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**Douglas Fleming**

**Introduction**

From 2015 to 2018, groups of experienced English as a Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) teachers from rural and remote areas in Western Chinese provinces have taken part in three-month summer professional development projects at the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa. These teachers work on improving their communicative teaching practices and English language proficiency while living in Ottawa for the summer.

My purpose in this chapter is to explore how my experiences with general education teacher candidates in Canada have informed my work with these veteran Chinese teachers. Specifically, I describe how my debunking of the “native speaker fallacy” serves the cause of equity.

**Equity and Teacher Education**

I have placed questions of equity in the forefront of my work as a second language teacher educator. My goal in this regard has been to assist the general education teacher candidates in my care in developing their understandings of how interlocking systems of domination, power, and privilege pervade second language school curricula, educational beliefs and teaching practices so that they can critically evaluate various educational practices and construct viable strategies for inclusive pedagogy.

A theme that runs through all the courses I teach is an emphasis on the responsibilities teachers have to critically reflect on their own personal assumptions and “to take into account the diverse histories, values beliefs and bodies of the students who enter into today’s classrooms” (Dei et al, 2000, 172). By challenging our assumptions and presuppositions about both our students and ourselves, we can reformulate our understanding of the world to permit “a more inclusive, discriminating, permeable and integrative perspective” (Atherton, 2001).

Given the fact that most teacher-candidates “tend to represent a single race: white” (Wubbles, 2004) (my own personal racial identity), I start my courses with Peggy McIntosh’s well-known reflection that “as a white person, I realized I had been taught about racism as something which puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege which puts me at an advantage.” (McIntosh, 2005, 109).

As Sleeter (2016) notes, three general education research studies (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Irizarry & Raible, 2011 and Jupp, 2013), found that equity work by teachers, both White and of Color, can be successful when teachers “explicitly acknowledged racism in students’ lives, helping them learn to critique and navigate its manifestations” (p.1065).

**International ESL Teacher Professional Development**

The expansion and growth of English as an international language has increased the need to have teachers teaching the language in foreign language contexts (Block, 2003). This has also resulted in a marked increase in the number of non-native speaking teachers of English (NNEST’s). At the international level, in fact, the number of NNEST’s is now far greater than the number of native speaking teachers of English (Brown, 2000).

Due to shortage of qualified English teachers and the need to improve the level of English in the public sector, governments have undertaken various initiatives such as participation in professional development courses abroad (Matear, 2008; Zhou & Shang, 2011).

In China, ESL educational reform is taking place where there has been a shift from a model of pedagogy based on traditional grammar-based teaching approaches and transmission of content to a focus on student-centered approaches based on communicative language learning (Zhang & Li, 2014; Li & Edwards, 2013).

In order to help implement this reform, the Chinese government sends veteran teachers abroad for three months to take professional development courses such as the one I manage at the University of Ottawa.

**Rejecting the Native Speaker Fallacy**

First coined by Leonard Bloomfield (1933), the notion of the “native speaker” has became a fundamental tenant within ESL teaching (Cook, 2016). As and Firth and Wagner (1997) have argued, however, the notion of the “native speaker” sets up an impossible and monolingual ideal that has represented most speakers of English as deficient.

Even though some scholars, such as Reves and Medgyes (1994), have argued that “native” and “non-native” teachers both have their positive places in second language teaching, Amin (2000) and Kumaravadivelu (2016) have clearly documented that non-native teachers of English (such as themselves) are usually viewed as inferior to those considered native.

Phillipson (1992) went even further by attacking the very notion as a “fallacy" and has led to a hierarchy within the profession. This has been closely linked to the discourse that English is owned by those born and raised within the linguistic mainstream of Anglo-American circle (Canagarajah,1999; Norton, 1997; Widdowson, 1994).

The native speaker fallacy has set up a hierarchy specifically for the veteran ESL/EFL teachers who participate in the summer professional development projects at the University of Ottawa. This is concretely felt in terms of pay, status and working conditions. The fallacy has encouraged the use of foreign “experts”, standardized tests such as the Gaokao and has reinforced neo-colonialism through the privileging of “first world” accents and dialects.

To counter this prevailing discourse, the project has drawn upon multilingual teaching faculty to represent the diversity of the Canadian linguistic landscape: the majority were speakers of French, Spanish, and Farsi who taught and worked in English. Likewise, to counter the potential of a unidirectional dissemination of knowledge from (Western) teacher to (Peripheral) learner (from the periphery), curriculum was designed in close consultation with Chinese universities, funding agencies and diplomatic officials. The projects were constantly re-designed and adapted to the unique professional and linguistic needs and goals of the Chinese teachers themselves.

As was continually emphasized in the lecture content and workshop facilitation, the participants were encouraged to evaluate (the multiplicity of) dominant trends within current second language teaching theory and classroom practice so that they could determine for themselves the most useful approaches for their own teaching contexts.

So, in ways that are similar to the classes I teach with Canadian teacher-candidates, my goal with these veteran ESL teachers from China is to develop their understandings of how interlocking systems of domination, power, and privilege pervade second language school curricula, educational beliefs and teaching practices so that they can critically evaluate various educational practices and construct viable strategies for inclusive pedagogy. I want them to critically reflect on their own personal assumptions so as to reject the native speaker fallacy under which they labor.

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