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Teaching a Foreign Language in the Country: The Non-Native Speaker in the Country Where the Language is Spoken

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Teaching a Foreign Language
in the Country

The Non-Native Speaker
in the Country where
the Language is Spoken

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at Los Angeles 1972

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ABSTRACT

This project concerns itself with the psychological realities of a non-native teaching a foreign language in the country where the language is spoken. Included are my personal reactions and experiences of eight weeks spent teaching an intensive course of Spanish to North American university students of anthropology in Silvia, Cauca, Colombia. Various aspects such as advantages, disadvantages, teaching modifications because of the fact that one is a non-native speaker, personal feelings and student reactions to the fact that they have a non-native teacher are touched upon. The reactions and feelings of other teachers who have been in the same teaching position are included in this project. It is hoped that this project will be of value to any teacher who finds himself in a similar teaching position. The number of teachers in such a position may not be large, but any of such teachers with more insight is a potentially better teacher.

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Introduction

This project is written for all those who find themselves in the same position as I did: that of a non-native teacher of a foreign language in the country where the foreign language is spoken. I feel that such a situation merits description and the language teacher needs some insights into the feelings of such a teacher. The number of teachers in such a position may not be large, but with our rapidly shrinking world due to modern technology, this number is likely to increase in the future. Of course, numbers are not of overriding importance. If there were only two other teachers who found themselves in the same position as I did, I would still feel that this project would be valuable. Two teachers with more insight are two potentially better teachers.

I was led to ^{write} ~~write~~ this project because of my own experience in teaching Spanish to American anthropology students in Silvia, Colombia. I would like to present an analysis of my feelings and attitudes that may prove to be enlightening.

I taught six college juniors (18 - 21 years of age) who had had no previous formal Spanish study although three students had worked with commercial self-study tapes. I also tutored two advanced students who had been living in Colombia before joining the program. For the major part of

the eight weeks I taught, I had an individual class with my one slow student, a class of two students who were average learners, and a class of three students who had a facility for learning Spanish. Each student also met daily, individually or in pairs, with a native language assistant. I taught a total of six hours daily and each student spent a total of five to six hours daily with Spanish, including one hour daily with tapes. In the evenings, the students had assigned readings, classes and/or exercises in anthropology given by the director.

I was very well aware of the language teaching concept that contends that a well-prepared and trained non-native speaker can be a better teacher than the native speaker with no language teaching training. Being a native speaker doesn't necessarily make one a teacher. Without a knowledge of grammar and methodology, it is of little value being a native speaker. This concept I knew intellectually, but psychologically I reacted differently.

I found that when I met a person with whom I would never come in contact again, rather than saying that I was the Spanish teacher for a group of American anthropology students doing six months of research in Colombia, I would simply say that I was with an anthropology group, implying that I too, was merely a student. I often said that I helped them with Spanish, which is a half-truth at best. I found that it was easier to say this type of thing than to

explain that it's an American group and they had to hire an American and a novice like myself. To my mind, the Colombians would think it was more logical and simple to hire a Colombian. It was partly laziness on my part to go into an explanation.

People with whom I had daily contact and whom I knew well, knew what I was doing in the small town of Silvia: I was the Spanish professor. With them, I felt no qualms about explaining my exact role. In fact, they always introduced me as "la profesora," (the professor). The role of teacher carried a high social status in this small town and it was a very good thing socially for the families to have me in their home.

I also found it hard at times to admit that I was the teacher because I looked the same age as my students who were college sophomores and juniors. In retrospect, I often didn't say that I was the teacher not because of lack of confidence in my ability to speak Spanish well, but rather because I didn't look like a Latin, although a number of times people told me that they thought I was a peninsular Spaniard. (not because of my dialect, but because of my physical appearance.)

I often felt "guilty" teaching Spanish and making good money according to Colombian standards while I saw so much poverty and unemployment in that country. I really wasn't thinking, only feeling, for I knew full well that the program

wanted to hire an MAT and they did hire a native speaker as my language assistant.

One incident stands out in my mind and shows my psychological make-up at that time. I had just made a stupid mistake and had missed my airplane because I had misunderstood the ticket reservationist. When he said "las doce y media", (12:30), I thought that he had said "las dos y media" (2:30). When we began chatting, he asked me what I was doing in Colombia. I said that I was a teacher in an anthropology group. He asked me exactly what was my specialization in the field of anthropology and I said that it was medicine. Looking back, I realize that I didn't want to say that I was a Spanish professor after making such a mistake, even though the man commented on the excellence of my Spanish. Although a native speaker might make the same mistake like the difference between "can" and "can't" in English, I felt worse precisely because I was a non-native and I should have spoken the language well enough if I had the "nerve" to teach in the country with all the native speakers available.

If I was speaking with a person who thought that I was simply an anthropology student, I found that when they asked me such "linguistic" questions as "Is it easier to learn English or Spanish?", I would answer rather simplistically, even what I consider "wrong", according to most theories of language. For example, I would not discuss the validity or invalidity of comparing how one learns his native language

vs. how he learns a second language, how these two processes are similar and dissimilar at the same time, etc., I would simply say that Spanish was easier because there were fewer exceptions to grammatical rules than in English. I had heard that statement. I didn't know whether it was a folk tale or whether any actual research had been done on the frequency of exceptions to grammatical rules. I just didn't want to sound erudite by discussing theories of language and language acquisition, yet perhaps I would sound erudite if I discussed the same matters in English. On the other hand, because I was a non-native in the country where the language is spoken, I didn't want to put my "expertise in language theory" to the test. It wasn't the fact that I lacked vocabulary to express myself, but because I was a non-native in the country where the language is spoken, I didn't want to offend anyone saying that English is easier, because it was a matter of pride to Colombians that Spanish is an easy to learn, logical language. I also didn't care to refute such judgments as "the pronunciation of English is impossible to learn for a Spanish speaker," or "Spanish is harder to learn than English because it has many ways of saying the same thing", a theory which I don't consider valid. I don't know if there is any answer as to which is harder. It would have been easier to have said that it depends on individual learning styles. I heard the statement that Spanish has many ways of saying the same thing and is therefore harder to

to learn. I wondered why people believed it. I didn't know if there is any evidence comparing English with Spanish.

The Concept of the Teacher

I would like to preface the following section on advantages and disadvantages of my teaching situation by saying that what I perceived as disadvantages depended on my concept of the teacher. I now see that I shared to some extent the Spanish speaker's concept of a teacher that assumes that the teacher is the authority figure and has all the answers. His authority is never to be questioned. He is also formal in his attire and comportment. Therefore, I worried about some imperfections in my pronunciation, my slow rate of speech, etc. I was afraid that my competence in these areas was questioned; on the other hand, if my concept of the teacher was more like that concept held in the United States - that the teacher doesn't and really can't know all the answers, but can be an able guide in helping the students find the answers and solutions, then I wouldn't have considered such things as disadvantages. The teacher can develop strategies in teaching his students how to learn, how to continue their learning without the aid of the teacher. This was what I did when I tried to teach the students how to read "clues" in Spanish in order to ascertain meanings that were unknown or unclear to them. Near the end of the course, before the students left to do their field research,

I also made the students read the Peace Corps' "How to Keep on Learning a Foreign Language" booklet designed to help students continue to learn the language in-country after a formal language course.

The concept of the teacher held by the students is also very important. If the student assumes that the teacher knows all the answers, he would be shocked if the teacher were to admit that he doesn't know something but said he would look it up later. The student might not only be shocked, but actually doubt the competence of the teacher. As a teacher, I should have taken into consideration how my students viewed the role of teacher. I generally feel that their concept of a teacher lay somewhere between the two views I have mentioned. I never tried to give the impression that I was "all knowing". Nonetheless, I feel that they respected my knowledge of Spanish.

The Advantages of My Teaching Situation

One of the advantages of my being a non-native teacher in the country where the language is spoken was the fact that the students were immersed in a total Spanish-speaking environment. They were constantly bombarded by Spanish. Whatever went on in the classroom was merely an extension of the daily language activities of the students. What was unique to the fact that I was a non-native speaker was that the students were reassured that the forms of speech I used as a non-native were also used by natives in that particular Spanish-speaking environment.

Because the students lived with Colombian families, they were involved with "real" language use of Spanish, i.e., they used the language to actually communicate with other people. In other words, the motivation factor was high because of the relevance of what the students were doing in class to what they were doing outside of class. This situation is in great contrast to the normal classroom situation in an American junior, senior high school or college where the student is taking a foreign language because it is required and he sees no reason to take it since he sees no opportunity to ever use it. The advantage I mentioned would also be an advantage to me as a non-native speaker because, up until the

the end of the course, I rarely engaged in "real" informal (chit-chat and some slang unknown to me) language outside of the class with the students. They simply were fatigued from Spanish in their families so that we usually spoke in English. This added informal "real" language input of the families (which as a non-native I couldn't provide as easily) was very valuable for the student in developing oral/aural comprehension.

Another advantage was the fact that the students had the opportunity to hear dialectical and idiolectical speech differences. The students used to comment to me that the members of their families sometimes had a "different accent" that I did. They substantiated this observation by pointing out the [z] allophone of the phoneme /y/ as in "yo" (I or me) not found in the dialect of Spanish that I speak. I not only don't speak that particular dialect, I don't have a completely native accent. Therefore, as a non-native in the country where the language is spoken, it was valuable for the students not only to hear dialectical and idiolectical differences, but to hear how my speech differed from native speech. This was excellent training for the ear and might have helped the students see where were the difficulties in phonology for English speakers learning Spanish.

Even more important that the dialectical differences were the idiolectical differences. The rate of speech, the differences in pitch and manner of speech between men and

women, the vocabulary particular to a specific individual - factors such as these caused difficulty in comprehension for the students. I tried to instill confidence in the students that with time these problems would be overcome. One thing that I did was to bring a tape recording of a conversation that I knew the students wouldn't understand in its entirety. In class we worked together and the students were surprised to find out how much they really did know when they helped each other.

I felt that there was little need to "teach culture" on my part because the students were discovering by their own experiences the cultural realities of Colombia and the Spanish language. Perhaps it was necessary in order to avoid beforehand mistakes in the immediate daily life situations, but because I was a non-native in the country I didn't feel I had too much to offer the students, especially since I hadn't been to Colombia before. Without my pointing it out in class, the students quickly learned such "cultural insights" as the various gestures that accompany speech, and social courtesies such as the use of the handshake. I didn't have to devote some allotted time to teaching culture, e.g., "customs" on Monday, "history" on Tuesday, because these anthropology students learned these things through observation or through their readings in Colombian high school texts.

I personally felt that a great deal of their observation ability was due to the fact that as anthropologists,

they were trained to be observant. If they had not already had this ability, I would have assigned them readings from the excellent books we had on the methodology of field observation. I would have also given them a series of questions to get them thinking about the Spanish language in particular. For example, "are 'formal' - Ud., Uds.", speech forms used among family members? etc. The students used the Colombian high school texts as a cultural supplement. They also worked with a native speaker with these texts as exercises in reading out loud, pronunciation, reading comprehension and as a basis for controlled or free conversations.

Another advantage was that I had the entire outside world as a workshop. "Homework" in Spanish consisted primarily of "doing" activities. I realized that if my Spanish classes were to make any sense to the students, they must utilize the resources of the environment. For example, after a class on question asking, I had the students ask questions of the families with whom they were living. Questions about the family genealogy were asked. The questions and answers were recorded on a tape recorder and utilized in class. I used the tape recording for the purpose of connecting pronunciation and grammar and also for listening comprehension of the families' responses.

"Doing" exercises focusing on student behavior rather than teacher behavior seemed to be better for the non-native speaker in the country where the language is spoken because

the teacher was not the authority performing since he was not quite as competent an authority as a native speaker.

I make use of the outside world in devising my lesson plans. For example, I observed a soccer game that one of my students participated in and based a lesson on the use of preterite vs. imperfect past tenses. I asked the student who participated specific questions about the game with either the preterite or imperfect tense. My questions and the answers given by the student were copied by the other student as a dictation exercise.

One advantage I believe that I had being a non-native teaching the language in the country where the language is spoken was the fact that I could often be detached from "emotional" problems. For example, I could use the source material of the environment such as the high school texts and not become upset or angry if I read something that was definitely wrong or pure propaganda because I couldn't recognize such things like the native could. Even if I did, I could view the matter more objectively, perhaps deriving a lesson on point of view in language.

I realize that this would be true for a knowledgeable native speaker who spoke another language too. It would depend on the native language of the language learning group and what languages the teacher speaks.

The Disadvantages of My Teaching Situation

My pronunciation is not that of a native speaker of Spanish, although it's near native. Occasionally I corrected my own pronunciation in mid-sentence or found myself tongue-twisted. This situation was not really important in that even native speakers have imperfect performance levels. The important factor concerned the students' ability to understand a native speaker whose pronunciation differed from mine, and this contrast was more immediate because I was a non-native in the country where the language is spoken. I encouraged the students to make use of the Spanish programmed tapes we had in order to hear different native accents. There was nothing to be done when the students heard me speak with a native speaker and could thus perceive our differing pronunciations.

Another disadvantage that the students encountered concerned my rate of speech. My rate of speech in Spanish is slower than my rate of speech in English, and is slower than a native speaker of Spanish. I definitely believed this and so I casually asked native speakers and they were in agreement.

What did this fact mean to my students? When one slows down his rate of speech in Spanish he does change the pro-

nunciation because of the stress system. For example, if there are two identical contiguous vowels, one stressed and the other unstressed, in slow, deliberate speech they are pronounced separately, but fuse in rapid speech. Slow speech - /la-a-mi-ga/. Rapid speech - /a-mi-ga/. When a teacher purposely slows down his rate of speech in order to facilitate comprehension, he runs the risk of incapacitating his students in the "real world" where people generally don't enunciate, but slur their words and speak at a rapid rate. I didn't purposely slow down my rate of speech. The students often complained that they understood every word that I said but couldn't understand the Colombians. Many other factors entered into this observation: the different vocabulary of the native speaker, the use of verb tenses and so forth. I really couldn't find any workable solution to the problem other than consciously accelerating my rate of speech which sometimes resulted in my being tongue-twisted. I believe that I can accelerate my rate of speech if I devote time and effort to the task. I don't believe, though, that the task is vital if I am teaching Spanish in the United States, but in my situation in the country where the language is spoken in an intensive program, the problem seemed to be intensified (or maybe I dwelled on it because I was a non-native speaker) because the students were limited in time and any "problem", if one wants to call it that, was intensified.

Another disadvantage that I encountered was a matter of authority. The program employed a native speaker as a language assistant. This individual was a high school graduate without training as a language teacher, but had a good knowledge of Spanish grammar and phonology and had been a tutor before. He worked with the students individually or in pairs with tape cassettes on pronunciation and using Colombian high school texts in geography and history, worked on reading out loud and reading comprehension. He also directed controlled or semi-controlled conversation based on the assigned readings in the text. The more advanced students also participated in free conversations on topics related to the readings.

Some confusion arose, for example, when he commented on one verb tense that a student pointed out in a reading. His rule for the use of the tense differed from mine. I said that the verb "estar", in the past is almost always used in the imperfect tense in the past because this verb denotes location. My assistant said one always uses the preterite tense. I believe that both rules are correct because I have heard both "estaba" (imperfect) and "estuve" (preterite) used by Spanish speakers. The assistant categorically stated that only the preterite tense was acceptable. The student came to me confused. I tried to explain to him that both uses were "correct" because both

are used by native speakers. He answered, "But X said no and he's Colombian." I resolved the problem by telling him to use the form he heard used around him. I don't know if he believed me or not because he used the imperfect tense and I noticed that the preterite tense was used with a little more frequency in Silvia.

Another disadvantage that I encountered concerns the linguistic complexity of the speech the students heard from their very first day in Colombia. This would have been the same situation for a native speaker in country where the language is spoken. Perhaps because I was a non-native I had doubts about the sophistication of my speech as compared to that speech the students heard around them. These doubts must have been very deep and hidden because I honestly believe I can express any concept in Spanish. According to most traditional theories of language, the student should not be exposed to new and more complex structures until he has completely mastered, by repetition, previous structures. Such new and more complex material prematurely introduced would lead to confusion on the part of the student or even harm him in some way. Although I'm not in agreement with this idea, I did find that it was very difficult to sequence linguistic structures simply because the students were hearing all the structures together from the very first day. I did try to sequence these structures because I wanted some sort of continuity from day to day. It wasn't an artificial

classroom situation where the students are more "sheltered" in that only familiar structures are used. My students were a little frustrated at first because they understood one tense but not another and thus couldn't understand completely an entire utterance. One idea that I experimented with in order to build the students' ability to make analogies was to work with actual sentences that had been recorded and to teach the students certain clues in order to make reasonable inferences because even in one's native language, one can't always know all the vocabulary, etc., and it's necessary to make reasonable inferences or assumptions.

For example, if the students had no idea as to the meaning of one word in a sentence we would try to deduce together what part of speech it was from their knowledge of syntax. Then we would try to deduce its lexical meaning, mostly through common sense and logic.

One important disadvantage I had was that I was always being "tested" by my students when I used my Spanish with a native speaker. Because I was a non-native, my performance in an enormous variety of situations outside the classroom was always being observed and evaluated by my students, consciously or unconsciously. This constant testing produced an unsettling effect in me. I was always conscious of my Spanish especially if the entire class was with me when I bargained for a taxi, for example. Because

the students needed to learn to do such mundane chores as bargaining for a taxi, I made them do it after a week of classes when they had more confidence in their ability. I knew that I could do it; they needed to perform, not I. Most of my evaluation of the speaking ability of the students was based on such informal, outside of class performance.

Other Teachers

The next part of this project concerns other teachers who found themselves in the same teaching situation, although the particulars of each situation were very distinct.

I used an interview format. The responses are not exactly minute word for word what was said, but are very, very close and attempt to preserve the intended meaning as closely as possible.

Teacher #1

X, who taught Spanish last year in the same program that I did in Colombia.

"Did you have any special feelings about teaching Spanish in a Spanish-speaking country being a non-native speaker?"

"In some ways it is easier to teach a language that is not your native language. Teaching to your own language group makes you aware of problems. In the country you can be aware of cultural problems because you have your own memory of the process of adjustment to that culture. ✓

"In Latin America I felt that the teacher was considered an authority. I was never quite sure of myself because every native speaker was more of a kind of authority. I had to be careful not to lose confidence in myself and not to feel intimidated.

"It was embarrassing meeting people if they asked what I was doing. Why import a "gringita" to do the job of a Colombian - this was what I imagined the Colombians were saying. One has to be very diplomatic in order to prevent the people from thinking such a thing. Therefore, I tried to label myself a coordinator and use Colombians as much as

I could as a resource."

"Did you notice any student reactions to the fact that you were a non-native speaker?"

"It's funny. I expected that I would receive some kind ✓ of reaction because I even had a native speaker, a Puerto Rican girl. I never received any personal affronts from Colombians, although my Colombian friends would laugh and think that I was kidding when I said that I was teaching Spanish. No Colombian (outside of my friends) made a remark when I was around.

"My students never challenged me because if I didn't know something, they were content to look it up together with me. For example, we found a word in the newspaper - "tigurar". I had no idea what it was. We kept asking native speakers, and we discovered that it was a misprint and should have been "figurar". "

"Were there any advantages to the fact that you were teaching in the country where the language is spoken?"

Being in the country is fantastic. It is great for projects and assignments. In normal situations there is no real use of structures learned or at best it is very hard to simulate. Being in the country is an advantage culturally speaking. The students can see why people do things because they share the same circumstances. Living with families

the students experience real communication at several levels. They get the entire feeling, even the sounds and smells of the culture.

"I believe that it would be an advantage for the students to receive a little training before going to the country because it is very frustrating for real beginners when they can't understand anything. They oftentimes build up wrong patterns of speech."

"What were the disadvantages of teaching in the country, being a non-native?"

"The obvious: you are not the real thing. It's easier for the students to understand you. It's a disadvantage if students only understand you and not native speakers, and don't get beyond that point. It can be an advantage if it helps the student's confidence and acts as a transition between non-comprehension and comprehension.

"If a student comes up with a real complex question, it would not be as easy if one were a non-native speaker, yet even native speakers often times can't explain their own grammar.

"In Silvia, there was the disadvantage of lack of materials such as a blackboard."

"What teaching techniques or methodologies do you use to overcome those disadvantages?"

"I didn't avoid structures that I wasn't sure of. Things that were challenging to me I did with my class. If some structure or point had just become clear to me, then I found it easier to prepare a lesson to teach it because I still had the process in mind.

"I set up the program to include voices other than my own - programmed tapes and local natives.

"Specific tasks in the outside world make use of a tape recorder. The student recorded a conversation of a native speaker and then played it back until he had a rather complete comprehension. The student then wrote down phrase by phrase in his own vocabulary and style what was said.

"The last and most important step was to make the students check what they had written against the native speech and note the differences and similarities. Because I was a non-native, I made a lot of use of tape recorders since I knew I had improved in the learning of the second language using tape recorders."

Teacher #2

I interviewed X, a native Spanish speaker who taught English as a Second Language to Spanish (Puerto Rican, Costa Rican, etc.), Greek, Polish, Vietnamese and Korean speakers in a junior and senior high school in the United States.

"Did you have any special feelings about teaching English in the United States, being a non-native speaker?"

"If people asked me what I was doing and I answered that I was teaching English, they naturally assumed that I was teaching Spanish speakers. They couldn't 'take it' that I taught others. Actually I had a great number of native Greek speakers. I never said more than ten Spanish words in two months of teaching, not because of shame, but because I preferred other methods.

"My problem was that I was a student teacher and therefore was a 'nothing' in the school. I was also a foreigner in an American high school and I tried to fit in. One thing though, I didn't dress as an American. I didn't belong but I was learning a lot.

"I was always conscious of my Spanish accent - nervous at times."

"Did you notice any reaction by anyone to the fact that

you were a non-native speaker?"

"A couple of times - by my students. They made some negative comments in class."

"What were the advantages to teaching in the country where the language is spoken?"

"Of course, there is the question of availability of materials; therefore the life of an American English speaker can be brought into the classroom.

"All types of realia were used such as Howard Johnson tablemats and menus.

"Because I was in the United States when my supervisor came, I was able to use him as a native model for pronunciation and thus got him involved in the class."

"Were there any advantages to the fact that you were not a native speaker?"

"I could communicate with the Spanish-speaking students in their native language if I had to; I also could with the Greek speakers.

"I was more aware of the difficulties of English because I have been through them in learning English as a second language. For example, when one introduces the "dummy do", one knows one's going to have trouble or you will encounter such things as "Do you know what time it is?" vs. "Do you know

what time is it?"

"I also identified with the students when I told them I was going back to my country because many of them were going to do the same. This happened even though none of the students were from my culture. (Spain) I had personal contact with the students outside of class. In fact, one student still writes to me."

"What were the disadvantages of being a non-native in the country where the language is spoken?"

"Firstly, having taught Spanish and then teaching English, I discovered that what kids "throw out" at one in one's native language usually presents no problem, but with English sometimes there were a few questions I wasn't sure of, but my classes were for beginners and I knew the grammar. One time I put my foot in my mouth, because I misspelled the word "knife" and one of my students caught the error.

"I sometimes said a structure wrong and I knew it."

"What teaching techniques or methodologies did you employ to overcome these disadvantages?"

"I used my supervisor as a native model when I could. I also used the Lado English Series tapes so that the students could hear native voices.

"I used pattern drills and patterned myself to death. I worked with the tapes myself and corrected my own pronunciation.

I studied the lesson linguistically for myself and then prepared how to teach it to my class.

Teacher #3

X, who taught English as a Second Language to a mixed group of students with varied language backgrounds. X has lived in the United States four years, but his native languages are Catalan and Spanish.

"Did you have any special feelings about teaching English in the United States being a non-native speaker?"

"Yes, I found that people such as other teachers put pressures on me. If I made a little mistake, it was assumed I made it because I was a non-native. Of course, even native speakers of a language make mistakes in that language. If I made the same mistake in French and Spanish (which I consider my native languages), it wouldn't have been the same thing according to them. I was self-conscious having a job teaching foreign students being a foreign student myself. I was self-conscious, thinking I couldn't make mistakes. I thought that perhaps I was taking the job of an American."

"Did you notice any student reaction to the fact that you were a non-native speaker?"

"There was no negative reaction. They accepted me

perfectly. My students were always positive towards me. Two of my students were qualified teachers of English in their country and they liked the fact that I'm not a native. I asked a fellow teacher to tell me if there ever were any negative reactions to the fact of my being a non-native speaker, and there weren't any as far as I know."

"Were there any advantages to the fact that, as a non-native, you were teaching in country where the language is spoken?"

"The student assumes that a teacher in such a position in the country is generally fluent in the language."

"Were there any advantages to the fact that you were a non-native speaker?"

"Well, I taught American English, not being an American, but I transmitted the cultural implications of the language. I was able to be more open to my students, those speakers of romance languages because I speak various romance languages. ✓

"I considered it a great advantage that being a non-native I remembered how I had learned the language, as an adult, what grammatical points would cause problems and what would be easy for French and Spanish speakers. In my opinion, I teach English better than French or Spanish because I don't take it for granted. I can foresee difficulties because I learned the language as an adult. I was much more sympathetic

to problems."

"Were there any disadvantages to the fact that you were a non-native speaker?"

"I thought that my accent might be a problem because I am not a native speaker of American English, but many people mistake me for a native speaker. I didn't consider it a disadvantage."

"What teaching techniques or methodologies do you use to overcome those disadvantages?"

"There really were no disadvantages. I constantly tried to remember how I had learned English. My teaching of English was based on lesson plans based on how I learned the language. In this sense, my teaching of English differs from my teaching of French and Spanish because I teach those languages in a more logical sequence."

Conclusions

Are there any conclusions to be drawn from these diverse accounts about the non-native teacher in the country where the language is spoken?

I believe that there are a few conclusions or insights to be drawn.

Psychologically, it is not easy to be a non-native teacher in the country where the language is spoken. In all of the accounts contained in this project, the non-native teacher felt either self-conscious or nervous about his ability or acceptance because he was a non-native speaker in the country where the language is spoken, in addition to the normal anxiety any teacher, including a native speaker, experiences.

One of the primary advantages of being a non-native speaker in the country where the language is spoken was the ability to predict areas of ease and difficulty for the students since he too had learned the language as a second language. Any difficulties were easier to deal with because the teacher had the resources of the country where the language is spoken. Related to this idea, is the advantage of the resources of the total language environment in the country which could aid the non-native speaker in offsetting any disadvantages he might have.

There were disadvantages of being a non-native speaker in the country where the language is spoken, but generally the advantages outweighed these, according to the opinions in this project.

Very importantly, what is considered a disadvantage by the non-native speaker (in the country where the language is spoken or not, e.g., the imperfection of his pronunciation and total grammatical knowledge; depends on his concept of a teacher held by his students.

In this regard, perhaps the non-native teacher in the country where the language is spoken should perceive the role of the teacher as that of a guide, using native speakers as resources, not an authority precisely because it is much harder for him to be or to be perceived as an authority than for a native speaker. Many of what I considered my strengths as a teacher had to do with the fact that I was a non-native speaker and had learned the language that I was teaching as a second language. I think that this was even more important than the fact that I had a knowledge of methodology. For example, as a non-native speaker I could predict problems that the students would encounter because I had the same problems or because I also spoke the native language of my students and thus knew that many English speakers encountered those problems in learning Spanish. It didn't matter as much if I knew four methods for teaching the subjunctive tense if I

couldn't predict or make some reasonable assumptions as to where the errors were going to be made and thus modify my methodology accordingly. I wasn't an authority on all the instances in which the subjunctive tense is used, but I could guide or advise students in how to avoid certain errors. In my situation in Colombia, I feel that I was a better than a native Colombian without any knowledge of how one learns a second language or without any language methodology.either. I imagine that this was the idea of the director who hired me.

One conclusion to be drawn from this project is that there is a lot of work to be done in this and related areas. To end this project, I will propose a series of considerations or food for thought for non-native speakers in the country where the language is spoken.

Why "in-country" teaching (even for native speakers)? What are the advantages? What are the disadvantages? Has any research been done on language learning performance?

Do a teacher's attitudes toward himself as a person and a teacher influence his teaching? Is this influence direct or indirect, measurable or unmeasurable? When do a teacher's attitudes toward himself as a person and a teacher influence his teaching? Which is more important: his self-concept or his concept of a teacher? Can these two things be separated?

How can the non-native teacher in the country where the

language spoken prepare himself mentally? Is it possible?
Is it necessary?

Is a non-native speaker a better teacher than a native?
Where: in or out of the country where the language is spoken? Do we assume that the native is not trained in language teaching methodology while the non-native is? Is this a reasonable assumption? Is there any research on native vs. non-native teacher effectiveness? What does it say? What does a non-native have that a native doesn't and vice versa?

Would a teaching methodology based on how the teacher learned, as an adult, the language he teaches be feasible? Has it been done? What would it entail? Would it be insensitive to the varying language learning styles of his students?

The students' attitude toward the non-native teacher in the country where the language is spoken: Is it generally positive or negative? Has any research been done on this question? What does the student's attitude toward the teacher mean in terms of his performance and the performance of the teacher himself? If the students' attitude is negative, what can the teacher do to change it? Should he attempt to?