5 Cultural Adaptation and Building Authority As a NNES: A Reflective Study

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In the fall 2014, I was teaching a first-year writing course to a mixed group of international and U.S. students at a large public research university in the Southwestern United States. As an international graduate teaching assistant at the time, I was still relatively new to composition as a field and a profession after earning my BA and MA degree in linguistics and translation studies in Russia and my second MA degree in TESOL in the US. The composition course I was teaching focused on improving students' knowledge of rhetorical conventions across a variety of genres with a special focus on intercultural communication and linguistic diversity. For one of four major units, students analyzed a literary text, a play by an American playwright David Henry Hwang titled *M. Butterfly*. For the most part, students reacted positively to the text and had many engaged discussions of its themes. However, at one point during a whole-class discussion, a NES White male student asked in a slightly accusatory way, "Did you choose it because you liked it?" He seemed to imply that the text had few merits on its own, an opinion voiced in a previous online discussion, and that my curricular decisions were based on my personal preferences rather than on my expertise or subject knowledge. At that moment, my body language showed great discomfort: I was standing when the student asked the question, but after hearing the question, I sat down, my arms and legs crossed, and my head lowered. It felt like an attack on my teaching skills and my authority in the classroom. My first reaction was to defend my teaching qualifications as well as the play's many virtues. However, I checked myself and instead re-directed the question to the whole class, asking the students, "Why do you think I chose this play?" One student commented that it was confusing, to which I replied with a joke, "Ah yes, I always like to make my students suffer." The class laughed, and another student offered a different suggestion: "because it's open to many interpretations." A few students also commented that the play was difficult to understand sometimes, at which point the first student repeated his question again (this time with even more emphasis): "Did you choose it because you *liked* it?" This time, I caved into the

impulse to defend myself and laid out my reasons: the play was accessible and thought-provoking; it was multilayered and fit well with our cross-cultural class. To that, the student replied with, "So what you're saying is that you *did* choose it because you liked it." The class laughed, and I felt defeated. I proceeded to admit that I would not have chosen the play if I hadn't liked it, and that students were entitled to their own opinion whether they liked the play or not. At that point I moved on to the next item on the agenda.

After the class, I dwelled on the incident for a long time, wondering if there was a better way to handle the situation. Did the student persist in asking the question because he felt comfortable asking questions in our class or because he felt it within his right to question the authority of a NNES international TA? Would he still repeatedly ask these questions in the same tone if I were a male, U.S.-born NES instructor, or would he have more trust in such instructor's decisions? Or perhaps I would not feel my authority was questioned if I was a NES instructor? Do my students have any trust in my knowledge and expertise, or would I have to justify every pedagogical decision I make to them?

I was able to analyze in detail my reactions to this incident—and many others like it—because the class meeting was videotaped as part of a reflective autoethnographic study I conducted that semester. The study grew out of a desire to investigate my own teaching practices and how well they aligned, or not, with my evolving ideals and beliefs about education and teaching. I was particularly interested in exploring how, as an NNEST, I navigated challenges around building a confident teaching persona in a space where I was one of the few NES instructors in the writing program. In this chapter, I draw on the study to look beyond language differences and explore how the process of building confidence and authority as a NNEST is affected by cultural and ideological differences that often coexist with (and are complicated by) nonnative speaker status. I start with offering a more nuanced discussion of authority in teaching that takes into consideration cultural and disciplinary differences. I then describe the design of the present study, discuss its results, and offer implications for NNESs and writing program administrators.

Authority, Culture, and Teaching Writing As a NNEST

"Power" and "authority" in educational settings have been conceptualized in multiple ways. One of the better-known conceptualizations is Max Weber's classification of authority into three (later expanded into four) types. Weber (1957) divided authority into *legal* (or bureaucratic) authority that relies on laws and rules; *traditional* authority upheld by traditions and time, and *charismatic* authority whereby individuals garner support and following from

people due to personal qualities and emotional appeal. Later, sociologists using Weber's classification added a fourth type called *professional* authority, supported by the person's expertise in a given area of knowledge or activity. Moreover, a crucial part of Weber's theory is that authority is a social relationship (Pace & Hemmings, 2007): authority figures are able to give commands because people obeying them see their authority as legitimate.

This point dovetails with Patricia Bizzell's (1991) description of authority as well; to exercise authority in the classroom, teachers must first persuade their students to trust their knowledge and good will: "Persuasion must precede authority" (p. 851). Bizzell stressed that students need to believe their teacher has their best interests at heart to follow along with a curriculum that they might resist or find difficult. Likewise, in their description of an exemplary writing instructor, Steven Vanderstaay et al. (2009) explained how the teacher they observed relied almost exclusively on his professional authority while eschewing his bureaucratic authority in order to create an engaged and productive learning community in his classroom. Notably, they identified an "internal authority" coming from a deep-seated "belief in himself" (p. 277). Thus, the most desirable type of teacher authority stems from confidence in one's own abilities and students' trust.

In composition studies, authority and power relations have been a frequent topic of investigation. As Bizzell (1991) put it, "one might read the history of modern composition studies as a series of attacks on classroom uses of power" (p. 847). Proponents of critical pedagogy in composition as well as theorists of social-constructivist approaches to writing and rhetoric have questioned the role of ideology in shaping the reality of its followers and urged writing instructors to use writing instruction, in Patricia Mayes' (2010) words, "as a vehicle for exploring and critiquing power relations, diversity, justice, oppression, and other social issues; . . . the ultimate goal is a transformative effect on power relations in the classroom and perhaps in society in general" (p. 190). Social-constructivist theorists in composition studies, including James Berlin, Bizzell, David Bartholomae, and John Trimbur, also advocated for critiquing the existing dominant ideologies and social injustices by decentralizing the classroom and sharing power with the students. However, as Robert Yagelski (1999) pointed out, decentralizing power in the classroom requires a balancing act between "using one's legitimate authority as a teacher on the one hand and, on the other, taking appropriate measures to undercut that same authority so that it does not inhibit the effort to foster critical consciousness in students" (p. 41). These decentralizing efforts also involve constant questioning of the writing instructor's own practices, which can be, in Yagelski's words, unsettling and uncomfortable. This process can be even more daunting for teachers coming from international

backgrounds whose mindset is often shaped by a different set of internalized beliefs about education, teaching, and authority. While many, if not most, of NNES instructors in composition come from international backgrounds and represent a wide range of cultures, the effects of cultural background on understanding and enactment of authority are often missing from the discussions of authority in composition studies.

"Culture" often defies precise definitions; in this chapter, I adopt Geert Hofstede's (1980) definition of culture as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (p. 9). In Hofstede's framework, cultures differ across five major dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, and long-term versus short-term orientation. For our discussion of power and authority, the first dimension is most important. Power distance is defined as "the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (such as the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally" (Hofstede & NcCrae, 2004, p. 62). All societies exhibit varying degrees of inequality between those at the top of social hierarchy and those at the bottom, but in cultures with high power distance, the less powerful members of society are more likely to accept that distance as a given. The high-power distance is also evident throughout the education system where power balance is often skewed: the teacher possesses a large degree of authority by virtue of holding the position itself, and students rarely get a chance to negotiate power relations in the classroom or to question their teacher's decisions. Research into the experiences of students from more traditionally high-power distance cultures studying in a lower-power distance countries exemplifies these cultural differences; for instance, Yi Zhang (2013) found that compared to mainstream U.S. students, students from China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong commonly perceived learning as more instructor-centered and felt intimidated to reach out to their online instructors when issues occurred. Conversely, Huong Tran Nguyen (2008), exploring cultural influences on five Vietnamese American teachers' professional identity construction, demonstrated that these teachers expected "to command authority in the classroom and reverential respect from their students and parents" simply due to their status as teachers (p. 113). Furthermore, teachers coming from high-power distance cultural backgrounds might have difficulties adjusting to teaching practices shaped by lower-power distance cultural discourses such as higher value placed on students' active participation in class discussions or collaborative work such as peer reviews.

Instructors starting to teach in a different cultural setting are exposed to new cultural and disciplinary discourses that might change their understand-

ing and beliefs about power and authority in the classroom. At the same time, adjusting their teaching practices to align with their changing beliefs might prove more challenging for NNES instructors. Even if NNES international instructors might desire to adopt more egalitarian teaching practices or follow a critical pedagogy framework, they are likely to discover that due to the challenges their NNES status creates for establishing credibility, they have limited resources when it comes to building authority in their classrooms. NNES instructors often face students' prejudice because of their language status (e.g., Liu, 2005; Reis, 2012; Shehi, 2017) that undermines their credibility as writing instructors. In addition, the deficit view of NNESs, when internalized, also negatively affects these instructors' faith in their own teaching abilities (e.g., Canagarajah, 1999; Llurda, 2009; Medgyes, 1994, among others). Such challenges can be further exacerbated for those NNES instructors who might be in a more precarious position due to factors beyond their language background, such as their status in the profession, gender, ethnicity, age, etc. Novice teachers who are international teaching assistants (ITAs) are in an especially vulnerable position: their authority is likely to be challenged by NES and NNES students alike, not only due to perceived differences or deficiencies in language use, but also as the result of possible gaps in their knowledge of cultural expectations for teaching and writing in U.S. higher education settings (Collins et al., 2021; Shehi, 2017; see also Kasztalska & Maune, this collection).

Considering that students' trust and the instructor's own confidence are the two crucial components for building professional authority, it is not surprising that many NNES instructors have to rely on traditional or institutional authority (in Weber's terminology). This falling back on teacher-centered pedagogy is more likely to happen if the ITA's home culture is characterized by high power distance orientation; after all, "teachers are most likely to teach the way their teachers taught while they were growing up in schools" (Fagan, 2022). This point was echoed by Michael Stancliff and Maureen Daly Goggin (2007), who also stressed that for novice teachers, "inexperience leads to rigidity and pedagogical 'frame-lock'" (p. 15). And while it is true for all novice teachers, international NNES instructors' challenges are more complicated due to cultural distance (compared to U.S.-born NESs) and lack of targeted resources and support for international NNES provided by graduate and writing programs.

Furthermore, novice instructors might not always realize that there is a disparity between their espoused beliefs about teaching and their actual teaching practices. For example, in Christopher Anderson's (2002) study of a group of ESOL teachers at a higher education institution in the UK, he observed that while teachers often claimed to be following "student-centered" (p. 202) teach-

ing philosophy and pedagogy, in practice, the control they exercised over their lessons created an authoritarian, teacher-centered classroom. One tool that both NES and NNES novice instructors can utilize to make these conflicts between beliefs and practices more apparent is critical reflective practice. Stancliff and Goggin (2007) described a teacher training curriculum that used critical reflection in order to reconcile the rift between the functional ("nuts and bolts" of teaching) and conversion (rhetoric and composition theory) approaches in teacher training. Furthermore, they emphasized that there is no "atheoretical" approach to teaching as "every act of teaching arises from some set of assumptions about what teachers should teach and how students learn" (p. 15). While their work targeted mainstream NES teachers-in-training, for NNESTs, critical reflection can uncover other layers of conflicts or discrepancies rooted in different cultures, languages, and ideologies.

Study Design

Reflective teaching has been used in multiple disciplines in a variety of ways. John Dewey (1933) was the first prominent advocate of reflection, which he defined as an action characterized by "active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge" (p. 9). Reflection-in-action became a staple in professional development in multiple fields due to the work of Donald Schön (1983), who described how professionals in different fields dealt with problems by reflecting on their past knowledge and current issues at hand. In TESOL studies, reflective practices have been the focus of Thomas Farrell's work (2004; 2013; 2015). Farrell suggested multiple ways teachers can reflect on their teaching: through peer and mentor observations, through teaching circles and observation groups, but also through self-directed reflective studies where teachers audio or video record themselves and/or keep a teaching journal. Farrell emphasized that for teachers, reflective practice entails examining "their beliefs and practices about teaching and learning so that they can better understand these" (2013, p. 22). Reflective practice is thus directed not only at the issue or task at hand (Schön's reflection-in-action) but also at the underlying beliefs and ideas at the foundation of teacher practices.

The present study followed Farrell's recommendations for reflective practice and used systematic self-observation techniques for collecting data (Chang, 2016). For two semesters of teaching first-year composition courses, fall 2014 and spring 2015, I collected all of my lesson plans and teaching materials, I recorded my immediate reflections on each class meeting in a teaching journal, and I video- or audio-taped most of the class meetings. The camera for video recording was set up to record only the front of the classroom, where

I stayed most of the time. The students were not recorded on video, although their voices sometimes were; I explained the purpose for recording our meetings to my students and assured them they were not on camera and any conversations I might record would be kept confidential. The students' behavior did not appear to be affected by the presence of the recording device.

In collecting and analyzing the data, I used Jerry Gebhard's (2006) reflective questions:

- What are my beliefs about teaching? Are my practices consistent with these beliefs?
- What do I think I do in the classroom? What do I actually do?
- Are there any issues of self I need to address? Am I facing my teaching self?

I started my teaching journal with reflecting on my past educational experiences and my beliefs about education. I watched or listened to the class recordings and transcribed selected instances that seemed particularly important. I then read my journal entries, lesson plans, and the transcripts together in order to analyze and reflect on my experiences. In my analysis of journal entries and class meeting recordings, I paid particular attention to in-class discussions and activities, my reactions to student comments or questions, and my classroom management tactics.

In my analysis of the research data, I followed the framework exemplified in Lara Handsfield and colleagues' (2010) research: they examined how everyday interactions "illustrate the microscopic and everyday dimensions of power" (p. 405). In analyzing my teaching materials, journal records, and transcripts of video and audio recordings, I was looking for possible contradictions between my ideas about teaching and what I was actually doing in the classroom. I focused my attention on the pedagogical moments where power dynamics came to the forefront such as the way I organized class discussions, let students ask questions and the way I answered them, and the way I directed the students to engage with the different in-class activities. I also paid close attention to the physical aspects of my classroom, namely what space was typically occupied by students and what space was normally reserved for myself as well as my body language and tone of voice. While the events I analyzed were small-scale, it is these interactions that compose the entire class, including its atmosphere, power dynamics, the kind of dialogues that happen in it, and the quality of instruction and learning. Furthermore, these micro-level interactions, as Mayes (2010) pointed out, lay the foundation for the construction of power. In the following section, I describe my initial reflection on my past educational experiences in a different cultural setting and

proceed to discuss some of the most prominent themes and instances that exemplify the issues of power dynamics in my attempts to build a more desirable professional authority.

Learning Through Reflection

Past Educational Experiences and Ideological Shifts

At the beginning of the research project, I reflected first on my past experiences with power and authority in the classroom in my teaching journal. Russian culture in general is marked by a high-power distance in Hofstede's framework of cultural dimensions. The Russian education system, despite in theory breaking up with the Soviet past, still bears the signs of its problematic history. As I went through primary and secondary school in the 1990s and completed my college degrees in the 2000s, the school systems still bore a distinct presence of Soviet ideologies. Delbert Long et al. (1999) provided a more critical description of Soviet education: "The Soviet school system was from its inception a vital instrument of state policy. It was used . . . to mold youth into adults who did not question the right of party leaders to control all property, all institutions, all forms of media—in essence, to control the thoughts, feelings, and actions of people" (p. 21). The influence of the Soviet system and ideologies was evident on multiple levels, from individual subjects' curricula to the ways lessons and exams were organized.[1] Most of the classes I took employed a very rigid top-down structure: lectures were the most common format; peer reviews, as well as syllabi or other forms of course contracts, were nonexistent, and more importantly, the instructor held almost infinite power over students because students' final grade was determined solely based on an oral or occasionally written end-of-semester exam. Even though I was fortunate enough to learn from some outstanding professors who evoked deep appreciation and curiosity for their subjects, the system as a whole was marked by high power distance dynamics and employed many practices that can be described as oppressive or authoritarian. In my experience at one small college and three large universities, I was never able to make my own choices when it came to deciding which courses to take—the entire curriculum was

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1   I do not wish to represent the entire Russian educational culture as a monolith, nor do I equate culture with the nation-state. As Kubota (2004) pointed out, all cultures are discursively constructed and undergo constant change. The culture commonly present in public schools in my mid-size hometown in the 1990s was different from the culture of public schools in Moscow during the same time period; similarly, I found significant differences across different cultures at different institutions, states, and communities in the US.

set for me when I chose my major, and I was also not able to choose between different instructors who taught these courses. Students had very little power over the direction of their academic careers or in negotiating their grades. Finally, writing was not typically taught at the college level (either in Russian or in a foreign language), and writing support or coaching was rarely available for major projects such as term or thesis papers.

When I moved to the US, I noticed some significant differences in the educational culture as a whole and experienced a paradigm shift on multiple levels. First, I saw a drastic change in the way classroom and coursework was organized, how much accountability was built into the curriculum (e.g., course grades were formed by multiple components rather than only one exam), and how differently instructor-student power dynamics worked. Furthermore, many rhetoric, composition, and TESOL courses I took introduced me to new ideas about power, ideology, social justice, education, and literacy. As I read the work of scholars ranging from Paolo Freire and Henry Giroux to bell hooks and Ira Shor, I became interested in critical pedagogy, which was a radical departure from my previous educational experiences. As I recognized the value in the ideals of critical pedagogy, promoting students' active role in the classroom and creating a more democratic space became important parts of my teaching philosophy. I sought to implement critical pedagogy values in my teaching practices as well by, for instance, inviting students to participate in curricular decisions such as co-creating grading rubrics, choosing how to be divided into groups, or choosing and conducting mini-lessons on the topics in grammar and mechanics that they deemed important. However, I also sensed that I was not always able to practice my beliefs when it came to my own teaching; for instance, I suspected that I resorted to more direct lecturing than I would have liked. Analyzing my classroom interactions provided me with a more accurate insight into my teaching practices.

Points of Disconnect Between Beliefs and Practices

I looked for tensions between my beliefs and practices within the classroom interactions and the ways I organized and conducted classroom activities. At some points, I was able to stop myself from overexplaining or lecturing and allow my students to arrive at answers on their own. For instance, during a sequence focused on narrative writing, groups of students were assigned some fairly complex articles to read and summarize to the class. When one of these articles proved difficult for one group of NNES students, they asked me for guidance, and instead of spoon-feeding them the answers as most teachers in my past experiences would do, I was able to guide them to arrive at their own

understanding through a series of questions. Similarly, at a few instances, I was able to push students to try to find their own answers even when they expressly asked for my opinion as the ultimate authority. For example, during a whole-class discussion of one act of the play, I asked students to summarize an important scene and describe its significance. As a student was struggling to explain the meaning of the scene, I kept asking probing questions to help students arrive at a clearer understanding on his own: "Do we get a sense of why this character wants to leave? Do we know what the author is trying to say here?" To these questions, the student replied that he did not know and instead asked me directly to "tell [them] what it means." Instead of providing my own answers though, I asked other students to offer their ideas, and at that point another student stepped in with an interpretation of the scene, prompting a third student to make another suggestion, and the discussion proceeded. In such instances, I saw examples of a conscious effort not to act on an impulse to tell students "what that means" and instead apply some of the teaching strategies I deemed more effective.

However, I also realized that when I was not consciously making an effort to act more as a facilitator or guide rather than "bank clerk" depositing knowledge into my students (following Freire's metaphor), my teaching behaviors did not align well with my intentions. For instance, an overview of class recordings showed that the time I spent talking to the class was a significant part of most class meetings. A typical lesson plan would start with whole-class announcements and updates with a short lecture on a pressing topic such as assignment expectations or commonly asked questions; the class would then shift gears into a small group task followed by a whole-class discussion; depending on the class, it would be two small group activities and discussions. Even though the lesson plans looked good on paper, in practice, I ended up not only making class announcements and delivering mini-lectures, but also summarizing group activities extensively, following up on points students made that I wanted to clarify or elaborate on, and overall maintaining a much more constant lecturing presence than was warranted by the lesson plans. In my teaching journal, an early entry described it as a problem: "One more influence of my educational background [is] my tendency to lecture or talk a lot. I really want to decrease the amount of lecturing I do in class." Still, a few later entries with reflections on class meetings and lesson plans showed that I was not satisfied with how well I was able to accomplish that goal: "I talked a lot when it came to analysis—I should have engaged students' voices more, but it is extremely easy to slip back into the familiar and comfortable lecture format." My planning notes showed that I tried to find ways to address the issue, but ultimately, I was not always successful: "I tried to put

breaks in between the slides and between different points on the presentation so that I'll have space to ask students' opinion first, before launching into 'let me tell you what I think.' But I'm not sure how useful it's going to be."

Establishing Authority

Another prominent theme that emerged from my analysis of the video and audio recordings of classroom interactions was the struggle I seemed to be having with establishing a sense of authority. At that relatively early point in my teaching career, I, as many other international teaching assistants, was anxious about my NNES status and how it might affect my students' perceptions of me as a teacher of English and writing. The internalized native speaker fallacy was a large factor in my anxiety, combined with occasional remarks from past students about my accent or my NNES background. While this anxiety abated with each new semester of teaching I successfully concluded (and with reading more literature dismantling the native speaker myth), it was never completely eliminated. Like many other NNES teachers of writing (e.g., Hijazi, this volume, and Shehi, 2017), I felt compelled to present the class with an abstract of my CV at the beginning of the semester, using my credentials as a justification—if not an excuse—for being their instructor. A typical first class meeting would start with me welcoming the students and introducing myself with a summary of my CV (and occasionally pulling up the actual CV on the class screen), explaining what degrees I have earned and describing my past teaching experience. In Weber's terms (1957), I felt that not only my professional and charismatic authority were lacking due to my novice status, but that my institutional authority was likely to be questioned because of my NNES status; by disclosing my qualifying degrees and teaching experience, I was preemptively trying to answer the question of why a NNES foreigner was teaching an English class.

However, despite struggling with a sense of inadequate authority in the classroom, some classroom interactions betrayed instances where I would exercise too much control over the direction whole-class conversations were going (for instance, I would try to silence or overlook some ideas while promoting others). While this type of directing is largely inevitable, a closer look at how I was doing it showed me that too often, I did not let students' comments lead the conversation in another direction even if it was appropriate, either because I did not immediately see the point in students' comments or because I wanted to have enough time to discuss other issues that were more important in my opinion. For example, in one reflective entry in my teaching journal, I asked a student to summarize a passage before discussing

it to refresh everyone's memory. A normally quiet student volunteered to do it; as I wrote down the main points of the summary on the board, I started going over the passage myself, providing other details. In the journal entry, I noted: "this was one of the first times [the student] said anything in class in this sequence. It almost looked like I did not like his summary and decided to offer a better one. This could make him even more silent if he sees that his comments are not appreciated. Also, I clearly have my own agenda in exploring this passage in more detail, and I am pushing for a certain view."

Such instances betrayed my discomfort with letting go of the control over class interactions. Looking back at the incident described at the beginning of this chapter, I was eager to step back into my role as someone who sets the agenda and directs the class interactions when I sensed that my teacher authority was questioned. The incident described at the beginning of this chapter serves as another example of how my sense of authority influenced my teaching tactics. When the student first uttered the question ("Did you choose this play because you liked it?"), I tried to use it as an opportunity to have an open discussion of the course curriculum and offered my rationale for choosing the play after hearing other students' opinions on it. However, the student's persistent rejection of my explanation and repetition of the question made me extremely uncomfortable, and feeling like my teacher authority and credibility were under direct attack, I chose to exercise said authority and change the topic of conversation.

I noticed, however, that these instances of trying to retain control over the classroom were happening mostly unplanned and for the most part, unconsciously. My conscious efforts pointed in the opposite direction and sometimes made me avoid exercising my teacher authority in cases where it would have been warranted. In one such instance, I sought to use students' explicit permission to act on their behalf in order to enact a classroom policy instead of exercising my authority directly. Midway through the semester, I sought students' feedback on the course through an informal survey. A few students noted in their comments that other students checking their phones or laptops was distracting. Our syllabus stated that students were allowed to use computers for class work but not for personal purposes. I mentioned the survey responses in class and asked everyone to respect our class time and put away their devices when not using them for class work. Tellingly, I used the phrase, "now you've invested me with the authority to be more strict about it" as I was still concerned about directly commanding students. After that discussion, I proceeded to make a remark: "So, I just talked about a stricter cell phone use policy, *people in the back*." Instead of enforcing the policy directly, I chose to use students' own comments and humor as a way to make myself appear less authoritarian.

This incident illustrates another dilemma for me as an instructor: clearly, enforcing the no-cell phones policy would not have constituted an abuse of power on my part; nonetheless, I hesitated to enforce it because I was overly cautious about being perceived as an authoritarian teacher even as I still exercised traditional or legal authority in other, less obvious cases. My lack of assertiveness also led me to fall back into lecturing mode more than I wanted to when, for example, students were reluctant to participate in class discussions or when they did not complete a required reading assignment. By being overly conscious about being perceived as an overbearing teacher, I still ended up employing practices that I considered undesirable and overbearing.

Discussion and Conclusion

A question that surfaced at multiple points throughout my analysis of the data concerned the types of authority available to NNESTs of writing. For many international NNESTs just starting their teaching career, professional authority might seem out of reach. Charismatic authority is highly subjective and depends on a range of personal characteristics, from one's accent and command of English to race and gender. For an introverted, soft-spoken female instructor like me, it was not an option either. Traditional and bureaucratic authority seem to be the two kinds that are available to NNESTs as these types are independent of the personal characteristics of the teacher. When I tried to act based on other, more desirable types of authority (as when I attempted to have a more open dialogue about my decision to use the play as part of our class curriculum), I felt that my students did not accept that authority, which made me fall back on more traditional institutional authority. However, when teachers rely on these less desirable types of authority, it becomes little short of coercion, as Bizzell (1991) also warns. Some studies have demonstrated that over-relying on institutional authority can lead to "extensive student resistance" (Oral, 2013, p. 113), which further questions teacher authority and impacts classroom interactions. Nonetheless, when no other types of authority are available, novice NNES instructors are left with no other recourse.

Through this study, I realized that my teaching practices were deeply shaped by a desire to implement critical pedagogy that was undercut by constant feelings of insecurity. On one hand, I adopted the ideas of critical pedagogy and was eager to follow them in my own classroom. On the other hand, I felt my authority was always at question, never completely safe from scrutiny, and so I was not comfortable releasing whatever authority I could master. That conviction stemmed in part from my relatively novice status as a writing instructor and being new to the region, but also from my status as a

NNES and my worry that my students would always question my pedagogical decisions simply because I am not a native speaker of English and not a native to the U.S. culture. Monika Shehi (2017) described a similar issue with NNESTs adopting translingual approaches in their classroom: if a NNEST follows a curriculum that actively questions the privileged position of standardized American English, their students might become "frustrated" if they believe "that the reason the privilege of SAE is challenged is to accommodate 'foreign' instructors whose language skills they believe to be inferior to their own" (p. 267). Thus, the path towards professional development and growth that many novice international NNESTs have to take is complicated by their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. To a large extent, the solution seems to lie in programmatic and institutional investment in NNES teachers' self-confidence and improving students' attitudes towards NNES instructors.

I learned from my experience that reflective practice holds great potential for NES and NNES teachers alike. All novice teachers regardless of their linguistic background are likely to fall back on more familiar teaching practices. Many NES novice instructors come to teach writing from a variety of backgrounds, and exposure to scholarship on the teaching of writing might create a rift between their previous beliefs about teaching and their current roles and expectations. Utilizing critical reflection tools can help these instructors, whether NES or NNES, to formulate their current stance on questions of teaching and pedagogy and absorb new information. In Icy Lee's (2015) words, "focus on critical reflection in teacher education can facilitate the integration of new knowledge and challenge the deep-seated beliefs" (p. 33). It can be especially beneficial for international NNES teachers who come from cultures that differ significantly from mainstream U.S. culture.

In the project described in this chapter, I used a variety of reflective practices such as keeping a teaching journal or video and audiotaping class meetings. However, there are multiple other practices that can be used in combination or individually, by NNES and NES alike. Julian Edge (2011) provided a helpful overview of different strands of reflective practice commonly used in TESOL teacher development; Lee (2008) described a number of ways to use reflective teaching journals, and Farrell's (e.g. 2004; 2013; particularly 2015) extensive list of publications on reflective practices provides a comprehensive guide to a variety of reflective strategies, including peer support groups and mentor observations, which can be implemented in a teaching practicum course or professional development program. Using reflective practices in a group setting that includes NES and NNES teachers is especially beneficial as it builds collaboration between instructors and allows NNESs to grow their confidence and all instructors—to share their strengths and challeng-

es. Melinda Reichelt (this volume), for instance, described a "reading-writing autobiography" assignment in a pedagogy course that allowed NES and NNES instructors to learn about each other's experiences.

In my own project, I used a similar autobiography as a starting point to investigate my beliefs about teaching and education. Reflecting on my past experiences with learning and teaching helped me formulate the main differences I perceived between the U.S. and Russian education systems and allowed me to see points of disconnect between my teaching philosophy and what was actually taking place in my classroom. Examining these points of disconnect, in turn, made me investigate issues of power and authority in the classroom. NNES teachers who often face microaggressions, biases, and direct confrontations with their students (e.g., see Hijazi and Wang-Hiles, this collection) experience significant challenges in building their professional authority. I found myself oscillating between relying on my bureaucratic or traditional authority (using my institutional position of an authority figure rather than professional authority built on students' and my own belief in my teaching abilities) and eschewing exercising any power whatsoever. Neither of those scenarios left me satisfied with my teaching. It took me a few more years to gain enough expertise and teaching experience to feel confident in my professional authority. That timeline would likely have been shorter had I been able to articulate these conceptualizations of authority from the beginning.

There are ways to facilitate professional authority development for NNESTs. An important component of such training should address deficit-oriented perspectives towards NNESs and their legitimacy as language teachers. It is crucial that NNESTs get acquainted with literature that debunks the native speaker myth and points to the distinct advantages of NNESs as language and/or writing teachers. I was fortunate enough to have taken coursework in rhetoric, writing, and TESOL where I read the important works of Cook (1999), Kramsch (1997), Phillipson (1992), and Widdowson (1994), among others, who demonstrated the imperialist roots of the native speaker myth and advocated for NNES to be recognized as legitimate language users in their own right without being compared against the NES standard. However, composition teacher training programs rarely dedicate enough time to exploring the ideas of native speakerism, linguistic pluralism, and translingualism. Exploring these ideas in teaching practicums and other professional development trainings can not only help NNESTs find confidence in their language and teaching abilities but also help NES and NNES instructors alike find ways to introduce some of these concepts to their students in order to challenge negative biases and stereotypes (for more specific strategies, see Hijazi and Reichelt, in this volume), thus fostering more diverse and accepting classroom communities.

While many scholars recognize the importance of building authority for NNESTs (e.g., Shehi, 2017; Kasztalska & Maune, this volume), authority itself is often left undefined. Conceptualizing authority as stemming from different sources (institution, traditions, professional expertise) can benefit NNES instructors who seek to find a better balance of power in their classrooms and grow their confidence as instructors as well. Finally, an important source of authority, instructors' confidence, can be fostered at the programmatic and institutional levels, and many chapters in this volume offer strategies to promote collaboration between NNES and NES instructors and ensure NNESTs have the necessary support of their writing program administrators. Too often, NNESTs are left to face the challenges stemming from their nonnative status on their own. More robust institutional and programmatic support will allow NNESTs to build their professional expertise, confidence, and teacher authority.

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