

Commentary Section

The MEXTESOL NNEST Caucus

Dear Colleagues:

I am very pleased to announce the creation of the MEXTESOL NNEST Caucus, a group formed with the intention of finding ways for mutual support among non-native English Speaking teachers in Mexico. Here is a brief outline of the origin of the Caucus:

The TESOL NNEST Caucus

A marked preference towards native English speaking teachers of English (NEST's) and the subsequent discrimination of non-native speakers (NNEST's) in both native and non-native speaking countries has led to a shared concern on the part of NNEST's about job opportunities and possibilities for the development of professional careers in the English teaching field. This situation gave place to the birth of the TESOL NNEST Caucus. The formation of this group derived from a colloquium organized by George Braine from the Chinese University of Hong Kong and current Chair of the Caucus, in the 1996 TESOL Convention in Chicago. In that colloquium several NNEST's talked about their experiences as discriminated teachers of English, and Lia D. Kamhi-Stein from California State University proposed the creation of a NNEST Caucus in TESOL. After a period of two years, during which Lia D. Kamhi and Jun Liu from the University of Arizona collected 200 hundred signatures that had to support the Petition for the Caucus. In this way, the TESOL NNEST Caucus was officially constituted by the end of the 1998 TESOL Convention in Seattle.

The goals of the Caucus are:

- § "to create a nondiscriminatory professional environment for all TESOL members regardless of native language and place of birth,
- § to encourage the formal and informal gatherings of nonnative speakers at TESOL and

- affiliate conferences,
 § to encourage research and publications on the role of nonnative speaker teachers in ESL and EFL contexts, and
 § to promote the role of nonnative speakers members in TESOL and affiliate leadership positions.”
 (TESOL NNEST Newsletter, Vol I, No I).

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In the second week of October 1999, at the MEXTESOL Annual Convention in Mazatlan, Sin., Lia D. Kamhi-Stein, who is now the Editor of the TESOL NNEST Caucus Newsletter, gave an interesting and thought-provoking talk, where she encouraged non-native English speaking English teachers in Mexico to form a similar group so as to search for ways of mutual support against discriminatory practices in the Mexican English teaching context. Lia's participation in the Mazatlan Convention obeyed to an invitation from the current MEXTESOL President, Peter Hubbard, who for many years has devoted himself to opening ways for the professional development of Mexican teachers of English. He persuaded Lia to come and motivate Mexican NNEST's to make a group similar to the TESOL NNEST Caucus and, as a result of this, the basis for the creation of the MEXTESOL NNEST Caucus were set in a meeting held on the 15th of October, 1999. In that meeting a committee was appointed to organize and co-ordinate the formation and the actions the group.

The committee members are the following:

Co-ordinators:

Francisco Maya. (Universidad de SanLuis Potosi)
 Gerardo Ochoa. (Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes)

Representatives:

Lilia Carolina Lopez Cenicerros (Escuela Activa Integral en Culiacán, Sin.)

Claudia Cruz Armenta (Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla y Universidad de las Americas-Puebla).

As a co-ordinator, I am glad to invite all NNEST's in Mexico to join us and participate in the establishment of goals and principles of procedure for the Caucus. An e-mail list has been set to maintain the group members in touch. You can subscribe to it by sending a blank message to nnest-subscribe@listbot.com or by telephone or fax at (4) 70 1818 & 970 1789.

If you need further information, do not hesitate to contact me at hgochoa@prodigy.net.mx or gerardoochoa@yahoo.com , or at the telephone numbers above.

Finally, I would like to thank Lia D. Kamhi-Stein and Peter Hubbard for their guidance and support on the creation of the Caucus.

With kind regards,

Gerardo Ochoa.
MEXTESOL NNEST Caucus Co-ordinator.