

NNESTs on the rise: Learning and teaching of L2 pragmatics

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ABSTRACT

It has been a widely accepted perception that only the native-language teachers can teach the authentic language form, whereas nonnative-language teachers are considered as second class professionals (Mahboob, 2004; Brain, 2010; Kumaravadivelu, 2012); the so called “native speaker fallacy” (Phillipson, 1992). With such preference to native teachers still being prominent on one hand, the population of nonnative English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) today outnumbers its counterpart on the other (Kahmi-Stein, 2004). Although the benefit of the local NNESTs are somewhat recognized (Medgyes, 1999; Mahboob, 2004), the favoritism toward native teachers seems to be deep-rooted (Mahboob, 2004; Braine, 2010). This phenomenon brings about several disadvantages to nonnative-language teachers, such as limited employment opportunities and difficulties in teaching areas such as pronunciation and culture, which can lead to diminishing confidence as language-teaching professionals altogether. Despite this undesirable circumstance, research on instructional pragmatics, which specifically targets the needs of nonnative English-speaking teachers, is rather scarce. Thus, this paper examines how NNESTs can be empowered to teach the target community pragmatics, by investigating NNESTs’ challenges in learning and teaching the target community pragmatics, and secondly, by exploring means to overcome some of the disadvantages that hinder NNESTs as English language professionals.

INTRODUCTION

As English became the main medium of inter-cultural communication around the world, the demand for English language education keeps growing. With such accelerated needs, the opportunities for English language teachers are also expected to be plenty. However, learner’s preference for the native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) is strong, especially in non-English speaking countries (Lee, 2004; Liu, 2004; Mahboob, 2004; Matsuda & Matsuda, 2004; Braine, 2010), resulting in reduced employment opportunities for the trained nonnative English-speaking teachers (NNESTs). On the other hand, the vast majority of English language teachers in non-English speaking countries are nonnative speakers of English (Pasternak & Bailey, 2004). This

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implies that a large number of trained and competent NNESTs are at a disadvantage when finding jobs. Such preference, or the so called “native speaker fallacy” (Phillipson, 1992), has been a source of argument for many years as to who is better suited to teach a foreign language.

Since the emergence of communicative language teaching (CLT) in second-language curricula in the 1970s, attention to the teaching of communication has grown rapidly. This movement opened the door for an emphasis on the pragmatic component in the language curriculum. However, due to various issues, such as economics, geography, culture or the time constraints, many NNESTs have never had experiences in English speaking countries, nor received instruction from native English speakers (Pasternak & Bailey, 2004). In spite of their limited knowledge and lack of experience in the target community, these NNESTs are faced with the challenge of *teaching* something to which they have not been exposed. On the other hand, learning the range of language uses and functions in different cultural settings is said to be one of the largest obstacles in foreign language acquisition, even for advanced students (Bardovi-Harlig, Hartford, Mahan-Taylor, Morgan & Reynolds, 1991; Bardovi-Harlig & Dornyei, 1998). Putting these two concepts together, one may wonder how the NNESTs teach the target community pragmatics if they have not acquired themselves the full knowledge of what these pragmatics entail. If NNESTs fail to address the importance of intercultural communication in their classes, their foreign-language students will consequently not be equipped with second-language (L2) pragmatic knowledge. This goes against the current communicative language-teaching movement, which stresses the important role of pragmatic competence in foreign language education. If this circumstance is true for the NNESTs around the world, then there is an urgent need for a constructive framework to prepare and equip these educators with this key knowledge. Possible solutions to such dilemmas must be explored for the growing population of NNESTs.

In spite of such needs, much of the research on pragmatics in the past has dealt with *learners’* pragmatic development and the effective instruction for *learners’* acquisition. The focus of this paper is motivated by the scarcity of research and materials on instructional pragmatics that specifically address the issues of NNESTs. Thus, this paper will investigate the challenges that NNESTs face in teaching English community pragmatics, as well as explore means to overcome some of the disadvantages that hinder NNESTs as L2 instructors. It will begin with a brief definition of pragmatic competence and an overview of the relevant literature in the field of L2 pragmatic development. Then, it will discuss the challenges for NNESTs as learners of L2 pragmatics, followed by the results of empirical research on pragmatic-focused instruction for NNESTs. Finally, it will end with suggestions for developing L2 pragmatic competence for NNESTs.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

What is Pragmatics?

With the growing attention to the teaching of communicative language use in foreign language classrooms, the role of target-community pragmatics has become more significant. Among many available definitions of pragmatics, Kasper (1997b) cites Crystal’s (1985) definition of pragmatics stating that “pragmatics is the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choice they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language have on other participants in the act of

communication” (Kasper, 1997b, p. 1). Likewise, Chomsky (1980) defines ‘pragmatic competence’ as “knowledge of conditions and manner of appropriate use in conformity with various purposes” and it “places language in the institutional setting of its use, relating intentions and purposes to the linguistic means at hand” (p. 224-225). In other words, pragmatics is the study of language use in sociocultural contexts. Thus, pragmatic competency in a foreign language “requires offline knowledge and online control of the linguistic and the sociocultural aspects of pragmatics” (McNamara & Roever, 2006, p. 54-5). That being said, what is the actual role of pragmatic knowledge in “language competency”?

In order to develop student’s L2 competency, language teachers must first know what language competency is comprised of, so that they have an understanding of what they need to equip themselves with in order to teach. According to Bachman’s model of language ability (Bachman & Palmer, 1996), language knowledge is divided into two categories: organizational knowledge and pragmatic knowledge. The organizational knowledge is divided again into grammatical knowledge and textual knowledge. The pragmatic knowledge is also further divided into functional knowledge and sociolinguistic knowledge, where the former “enables us to interpret relationships between utterances or sentences and texts and the intentions of language users”(p. 69) and the latter “enables us to create or interpret language that is appropriate to a particular language use setting” (p. 70). Such categorization illustrates that pragmatics is not an extra knowledge or a “finishing touch” in language acquisition, but it is as essential as the grammatical and textual knowledge; hence, a learner’s target language pragmatics must be developed simultaneously with the organizational components (Kasper, 1997).

Many studies show the difficulties in developing pragmatic competence in a foreign language. Thomas (1983) explains that a language learner’s communication breakdown, or pragmatic failure, can be categorized into two groups: pragmalinguistic failure and sociopragmatic failure. Pragmalinguistic failure is caused by divergence of linguistic encoding, in other words, pragmalinguistic failure refers to a speaker’s incorrect choice of linguistic form in relation to the context. For instance, when someone offers to help carrying large bags, a Japanese learner of English may respond “so sorry, you are very kind” instead of thanking the person. The other category, sociopragmatic failure, is caused by cross-culturally different perceptions of acceptable behavior. For example, even though it may be acceptable in certain circumstances, it is generally considered inappropriate in English-speaking countries to ask someone you’ve just met for the first-time about his/her salary. Research findings show that the sociocultural aspect of language use is particularly difficult to learn, because it is not as “explicable or quantifiable as grammar and lexis” (McConachy, 2008, p. 124). The same view is shared by Thomas (1987), Takahashi, Beebe, and Uliss-Weltz (1990), and Kasper (1997b).

Ishihara (2010a) also lists transfer of first language (L1) pragmatics as one of the reasons for divergence. The learners may apply their L1 knowledge of appropriate behavior, which could be different in the target community. The level of L2 proficiency could also cause a learner’s misunderstanding of a native speaker’s intention or a misunderstanding due to the learner’s incorrect expression. In other cases, known as overgeneralization of perceived L2 norms, language learners may develop a certain perception of L2 pragmatics and apply their perceived pragmatics in the L2 context. For instance, in their wish to accommodate or acculturate into the target language community, learners may apply their hypothesized pragmatics and surprise or even offend the native speakers (Murphy & Neu, 1996; Nakabachi, 1996; Fujioka, 2003). Instruction or instructional materials can also cause pragmatic divergence. Overemphasizing one aspect of pragmatics may lead the learners to stereotype L2 pragmatic norms, which may be

different from the L2 norms in reality. Lastly, learners may not always attempt to apply their L2 pragmatic knowledge. Some learners intentionally avoid assimilating into the L2 culture (pragmatic resistance) in order to maintain their cultural identity.

Factors Influencing Learner's L2 Pragmatic Development

Thus far, this paper has examined difficulties in acquiring the target community pragmatics and possible reasons for cross-cultural communication breakdown. However, many studies have shown promising results on foreign language pragmatic development. One of the most important factors that influence L2 pragmatic development in foreign language learning is the availability of input. In comparison to the ESL context, EFL learners receive less input for social and cultural features of context (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996; Bardovi-Harlig & Dornyei, 1998; Schauer, 2008). In an FL (foreign language) context, learners receive pragmatic input through classroom instruction, textbooks, and media (internet, movies, TV shows, etc.). However, it has been reported that the range of speech acts and realization strategies that are presented in class are narrow (Alcon & Martinez-Flor, 2004). Likewise, research on English language textbooks regarding pragmatic components shows that they do not provide adequate pragmatic input (Kasper, 1997a; Crandall & Basturkmen, 2004; Vasquez & Sharpless, 2009). The use of audiovisual material together with the use of textbooks has been reported to be beneficial in providing an input-rich classroom (Rose, 1997; Alcon & Martinez-Flor, 2004). The authors claim that the audiovisual materials provide opportunities to discuss pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects of L2 language use, and that they also invite students to analyze and think about different linguistic choices for specific cultural contexts.

The other influential factor is instruction. As seen above, the availability of input is limited in FL contexts. This highlights the important role of instruction as one of learners' primary sources of input. There is evidence that learners who have received pragmatics instruction outperformed those who have not (Wildner-Bassett, 1984; Cohen, 2005). Since "learning a new pragmatic system often entails learning how to make new interpretative assessments of the world" (Schmidt, 1993, p. 34). Awareness-raising activities on contextual language use, drawn from Schmidt's noticing hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990), have demonstrated positive outcomes (Bardovi-Harlig et al., 1991; Schmidt, 1993; Rose, 1994; Hinkel, 2001; Eslami-Rasekh, 2005a). Teachers cannot possibly prepare students for every expression in every possible context, but building their awareness of the L2 cultural norms can allow students to make their own choices of what to say, when to say it, and how to say it in new contexts. However, it has been reported that awareness does not necessarily lead to the learning of L2 pragmatics. In their discussion on pragmatic awareness versus production, Bardovi-Harlig and Dornyei (1998) claim that although increased awareness should be one of the goals in a pragmatic-focused class, awareness alone is not enough to develop learner's pragmatic competence. They suggest that awareness-raising "should supplement the introduction of pragmatically relevant input in instructed L2 learning" (p. 256). Another approach that has shown promising results is explicitly providing metapragmatic information (Rose, 1994, 1997; Hinkel, 2001; Tateyama, Kasper, Mui, Tay, & Thananart, 2001; Eslami-Rasekh, 2004). The rationale behind its effectiveness is that clear explanation supplemented with metapragmatic information makes the target pragmatic features more salient. Additionally, equipping students with metapragmatic tools will help them analyze pragmatic features in their new contexts.

The learners' L2 proficiency can also influence their L2 pragmatic acquisition. Although it has been reported that even low proficiency learners can improve pragmatic ability through instruction (Wildner-Bassett, 1994; Tateyama et al., 1997), other studies show that learner's pragmatic ability progresses in proportion to their language proficiency (Takahashi & Beebe, 1987; Rose, 2000). Additionally, many other interlanguage studies resulted in fewer cases of negative L1 transfer along with their improvement in L2 language proficiency (Trosborg, 1987). All these findings can be linked back to Bachman's definition of language competency, which indicates that the organizational knowledge and pragmatic knowledge are equally weighed in one's language competency. This is an essential aspect to consider in terms of curriculum or syllabus designing since it confirms that pragmatic routines must be incorporated right from the beginning.

The learner's affective filter can be another factor regarding pragmatic development. Originating in the SLA theory, lowering the learners' affective filter may increase a learner's motivation and interest for L2 pragmatics. Their positive views on the development of their own pragmatic ability could influence their actual development of pragmatic competency (Ishihara, 2010a). On the contrary, negative emotion such as anxiety or stress could raise students' affective filter and potentially impede their learning.

The last factor is "the length of stay" (Alcon & Martinez-Flor, 2004), however, this factor is only applicable to ESL students. Since exposure and practice opportunities are limited in the FL context, this factor will be discussed in terms of "frequency of exposure" (lessons, media, conversation in L2, etc.) in this paper. Language learners must take control of their restricted exposure in an FL context, and actively seek to create learning opportunities. Nevertheless, there is no definite goal as to how much exposure is necessary or ideal for the L2 pragmatic development to take place. More research is needed in this area.

Challenges for NNESTs as Learners of L2 Pragmatics

As shown above, extensive studies have been conducted for learners' development of L2 pragmatic competence. Nonetheless, teaching of target community pragmatics to EFL students is not entirely applicable to that of pre-service and current NNESTs. Firstly, teaching requires more comprehensive knowledge of the content, and secondly, teachers must know *how* to teach their students effectively. Many researchers claim that instructional pragmatics is largely neglected in teacher training programs (Rose, 1997; Cohen, 2005; Eslami & Eslami-Rasekh, 2008; Vasquez & Sharpless, 2009; Ishihara, 2010), although awareness and control of L2 pragmatics are two of the most important components of nonnative English speaker's language proficiency (Nemtchinova et al., 2010). Moreover, the fact that the majority of English teachers in non-English speaking countries around the world are NNESTs, constructive strategies that specifically focus on the target population are needed. As the past research illuminated the importance of noticing opportunities and in-class instruction, researchers must now pay attention to the larger picture of pragmatics development and explore how the NNESTs can be empowered to teach this subject matter in an EFL context.

So far, this paper has reviewed the important aspects of incorporating pragmatics into English language curricula, the positive result of learners' pragmatics development, and possible reasons for pragmatic failure. The specific issues associated with the NNESTs will now be explored, with the focus of how EFL learners can be prepared to teach L2 pragmatics as

NNESTs. First, an examination of the teachers' and students' perception of NNESTs in comparison to the NESTs is needed.

Mahboob (2004) conducted research on ESL students' opinions of the "native" status in different language teacher criteria. These criteria included oral skills, literacy skills, grammar, vocabulary, culture and teaching styles. NNESTs scored higher in grammar, literacy skills and teaching styles. On the other hand, NESTs dominated teaching of oral skills, vocabulary and culture. One of the ESL students said, "I want the *truth* (sic) pronunciation which non-native teachers can't speak or use voice like native speakers" (p. 141). Such comments reflect the students' view that there is an "authentic," "correct," or "ideal" pronunciation of English language. Although some ESL students reported that NNESTs can be a source of L2 cultural knowledge, by explaining the target cultural background in student's L1, NESTs were more in favor because students believed that, "no matter how well one learns a new language, one will always maintain their cultural heritage" (p. 133), meaning NNESTs' L1 culture could interfere with their ability to teach L2 culture. Similarly, language institutions often receive requests from students or students' parents that they would like NESTs (Shao, 2005). Such demands, caused by students' or parents' negative perception of NNESTs is one reason for unequal job opportunities. Cited in Bernat (2008), Rajagopalan's questionnaire collected from 450 NNESTs reported that more than half of the participants felt handicapped when it came to career advancement, causing anxiety and inferiority complexes.

Being aware of such unenthusiastic views on nonnative language teachers, some NNESTs are unsure of themselves as English language professionals. It is not uncommon, as Eslami-Rasekh (2005b) notes, that an NNEST introduces himself or herself saying, "my English is weak. I am ashamed to say that I have been an English language teacher [...] for 8 years" (para.2). Although the virtue of modesty may apply to a certain extent in Japanese pragmatics when one is talking about his or her own achievement, the low self-confidence due to their lack of English language proficiency seems to be a concern to many NNESTs. It is important to note that "language proficiency" discussed here is defined as the grammatical knowledge and pragmatic knowledge in the Bachman's model discussed earlier in this paper. Some NNESTs also acknowledge cultural knowledge as areas of difficulty (Kamhi-Stein, et al., 2004), explaining that they view their variety of English as "deficient and that lack of English proficiency constrains them when implementing communicative methodologies" (p. 83). Liu (2004) recalls his experience as needing constant attention to fill the gap as an NNEST. In another study, a survey by Medgyes (1994) on the perceptions of NNESTs' own proficiency, the nonnative teachers "viewed themselves as poorer listeners, speakers, readers and writers" (p. 33). These NNESTs identified speaking, fluency, pronunciation, listening, vocabulary and idiomatic and appropriate use of English as particularly problematic. Some secondary schools separate the responsibility of NESTs and NNESTs, with the former teaching oral English skills exclusively and the latter teaching grammar. While it is true to say that NESTs can provide an English-rich environment in class, this arrangement makes some NNESTs feel that their work is undervalued and that they are overshadowed by NESTs (Lee, 2004).

L2 Pragmatic Development for NNESTs

The following section will examine NNESTs as "learners of pragmatics teaching" and explore how NNESTs can teach pragmatics in their EFL classrooms effectively and successfully.

In other words, how an EFL learner could be trained and prepared to become an NNEST candidate in a foreign language context.

Ishihara lists the following factors as required teacher knowledge for teaching L2 pragmatics (Ishihara, 2010a, p. 23):

- Subject-matter knowledge, which can be used to teach the range of pragmatic norms in the target community (pragmatic variation)
- Knowledge of metapragmatic information, which is an essential tool to explain and analyze pragmatics to the students
- Pedagogical content knowledge, which is important in deciding how to teach effectively and how to assess student's L2 pragmatics understanding
- Knowing the students (their cultures, identities, L2 proficiency, etc.) will affect teacher's instructional decision
- Knowledge of pragmatics-focused curriculum affects teacher's instructional decision
- Knowledge of the role of L2 pragmatics in that particular educational context will also affect teacher's instructional decision

Instructional pragmatics for L2 pragmatics teaching is a fairly new area and needs further research (Rose, 2005; Vasques & Sharpless, 2009; Ishihara, 2010a). Preparing teachers with the above knowledge will give them tools and framework to customize their pragmatics-focused lessons in accordance to their students' needs.

RESEARCH

Kasper stresses the importance of pragmatics in a teacher education program (Kasper, 1997). Regardless of the extensive literature on the learners' pragmatic development and effects on instructional approach, there is a paucity of studies that address the particular issues on NNESTs, such as their dual roles as 'learners' as well as 'teachers', the anxiety from the difficulties in L2 pragmatic acquisition, the pressure of the mastery of the subject, and limited L2 access despite their high motivation and enthusiasm for their professional development. Among the limited supply, this paper will now examine two studies that have been conducted on NNESTs pragmatic development.

Rose (1997) applied a consciousness-raising approach to experiment pragmatic consciousness-raising (PCR) with English language teachers in Hong Kong in order to become familiar with research in pragmatics, raise awareness regarding context-based variation in language use, and to provide teachers with pragmatic analytical skills, so that they could ultimately help their students to do the same. He used a three-part process for PCR:

1. Develop familiarity with theory and research in pragmatics
2. Conduct pragmatic analyses of the teachers' L1
3. Conduct pragmatic analyses of the L2

This approach demonstrated how cultural relativity contributes to the appropriate judgments when making language choices. Even though this three-part model of PCR alone is not sufficient in fulfilling the pressing need for the NNESTs, these activities "will help develop prospective

teachers' sensitivity to variation in language use as well as equip them with analytic abilities which they can apply in their language teaching" (p. 136).

In her quasi-experimental study, Eslami and Eslami-Rasekh (2008) investigated the effect of metapragmatic instruction on the speech act awareness and production of Iranian NNESTs in an EFL context. Participants in this study were MA TESL students in Iran, who have had nine years of English instruction but had not spent any time in English speaking countries. To begin with, students were given a number of research papers on various pragmatics topics (e.g. Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Rose & Kwai-Fun, 2001), so they could raise pragmatic awareness and provide them with opportunities for communicative practice. Having gone through these research papers gave the students some analytical tools to think about appropriate language use. Activities in this study, she describes, were designed to make learners consciously aware of differences between the native and target language speech acts. The findings showed that the explicit metapragmatic instruction was effective and that "with the pedagogical focus on pragmatic competence, pragmatic awareness and production can be acquired in the classroom or more specifically in the FL classroom" (Eslami & Eslami-Rasekh, 2008, p. 192). This supports the earlier studies on acquisition of pragmatic awareness with pedagogical focus on pragmatic competence (Bardovi-Harlig & Dornyei, 1998; Takahashi, Beebe, & Uliss-Wltz, 1990; Kondo, 2008). This result clearly indicates that certain aspects of L2 pragmatics do not develop adequately on their own. Another finding was that despite NNEST candidates' high motivation, their lack of pragmatic competence became prominent through this experiment. Eslami-Rasekh suggests input-rich instruction for their further development of pragmatic competence.

DISCUSSION: NNESTs IN ACTION

Thus far, this paper addressed multiple obstacles that NNESTs are dealing with as they thrive to develop as competent and qualified professionals. In this section, the learner factors for L2 development, issues with NNESTs and the research findings will be synthesized to propose some practical ideas that NNESTs may be able to put into effect in their FL context. Since awareness and control of L2 pragmatics is one of the most important components of nonnative English speaker's language proficiency (Nemtchinova et al., 2010), this section will explore development of NNESTs as learners of teaching L2 pragmatics. The practical ideas presented are:

- a. Rich L2 pragmatic input
- b. Awareness-raising, explicit instruction with metapragmatics
- c. Journal writing
- d. Class observation
- e. Learner-as-researcher approach
- f. Lowering affective filter
- g. Recognize student's subjectivity and encourage class discussion

The limited L2 input in an FL context, which was discussed earlier, has been identified as a crucial disadvantage in many studies (Kasper, 1997; Bardovi-Harlig & Dornyei, 1998; Alcon & Martinez-Flor, 2008; Eslami-Rasekh, 2008). This suggests that NNESTs must actively seek input opportunities and make use of available sources, which would be useful for both learning and

teaching purposes. One of the key techniques for creating an input rich environment is the use of audiovisual materials. It has been recommended to provide opportunities to learn and practice pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic awareness in a variety of contexts (Rose, 1997, 2001; Schauer, 2006; Alcon & Martinez-Flor, 2008). Also, keeping current with the pragmatic topics outside of teacher preparation programs through academic resources, journals and conferences, may also help further professional development, since pragmatics is generally under-represented in TESOL programs (Rose, 2005; Velasquez & Sharpless, 2009).

As for the L2 pragmatic instruction, research on the effects of different teaching approaches has shown positive results for awareness-raising approach and explicit instruction with metapragmatic information (Schmidt, 1993; Rose, 1994; Kasper, 1997; McConachy, 2008). Discussion and analysis following these activities were found to be beneficial in encouraging metapragmatic analysis, as the students actively analyzed, gave thoughts and reflected on the activities among each other (Rose, 1997; Eslami-Rasekh et al., 2004, Eslami & Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Kondo, 2008). NNESTs can implement such an approach in their pragmatic learning as well as teaching.

Ishihara (2010a) encourages language teachers to use written reflections and interactive discussions as much as possible “because learning through reflection can be enriched, supported, and furthered by dialoguing with oneself or with colleagues” (p. 29). Matsuda and Matsuda (2004) also support this task, claiming that teachers learn from their differences, and that, “professional, cultural, and linguistic diversity that teachers bring with them becomes an asset” (p. 177). Since the hardship of learning the L2 pragmatic norm lies in the sociocultural differences, such opportunities to exchange and discuss different ideas and experiences about them seem particularly valuable for NNESTs’ L2 pragmatic development.

Another idea to empower nonnative teachers to enhance their instructional pragmatic skills is to observe pragmatic-focused lessons of peer NNESTs (Ishihara, 2010a), because studying actual lessons that teach pragmatic components could “expand their repertoire of teaching strategies and ideas about assessment” (p. 123). NNESTs can further engage in discussions and share their rationale or insights about the lessons. Peer observation may also be arranged among the NESTs and NNESTs. As many teacher preparation programs do not include teaching of L2 pragmatics (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005b; Vasquez & Sharpless, 2009), both native and nonnative teacher candidates can benefit from participating in classes where they may bring in different strengths and values to the class. In-class presentations followed by class discussion will also be beneficial in teacher training programs.

In the learner-as-researcher approach, teachers collect authentic samples of speech act sets from the news, movies, magazines and newspapers, and analyze the data based on the framework of different speech acts in research articles (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005b). NNESTs can work collaboratively with other English teaching professionals, whether native or nonnative, and present the findings to the class in teacher education programs. Such activity will also contribute to the availability of L2 input and metapragmatic analysis, which can be followed by interactive reflection in order to further enhance learning.

The other aspect we must attend to is NNESTs’ affect. Lowering the affective filter seems especially vital in the case of NNESTs, because the negative perception of others about the NNESTs we have outlined earlier may further affect the teachers’ existing pessimistic self-perception as English teachers; their motivation and self-confidence may decrease even more and their anxiety may increase. This vicious circle must come to an end somehow. In contrast to the

previously mentioned negative perception, some positive comments about the NNESTs have also been reported (Medgyes, 1999). The NNESTs can:

- provide a good learner model for imitation
- teach language learning strategies more effectively
- supply learners with more information about the English language
- anticipate and prevent language difficulties better
- be more empathetic to the needs and problems of learners
- make use of the learner's mother tongue

Some ESL students commented that NNESTs could be better in grammar and writing, and that they can explain or answer students' questions in a clearer manner (Mahboob, 2004). NNESTs' should know their strengths, build confidence and let these strengths lower their affective filters. "Those with attitudes more conducive to second language acquisition will not only seek and obtain more input, they will also have a lower or weaker filter. They will be more open to the input and it will strike 'deeper'"(Krashen, 1982, p. 31). This is especially applicable to NNESTs because their dual role as teacher/learner can motivate many of their students. Since attaining an input-rich environment is one of the challenging factors in an FL context, affective filter seems to play an important role for learners' willingness to learn, and consequently, to further expand their opportunities to learn.

As teaching of L2 pragmatics can be a sensitive matter for FL learners, NNESTs must recognize their students' subjectivity in their language choices. Ishihara (2010b) found how some nonnative speakers intentionally avoided applying L2 pragmatics, even though the participants were linguistically capable of constructing the target community pragmatics. Such avoidance indicates that the native-like pragmatics is not necessarily the language learner's preference when it comes to the actual production. Therefore, Ishihara suggests that L2 pragmatics could be taught separately for the purpose of *receptive* skills, to understand the native speaker's intention, and for *production*, where learners can build their L2 pragmatic repertoire so that they can make their own decisions regarding self-expression. In such circumstance, it is NNESTs' forte, as language learners themselves, to be able to understand students' dilemma in performing L2 pragmatic norms, and as a result, make choices that are not native-like; choices that are driven by their multicultural or multilingual identity. When such resistance is noticed in the EFL classroom, where students share their L1 and L1 pragmatics, it may be beneficial for the whole class to engage in metapragmatic analysis and discussion, where students can learn from pragmatic interpretation of their peers. Furthermore, the follow up analysis and discussion will help the learners internalize and mold the L2 pragmatic features within themselves.

CONCLUSION

Numerous ways have been examined in which NNESTs can be empowered to answer the EFL students' needs. This paper has also revealed many concealed advantages that NNESTs possess in teaching L2 pragmatics. Building their confidence and making the most of their strengths will assist NNESTs in further developing as English language professionals. At the same time, as the need for competent NNESTs increases, their valuable role as bilingual/bicultural language teachers should receive greater acknowledgement. The fact that the language learners' views on NNESTs are not all negative is perhaps an indication that NNESTs will soon be free of constraints and the labels such as NEST and NNEST will no longer be used.

Having said that, NNESTs must not forget that, “being proficient is a continuum, rather than an either-or proposition” (Pasternak & Bailey, 2004, p. 163). Regardless of their status, whether native or nonnative, or novice or experienced, teachers must not stop learning. They should try to develop their teaching skills throughout their career and stay current with research topics of their professional area; what they know affects what their students learn.

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