How Can We Motivate Students Through Our Non-native Speaker Teacher Identities?
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Research has revealed the strengths and weaknesses of both native (NS) and non-native speaker (NNS) teachers and proved that native language is not the primary factor that determines a teacher's efficacy. Nevertheless, in Japan, there are still many people who believe that the only reliable source to learn a foreign language from is a NS teacher. This paper gives an account of the identity of NNS teachers and introduces how they can benefit from their previous learning experiences when teaching and motivating their learners. The aim of this article is to encourage the discussion on native and non-native teachers, as well as how to make classes effective and motivating.

研究はネイティブスピーカーと非ネイティブスピーカー教師両方の長所と短所を明らかにしており、母国語が教師の能力を決定づける主要な要因ではないということを証明しています。それにもかかわらず日本では、ネイティブスピーカーの教師から外国語を学ぶことが唯一の信頼できる方法であると信じる人がたくさんいます。この論文は非ネイティブスピーカー教師のアイデンティティーについて説明し、彼らのこれまでの学習経験が、生徒に教える時、モチベーションを与える時に、どのように役立っているかを紹介します。この論文の目的は、ネイティブ教師と非ネイティブ教師に関すること、さらに効果的で、モチベーションの出る授業をどのように作るかを議論することを奨励することです。

Introduction

Back in Europe, I never thought about my non-native speaker teacher identity. There, it was evident that people from various countries teach English. I never faced criticism, not even outside Hungary, just because I was not a native speaker (NS). However, in Japan, many people are surprised when they discover that I am an English teacher in spite of the fact that I am not a NS.

In Japan, there are three types of English teachers categorized by their native language: Japanese English teachers, English native speaker teachers, and non-Japanese non-natives (NNS). Although, widely recognised and employed outside their home countries in Europe, NNS teachers are still facing criticism and rejection in Japan (Akiyoshi, 2010; Sutherland, 2012). EFL teaching positions are generally advertised as positions for Japanese English teachers and NSs, which leaves very little, or no space for the NNS EFL teachers, and presupposes that they are ineffective. National curricula and textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) also assume native speaker norms, which affects learners' attitudes and objectives. On almost every train there are advertisements for language schools merchandizing themselves by having only native speaker teachers and thus adding to the impression that English can only be mastered from NSs. All these factors contribute to the Japanese general public's preference for native speakers.

Living in Japan makes me think about who I am as a NNS EFL teacher and how I can use this initially perceived disadvantage to my advantage in motivating my students. In this paper I draw together some of the ways in which I am trying to realize the benefits of being a NNS teacher. With this account I would like to encourage fellow NNS teachers to think about and make use of their potential, and, at the same time, I would like to broaden the discussion regarding the perceived benefits of NNS and NS teachers.

Native and non-native speaker teachers

Research regarding NNS teachers started in the EFL context in the early 1990s. Since then NNS teachers' self-perceptions, issues of their credibility, and students and administrators' perceptions have been examined outside the EFL context as well. The greatest field of research is ELT, due to the vast number of English language learners and respective NNS teachers trained all around the world; however, it is not exclusive to it.

NSs are credited most for their communicative abilities, pronunciation, fluency and vocabulary, since these are the areas of language competence and knowledge that NNSs find most challenging to master. However, difficult as it may be, it is possible to gain native-like competence. Educated NNSs may emulate the language competence of many native speakers. Moreover, even NSs make ungrammatical utterances, might not know

how to pronounce unfamiliar words, or need time to think how to express themselves appropriately (Mulder & Hulstijn 2011).

Superior knowledge of language structures, grammar and the ability to teach learning strategies are attributed to NNS teachers due to their own experiences of studying the target language. As one's mother language is acquired unconsciously as a child; native speakers need to be trained to be able to understand the system and the structure of their own language. Without such knowledge they might encounter difficulties when they are expected to explain grammatical rules explicitly. However, those NSs who have a solid knowledge of language structures, particularly those who have studied a foreign language themselves may just as well be aware and capable of teaching language structures and learning strategies as NNSs teachers.

Training is crucial for both natives and non-natives. As early as 1992, Phillipson stated that the fact of being a native speaker of a language does not make one capable of teaching it and also that being a capable teacher does not always mean the person is a native speaker. However, Braine (1999) found that course administrators in Japan and Hong Kong still preferred unqualified native speakers to qualified non-natives.

Akiyoshi (2010) investigated whether parents had the same attitude as course administrators in order to learn whether the preference for NS teachers in hiring practices is triggered by parents' expectations. She discovered that parents of preschool aged children considered the teacher's education and experience more important than being a native. In other words, participants in her survey would rather have a trained NNS than a less-educated NS. This may indicate the parents' expectations will remain the same considering their children's foreign language education up to tertiary level, which does not justify course administrators' hiring policies.

Students' preferences have also been examined in various countries. At the beginning of a university EFL course in the USA, Asian learners expressed more positive feelings towards NS than NNS instructors (Moussu 2002, cited by Braine 2005). However, their attitudes gradually changed and became more positive to NNS teachers as well by the end of the course due to positive learning experiences in a NNS teacher's classes. In

terms of non-ELT, specifically in a Spanish language teaching context, the same pattern of preferences was identified by Meadows & Muramatsu (2007). They also discovered a link between the learner's goal of attaining NS fluency and a preference for a NS teacher.

It has been suggested (Medgyes 1992, Árva & Medgyes 2000, Meadows & Muramatsu 2007, Sampson 2012) that both NS and NNS teachers have their advantages and disadvantages, strengths and weaknesses and that they complement each other; therefore neither can be regarded as superior or inferior to the other. Language proficiency alone is not enough to predict or prove a teacher's effectiveness. Other factors, such as experience, education, empathy, training, and charisma are also important.

Individual differences between people have a far greater impact on their effectiveness as teachers than their status as NNS or NS. Teachers are professionals, consequently, irrespective of being a native or not, they strive to do their best to motivate their learners and create an environment where each learner can achieve their language related goals. There will always be teachers who are more effective or popular than others, yet it is hardly ever a result of their native language.

Motivation

Motivation is a key element in language learning. When foreign language education is made compulsory, there tend to be a great number of uninterested learners. The mere presence of a NS teacher might be motivating for many learners (see Moussu, 2002; Madrid & Canado, 2004; Akiyoshi 2010), especially in Japan where people like the 'original', the 'perfect thing' (e.g. respondents of Sutherland's survey (2012) draw a parallel between Japanese people's desire to possess expensive designer products and their wish to obtain the accent of NSs.) However, the initial eagerness to study may easily disappear if the lessons are boring, or the teacher is unable to raise students' interest in English. Therefore, it is essential that teachers, whether native or not, create a motivating environment, attend to learners' needs and help to establish and meet students' language related objectives.

There have been several conceptualisations of L2 learning motivation over the years. In the following section, I refer to Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System theory (2005, 2009), which has three components: the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to Self and the L2 Learning Experience. The Ideal L2 Self comprises of the aspirations one has towards the L2. It needs to be attainable, possible and realistic within one's particular circumstances (Dörnyei, 2009). A strong Ideal L2 self aids goal setting and motivates one to persist in the activity. Role-models have a crucial role in this. Dörnyei explains that one source of lack of L2 motivation might be the result of the absence of a role-model on which one's Ideal L2 Self can be based. Therefore, it is essential to help students create their vision through awareness raising activities and presenting powerful role models.

Second, the Ought-to Self 'concerns the attributes one believes one ought to possess to meet expectations and to avoid possible negative outcomes' (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 29). Finally, the L2 learning experience is related to one's own learning experiences and the learning environment. Dörnyei claims that initial language learning motivation might not necessarily come from one's self image, but that the successful engagement with the learning process has a significant role also.

Using my NNS teacher identity to good effect

Relying on my language learning experiences

When I start teaching a new group of learners, I never hide that I am a NNS. Instead, I am trying to emphasise that we are working collaboratively. We must accept that we will never cease to be learners of English. I do not expect them to do anything that I have not done myself.

As a NNS, each aspect of the English language is connected to the memory of trying to learn it. As such, I am constantly aware of possible difficulties that might not be apparent to a NS teacher. When planning a lesson, NNSs can refer to their own encounter with the particular piece of language they are about to cover in class, and try to recall what they or their classmates found complicated.

Moreover, I also consider how that piece of language is used or in what situation it occurs in Japan (e.g., Japanese students usually find it difficult to comprehend the difference between adjectives such as embarrassed – embarrassing as there is no equivalent distinction in Japanese). Anticipating problems in this manner enables me to present new language and activities in the easiest way for learners to grasp. To have students practice and use the new language, NNS teachers can apply activities and games which they did as students. Furthermore, we can introduce students to learning strategies we have discovered ourselves (e.g., how to differentiate adjectives ending in -*ed* or –*ing;* how to remember the spelling of particular words; word order, and how to benefit from our own and our peers' mistakes).

Overcoming negative self-evaluation and language anxiety

When I see students struggling, I often tell them how I struggled with English and reveal what helped me overcome it. For example, at beginner level, I was often stuck in the middle of a sentence because I did not know how to continue. Therefore, I always had the feeling that I could not say anything in English. I have seen my students in the same situation many times. In most cases the problem is either that they are trying to translate something word for word from Japanese but they do not have the vocabulary or that they would like to convey something that is more complicated than they are able to express in English. As a result, many of them form a negative opinion about their own competence and level, which makes them lose confidence and motivation. That is, they have unrealistic objectives and their Ought-to Self is too dominant.

I overcame this difficulty by changing my way of thinking in my native language. Especially at the early stages of learning a foreign language, it is inevitable to strive to translate one's thoughts. In our native language we can fully express ourselves without much effort. By contrast, in the target language it takes considerable time to become able to do so. Therefore, if we stop being desperate about expressing all of our elaborate thoughts, we will not be devastated by not being able to communicate them in the target language. With this technique, I managed to protect my self-esteem and evaluate my progress positively, which were essential to me in maintaining the balance between my current level at that time and my Ought-to and Ideal selves. I encourage

my students to try out such strategies as well as think about other ways in which they could cope with their own difficulties.

Anxiety is present in every classroom to some extent and increased anxiety might decrease motivation (Dörnyei, 2001). A supportive learning environment and peers have always helped me to overcome anxiety and regain motivation when it was fading away. Therefore, as a teacher I put great effort into creating a cohesive learner group and give time for students to get to know each other. I have found, as Dörnyei (2001, 2007) suggests, this time to be extremely beneficial for a more conducive class dynamic. Although there are individual and cultural differences between students in Japan and Hungary, particular activities, tasks or topics can also increase or decrease students' anxiety and motivation. My own learning experiences regularly help me judge what activities will bring about a more positive effect.

Role-models aid goal-setting

Dörnyei (2005, 2009) argues that role-models have a crucial role in creating one's Ideal L2 Self as it helps to attain one's objectives. However, if one does not select the right role-models, it may also correspond to posing oneself unrealistic goals. NNS teachers like myself, Japanese English teachers, senior students or L2 learners from other countries can be ideal role-models of successful language learners. As NSs acquired the language naturally through their ears from their direct environment as a child, they cannot serve as model English language learners (Medgyes, 1994); instead, they can be English language models. If such distinctions are made clear to students, they can be prevented from setting unobtainable Ideal L2 selves for themselves.

My role model as an English language learner is my high school teacher. I decided to become a teacher because I wanted to be like her. Her vast knowledge of English and compassion for her students' difficulties absolutely impressed me. Now, as a teacher, I attempt to serve as a role model for my learners and motivate them to find their own, attainable objectives and approach them step by step as I did.

I introduce my own culture in class and emphasise how English has been a means of self- actualisation for me. That is, if it had not been for English, I would not have had the possibility of making friends with foreigners

visiting Hungary and I would not live and work in Japan now. In fact, to me, besides hoping to become a teacher, the major motivation to improve my English was to be able to keep in touch with my foreign friends – none of whom were native English speakers, yet the only way we could communicate was through English. I attempt to call students' attention to chances to use English in Japan, not only with native speakers.

Setting goals and building an Ideal L2 Self are key aspects to keep up one's motivation. In class, I stress the importance of goal setting and checking of the goals which have been achieved. It helps learners realise how they are gradually getting closer to their ideal selves. Even if learners do not have a clear future goal, there are several opportunities to set goals in class, such as before activities (e.g., try to make a 2-minute conversation without using Japanese), projects, or at the beginning of a new unit and so on. I often give examples of what goals I had when I was at their stage (e.g., not to make any mistakes in a vocabulary test, being able to speak for one minute without stopping, trying to circumvent problems instead of stopping when not knowing specific words). What is crucial is to check the achievement of these goals. Feedback from the teacher and peers, self-reflection, positive evaluation of the task and the learning process and feelings of achievement will gradually increase learners' motivation. In addition, I let students know my current objectives and disclose that even the teacher has space to improve her language abilities. Through this we develop mutual compassion towards each other.

Speakers of English

I draw attention to world Englishes and to English as a Lingua Franca. As a NNS, I can effectively highlight and serve as proof that English is not only spoken by native speakers. Meisei University actively promotes world Englishes: besides NSs, the International Studies Centre employs NNS EFL teachers from various countries too. Students have the opportunity to encounter several accents of native, as well as non-native English. In such an internationally diverse environment, students realise that there is not only one accent, and they can become more confident in their pronunciation and more willing to engage in communication in English. Furthermore, they can experience that English can bring people of various countries and cultures

together. Therefore, this learning environment can help to provide learners with further role-models who may help them develop their views of their Ideal L2 Self. They also realize more easily that their Ideal L2 Self does not need to be one which emulates only a native speaker's language abilities.

Summary

Some people in Japan might think that NS teachers are the only reliable sources to learn a foreign language from, but there is plenty of evidence that NNS teachers can be just as effective as NSs and can exploit their own language learning experiences for the benefit of their students. Although motivation depends on various factors, teachers – regardless of being a NS or not – are able to create an environment in the classroom where students can more easily find and maintain motivation and set achievable L2 related objectives. Teachers need to assist learners in goal setting and encourage self-evaluation. When creating one's Ideal L2 Self, role models have a great influence on what learners project or dream themselves to be. NNS role models might be as powerful if not more powerful than natives. Furthermore, NNS teachers can attempt to make use of their prior English learning experiences. We can use our own learning process as an example and introduce how we managed to overcome anxiety, how we set goals and take responsibility in our own learning. In addition, raising students' awareness of world Englishes helps them accept their own accent and makes them more confident in themselves.

The aim of this article was to raise awareness of some of the characteristics of NNS speaker teachers. It did not mean to criticize or question the importance of NS teachers in any way.

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