TEACHING PRAGMATICS AS A NATIVE SPEAKER AND A NON-NATIVE SPEAKER

Kumiko Akikawa
American University & Montgomery College

Introduction

Research on nonnative speaker (NNS) teachers issues has attracted increasing attention and numerous studies on NNS teacher self-perceptions and comparisons of native speaker (NS), and NNS teachers’ differing advantages have been carried out in the past decade (for a brief overview, see Braine, 2004; Moussu & Llurda, 2008; also see Braine, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 2004; Llurda, 2005). Yet, few have explored how teachers’ NS or NNS status affects their instruction of pragmatics. Considering reported insufficient pragmatic abilities among advanced language learners (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1993; Beebe & Takahashi, 1989; Eisenstein & Bodman, 1995; Félix-Brasdefer, 2003; Takahashi & Beebe, 1987) and the existence of references to NNS teachers’ relatively weak sociopragmatic ability (e.g., Liu, 2004; Medgyes, 1994, 1999), it is worth examining how NNS and NS teachers relate to teaching pragmatics (be it in a native language or a second language) and how their perceptions influence instruction. Drawing on my own teaching experience as both a NS teacher of Japanese and a NNS teacher of English, this study explores three questions regarding instructional pragmatics: (a) how is pragmatics instruction affected by a teacher’s nativeness or nonnativeness; (b) how does a teacher’s native or nonnative status affect teaching competency; and c) how does one become a competent teacher of pragmatics?
The first part of this study examines the challenges and difficulties I faced as a NNS teacher of pragmatics. The second section compares my experience of teaching Japanese pragmatics as a NS teacher and teaching English pragmatics as a NNS teacher. In particular, I examine whether NS teachers have a genuine advantage in teaching pragmatics because of their familiarity with the target culture and their linguistic fluency. While knowledge of the target culture and adequate language proficiency are of course, necessary for successful language teaching, they are likely not sufficient. Other areas of second language (L2) instruction, such as appropriate professional preparation, are also needed for quality teaching (e.g., Derwing & Munro, 2005; Medgyes, 1999; Paternak & Bailey, 2004). Consequently, I was intrigued about the ways in which target culture knowledge, language proficiency and professional preparation function differently when one is teaching one’s first language (L1) vs. teaching an L2, especially in pragmatics instruction, an area of teaching commonly thought to play to NS teachers’ strengths and NNS teachers’ weaknesses. Finally, I emphasize the value of collaboration among teachers in regard to pragmatics instruction as a means of empowering NNS teachers who lack self-confidence, and for developing critical awareness for both NS and NNS teachers.

**Challenges**

Even advanced L2 learners with high linguistic proficiency sometimes lack pragmatic competence and experience frustration, embarrassment, or even communication breakdowns as a result. This group of learners includes NNS teachers of a language who were born and educated in a foreign language setting (see the author’s narrative in Liu, 2004; Medgyes, 1999;
and Elena’s case in Pasternak & Bailey, 2004). While such NNS teachers have acquired a high level of linguistic competence and might have even earned an advanced diploma as educators, they often have few opportunities to interact with NSs or competent NNSs in the target language and little exposure to an authentic language use in context. Therefore, the development of their L2 pragmatic knowledge and linguistic skills is often limited.

This is my case. I was born in Japan and studied English as a foreign language. My exposure to the language was limited to formal educational contexts and restricted to one specific variety of English; that is, academic English primarily for reading and writing. After my graduate study at Japanese and British universities, I was fairly confident in my English skills: I enjoyed reading English books, wrote lengthy research papers, and was able to handle basic communication during my one-year stay in England. Although my English language skills had been developed mainly through reading and writing in graduate school, I was somehow confident of my overall English language skills, including oral communication. I had even no hesitation about teaching English at Japanese universities, even when I was scheduled to teach English conversation classes.

It was when I came to the US to pursue an MA degree in TESOL that I realized my English could be misleading, confusing, and sometimes even incomprehensible. I was quite shocked at the fact that my language could still be misunderstood or unintelligible even after years of study as an English major. Since miscommunication happened in various modes of communication—including face-to-face conversations, e-mails, and telephone conversations—I began to realize that these communication difficulties were not due to accent alone. Gradually I
came to learn that there were social conventions I was not aware of, and that confusion or misinterpretation often occurred when I violated those behavioral and linguistic norms.

As researchers have pointed out, L2 speakers who come into contact with a new discourse community notice that it is not linguistic competence which makes one communicatively competent, but pragmatic competence as well (e.g., see Liu, 2004; Medgyes, 1999). This realization may be more vivid for L2 speakers with relatively high linguistic competence as they are likely to be frustrated at being unable, despite their high English proficiency, to make themselves understood or to interpret the intention of their interlocutor.

As an English speaker with extensive learning experience and the proficiency to teach English at the university level, I was shocked and embarrassed by every occasion when I was misunderstood or I misinterpreted other speakers. For instance, I discovered that sometimes when making a polite request, my interlocutor became confused and failed to interpret my request as a request. I did not realize that Japanese request strategies, such as implying and hinting, were not only ineffective but confusing to those socialized in U.S. language communities. I was even unaware that my request strategies were in fact, Japanese, and that there are different kinds of pragmatic strategies specific to particular cultures. It also surprised me to learn that sitting back and quietly listening to someone else can be taken as a sign of indifference or passiveness rather than as a sign of respect. What I realized after spending some time in the US was that I had to employ appropriate pragmatic strategies, know and use conventional language forms, and support those conventional forms with my non-verbal behavior to achieve communicative needs.
During my MA TESOL program in the U.S., I was introduced to an area of study called interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), which deals with such issues as how L2 speakers acquire pragmatic competence and how L2 pragmatics can be effectively taught (see Kasper & Rose, 2002; Rose, 2005, for a review). I was fascinated by ILP research and eager to learn about it. As I learned more about it, I was also motivated to teach L2 pragmatics so that I could help other L2 speakers. All my embarrassing experiences and struggles became motivation to learn and teach pragmatics.

Therefore I agreed without hesitation to teach pragmatics-focused lessons as a guest speaker in an EAP (English for Academic Purposes) course which a colleague was teaching. The EAP course was designed to familiarize international undergraduate students with U.S. higher education culture and help them to make a smooth transition to that discourse system. I soon noticed that students’ pragmatic skills were generally weak in comparison with their linguistic skills, and that their unfamiliarity with U.S. educational culture and low pragmatic awareness made it difficult for them to adjust their language according to context.

These students responded well to my pragmatics-focused instruction and seemed highly motivated to learn about pragmatics and very appreciative of my lessons. I taught similar course sessions the following semester which were also well received, and students’ positive feedback and their improved performance as determined by pre-/post-instructional assignments convinced me of the validity and effectiveness of a pragmatics-focused approach to teaching such students. This first attempt to teach L2 pragmatics increased my motivation and excitement about pragmatics instruction. In particular, I was pleased to see that my
learning experiences as a NNS could serve as a resource for my teaching: I could point out misunderstandings about American culture that are common among international students and highlight some important linguistic forms and cultural assumptions which students tend to miss.

In spite of the general success of these early attempts and my excitement, I was not very comfortable teaching about a culture other than my home culture, and I had not gained great confidence in my teaching. At the time, my exposure to the target culture was rather limited and my knowledge about the discourse system of higher education in the U.S. as well as my own English pragmatics skills made me wonder if I was ready to teach them to others. My doubts about my pragmatic abilities made me self-conscious about my NNS status, and I was nervous about how students might react to a NNS teacher with limited experience in teaching the pragmatics of American English. I could not overcome this insecurity about my teaching even through careful, advance preparation. In the end, I began to suspect that only a NS, who was socialized into this culture, and who had internalized its pragmatic norms, could teach pragmatics confidently and comfortably. It seemed to me that only one’s NS status would allow one to claim sufficient expertise in the target culture.

Coincidentally, just this time when I was beginning to wonder if teachers’ NS or NNS status had a significant influence on the effectiveness in pragmatics instruction, I was given a chance to teach pragmatics of my native language. I was invited to be a teaching assistant in a third-year Japanese course which focused on the development of students’ pragmatics-related skills. In this course I assisted the instructor by facilitating discussions about Japanese culture and providing comments as a NS informant, as well as teaching a few self-designed lessons.
Discovery 1: Proficiency and Ability to Teach

When teaching lessons in the Japanese course, I noticed that my attitude toward teaching the pragmatics of my native language were very different from the one I had toward teaching English pragmatics. I was much more comfortable and almost never felt nervous, as I did while teaching in the EAP course. Self-confidence in my language proficiency and knowledge about the target culture alleviated all hesitancy about my teaching and provided a sense of security. Students’ trust and interest in my comments as a cultural informant also enhanced my comfort and confidence. I began to be convinced that being a NS teacher provided a great advantage in terms of one’s knowledge about the target culture, proficiency, and above all, assuredness.

However, the sense of empowerment did not last long. My self-confidence was soon shaken. I found myself unable to answer students’ questions, especially when they asked for reasons and explanations (“why”) rather than appropriate language forms (“what”). As a NS, I could tell students what is appropriate and what is not, but I had difficulty explaining why some forms are considered appropriate in a given context and why others are not. For instance, in a situation where a student wants to give a compliment to a professor on an excellent lecture in Japanese, the student should not say “Your class was really great” as one might do in English. Instead, it is more appropriate for the student to say “Your class was very helpful.” In this instance, I could easily tell which of the two compliments was more appropriate but I could not clearly explain why. Only later did I became aware that the former, inappropriate form—*your class was great*—sounds to someone acculturated in Japan as if the student (with lower social
status) were evaluating the professor’s (with higher social status) performance, which is considered impolite in Japanese culture. In contrast, the latter form—*your class was helpful*—emphasizes the benefit of learning from the professor’s lecture. Being merely a NS of the language did not enable me to provide such on the spot cross-cultural interpretations although a teacher of pragmatics should be able to do so as well as explain underlying cultural values (Ishihara, in press; Meier, 2003).

Although I was proficient in the target language as a NS, I was unconscious of my own cultural ideologies and unable to provide cross-cultural interpretations, which professional preparation would have made possible. This supports claims made by several researchers that what matters in the teaching of a language (in addition to competent language proficiency, of course) is adequate professional preparation, which makes a teacher a skilled analyst of the language (Wright & Bolitho, 1997). By the same token, having advanced proficiency as a NS of the language does not guarantee one’s ability to teach the language (Medgyes, 1994; Pasternak & Bailey, 2004). In the Japanese classroom I experienced feelings of helplessness despite my competence in the language, and this came as a blow. However, it also caused me to reject the native speaker fallacy (Phillipson, 1992), which I had begun to give credence to because of my confidence shaking experiences as a NNS teacher. Only after I had formally studied speech acts of compliment in Japanese, could I explain the underlying cultural assumptions about such compliments. Therefore, being an effective pragmatics instructor proved to be less a matter of being a NS of the language than it was the result of having gained formal knowledge about the pragmatic feature being taught.
Discovery 2: Linguistic Competence and Pragmatic Awareness

My experiences as both an NS and NNS made me realize that being a NS does not guarantee perpetual pragmatic success, nor does it provide the formal knowledge needed to analyze language pragmatics and explain them to others. As my pragmatic awareness increased (both from formal study and simply from more exposure to English in use) I came to pay more attention to other people’s language use, analyzing its appropriateness in context and identifying underlying cultural assumptions. While doing so, I was surprised to encounter some NSs of both English and Japanese while they were clearly proficient in their respective languages, were not always pragmatically appropriate. For example, although most of my native English speaking students showed appropriate deference to me in their email messages, some also sent me pragmatically inappropriate request emails. Similarly a Japanese coworker surprised me. While she was a completely fluent NS, she was far too casual in business settings-to the point at seeming unprofessional (see Ninio & Snow, 1996, for other examples of native speaker inappropriacy). Even viewing these instances in the light of personal, generational, and gender differences, these native speaker interactions could not be judged as pragmatically successful.

Conversely, I encountered a number of NNSs who possessed solid linguistic and pragmatic competence. Many of these NNSs provided me with authentic language samples, which I presented as examples of appropriate language use in my English pragmatics class. It was encouraging and empowering to encounter such pragmatically competent NNSs, particularly when I was not confident about my own pragmatic ability as a NNS. These fellow
NNSs provided evidence that pragmatic competence is not something granted in accordance with one’s NS/NNS status but something one must learn and acquire to be a competent language user.

As I was exposed to authentic language use during my stay in the US, I noticed that my pragmatic knowledge and skills gradually developed. Although I had been immersed for a relatively short period of time, a second language context provided me with ample opportunities to apply my formal knowledge analyse other people’s language use, as well as to try to incorporate new linguistic forms into my own production. I felt that I became more able to perceive subtle nuances created by slightly different wordings and strategy choices, and to better able to discern (in)appropriateness of language use in both languages through my formal study. Such pragmatic awareness allowed me to employ language forms which were already a part of my lexicon with more comfort and confidence, and encouraged me to expand my repertoire by trying to use different expressions. Compared to when I was teaching in the EAP course earlier, I felt my sociolinguistic skills and pragmatic awareness had improved. This realization and the resulting boost in self-esteem, were crucial to my professional growth because they allowed me to overcome the sense of inadequacy I had come to feel because of my Nonnative English Speaker Teacher (NNEST) status.

What I came to realize was that if I were able to heighten my pragmatic awareness and use appropriate language, surely other L2 speakers could improve their pragmatic skills as well. Just as I was encouraged by other NNS colleagues, I too could be a source of encouragement and empowerment for my students. As a NEST we can indeed represent an attainable model
for students (Brady, 2007; Medgyes, 1994, 1999), and this is particularly true when teachers and students share similar educational backgrounds. Understanding the potential of NNS teachers to be seen both as role models and fellow language learners/users greatly encouraged me to continue teaching as a NNEST.

**Discovery 3: Variables of Pragmatic Norms**

As I learned more about the target culture as a NNS, I could not help noticing a wide range of L2 pragmatic norms, which made pragmatics instruction more complicated, challenging, and sometimes controversial. When being asked by students, for example, “What is the best way to say No to an invitation to a party?”, it is impossible for teachers to provide one definitive answer which works in every situation. The response varies depending on contextual factors such as the social status of the speaker relative to the addressee (e.g., the invitation is from the speaker’s classmate vs. boss in his/her workplace), their relationship (e.g., the inviter is the speaker’s close friend vs. a relatively new colleague), and intensity (e.g., a friend’s birthday party planned a month ago vs. a spontaneous invitation) (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In addition to this *intra-lingual variation*, pragmatic norms differ according to region, gender, ethnicity, and generation (*macro-social variation*, Barron, 2006). Judgment about “what is best” is inevitably subjective and personal and the best that teachers can do is to show range of acceptable options in context.

Because of the elusive nature of pragmatic norms and the creative nature of language, teachers must remain open-minded when teaching pragmatic norms and be aware of danger of unconsciously imposing their own values, based on their subjective point of view. Developing
critical awareness of pragmatic variability may often be more difficult for teachers who have limited experience in other discourse communities, as will be the case for many monolingual NS teachers. In terms of enhancing critical awareness, highly multicultural and multilingual NNS/NS teachers likely have a greater potential for helping students understand the variety in language form and use when compared to some monolingual NS teachers with limited cross discourse experience (Ellis, 2004, 2006; Kachru & Nelson, 1996). These monolingual NS teachers may be gifted teachers in other respect, but lack the tools of cross-cultural analysis and negotiation needed to help their students be open and observant enough to note and accept pragmatic norms different from their own.

**Discovery 4: L2 Identity and Multicultural Awareness**

Lastly, what I came to think of as a great asset to teaching pragmatics was my own experience in developing an L2 identity, which I could share with students who are likely going through a similar process as they are forming their L2 identity.

Although “obviously inappropriate” behaviors exist in language communities, there is also a range of appropriate conduct that varies according to varieties of Englishes and the speaker’s personal preference, which may be dependent on factors such as age, ethnicity, gender, regional group, and personality (Barron, 2006; Ervin-Tripp, 2001; Ishihara, 2008, in press; Siegal, 1996; Thomas, 1983). Recalling my own experience, once I became able to establish the bounds of inappropriate behavior in the L2 community, I could often make individual choices regarding L2 pragmatic norms. I realized that what guided my decision-making about which norm to use was my own sense of politeness as part of my L1 identity. Just
as my personal values are influenced by my L1 cultural values, so too are my pragmatic norms (both in L1 and L2 settings). Being an adult, my L1 identity is firmly established as are many of my L1 pragmatic norms. Therefore, my attempts to respond to L2 norms became an attempt to find a compromise between L1 and L2 norms that would be pragmatically acceptable in the L2 community while still maintaining my sense of personal identity (for more examples of and discussions about negotiation of L2 speakers’ subjectivity, see Ishihara, in press; Medgyes, 1999, Siegal, 1996).

For instance, in graduate school in the U.S., I insisted on addressing professors with titles even when they did not mind or even preferred being called by their first names. I wanted to be polite and respectful just like most of my peers did, but under a strong influence of my L1 norm, my intent was manifested differently from my peers’. While I was fully aware that addressing these professors with their first names was acceptable in this specific context, it seemed disrespectful based on my Japanese norm. I knew how I addressed professors was different from the usages of some of my peers’ but it seemed to me that this was my choice as an individual. A few explicit conversations with professors and peers about this topic also assured me that while some professors may mind being addressed by their first names, others who prefer to be called by their first names would not be offended by being addressed with titles. So, I decided to make this formal manner of address my personal L2 norm, and I behaved according to this norm until I later found other ways to express politeness and respect in the same social context. As I became aware of more options, I made slight changes to my behavioral code and as my L2 social identity developed, I was both able to better function in the L2 community and balance my L1 cultural norms with L2 norms.
Although properly addressing one’s professors is a relatively minor pragmatic issue, teachers should be aware that prescriptive instruction about what to say or do in such situations might run counter to students’ cultural values and practices. As Liu (2004) has noted, forming a new identity based on a different cultural values sometimes causes conflicts among a person’s multiple identities, requiring L2 speakers to constantly negotiate with the L2 community so that they can establish their own norms which do not conflict with either their L2 or L1 cultures. To support students, teachers must be aware that L2 speakers often go through this complicated and wearying process when they are living in the L2 community. Language teachers who are able to reflect on their own experiences in developing an L2 identity can not only build understanding and empathy with students, but also show students ways to balance multiple roles. In fact, L2 users’ choices regarding pragmatic norms seem to be often the result of cultural negotiation and their ability to balance multiple identities (Ishihara, 2008, in press). As a result, multicultural, multilingual teachers can model for learners the ways in which they negotiate interactions across diverse intercultural terrains.

In addition, it is likely that multicultural/lingual teachers have developed a healthy critical awareness about their L1 culture and personal values, since the formation of L2 identity often develops through observation and analysis of L2 norms and comparative reflections on personal values in relation to both L1 and L2 norms (Kramsch, 1993). Perhaps, this is why multilingual/cultural teachers seem to have more critical awareness of both their L1 and L2 than monolingual teachers and thus have a richer resource for language teaching (Ellis, 2004, 2006; Kachru & Nelson, 1996).
Thus what matters is not whether or not a teacher is a NS, but whether or not that teacher has cultural sensitivity, empathy for students as they go through challenging cultural negotiation/adaptation process, and awareness of the elusive nature of pragmatic norms. In case of the teaching of the English language in particular, one must be aware of the diversity of this language and the complex variation of pragmatic norms that this diversity implies. Since tolerance toward other varieties develops as teachers develop multicultural perspectives and identities, being multilingual and having critical awareness of one’s own culture and the cultures of others seems to be the key to being a competent teacher of pragmatics.

**Collaboration among NS/NNS Teachers**

Through my experience teaching as a NS and a NNS teacher, I have become convinced that what plays the key role in L2 pragmatics instruction is not whether one is a NS or a NNS but whether one (1) is a linguistically and pragmatically competent language user, (2) is professionally trained, and (3) has critical awareness of numerous varieties in pragmatic norms. Although developing pragmatic competence may be challenging to NNS teachers educated and working in an FL context due to general lack of exposure to the target culture, I believe their progress can be accelerated through conscious analysis of language use, utilizing various materials available on-line, relevant research findings and resources for teaching (e.g., for sample lesson plans to teach English pragmatics, see Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003; Tatsuki & Houck, in press; for teaching pragmatics in general, see Ishihara & Cohen, in press).

Another challenge NNS teachers might face in the course of teaching is the loss of self-esteem, which can negatively affect teaching practice (e.g., Brinton, 2004; Kamhi-Stein, 1999;
Lee, 2004). However, in my case, my loss of self confidence also had a positive outcome. My anxiety about pragmatic knowledge spurred a great deal of reflection and analysis. My emotions caused me to continually question the rightness of my judgments, and consequently, I made special efforts concerning the appropriateness of the materials I used in the classroom. I consulted NNS and NS colleagues whenever possible to obtain as many possible perspectives and interpretations as I could. I admit that anxiousness and uncertainty were my major motivations for this care, yet I came to realize how insightful such conversations were, and they enabled me to present a variety of pragmatic norms in the classroom. My self-doubt as a NNS led me to be better prepared as a teacher.

Consequently, consulting colleagues on language usage has proved to be an essential part of preparing to teach pragmatics. For NNS teachers, collaboration can be a rich resource for enhancing their own cultural awareness as well as expanding their linguistic repertoires. For NS teachers, NNS teachers’ learning experiences, struggles, and challenges in balancing multiple identities provide them with insights into how they can more effectively teach and support their students. Sharing different perspectives with other competent speakers can be an eye-opening experience, particularly when collaborators are from different educational/cultural backgrounds (see de Oliveira, 2008; de Oliveira & Richardson, 2004; Matsuda & Matsuda, 2004).

With regard to English language teachers, given that English is spoken in such a broad range of countries and each has its own norms of use, English teachers’ instructional decisions should ideally reflect the norms of as many varieties as possible, including nonnative varieties (Kachru & Nelson, 1996). In today’s globalized world English serves as a medium of cross-
cultural communication, and English language learners should not only develop their linguistic ability but also develop better multicultural awareness (e.g., Sharifian, 2009). In classroom instruction therefore, teachers should try to expand students’ multicultural awareness by identifying and validating a wide variety of cultural norms and then helping students develop strategies for finding and negotiating such norms through observation and analysis.

In case of English teaching, collaboration among NNS colleagues can be a way to empower NNS teachers who have little self-confidence (e.g., see Lee, 2004). Reflecting on my own experience at the time when I was acutely aware of my lack of pragmatic competence, research establishing the competency and strengths of NNESTs could not help me to overcome self-consciousness and embarrassment. Although the claims made sense, they did not convince me of my value as a teacher. I had to actually see or hear about NNS colleagues who were admired and respected as models of successful learners. I was very fortunate to find wonderful NNS colleagues who could provide such powerful personal narratives. They allowed me to start believing that success as a NNS TESOL practitioner was not limited to a few elite researchers, but also extended to so many of my NNS colleagues, and in fact—maybe—even to me. It is of great importance for NNS teachers to find other NNS professionals who can serve as attainable models, or even companions in the process of gaining self-acceptance, just as each NNS teacher can be a learning model for her or his students.

Conclusion

Looking through the lens of being both a NS and NNS teacher of pragmatics, I can respond to my first research question, “How is pragmatics instruction affected by the teacher’s
nateness or nonnateness?”. By acknowledging that my NS/NNS status was a strong influence on my self-perception as a teacher, it affected my teaching practice both positively and negatively. While anxiety I felt as a NNS teacher led me to strive to be better prepared, my NNS status also made me self-conscious and anxious, which likely made my instruction less effective than it could have been. Conversely, while I felt extremely comfortable teaching my own language and culture and could therefore provide instruction more confidently, I noticed that this comfort and self-confidence could sometimes result in hasty judgments and less attention to acceptable pragmatic variations which differed from mine.

Therefore, whether I was teaching as an NS or an NNS pragmatics teacher, I had challenges to meet, but the problems were different: As an NNEST my challenge was to increase my self-esteem and confidence. As a NS teacher, I needed to develop better critical awareness of the variability of pragmatic norms among Japanese speakers.

The second question, “How does a teacher’s native or nonnative status affect teaching competency?”, it can be answered by discussing the third: “How does one become a competent teacher of pragmatics?”. First of all, a native speaker’s pragmatic competence does not necessarily translate into an ability to teach pragmatics. To be able to explain underlying cultural assumptions and to make cross-cultural interpretations, professional training is required regardless of whether one identifies as an NS or an NNS. In fact, since NS teachers may often be unaware of their own cultural assumptions, explicit and conscious training is likely more critical for achieving effective teaching. Moreover, there may be cases at times when native language proficiency does not guarantee comparable pragmatic competence.
Consequently, a teacher’s NS or NNS status is not a major component of effective pragmatic instruction; rather demonstrable linguistic and pragmatic competence along professional training is the primary sources of competent teaching.

Competent teachers should possess critical awareness of the variability of pragmatic norms and remain open-minded to acceptable forms that they themselves might not use. Although it is impossible for teachers to become familiar with all permissible forms, especially considering all the varieties of English; having critical awareness and acceptance of pragmatic diversity will allow teachers to help their students develop cultural sensitivity and tolerance so that they can observe and analyze pragmatic norms different from their own and make their own pragmatic choice (Ishihara, 2008; in press).

My experiences also suggest that multilingual and multicultural teachers may often have a greater potential to help and support L2 learners to establish L2 identity. Since acquiring L2 pragmatic competence inevitably involves cultural negotiation and balancing multiple identities, teachers’ own experiences likely enable them to impart cultural negotiation strategies and to serve as models just as language learning experiences support ESL teachers by offering rich resources for their teaching practice (Ellis, 2004, 2006).

Finally, we should remember that among competent teachers, those who make a constant commitment for professional participation (see Brady, 2008 for a distinction between “professional participation” and “professional development”) have the greatest potential to be good teachers (Pasternak & Bailey, 2004). Collaboration with colleagues, especially those who come from different backgrounds but pursue the same professional goals, provides
opportunities to broaden our perspective and to develop critical awareness. Above all, collaboration with colleagues who are dedicated to the profession brings us the strength to make constant efforts to grow professionally.
References


