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INTRODUCTION

Don's Story

It was at the Taipei YMCA in 1979 that I first stood before a class as an English teacher, wondering how to survive the period with my dignity intact. I was sure of my command of English, but much less confident that I would even understand a jargon-laden question about English grammar rules, let alone be able to answer it.

I was also distinctly aware that knowing how to speak English was not the same as knowing how to teach English. What few vague ideas I had about language teaching dated from painful experiences in high school and college foreign language classes. These experiences had convinced me that there had to be a better way to teach language than lecturing on the finer points of grammar, but they had not shown me what that better way might be. Thus, in that first class period, I focused most of my attention more on my need not to make a fool of myself than on effective pedagogy, and my primary goal was to hear the bell ring before I ran out of things to say.

Over the next 2 years, as my skills improved and I became more confident, I became less worried about getting through a class period. In this stage of my development, I judged the success of a class period largely on whether or not students seemed to like a lesson, and I rarely persisted in any activity to which students did not quickly respond. As a result, my courses evolved into a series of "greatest hits" activities that entertained reasonably well and generated quite a bit of language practice, but did not have much continuity. Only after considerable trial and error — and a graduate program in language teaching — was I able to move from a standard of "Do my students like this activity?" to one of "Is this activity really going to help them learn?"

This is not to say that the English courses I taught during my earlier years were a waste of students' time; I no doubt provided the students with good practice opportunities and valuable language knowledge, and I may have enhanced their interest in language learning by making it more enjoyable than it might otherwise have been. However, as I studied the rudiments of the language teaching craft, I learned not only how to teach language lessons more effectively but also how to help students learn to structure more productive language learning experiences.

Novice Teachers of English

Every year, many thousands of men and women from English-speaking nations go abroad as English teachers through a variety of volunteer, academic, government, and church organizations. Many others locate English teaching jobs through recruitment agencies, Internet job boards, or personal connections, or simply by appearing in a city and asking around. Though these novice language teachers often face problems similar to those described above, over time, many learn to be good language teachers. To a large extent, success in teaching is based on qualities such as diligence, patience, and common sense, which many nonprofessionals possess in abundance, and many novice teachers make a significant educational contribution to their host nations in spite of their lack of professional training. However, learning the craft of language teaching by trial and error can take a long time and involve considerable emotional wear and tear on both teachers and students. The purpose of this book is to accelerate the process by providing a nontechnical introduction to English teaching that is geared toward the special needs of novice native-English-speaking teachers working abroad. Therefore, throughout this book, we refer to our target audience as novice teachers (NTs) of English.

The NT Teaching Experience Abroad

Because teaching English as an NT in a foreign country is quite different from teaching as a trained teacher in an English-speaking country, the assumptions and emphases of this book are different from those of most introductions to English teaching in several ways. We assume that:

1. **NTs need a practical introduction to teaching abroad.** Most NTs have some experience with language learning as a result of high school or college foreign language courses, have a native or near-native knowledge of English, and have a native understanding of at least one English-speaking culture. However, most NTs do not have professional training or experience in language teaching and are not necessarily interested in making a career of it. Therefore, this book is a practical introduction to the range of issues involved in learning to teach

English abroad rather than a scholarly introduction to the language teaching profession as a whole. The book *is* based firmly on current English teaching thought and research as well as on the authors' experiences as language teachers and language learners. However, we assume that what an NT needs most is a readily intelligible distillation of English teaching theory and practice, explained with a minimum of technical jargon.

2. **NTs can learn culture through genuine communication.** In contrast to English teachers in English-speaking countries, NTs must not only learn how to teach English, but also learn about and adapt to the expectations, goals, methods, and resources of an unfamiliar educational system and culture. In addition to posing challenges, this situation has distinct advantages, one being that it provides an excellent opportunity for genuine communication; students are experts in their culture, so many activities can involve students in talking and writing about their culture in order to help educate the teacher.

3. **Adapting to life in a foreign culture can be difficult and affect teaching.** NTs abroad are trying to cope with teaching while simultaneously undergoing the exciting but sometimes difficult process of adapting to life in a foreign culture. Though this adaptation process may normally be outside the range of topics considered in a book on language teaching, we have chosen to discuss it because it not only has a significant impact on the life of NTs abroad but can also affect their teaching—especially their effectiveness in teaching explicit or implicit lessons about culture and intercultural communication.

The Typical NT Environment

Teaching situations abroad can differ significantly according to the culture of the host country, students' skill levels, the resources available, class size, and a host of other variables. The following are some common ways in which these situations may vary:

1. **Equipment:** In virtually all settings where NTs teach, there will at least be chalk and a blackboard or some equivalent. In some settings, computers, projectors, DVD players, and other types of equipment may also be available, and there may be good Internet access; in others access to the Internet and technology may be limited.

2. **Materials:** A textbook will probably be available for most English courses, though in some settings only the teacher may have a copy. In some settings, students will have access to a range of textbook options and a plethora of authentic English language resources, such as English television series and movies. In other settings, students may have very little access to textbooks or authentic reading and listening materials in English.

3. **Student Age:** The age range of students NTs might teach is broad, with the youngest consisting of preschool children and the eldest including retired adults. However, most NTs work with adolescents (especially the higher levels of secondary school) or young adults (especially university students or young working people).

4. **Class Size:** Though it is increasingly common for NTs to have classes with only 20 or 30 students, there are settings where class sizes are much larger than this, perhaps even exceeding 100. At the other end of the scale, in some private teaching settings, it is possible to have as few as five or six students.

5. **Skill Levels:** NTs teach students at every skill level; some students are brushing up their command of the terminology of nuclear physics and others still don't understand "How are you?" However, NTs usually face students lying somewhere between these two extremes who have adequate English skills for rudimentary communication with a foreign English teacher in class but who cannot yet communicate fluently. In many countries, students can read more than they can say or understand in conversation.

6. **Programs:** NTs often teach within established programs (i.e., with goals, curricula, expectations, evaluation systems), but by design or default many programs will leave room for innovation and decision-making on the teacher's part.

7. **Schools:** NTs often work in the host country's formal education system, teaching in primary, secondary, or tertiary institutions. However, some teach in private English centers, intensive English programs, test preparation centers (preparing students to take tests like the Test of English as a Foreign Language [TOEFL] or the International English Language Testing System [IELTS]), or various English villages or clubs.

8. **Language Environment:** Most NTs teach in places where English is not widely used outside the classroom. This limits students' opportunity for practice and prob-

lematizes students' goals and motivation. For example, in many countries, students study primarily to get high scores on exams; consequently, they study in ways that prepare them for tests but do not help them develop usable English skills. This, in turn, means that they may lose interest in English study once they no longer have tests to pass.

9. **Culture:** Many NTs will teach in non-Western societies, some of which are relatively traditional societies that look more to their past for values and practices than most Western societies do. In some of these societies, attitudes toward English teaching have been influenced by traditional methods for learning to read a prestige language, such as classical Chinese in China and Arabic in many Islamic countries (languages that play a role similar to that which Latin played in premodern Europe). Such societies tend to value the authority of the printed word and of the teacher, see language learning as knowledge acquisition rather than skill development, and emphasize study of texts (grammar, vocabulary, and reading) more than speaking and listening skills. Though these values have begun to change as an increasingly global economy increases the importance of effective communication in English, grammar books and dictionaries often still have a very high degree of authority. As a result, NTs' assumptions about how one should teach and learn language may differ considerably from those of their students and colleagues.

10. **Relationship to the West:** The position of economic, military, and cultural dominance that English-speaking nations have occupied over the past two centuries allows a few generalizations about the relationship between the NT's culture and that of the host country. First, many (but not all) NTs teach in nations that are not as wealthy as the teachers' home countries. Second, the wealth, technology, markets, and cultural power of English-speaking nations often inspire considerable admiration (and much of the motivation for English study) in the host country. These feelings may, however, be complicated by feelings of bitterness toward ex-colonial and imperial powers. Students may have very mixed feelings about the English-speaking nations of the West, and some NTs have been surprised at the speed with which a class of students that seemed very enthusiastic about the West becomes defensive or even hostile.

Theoretical Assumptions

In this book, we primarily take the *communicative language teaching* (CLT) approach; in other words, we stress the idea that language is a tool for communication and that communicative activity should play a major role in the language classroom. We take this stance not only because it is a dominant trend in current thinking about language teaching, but also because most NTs find it instinctively appealing and comfortable to work with. At times, however, we also discuss teaching methods, such as text memorization, that are associated with other theoretical approaches. This is partly because we share the belief of many scholars that there is no single theory of language teaching that is authoritative (e.g., Omaggio Hadley, 2001; Brown, 2002; Richards & Burns, 2012). Given the tendency of many Westerners to be critical of traditional or outdated approaches—and the distinct possibility that some host colleagues will use these methods—NTs need to be able to see the reasons for and merit of these methods. Without this bit of empathy, they may end up alienating both their colleagues and their students.

As language teaching professionals increasingly recognize, the English classroom is often not the most important focus of activity for many students. In many cases, students' success in learning a language depends more on the effectiveness of their strategies outside class than on the skill of the language teacher in class. This is especially true for the many students who do not study English in full-time programs and whose success depends on the work they do outside class. It is also especially true for students whose native language is not closely related to English and whose acquisition of English is not speeded by the vocabulary, grammatical, or cultural similarities that accelerate the English study of many European students. Consequently, we will also discuss study methods and ways for students to plan their own study programs.

We approach listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary, and culture separately rather than organizing discussion based on whole-language approaches to teaching and learning. This is a deliberate choice; such divisions are likely familiar to NTs as a result of their experiences in foreign language classes. Also, many of the schools and students with whom NTs will work tend to think in terms of these categories, and teachers who are learning a new craft in a new environment would be wise to begin from what is familiar to both them and the students.

Topics in this book are sequenced roughly in the order in which an NT is likely to need the information. The first

section of the book, Preparing to Teach (Chapters 1–6), is devoted to issues of classroom survival: basic principles of language learning and teaching, and course and lesson planning. The second section, Aspects of English Teaching (Chapters 7–14), discusses the various aspects of language teaching in more detail. Finally, Chapter 15 addresses adaptation to life in the host country, and Chapter 16 suggests future paths for NTs who become interested in being professional language teachers.

Changes in the Third Edition

In this new edition of *More Than a Native Speaker*, there are a number of important changes:

- ▶ The text has generally been revised and updated.
- ▶ New research findings have been incorporated into our discussion of various teaching methods.
- ▶ Our discussion of technology and media has been updated and expanded.
- ▶ Also included is an accompanying web page that includes additional activity ideas to augment the activities in Appendix B, as well as a comprehensive listing of online resources for teachers and learners.

> **Go to www.tesol.org/nativespeaker to access these valuable resources.**

- ▶ The references have been updated, partly to bring in new voices and research, and partly to reflect new editions of the books we cite.

Last but not least, a very important and felicitous change in the third edition is that Maxi-Ann Campbell has come on board as coauthor. We have revised this book as a team; occasionally, one of us will provide personal notes or experiences:

FROM DON: In addition to the general experience and perspective that Maxi brings to the book, her contribution is especially valuable for bringing this book firmly into the 21st century by updating aspects of the book dealing with the Internet and technology, things that are a native language to her in a way that will probably never be true for me.

Additional Notes

This book is intended for NTs from any English-speaking nation, but we will be more convincing and accurate if we draw primarily on our own U.S. background for language and culture examples. Asia in general and China in particular are overgenerously represented in our choice of examples; again, this is because much of our language teaching experience has been in the East. Finally, we beg your indulgence for our use of *Westerners* to refer to people from countries where most people speak English as their first language. It is simply too much of a mouthful to consistently refer to *U.S. citizens, Canadians, British, Irish, Australians, New Zealanders, and others.*

As much as possible, we have tried to use plain English rather than jargon and abbreviations. The few exceptions are as follows: *English as a foreign language* (EFL) refers to teaching English in a country where English is not widely used. This is in contrast to *English as a second language* (ESL), teaching English to non-English-speaking people in an English-speaking context. As mentioned earlier, CLT refers to *communicative language teaching.* And for the sake of convenience, we also allow ourselves the new acronym NT — *novice teacher* — to refer to native speakers of English who are serving as teachers of English abroad with little or no language teacher training.

Acknowledgments