

Knowledge base development of native and nonnative English-speaking teacher candidates:

A comparative case study of two teacher preparation programs in Canada

Doctoral Dissertation Grant

Farahnaz Faez
Modern Language Centre
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
OISE/UT

Research Supervisor:
Dr. Antoinette Gagné
Modern Language Centre
Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
OISE/UT

Detailed proposal:

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Statement of research issue and relationship to TIRF's research priority:

In view of the increasing presence of NNES educators in the teaching profession worldwide and the paucity of research as to what constitutes a comprehensive knowledge base to provide effective instruction for ESL learners, I propose a comparative case study of two different teacher education programs. This study will explore how the two programs develop the knowledge base in native and nonnative teacher candidates in order to work with ESL learners. I will collect data from various stakeholders in the two programs and will include the perspectives of native and nonnative teacher educators and teacher candidates. It is believed that the examination of the same issues in two different programs with the common goal of preparing teachers to work with ESL learners will allow for a broader and deeper understanding of effective instructional practices in teacher education programs. Furthermore, the unique contribution of this study is to draw on the insights of both NES and NNES teacher educators and teacher candidates for a broader exploration of the issues involved.

Theoretical background:

Despite the significance of delineating a core knowledge base in language teacher education programs, there is no general consensus in the field about what language teachers should know in order to teach effectively. The need to outline the knowledge base and establish standards for the content of language teacher education programs has been recognized in the field (Guntermann, 1993). Some efforts have been made to identify the knowledge that teachers need to possess (for example, see, Shulman, 1986; 1987; Richards, 1998) in order to develop effective teacher education programs. However, to date language teacher education has predominantly been 'documented by

tradition and opinion' and 'relatively little studied' (Freeman & Johnson, 1998, p. 398). It is time that language teacher education moves toward research-based decision making.

Knowledge and teacher knowledge: The conceptions of knowledge (notably Ryle, 1949 and Polanyi, 1966) have influenced the conceptions of teacher knowledge as “knowing-in-action” and “reflection-in-action” (Schon, 1983) as “practical knowledge” (Elbaz, 1983), as “personal knowledge” (Clandinin and Connelly, 1987, 1991; Connelly and Clandinin, 1985, 1995; Clandinin, 1992), as “situated knowledge” (Leinhardt, 1988), and as content knowledge (Shulman, 1987). Different from the conceptions of teacher knowledge as experiential and situated, Shulman proposes a theoretical framework of teacher knowledge which is analytical (see, Shulman, 1986, Wilson, Shulman, and Richert, 1987) and distinguishes three categories of content knowledge: 1) subject matter content knowledge, 2) pedagogical content knowledge, and 3) curricular knowledge. The model is further developed to include more categories such as knowledge of learners and their characteristics, educational contexts and evaluation (Shulman, 1987; Shulman & Sykes, 1986; Tamir, 1988).

Language-teacher knowledge: Language teaching is more complex than other subject matter in that the target language is often both the medium of instruction and object of learning. While a number of studies have investigated the knowledge of L1 teachers (see, for example, Grossman, 1990; Hillocks, 1999) not much research has been conducted in the area of ESL teacher knowledge (see, however, Day & Conklin, 1992; Day, 1993; Woods, 1996; Tsui and Nicholson, 1999, Andrews, 1999, 2003).

Conceptualizations as to what specifically constitutes subject matter in language teaching vary. Subject matter alludes to what teachers know about what they teach. Taking into account the diverse nature of teacher candidates that include both native and nonnative individuals with different backgrounds and life experiences, determining the core knowledge base in language teaching becomes even further complicated. NES and NNES teacher issues are controversial and much research has focused on the perceptions of NES and NNES teachers regarding their perceived possible strengths and/or limitations in their knowledge base (Arva and Medgyes, 2000; Inbar-Lourie, 1999; Liu, 1999; Medgyes, 1994; Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999; Tang, 1997; Maum, 2002; Mahboob, 2003).

Subject matter knowledge in language teaching: Lafayette (1993) suggests three components encompass language teachers' subject matter knowledge: (1) language proficiency, (2) civilization and culture, and (3) language analysis (knowledge about the language). Richards (1998) finds Schulman's conceptualization of knowledge base a useful frame of reference for examining the core knowledge base of second language teachers. He proposes six dimensions: (1) theories of teaching, (2) teaching skills, (3) communication skills and language proficiency, (4) subject matter knowledge, (5) pedagogical reasoning skills and decision making and, (6) contextual knowledge. Researchers have differing conceptualizations (for more examples see, Day & Conklin 1992; Lipishak, 1977) and emphasize various areas of competency.

NES and NNES subject matter knowledge: Research has distinguished the potential competency as well as the strengths and limitations of each group of professionals. There seems to be a consensus that the ESL teachers' competence in English is a crucial part of teacher knowledge (Lafayette, 1993; Lange, 1990); nonetheless, compared to their native speaking counterparts, NNES teachers perceive language proficiency as their most crucial weakness (Inbar-Lourie, 1999; Medgyes, 1994; Medgyes & Reves, 1994; Tang, 1997). NNES educators' inadequate language competence is seldom alluded to and often referred to as "self-perceived language needs" (Kamhi-Stein, 2000); however, Medgyes and Reves' (1994) study is an exception that draws causal effects between language deficiency and teaching performance.

Cultural knowledge and declarative knowledge about the language are other components that are recognized as constituents of subject matter knowledge in language teaching (Lafayette, 1993). Research findings differ quite drastically with respect to discussions around knowledge of culture and socio-linguistic norms. While NES teachers are known to be cultural representatives because of their background and as a result better informants of their heritage, NNES educators are reported to have limitations in their cultural knowledge (Medgyes, 2001; Kamhi Stein, 2000; Samimy and Brutt-Griffler). Nevertheless, Lazaraton's 2003 study reveals that NNES educators' *teaching* of culture is not always problematic, due to their inter-cultural sensitivity as a result of their first-hand experience having learnt the same target language and culture (Braine, 1999). On the other hand, the primary advantage usually attributed to NNES teachers is their explicit and declarative knowledge about the target language (Bailey, 2002; Arva & Medgyes, 2000).

NES and NNES pedagogical knowledge: NES and NNES teachers' pedagogical content knowledge has also been a matter of concern (Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Medgyes, 1994; Reves & Medgyes, 1994). Pedagogical content knowledge refers to what teachers know about teaching their particular subject matter. Suggestions as to what constitutes language teachers pedagogical content knowledge includes competencies that relate specifically to language teaching such as how learners learn languages, language development stages, learning styles, preparing and implementing communicative-oriented activities, knowledge of learners and their errors (Richard, 1998; Wing, 1993; Dittrich, Schrum, and Stewart, 2000). NNES educators are recognized for their insights into the language learning process, anticipating problematic areas, providing appropriate instruction and being good models for ESL learners (Phillipson, 1992, Medgyes, 2001); however, NES educators' superior command of fluent and idiomatically correct language forms exposes ESL learners to authentic language and can motivate their students (Arva & Medgyes, 2000).

NES and NNES and the broader social context: Interest in the area of NES/NNES educators has also generated discussions around the personal and professional ramifications of being a member of either group. NES/NNES issues have also been debated within the contexts of English globalization and world Englishes (Canagarajah, 1999; Gupta, 1999; Nayar, 1994), linguistic imperialism (Pennycook, 1998; Phillipson, 1992), NES/NNES collaboration (Gill & Rebrova, 2001; Tajino & Tajino, 2000) and

critical pedagogy and identity formation (Amin, 1997; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999). These studies have particularly emphasized that English educators should be evaluated based on their professional subject matter knowledge and expertise, rather than on their native and nonnative status (Liu, 1999).

Reconceptualization of the knowledge base: More recently, an increasing number of researchers have criticized traditional perspectives of language teacher education and have called for a reconceptualization of the field (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Freeman & Richards, 1996; Richards & Nunan, 1990, Schulz, 2000; Savukova, 2002; Tsui, 2003). Freeman and Johnson (1998) propose a framework for the knowledge base of language teacher education comprised by three inter-related domains: the teacher-learner, the social context, and the pedagogical process. Their proposal emphasizes “*who teaches what to whom, where?*” (p.405). In a similar vein, Tsui (2003) reconceptualizes teacher knowledge as an amalgamation of what has been previously conceived as distinctively identifiable knowledge domains including knowledge of subject matter, the learner, the curriculum, the context and pedagogy. She believes that this amalgamation is affected by the teacher’s personal conceptions of teaching and learning, which is formed over the years as s/he is also influenced by other sources.

Drawing on insights provided by various characterizations of teacher knowledge, reconceptualizations of the knowledge base include: Freeman and Johnson’s “inter-related domains” (1998, p.405); Savukova’s “web of factors” (2002, p.87); Tsui’s “integrated coherent whole” (2003, p.65) as well as the recognition of the central role *teachers* occupy in the learning to teach process and the language learning process of ESL learners. Therefore, understanding how NES and NNES teacher candidates compare in the process of developing their professional knowledge base is important in moving the field forward. My study aims to address this issue. Furthermore, teacher educators are teachers themselves (Hudson-Ross & Graham, 2000; Friedus, 2002; Jay & Johnson, 2002; John, 2002) and just as NES and NNES teachers drive learning in their classrooms, teacher educators are central in shaping the experiences of teacher candidates in pre-service programs. Studies on teacher educators represent a small but growing body of research (Acker, 1997; Beck & Kosnik, 2001; Beynon, Grout & Wideen, 2004; Day & Leitch, 2001, Tillema & Kremer-Hayon, 2002); However, the exploration of the perspectives and instructional practices of NES and NNES teacher educators, to my knowledge, has not been documented in literature, and is what I consider the unique contribution of this study.

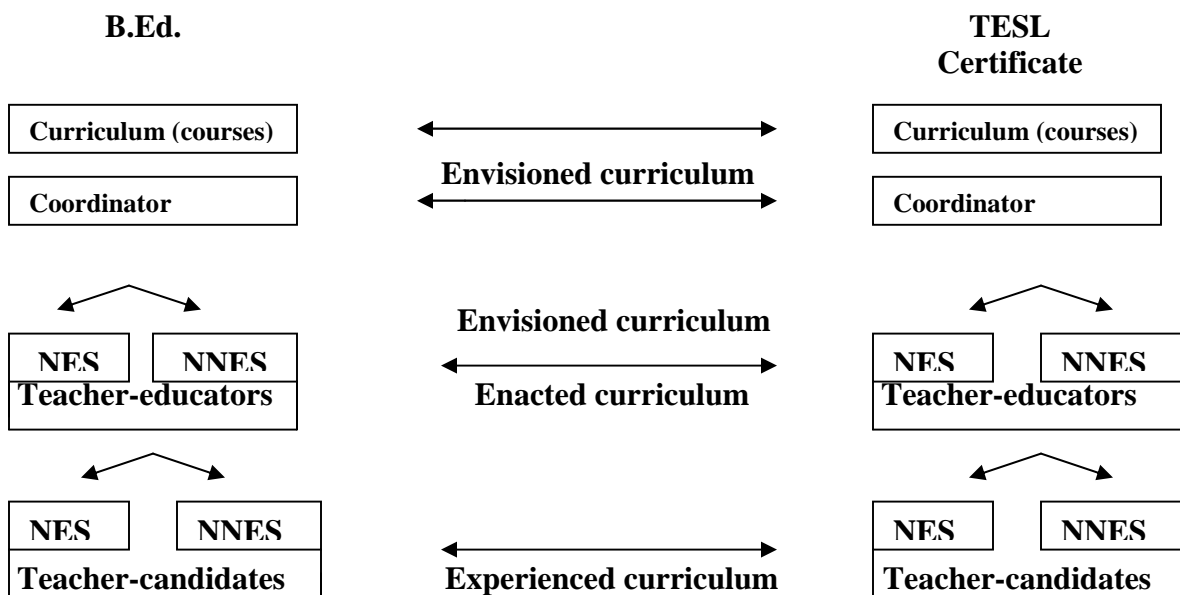
Research Framework:

First, by comparing two different teacher education programs: a) a B.Ed program that is a generic teacher education program that prepares teachers to work with K-12 ESL learners and b) a TESL post-degree certificate program that prepares (second language) teachers to work with adult ESL learners, I am hoping to gain insight into how these programs develop a knowledge base in their candidates to work with ESL learners and possibly shed some light on a more comprehensive conceptualization of the knowledge base in language teacher education programs.

Second, by collecting data from the coordinators of the two programs, NES and NNES teacher educators and NES and NNES teacher candidates, I am hoping to collect data from multiple sources and gain insight into how NES and NNES perspectives compare in conceptualizing the knowledge base and what each group prioritizes as components of the knowledge base in working with ESL learners.

Third, this study will explore how the knowledge base is filtered through various levels of the curriculum; by gathering data at three levels, this study will investigate a curriculum model proposed by Cameron (1992) and Cameron and Gagné (2001). This model includes: 1) the *envisioned curriculum*; in this case, the course outlines and what the coordinators believe should happen in pre-service programs; 2) the *enacted curriculum or actualized curriculum*; in this case, what the teacher educators operationalize in the pre-service programs; and 3) the *experienced curriculum or real curriculum*; in this case, how the curriculum affects or is understood by teacher-candidates.

By including NES and NNES teacher educators in the study, I am hoping to gain insight into how these two groups of professionals compare in envisioning and enacting the curriculum. Finally, the main focus of the study is how NES and NNES teacher candidates compare in terms of the experienced curriculum.



The K-12 B.Ed program at OISE/UT

This one-year post-degree program prepares qualified candidates to teach in Ontario schools.

The recent education policy in Ontario is that *every teacher should be an ESL teacher*. This is due to the increasing number of ESL learners in the K-12 classrooms as a result of the quarter million of immigrants that come to Canada every year. Ontario has been home to 58% of these immigrants in the past three years and Toronto alone has received 48% of the immigrants.

The Woodsworth TESL post-degree certificate program at the University of Toronto
 The certificate program in Teaching English as a Second Language provides professional preparation to individuals interested in teaching ESL to adult learners. The program consists of 8 semester-length courses including a required practicum.

A comparison of the two programs:

The summary table below highlights the many differences between the two programs which I view as an important strength in my proposed research.

Characteristics	B.Ed. program	TESL Certificate
Program goals	Certification of K-12 teachers across disciplines for Canadian schools where English is the medium of instruction	Certification of ESL teachers for adult ESL instruction in the public and private sector
Program length	9 month B.Ed. for K-12 (full-time) (one-year university calendar)	8 months of full-time study (one-year university calendar) or two to three years of part-time study
Entrance Requirements (English)	Only NNES candidates with less than three years of consecutive schooling in an English speaking country are required to take a standardized proficiency test such as TOEFL or IELTS.	Only NNES candidates with less than four years of consecutive schooling in an English speaking country are required to take a standardized proficiency test such as TOEFL or IELTS.
Entrance requirements (General)	Applicants must hold an approved degree that includes at least 15 full-year courses equivalent to a four-year degree program.	Applicants must have a minimum of a three-year undergraduate degree with an acceptable average
Teacher candidates' characteristics	Approximately 1300 teacher candidates where about 10% are NNESs	120-150 admitted, about 10% are NNESs
Range of courses offered and course weight	5.0 full-course equivalents	4.0 full-course equivalents
Practicum (In hours)	0.5 course weight 2 five-week practicum sessions with different host teachers in different schools and a five-week internship	0.5 course weight 30 hours of observation and 20 hours of teaching within supervised classrooms
English proficiency development model	All courses are taught through the medium of English but little attention is paid to the language development of NNES teacher candidates by most instructors. However, several optional support services are available to NNES candidates	All courses are taught through the medium of English but little attention is paid to the language development of NNES teacher candidates by most instructors. No support services are available to NNES candidates.
Teacher Educators	The majority of the 200 teacher educators are native speakers and few are language teaching specialists	The majority of teacher educators are language teaching specialists

The two programs reveal that they are very different in the way they seek to develop the knowledge base required to work with ESL learners. By comparing two different programs I am hoping to gain a better understanding of how native and nonnative teachers develop as teachers in these two contexts.

Methodology:

Case study methodology (Creswell, 1998; Eisner, 1998; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990) with its emphasis on acquiring multiple data sources and triangulating data best suits my research program as my goal is to explore how two different teacher education programs develop the knowledge base in their candidates in order to work with ESL learners and in what ways native and nonnative teacher candidates differ. My case study will include a document analysis, that is, a description and comparison of the two programs. This will be accompanied by portraits of a) the coordinator of each program, b) a native and nonnative teachereducator in each program, and c) two native and two nonnative teacher candidates in each program.

I want to explore the perceived needs of these two groups of professionals and find out how they compare and also find out how each program responds to these needs. I will conduct an in-depth semi-structured interview with each coordinator and teacher educator focusing on their background and current beliefs about what teachers should know in order to establish effective teaching practices to work successfully with ESL learners. I will also observe each teacher educator's classroom at least twice during the 2004/2005 academic year. These observations will allow me to gain a deeper insight into the pre-service classrooms. An observation form will be developed to allow me to take field notes consistently from situation to situation. The teacher-candidates will be interviewed twice-once in the middle of the academic year and once at the end of the academic year. This data from multiple sources and various levels of instruction will allow me to gain a deeper insight into the factors that contribute to the development of knowledge in the NES and NNES teacher candidates.

The interviews will be transcribed. I will explore the emerging themes and develop a coding scheme, and code the data thematically. I will use the NUDIST software to analyze the data. I will check with the participants to ensure that the transcripts, coding and my interpretations reflect their views and actions as accurately as possible.

Implications for theory, policy and practice

This comparative case study may contribute to 1) shaping policy initiatives related to curriculum design and course outlines in teacher education programs, 2) fine tuning learning opportunities for NES and NNES teacher candidates, 3) defining a research agenda in this area, and 4) helping all stakeholders to adopt strategies to reach the common goal of developing the required knowledge base in NES and NNES teacher candidates to work effectively with ESL learners.