Hidden Roads: Nonnative English-Speaking International Professors in the Classroom

Katherine Grace Hendrix
Aparna Hebbani

Editors

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Catherine M. Wehlburg
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About This Publication
Since 1980, New Directions for Teaching and Learning (NDTL) has brought a unique blend of theory, research, and practice to leaders in postsecondary education. NDTL sourcebooks strive not only for solid substance but also for timeliness, compactness, and accessibility.

The series has four goals: to inform readers about current and future directions in teaching and learning in postsecondary education, to illuminate the context that shapes these new directions, to illustrate these new direction through examples from real settings, and to propose ways in which these new directions can be incorporated into still other settings.

This publication reflects the view that teaching deserves respect as a high form of scholarship. We believe that significant scholarship is conducted not only by researchers who report results of empirical investigations but also by practitioners who share disciplinary reflections about teaching. Contributors to NDTL approach questions of teaching and learning as seriously as they approach substantive questions in their own disciplines, and they deal not only with pedagogical issues but also with the intellectual and social context in which these issues arise. Authors deal on the one hand with theory and research and on the other with practice, and they translate from research and theory to practice and back again.

About This Volume
Hidden Roads: Nonnative English-Speaking International Professors in the Classroom is an important publication as it foregrounds the experiences and the issues related to faculty for whom English is not their primary language. International faculty are increasing on US institutions for higher education and yet, there has not been a great deal of focus or information about their experiences. These voices are an important part of post-secondary education and special issue editors Dr. Katherine Grace Hendrix and Dr. Aparna Hebbani allow them to share their stories and help to guide higher education through these years of international and global change.

Catherine M. Wehlburg
Editor-in-Chief
International teaching faculty in the communication classroom constitute an important part of instructional staff at many US American universities. They are mostly employed as either International Teaching Assistants (ITAs who are master's or PhD students) or in the tenure-track stream as faculty. With the exception of several dissertations (Holland 2008; Kozlova 2008; Trebing 2007) and a few recent publications (Hao 2009; Hendrix 2007; Hendrix, Hebbani, and Johnson 2007; Wong (Lau) 2004; Yook and Albert 1999), much of the research on international faculty in the classroom has focused on gathering voices of US American students as the subjects (Hsu 2012; Li, Mazer, and Ju 2011; Liu, Sellnow, and Venette 2006; Zhang et al. 2007). Hence, there is a notable absence in the literature of voices of the nonnative English speaker in the classroom (that is, the ITA/International Professor) just as this was once the case for native English speakers of color—for example, African-American professors (Hendrix 1998; Jackson and Hendrix 2003).

Gathering such data through autoethnographies allows the voice of these international faculty into the chorus (Hendrix 2010). With autoethnographic research, the investigator is the epistemological and ontological nexus upon which the process turns (Spry 2001) with performative autoethnography being “critically reflexive” and, as such, providing scaffolding for contemplating “the ways in which our personal lives intersect, collide, and commune with others in the body politic” (Spry 2013, 217). According to Reed-Danahay (1997), while the emphasis on graphy may vary, the authors will use their own experiences to understand their interactions within a culture. She further articulates autoethnography as a genre of research and writing that connects the personal to the cultural and places the self within a social context. Ellis and Bochner (2000) describe this method as writing that “makes the researcher’s own experience a topic of investigation in its own right rather than seeming as if they’re written from nowhere by nobody” (734). This volume is “an invitation to dialogue” and we argue that recognizing the existence of the international professor as a classroom teacher is a first step that can ultimately lead to an investigation of research topics of interest allowing us to discover whether these faculty fall into the same “bias” bind as their African-American and Latino-American counterparts in conjunction with the assets they bring to the US classroom.

Thus, the purpose of this volume is to collate papers that address this underresearched dimension of the international faculty experience with the hope of promoting greater understanding of their classroom encounters and the pedagogical practices that ensue based on their responsibility to demonstrate subject matter expertise while simultaneously facilitating the learning
process of US American students. Our immediate goal is to acknowledge the existence of nonnative English-speaking ITAs/professors in the classroom, thereby leading the way toward initiating more research, deliberation, and professional development centered around the needs (and assets) of these important educators who, until now, have journeyed along a hidden road leading from ITA to tenure-track faculty member.

The volume opens with Chen deftly analyzing the negotiation of co-cultural identities, including the role of race, in the intercultural classroom. In the second chapter, Kittler describes two educational systems colliding in the classroom—his European (specifically Czechoslovakian) orientation to the roles of teacher and student in contrast with the perceptions of his US American students. In the third and fourth chapters, Zhang and Hsu discuss their experiences from teaching different classes and students’ experiences with nonnative speaking teachers with Zhang focusing on the intercultural dynamics and Hsu articulating how confirming behaviors have allowed her to reduce misunderstandings between professor and student. Mutua conveys her experience as an ITA in the classroom while Hebbani looks back on her crossing from ITA to tenure-track lecturer while reporting the results of an empirical study of ITAs co-researched with Hendrix. In the seventh chapter, McCalman addresses the growing English as a Second Language classroom and training US American teachers through the experiences, education, and standpoint of an international professor. Finally, the epilogue provides an opportunity for Yep to retrace the steps of these journeyers, comparing and contrasting them with travels of his own, and plotting a potential map for us to follow in the future.

Katherine Grace Hendrix
Aparna Hebbani
Editors

References