

Cultural Adaptation of NNES (Non-native English Speaking) College Faculty: A Cross-Disciplinary Study

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In order for culturally and linguistically diverse faculty members to thrive in their teaching role, it is important that their adjustment to the culture and climate of the US colleges and universities be understood and supported. To that end, this qualitatively oriented study of 28 NNES (non-native English speaking) faculty members addresses the following research questions: (1) What factors or resources contribute to NNES faculty members' cultural adaptation to their teaching role in the US?; (2) How do NNES faculty members view themselves as teachers, the US college classrooms and students?; and (3) Does cultural background or academic discipline contribute to the NNES faculty members' perspectives? We expand past NNES teacher research to include faculty from different academic disciplines in order to more comprehensively understand this under-researched teacher population. Survey results and follow-up interviews reveal both similarities and important differences in the perceptions and factors that affect NNES faculty from various cultural backgrounds and across academic disciplines.

Keywords: NNES (non-native English speaking), international faculty, cross-cultural communication, teacher training

Introduction

The presence of a culturally diverse college or university faculty may contribute to student retention and progression, particularly in the case of students representing cultural minorities (Quarterman, 2008). In fact, contemporary college and university faculties in the US are increasingly diverse in their ethnic and cultural make-up (Lee, 2010). NNES (non-native English speaking) faculty members are an increasingly large and vital part of the faculties at US colleges and universities. Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Department of Labor (2011) report indicated that in 2008, post-secondary teachers held approximately 1.7 million jobs. Among faculty members at institutions of higher learning, it has been estimated that anywhere from 4% or 5% to over 24% were born in another country (Gahungu, 2011; Marvasti, 2005), an indication of the difficulty in accurately determining the numbers of NNES faculty members in the US.

In any culturally plural society, such as the US Academic Community, members of different cultural groups adapt to and engage with other cultures in any of a number of ways (Berry, 1980; 2011). For those faculty members in English-speaking countries whose cultural and language background differs from that of the context in which they are living and working, significant difficulty in the process of socio-cultural adjustment to the teaching role

may be experienced (Gahungu, 2011; Kim, 2009). The present study targets this process of cultural adaptation.

Background: Literature Review

Historical Context

Over the past few decades, a great deal of researches into the cultural adaptation of NNES faculty have focused primarily on faculty in the field of TESL (teaching English as a second language) in various contexts (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Ellis, 2004; Lee, 2009; Liu, 1999; McKay, 2003; Moussu & Llurda, 2008). Although not ignoring cultural identity, much of this research and analysis of NNES-related phenomena have focused on language use and proficiency on the part of NNES instructors of English or on the perceptions of instructor proficiency by the ESL (English as a second language) students they teach (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2002; Llurda, 2004; Mahboob, 2004; Moussu, 2006; Shibata, 2010).

Despite of the increasing number of NNES faculty in the US higher education institutions, in-depth studies on NNES faculty in different academic disciplines are limited. Most studies have been conducted with NNES faculty in the field of TESOL (Holliday & Aboshiha, 2009; Ilieva, 2010; Lazaraton, 2003; Liu, 1999; Llurda, 2004; Samimy, 2008). In one of such studies, Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999, p. 418) focused on the empowerment of NNES TESOL instructors, and more importantly, examined and problematized some of the culturally-bound assumptions of language learning theory itself. Moussu and Llurda (2008) provided a useful overview of the state-of-the-art of research on NNES English teachers. On the other hand, Gahungu (2011) recently reviewed the state of research on foreign-born faculty, in general, offering a number of helpful suggestions for their support. He emphasized the importance of “foreignness” as a resource. Other existing literature has focused on areas such a perceived effectiveness, job satisfaction and research productivity of international faculty (Kim, Wolf-Wendel, & Twombly, 2011; Mamiseishvili & Rosser, 2010; Marvasti, 2005). Kim et al. (2011) found that international faculty produced US faculty in terms of scholarly production, while they felt less satisfied with their jobs. Marvasti (2005) suggested that foreign-born faculty outperformed their native counterparts in research to compensate for the somewhat negative self-perception of their own teaching, so that they can be more competitive on the job market. From a higher education management perspective, Dedoussis (2007) pointed out that diversity of faculty in terms of international and intercultural background was considered as an organizational strength. Taken together, the existing literature points to the need for more focused examination of NNES faculty’s experience across disciplines.

Theoretical Framework

The predominant framework that underlies our understanding of the cultural adaptation process that NNES faculty experience is Berry’s (1974; 1980; 2011) Intercultural Strategies Model. Berry (2011, p. 2.4) discussed acculturation strategies as preferences among cultural groups as to how to interact with the larger culture in a given country. NNES faculty in US colleges may demonstrate one or more of the strategies of: “integration”, in which the individual maintains his/her first culture while actively engaging with the larger culture; “assimilation”, which involves distancing oneself from one’s first culture, while engaging with and attempting to conform to the norms of the larger culture; “separation”, whereby a person clings closely to and draws from her/his first culture but remains apart from the larger culture; and “marginalization”, a situation that involves distancing oneself from both one’s first culture and the surrounding larger culture (Berry, 2011, p. 2.4).

Lave and Wenger (1991) claimed that in functioning communities of practice, situated learning entails

much more than just the acquisition of propositional knowledge by individuals. Rather, learning is understood as a discursive practice that involves the dynamic, evolving participation of all members of the community. The situated learning approach to understanding the college classroom suggests a framework with application to international faculty. Effective classroom teaching involves both faculty members and students in a collaborative adaptation process by which more effective communication and teaching are achieved. College faculty generally may be viewed as comprising communities of practice, in which NNES faculty find themselves practicing within a specific social context. In the past studies of ITAs (International Teaching Assistants), a related population, student opinion surveys have indicated adverse impressions in some ITA-led US undergraduate classrooms, which are largely affected by the language skills of the ITAs. Such long-lasting impressions can influence students' perceptions of NNES faculty, most of whom are former ITAs. These findings suggest that it is important to educate students about the benefits of a multicultural classroom, so that all members of the classroom community are participants in a mutual cultural adaptation process. On the other hand, it must be kept in mind that NNES faculty do face challenges besides language skills, such as lack of teaching experience, inadequate training and cultural differences (Rajagopalan, 2005).

Cultural Adaptation Challenges Faced by NNES Faculty

The challenges faced by NNES faculty may vary according to disciplines and individual backgrounds and experiences, but some are likely to be encountered by NNES faculty across the higher education spectrum. In the field of ESL or TESOL, Lee (2009) pointed out that there was a preference among many English language program directors for hiring NES (native English-speaking) instructors, out of a belief that students would rather learn English from native speakers. Such a view is consistent with Marvasti's (2005, p. 172) research into the effectiveness of foreign-born faculty at US institutions, which suggests that international faculty members need to outperform native faculty peers in research and publication in order to occupy the same positions at US institutions, particularly with respect to entry-level (assistant professor) positions. Moreover, undergraduate student perceptions of NNES faculty in US colleges and universities have been studied. Dedoussis (2007, p. 141) indicated that students may be tempted to focus on linguistic shortcomings at first, but then learned to focus on those faculty members' strengths. McCroskey (2002) also discussed the challenge of students' perceiving domestic faculty as more effective in some cases. Intercultural communication apprehension was cited as one factor that influences students' perceptions of international faculty. Further, she found that the greatest predictor of students' negative perceptions of international faculty was ethnocentrism. These and related works suggest that the challenges faced by NNES faculty are common across disciplines.

Effective Cross-Cultural Classroom Communication

In their role as facilitators of learning, NNES faculty is expected to be able to communicate effectively with students. Marvasti (2005) asserted that instructional communication behaviors were a likely contributing factor to negative views of NNES faculty. The importance of faculty training, departmental assignment and cultural factors needs to be taken into account; the challenges that NNES faculty face in the classroom are not primarily linguistic issues at root, but include a range of concerns. The need for such an approach is evidenced by findings that linguistic competence is only one part of overall teacher effectiveness (Ellis, 2004; Rajagopalan, 2005). In reviewing works that offer insight into effective classroom practice for NNES faculty, McCalman (2007) suggested that the international faculty members needed to bridge the cultural gap and students could not be expected to do this.

To achieve intercultural competence in the classroom, there is a need for training which is specifically focused on the international faculty at the institutional level. Further emphasizing the centrality of intercultural competence in the classroom, Lazaraton's (2003) discursive analysis found that "incidental cultural knowledge" (i.e., displays of cultural understanding in the way one communicates and interacts when not focusing on culture) was a critical element in effective cross-cultural classroom communication. Similarly, Kim (2009) found that English proficiency as a factor in ITA self-efficacy could be understood only with relationship to socio-cultural adaptation difficulty. Reinforcing the need for researchers to consider a range of factors when examining NNES faculty's experiences in the classroom, one may consider McCalman's (2007) motivation of his/her students by showing his/her own learning of US culture and use of classroom discussions to encourage adoption of global citizenship (how people around the world would solve the same problem). Finally, awareness of one's own culture is another key to successfully participating in the process of intercultural competence development (Campinha-Bacote, 2001). All of these sources indicate the need for better understanding of strategies that facilitate intercultural classroom interactions.

Research Questions

Based on our review of the primary literature and context, the present study was undertaken to address the following research questions: (1) What factors or resources contribute to NNES faculty members' self-perception and cultural adaptation to their teaching role in the US?; (2) How do NNES faculty members view themselves as teachers, the US college classroom and students?; and (3) Does cultural background or academic discipline contribute to the NNES faculty members' perspectives?

Methodology

Participants and Procedure

The study was conducted primarily in a four-year Liberal Arts College in the Southeastern US. The college has a large number of full-time faculty members and nearly 40% of them speak a language other than English as their first language. Eight NNES faculty from other post-secondary institutions were also invited to participate in the study. A total of 28 NNES faculty (16 males and 12 females) participated in the study. Their age ranges from 31 to 49 and their disciplines cover language and arts (10 participants), business (six participants), and science and technology (12 participants). With regard to the origins, 19 participants are from Asia, four from Europe, three from South America and two from Africa.

Participants were asked to complete the "Survey of NNES College Faculty". Based on the survey results, eight participants were interviewed in individual follow-up sessions. Table 1 describes the demographic data of each interviewee. Each interview lasted about 20 to 30 minutes, and the interviews were recorded with a digital audio recorder to enable later verification of the detailed notes taken. In the interview, seven questions were asked: (1) What is the greatest challenge to you as a non-native English speaking faculty member in a US college or university? (2) In your graduate program, did you receive any training that specifically prepared you as a college teacher? If so, please describe that training or preparation; (3) What class management skills do you think work well in the classes that you teach? How did you learn these skills?; (4) What teaching techniques or strategies have not worked well in your classes? How have you improved your strategies?; (5) What kind of image or persona do you want to present to your students?; (6) What are the differences and similarities between the college students in your home country and American college students?; and (7) What is

your greatest strength as a teacher?

Table 1

NNES Faculty Interviewee Demographic Information

Participant code	Gender	Age	Discipline	First language	Years in US
A	F	30	Information technology	Marathi	5-9
B	F	35	TESOL	Turkish	10-15
C	F	32	Management information system	Chinese	5-9
D	F	41	English	Chinese	10-15
E	M	50	History	Chinese	>15
F	M	41	TESOL	Romanian	>15
G	M	34	Biomedical engineering	Chinese	10-15
H	M	35	Information technology	Chinese	10-15

Instrument

The 32-item survey was developed based on the research questions and with reference to the SCAS (Socio-Cultural Adaptation Scale) (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). Items 1-11 ask demographic questions, including gender, age, home country, first language, years in the US, field of study, years of teaching in the US and previous teaching experiences in the home country. Items 12-16 ask about NNES faculty's current position, primary responsibility at the position, class size and language use outside of the classroom. Self-perception of their teaching is measured in five questions: (1) How comfortable do you feel in front of students in the classroom?; (2) How confident are you when teaching in US undergraduate classes?; (3) How often do you feel nervous, uncertain or anxious in front of students in the classroom?; (4) Which of these describes how you think most of the students in your classes view you?; and (5) Which of the following best describes how you view yourself as a faculty member? For each question, five choices are provided to allow for a range of responses: (1) very effective and confident; (2) somewhat effective and confident; (3) no strong feeling (unsure); (4) somewhat ineffective and not very confident; and (5) very ineffective and unconfident. Their view of the US classroom and value of education is measured in four questions: (1) How do you view the US undergraduate classroom in comparison with classrooms in your home country?; (2) Regarding politeness, how do you view US undergraduate students in comparison to undergraduate students in your home country (in general)?; (3) Which of these best describes the value of education in your home country/culture?; and (4) Which of the following best describes the value of education in US culture? The choices for the value of education are critically important, important, somewhat important, not very important and not valued. Additional items are included in the survey to ask faculty's view of English proficiency in their own discipline, teaching philosophy, motivation for becoming a faculty member, and factors contributing to the success of NNES college faculty in the US.

Results

Question 1: What Factors Contribute to NNES Faculty Members' Self-perception and Cultural Adaptation to Their Teaching Role in the US?

The results of the survey shed light on the first research question in revealing a number of characteristics,

some of which appear to be interrelated, which contribute to the participants' cultural adaptation to the teaching role in the US.

The survey results indicated a very positive self-perception among most participants. Eight-nine of them felt very comfortable in the classroom; 86% felt very confident when teaching; 89% never or seldom felt nervous or uncertain before students; 89% thought most students viewed them as effective and confident; and 96% viewed themselves as effective and competent. Table 2 summarizes the results of the survey on items addressing the first research question.

Table 2

Self-perception Survey Item Responses

Survey item	a	b	c	d	e
How comfortable do you feel in front of students in the classroom?	24	2	0	1	0
How confident are you when teaching in US undergraduate classes?	23	3	0	1	0
How often do you feel nervous, uncertain, or anxious in front of students in the classroom?*	10	14	2	1	0
Which of these describes how you think most of the students in your classes view you?	12	12	3	0	0
Which of the following best describes how you view yourself as a faculty member?	17	9	1	0	0

Notes. Response "a" indicates a very positive perception; and response "e" indicates a very negative perception; * For this item, the "a" response indicates that the participant rarely reported feeling nervous.

Pearson's correlation calculations indicated that the participants' self-perception correlated with three other factors: length of residence in the US (significant at $p \leq 0.5$), class size ($p \leq 0.5$) and view of the importance of English proficiency in the discipline ($p \leq 0.5$). It was observed that the longer participants lived in the US, the more confident they felt about in their teaching. The participants' class size correlated negatively with their self-perception, meaning that those teaching smaller classes tended to view their own teaching function more positively than those who taught larger classes. Participants' self-perception also correlated with their view of the importance of English proficiency in their discipline.

The survey results were reinforced by the participants' answers in the follow-up interviews. Nine participants were interviewed after they completed the survey. In their responses, five of them indicated that the length of time they had spent on their teaching position contributed to their self-perception. Teacher D, a female English faculty member from China, asserted, "Because of all my years of teaching experience, I learned to, like the quote says, 'Do not let them get to you'". Teachers D, F and H each indicated that they benefited from the graduate teaching experiences in their Ph.D. programs. Other participants, especially faculty in the science and technology fields, said that they had little teaching experience in their graduate programs. A number of them worked at their doctoral advisers' research labs most of the time.

Participants also indicated that learning from experienced colleagues helped them improve their teaching. In the survey, 93% of the participants felt that their native speaking colleagues were supportive. Teacher G, a male faculty in biomedical engineering from China said, "I learn the lecture skills from my senior colleagues. When I teach a new class, I would consult people who have taught the class before". His primary job's responsibility was to conduct research, and he believed that fundamental courses should not be taught by teaching faculty who can do a better job than research faculty.

The use of English language outside of the classroom affects the teaching philosophy of the participants.

The survey results indicated more English use outside class correlated with more hands-off teaching philosophy (significant $p \leq 0.5$). Participants who used more English outside the class tended to believe that students learned best when they were given almost exclusively opportunities to experiment with little direct instruction. In contrast, participants using a language other than English outside the class tended to believe that students learned best when the instructor offered primarily authoritative teaching (e.g., lecture) with some opportunities for students to experiment.

Question 2: How Do NNES Faculty Members View Themselves as Teachers, the US College Classroom and Students?

In response to the second research question, 86% of the participants felt the US classroom was more casual than classrooms in their home country. Regarding the politeness of students, 64% of the participants felt US college students were less polite than students in their home countries. It is important to note that this view, although predominant, was by no means universal. Teacher H, a male Chinese faculty member in information technology commented that, "I do not feel the politeness is very different here than in China". Table 3 summarizes the responses to the two politeness-related questions.

Table 3

View of Classroom and Students Survey Item Responses

Survey item	a	b	c	d	e
How do you view the US undergraduate classroom in comparison with classrooms in your home country?	13	10	3	0	0
Regarding politeness, how do you view US undergraduate students in comparison to undergraduate students in your home country (in general)?	10	8	8	1	0

Note. Response "a" indicates a very positive perception; and response "e" indicates a very negative perception.

When asked about the value of education in the US and their home country, 93% of the participants felt that education was important or critically important in their home countries, with 64% of the participants identified it as critically important. Eighty six percent of the participants identified education as being at least important in the US, but only 36% identified it as critically important. Table 4 summarizes the responses to these two questions.

Table 4

Value of Education Survey Responses

Survey item	a	b	c	d	e
Which of these best describes the value of education in your home country/culture?	18	7	2	0	0
Which of the following best describes the value of education in US culture?	10	13	3	1	0

Notes. Response "a" indicates a very positive perception; and response "e" indicates a very negative perception.

The interview data gives a fuller picture of how the faculty participants view students in the US college classroom. Teachers A, B, D and E shared the same comments on the differences between students in the US and their home countries. They indicated that students in their home countries were very respectful and viewed the teacher as the authority. They would follow instructions without questioning, as Teacher A, a female professor in information technology commented, "If I was a student, I do not remember asking my teacher 'Why are we doing this?'. If my teacher told us to write an essay, we would just do it. So that has been surprising". The participants also felt that students in the US were more willing to share their views in the class while students

in their home countries rarely volunteered to answer questions, even though they knew the answers.

Other interviewed participants indicated different characteristics of American students. Teachers C and G pointed out that students in the US were more creative and innovative and they were better in self-learning. Teacher D asserted that American students were more self-motivated. She said, “You have to make them want to do things and they do not want to be made to do things”. In contrast, students in their home country seem to be more motivated extrinsically. Teacher C, a female faculty member in management said, “Chinese college students in my generation were very simple and goal-oriented. We just wanted to improve our grades”.

However, all participants acknowledged that these differences were general and there was much individual variance. They also mentioned that they had left their home counties for a long time and the present-day students might be different from their generation.

Question 3: Does Cultural Background or Academic Discipline Contribute to the NNES Faculty Members’ Perspectives?

To answer the third research question, participants were grouped based on their origins and disciplines. The view of the US classroom and value of education differed based on cultural background of respondents. Table 5 summarizes the responses to the question “How do you view the US undergraduate classroom in comparison with classrooms in your home country?” based on the regional origin of each respondent.

Table 5

View of US Classroom Survey Responses by Region

Choice	a	b	c	d	e
Asia (19)	10	5	3	0	0
Europe (4)	1	3	0	0	0
South America (3)	1	2	0	0	0
Africa (2)	2	0	0	0	0

Notes. Response “a” indicates a very positive perception; and response “e” indicates a very negative perception.

Fifty six percent of Asian faculty felt the US classroom was much more casual than classrooms in their home country, and 68% of them felt that American undergraduate students were less polite than students in their home country in general. The responses of the European and South American faculty respondents were relatively more neutral, and those of the two African faculty participants were more in line with those of the Asian faculty responses. Table 6 summarizes the responses to the question “Regarding politeness, how do you view US undergraduate students in comparison to undergraduate students in your home country (in general)?”, analyzed by region.

Table 6

Student Politeness Item Survey Responses by Region

Choices	a	b	c	d	e
Asia (19)	0	1	5	5	8
Europe (4)	0	0	2	1	1
South America (3)	0	0	1	1	1
Africa (2)	0	0	0	2	0

Notes. Response “a” indicates a very positive perception; and response “e” indicates a very negative perception.

The results indicated that most of the Asian faculty participants come from a cultural background where

the teacher-student relationship is more or less hierarchical and students are respectful to the teacher. This was confirmed in the interviews with the participants from Asia. Teacher D vividly described the shock she experienced when communicating with American students early in her career in the US:

Some things, as a student, I would never even try to do it, but they (the US students) are doing it, so I was in shock. I think it is still mostly about cultural differences, because of the way I was brought up, and in Asia, how we look up to teachers.

Teacher H described the teacher-student relationship in the US as different from that in China. He said, “In the US, there is more sharing of ideas between students and teachers; not so much over there (in China). Also, there is more emphasis on discussions here (in the US)”. He highly valued this kind of egalitarian relationship between the students and teacher.

Besides the teacher-student relationship, the perceived value of education in the home country and in the US varied among the faculties from different regions. Table 7 summarizes the responses to the questions “Which of these best describes the value of education in your home country/culture?” and “Which of the following best describes the value of education in US culture?” based on region.

Table 7

Value of Education Survey Responses by Region

Choices	a. Critically important		b. Important		c. Somewhat important		d. Not very important		e. Not valued	
Asia (19)	15	7	3	9	1	2	0	1	0	0
Europe (4)	2	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
South America (3)	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Africa (1)	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0

As shown in Table 7, 79% of Asian faculty felt education was critically important in their home countries and only 37% of them felt education in the US was critically important. One of them even felt that education was not a very important part of life or society in the US. For faculty from Europe, South America and Africa, the answers to the two questions were the same. That is, they felt education was of the same importance in their home countries and in the US.

Besides cultural background, academic disciplines played a role in the faculty’s perception of English proficiency. Nine out the 10 participants in language and arts rated English proficiency as very important. The only participant who did not rate it as very important was a Spanish teacher. All of the six participants in business also rated English proficiency as very important. For the 12 participants in science and technology, only 50% of them rated English proficiency very important. The other 50% rated it as important.

The different perceptions of language echo with the responses in the interviews. For one information technology faculty member, language has been a factor in the classroom, but not a major limitation: “There have been a couple of semesters where one or two students told me they had trouble in understanding my accent, but it has not been a big issue” (Teacher A). Teacher G, a male faculty in biomedical engineering whose primary responsibility is to conduct research, directly stated in his interview that language is not the biggest challenge in his teaching. He said, “I think the biggest challenge is scientific... Language is not my major concern and I do not make special efforts to polish my language”. In contrast, Teacher D, an English faculty member, was highly conscious of the way her speech perceived by her students. She noted, “I was sometimes intimidated by students, because I am worried about my accent and students did make fun of my accent. So

because of that, I was even more conscious of how I say things”. For Teacher C, “The combination of culture and language makes a great challenge”. Although she did not think that accent and grammar errors were major barriers in teaching, she believed that a good teacher should be an interesting presenter with the ability to make knowledge interesting for the students, which requires a good mastery of language skills and familiarity with the culture.

Discussion

NNES faculty in US colleges and universities represent a diversity of backgrounds and perspectives, but all share a process of cultural adaptation to the teaching role, as it is constituted in the US. It is worth noting that the NNES faculty members surveyed and interviewed in the present effort were studied in the context of this cultural adaptation process, with each participant at a unique stage of development.

Most of the NNES participants seem to fit largely in the approach of integration, in terms of Berry’s (1974; 1980; 2011) Model of Intercultural Strategies. In teaching, they used their own cultures as a resource, while adapting elements of the US culture they perceive as beneficial. However, the individual participants also indicated more or less pronounced tendencies towards separation or assimilation. To illustrate the variety of their acculturation strategies, the eight interview participants are grouped based on their similar characteristics.

The first group may be termed cultural mediators. These faculty members are fully engaged in both their first culture and the target (US) culture, and thus, fit firmly within the cultural integration strategy. Instead of viewing their values and beliefs in the first culture as a barrier to effective teaching in the US classroom, they utilize them as a valuable resource. They consider themselves as bridges between two cultures. Teachers D and F demonstrate the characteristics of cultural mediators quite strikingly. For Teacher D, her heritage and upbringing are distinct from, yet clearly relevant to the US college classroom culture. She repeatedly emphasized in her interview responses the fact that she incorporates aspects of her home culture in her teaching, declaring that, “I combine Asian and American culture in my classes”. Teacher F, likewise, believed that his students benefited from his ability to incorporate his own extensive cross-cultural experiences. He also views his students as “potential colleagues”, further confirming his identity as a mediator at multiple levels. Both teachers have established their identities in their ability to mediate between the two cultures they have embraced.

The second group is similar to cultural mediators, but may be called “cultural naturalizers”, as they may draw more extensively from their first culture background and attempt to incorporate traditions and standards from it in their interactions with the larger surrounding culture (i.e., naturalizing first culture practices in the local classroom culture). This group is characterized by Teachers A and E. They are engaged in both cultures and also able to adapt to the target culture. However, they exhibit a tendency to preserve the values of the first culture, and at the same time, maintain their own personal style. Teacher A expressed that her approach towards the teacher-student relationship had been strongly influenced by her first culture. As a student in India, she did not build extensive personal rapport with her professors, aside from asking questions or discussing content knowledge. Although she saw different expectations from her American students, she was firm in maintaining her approach and limits personal interaction with students (e.g., sharing jokes or stories that are not related to the class). Teacher E integrated different elements in his teaching, such as case studies and invited talks, in teaching a diverse group of students, indicating adaptation to the target classroom culture. At the same time, his teaching also draws heavily on his first culture and personal insights. As illustrated by these two teachers,

“naturalizers” utilize their first culture resources to influence the target culture classroom and bring about changes in their students’ perspectives.

The third group may be called “cultural adapters”, because they make a consistent effort to overcome the differences between their first culture and the target culture. They try their best to adapt to the target culture. This group is characterized by Teachers B, C, G and H. In their initial stages of teaching, they realize that the students and classroom environment are different from these of their home countries. They would explore the students’ needs and experiment new teaching techniques in order to find out the best technique to fit the students in the target culture. For example, Teacher B switched from lecture to group discussion when she found that students were not interested in lectures. Similarly, Teacher C designed business cases when teaching some complex technical knowledge to MBA students and Teacher G assigned students problems to solve instead of requiring student to read textbook chapters. They rarely draw from practices in their first culture and are primarily concerned about what works best for the students in the current classroom setting. All four of them come from a cultural background where the instructor is a strong, authoritative figure, but in their survey responses, they reported adapting to a more “hands-off” teaching philosophy and believed that students learned the best when given opportunities to experiment. This shift is closely related to their extensive use of English in and outside of the classroom, and also, consistent with their identity as cultural adapters is the desire among these faculty members to learn more about the target culture.

As we have seen, NNES faculty adapt to the new teaching environment and classroom culture in different ways. What is common among all the groups is a strong motivation to learn about the target culture and their students, which indicates awareness of their culture (McCalman, 2007). “Mediators” view their own cultural knowledge as an important resource in their teaching, whereas “naturalizers” attempt to influence the classroom with their first culture, and “adapters” adjust their teaching approaches to meet their students’ needs.

Conclusions: Future Directions

The study examined the factors that influence the cultural adaptation process of NNES faculty and their perceptions of themselves and the US college classroom. Survey results indicated the most significant factors were length of residence, class size, view of the importance of English proficiency in the discipline and the use of English outside the classroom. In follow-up interviews, other key factors that emerged were graduate teaching experience and learning from colleagues. With regard to their perceptions, most participants viewed the US college classroom and students as less formal and polite than those in their first cultures. In addition, education is less valued in the US in their view. However, the perceptions varied based on the cultural background and academic discipline of the participants.

The findings add to our understanding of NNES faculty members’ experience in the US college classroom. A key implication is the need for increased professional development opportunities for them. Gareis and Williams (2004) discussed the benefits of establishing an international faculty development program. It is evident that such training would play an important role in the adaptation process of NNES faculty. Few participants in the study have had training in teaching in their graduate programs. Scenario-based case studies, common in ITA training, can be included in the faculty orientation. For instance, Michigan State University (2011) developed a series of real-life scenarios for preparing TAs (teaching assistants). Besides scenarios, workshops on the characteristics of student populations in the target culture can also enhance faculty members’ understanding of students’ needs and expectations, which might be different from those of students in their

home countries. As an example, characteristics of the “Millennial Generation”, such as high expectations (close to entitlement), a need for feedback and reinforcement, consumer mentality, cooperation and collaboration, may be reviewed for new faculty members (Elam et al., 2007). These practices can help NNES faculty overcome the challenges described by our participants.

In light of the findings reviewed here, it is crucial that investigations of NNES faculty’s cultural adjustment and professional development continue. One suggested avenue of further research might be follow-up studies of selected junior NNES faculty members over time. Another possible direction may be descriptive study of the classroom discourse to investigate the interaction between NNES faculty and students. Given the increasing number of these faculty members and their importance in US academia, the study of NNES faculty should expand from TESOL field to all academic disciplines. With one such effort, Vogt (2008) found that successful interaction between faculty and students had a beneficial impact on engineering students’ self-efficacy and achievement in college (McArthur, 2006). Increasing the likelihood of this success in all fields entails acknowledging the challenges and providing institutional support for NNES faculty.

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