The multilingual teacher: Issues for teacher education

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ABSTRACT

The role of multilingual teachers in English language education has been a focus of studies in the past decade. This article extends that research by examining the attitudes and behaviours of six multilingual teacher trainees and their mentor teachers during their practicum experience as part of a postgraduate certificate in TESOL. Our findings indicate that, while language proficiency was perceived as a major challenge for these teachers in formation, the fact that they were role models for learners and had their own experiences of being a language learner were clear advantages. Additionally, many of the challenges they faced with developing pedagogical approaches that met their learners' needs were challenges faced by all novice teachers.

Introduction

Now that English is the language of globalisation, international communication, information technology, commerce and trade, the media and pop culture, and even education, it is no longer the sole property of the native-English speaker. Indeed, while Graddol (1997) estimated that there are 375 million L1 speakers of English, there are also 375 million L2 speakers of English, and 750 million EFL speakers, with the latter category the fastest growing. Several writers have claimed that nativisation has occurred even in EFL varieties in places such as Europe (Modiano 2003) and China (McArthur 2003). Other researchers have posited a common core of international English, as opposed to NS standard varieties such as British English or American English (Jenkins 2000; Seidhofer 2001; Prodomou 2003). Therefore, it is clear that both English and English language teaching are no longer the sole preserve of the native-English speaker. Consequently, the native speaker as model has been contested (for example, Canagarajah 1999; Cook 1999; Davies 1991; Nayar 1994, April), with recent research and discussion focusing on the increasing role of non-native English speaking teachers (NEST). We also contest the use of the term NEST, which is now common in the literature. That the non-native speaker teacher is defined by not having English as an L1, rather than being defined in terms of their
bi- or multilingualism, is in itself a continuation of the NS model. We have, therefore, rejected this terminology (except when quoting literature in which it is used) in favour of the more inclusive, and also more accurate, multilingual teacher.

**The multilingual TESOL teacher: Issues and concerns**

Research on the multilingual teacher has examined both multilingual teachers’ and native-speakers’ perceptions of the multilingual teacher. Tang (1997) found that multilingual teachers judged native-speaker teachers as having superior fluency skills, and multilingual teachers as having greater accuracy. Additionally, the multilingual teachers considered they had an advantage because they shared a first language with their students and could empathise with their learners due to their own language learning experiences. In a study focusing on accent, Kelch and Santana-Williamson (2002) found that student attitudes to different varieties of English were not correlated with the actual variety spoken, but rather with the listener’s perception of nativeness. Because much of the research has identified English language proficiency as a potential issue for the multilingual teacher, researchers (for example, Liu, D 1999; Medgyes 1999) have argued that language training should play a major role in teacher education programs for multilingual speakers. While supportive of such training, Polio and Wilson-Duffey (1998) note the practical difficulties of implementation.

In his work in Hungary, Medgyes (1999) found that the multilingual teacher has a number of advantages over the native speaker: they provide a good role model, teach language learning strategies effectively, supply more information about the English language, anticipate and prevent language difficulties, and use the home language. Other researchers (Braine 1999; Ellis 2002) have also reported such strengths as empathy, knowledge of their own learning strategies and understanding more about the grammar of English. Ellis further notes that most literature describes NESTs in deficit terms, and suggests that it would be more useful to focus on their strengths and abilities.

These studies, while demonstrating differences between the multilingual teacher and the native speaker, do not seek to oppose the ideology of different identities for these English language teachers; rather, they take a descriptive approach. Brutt-Griffler and Saminy (1999), on the other hand, report on a study that sought to empower multilingual teachers through critical praxis. They found that ‘the construct of nativeness in ELT has a lived reality in postcolonialism ... and is a site of struggle for many non-native-English-speaking professionals’ (p 429). Amin (2001) found that multilingual teachers from visible minorities in Canada believed their
students felt that only white teachers were authentic native speakers. However, they also felt that it was ‘their positioning as nonnative, as the Other of ESL, that allowed them to ‘draw on their experience of otherness to build successful pedagogies’ (p 103), such as building community, designing materials that foster inclusiveness and disrupting ‘native speaker mythologies’ (p 103). This research supports other findings on the importance of the multilingual teacher as a role model and mentor (Ellis 2002).

Researchers and teacher educators have recommended strategies that could help disrupt ‘native speaker mythologies’: integrating broader issues related to non-native speaker teachers into the TESOL curriculum (Kamhi-Stein 1999); encouraging collaboration between native and non-native speakers on teacher training courses wherever possible (Polio and Wilson-Duffey 1998); and engaging trainees in a systematic study of the culture of the English-speaking country in which they find themselves (Liu, D 1999; McKay 2000; Lazarton 2003).

**Context of the study**

The research reported here expands on previous research by investigating the apprenticeship of the multilingual teacher in a postgraduate TESOL program. By examining trainee teachers\(^1\) rather than practising teachers, this research is able to determine issues of concern to these new teachers and provide recommendations on how to support multilingual speakers in teacher education programs.

Six trainee teachers enrolled in the practicum in the Postgraduate Certificate in TESOL were studied over one semester. The practicum involved ten hours of supervised teaching and 15 hours of observation over ten weeks. Two trainees found placements in English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) centres, while four were placed with migrant classes.

The trainees were bi- or multilingual speakers from China, Japan, Thailand and Serbia, who had learnt English in foreign language contexts. Three were migrants who had lived in Australia from between six months to four years: one had completed a Diploma in Education in history, another had an undergraduate degree from an Australian university and the other three were international students. None of the six had prior English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching experience. Table 1 (on the next page) summarises the trainees’ backgrounds.

**Research methodology**

Data were collected from multiple sources: pre- and post-interviews with trainees, interviews with mentor teachers, videotapes of trainees teaching, learning journals, written evaluations of lessons by trainees and mentor
Table I: Backgrounds of the six trainee teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Years in Australia</th>
<th>First language</th>
<th>Prior experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yuki</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiro</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>Accountant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fay</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Accountant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>Serbian</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sasi</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

teachers, and an observation task on ‘the learner as cultural being’ (Wajnryb 1992). Since the research literature identifies English language proficiency as a potential obstacle for the multilingual teacher, we asked both trainees and mentor teachers for their perceptions of the trainees’ English proficiency.

We also wanted to examine the development of their expertise as TESOL professionals because a postgraduate program apprentices trainees into the profession. We therefore asked questions about TESOL knowledge and skills. Because of the unique contribution made by multilingual teachers as models and mentors (Ellis 2002), we also investigated trainee perceptions of their role as models. In addition, because researchers such as Amin (2001) noted that students often do not accept the professionalism of the multilingual teacher, we asked trainees what they thought of their students’ responses to them as English language teachers.

The initial structured interview with trainees focused on their previous experiences in teaching or tutoring, and students’ attitudes towards their English proficiency and their ability to teach it. In the final structured interview conducted at the end of the practicum, trainees were encouraged to reflect on how they believed their language had developed and what they had learnt about teaching. The mentor teachers were also interviewed at the close of the practicum. The trainees were videotaped during the final weeks of their teaching practice, so as to give another measure of their English proficiency and teaching skills. Their learning journals, observation tasks and written evaluations of lessons were analysed for further insights into their practicum experience. The raw data were coded according to data source (trainee or mentor teacher) and data type (interview, etc). Data codes are used after direct quotations for ease of identification (see Appendix 1 for data codes).

We did not choose a fine-grained analysis (for example, conversation analysis or discourse analysis) of the language used by the multilingual trainees in their classrooms, because the goal of this research was to uncover attitudes and behaviours rather than to examine how attitudes and behaviours
were reflected in the trainees' classroom interactions. Instead, we analysed the data for themes within the two broad categories identified in previous research: English language proficiency and TESOL knowledge and skills. When in doubt about which category to choose for a particular attitude or behaviour, we relied on trainees' and mentor teachers' own 'emic' descriptions. Within these two broad themes, we further analysed the data for sub-themes based on recurring comments across trainee and mentor teacher data. We did not, however, quantify or rank themes as the goal of the research was to develop a 'thick' description of the attitudes and behaviours of these particular trainees and mentor teachers.

Findings

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Within the area of trainees' language proficiency, we found the following salient sub-themes: intelligibility, linguistic accuracy, TESOL terminology, acting as models or mentors, students' responses to trainees' English, multilingual mentor teachers and bilingual skills.

Intelligibility

A common source of anxiety among trainees was their language proficiency and, in particular, their pronunciation. This is well expressed by Fay:

My pronunciation is not like a native speaking teacher. Sometimes you can't get the initial pronunciation from the spelling. It's hard on the spot to speak the word.

(F I1)

Yuki, another trainee teacher, was apprehensive about her accent being comprehensible to students in a multilingual class.

Maybe it depends on the nationality. Japanese students could understand because I have some Japanese accent. I have some Thai friends and they often misunderstand my English.

(Y I1)

Five of the six mentor teachers saw pronunciation as an issue. In several cases problem sounds were mentioned, while in others errors in pronunciation of specific words were noted. Comments about the level of interference varied. Some mentor teachers reported that their trainees were mostly intelligible and self-corrected, as illustrated by the following excerpts:

She has a little bit of difficulty with her 'i' and 'r' but it doesn't interfere too much.

(Y M T)

She is mostly fine, when she wasn't using 'v's or 'w's. Occasionally she was wrong but she usually corrected it.

(J M T)
One mentor, however, felt that her trainee (Hiro) was unaware of the effect of his pronunciation difficulties.

At times he was a little bit unintelligible. Hiro needs ... lots of practising pronunciation because some of the students' spelling was wrong where they had listened to what he had said, for example, the word 'cringing' they had translated into 'clinging' ... he is not aware that he is making the mistakes and needs to be.  

(H MT)

**Linguistic accuracy**

In addition to concerns about pronunciation, several mentor teachers commented on the trainees' structural errors:

I did find quite frequently that she gave the wrong structures for directions, which was a cause of confusion. They actually, being Asian, sort of knew what she meant, but they were not getting correct structures.  

(S MT)

Another teacher raised the problem of register difficulties.

Sometimes in teaching politeness, instead of ‘Do you think you could turn the music down?’ she suggested that they ask, ‘Do you think I could have a quiet time?’ And she said that was a more subtle, indirect way, instead of ‘Would you mind ...?’ So the knowledge of register was a little bit askew.  

(L MT)

Both trainees and mentor teachers agreed that the trainees' written skills were stronger than their speaking and listening skills. While written handouts were generally well prepared and edited, occasionally trainees made spelling mistakes on the whiteboard.

When asked to rate the trainees' English on a scale of 1–10 in terms of the proficiency needed to be a teacher, the mentor teachers were more generous than the trainees, ranking them 6–7 depending on the language level of students they were teaching. The trainees, however, ranked themselves around 5.

**Use of TESOL terminology**

Since these trainees are learning to become professionals in the field, we were interested in whether they had sufficient TESOL terminology to help their students. While such knowledge could also be considered as TESOL knowledge and skills, we categorised these data under English language proficiency because both the trainees and their mentor teachers considered any gaps in this area to relate to an inadequacy in English. Yuki, for example, spoke about her concerns of using English to teach grammar, especially to more advanced students. For Yuki, the teaching context was a vital factor. From her perspective, the demands of teaching in Australia were far greater than in Japan.
If I teach English in Australia I have to explain everything in English so even though I have a lot of knowledge about grammar, of vocabulary, sometimes I can’t explain [in] English so students must think ‘That teacher has no knowledge’. If I teach English in Japan I can explain in Japanese so I can show all of my knowledge. (Y I1)

Yuki’s view that she had not developed the English metalanguage to the point where she could confidently use it in the classroom was shared by other trainees.

**Trainees as models and mentors**

Since many writers have commented on the important role multilingual teachers play as models for language learning and use (Medgyes 1994), we asked trainees about their perceptions of themselves as appropriate role models for students. Responses varied, reflecting the students’ differing levels of confidence at the beginning and end of the practicum. For example, in the initial interview Yuki held negative perceptions of herself as a role model.

Not at all I think, because maybe every student will see I’m not a native speaker as they listen to my English and then they will not follow (Y I1)

But by the final interview she was more positive.

The students asked me how long I have been studying English abroad. I told them one year. They were surprised and I was encouraged. (Y I2)

Yuki’s mentor teacher was very positive about her impact as a role model.

I think she’s very appropriate and I mean in her language responses ... One thing I really appreciate about having someone who is an overseas non-native English speaker teaching language is that it is a fairly appropriate role model if you want to look at a multicultural society ... and non-standard varieties of English, to a point, not where they are disempowered but where they actually can participate. For the true representation of what society’s like it’s very important. I’m thrilled by it. (Y MT)

Several other trainees spoke about the positive experience of being mentors for their students:

I received a few positive comments yesterday. One of the Korean students told me she would like to study the TESOL course hoping she can be a teacher back in Korea, and one of the Taiwan students asked ‘how can I be a student teacher?’ So I think they’re more interested in why and how I can be standing in front of them being a student teacher. Maybe they can’t think of this happening in a native speaker country. (L I1)

Where mentor teachers had reservations, they were based on their trainee’s language proficiency.
Hiro's language skills are a little bit out. The students noticed and pulled him up on this. It was no big deal because they understood. At times they may have thought, as a speech role model, he may have been impeding their progress.

(H 12)

Hiro, however, had his own reservations; he felt that he lacked the necessary cultural knowledge as well as the language to express it. Speaking about himself as a role model, he said:

I think inappropriate ... because I have no background knowledge about English culture ... I should have more knowledge about Australian culture. ... I present it but they didn't show satisfaction. (H 12)

Within the TESOL field, reflection on the experience of language learning is considered sufficiently important for teacher education institutions to incorporate language learning as part of their TESOL program (see, for example, Flowerdew 1998). Multilingual teachers have already had language learning experiences (Widdowson 1992), and the trainees in our study referred to a number of occasions where they drew on these to teach vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation:

I can explain new words to them. I can foresee their problems with vocabulary and so I can prepare those words first and use my own language to explain it simply. (F 12)

Knowing where the pronunciation differences are, I can predict where the pronunciation errors will occur. (Y 12)

Trainees were also able to show empathy with students based on their own experience of learning English, and to share strategies for learning that they had found helpful:

Usually I caught my own mistake ... I told them that I was no better than them when I first came to Australia four years ago. I'm not a very good learner, a passive learner. If I'm watching TV I try to get some listening training, but I was still in my own shell and I didn't try to get into the community. But this course has made me push myself because I needed to go to a language centre to do my prac [practicum]. I needed to negotiate with those in charge to get a place. I know I have to encourage my students to do the same - to get into the community, and so I try to set up activities for them, to go to the health centre and to make some enquiries. (F 12)

In contrast, one of the teachers felt that her trainee overplayed identification with her students. However, her comment also reflects on the amount of teacher talk the trainee used:

They (students) were aware that she was a non-native English speaker because she kept telling them. She did tend to talk too much about herself, and they got a bit fed up because they wanted to tell their bit too. (J MT)
Student responses to the trainees' English

Research has shown that students may have negative attitudes to a perceived lack of nativeness (Kelch and Santana-Williamson 2002). We therefore asked trainees and their mentor teachers how students responded to the trainees' English. The following description of students' reactions to Yuki's teaching was typical of the comments elicited by this question:

The lower-level students became respectful once they realised they were learning. They said to her at first that everything was too easy. I think they responded with hesitancy at the beginning. They listened carefully for her faults and errors, and they were very critical but she has won them over.

(Y MT)

Yuki herself spoke about the experience of being 'tested' by one of her students:

I have experienced discrimination from a female Korean student in class who challenged my knowledge by asking me to write words on the board to check my knowledge. This made me nervous and upset.

(Y 12)

The trainees generally felt more accepted by classes with lower levels of English proficiency:

In the lowest class, I think students think I am a teacher and they called me teacher and they asked me questions ... I feel like they respect me but in the highest level class students think I am a student.

(S 12)

Student responses to trainees as non-native teachers

Because researchers such as Amin (2001) have identified students' negative perceptions of the multilingual teacher, we asked both trainees and mentor teachers how students responded to having a non-native speaker as their teacher. Only one mentor teacher spoke about student prejudice:

Students are very prejudiced which is always amusing since they are non-native speakers themselves, so you would think there would be holding up that person as role model and saying to themselves 'I can be there'. Instead, they have to be convinced.

(Y MT)

Other teachers were more neutral in their comments:

They didn't care about whether she was black, white or brindle but they respond to her authority and knowledge and confidence. That's the key issue. And she needs experience to develop that.

(S MT)

As for the trainees, Yuki expressed reservations about non-native speaker teachers, despite her own aspirations to be one. When asked how she would feel if she had a non-native speaker teacher, she replied:
I don’t feel good. Maybe in each Asian country they can study grammar by themselves or with the non-native English teacher but they came to Australia to study mainly speaking and listening because they couldn’t improve speaking, listening in their countries, but if non-native speakers teach them they feel they waste time or money. So the model is not authentic at all. (Y 12)

Her reservations stemmed primarily from an insecurity about her current language skills, but she felt that given more time in Australia her students would be more comfortable with her as a teacher.

Two trainees reported experiencing prejudice, disturbingly, from their own teachers. Julie reported several incidents when she was doing her Diploma in Education in which negative comments were directed towards her English proficiency, personal appearance and style. Similarly, Fay had an unpleasant experience when telling a native-speaker ESL teacher that she was doing the TESOL course:

... she just said ‘aha’ ... a kind of surprise, like to her I was not good enough to be an English teacher. (F 12)

**Multilingual mentor teachers as role models**

An issue that emerged during this study that has not been reported in earlier studies was the impact on trainees of multilingual mentor teachers as role models. It came to light through reflections by Yuki on her practicum experience, when observing a number of lessons in a language centre with a high percentage of multilingual teachers. After speaking of her feelings of inadequacy as a non-native speaker teacher, she added:

In Cabramatta I didn’t feel like that [self-conscious/uncomfortable] as most teachers are non-native English speakers. I heard maybe some students in some countries feel uncomfortable with native English speakers which is why they wanted non-native English speakers to teach them. (Y 12)

Yuki interviewed a teacher in this centre and recorded his comments in her observation task. The language background of the teacher was not identified, but his comments clearly influenced Yuki’s perception of herself as a non-native teacher, boosting her self-confidence. She concluded:

Moreover, concerning teaching English by non-native English teachers, it seems that the advantages of it can overweight the disadvantages of it. (Y OT)

**Bilingual skills**

The use of the home language in English language teaching is a highly contested issue, with opinions about it ranging from its prohibition, in methods such as audiolingualism, to using it as a resource (for example,
Murray 1992). The trainees in this study made minimal use of their bilingual skills as the majority of classes were multilingual. When they did use their first language in the classroom, it was to provide quick explanations as part of a classroom management strategy. Outside the classroom, trainees used their first language to clarify issues and instructions given by the mentor teacher in class.

Sometimes I use Russian, Serb, Croatian, Bosnian, and I help them to explain something quickly. (J 12)

She used her bilingualism with R, a Thai student. We asked her to explain issues to her as she had very little knowledge of what is happening and very little exposure to English. And also about visa issues. (S MT)

Yesterday a number of Asian students asked how to go to P B high school [the site for their new class] and during the break they asked if I can speak Mandarin so I could explain to them more thoroughly. So we spoke Mandarin outside the classroom and I reminded them if we’re in the classroom we must speak English but that outside the classroom, if they need further help, I could help them. (L 11)

Although it was beyond the scope of this study to explore what trainees thought about using their first language in the classroom, trainees did provide some insights into their beliefs, as is shown in Linda’s comments above. However, the extent to which Linda’s comments reflected her own convictions, and how much they reflected external constraints and expectations, is not known. In Yuki’s classroom, where the majority of students were Japanese, her mentor teacher encouraged the use of English only.

She didn’t use bilingualism at all. In this instance, I think that is quite good. I would have been very disappointed if she had. (Y MT)

Yuki expressed some relief that she would not be using her bilingual skills in the classroom.

There is one good point in teaching in Australia that maybe Japanese students have to ask me in English, everything in English, then they can’t ask me difficult things, so the questions are easier than the questions in Japan. They can’t explain their feelings or their questions in English well. (Y II)

For her part, Sasi felt confused about the appropriateness of using her first language in the classroom:

I wonder if I should speak the first language in the classroom, because there is one Thai student and she is quite slow when learning and Diane [mentor teacher] asked me to translate in Thai but it’s not fair for other students, so I am not sure. (S II)
The issue of whether or not to use trainees’ bilingual skills in the classroom is clearly one that should be discussed during the practicum. While this topic is addressed in another subject in the Postgraduate Certificate in TESOL, none of the multilingual trainees in this study mentioned the issue in their journal entries or lesson self-evaluations.

**TESOL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS**

The two salient sub-themes that emerged from our data were the trainees’ teaching abilities and their prior language learning experiences.

**Teaching abilities**

The developmental needs of the trainees in this study were very similar to those of any trainee teachers: they needed to learn to teach language in context, to match materials to student needs, and to plan and pace lessons. When asked their perceptions of the trainees’ grasp of the basic concepts of language teaching and learning – and the extent to which they used methods, techniques and tasks that met learners’ needs – the mentor teachers varied in their assessment of the trainees’ skills:

- It was all new to him. He told me he had never taught anybody before and this showed. (H MT)
- The tasks met learners’ needs. They were quite well scaffolded ... Her written tasks and worksheets were good. Techniques? – she used communicative tasks and I think they met the learners’ needs. (L MT)
- She was always trying to meet learners’ needs. It was just the perception of them that changed over the course of the practicum a little, probably not dramatically, that the learners need a real context. She is a little bit teacher-focused as new teachers always are ... she was sensitive to student needs because she does allow students adequate time to complete work and I think that ties into engaging the learner ... so she is sincerely engaging them and trying to pace herself and fit with where they are at, and checking all the time. (Y MT)

One common area of difficulty for the trainees was responding to ‘teaching moments’ in the classroom. This is a challenge for any trainee but is probably amplified for those who are multilingual. Linda anticipated this in her pre-practicum interview, a perception confirmed by her mentor teacher:

The most difficult part of teaching for me I think will be, [it will be] hard to read the students’ response, and how to respond in some unexpected circumstances ... I can’t plan for it. I can plan for my lessons. But if there’s any circumstances that arise unexpectedly, I think it is quite challenging for me ... (L 11)
Sasi's mentor teacher commented on her difficulty in giving corrective feedback in the classroom:

... the one thing I did notice, was that if they gave an inappropriate response, you could see her processing it and not knowing how to fix it, instead of grabbing it and using it. (S MT)

It is possible that cultural factors might exacerbate the normal hesitations felt by trainees in giving directions to a class. The impact of culture on the giving of instructions and providing feedback in English could be an area of fruitful future research.

Clearly, the trainees are at the beginning of what will hopefully be a lifelong engagement with teaching and learning. Yuki's mentor teacher put this developmental process into perspective when commenting on the integration of theory and practice among monolingual-speaking teachers at the centre where she worked:

That takes years for people to learn, developing a theoretical underpinning to their pedagogy. They tend to grab bag. You can't expect someone has been teaching five hours to do that. (Y MT)

**Prior language learning experiences**

Many teacher educators have commented on the importance of trainees' prior experiences and beliefs in shaping their classroom behaviour, as well as the resistance of these beliefs to education and training (Freeman and Richards 1993; Flowerdew 1998; Richards 1998; Johnson 1999; Peacock 2001). As Ellis says, based on Lortie's (1975) concept of the 'apprenticeship of observation', 'the thousands of hours we spent watching our own teachers are far more influential than the methodology we learn on teacher training courses' (2002: 98). Given that the trainees in this study all learnt English in a foreign language context, we would expect this experience to be formative in their teaching practice during the practicum.

When we mentioned things, she always knew the theory. I asked 'Had she studied that?' and she said 'Yes, of course' but one of the problems was she was teaching like she was taught, very sentence level, very decontextualised, very much based upon her own experience of learning grammar. (Y MT)

One trainee, Fay, reflecting on her experience as a language learner, spoke of choosing pedagogy that differed from that of her teachers:

I tend to have a different teacher approach from my school because I have the bad experience there. It was always grammar and students were always supposed to say 'yes' to the teacher. There was no negotiation, we were not allowed to make noise in the class, students were scared of the teachers. (F I2)
Despite her enthusiasm for new approaches, she reflected on the difficulties of introducing them in the classroom:

The teaching methodologies subject is very difficult because it is so different from how we were taught in our countries. (F 12)

A combination of cultural background, youth, personality and language proficiency resulted in classroom management difficulties for Sasi. Her mentor teacher commented:

Another thing in an Asian culture, I gather from my other Thai students, is they don't have the policy of women coming forward, and she is also young too, so she hasn't established herself in society ... They [her students] are all older people and mature. However, they really appreciated her bubbly personality ... I think there are further dimensions ... how to take control of class that was very much an issue for her. She just kept saying 'okay okay' not 'good morning, today we going to deal with ...' oh she did gradually but that was difficult for her, and giving clear precise and specific instructions ... In disciplinary matters where she needed to get their attention she would just be quiet and would wait to get their attention. It didn't work. (S MT)

The mentor teacher further commented that Sasi did begin to be more assertive, and that her behaviour could be attributed to a lack of confidence. On the positive side, Sasi did seem to have an intuitive sense of how to pace her lessons:

She was dealing with very very low-level adults and she did slow her pace down, she did to get the pace of the class very quickly, I noticed that. It was a very beneficial quality ... she understood that you need ... to deal with the words on multiple levels for it just to be comprehended. I presume her own language level did this, so she got the pace. That was very valuable. (S MT)

Class level

In the study we were interested in exploring the class level that trainees felt most comfortable teaching, since there is anecdotal evidence that institutions often assign multilingual teachers to beginner classes in the belief that these are easier for them to teach. Most trainees and mentor teachers, however, felt that the most suitable level for trainees was a general class with adult beginners.

Trainees gave various reasons for preferring to work with lower level classes. Yuki, for example, indicated her strong interest in mentoring students struggling to find the motivation to learn English.

When I started studying English maybe ten years ago I couldn't understand English at all and I hated English, so I understand the students who think
English is terrible, so maybe those students' English level must be very low so I want to teach those kinds of students. (Y 12)

When asked what had changed her attitude to English, she responded:

In Japan, the purpose of study English is usually just passing an exam for university, so even though I didn't like English. I had to study English so hard ... After passing the exam, I thought if I stopped studying English ... that time I have been study English will be wasted. So I started to go to English conversation school with English speakers and it was the first time for me to speak English. I never spoke before that. The English teacher understood my English and I was so impressed ... I started to practise speaking and listening, and I realised that I could speak English and make a lot of friends ... [therefore] I want students to know how useful and how enjoyable studying English can be. (Y 12)

Sasi's preference, however, was for:

Young children and adults, beginners. I think I want to teach children and because I think ... children can pick up a language easily and in Thailand not too many people want to teach children because they make less money than teaching adults. (S 12)

Two of the other trainees found it a challenge teaching beginners, preferring to work with more advanced learners.

With beginners, I found it very difficult to start all over again. The books and activities are more interesting for more advanced learners so I found it more interesting and challenging. When I move to another class whose level was higher (intermediate) it was easier to come in and talk, and they understand. They do not have problems with my accent ... everything is easier with higher-level. (J 12)

Fay, however, could see the potential benefits of using her bilingual skills in a beginner class.

In a class where, for example, they speak Chinese, then I think a lower class is not as hard [as a higher one] because I will use my bilingual skills. (F 12)

Superficially, ELICOS centres appeared to be the best practicum placements for international student trainees, whose own experience and context paralleled that of ELICOS students more closely than that of migrant learners. However, commenting on the response of fee-paying ELICOS students to multilingual teachers, Yuki's mentor teacher said:

The students resist them strongly. They will come and complain. People who are non-native speakers have a lot to overcome, but once they do the students are very loyal. (Y MT)

This resistance was not reported in any adult migrant settings during the study.
Discussion

The primary areas for additional learning for the trainees in our study are language proficiency, especially pronunciation, linguistic accuracy and facility with TESOL terminology in English. This concurs with the findings and recommendations made by other educators of multilingual teachers who have learnt English in a foreign language context (for example, Liu, D 1999; Liu, J 1999; Medgyes 1999; Polio and Wilson-Duffey 1998).

However, both trainees and mentor teachers also recognised the need for trainees to study and to understand the culture of the country they are teaching in. This suggestion has been raised by Lazarton (2003), Liu, D (1999) and McKay (2000) as well, with the latter noting that ‘the area in which they [trainees] seem to experience the greatest sense of a lack of knowledge was in the area of cultural knowledge’ (2000: 54).

Ellis (2002) and others (for example, Braine 1999; Medgyes 1999) have noted the unique contribution made by multilingual teachers. While this present study focused on trainees rather than on experienced multilingual teachers, the contributions identified by these other researchers can also be seen in the trainees. For example, like the more experienced multilingual teachers, trainees were able to show empathy with students based on their own experience of learning English and to share strategies for learning that they had found helpful. Although uncertain about using their home language in instruction, outside the classroom trainees used their first language to clarify issues and instructions given by the mentor teacher in class.

In general, the trainees’ use of their first language paralleled that of the experienced teachers in Ellis’s (2002) study. The overall consensus among mentor teachers was that, while language proficiency was an issue, the trainees had a positive effect as models and mentors in the classroom and that, given time and experience, they would make a significant contribution to the TESOL profession.

The trainees themselves, however, felt considerable insecurity about their English language skill level and their teaching expertise, and were concerned that their students would not consider them to be ‘real’ teachers, a perception referred to in the literature as ‘imposter syndrome’ (Brookfield 1990). Pegson and Tennant (1995), in discussing this among adult educators, speak of the fear and guilt that teachers experience when they feel they do not have sufficient knowledge or expertise to meet student needs. However, there was only one report of explicit resistance to multilingual teachers, which was in an ELICOS setting. As Ellis (2002) notes, ELICOS colleges have only begun to employ multilingual teachers in the past ten years, unlike the Adult Migrant English Program in Australia, which has a long history of employing and valuing multilingual teachers, thereby creating a culture of inclusion.
Only one of the trainees was placed with a bilingual teacher, and this student reported no special benefit from this placement after the practicum. However, given the support in the literature (Medgyes 1994; Kamhi-Stein 1999; Ellis 2002) for multilingual teachers as role models for language students, it might be expected that the placement of multilingual trainee teachers with multilingual mentor teachers could have positive effects. This area warrants further study.

So, for trainees to utilise their multilingual advantage fully they must position themselves (and be positioned by the field) not as ‘other’ but as effective role models and mentors. This requires that all trainees and teacher educators (multilingual or not) deconstruct the myth of the native-speaker. To this end, Kamhi-Stein (1999) suggests classroom activities that range from analysing the language learning histories and beliefs of trainees to classroom-centred research on the topic of non-native speaker teachers. She also suggests collaboration between native and non-native speakers on teacher training courses wherever possible, while Amin (2001) recommends building community and designing materials and discussions that foster inclusiveness. Many of these suggestions are already addressed in another subject in the Postgraduate Certificate in TESOL, but this study indicates that becoming effective role models and mentors is a long-term process for multilingual trainees. Thus, it is unlikely to be achieved within only one subject or program, but rather requires the entire TESOL profession to be active in countering the myth of the NS as model.

In many ways, the developmental needs of the trainees in this study were similar to those of any new trainee teachers. We concur with McKay (2000) who has called for more research to determine the extent to which concerns raised by multilingual trainees are shared by native English-speaking trainees.

**Conclusion**

While this is a small-scale study, the insights gained both from the multilingual trainee teachers and their mentor teachers suggest ways to strengthen the Postgraduate Certificate in TESOL practicum, in particular, and preservice TESOL education in general. Foremost among these is the development of trainees’ English proficiency and cultural knowledge alongside their teaching abilities. For this to happen, however, we need to recognise the time constraints on programs. Firstly, additional tutorials on language and cultural issues could be offered for multilingual trainees. Secondly, they could be provided with opportunities for micro-teaching or peer teaching where issues of language and culture, as well as
pedagogy, could be explored in follow-up debriefing sessions. Thirdly, trainees could be given the choice of working with a multilingual mentor teacher and/or with a bilingual class. Finally, the issues uncovered here (for example, the role of L1 in the classroom, teaching in non-English speaking countries) and in other research on multilingual teachers should form part of the syllabus and discussion of any preservice program. Clearly, mentor teachers and academic staff can also make a significant contribution to the trainees' development by empathising with the challenges they face, addressing any issues associated with low self-confidence and encouraging all trainees to overturn the ideology of the superiority of the native speaker as English teacher.
### APPENDIX I

**Coding for data quoted in the text**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Trainee teacher pseudonym</th>
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<th>Mentor teacher interview</th>
<th>Trainee interview 1</th>
<th>Trainee interview 2</th>
<th>Learning journal</th>
<th>Observation task</th>
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<td>F I1</td>
<td>F I2</td>
<td>F LJ</td>
<td>F OT</td>
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<td>H MT</td>
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<td>H I2</td>
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<td>H OT</td>
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<td>J OT</td>
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</table>
NOTES

1. We use the term 'trainee' or 'trainee teacher', even though we oppose this term, implying as it does that learning to become a teacher is training, rather than education. We use the term for ease of reading so that the term 'student' is reserved for students learning English as an additional language.

2. Pseudonyms are used to protect participants' identity.

3. We have used terms from ethnographic research methodology. Even though this study was not an ethnography in the anthropological sense, it did use data collection and analytical tools used in ethnography.

4. While we also analysed and cross-checked data from teaching videos and lesson plans, there is no coding for these as they were not quoted directly in the text. Note also that quotations have not been used from all cells.

REFERENCES


