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Issues in Language Instruction

A Journal for Practicing and Interpreting Teaching English as an Additional Language

Editor's Note

ILI is happy to announce its 12th year of publication. Over the years we have published on numerous topics important to practitioners of ESL and EAP. Of course, core topics such as teaching the four skills, vocabulary, and grammar are explored, but *ILI* has also devoted much space to pushing the traditional boundaries of the Intensive English Program (IEP) or English Language Center to contribute more generally to international education at the university. As a result, *ILI* has not only disseminated innovations in teaching but also explored and documented ways the profession can continue to expand at public institutions.

The first way is to work with the university to publish an open access journal to create a digital archive for research and other professional activities relevant to the university's English Language Center. An open access journal can publish on ways to broaden the scope of an English Language Center as well as expand the view of ESL/EAP practitioners. A journal can also provide faculty with professional development experience as editors. Previous topics in *ILI* include:

- Expanding the relevance of the university's English Language Center
- Professional development of EFL teachers
- Re-envisioning the role of EAP practitioners for short-term programs
- Integrating a pathway program at a university with an IEP
- Publication of conference proceedings
- English for Specific Purposes (ESP)
    - English for Academic Purposes (EAP)
    - English for Professional Purposes (EPP)
    - English for Research and Publication Purposes (ERPP)

This Volume of *ILI* addresses one topic that expands the ESL/EAP practitioner's view of students and another that considers the perceptions of a U.S. colleague who did not grow up with English in the home. The first paper is on student refugees and the other is an inside look at perceptions of a "nonnative speaker" of English who teaches in an Intensive English Program in the U.S.

In his case study, *Supporting the Inclusion and Identities of African Refugee Students in U.S. Higher Education,* Samuel Dermas Habtemariam examines linguistic and academic challenges as well as the construction and maintenance of the social and educational identities of four African refugee students in the U.S. The discussion reveals meaningful differences in values between the African refugee students and their university peers. Habtemariam's paper makes explicit the point that not all international students have the same needs and that understanding the background of a student population as well as incorporating values and identities of the student population into the curriculum can help ensure success.

In her reflection, *Teaching Pronunciation as a NNEST in an Intensive English Program in the US,* Parul Sood offers insights into her professional journey as a "nonnative" English-speaking teacher in the U.S. The insights take the form of beliefs and perceptions of a "NNES" instructor working in an IEP alongside a dominant majority of North

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American English-speaking teachers raised with English as their home and school language. Crucially, Sood chooses to focus on pronunciation, which can be an identifier of "nativeness" or "non-nativeness" and a host of underlying assumptions about the ability to speak and teach the language. Included in the paper is a section on teaching strategies that Sood has found successful.

Finally, I would like to thank *ILI's* two editors, Marta Carvajal Regidor and Jennifer Grode. Their experience, expertise, and careful examination of the manuscripts significantly contributed to the preparation of these articles for publication.

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Supporting the Inclusion and Identities of African Refugee Students in U.S. Higher Education

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Abstract. This paper seeks to understand how African refugee students in U.S. higher education construct their social and schooling identities while they negotiate the challenges they face. Although existing literature addresses identity formation among refugee students in the post resettlement period, little is known about how African adult college refugee students maintain their identities once settled in the United States. Framed as a qualitative case study, findings assert that African refugee college students face both linguistic and academic challenges as students enrolled in higher education in the U.S.; however, the magnitude of the linguistic challenges varies based on the status of English language as a medium of instruction in the country of the refugees' first asylum. The two challenges—linguistic and academic challenge—become intertwined once refugees pursue post-secondary opportunities in the U.S. Findings highlight the juxtaposition of maintenance of previous schooling and cultural values while learning and negotiating a new culture of post-secondary schooling in the U.S.

Keywords*: Education for refugees, postsecondary education, refugees, inclusion, African refugees*

Introduction

The United States has been a welcoming country to refugees from different countries and continents and has been described as one of the largest refugee recipients in the world (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2018). Since 1975, over 3 million refugees have had an opportunity to be resettled in the U.S. (Bernstein & DuBois, 2018). Nevertheless, the admission of refugees to the U.S. has dropped significantly since 2016 due to political reasons, and in 2018 alone, 45,000 refugees were planned to be resettled in the U.S., the lowest admission when compared to prior 2016 (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2019). Despite this drop, a significant number of refugees are believed to go to school upon arrival in the U.S., and some to a university or college. There are no clear data that specify refugees' enrollment rate in colleges and universities in the U.S. Yi & Kiyama (2018) state:

> Missing from literature on refugee populations is specific data on the numbers of refugee students attending postsecondary institutions in the U.S. Due to varying methods of classifying immigrant students and significant differences in when refugee students resettle in the U.S., and subsequently enter U.S. education systems, no clear data exists that accurately captures refugee students in higher education (p. 10).

Previous literature has focused on refugee students' schooling experiences. For example, Dryden-Peterson (2016) and Erden (2017) explored the schooling experiences of refugees in the refugee camps in Africa and Syrian refugee students' challenges in Turkey, respectively. While Bash and Zezlina-Phillips (2006) studied identity formation among refugee school children, Uptin (2013) investigated refugee students' engagement in constructing and reconstructing

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their cultural identities in Australia to be part of a new society. However, little is known about how refugee college students, as adults, construct their social and schooling identities while attending school in the United States.

Studying Refugees' Schooling Experiences in the United States

The schooling experiences of refugees who come to the United States often vary dependent on the age of the refugees when settling in the United States. Some refugees either go to school themselves or send their children to school in the U.S. A majority of these refugees went to school in refugee camps before they were settled and had unpleasant schooling experiences. As Dryden-Peterson (2016) wrote, "for refugee children, disruption of education by protracted conflict and exile is more the norm than the exception, and it is often a precursor of educational experiences outside of the national education system of a country of origin" (p.134). It may be due to these traumatic experiences that a large body of literature (e.g., Kira, Lewandowski, Ashby, Somers, Chiodo, & Odenat, 2014; Bryant, et al., 2018) has focused on investigating the psychological issues, particularly the traumas these refugees have faced in the refugee camps and the strategies the schools follow to prepare them for future life in the US (Dryden-Peterson, 2017).

There are some recent studies that focus on refugee students' identity formation. Erden (2017) investigated the schooling experiences of Syrian refugee students in Turkey and found that despite the challenges they face such as linguistic deficiency, lack of refugee education policy, and a cultural gap, refugees aim to build their sense of identity by learning skills to lead their day-to-day lives. In a similar vein, Saleh (2018) discovered the challenges refugee students face in terms of literacy skills and learning a new language and culture and suggested that schools should consider the students' cultural background, personal identities, and native language or funds of knowledge to help them succeed at school. In addition, Dryden-Peterson (2016) studied the educational experiences of refugee students in their first asylum countries and reported three issues in relation to linguistic problems, teaching strategies, and social segregation in the schools. Additionally, Uptin's (2013) study focused on how refugee students in Australia engaged in formulating and reformulating their cultural identities to be part of a new society, stressing the ways that refugees build their learning but resist a *homogenized identity*.

All of the studies noted above focused on young refugee learners and how they construct their new identities in a new country. There are, however, adult refugees who pursue educational experiences once arriving in the United States, and the social and schooling identities of these adult college refugee students have not been considered as a site to learn about adult refugee students.

This paper understands that one's identities are constructed socially. Hall and Du Gay's (1996) conceptualization of identity is drawn upon, as this conception of identity recognizes identity as a fluid and continuous process within a given context. Concerning identity construction, Hall and Du Gay stated, "In common sense language, identification is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation" (Hall & Du Gay, 1996, p. 2). The study on which this paper is premised is significant, for it can inform educators, policy makers, teachers, and other education stakeholders in the U.S. about the ways in which adult refugee students maintain their social and schooling identities in their social and academic engagements in the post-resettlement period. This paper addresses the following research questions:

1. How do African adult refugee students construct their social and schooling identities while attending college in the U.S.?
2. What challenges do African adult refugee students face in their college academic and social interactions due to the cultural discrepancies they face in the U.S.?

By exploring African adult refugee students from Eritrea and the Democratic Republic of Congo who are enrolled in post-secondary education, this paper creates a case study of how these individuals have negotiated their identities as college students.

Literature on College Refugee Students

Upon arrival in the country of first asylum and waiting for resettlement, refugee students may go to school in the refugee camps, but college students usually receive their education in cities. They are exposed to a second education system and cultural experiences in the country of first asylum, and after resettlement, they struggle to fit in a third education system and foreign culture, leaving most of them in culture shock (Joyce, Earnest, De Mori & Silvagni, 2010). Moreover, these refugee students encounter a number of challenges, as one percent of them eventually get access to higher education (Ramsay & Baker, 2019).

One challenge often faced by refugee students is a lack of access to what may be considered *professional* advice. After resettlement, agencies that help them to resettle arrange different programs to help them get a job or go to school. However, according to Earnest et al. (2010), these programs are not led by experts in refugee issues but by social or case workers, and hence their assistance to the refugee students concerning successful navigation of institutions of higher education is limited. Thus, refugee students are often bewildered upon arrival at higher education institutions as resources do not seem to be targeted toward their unique needs (Anselme & Hands, 2010).

In their study of university refugee students in Australia, Joyce, De Mori, and Silvagni (2010) found that refugee students often entered education systems that are very different from what they have experienced; hence, the researchers described the university as a "culturally alienating place" (p. 169), as newcomers feel a greater sense of isolation and less belongingness within those institutions.

Another challenge, a lack of proficiency in English is described as the other major obstacle for refugee students in higher education (Joyce et al., 2010; Ramsay & Baker, 2019). Some of these refugees went to school in the country of first asylum where the medium of instruction was English. However, refugee students may still have difficulty interacting with others in English because the English they were taught as a foreign language was more of an academic English, and this form of the language does not enable them to easily socialize and become part of the community. Stevenson and Baker (2018) stated:

> Language proficiency is further complicated by settlement and education policies that also do not recognise the bespoke academic language and literacy needs of students who are non-native English speakers, and have had interrupted education. This is compounded by the fact that many refugees learn the forms of English which can help them navigate their new social milieu but the social milieu of HE [higher education] is radically different, containing as it does its own linguistic culture (p. 57).

Still another challenge for refugees relates to health issues. The majority of refugees encounter extreme challenges in refugee camps. They may have witnessed the death of their beloved ones, family members, relatives, neighbors, and friends (Habtemariam, 2017). Such traumatic experiences may distract refugee students from their studies, leading to more stress and even depression. Joyce et al. (2010) found that refugee students in Australia suffered from culture shock, depression, stress, and other underlying health conditions. These complex health issues usually appear to worsen as refugees do not get enough medical attention in the refugee camps. Thus, health issues can become an obstacle to refugee students' academic success.

Methodology

This study drew upon qualitative methods for data collection and analysis and employed a qualitative single case study methodology (Yin, 2014; Stake, 1995), bounded by time and place, as a way to understand the lives and experiences of refugee college students. The single case study methodology was chosen because of its ability to address a specific case as a method for understanding the deeply complex issue of how refugees negotiate their identity once enrolled in U.S. higher education and how this relates to the college education system (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The four participants in this study compose the "case" in the remainder of the paper.

Setting

The study is set in the United States, and specifically within a state in the Midwest. This state is one of the states in the U.S. that receives a great number of refugees in the country due to two particular reasons. The first reason is that there are refugee resettlement agencies based in the state that assist refugees in starting a new life. These resettlement agencies play a pivotal role not only in enabling refugees to get a national ID, a driver's license and food stamps, but also provide refugees with the opportunity to go to school, learn the English language, and lease an apartment. Thus, refugees depend on such agencies to begin their new lives in the U.S.

This midwestern state is enlisted in the Federal Refugee Resettlement Program and receives funding from the federal government to assist refugees in resettling in the state. In 2016 alone, this state received over 1000 refugees that came from different countries, including Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Syria, Central African Republic, Iraq, Burma, South Sudan and Uganda (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2018). The midwestern state featured in this paper was selected for this study based on purposive sampling, which allowed the researchers to select participants based on the particular purpose related to addressing the research questions (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). Purposive sampling also provided ground for in-depth and relevant data to be collected to meet the objectives of the study (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011).

The case in this paper focuses on African refugees due to the great numbers of African refugees being resettled in this state. Additionally, as an African refugee, I was able to correspond with the participants featured in the paper, sometimes in the native language of the participants. My positionality allowed for more in-depth correspondence with the research participants.

Participants

As previously mentioned, the participants in the study were African refugees who have been resettled in a midwestern state through the UNHCR Refugee Resettlement Program. Prior to their arrival in the U.S., all of them were granted refugee status by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in the first host countries. For the purpose of the study, four participants were recruited from Higher Education Institutions. The parameters that governed the selection of participants included: 1) participants had been in the U.S. for more than one year, 2) participants were refugees from the countries of Eritrea and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and 3) all participants were current college students (enrolled in courses at a post-secondary institution in the U.S.).

All participants were recommended by one of the resettlement agencies. The agency was involved in the recruitment process because of its connection with the college-aged refugee students. The business relationship between the resettlement agency and the refugee students has continued over the course of the students' time in the U.S. because the refugees depend on the agency to file for green card status and because the resettlement agency also provides advice on other legal issues.

Two participants who participated in the study are Eritreans who came to the U.S. in 2015. Gebreslassie (all names of participants and specific places are pseudonyms) stayed in Ethiopia as a refugee for five years and went to school there before he came to the U.S. He lived in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia with his mother and sister. While in Ethiopia, he had the challenge of learning Amharic, the official language of the country and of communicating with the teachers who were Amharic speakers. The other Eritrean refugee student is Haylom, who fled to Sudan and stayed in the refugee camp for a long time with his parents. He went to school there and learned Arabic, which is an official language and medium of instruction in schools. His first language is Bilen, one of the nine languages spoken in Eritrea.

The other two participants in the study, David and Solomon, are from the Democratic Republic of Congo. They managed to escape to South Africa with their parents and lived in Johannesburg for more than ten years. David and Solomon both spoke Swahili as their first language; they went to school in South Africa and did not have a problem learning English, an official language and medium of instruction in the country. They arrived in the U.S. in 2016. Thus, the participants featured in this paper represent different languages and cultures and are from two African countries.

Data Collection

The study employed semi-structured interviews with the participants. Each participant was interviewed for 60 to 90 minutes twice in March 2020 and twice in May 2020. While the March interviews were conducted in person, the

May interviews became phone interviews due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The social distancing mandates due to COVID-19 impacted the refugee students and due to their limited resources (limited access and use of computers), the final interviews were conducted by phone rather than via Zoom or other videoconferencing platforms. The Human Subjects Research Committee at the institution of higher education where the author is affiliated approved this research study.

The rationale for using semi-structured interviews throughout the study was that this format contained open-ended questions and allowed the participants to tell stories as part of the interview process without being restricted to just responding to interview questions. In addition, I memorized the questions so that the participants would not feel intimidated by an artificial interview procedure (Maxwell, 2013). All interactions were audio-recorded and transcribed.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was guided by Miles and Huberman's (1994) qualitative data analysis procedures. Analysis began by creating broad, deductive categories for the data derived from the theoretical framework, research questions, literature review, and interview protocols. Categories included, for example, school culture, home culture, schooling identities, social identities, academic challenges, identity construction, and values. After reading the transcribed data, text was highlighted, ranging from a single line to a full paragraph, and ascribed to these broad categories. After this, a code list was generated to analyze the chunks of text placed in each broad category. Text was also coded in an inductive manner, seeking themes within the data. Coding allowed me to consider the intersections of the theoretical framework, the research questions that were asked about refugee students' construction of social and schooling identities, and the academic challenges that the refugee students faced. The transcribed data were shared with the research participants, which provided an opportunity of checking whether the analysis had captured participants' perspectives accurately (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Findings and Discussion

The paper next presents four categories: linguistic challenges, academic challenges, constructing African social identity, and maintaining schooling identity. These categories are essential to understanding how the participants in the study confronted the challenges and opportunities they experienced as postsecondary refugee students.

Linguistic Challenges

Participants in the study explained that the language barrier they experienced was their major challenge in the country of resettlement. In part, this obstacle traces back to the countries of first asylum that have mother tongue education policy at the elementary level and English as a medium of instruction at the secondary and university levels. For example, the participants who were in Ethiopia attended their elementary education, until 8th grade, in Amharic. Their high school education, however, was in English. Similarly, those who were in Sudan went to a school run by UNHCR where Tigrigna and Arabic are the medium of instruction at the elementary level, up until 6th grade, but English and Arabic were the languages of instruction at the secondary level and above. These differences in language of instruction at elementary and secondary levels account for insufficient proficiency in English when the refugee students entered high school. Further, the use of English in high school may not be sufficient for refugee students to carry out academic activities and socialize in English.

Thus, refugee students who were in Ethiopia and Sudan were severely affected by the linguistic barrier as experienced within their college education in the U.S. The two refugee students who were in South Africa, however, were educated in English; hence, these participants were in a position to communicate better and to perform their academic duties in English, though they still faced barriers while interacting with native speakers of American English in the U.S. These two participants felt as though their accent stopped them from being understood by their peers and teachers. As a result, in the country of resettlement, the English language became an obstacle for the refugee students to be able to socialize and communicate as needed with their professors, and they often felt isolated socially and culturally. Gebreslassie said:

> While I was in the U.S. at school, my English was not good enough. In a sense, I was able to listen, but I could not communicate in English here and I felt isolated. I did not have a lot of friends here and the culture was completely different. I do not think the people in the U.S. were as communicative as the people in Addis Ababa…… My high school fear of not communicating properly with teachers and students could be repeated here in the college, I thought. But, it is fine because at least I can communicate with people though I don't socialize as much as I used to when I was in Addis Ababa.

Gebreslassie continued to explain how his poor English put him in a stressful situation due to lack of proper communication and socialization.

> I read about it before. In order to understand my problems and the stress as well as the deep depression I had. I was trying to google to find out the cause of my problems. The reason the depression started was when I went to school in the U.S., I was not able to communicate properly with the students and teachers. I could not socialize and make jokes or play with my classmates due to my poor English. Moreover, I did not have any friends and could not find people who could understand me. So, it was very stressful time.

Gebreslassie also found that people's attitude towards his English put him in an odd situation. He noted that some students made fun of his accent in English, and this obliged him to search for friends who spoke English like him and whose cultures were similar to his. In line with Gebreslassie, Haylom stated:

> Yes, sometimes, it feels strange or different when they laugh at my English accent. But the African students do not laugh at my English, and I feel like I am with my people and home. They welcome you and the way we speak is the same.

This finding resonates with Stevenson and Baker's (2018) explanation that refugee students do not feel part of the wider university community due to their unique accent and "bespoke academic language" (p. 57). Linguistic challenges were often intertwined with broader academic challenges, the next theme discussed.

Academic Challenges

Participants' understanding of the different education systems, between the country of first asylum and the United States was often highlighted. All participants spoke of how college courses in the U.S. demanded that students participate actively. The participants expressed that they had difficulty fulfilling this mandate due to their upbringing, stating that they were raised to be good listeners, to keep their voice down, and not to speak up before their elders or teachers, as it is considered offensive. Participants also noted that there is part of the African culture that says that younger children should look humble by keeping their head down, should not question their elders' ideas but accept them, and should respect authority. These cultural values impacted the academic engagement of the refugee students in the U.S. classroom. Gebreslassie explained this by saying:

> I am not an active participant in class, and I think this is because of my cultural background. In my culture, parents tell us not speak before teachers/elders as a sign of respect and to remain silent and patient so that you learn a lot from others.

Another difference in education systems was also noted. The refugee students explained that the teaching and linguistic styles of their teachers in the U.S. were different from what they were used to. The teaching style in the U.S. emphasizes assignments and independent learning, unlike in Africa, where the refugee students had to do all the academic work under strict supervision of their teachers, not independently, as explained by Solomon:

> I mean, it's different. Schooling in Africa's different, like the teachers are more intense, like the teachers push you, like they want you to do your work stuff like and it's much more harder compared to the schools in America… I would say that teachers do not put pressure on you. They don't pressure the students as much, compared to, like back in Africa where they want you to do the work. In America, as long as the teacher teaches the subject, she's done with it. She doesn't push you or anything like that.

The variety of English was also a factor. Since the accent and the English the teachers used in the U.S. are different from their previous teachers, the refugee students found it difficult to understand and follow instructions. In addition, the students did not have access to programs in the U.S., where they could use their first language as an aid to understand concepts. Haylom put it this way:

> But until 6th grade, the medium of instruction weas Tigrigna and Arabic, which means we learned these subjects in Tigrigna and Arabic. After 6th grade, however, we learned the subjects in English and Arabic. As I said, still English was difficult for me. I took English as a subject in the refugee camp in Sudan, but I did not pay much attention to the language, and it was a bit different from the English I am experiencing in the U.S.

The different teaching style, with emphasis on autonomous learning and assignments, as well as the use of American English by teachers who are native speakers, became an obstacle for the refugee students' academic success. Additionally, an expectation of the role of *active learner* was challenging for the students, a finding in line with Lambrecht's (2020) study.

Constructing African Social Identity

All participants said that they desired to preserve their African identity. These refugee students left their countries when they were young; some were born in the country of first asylum, but due to the efforts and desire of their parents, the participants wanted to keep up their African identity. The actions that identified them as Africans, in their perspective, included being respectful to elders and teachers, not staying out late at night for a drink, not having tattoos or piercings, not having a girlfriend until graduation, standing out academically, sharing the burdens of the family, and depending on the decisions of parents or consulting parents before making any decision related to school or life. These named values from the participants were attributed to their African identity because the refugee students had these shared values and characteristics in common. The four participants were united in showing allegiance to those values, a point discussed in Hall & Du Gay (1996).

What was described as *values* by the African refugee students was frequently viewed in contrast to the values of their American peers. The refugee students' perceptions of American college students included claims that they saw young American college students as wanting to enjoy their freedom of being a young adult, often an age when Americans desire to make decisions for themselves rather than having parents decide for them. Also, the participants in the study perceived that American college students were prepared and willing to argue with teachers, if necessary, fight for their rights until the end, address their teachers by their names without using a formal title such as Dr. or Professor. Other contrasts they witnessed between the values they held and those the American students seemed to have included the normalcy of tattoos, girlfriends/ boyfriends, and piercings. The participants noted that all of these things made them feel different from their American peers.

The refugee students did not hide their feelings about holding values they deemed *African* in nature; they recognized that such values made them different from the rest of the student population. In some cases, the African refugee students explained to their American peers that they had different values and attempted to reflect them at school, though they were not always successful in convincing them. Thus, the cultural mismatch, noted earlier by Ogbu (1982), between the refugee students' home culture and school culture was evident, leading refugee students to some identity confusion. David stated:

> Even though you say you are African and you say this won't affect your life, you still want to fit in. You still want to be seen as normal, as one of them. So, you sometimes forget and you start blending in with them [American students], and you start blending in. If you move away, you like, you forget. You say, hey, this is not me. It's like, stay on track…You got to remember. You are African. This is not your culture.

In addition, Gebreslassie explained how he saw himself as a different student culturally because of the absence of the common values and subjects to talk about.

> I don't think I have a common ground to discuss matters with my American classmates. I believe if there were students from Eritrea or Ethiopia, I would have a common ground to raise common subjects to discuss. Also, I would understand their cultural cues, all the verbal and non-verbal signs which make my communication easy. But here, since I cannot even speak English properly, it is difficult to see myself as an American student.

Students commented about how they thought more about their individual lives, rather than the communal life, since arriving in the United States. The *individual life* can be thought about as doing things independently and progressing financially for oneself, whereas communal life refers to sharing your income with family members, and hence progressing financially together and sharing any burden, pain, and labor with family members. Being in a foreign land, though it is difficult to preserve their African identity, refugee college students attempted to do so by using Swahili, Tigrigna and Arabic/Bilen languages at home when discussing cultural issues with their parents and siblings, by cooking and eating African foods at home, and by respecting authority like the police and teachers. The participants noted that they were proud of their values and African identities and suggested that other African refugee students keep up their African culture. Solomon commented this way:

> No, I think they should not forget their culture. I think they should be proud of where they came from because that is a privilege. Most Americans want to go back to Africa, like most black Americans want to go back to Africa to find about their roots.

In addition, participants tried to maintain their African identity by having friends from Africa at school, and by practicing their cultural values at home. To this effect, the students were proud of their origin and know where they are from in Africa, and they perceived this in contrast to African American students they met who wished to go back to Africa in search of their roots. David said:

> Many African Americans are very active about wishing to know about Africa. You know, like they always want to know about their roots and they say, I wish I could go back to the motherland, motherland, but they don't really know Africa where they are from. But, you, as a refugee had a chance. You know where you from; you know what your grand great-great-great grandfather is from. So, when you come here, don't try to erase that part of your life because it's still in you.

Maintaining Schooling Identity

The refugee students wanted to be identified as outstanding and hardworking; this kind of schooling identity was created due to the following reasons. Firstly, their parents believe that school is the only way to change the lives of their children and hence prepare them to be successful students at college. In addition, the participants explained that their parents deserved a better life because they went through much; the participants believed that they, as college-aged individuals, could play a pivotal role in transitioning their parents upward (economically and socially) if they were successful at school. This value applied not only to the refugee students but also to their siblings who were still young and to those who did not go to school. This seemed to be the source of the refugee students' schooling identity. Solomon articulated it as follows:

> I think that this is unspoken because you have to continue your schooling. You are in America, but you have been through a lot and someone with the common sense would know I have to do better for my family. My parents have gone through a lot for me. I am sure about that. They don't have to say that but that's for sure. What would be a reason for me failing school? So, they [my parents] always tell me to do good. I want you to buy a house one day for me. So, you have to do good in school.

David supports this argument that refugee students should be successful to ensure upward mobility of themselves and their parents. David noted:

> If you go to school, you definitely will be successful. That's what they [parents] think but it's not always like that. You can have a degree in mechanical engineering but obviously it's not just because you go to school, you are going to have a lot of money and knowing the history of your parents, like what they've been through and everything they have done for you, you want to please them. You want to pay them back somehow. So, it just puts a lot of pressure on you to do good, so you can repay them. Yeah, so like hey, if I am slack in school, I'm not going to be successful, not going to be able to provide for my family. So, you want to be able to provide your family. So, you do good in school. You push yourself because you know what you want from them.

Secondly, the refugee students reported that there are sufficient educational facilities to study in the U.S. They explained that they have to be outstanding because they have all the resources around them to facilitate their studies. With fewer educational facilities, they survived school in Africa, and now there is no reason not to use all the available resources like laptops, fast internet connections, and full-fledged libraries and e-books for their own advantage. Solomon explained:

> I like it here, like school is much more; you got a lot of resources around you. You got the Internet; you got Wi-Fi; you got a laptop to do your homework. You got libraries. Schools are much better, compared to like Africa where you have to pay to go research or something. You got access to everything. It sounds like it is much better here.

Participants often asserted that they thought American peers took these opportunities for granted, whereas refugee students worked hard to effectively use the available opportunities. Thus, despite the academic and linguistic challenges mentioned above, the refugee students believed that resilience, hard work, and academic achievement are the features that shape their schooling identities. But, they admitted that they were less confident to speak up and challenge teachers and authorities and were hesitant to make their voices heard.

Conclusion

Linguistic and academic barriers were identified as major obstacles for the success of the refugee college students even though there are English language centers in many U.S. universities that help not only refugee students but also international students with limited English. Linguistic barriers were more challenging for refugee students who came from the countries of first asylum that had a mother tongue education policy and English as a medium of instruction at only the high school and university levels. Those who came from a country of first asylum, where the medium of instruction was English throughout kindergarten to the university, experienced a minimal linguistic barrier. Thus, the status of English language in the country of first asylum was a determining factor for the refugees' linguistic challenge, a finding which is not explored in depth in existing literature.

Academic challenges impacted the participants in this study due to encountering a different education system in the U.S. Unfortunately, few support systems for refugee students in post-secondary education existed beyond English language centers. Instead, support systems were primarily found in the resettlement agencies. One implication of this

finding is that there is additional need for support for refugee college students in post-secondary institutions. Instead of being grouped with international students, refugee students would benefit from a greater understanding from faculty who would benefit from knowing more about the history of schooling as it relates to refugee students. A similar finding was reported by Anselme and Hands (2010), who emphasized that refugee students need *special support* (p. 92). A greater support system within post-secondary education may include counseling, academic support, interaction with teachers and financial assistance.

This study highlights the need for bridging the cultural mismatches between the refugee students' home and school cultures. In some school courses, Africa may be portrayed as a war zone, where inter-ethnic conflicts take place. Though this is true in some instances, a positive image of Africa should also be incorporated into the curriculum. The values that the participants described in the study should be reflected in the curriculum as a way to demonstrate a balanced image of Africa, thus showing respect for the values of the newcomers. In addition, this study reiterated what Jack (2019) argued: "access is not inclusion" (p. 159). When university access is given to refugee students, we may need to work more to ensure better inclusion and diversity by incorporating refugee students' values and identities into the college curriculum. Moreover, college education should support refugee students in their efforts to maintain their African identity, which is consistent with the efforts and principles of universities to diversify their campus in the U.S. (Jack, 2019). Part of this support could be to broaden the scope of multicultural education to include the voices, identities, and values of the African refugee students to ensure the promotion of cultural competence (Gay, 2013).

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Issues in Language Instruction

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Teaching Pronunciation as a NNEST in an Intensive English Program in the U.S.: A Professional Journey

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Background

I am a nonnative English-speaking teacher (NNEST) in an English language program at a Midwestern University in the U.S. I was born and raised as a bilingual in India. I spoke Hindi at home and began learning English in school. India is a linguistically diverse country, but because of its colonial legacy, English is considered as an important part of Indian higher education and is usually seen as the language of power and prestige. English was spoken by the ruling British government, so the laws were written in English, and the government administration was also conducted in English. Additionally, English became the medium of instruction in public schools. After India gained independence from the British, the Constitution of India named both Hindi and English as the official languages of India. Thanks to the foresight and liberal ideas of the then national leaders, most Indians who now graduate from a university have a good functional knowledge of general English, which is expectedly influenced by the local language(s), resulting in Indian English.

Upon graduating with a bachelor's degree in elementary education, I moved to the United States and started working toward getting a master's degree in education with an emphasis in TESOL. I started working at the Applied English Center (AEC) at the University of Kansas as a lecturer in 2012 after spending a year as a Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA). The AEC is an English language center that houses the Intensive English Program (IEP) among other language programs and courses for nonnative English-speaking students at the University of Kansas. In the IEP, there are five levels of instruction and two main classes in the curriculum for every level: Reading/Writing/Grammar (RWG) and Listening/Speaking/Grammar (LSG). Over the years, I have taught all language skills at different levels.

Earlier on in my career, I taught a Grammar for Communication class where grammar was taught separately from reading and writing. I spent a great deal of time learning the rules and how to teach them concisely to students. Although I received my education in English, I did not have much grammatical instruction in school. At that time, grammar was "caught and not taught" at school because the focus was on the whole language philosophy, which de-emphasized grammar instruction. I must admit that I valued learning the grammar charts myself first and then finding a way to teach them in the classroom.

Eventually I moved on to teaching integrated RWG classes. My educational background in TESOL helped me gain knowledge in second language teaching methodology and second language acquisition theories for teaching these skills at an IEP. Because of positive feedback from peers and my students, I felt confident as an RWG teacher. Watching my students making progress and advancing in their language learning journeys motivated me. I enjoyed being a successful RWG teacher, so I mostly requested a teaching assignment that included teaching reading and writing as I wanted to continue doing something I was good at. Being a nonnative speaker, I assumed that I would not be seen as an adequate speaking teacher in an LSG class.

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Embarking Upon My Journey as a Pronunciation Teacher

At the IEP where I teach, all ESL instructors are expected to teach any skill at any level. This policy eventually required me to teach speaking skills, including pronunciation. I was very hesitant at the beginning and did not know where to start. I decided to talk to other experienced LSG instructors about the curriculum and teaching strategies. The student learning objectives (SLOs) in the LSG classes are mainly based on developing listening and speaking skills. Pronunciation and grammar are a part of the curriculum but are not as specifically articulated. I got useful tips and teaching materials by collaborating with experienced colleagues, which gave me a starting point. I was less confident but ready to work hard. I decided to break the curriculum into parts or categories that I could more easily grasp. One successful strategy that I have always relied on is to understand how a particular topic or exercise fits into the curriculum and why we are working on it. This bigger picture perspective helps me orient my instruction and more effectively teach my students.

As time went on, I felt increasingly confident with the LSG curriculum. The grammar aspect of the class was the same as in the RWG class, so I focused more on teaching to the speaking and listening SLOs. I realized that I had taught all these skills before in some way in an RWG class. Examples include notetaking, expressing likes/dislikes or opinions, explaining graphs, giving presentations, summarizing, and using markers to compare or contrast or show cause and effect. I felt my task was to find ways to help my students learn how to listen for or recognize these ways of using English as well as to help them develop the required skills. I focused on finding good examples for in-class practice exercises. Reading aloud, which is a significant component of my reading class, worked well in an LSG class, as well. Regular sessions of reading aloud with engaging content provided opportunities for me to model fluency and inflection. Over time, I observed students really enjoying my LSG classes, and I also began to enjoy teaching these classes more. However, one aspect that was and is still challenging for me to teach is pronunciation. I do not think I teach it as well as the other parts of the curriculum because my first language was not English.

Challenges of Teaching English Pronunciation as a Nonnative English-Speaking Teacher (NNEST)

I avoided teaching an LSG class even though I am an experienced ESL teacher because I felt a lack of confidence while teaching pronunciation. The question that stayed in mind was that even with a solid understanding of teaching methodology, was I speaking English "competently" like my native English-speaking colleagues? In other words, are native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) more capable language teachers in comparison to NNESTs? The answer to my question begins with understanding the native-nonnative dichotomy.

Native-Nonnative Teacher Dichotomy

In the profession of English language teaching, a preference for native speakers has traditionally been based on the assumption that native speakers are the ideal teachers of English. For an example of an explicit statement for the preference for native speakers of English, see Braine (2010, pp. 3-4). However, it is not easy to define the term *native speaker* because being a native speaker cannot be determined by considering only the place of birth or even the first language (Phillipson, 1992). Emphasizing the language user, Duran and Saenkhum (2022) noted how English has spread worldwide due to colonial developments and globalization, and as a result there are culturally, ethnically, and racially diversified users of English. "English users are now found in every continent whether or not they acquire English as their first language" (Duran & Saenkhum, 2022, p.3). Phillipson challenges the legitimacy of the native speaker concept, asserting that there is no scientific evidence to support it. He refers to this idea as the "native speaker fallacy," suggesting it stems from the assumption that native speakers are more skilled in "demonstrating fluent, idiomatically appropriate language" (p. 194). However, he argues that such skills can be acquired by nonnative teachers. Phillipson emphasizes that effective teachers are made through training and experience, regardless of their native language background.

Phillipson's ideology resonates with me because when I first started teaching, I had the knowledge I acquired through teacher training programs but did not have much experience. I was not a native speaker but was considered

proficient in English based on my high TOEFL score and a perfect score on the institutional version of the Test of Spoken English called the Speaking Proficiency English Assessment Kit or SPEAK Test, a test given to assess the oral language proficiency of nonnative speakers of English who are applying for graduate teaching assistantship (GTA) positions at some universities. When I first started as a GTA, I mostly used the material that was created by my mentors or the coordinators of that course. Over the years, I observed other experienced colleagues in the classroom, and I borrowed teaching methodology, along with ideas, strategies, and activities from them. All this training in my early years helped me become the teacher that I am today. Regardless of my native language, I got trained to teach the *English* language. Based on my personal experience in the field, including my documented high degree of proficiency, I can say that professional preparation is more important than being a native speaker. Professional preparation enables both native and nonnative speaking teachers to assess and develop pedagogical practices based on expertise, knowledge, and experience.

Perceptions or Misperceptions?

My self-perception about having a different accent, pronunciation, and sometimes vocabulary initially contributed to my lack of confidence as a pronunciation teacher. I felt anxious about my communication abilities in English because I thought that my students would be skeptical about my teaching ability, especially at the beginning of the semester, given my non-white physical appearance and my nonnative accent. It was my perception that NNESTs are generally believed to have inadequate knowledge of the English language and are being constantly judged against the native speaker norm. This made me wonder if I should perhaps attempt to mimic a native speaker of American English in the classroom. Research has shown that a teacher's past classroom experiences, current professional status, and their career aspirations can significantly impact how strongly they identify with native speakers and their desire to achieve a native-like accent (Jenkins, 2005). A more recent study done by Coşkun (2013) also reported that non-native EFL teachers are uncertain about their accents and language proficiency in general. Although they are aware of their strengths, they feel less powerful in the classroom. This explains why I wanted to sound like my white-American peers.

This lack of confidence and these feelings of insecurity are probably related to self-perceived language ability rather than actual language proficiency. In fact, this perception was articulated in Rajagopalan (2005) who revealed that NNESTs' self-perception of English proficiency, rather than their actual English abilities, plays a key role in establishing their confidence in teaching.

Since I have a terminal degree in my profession and have successfully taught ESL for the last 12 years at an American University, I finally decided to change my attitude about my Indian accent and now believe that it does not reflect my language ability or ability to teach English well. Given that self-confidence is an essential component for successful teaching, it was important for me to have a positive self-perception about my language proficiency. To compensate for this difference, not deficiency, I have focused more on preparation and planning for my classes, as I believe that good teaching practice does not depend on being native or nonnative but rather depends on being well prepared. I believe the reason I have not received any student complaints about my accent or comprehensibility is that I have paid careful attention to the speed, clarity, and volume of my speech in the classroom and have always aimed for overall intelligibility, a goal of good instructors in all disciplines.

In the past, whenever I taught an LSG class, I started with an assumption that my students would not consider me a good speaking teacher because I do not speak the language like other American teachers. To my surprise, this was not how my students saw me in the classroom. My course evaluations reflected that they accepted me and liked my approach to teaching LSG. While students position me as an NNEST, they also value my expertise, the way I teach, and my dedication to the profession. To illustrate, students are resoundingly positive in their evaluation of my LSG classes. They write comments like, "*The course is very clear, so I can understand very easily*" and "*I like the class (and) that I can speak my opinion freely.*" I believe my students also see me as an example of a successful learner of English. In class they consistently ask me questions like "*When did you start learning English*?" or "*How long did it take you to become proficient*?" They want me to share my experiences and strategies for learning English. As nonnative English-speaking teachers, we have already experienced the process of learning a language, which helps us provide valuable insights and a venue for empathizing with our students.

Looking deeper into the research confirmed my beliefs. Coşkun (2013) notes that NNESTs are likely to understand the learners' challenges and problems better and share empathy with them. A study done by McKay (2003) also

reported that nonnative English-speaking teachers may be better at identifying and understanding the challenges faced by their students when learning English, potentially because they themselves have experienced similar difficulties as learners of the language, leading to greater empathy. Furthermore, Cook (1999) argued that multilingual teachers are more qualified than their monolingual counterparts, as "students may feel overwhelmed by native speaker teachers who have achieved a perfection that is out of the students' reach" (p. 200). Cook's (1999) idea was that students might prefer nonnative teachers because they provide a model that feels more achievable to learners. Therefore, as NNESTs, we need to be aware of how students may perceive our status, our role, and our contribution to the educational process. We need to recognize that students need to be aware of and exposed to other varieties of English, both "native" and "nonnative," as they can encounter either in the current globalized context. It is also important for teacher education programs to develop courses and materials for teachers to raise this awareness and make NNESTs aware of their potential to be successful and valued language teachers. Simply put, NNESTs offer unique advantages to the profession. Being a native English speaker is not as important as learning how to use the language effectively to engage with students and help them develop their knowledge of the English language.

Understandability or Native-like Pronunciation: What's the Goal?

For some teachers, the goal is to help students communicate a clear message, but other instructors find it a bit uncomfortable to leave students' "mistakes" uncorrected even if the message was clear. I have always questioned the importance of traditional "native-like" pronunciation over understandability.[1] When our students move on to take non-ESL classes at the university, their comprehensibility not only depends on their pronunciation but also on their familiarity with the topic of discussion (Chung & Miki Bong, 2019) and faculty attitudes toward "nonnative" English speech (Sheppard, Elliot, and Baese-Birk, 2017). Additionally, the comprehensibility of English language learners (ELLs) is greatly influenced by the willingness of other students to actively listen, understand, and support their speech, creating a comfortable environment where all participants cooperate in the communicative act.

Attitudes and goals of ("nonnative") English language users are also relevant. Around the world, many nonnative speakers use English as a tool for communication. These English language speakers may not have, need, or want an American English accent or "perfect" pronunciation when communicating with others in English. A goal of U.S. English language programs at the university level is to prepare students to be successful in their academic classes at the university. However, attaining this goal does not necessarily require that students become native-like in English, including in their pronunciation. Learners should focus their efforts on being clear and intelligible enough to facilitate understanding and smooth communication. But does this mean that teachers should put *no* importance on helping students strive for native-like pronunciation?

Pronunciation teaching has been influenced by two contradicting principles. Levis (2005) reports that the *nativeness* principle is to teach or learn a native-like pronunciation in foreign language teaching. In contrast, Levis' (2005) *intelligibility* principle states that pronunciation teaching and learning should focus on making learners produce speech that is "understandable" or "intelligible," regardless of how native-like it sounds. He further argues that striving to perfectly mimic a native speaker's accent is often unrealistic for most learners and may result in discouragement. He emphasizes that the priority should be clear communication and being understood, rather than achieving "native-like" pronunciation, highlighting that such fluency is not essential for effective communication. Although the nativeness principle and the intelligibility principle differ with respect to goals for student success and qualifications of teachers, they are not completely incompatible. Both approaches agree that pronunciation is important for language teaching. Therefore, in my opinion, we as teachers should take a balanced approach to lead students to set more realistic and pragmatic pronunciation goals while acknowledging a role for native-speaker pronunciation in our curricula and teaching materials.

Lack of Training

Another challenge of teaching pronunciation was a lack of guidance and adequate training in my education. For example, in my degree coursework, I had no training in phonetics, phonology, or pronunciation pedagogy. Graduate students enrolled in my TESL/TEFL program could take phonetics and phonology courses in linguistics departments,

[1] The terms understandability, comprehensibility, and intelligibility are used interchangeably. For a discussion of these concepts relevant to perceptions of university faculty see Sheppard, Elliott, and Baese-Berk (2017).

but there were both advantages and disadvantages to doing so. General or theoretical linguistics courses incorporate examples from English but also focus on other languages, as well. Moreover, the focus of these courses is not language pedagogy. The TESL/TEFL student may be better served in applied linguistics classes, which often cover language teaching more generally, though they often have little time for a deep dive into pronunciation pedagogy.

Instructors can get on-the-job training as they work through the curriculum for an assigned course. In my case, the LSG curriculum provided the broad topics that needed to be covered in class, but instructional material that could be used to teach the specifics of pronunciation were not provided. This may be the case in other English language programs. I continued to educate myself by reading books and articles about how to effectively teach pronunciation, but I kept struggling. My question was, "what constitutes the knowledge base that allows NNESTs to implement systematic pronunciation teaching?" Despite the number of NNESTs in the field, and the key role pronunciation plays in oral communication, teaching practices of NNESTs in pronunciation instruction have not been explored much (Couper, 2017).

Due to the unavailability of pronunciation pedagogy courses, I did not learn how to teach pronunciation systematically, which is quite common in many ESL/EFL contexts (Couper, 2017). According to Couper (2017), a major problem in EFL/ESL settings is that teachers often lack sufficient training in pronunciation pedagogy, resulting in a lack of confidence and inadequate skills when it comes to teaching pronunciation effectively. Hence, I propose that we take ownership of our professional development and actively participate in collaborative learning communities to continuously improve our skills and knowledge in the field. All NNESTs can seek other forms of professional development like regularly attending conferences and workshops. Moreover, teachers can learn tips to teach pronunciation from other professionals in the field. While it has been established that teacher training in pedagogical phonology is critical to pronunciation teaching (Murphy, 2014b, Couper 2017), based on my personal experience, I can say that I developed an important part of my knowledge in this area through collaboration with other knowledgeable colleagues and through my own classroom experiences.

Pronunciation Teaching Strategies that Worked Well

Research in teaching pronunciation has demonstrated that explicit instruction can be helpful in becoming a comprehensible speaker despite having a foreign accent. Explicit instruction of phonetic and phonological features of the language can help the learners see differences between languages they speak and the language they are learning (Lee, Jang, and Plonsky, 2015). Levis and Echelberger (2022) suggest integrating pronunciation into language instruction in general. In addition, a study done by Buss (2016) examined the practices of EFL teachers in Brazil and reported that teachers approached pronunciation mainly by focusing on learners' errors through repetition. Much like the grammar structures and charts, I now could see the need to train myself in teaching phonetic and phonological aspects of the language in a structured way. After research, self-observation and reflection, this is how I used some common teaching techniques rooted in best practices in my classes where I taught pronunciation.

Explicit Explanation of Pronunciation Rules & Concepts

Pedagogical research on pronunciation has suggested that explicit pronunciation instruction helps learners achieve intelligible and comprehensible L2 speech (Lee et al., 2015). From what I have observed, students are usually curious about the pronunciation of various words, and this presents itself as a teaching moment where it is easier to draw students' attention to specific rules about pronunciation. I teach these rules explicitly with examples. However, I take an inductive approach where my students first look at specific examples and then construct a rule. For instance, in one of my lower-level classes, the book provides a chart to explain the rules for pronunciation of final *-s* in plurals or third person singular verbs. Before studying the chart and examples, I provide my students with target examples on the board and request information from them to construct the rule. At the end, we go back to the correct pronunciation of the examples and restate the rules.

While explaining how to produce sounds or use pronunciation patterns appropriately can be challenging, directions about what to do with the vocal organs can help some students in some circumstances. I use a vowel chart or a phonemic chart for explicit instruction. The chart is a representation of the space in which the tongue moves to produce vowel and consonant sounds. This approach focuses on listening and imitation to effectively manipulate the vocal tract

to produce sounds in English. I find that understanding where sounds are produced (place of articulation) and how they are produced (manner of articulation) helps students visualize movements which would not normally be visible.

Integration of Pronunciation in Other Language Skills

Levis and Echelberger (2022) noted that pronunciation is connected and is essential to the learning of other language skills like listening, reading, vocabulary, and grammar. Therefore, it can be included where it is relevant to the content or students' needs. For example, in learning new vocabulary, I include an oral component to practice how the words sound, where stressed syllables are, and what unstressed syllables sound like. Other examples include focusing on connecting oral pronunciation and spelling of a word as well as breaking speech into understandable phrases marked by pauses and intonation while reading an article from the textbook.

Corrective Feedback

When addressing specific pronunciation challenges that hinder comprehension in the classroom, I incorporate corrective feedback in pronunciation instruction. Although correcting students' pronunciation errors depends on the context and the activity, it usually helps learners to notice the errors they made and correct them. Before an activity, the teacher must decide whether the lesson's focus is on accuracy or fluency. For example, in a class discussion or debate where I want students to respond quickly and naturally to what other people say, fluency becomes the main focus. However, if I give students time to prepare a dialogue or a presentation, I focus more on accuracy. In accuracy-based lessons, I find more immediate feedback is appropriate. For example, if a student makes a pronunciation error in my class, sometimes I highlight the mistake right away and elicit the correct pronunciation of that word. Other times I repeat the learner's sentence (including the error) and then reformulate the incorrect sentence in a way that demonstrates correct pronunciation. Then I ask the question, "*Is that what you meant to say*?" This allows learners to hear the correct form without explicitly pointing out the error. If it is a whole class discussion or a practice run for the assessment, I make note of the major or repeated errors and share it with the students individually at the end of the lesson. This allows them to complete their thoughts or sentences without any interruptions. My approach is consistent with current pronunciation pedagogy proposed by Saito (2022).

While giving corrective feedback, it is also important to keep in mind that students should not get discouraged or lose the motivation to speak freely. Occasionally, I encourage students to correct each other's mistakes, too. This fosters a collaborative learning environment and reinforces understanding. I elicit feedback by asking questions like "*Did anybody notice a mistake? Can anybody suggest a better way to say that?*" An important point here is to try to balance error correction with positive feedback. Even while pointing out errors on the spot, I try to highlight and praise what students did correctly, as well. For example, I make comments like "*That was a very nice use of the past tense verb, but you made a small pronunciation mistake. Can you tell what that was?*" In my feedback, I include errors related to both the segmental and supra-segmental features of speech because they are both important to clear and intelligible speech.

Conclusion

In conclusion, teachers who identify as nonnative English speakers need to reflect on how they perceive themselves in academia in the United States or any other English-speaking country. In many ways, I have addressed "non-nativeness" by being aware of my own identity. In the field of TESOL, the focus needs to continue to shift away from the native/nonnative speaker dichotomy to the importance of being professional and the professional training of teachers. There is no question that native speakers' natural command of colloquial language and pronunciation can contribute to the perception of effectiveness as teachers. Nevertheless, nonnative teachers have their own skillsets and, despite being nonnative, they can be successful teachers. Moreover, the unique language-learning experiences of NNESTs, which enable them to empathize with their students, should not be underestimated.

As far as teacher training is concerned, more pronunciation pedagogy courses could be added to graduate curricula to help teachers-in-training study best practices to teach pronunciation. These courses should focus on establishing a pedagogical foundation to assist teachers in making informed decisions in pronunciation classes. This foundation should be reinforced with training in essential areas like phonetics, phonology, and theoretical concepts related to second language pronunciation. Additionally, incorporating practical on-the-job training would be valuable, enabling

teachers to apply pronunciation teaching techniques in real-world scenarios. Finally, these training programs need to make NNESTs aware of the advantages they bring to the profession to help them become confident and capable language teachers.

English language teachers need to accept and appreciate the varieties of English that exist today, so that they can set relevant goals for their teaching contexts. They must bear in mind that language learners do not necessarily want to be "native-like." They should be able to assist students in becoming successful speakers in a globalized world with many varieties of English. There is no doubt that we need to focus on phonetic and phonological aspects of English in the classroom. However, the ultimate goal of pronunciation instruction should be to help students to produce intelligible speech that can be easily understood in relevant contexts. Continuing to research pronunciation instruction and its effects on ELLs will help expand our understanding of second language pedagogy and acquisition while broadening our perspectives. As we learn more about how best to address pronunciation in an ESL context, we can hopefully improve how instructors teach and encourage them to recognize pronunciation as a crucial and integral part of second language acquisition.

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