

**EXCERPTS FROM THE 2004 NNEST CACAUS LISTSERV  
DISCUSSION ABOUT CHANGING THE NNEST NAME**

----- Original Message -----

**Subject:**[nnest-l] A less negative Caucus name  
**Date:**Mon, 05 Apr 2004 15:55:47 -0400  
**From:**Brock Brady <bbrady@american.edu>  
**Reply-To:**Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL Caucus E-List <nnest-l@lists.tesol.org>  
**To:**Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL Caucus E-List <nnest-l@lists.tesol.org>

Dear fellow Caucus Members,

During our annual Business Meeting at Long Beach, our President, Ahmar Mahboob, raised the idea of finding a name/acronym for our Caucus which didn't have the negative connotation that the "non" of NNEST obviously does. His suggestion of "Anglophone Caucus" didn't receive wide acclaim at the business meeting; however Ahmar has a good point, and I'd like to try to keep the ball rolling. I don't know if the suggestion I will make is a workable solution or not, but maybe it will inspire another member find the title that we might be looking for.

It occurred to me that we might consider "BEST" (Bilingual English Speaking Teacher). It would be hard to have a more positive-sounding acronym, it's descriptively honest, and it turns the language issue into a "positive" (it's additive) instead of a negative. [NOTE: Multilingual English Speaking Teacher might be appropriate too, but I don't think MEST would be a felicitous acronym : --)].

Another plus would be that, as it has sometimes been argued, NESTs who have lived and worked abroad and who have done business in another language often develop many of the skills and sensitivities that are common to NNESTs. The BEST acronym would accommodate these colleagues appropriately.

Just a thought to share. I welcome your input.

Brock Brady  
Coordinator, TESOL Programs  
American University  
Washington, DC

----- Original Message -----

**Subject:** [nnest-l] Nonnative speakers are 'BEST'  
**Date:** Mon, 5 Apr 2004 20:57:46 -0400  
**From:** Ahmar Mahboob <mahbooba@mail.ecu.edu>  
**Reply-To:** Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL Caucus E-List <nnest-l@lists.tesol.org>

To: Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL Caucus E-List <nnest-l@lists.tesol.org>  
Dear Brock,

Thank you for continuing the 'name' discussion on the list. I think that while the members of the caucus are probably beyond taking the 'non' of NNEST to be a negative term, other members of the TESOL, and indeed the non-TESOL, community are not. We do need to explore this issue further.

In many of the presentations that I have made on the issue of NNESTs, one question that frequently arises is that by focusing on 'non'-native speakers and their strengths as being able to appreciate the processes involved in learning an additional language, we are ignoring teachers who may be native speakers of English but have also had the experience of learning an additional language and can therefore empathize with their ESL/EFL students. Indeed, in many MA TESOL programs, graduate students are required to demonstrate proficiency or take courses in a foreign language. Thus, in addition to the positive feel of the acronym 'BEST', I feel that it is inclusive of both non-native teachers and native teachers who are bilingual.

Having said this, I am not sure how I feel about losing the identity of being unique as 'non'-native speakers of the language that we teach. By losing this 'non', we do in a way compromise our identity as being unique within the profession. While native speakers who are bilingual are sensitized to the issues of learning a new language, they may not be as aware of the ins and outs of learning English as an additional language. They also do not feel the discrimination in the hiring processes that come with being a 'non'.

I think, what I'm saying is that I'm not sure. I like the term 'BEST' and I like the feel of saying 'Nonnative speakers are BEST', but at the same time I'm not sure about the loss of an identity marker. The reason that I suggested the term 'Anglophone Speakers' at the Convention was because it kept the identity without the 'non' of the NNEST. [For those of you who were not able to attend the meeting, I suggested that we consider the term 'Anglophone' to refer to NNESTs as it is used in the English departments. In many English departments, Anglophone literature is used to refer to literature written in English by non-native speakers of the language. Literature written by native speakers is usually studied as American, Canadian, or English literatures.] However, as you know, the term was shot down because of its 'English' feel.

So, should we start using the term 'BEST' rather than 'NNEST'? I'm not sure yet. I would like to hear other voices on the list and to gauge the reaction of both native and non-native TESOL professionals to this (and possibly other) alternatives before making a stronger case for either.

Thank you once again for reviving this discussion and I look forward to a productive exchange of ideas.

Best,

Ahmar Mahboob

**EXCERPTS FROM THE 2008 NNEST CAUCUS LISTSERV  
DISCUSSION ABOUT CHANGING THE NNEST NAME**

----- Original Message -----

**Subject:**[nnest-l] If we are going to become an Interest Section, we might want to consider starting the discussion

**Date:**Thu, 31 Jan 2008 20:03:52 -0500

**From:**Lucie Moussu <moussu@rogers.com>

**To:**Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL Caucus E-List <nnest-l@lists.tesol.org>

**CC:**Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL Caucus E-List <nnest-l@lists.tesol.org>

OK, this is the last time I'll open my big mouth, but I must say something very important, and flatly contradict Paul and a few other people:

I have been doing research and writing theses and articles and speaking at conferences for the last EIGHT years on this ONE topic, and what I ALWAYS say is this: ESL/EFL teachers and student-teachers should NOT be labeled as native or non-native speakers! This is discriminatory and does NOT represent the linguistic and pedagogical skills and knowledge of these people (me included). Countless articles and books and theses and dissertations have been written on the subject! Am I the only one who reads them?

So my question is, one last time: why are we spending all this time, money, and energy to prove to the world that it is WRONG to discriminate against these "teaching-a-language-other-than-their-first-language" teachers, while at the same time we continue to do so??? I am sorry, but this is hypocritical.

And by the way, I refuse to be called a non-native speaker of English: I am a proficient speaker of English at work and a proficient speaker of French at home. Period. Now, let's call this IS whatever you want, I don't care, but not "non-native" anything.

Sayonara.

Lucie Moussu, PhD

----- Original Message -----

**Subject:**[nnest-l] The need to move on and form an Interest Section

**Date:**Fri, 01 Feb 2008 10:21:59 +0800

**From:**George Braine <georgebraine@cuhk.edu.hk>

**To:**Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL Caucus E-List <nnest-l@lists.tesol.org>

Hello everyone,

I am glad we brought the listserv back to life with the discussion of what to call ourselves. It is needed at a time of transition, from a Caucus to an Interest Section and also a Forum. With the Caucuses facing extinction, the transition is essential if we are to survive as the strong, cohesive group we have become over the past 10 years.

I have stated this before, but it deserves repetition: the term "nonnative speaker" is no longer a pejorative. People "stand up" - literally in classrooms and at conference presentations and metaphorically in their publications - and claim their nonnative speakership. It appears, clearly and boldly, in the titles of publications by nonnative speakers. Joining Paul Matsuda in his elegant proclamation, I, too, would like to say that I am "Proud to be a NonNative Speaker". The term encompasses my status as a multilingual.

In the near future, an important State-of-the-Art article will appear in the journal /Language Teaching/ on the history and research on nonnative ESL and EFL teachers. The article is authored by Lucie Moussu and Enric Llurda\*. \*In the same issue of the journal, an accompanying review of books on the same topic, authored by Amir H. Soheili-Mehr and Subarna Banerji, will be published. These publications are landmarks in the growth of our movement and go to prove that we have established a solid area of research. If a name change occurs now, what will become of this research?

As Paul stated, an Interest Section (IS) "represents an important area of research and pedagogy" within TESOL. "Nonnative speakers are a significant research issue because the term provokes various reactions from people. It merits IS status because these problems need to be exposed and addressed through research and teaching." Let's keep in mind that our Interest Section status is not guaranteed. The TESOL Board of Directors must approve it, and we'll not be approved if we are perceived to be impinging on other Interest Sections. So, I would like to suggest "NonNative Speakers" as the name of our IS. For your information, I have copied the names of the current Interest Sections below.

Since the formation of the our Caucus, we have empowered thousands of nonnative speaker English teachers and changed the landscape of TESOL. Many native speakers have joined hands with us on this journey. We need to keep this momentum and to find new leaders as we become an IS.

With best wishes,

George Braine

----- Original Message -----

**Subject:**RE: [nnest-l] The need to move on and form an Interest Section

**Date:**Fri, 1 Feb 2008 10:05:51 +0200

**From:**Nalini Reddy <divine.edu@vodamail.co.za>

**To:**Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL Caucus E-List <nnest-l@lists.tesol.org>

Hello all,

I have observed with interest this discussion that queues in my inbox every morning and at the risk of incurring the group's ire, I am bemused. Why on earth would anyone want to be a 'non' anything? In my opinion, 'non'anything is diminishing. It focuses on what one is not, rather than what one is. 'Multilingual' or any other term that ascribes empowerment rather than debilitation would be preferred.

Case in point: I am a South African(born not immigrant) and have been called a 'nonwhite' for almost all of my life. The term was intended to paralyse me in my own country. I am not 'nonwhite' I am not even 'nonblack'; I am South African.

While the term 'native' is intended to focus on 'mother tongue' it shifts the view from the issue of language to an issue of ethnicity. I do not think it will serve the interest(pardon the pun) of this IS to be 'non' or 'native' anything.

On the other hand, while English is not my 'mother tongue', it is my 'home language' but I am not a 'native' speaker. 'Multilingual' therefore does not aptly describe me as well but it is certainly not a 'NONentity'.

Now that I have stirred the proverbial brew...

Thank you all.

Nalini Reddy

----- Original Message -----

**Subject:**Re: [nnest-l] The need to move on and form an Interest Section

**Date:**Fri, 1 Feb 2008 09:48:56 -0300

**From:**Silvia Laborde (Alianza Pocitos) <slaborde\_903@alianza.edu.uy>

**To:**Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL Caucus E-List <nnest-l@lists.tesol.org>

Dear all,

It has been fascinating to follow this thread. There is such a rich tapestry of opinions! I want to thank Lucie for stirring up not only the discussion but such passions in our constituents.

I must confess that I, like so many colleagues on our e-list, am very proud to be a speaker of the English language who learned it the "hard way" and can now help others acquire such a rich and versatile language. I am also a very proud speaker of Spanish as my mother tongue.

Though I clearly understand Paul Matsuda when he claims that "...that NNEST is about "us" and our identity rather than about issues," I would argue that our identity IS an issue. Like Nalini, I also have been called a non-white, and the feeling that comes when you're described from the point of view of what you are NOT is demeaning.

So...that brings us back to who we are and what defines us: we are Speakers of Other Languages Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages: SOLTESOL. A little long?....perhaps.

Thanks everybody,

Silvia Laborde

----- Original Message -----

**Subject:**[nnest-l] Seeking Common Ground

**Date:**Fri, 01 Feb 2008 08:03:20 -0500

**From:**bbrady <bbrady@american.edu>

**To:**Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL Caucus E-List <nnest-l@lists.tesol.org>

Hi everyone,

First, is it important to note that all arguments make valid points--Paul and Lucie (for example) are both right.

Second, it is wonderful to see so much involvement after the relative silence of the last couple of years. Those posting beware: when we need members to fill leadership roles, we may come to you. :-)

Third, we need to get moving on organization--it would be a shame to lose momentum over a "label" issue we have never been able to satisfactorily resolve before.

Let me suggest that the "multi" of multilingual has some of the negative connotations as "non" does. Multicultural, multiracial, multi-proficiency, multi-generational--while these are all categories that have merit and are useful, I suspect that they may not always receive the attention and respect they deserve because they feel vague and ambiguous, not rigorous. Also MST (messed?) sounds like an accident that happened in the past, and MLST could be confused with a listserv for the Modern Language Association.

So I thought to myself--since everyone is right but the conflict continues, we need to find common ground and that may required a new approach.

Let me adapt an idea that Ahmar had about a year ago about having some sort of "diversity entity." As a suggestion, how about Diverse English Speaking Teachers (DEST). It echoes NNEST easily, it shows our concern to honor diversity, it suggests that gender and race can be issues for NNESTs, however, the reference to English implies that the entity has an emphasis on language issues, plus it easily encompasses issues of World Englishes (and acceptance of those who speak them).

I offer DEST only as one attempt to move out of a tactical impasse, not a term I've attached any self-esteem to---but I suspect that whatever solution we find, it may be one that moves beyond the "multilingual"--"nonnative" dichotomy that seems to be unintentionally forming.

So to conclude (and being someone who can rarely resist a pun), let me joke that perhaps the term I've proposed is our DESTiny. (ouch!)

Brock

----- Original Message -----

**Subject:**Re: [nnest-1] Seeking Common Ground

**Date:**Fri, 01 Feb 2008 09:53:05 -0600

**From:**Irene Simonenko <Irene.Simonenko@ops.org>

**To:**bbrady <bbrady@american.edu>

**CC:**Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL Caucus E-List <nnest-1@lists.tesol.org>

**References:**<LYRIS-2778075-207157-2008.02.01-08.02.18--  
irene.simonenko#ops.org@lists.tesol.org>

I am new to TESOL. Living in the US for 9 years I was looking for a group to belong to. As a new member NNEST attracted me right away because I immediately could identify myself with the group. Since there is a disagreement on the "non" part, which has valid arguments, we need a name that would immediately attract new members just like NNEST did.

Out of all suggestions, I would pick "DEST" because in my opinion it has the same power to attract the right people, stay focused on language, and it adds pride of our identities. The only problem I see is, don't you think it will take time to make a transition in the area of research that was under NNEST? Will it be hard to reintroduce research under this new title and educate people about the new name?

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## TWO OTHER VIEWS ON POSSIBLE LABELS

----- Original Message -----

**Subject:**RE: I think I can quote you

**Date:** Wed, 12 Nov 2008 14:20:13 -0800

**From:** Suhanthie Motha <nishansu@comcast.net>

**To:** 'bbrady' <bbrady@american.edu>

"We use the term "translinguistic identity" in referring to teachers who have undergone the cognitively complex process of developing proficiency in an additional language because we believe that the experience of traversing languages creates new understandings and processes, supports conceptual fluency (Pavlenko, 2003), and allows teachers to draw on a broader range of concepts and interpretive frames than are available to monolingual teachers. We therefore use the term "translinguistic" rather than "NNEST" identity in order to foreground what we believe is relevant pedagogically: not what has been framed as a "lack of nativism" (Lui, 2004) but rather the considerable linguistic and pedagogical resources that translinguistic identity offers English language teachers." (Motha et al, forthcoming)

From: Motha, S., Jain, R., and Tecle, T. (forthcoming). Translinguistic Identity-As-Pedagogy: Implications for Teacher Education. In Mahboob, A. (ed). Non-native English Speakers in TESOL: A Resource Book. Alexandria, VA: TESOL Publications.

Suhanthie Motha, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor

----- Original Message -----

**Subject:**Re: [nnest-l] Please take 5 minutes to read and respond to LINGUIST

**Date:**Wed, 23 Apr 2008 07:41:46 -0400

**From:**bbrady <bbrady@american.edu>

Amir,

In a post presentation discussion at a Conference at American University on professional issues, esp. those concerning race and gender in relation to professional identity, Sherrie Carroll, doctoral student at University of Maryland at College Park used the inclusive term of "Legitimate Users of English"--this made me think that one more tool in our educational arsenal might be, "Legitimate Teacher of English." It has the advantage of taking one's language learning/use history completely off the table and implicitly emphasizes the need for some sort of qualification or background.

I'm not sure it allows us to abandon the NNEST term just yet, for as long as there are those who use our English learning/use history to discriminate we will likely need to respond by demonstrating why a teacher's English learning/use history has no direct correlation to that teacher's legitimacy. Another turn in an ongoing discussion--no claim to solve the thorny label problem. :-)

Brock