ABSTRACT

Title of Document:	STORIES OF TEACHER IDENTITY: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO EAST ASIAN ESL TEACHERS' LIVES
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This study is a narrative inquiry into how our experiences as non-native

English speaking (NNES), English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers construct

and reconstruct our identities as persons and as teachers. While the phrase "East

Asian ESL teachers" in the title refers to Wen-Lin Huang, Kuriko Yayama, and Xuen

Zhang, K-12 ESL teachers in east coast public schools, it is also refers to me. These

descriptions are based on my personal journey as an English learner and graduate

student, as well as intensive interviews with three NNES ESL teachers whose

experiences I have to honor and give voice to by presenting them as I learned from

them.

This study captures the NNES teachers' experiences of becoming and being

ESL teachers in the United States. Particularly, this study emphasizes the meanings of

our experiences as language learners, ESL teacher candidates, and ESL practitioners

in relation to our identity construction and reconstruction, and highlights the effects

of cultural, linguistic, social, personal and interpersonal elements on our professional

identity transformation. This study also describes the multitude of obstacles NNES

ESL teachers overcome in developing the power of their minds. It is as much a study

about pain, frustration, struggle and challenges as it is about accomplishment and

hope.

The contributions to the thought and practice of teacher education as a result

of this study are three-fold. First, I hope the attention I give to the stories of teacher

identity of the four NNES ESL teachers will highlight the need for TESOL teacher

preparation programs to include and emphasize development opportunities for

NNESs. Second, I hope the witness of the four NNES ESL teachers' teaching lives

and the experiences of professional growth will open possibilities for NNES teacher

candidates in the teaching profession. Finally, I hope the themes emerged from this

study will provide an initial framework for future research in TESOL.

STORIES OF TEACHER IDENTITY:
A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO EAST ASIAN ESL TEACHERS' LIVES

By

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For

Wen-Lin Huang

Kuriko Yayama

Xuen Zhang

and

my parents.

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I wish to acknowledge…

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Chapter 1: Introduction

As an NNES graduate student, I was often frustrated and angry with myself when I was not able to participate fully in discussion or express my thoughts in front of my peers. In many circumstances, I had to observe events or evaluate any decision before I spoke. I had to deal with events and processes that were different from my cultural background and cognitive system. Thus, often, before I was about to make any comment, the topic moved in a different direction. Consequently, I often sat quietly in class.

<div align="right">Yen-Hui Lu (Taiwanese)</div>

I was always worried about the way I spoke because others might not take me seriously or might see me as an unintelligent person. So, I tried very hard to imitate how a native speaker sounds and how to say things in a right way whenever I could. Especially, when I was in front of native speakers doing presentations, something like that, I would pay extra attention to what was coming out of my mouth. You know, I had to sound like a native speaker as much as possible. Otherwise, they might look down on me.

<div align="right">Wen-Lin Huang (Taiwanese)</div>

Most of the teachers at my school were Americans. As an Asian, I can sense things. You know, as an Asian, certain things that we don't have to be told explicitly, but I can sense their attitude toward me through eye movements or body language. They sometimes ignored me as though I did not exist. I could sense that those teachers did not trust me as an ESL teacher. My purpose was to prove to them that I am a good teacher. Their attitude toward me had pushed me to prove my ability.

<div align="right">Kuriko Yayama (Japanese)</div>

Due to my Asian appearance, many of my students did not trust me as a qualified ESL teacher. Some of my students often questioned my pronunciation, and I felt that my students did not respect me as a language teacher at all due to my Chinese accent. The students often asked me in a doubtful tone, "Ms. Zhang, are you sure that you pronounced the word correctly?"

<div align="right">Xuen Zhang (Chinese)</div>

These four quotes from myself and three English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers of non-native English speakers (NNESs) reflect the variety of self-images and challenges we have faced in the field of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). During various stages in our careers, our identities as English teachers have faced various challenges. These include a lack of self-confidence as an English teacher in language proficiency and the challenge of teaching credibility because of linguistic and cultural identities, ESL students' negative attitudes, and administrators' unequal hiring decisions because of bias or racism.

This study discusses how our cultural and language learning backgrounds have shaped who we are, how we became English teachers, what challenges we have faced for the status of non-nativeness, how we have grown, and how we plan to continue our careers. As we have committed ourselves to teaching English, our life history stories have revealed different meanings of our learning and teaching experiences at schools and our lives beyond schools, yet developed similar story lines of doubt, insecurity, integrity, success, and contributions in our careers.

A common thread among us is our experiences of being NNESs in the United States. In our own way, each of us had expectations and understandings of the impact of linguistic and cultural identities on what we could do and what our possibilities might be. As NNES ESL teachers, these four perspectives point to the importance of understanding the ways in which language, culture and relationship with others may play out in our teaching lives. At the same time, each statement suggests that our experiences of teaching in the ESL classrooms may differ. The accounts of our experiences reflect our notions of opportunity, our relationships to school, and our

experiences as NNES in relation to others in society. Although our views may seem quite different in part, there are threads in our lives that connect our experiences.

Research Questions

The focus of this study is NNES ESL teachers' construction, conceptualization, and interrogation of our own identities. In this study, I sought to investigate NNES ESL teachers' identities in relation to our social world. Through our life stories, I searched for the meanings of our experiences as language learners, ESL teacher candidates, and ESL practitioners in relation to our identity construction and reconstruction.

Unraveling the interconnected strands of NNES ESL teachers' identities, as represented in their experiences, images, relationships, and stories, is not an easy task. One reason for this complexity is that social identities are not constructed in a vacuum. They are multilayered and complex, constructed through interactions with others, such as their teachers, students, colleagues and family members within social institutions. Viewing identities as a process of becoming, I believe, allows room for explaining not only how identities are formed, but also how identities change over time.

This study uses narrative inquiry to answer an overarching question: How do NNES ESL teachers construct their identities in the context of becoming and being a teacher in the United States? Through narrative inquiry, I seek to understand NNES ESL teachers' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, family stories, and prior experiences in learning and teaching and their teaching practices within the U.S. context. Three subsequent questions in the present study are: (1) What influence have

NNES ESL teachers' cultural and linguistic learning experiences had on their identities? (2) How does NNES ESL teachers' relationship with others influence the way they see themselves as ESL teachers? (3) How are NNES ESL teachers' cultural, linguistic and professional identities negotiated and transformed over time within the context of the teaching community in the U.S.?

Research Methodology

This study is a narrative inquiry into how the experiences of four NNES ESL teachers – Wen-Lin, Kuriko, Xuen, and I shift identities as persons and as teachers. In past decades, narratives and, in particular, stories people tell about their lives, have gained increasing status outside the fields of literature and folklore and have become the focus of the evolving interdisciplinary field of narrative study, which posited narrative as the central means by which people construct identities and give their lives meaning (Bell, 2002; Kelchtermans 1993). Consequently, scholars in a variety of disciplines have expressed new interests in biographies as a unique, rich and unsurpassed resource for an understanding of the inward experience of how social and individual forces may interact (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998). The fields of second language acquisition (SLA) and bilingualism are no exception to this trend: recently, several researchers have turned to stories people tell about their language learning (Pavlenko, 1998; Schumann, 1978). All these investigations, however, focus on contemporary stories in language learning.

The goal of the present study is to see how NNES ESL teachers view the relationship between their languages and identities, and construct their professional identities in language teaching. In order to answer the research questions, I examined

negotiation of identities with an exploration of NNES ESL teachers' life histories. Wen-Lin, Kuriko, and Xuen welcomed me into their personal and teaching lives during the investigation; I listened to their stories from their own words and perspectives. I tape-recorded and transcribed these conversations. After reading and living with these transcriptions, I went further into questions about their stories. I discussed ways in which our identities are shaped.

Using narrative as a form of reflection, I listened to the stories of the three participants' professional journeys. I felt very privileged. I sometimes heard echoes from their stories that gave me more confidence about my own status. At times, I felt their stories were furthering my professional growth as I heard how they came to make sense of their own experience. I found myself being led to many of the same conclusions that my participants had reached about themselves as they succeeded in their careers.

Research on NNES

The globalization of English language teaching has heralded an increase in the number of NNESs matriculated in the TESOL teacher preparation programs in the United States (Braine, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 2000). Yet, as has been aptly pointed out by scholars, much of the preliminary research into NNES scholarship has dichotomized NNESs and their counterparts, native English speakers (NESs), by stressing the "language proficiency" aspect of language teaching over other equally important variables such as cross-cultural competence, teaching experiences, and expertise (Braine, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 2000; Liu, 1999). Given that over three-quarters of the individuals in the global English language teaching community are

NNESs (Liu, 1999), it is crucial to investigate how NNES ESL teachers construct identity while navigating through the Western educational system, and how NNES ESL teachers reconcile their own perspectives of who they are – their linguistic, social, and cultural values and identities – with national stereotypes of their own and others' linguistic and cultural values.

Over the past 10 years there has been considerable growth in writing and research about NNESs and their experiences in school and society. Professionals and scholars have voiced different opinions on issues related to non-nativeness, such as perceived advantages and disadvantages of being a non-native English speaker in TESOL (Medgyes, 1994; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999), NNESs' challenge to credibility (Thomas, 1999), NNESs' self-perception (Liu, 1999; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999), the attitudes of students toward NNES teachers (Amin, 1997, Tang; 1997), and differences in classroom behavior between NNESs and NESs (Medgyes, 1992). Much research on NNES teachers' self-perceptions has been based on quantitative research design. Kamhi-Stein (2004) notes such quantitative data may tell us most of what we know about what it means to be an NNES teacher in America, but they tell far too little about the NNES teachers' inner strength and inner self.

Not only do the NNESs need to face the issues of language proficiency, but also, within an English-dominant country, NNESs must face the issues of credibility that challenge their teaching ability because of their racial and ethnic backgrounds. For example, Samimy and Brutt-Griffler (1999) surveyed 17 non-native students in a U.S. graduate TESOL program using a 23-item questionnaire that probed their perceptions regarding the issues of the native versus non-native in teaching English.

Although these teachers perceived themselves as competent and successful teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) in their home countries, they found their confidence decreased in the ESL context.

The challenges that NNESs face stem not only from professionals in the field, but also from their ESL students. In Thomas's (1999) personal narratives as an English writing teacher in the ESL context, regardless of her effort in teaching, she was often discouraged by her ESL students who often expected native English teachers and questioned her credibility as an English writing teacher. Walking through the experiences of being an NNES ESL teacher, I understand how the experience of feeling shame, hurt, and misunderstanding can influence our identity as an ESL teacher.

More recently, there has been an increase in the number of autobiographies that document the experiences of NNES professionals who work in higher education as either linguistic teachers or ESL teacher educators. Such NNES writers as Braine (2005) and Liu (2004) have documented the complexity of their own teaching lives as NNES scholars. Part of the accounts is commonly framed through autobiographical writing about NNESs' own learning experiences and the challenges and triumphs they encounter. Much of the research just cited has focused on NNES teachers for adult ESL classes (Amin, 1997) or college-level courses (Braine, 1999; Liu 2004; Thomas, 1999); however, no research or self-narrative documents NNES K-12 practitioners' linguistic, cultural identities, and self-identities (except Kamhi-Stein, Aagard, Ching, Paik & Sasser, 2004).

Research on Identity

Many educational researchers have adopted a variety of theoretical positions such as sociocultural, poststructuralist and feminist perspectives to study identity, focusing on various aspects of identity, such as linguistic identity, cultural identity, national identity, gender identity, and professional identity, to name just a few. Even the most theoretically sophisticated researchers would have problems navigating their way through the incommensurate constructs used to study identity, or developing an integrated perspective out of the diverse movements contributing to this discourse (Cummins, 1996; Norton, 2000; Wenger, 1998). In this study, I use the term "identity" to mean "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how the relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (Norton, 2000, p. 5).

To bring out NNES ESL teachers' experiences in relation to multiple identities, I needed multiple frameworks with which I could analyze our cultural, linguistic and racial identities from our experiences, and examine our professional identities as NNES ESL teachers in relation with others within the social context of the United States. I found that three perspectives are relevant to my study: experience on identity formation, language and identity, and poststructuralist perspectives on identity.

First, experience on identity formation provides a framework to examine identity from a person's daily experiences and interaction with others (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000; Dewey 1938; Wenger, 1998). Second, relationship between language and identity challenges the impact of language ideology on a person's

identity (Cummins, 1996; Norton, 2000). Third, poststructuralist perspectives on identity examine identity from a larger social, political, economic and cultural system to address relations between identities and power relations (Bourdieu, 1991). Although these perspectives may emphasize different aspects and issues on identity, they have rejected the assumptions of identity as static, unitary, and discrete, and share some basic assumptions about identity as multiple, conflicting, unfixed, and evolving.

With these three perspectives, this study provides an opportunity to understand the threads that both bind and separate the lives of NNES ESL teachers by exploring the meanings of NNES ESL teachers' experiences at home and in school, as well as the various relationships we forge in and out school, and our hopes and dreams for life beyond school. Through critically reflecting on my own experiences and examining the meaning and experiences of these three NNES ESL teachers, I hope to expand understanding of the complexities of the lives of NNES ESL teachers, and at the same time explore the identities of NNES ESL teachers. In particular, I examine the experiences of these three NNES ESL teachers who come from different countries, attended different schools and teach in different public schools. I explain the meanings we constructed of our learning experiences in language classrooms, and our relationships with family members, peers, and colleagues. I came to see that relationships with our family, friends, and teachers affected how we developed different kinds of choices, different kinds of futures for ourselves, and different interpretations of success.

Experience Approach to Identity Formation

What constitutes a teacher's identity? Who determines what makes a good teacher? For Dewey (1938), experience, education, and life were one and the same. He saw an individual's experience as a central lens for understanding a person and the keys to educational experience as the principles of interaction and continuity. To understand a teacher's identity, one must understand the teacher's life. Drawing on Dewey's theory of experience and education, Connelly and Clandinin (1999) approached the issue of teacher identity from the perspective of teachers' experiences and voices. They suggested that "our identities are composed and improvised as we go about living our lives embodying knowledge and engaging our contexts" (p. 4). Our stories and experiences are the narrative expressions of who we are in our worlds.

The experiential approach to identity construction relevant in development of teacher identity includes teachers' learning experiences and teaching experiences. Studies of relationships between preservice teachers' beliefs about teaching and their student teaching experiences have shown that beliefs were often based on past learning experiences (Bailey et al., 1996). Preservice student teachers normally bring to the programs "an internalized role identity through which they make sense of the environment" (Kagan, cited in Powell, 1994, p. 362).

For many of us, the concept of learning immediately conjures up images of classrooms, training sessions, teachers, textbooks, homework, and exercises. Yet for Wenger (1998), learning is an integral part of our everyday lives. Wenger argues that we all belong to several communities of practice everywhere and at any given time.

For example, family members develop their own practice, routines, rituals, and activities together. They do what it takes to keep going. Workers organize their lives with their immediate colleagues and customers to get their work done. In doing so, they create a practice doing what needs to be done. In the field of education, teachers develop their practice not only through the teacher education communities, such as the internship communities, school communities as well as professional organization communities, but also through the communities outside the classrooms.

Dewey (1938) believes the quality of the interaction will be realized to the degree that people involved form a community. How a teacher experiences her job, how she interprets her position, how she understands what she teaches, what she knows, doesn't know, and doesn't try to know – all of these are neither simply individual choices nor simply the result of belonging to the social category, "teacher." Instead, they are negotiated in the course of doing the job and interacting with others. In the idea of "identity in practice," Wenger (1998) elaborates the point that participation is a source of identity. Identity is constituted through relations of participation. Developing a practice requires the formation of a community whose members can engage with one another and thus acknowledge each other as participants.

In investigating identity, Norton (2000) focuses on relationship: "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (p. 5). As a consequence, practice entails the negotiation of ways of being a person in context. The negotiation of meaning by mutually participating with others

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in activities makes people who they are. In the interplay of participation and negotiation of meaning, our experiences and our world shape each other through a reciprocal relationship that goes to the very essence of who we are.

The present study is situated within the framework that experiences can solidify or reinforce, alter or expand, who we are in our worlds. Scholars argue that teachers are not empty vessels waiting to be filled with theoretical and pedagogical skills, but they are individuals who enter teacher education programs with prior experience, personal values, and beliefs that inform their knowledge about teaching and shape what they do in their classrooms (McDiarmid, 1990; Stuart & Thurlow, 2000). By visiting and writing about NNES ESL teachers' experience at home, school, and the work place, and their relationship with family members, friends, student peers, and colleagues, this study attempts to study NNES ESL teachers' experiences, values, and beliefs and teaching practice in relation to their identities.

Language and Identity

Recently, there has been a growing body of literature focusing on the relation between language and identity. Much research has focused on identity construction of language learners who speak other languages. A number of recent articles have examined the role of learners' social and cultural identities in learning English, and have documented the belief that identities shape the ways in which people make sense of the world and influence how they perform their daily practices (Hall, 2002; McCathey, 2001).

For example, Norton (2000), drawing upon insights from West (1992), Bourdieu (1997), Weedon (1997) and Cummins (1996), has highlighted the

importance of understanding the personal, social-psychological investments of adult immigrant women in learning ESL in conceptualizing the relations between power, identity, and the learning of language. After teaching six months of ESL courses, Norton went on to study five of the women participants over a period of twelve months. The women were asked to keep records of their interactions with Anglophone Canadians and to write diaries in which they would reflect on their language learning experience in the home, workplace, and community. Through the participants' journal writing, this study reflects the participants' multiple identities as immigrants, mothers, wives, workers, and learners in relation to language learning in which Norton found a complex relation among social identity, personal investment, and language learning.

Drawing upon Hilliday's (1985) sociocultural theory of language, Morgan's (1997) study focuses on the relationship between second language learners' identities and intonation teaching practice. Reflecting upon his teaching practice as a teacher-researcher in a community-based adult ESL classroom in Toronto, Morgan's study describes a particular language lesson on intonation and suggests that "social power and identity issues seemed to facilitate greater comprehension of sentence-level stress and intonation as strategic resources for (re)defining social relationship" (p. 431). Another example of research on language and identity is Bosher's (1995) study of the cultural identity of the second generation of a group of Hmong college students who immigrated recently to the U.S. According to quantitative data from 101 Hmong students and qualitative interview data from 15 Hmong students, this study suggests there is a high correlation between linguistic identity and academic success.

These studies reveal that identity becomes one of the significant constructs in second language education research; however, much of the research mentioned above focuses on second language learners. Prevailing paradigms of second language research have for decades not treated questions of teachers' sociocultural identity as a central issue in the process of language teaching and in the theories of language teacher education (Medgyes, 2000). There is a scarcity of research demonstrating a comprehensive understanding of the dynamic relationship between teachers' linguistic and cultural identities and language teaching. There is a particular need for investigations on NNES ESL teachers who came from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who bring a set of prior beliefs about teaching and learning which has been shaped by their experiences and observation as learners in their home countries.

The traditions of language teacher education rooted in general educational inquiry have emphasized the learners' language acquisition process, teaching techniques and pedagogy. Lagging behind by almost a decade, language teacher education has begun to recognize that teachers, apart from the method or materials they may use, are central to understanding and improving teaching of English. Researchers and practitioners in language teacher education have begun to recast concepts of who language teachers are, what language teaching is, and how language teachers learn to teach (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). As language students learn from many sources within learning environments and among learning elements, teachers play a major role in facilitating students' learning processes. Freeman and Johnson (1998) argue that in defining the knowledge base for language teachers, teacher

educators must focus not only on students as learners of language, but also on teachers as learners of language teaching. The knowledge base of language teacher education must account for how individuals learn to teach and for the complex factors, influences, and processes that contribute to teachers' identities.

It has been argued that the social identity of NNESs is not fixed but is, rather, shaped by social attitudes toward NNESs that, in turn, influence the role of NNES teachers in the ESL classroom (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Mcnamara, 1997; Tang, 1997). Scholars in the field of general teacher education urge teacher education programs to understand the perspectives and experiences from teacher candidates of diverse backgrounds as the basis for designing teacher education programs that will prepare them to be successful in teaching (Au & Blake, 2003). It is particularly crucial, however, for teacher educators to understand NNESs' challenges and issues, to recognize NNESs' need for acceptance, and to acknowledge their unique contribution in the field.

Poststructuralist Perspectives on Identity

While documenting the ways in which NNES ESL teachers acquire a new language and new culture in specific social settings such as schools and language classrooms in their home countries and in the United Sates, the study draws from poststructuralist perspectives (Weedon, 1997) to investigate the relationship between language, culture, and identities, and to understand how NNES ESL teachers see themselves in social settings.

Interest in investigating ways in which relations of power affect language learning and teaching has been gaining momentum, a trend reflected in the number of

researchers who adopt a poststructuralist approach to the field of second language education. Poststructuralists consider language choices in multilingual contexts as embedded in larger social, political, economic, and cultural systems. Poststructuralist thinking, in particular Bourdieu's (1991, 1997) model of symbolic domination, addresses relations between identities and power relations. Bourdieu views linguistic practices as a form of symbolic capital, convertible into economic and social capital and distributed unequally within any given speech community. The value of a particular language variety in a symbolic market place derives from its legitimization by the dominant group and the dominant institutions, in particular, schools and the media. The official language or standard variety becomes the language of a hegemonic institution because both the dominant and the subordinated groups misrecognize it as a superior language. In Bourdieu's terms, those who are not speakers of the official language or standard variety are subject to symbolic domination if they believe in the legitimacy of that language or variety. These beliefs are shaped in the process of misrecognition.

Cummins (2000) is interested in how different orientations to cultural and linguistic diversity are reflected in the policies and practices of schools, and particularly in the process of identity negotiation between students and teachers. Noting micro-level relations of power in the broader society, he points out that teachers may be unwittingly engaged in what he calls "coercive relations of power" by failing to question social inequality and preparing their students to accept the status quo. Education operating on the principles of coercive relations of power is very effective in suppressing language minority students' linguistic and cultural

identities because it makes students internalize the message that values and rules imposed by the dominant group are 'natural, normal, universal, and objective and that it is in everyone's interest to accept those rules' (Heller & Martin-Jones, 2001, p. 6). If language minority students do not fit, it is because there is something wrong with them, not with the school. Kanno's (2004) studies illuminate the role of schools in reproduction of social inequality. The respective descriptions of an elementary school in Japan show that students of second language in Japan context are subject to unequal power relations and are often unable to achieve the "right to speak" (Bourdieu, 1991).

Duff and Uchida (1997) conducted an ethnographic study of two American and two Japanese EFL teachers in an EFL context in Japan to answer two research questions: How are teachers' sociocultural identities, understandings and practices negotiated and transformed over time? What factors are associated with these changes? In searching the complex interrelationships between language and culture, between teachers' sociocultural identities and teaching practices, Duff and Uchida argue that language students as well as language teachers in any setting naturally represent a wide array of social and cultural roles and identities: as teachers or students, as gendered and cultured individuals, as expatriated or nationals, as native speakers or nonnative speakers, as members of families, organizations and society at large. Social life, identities and beliefs are co-constructed, negotiated and transformed on an ongoing basis by means of language (Norton, 1997). Duff and Uchida conclude that sociocultural identities are not static, deterministic constructs that ESL teachers

and students bring to the classroom and then take away unchanged at the end of a lesson or course.

NNES ESL teachers experience a tremendous shift in social and cultural relations when they start learning a new language in the EFL and ESL settings and become ESL teachers in American public schools. The discovery of self for language learners and teachers often occurs with others' recognition of who they are (Norton, 1997). From this perspective, the discovery of self for NNES ESL teachers also occurs with others' recognition of who they are. They need to (re)construct social life, beliefs, and their cultural and linguistic identities in relation to others.

Organization of the Study

In Chapter One, I have introduced the purpose of my study and have suggested the importance of the concept of self and identities in teacher development. I have argued that, since identities are important in second language learning and teaching, teacher educators need to understand how opportunities to practice speaking are socially structured in both formal and informal sites of language learning. Furthermore, it is important for theorists and teacher educators to understand how NNES ESL teachers respond to, and create opportunities for learning, and how they shift their identities, and invest in the second language teaching.

Chapter Two addresses the complex relationship between the methodology and theory. I also give reasons for choosing narrative-life history as the methodology. I write of my need to choose the methodology that best presents the purpose of this study. I also write of my positioning as a researcher as I live and tell my participants' stories through narrative inquiry. I discuss the complexities and

challenges I faced as I conducted the study. This chapter also provides the reader with an introduction to myself and the other three NNES ESL teachers. I share glimpses of how I met them and basic background about who they are. I describe the procedures and interview protocol of collecting the life history narratives of NNES ESL teachers, and explain the ways I analyze these texts. I discuss the actual procedures employed in planning and conducting this project for understanding the multiplicity and diversity of identities in both personal and social contexts.

My autobiography in Chapter Three provides a background for this study. Chapters Four, Five and Six represent the life histories of three NNES ESL teachers, Wen-Lin Huang, Kuriko Yayama, and Xuen Zhang, and explore the various meanings these teachers developed about language learning and teaching. I examine these meanings by connecting their experiences inside and outside of school to the ways they made sense of their identities as ESL teachers. These four chapters give central importance to our linguistic, cultural and racial identities of the meanings we developed. These chapters are dominated by the discussions of the linguistic importance and meanings we encountered as ESL teachers. I explore experiences of curriculum and pedagogy, and relationships with teachers as students, and with students as teachers in various classrooms.

I also explore our relationships with friends, examining the peer groups we formed, and consider our relationships with others in both formal and informal organizations and networks in and out of school. The stories reflect what the three NNES ESL teachers attended to, what they selected, and how I arranged and composed them. I attended to and composed stories with my own emotions and

memories which often echo in their stories. The three NNES ESL teachers are presented as authors of their own life histories and of their own teaching lives; I am intimately involved in the telling.

In the concluding chapter, I first use five metaphors (visibility obstacles, resource obstacles, barrier obstacles, resistance obstacles, and sabotage obstacles), which Sternberg and Spear-Swerling (1998) describe as five different types of obstacles one may face in personal navigation, to illustrate challenges and obstacles NNESs may face in the field of TESOL. Then, I use feminist poststructural perspective to discuss the relationship between voice and identities, and to address how NNES ESL teachers establish their identities through voice. And last, I address themes and issues that emerge from our narratives, and provide ideas and suggestions that TESOL teacher preparation programs may use to help NNES teacher candidates overcome obstacles and help them empower their own voice for establishing their professional identities.

Chapter 2: Framing the Research

In this chapter, I describe the research procedure including data collection and data analysis, followed by the rationale of positioning my research in narrative inquiry. Further, I discuss some specific methodological issues in narrative-life history approach.

As the main focus of my study is to understand how NNES ESL teachers, with their particular cultural and linguistic experiences, make sense of their daily experiences as they construct new experiences in teaching, the research paradigm of my study is aligned with social constructionism. From a constructivist point of view, individuals do not construct their understanding of experience in isolation, but they interpret experience within historical and sociocultural contexts (Lincoln & Cuba, 2001). In other words, to understand NNES ESL teachers, I must consider the meaning of the experiences they construct within the contexts.

For three major reasons, this study should follow a qualitative approach. First, this study is field-focused and heavily concerned with specific individuals in specific contexts. The main focus of this study is to understand specific NNES ESL teachers' cultural and linguistic experiences in the contexts of their home countries and their teaching practice in the U. S. context. Second, as a researcher, I am not neutral to the study. My own experiences as an NNES will be integrated into the

study. In other words, I am also an informant in the study. As an insider in this study, both my voice and participants' voices are addressed. Third, story-telling is a major character of the study in the process of data collection and data analysis. In this study, the understanding of NNES ESL teachers' experiences, teaching practice and identities is based on participants' dialogues with their past, present, and future.

Within the epistemology of a qualitative framework, qualitative inquirers use different approaches, theories and methodologies to explore and understand human action and experience. These approaches, theories and methodologies include grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), ethnography (Wolcott, 1999), phenomenology (Moran, 1999), case study (Stake, 1995), and narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Although they can overlap in significant ways, different approaches or methodologies provide inquirers with different lenses to explore human action and experiences. For example, the aim of a grounded theory is to generate a theory that explains a process, an action or interaction about a substantive topic (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Ethnography focuses on the patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language of a shared-cultural or social group (Wolcott, 1999). Phenomenological study is a methodology for describing the meaning of the lived experiences of several individuals about a concept or the phenomenon (Moran, 1999). A case study uses in-depth data collection and multiple sources of information in context to explore a bounded system or a case (Stake, 1995). Narrative inquiry focuses on experiences and the qualities of life (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

While considering these different methodologies, I found that narrative inquiry would best enable me to explore my research interest. Narrative inquiry

allows me as a researcher to understand participants' experiences and the impact of the experiences, and it also provides me with tools to understand and to explore the tacit assumptions of participants. I wanted to understand the meaning NNES ESL teachers give to their experience and how the meaning of experience reflects on 'professional self' – the way they see themselves as ESL professionals. The option for narrative interview was obvious since I wanted to acknowledge the subjective perception and the narrative character of the professional identities.

Narrative Inquiry

The epistemological assumption of narrative inquiry is that we as human beings make sense of our daily experience by living in story structures. The main claim for the use of narrative in educational research is that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). In other words, we pay attention to those elements of experience that we select, and we pattern those chosen elements in ways that reflect the stories available to us. The study of narrative, therefore, is the study of the ways humans experience the world.

Narrative inquiry has a long intellectual history both in and out of education and is increasingly used in studies of educational experience (Casey, 1993). However, a comprehensive overview of this design of research in education did not emerge until recently. In 1990, Clandinin and Connelly published their informative article, "Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry" in the *Educational Researcher*. In this article, they provide an overview of narrative research for the field of education, elaborate on the process of collecting narrative field notes and discuss the

writing and structure of a narrative study. More recently, these two authors expanded their ideas in a book titled *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research* (2000), which includes detailed guidelines for "what narrative inquiries do" (p. 48).

According to Clandinin and Connelly (1994), narrative is both phenomenon and method. Everyone who experiences this world leads storied lives and retells their own stories, whereas narrative inquirers collect, describe, retell such storied lives and write narratives of experience. In their own words, "narrative names the structured quality of experience to be studied, and it names the patterns of inquiry for its study" (p. 416). In the broad field of education, narrative work has focused on teacher education, looking at the ways in which teachers' narratives shape and inform their practice (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Thomas, 1995). Cortazzi (1993) identifies three factors that influence the development of narrative research in teaching practice. First, there is currently an increased emphasis on teacher reflection. Second, more emphasis is being placed on teachers' knowledge -- what they know, how they think, how they develop professionally, and how they make decisions in the classroom. And third, educators seek to bring teachers' voices to the forefront by empowering teachers to talk about their experiences.

The recent emphasis on reflective practice (Schön, 1983) and teacher research has strengthened the focus on listening to the voice of teachers and hearing their stories. In Clandinin and Connelly's (1992) study on teachers' personal, practical knowledge, they work closely with teachers to achieve, through observation, conversation, and mutual construction, an understanding of how teachers know their

practice. Scholars (Neumann & Peterson, 1997; Thompson & Tyagi, 1996) have

moved their research beyond the immediate technical issues of curriculum and

classrooms to encompass teachers' biographies.

Other scholars (Russell & Munby, 1991; Thomas, 1991) have sought an

understanding of teaching practice through teachers' personal experiences and

narrative. The central concept of practitioner knowledge through reflective

storytelling in teaching and teacher education is central to the organization of

knowledge and the processes of comprehension and thinking (Carter, 1993).

Recording and retelling classroom practice enables teachers to organize their growing

knowledge of teaching. For instance, following Schön's (1983) notion of "reflection-

in-action," Russell and Munby's (1991) study of 15 teachers focuses on

understanding how the interaction between teachers and their experience gives rise to

knowing how to teach. In their narratives, the researchers demonstrate that one of

their participants, Diane, was able to clarify her puzzles in teaching activities through

the process of "reframing experience" (p. 165). The stories of the participants'

experiences of exploring the relationship between beliefs and action also illustrate

how the process of reframing experience shapes the development of teachers'

professional knowledge.

In the field of language education, the tradition of providing narrative

accounts of patterns of language use is well-established in understanding language

use and language learning by gathering data from learner autobiographies, diary

studies, life histories and case studies (Bell, 2002). However, many scholars have

issued warnings against treating narratives simply as factual data subject to content

analysis (Pavlenko, 2002). Scholars argue that narrative inquiry requires going beyond the use of narrative as rhetorical structure (Bell, 2002). Recent research convincingly demonstrates that narratives are not purely individual productions – they are powerfully shaped by social, cultural, and historical conventions as well as by the relationship between the storyteller and the interlocutor.

Inquirers in narrative research focus on individuals' experiences. This focus on experience draws on the philosophical thoughts of John Dewey (1938), who saw that an individual's experience was a central lens for understanding a person. One aspect of Dewey's thinking was to view experience as continuous, where one experience led to another. Drawing from three criteria, *continuity* (past, present and future), *interaction* and *situation* in Dewey's theory of experience, experiences in narrative inquiry are both personal – what the individual experiences – as well as social – the individual interacting with others. Within Dewey's framework, this present study will focus on individual NNES ESL teachers' history or past experiences in relation to who they are and will be, and their present experiences as NNES ESL teachers in relation to their teacher identities as they interact with students, colleagues, students parents, and friends in the teaching community.

The methods for the study of personal experience that Clandinin and Connelly (2000) proposed focus on four experiences: inward and outward, backward and forward. With this narrative research model, I am able to deeply understand an individual East Asian ESL teacher's feelings, hopes, reactions, and moral disposition (inward); to associate existential conditions that an individual NNES ESL teacher

encounters (outward); and to connect a full range of an individual NNES ESL

teacher's experiences in the past, present and future (backward and forward).

Despite the different forms or terms of narrative inquiry, such as

autobiographies, life writing, personal narratives, narrative interviews, personal

documents and oral histories, they share the common focus on the experience of

individuals and the meanings that individuals construct in the world. What

distinguishes narrative research from annals and chronicles in the study of history is

its focus on the meaning of experience. Annals are a dated record of events in which

there is no apparent connection between events. In narrative research writing, the

inquirer stresses plot, meaning, interpretation, and explanation of the experiences in

an individuals' life (White, 1981).

Life History Approach

The importance of teachers' lives or biographies is being acknowledged lately

by a growing number of studies. As a methodological approach, Kelchtermans (1993)

characterizes five general features to illustrate the biographical perspective: narrative,

constructivistic, contextualistic, interactionistic, and dynamic. *Narrative* refers to the

emphasis on narrative form of teachers' stories in which teachers subjectively present

their teaching experiences. While teachers tell their life history, their professional

teaching experiences are composed into their narratives. This implies that the

biographical approach focuses more on the meaning of the experiences that teachers

make and not so much on the facts. The approach is also *constructivistic*. The

teaching experiences are meaningful to teachers as they construct their experiences

into a story. Also the meaning of teaching is constructed from his or her conception

about teaching and as a teacher. In the narratives, stories or events are always constructed in a given *context*, such as the physical, institutional environment of the school, as well as the social, cultural and political context of society. As teachers construct their experiences into narratives, the stories or events always result from a meaningful *interaction* with others such as family members, colleagues and students. Finally, the *dynamic* character of the biographical perspective emphasizes the temporal and multiple dimension of teachers' thinking and acting within a complex and multidimensional society. In short, the biographical perspective allows me to examine dynamic and complex teacher identities from a comprehensive in-depth approach.

In particular, autobiography has been credited as an effective tool that encourages self-reflection on one's own identity (Chisholm, 1994; Curtis, 1998). In the field of education, investigators and practitioners have been increasingly interested in writing autobiographies to tell stories about teaching and teacher education rather than simply generating findings from numbers and statistics. Autobiographical writing has become more than simply a rhetorical device for expressing sentiments about teachers or candidates for the teaching profession. It is now a major methodology for conducting research in the field. Instead of reporting statistics, teachers' stories capture their experiences as teachers and provide a better understanding of the complexity of what teaching is, how their prior learning and teaching experience shaped who they are and how others can be prepared to engage in this position (Carter, 1993).

In this study, my autobiography is a major resource for the investigation. As I recorded, categorized and analyzed my own memories, experiences, and dilemmas as a pupil and how I became an English teacher, I was able to construct my "personal theories" about teaching and learning, as well as gather insight into both my personal and professional development. The important consequence of writing an autobiography for me was that I was able to examine my own learning and teaching and improve my knowledge of good practice, which led to changes in my personal practice.

For example, in my autobiography, I revealed my own beliefs in learning and teaching by discovering my family stories and childhood learning experiences. In my narratives, I illustrated that my motivation in learning and teaching was inspired by my mother's learning experience. As a female Taiwanese, my family stories and cultural background have deeply shaped who I am as a teacher and influenced my beliefs in learning and teaching. My narrative illustrates that the complexity of learning to teach and teacher identity cannot be simply studied within the limited context of a teacher preparation program.

In addition to my autobiography, I use the life history approach to collect the participants' experiences. The hallmark of narrative writing is to recognize that people make sense of their lives according to the stories available to them. The stories people live do not exist in a vacuum but are constantly being restructured in the light of new events. Clandinin and Connelly (1991) explain that in the construction of narratives of experience, there is a reflexive relationship between "living a life story, telling a life story, retelling a life story, and reliving a life story" (p. 265). In this

sense, we live out our stories in our experiences, tell stories of those experiences, and modify them through retelling and reliving them.

Participants

This study starts with my own reflection upon my experiences of English learning and teaching, and my identities as an NNES graduate student and an EFL and ESL teacher. In order to push beyond my own experience as an NNES ESL teacher and to represent a range of different cultural and linguistic experiences, I invited another three NNES ESL in-service teachers who are from three different public schools in the east coast region of the United States to share their experiences. A "NNES ESL in-service teacher" in this study is defined as a person who was born and educated primarily outside of the United States throughout k-12 education, who considers her native language the first language and English the second language, and who is currently teaching ESL classes in the United States. Because of my own cultural background, I am more familiar with East Asian countries, so I have purposefully selected Wen-Lin Huang from Taiwan, Kuriko Yayama from Japan, and Xuen Zhang from China to participate in this study.

As an insider in this study, my own experiences and narratives are an important source to the study. Thus, I consider myself as one of the participants in this study, so the total number of the participants is four, Wen-Lin, Kuriko, Xuen and myself. I explore the NNES ESL teachers' experiences as learners and teachers, as well as review their past histories for changing concepts of the self and relationships with others. I decided on four participants for the study because fewer than four could

limit opportunities in understanding teachers' varied experiences and more than four might sacrifice understanding their experiences in depth.

In the following section I introduce the reader to each of the NNES ESL teachers in this study. These biographical sketches provide a glimpse of the teachers' basic background about who they are. The background of the participants in this study can be seen in Table 1 in terms of their age, birthplace, marital status, cultural and educational backgrounds, English learning and teaching experiences in both home country and the United States, and the length of time living in the U.S.

Yen-Hui Lu

I was born in Taiwan and began formal English learning in public school when I was in the seventh grade and continued throughout middle school and high school. Upon graduation with a Master's degree in Art Education in the United States, I worked as an educational specialist and a part-time English teacher in a language institute in Taiwan. After teaching English at the language institute for four years, I returned to the United States in 2001 to pursue a Ph.D. degree in TESOL, and this is how this dissertation journey began.

Wen-Lin Huang

I had met Wen-Lin a couple of times at regional conferences before I officially invited her to my study. When I first met her, I was about to complete my research proposal, and she was in her last semester of her Master's program at a regional university. While we were in the conference meeting, we briefly chatted about school work, but we did not have deeper conversations about our lives in

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general. I knew her to be Taiwanese, but I thought she might have been raised in the United States because her English is quite fluent and without foreign accent.

After I passed my proposal, Wen-Lin had begun her career as an ESL teacher in elementary school for a couple of months. As I started seeking participants for this study, I first thought about Wen-Lin. I thought she might not be a participant if she was raised in the United States, but she might be the person who could help me recruit NNES ESL teachers since she was in the field.

In order for her to have a clear idea of what I was going to do and who I was looking for, I briefly introduced the purpose of my study and the criteria of the participants in the study. To my surprise, she told me she was born and raised in Taiwan. Her background matched the criteria I had set for the study. She expressed interest in the research topics that relate to Asian teachers and was willing to participate. The image I had of her during the conference meetings gradually changed as I began interviewing her.

Wen-Lin is a calm, independent, young ESL teacher in elementary school. She was born in 1979 in Taiwan. She was first exposed to English at a private language institute when she was in the sixth grade. After one year of informal English learning at the private language institute, she had six years of formal English learning in public school. She completed high school before she immigrated to the United States when she was 18. After she immigrated to the U.S., she first studied English in an ESL program at a community college for two years, and then she transferred to a four-year university. Upon graduation with a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education, she taught in a mainstream classroom as a second grade teacher in public

school for five months. She received a Master's degree in TESOL in 2004, and is currently teaching in a second grade ESL classroom.

Kuriko Yayama

I did not expect that I would have a Japanese participant in this study because I have seldom heard of any ESL teacher who was Japanese. As I was seeking participants for this study, one of my Chinese friends, Ling, who was an ESL student-teacher in elementary school at that time, told me her mentor teacher was an NNES. From Ling's brief description, I knew Kuriko would be a good candidate for this study. Through Ling's introduction, I met Kuriko at her school and was struck by her friendly demeanor and generous spirit. She welcomed me into her teaching life.

Born in Japan in 1972, Kuriko started learning English in a private language institute when she was in the third grade. She had four years of informal English learning experience at the private language institute before she began another six years of formal English learning in public school. Kuriko was a straight A student throughout middle school and high school. She was also one of the outstanding college students in the department of English Literature. In order to improve her English and learn language pedagogy, she spent one year at an intensive language institute in the United States and then enrolled in a MA-TESOL program when she was 23.

Before she came to the United States, she worked as an English teacher for one year in an after-school institute in Tokyo. She started her career as an ESL teacher in elementary school upon graduation with a Master's degree in TESOL. By

the time I interviewed her, she had had six years of teaching experience in ESL classrooms.

Xuen Zhang

When I was recruiting the participants for this study, Kim, a Korean ESL teacher, was a potential candidate for this study on my list. When I first met Kim, she was a full-time middle school ESL teacher and a doctoral student in the same program with me. Since we had known each other for a long time, I thought her experience might greatly contribute to this study. Kim was very interested in this study, but because of her multiple roles as an ESL teacher, a doctoral student and a mother of two, she had to turn down my invitation. Fortunately, most of Kim's colleagues at her school were NNESs, and Xuen was one of them.

Through Kim's introduction, I visited Xuen after she finished her day at school. Without listening to my whole proposal, she nodded her head and said, "I am the one who you are looking for." I was a little bit shocked that Xuen agreed to be part of my study without asking further information. To reassure myself that she understood this study and time that she might have to spend in participating in this study, I asked her to take my proposal and reply to me later. She responded to me right away, "You know, as a teacher I am quite busy, but I know I am the one who can help you in this study." During my interviews with her, she always displayed a sense of honesty and frankness. As I got to know her better, I realized it is this kind of passion for helping people that makes her a successful teacher.

Xuen is a homegrown girl who went to school in China. She went away to college and came back to teach in the community in which she grew up. She has an

air of confidence in her teaching, as well as her English, although she had never traveled abroad until she first came to the United States. Xuen had 15 years of EFL teaching experience in college in China before she moved to the U.S. She was first exposed to English when she was in the seventh grade. After completing six years of formal English learning in public school, she majored in English Literature in college. She immigrated to the U.S. with her 11-year old daughter when she was 36, and two years later she married an American who is a Social Studies teacher at the same school where she now teaches.

Table 1: Background information on participants

	Yen-Hui Lu	Wen-Lin Huang	Kuriko Yayama	Xuen Zhang
Age	35	26	33	40
Birthplace	Taiwan	Taiwan	Japan	China
Martial status	single	single	married an American	married an American
First exposure to English	seventh grade	sixth grade	third grade	seventh grade
English learning experience in the home country	six years of formal learning in public school (seventh to twelfth grade)	- one year of informal learning in a private language institute (sixth grade) - six years of formal learning in public school (seventh to twelfth grade)	- four years of informal learning in a private language institute (third to sixth grade) - six years of formal learning in public school (seventh to twelfth grade)	six years of formal learning in public school (seventh to twelfth grade)
Education	- B. A. in Mass Communication (Taiwan) - M.A. in Art Education and M. Ed. in TESOL (U.S.) - Ph.D. candidate in TESOL (U.S.)	- B. A. in Elementary Education (U.S.) - Masters in TESOL (U.S.) - certified teacher in Elementary Education and TESOL (U.S.)	- B. A. in English (Japan) - Master in TESOL (U.S.) - certified teacher in TESOL	- B. A. in English (China) - certified teacher in TESOL (U.S.)
Age of first arrival in the U.S.	25	18	21	36
Length of living in the U.S.	seven years	eight years	ten years	four years
Formal English learning experience in the U.S.	four months of ESL learning in an intensive language institute	two years of ESL learning in a community college	one year of ESL learning in an intensive language institute	none
Teaching Experience in the home country	four years of EFL teaching (K-12)	none	one year of EFL teaching (K-12)	15 years of colleague teaching
Teaching experience in the U.S.	four months of K-12 ESL student teaching	- five months of in second grade mainstream classroom - one year of ESL teaching	six years of ESL teaching in elementary school	four years of ESL teaching in middle school

Data Collection

To develop a meaningful perspective of an individual's experience, the data I collected have focused on participants' stories related to who they are. Clandinin and Connelly (1994) call the data that narrative inquirers and practitioners create "field texts." Narrative researchers use different forms and methods of data collection to represent aspects of field experience, such as oral history, annals and chronicles, family stories, photographs, field notes of shared experience or observations, journal records, interview transcripts, storytelling, diary study, letter writing, autobiographical and biographical writing, conversation, personal artifacts, and documents. In this study, I used three data collection techniques: narrative-life history interviews, e-mail interviews, and researcher's journals to explore the research questions.

To collect stories of NNES ESL teachers' cultural and linguistic experiences, issues in teaching practice and their self-identities as ESL teachers, narrative-life history interviews are used as a major technique for gathering participants' life history. Within a six month data collection period, I have conducted five narrative-life history interviews with each participant. The interviews were guided by a semi-structured and open-ended interview protocol (Appendix A) adopted from McAdams's (1993) eight key events for interviewing a person's life: peak experience, nadir experience, turning point, earliest memory, an important childhood memory, an important adolescent memory, an important adult memory and other important memories. I also included interview questions developed by Belenky, Clinchy,

Goldberger and Tarule (1986) for understanding women's ways of knowing in relation to the development of self as prompts or follow-up questions.

I adopted a narrative-life history interview approach because I wanted to hear what the NNES teachers had to say in their own voice rather than test out my own preconceived hypotheses. I proceeded inductively, opening my ears to their voices and perspectives so that I might began to hear the unheard and unimagined ways of knowing and learning, identity transformations that have seldom been examined by academic researchers. After each narrative interview, I used email interviews to follow up on some issues or themes that emerged from the narrative interviews.

Before starting the narrative interviews, I had two informal conversations with the participants either by phone or face-to-face visiting. I first briefly introduced myself to my participants, discussed the purpose and focus of my dissertation, and explained the procedures of the research. Before asking an NNES ESL teacher to participate, I told her I was interested in her experience because it had so often been excluded as scholars sought to understand teacher development. I told her I wanted to hear what was important about life and learning from her point of view. The narrative interviews from one to two hours in length were tape recorded and transcribed. When possible, I let the teacher choose where the interview was to take place. In order to have a quiet and private interview environment, most interviews were done at my place. However, due to the participants' busy teaching schedule, for convenience, some interviews were done in the participants' classroom after the students had been dismissed.

The life history narrative interview protocol includes five sections: (1) Life Stories and Personal Myth; (2) Language Learning and Becoming a Language Teacher; (3) Stories of Border-crossing; (4) Teaching Experience in the U.S.; and (5) Self-Description. In each narrative life history interview, I started with basic background questions. For example, in the first interview, I asked them to briefly introduce themselves, including their birth place, informal and formal educational backgrounds and their family members. I did not follow each question I had prepared. Instead, I used them as a prompt, as the participants recalled their history. I used these background questions to capture their history chronologically. The background information provided me with a general image of their life that I used as a starting point for the interviews.

The interviews were organized in a cyclical way; every interview was followed by an analysis that provided topics for the next interview. In other words, the interview was cumulative, meaning that every interview revealed new pieces of the life puzzle. The questions of narrative interviews were concerned with self-image, relationships of importance, education and learning, real-life decision-making, dilemmas, accounts of personal changes and growth, and visions of the future. I tried to pose questions that were broad but understandable, so they would respond in their own terms without feeling inadequate to the task.

Shortly after each interview with the participants, I transcribed the interviews right away. By carefully reading the text at least twice, I identified some themes or "information gaps" (see Woods, 1985, p. 21), such as gaps in the chronology, or unclear passage (too few details, descriptions too vague). I also looked for further

questions behind the stories I might have from the texts, and revised the next interview protocol.

Finally, as a participant researcher, my own reflections and perspectives are essential parts of data collection. Thus, a central role in the research procedure was given to the research journal. I reported on every contact with the participants or phone call with a participant, wrote down reflections on every interview and recorded every change I made on the interview protocol after each interview. In my research journal I also wrote down the thoughts that flashed through my mind during the interviews: How did I feel about the story? How did the story or experience relate to my own experience? The research journal was more than just an additional source of information. It was also an important instrument to document the actual research process. Further, the journal contained my preliminary interpretative ideas or developing insights.

Data Analysis

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) distinguish the difference between the text collected from the field as "field texts" and the text the researcher reconstructs as "research texts." When individuals tell stories, the sequence or meanings of the stories are often missed. In order to construct meaningful research texts, I have engaged myself in the texts and explored the meaning and significance of the stories from the field texts. In the process of retelling the story, as a narrative inquirer, I often asked questions: What is the meaning or significance of the stories? What is the connection between different events in the story?

As I retold the participants' stories, I tried to use their own words and analyze them in meaningful ways by connecting key elements of the stories and providing links among events. I also adopted Clandinin and Connelly's (1990) techniques in presenting research texts by connecting stories with "place" and "time" in writing the experiential quality of narrative. According to Clandinin and Connelly, place is the context of the stories and consists of characters and physical environment. "Place" in this study is a cultural and social context where the NNES ESL teachers live out their stories, such as the places they grew up, the places they were educated and the places they taught or are teaching. "Time" in this study consists of East Asian ESL teachers' stories in past, present, and future.

Different forms of narratives provide the inquirer with different sources to explore participants' stories and experiences. As people live out their lives, they construct stories to support their interpretations of themselves and exclude experiences or events that conflict with their identities. Many scholars (Bell, 2002; Pavlenko, 2002) have argued that narrative inquirers must not only "tell the story," but must go beyond the use of narrative as rhetorical structure and carefully examine the underlying insights and assumptions the story illustrates.

In order to get into participants' stories, I have lived through my participants' stories by transcribing the interview tapes by myself and reading the transcriptions at least three times. During the initial writing stage, I narrated each event, story and experience that my participants shared with me. Then, retold the stories by connecting the place and time in a meaningful way. After retelling the stories, I analyzed their stories and arranged the complexity of the stories into themes under three categories

that connect to the three research questions posed in Chapter One. The identification of themes adds depth to the insight about understanding each participant's experiences. These themes are major ideas that emerged from the stories after the retelling of the story. Finally, in the concluding chapter, to make deeper sense of what we have experienced, I used cross-cases analysis technique (Creswell, 1998) to find patterns that emerged from our stories, and analyzed our experiences by linking them to the current discourse of language learning and teaching, and identity formation.

My Role and Relationship with the Participants

In narrative inquiry the relationship between researcher and participant pervades every aspect of the research process; it determines the quality and the quantity of the information gathered (Cole, 1991; Measor, 1985). A very important condition for establishing an appropriate relationship is a feeling of trust towards the researcher. Only the participant who feels safe and perceives the researcher as trustworthy will be prepared to share his or her life history story. To achieve this trust, I explained from the start to the participants how the research process would evolve and what I expected from them (Plummer, 1983). The teachers were also told how they had been selected for the study. Further, my professional background as a Ph. D. candidate was clarified and I promised confidential treatment of the data.

The relationship of trust should ensure that "teachers feel sufficiently free and relaxed to be *themselves*" (Woods, 1985, p. 14). In this study, I considered the process of this narrative inquiry a collaborative work between the inquirer and participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Throughout the process of research, my role as a narrative inquirer was to collaborate with the individuals who contribute

their stories in research. Collaboration in narrative research means I was actively involved in the participants' stories. The process of collaboration involved negotiating equal and trusting relationships between the participants and me. As I conducted this narrative inquiry, my prior experiences that related to the present situation in the study were also involved in the process of inquiry. For example, my own experiences as an NNES doctoral student and my stories as an NNES ESL student-teacher at some points became part of the narrative. Therefore, in the process of narrative inquiry, I presented myself in my dual role: as one of the participants and as a researcher in the study.

In order to enhance trustfulness, building a reciprocal relationship was one of important issues to which I paid particular attention. I believe that collecting life history data should not be a "one-way-street," but rather a process of "mutual storytelling" (Woods, 1985). In this process of mutual storytelling, sometimes I had to share relevant personal anecdotes to gain credibility and friendship with the participants (Cole, 1991). During the frequent contacts, I was often asked questions about the background of my study and my own language learning experience, and teaching experience. For example, a couple of the participants wanted to identify common acquaintances or asked questions concerning my educational background and family life, etc. Normally I would answer these questions honestly; however, I remained alert for the possible influence of my utterances on the participants' stories.

From my experience, after the second interview, the participants became more curious about me and felt the need to learn more about my stories. Thus, keeping the balance of giving and taking was an important task for me in the research process. To

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maintain a credible and trusting relationship, and to get relevant data, I often engaged myself in the relationship so that my participants would feel comfortable sharing their stories; at the same time, I was very cautious about taking the risk of going too far and influencing the content of the interview too much (Munro, 1991). Thus, when I shared my own stories, I was very aware of the affective dimension in the research relationship and, if necessary, I told my participants they would be able to read my whole story in the final work by the time the research is completed.

Nonverbal language or signals are also very important in this respect. Eye contact, smiling, concerned or surprised wrinkling of the eyebrows, etc., are highly relevant because participants want affirmation and reassurance (Measor, 1985). After all, they are sharing very personal experiences and thoughts with someone who did not exist in their life before the study. For me, the interplay between the emotional and the intellectual is an essential element for trust; thus, I did not deny the affective dimension but tried to minimize it. I posit myself two roles in this study. During the data collection, to avoid my influence on participants' stories, I minimized my personal reaction as I listened to their stories during the interview. As I read their narratives and wrote down my reaction, I freed myself into the stories and let my emotions engage in the texts.

My relationship with the participants also shaped the stories they told me. How I cared about my ongoing relationship with the participants as well as the ways they constructed the story make a difference to the narratives. Because narrative inquiry involves "real" people and a "real" story, I contacted my participants informally between conducting formal interviews in order to maintain the trust

relationship. These contacts usually occurred through emails and we discussed things like rental properties and recreational facilities in the area. I also socialized with participants when the occasion presented itself.

Ethical Issues

Qualitative research in general and narrative inquiry in particular has a clear ethical dimension (Plummer, 1983). In this section I will address a number of ethical issues in narrative inquiry, as well as identify the questions or problems in this study and describe how I coped with them. I will first address the way I protected participants' privacy. Then, I discuss voice and the ownership of the stories.

Anonymity and Privacy

As a narrative inquirer, when I entered into participants' lives and asked them to share their stories within a research relationship, the process of sharing a story and retelling a story may create potential risks to participants' lives. Thus, to protect the privacy and confidentiality of individuals who participated in this study, I obtained the Institutional Review Board's approval and informed consent from each participant before collecting data. In the informed consent form (Appendix B), I clearly addressed the purpose of the study, guaranteed the participants certain rights, advised of potential risks and promised to minimize and protect the participants from the risks. To protect participants' privacy from the start, I emphasized that the data would be treated anonymously and confidentially. I made special efforts to guarantee that no school or individual would be identified by name in any research reports or publications. Therefore, I used pseudonyms for both the institutions involved and

individuals interviewed, or general descriptions to make the data anonymous, without diminishing their informative strength and clarity.

One of the major problems in this narrative-life history research was the question of "intrusiveness." How deep was I allowed to 'dig' into the personal life experiences of the participant? During the study, I learned that participants were willing to share their experiences in a detailed, straightforward and outspoken way once a trust relationship was built. I found the stronger the rapport was, the more participants were willing to talk about themselves. On the other hand, the private and personal experiences were very relevant for the researcher's interest; however, my dilemma was: How could I avoid penetrating the private sphere in an improper way as I collected sufficient information for my study? I did not know if there were simple solutions to this dilemma, so I had to rely on my own social sensitivity and tact. I was particularly sensitive while asking about the participants' relationship with their family members or other significant people in their life history. Respecting my participants and never asking questions about the private sphere directly were my main strategies. When the participants happened to bring about these themes, I would carefully explore the utterance until I clearly understood what was meant and how these private experiences were linked to their identity.

Voice and Ownership of the Stories

The publisher Francois Maspero (as quoted in Lejeune, 1989) declared, "A life has only one author" (p. 185). For him, of course, the author was the one who had lived this life and who had taken responsibility for narrating it in front of the tape-recorder. Thus, the stories told in this study are credited to each participant who *owns* her life and who told the stories. My role during the storytelling process, of course, was a story listener and re-teller. As I composed my participants' stories, I was only a co-author of their stories in a written form in this study.

One of the major concerns in narrative inquiry is to have a place for the voice of each participant; thus in the process of telling and retelling stories in the narrative inquiry, the caring and equal relationship between researchers and participants is particularly important (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Traditionally, practitioners have been used as silent objects for study in researcher-practitioner relationships; thus, practitioners may find it difficult to feel empowered to tell their stories. As Carter (1993) highlighted, storytelling is a "mode of knowing." Narrative inquiry is a way of knowing what connects the knowledge within a close relationship between the knower and the known. Thus, in the process of narrative inquiry, it is particularly important for the inquirer to let the participants first tell their stories and to be aware of allowing all participants to have a voice in the research relationship. Because practitioners used to experience themselves as silent objects in the research process, the inquirer must provide time and space to allow the participants to tell their stories. During the interview process, I always made sure my participants had enough time to think and to share their experience.

However, having a participant's voice heard does not mean the narrative inquirer is silent in the process of narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is a process of collaboration between inquirer and participant as the research proceeds. When I engaged in narrative inquiry, I became part of the inquiry process. My experiences, like a participant's experiences in general, also shape the story within the researcher-participant relationship (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). As my participants in this study told their own life histories, each of them had her ways of telling. In a similar way, I also held a different point of view as I was listening to their stories. Thus, every story has a point of view that constructs a story in terms of the angle from which it is told. In the process of negotiating collaborative relationships in sharing stories, I tried to make sure both voices were heard by constantly and consistently reflecting on data. In conventional writing expression, the researchers often use neutral voice as "the researcher" in a research account. In this study, my voice is recognized as an internal condition that influences the text (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Verification

Like other qualitative methods, narrative inquiry relies on criteria other than validity and reliability. Many qualitative researchers (Altheide & Johnson, 1994; Lincoln & Cuba, 1985; Smith & Demmer, 2001) argue that the terminology of validity and reliability in positivistic research is not congruent with, or adequate for, qualitative work. Lincoln and Guba (1985) use alternative terms, such as "credibility," "transferability," "dependability" and "confirmability" to establish the "trustworthiness" of a qualitative study. In this study, I use the techniques of building

trustworthiness, such as member-checking and external audit to validate the research (Stake, 1994). When retelling the story told by the participants, for example, in the consideration of the authenticity of the story, I often used e-mail interviews to follow up on stories for details. After retelling participants' stories in written form, I asked the participants to double-check content to ensure accuracy of the data. Further, during the final research writing stage, I asked a couple of people outside the project to review different aspects of the research such as clarity of the language, the story lines and the cultural interpretation.

Conclusion

There were three advantages of using narrative inquiry in this study. First, narrative inquiry allowed me to understand the participants' experiences and the impact of the experiences. When I sought out and collected the stories of practitioners' personal and social experiences in schools or other settings, the narrative form of interviews established a close bond with the participants. Second, narrative form of interviews helped me get information that participants did not consciously know themselves. Analysis of people's stories allows deeply hidden assumptions to surface. Third, in this narrative inquiry process, the practitioners were given the opportunity to address voice to tell their own stories. By telling stories, the participants had a chance to understand the people and events that happened to them.

Chapter 3: Yen-Hui Lu

Influence of Cultural and Linguistic Experiences on Identity

I grew up in a high task-oriented and teacher-centered educational system in Taiwan. Teachers in Taiwan had complete authority and were respected as the only resource for learning. Teachers had absolute power to decide what and how students should learn, and the role of a student was passive information receiver. There was also a culture of learning as transmission in Taiwan's society. I learned that I was expected to accept what more experienced people had provided us without questioning.

Identity as an EFL Learner

I started learning English when I was twelve years old in junior high school. My early years were spent as a "passive learner" avoiding confrontation. At that time, the learning atmosphere in Taiwan was very traditional and teacher-centered. Most students worked quietly and steadily, completing the tasks set for them but unwilling to ask for more. The interaction with teachers was limited to almost nothing. For me, English was simply one of the required subjects in school. I had never thought about whether I liked English or not. For most students, English class was not fun at all because we had to memorize vocabulary and grammar rules. However, I had been one of the most outstanding students in English class because I was good at these

tasks. I was not quite sure if I was really interested in English, but I did know that it was very important to become fluent in English for future success. The identity of being a good English learner helped win others' praise and admiration.

After I graduated from college, in order to apply to a graduate school in the United States, I started taking classes at a language institute to prepare myself for the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and Graduate Record Examinations (GRE). It was actually a nightmare for me while I was in the English test preparation schools. There were more than 150 students in one small classroom. The main purpose of the TOEFL and GRE language institutes was to help students get skills in taking the tests. Therefore, the instructors taught us how to "guess the answer" without understanding any English or how to "analyze sentences" to find a correct answer. I hated the learning environment, so I started feeling English was a boring subject. I did not enjoy that type of learning at all; however, I was willing to suffer through it only because I had to pass the tests for future success, and I did not want to lose my identity as a successful language learner.

Second Language Acquisition theorists have theorized a number of affective variables such as a learner's motivation or personality, as important indexes that determine successful language learning. It is assumed that the learner's attitudes towards the target language community determine how motivated the second language learner is. Indeed, my motivation to master English for future success was tremendous, but I was mystified by my own language learning and surprised that I was not able to speak a word when I first came to the United States and encountered a native English speaker.

Identity as an ESL Learner

Right after I graduated from college, my mother sent me to an intensive language camp at the University of Texas in Austin as a graduation present. Before I first came to the United States at that time, I had studied English for more than ten years, and yet I could not speak English at all. In order to LEARN English better, I was extremely excited about this language camp. I was expecting my teacher would TEACH me English so I could LEARN how to SPEAK English. However, I was not pleased with my teacher. Everyday, she would say, "OK, who would like to share something with me?" Then my classmates would talk about nonsensical things for an hour. It was fun to listen to my classmates' silly stories, but I was often angry at my teacher and thought, "This is really wasting my time. I paid a lot of money and flew all the way from Taiwan to LEARN English. So, TEACH me English!"

I believed my teacher never prepared for the class at all. During the writing class, she would ask us to work on "free writing" for 30 minutes without giving us any topic or guidelines. Free writing? I didn't need a teacher for free writing! She just wanted to kill time because she did not know what to teach! The teacher made me even more disappointed when I asked her to explain or correct English grammar in my writing. Instead of giving me an explanation, she would say, "Don't worry about errors or English grammar. Just keep writing." How come an English teacher did not know how to correct English grammar? This incident proved my theory that she was not a qualified English teacher. I believed that any of my English teachers in Taiwan were much better than her.

Although I never enjoyed English learning in Taiwan, I always admired my English teachers who had a lot of knowledge of English grammar and sentence structures that helped me LEARN English. They taught me their secret skills in memorizing vocabularies in a systematic way, and they taught me how to analyze sentences to find a correct answer on a test without understanding the meaning of the texts. I actually hated English learning; however, I believed that my teachers were really good at TEACHING English. I also believed I did LEARN English because their secret strategies helped me pass countless boring English exams. One thing I never figured out from my teachers was how to SPEAK English. I thought I could not SPEAK English only because I did not LEARN enough English.

Indeed, I was not very pleased with my English teacher at Austin, but I did enjoy the class. At least I did not need to worry about any boring test. I never had such an easy and fun English class before. Just talking and free writing! I didn't even need to spend a lot of time doing drills for homework. What I had to do was read a novel! The three-month language camp ended in early December, but before heading to our home countries, my English teacher invited us to her house for a Thanksgiving party. Hundreds of guests were invited to the party including my teacher's husband, parents and siblings. My classmates and I were all excited about our first American Thanksgiving party, and my teacher's guests were all interested in learning our cultures. Therefore, we TALKED and laughed. We laughed and TALKED. Then, we TALKED and laughed…

In Dewey's (1938) book, *Experience and Education*, he emphasizes the meaning of experiences, experiment, purposeful learning, and freedom. After

reviewing my own language learning experience, I realized that what I had learned in Taiwan was only the knowledge and factual information of the language itself. I did not acquire the language at all. The English learning situation in Taiwan was isolated from the situation in the real world. However, without examining my own prior beliefs in learning and teaching, I used my prior language learning experiences as criteria to judge a language teacher and language teaching.

Research indicates that a teacher's beliefs and past experiences as a learner tend to create ways of thinking about teaching that often conflict with the images of teaching that teacher educators advocate in teacher education programs. Tillema's (1995) research concluded that prospective teachers' prior experiences and beliefs about learning and teaching often act as filters, sifting out the novice teachers' experiences in their pre-service programs that are cognitively incompatible with their own beliefs about teachers and teaching. These experiences and beliefs, in turn, act as filters to new information in teaching practice. My educational background in Taiwan had trained me to be a GOOD student who was supposed to sit quietly and absorb everything the teacher taught without questioning. The way I was taught in Taiwan had been deeply transformed into my belief system and became an image of how a teacher should teach English. No wonder I was so disappointed with my English teacher in Austin!

Many theoretical perspectives have analyzed the process of how teacher beliefs are shaped, and have explored how novice teachers bring a set of unarticulated and unexamined beliefs about teaching and learning. These unarticulated and unexamined beliefs have been shaped by the novice teachers' experiences and

observations, inside and outside of school, in their earlier years as students themselves (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985; McDiarmid, 1990; Stuart & Thurlow, 2000). Teachers, like all learners, interpret new content through their existing understanding, which is shaped by their cultural experience.

While reflecting on this early piece of language learning in the United States, I realized the process of English learning in the language camp was embedded in a real situation, and I was emerged in whole language learning, but I wonder if I would have learned more if I had understood my teacher's intention. Norton (1997) argues that although the teacher was providing the students an opportunity to practice speaking, the students would have received more if the teacher had adjusted the pedagogical approach to the complexity of learner identities. The process of reflecting on my own language learning experience has helped me become aware of my own preconceptions and identity conflict in learning and teaching.

Identity as an NNES Graduate Student in the TESOL Program

I encountered several challenges during the first couple years of graduate study in the United States. First, since I was new to the American educational system, I was often nervous and did not know how to participate in class. Compared to Taiwan's teacher-centered classroom, the classes in the United States were full of different activities. As I was still used to Taiwan's one-way instruction, I often felt the classes in the U.S. were unstructured and that I was not learning anything "from" my instructors. To explain the relationship between education and experiences, Dewey (1938) argues that "all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative" (p. 25). In

Dewey words, some of my learning experiences in Taiwan such as being a passive learner and expecting learning from experienced others, were "mis-educative" and hindered future learning.

Second, as an NNES graduate student, I was often frustrated and angry with myself when I was not able to participate fully in discussion or express my thoughts in front of my peers. In many circumstances, I had to observe events or evaluate any decision before I spoke. I had to deal with events and processes that were different from my cultural background and cognitive system. Thus, often before I was about to make any comment, the topic moved in a different direction. Consequently, I often sat quietly in class. Schumann (1978) describes social distance, the cognitive and affective proximity of two cultures that come into contact within an individual, as an effective construct to give explanatory power to the place of cultural learning in second language learning. My experiences as an NNES graduate student in a TESOL program supported Schumann's argument of socio-cultural factors in language learning which examines second language acquisition with the consideration of the learner's home culture.

I wondered why I felt I was not learning anything 'from' my instructors and why I was often frustrated and angry with myself when I was not able to fully participate in discussion or express my thoughts in front of my peers. My learning experiences in Taiwan had been transformed into my belief system about what teaching is, and this belief system became part of my identity. In understanding identity, Watkins-Goffman (2001) explains that one's experiences play an important role in identity formation. He says:

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> Identity is a complex ongoing mental process influenced by one's experiences. One's history and experiences are key to the sense of self. Our identity or who we think we are is important because it is at the core of all our thoughts and feelings and it influences how we express them. (p. 1)

The students who leave their home country and immigrate or travel to a new country might have a more complex sense of identity because they often struggle to seek an identity in a new context while they are in the process of learning a new language and adapting to a new culture. I wondered if anyone would see my struggle and experiences as a live resource for understanding Schumann's theory of sociocultural factors in language learning and Norton's theory in language and identity. To explain this complexity of psychological process, Norton (1997) states:

> Whereas immigrant learners' experiences in their native country may be a significant part of their identity, these experiences are constantly being mediated by their experiences in the new country, across multiple sites in the home, workplace, and community. (p. 413)

Third, I often was confused about the subject content in the TESOL program. To my surprise, the curriculum was basically designed for the learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) in the U.S. context. As my initial plan after graduation was to go back to Taiwan, I often struggled to apply ESL concepts and methodologies I had learned in the U.S. to the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context in Taiwan. During the first semester of my graduate study, I was the only international doctoral student in the TESOL program, and the majority of students in my classes were White. Thus, being a minority, I was embarrassed to address my personal concerns, so I kept silent.

Asian students often are stereotyped as "model minorities." This stereotyping labels Asian students as a hardworking, self-sufficient and self-reliant group (Watkins-Goffman, 2001). This image of how others saw me shaped my identity in relationship with others, so I worked hard and tried to find a way to help myself. Although this stereotyping is often considered a positive one, the flip side of these stereotyping Asian students' needs is neglected.

Asia consists of four different geographical terrains: East Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and South Asia. Each cultural group or country in these terrains (for example, Taiwan, China, Korea and Japan in East Asia) has its own unique language and culture. Without recognizing particular ethnic and cultural differences, such stereotyping has created cultureless assumptions about Asian people. Being labeled as an "Asian student," I wondered where I should place my "Taiwanese" identity in terms of diverse learners. In particular, as an "international" student, I was an outsider in relation to the commonly understood meaning of the "minority," which often refers to African-American or Asian-American, etc.

While swinging between the past, present and future in the TEOSL program, I often chose to keep my voice silent. Just like my mother who always felt ashamed to let others know her illiteracy, I also felt ashamed to share my difficulties. From my mother's big secret, I learned I must put on a mask whenever I encountered a problem and establish a strong identity so no one would call me a failure. I told myself that since it was my own decision to study in the U.S., I must suffer these confusions, struggles and difficulties. I believed I could make things different as long as I worked hard, just like my mother taught me.

Thus, I worked hard to get involved in this society and built an image pretending I was not different. Is the image I wore in front of everyone not real? Has the image I often carried with me become part of my identity? If 'identity' is *who I am* and 'image' is *who I present to others*, how will the image of *who I present to others* influence the identity of *who I am?* "The distinction between identity and image is blurred… The image a person presents publicly must find its root in some part of that person, her context, and her experiences" (Motha, 2004, p. 304). With silence, I hid my own inner voice within my private self, but the struggles remained. I wondered if other NNESs had experiences like me.

Influence of Relationships on Identity

The primary purpose of education in Taiwan was to train students to get higher scores in the National Entrance Exam for college. In such a task-oriented education system, teachers often followed nation-wide curricula to push students into the tests, the only criteria determining Taiwanese students' academic future, without thinking of students' needs. Many parents work hard to support their children and do their best to get their children into a well-known school without knowing their children's individual talents. With society's expectations and parents' pressure, few students enjoy learning or know the purpose for their learning.

Unfortunately, I was one of those students. As far as I can recall, there was not a moment that I really enjoyed learning during my school years. I hated boring lectures and countless exams. Thus, I hated teachers and I hated going to school. If there was a reason I never gave up studying and was able to get into higher education, it must have been my mother. My mother's tenacity and example taught me a lot

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about the value of learning. In writing my mother's stories, I learned how I see myself and understand the world through her life.

A Family Story that Establishes an Identity for Learning

My mother was born into a very poor family in a small village in eastern Taiwan. My great grandfather was a tenant farmer, so he was too poor to afford to send my grandfather to school. Due to his illiteracy and low social status, my grandfather worked as a miner to raise his three children. As an eldest child in her family, my mother had been told she was responsible for taking care of her two younger siblings. Every day, when my mother was only five years old, she had to search and collect pieces of coal that fell from the carts at the mine, so she could use them in exchange for some supplies for her family.

At the age of seven, when many of her peers were ready to go to school, she was working as a baby sitter for a rich family. Every morning, she had to wake up at five o'clock, head to the rich family's house, cook breakfast and take care of her master's baby. When the baby was sleeping, she had to clean dishes and the house. She had been dreaming that she could dress in a school uniform like her peers and have a chance to go to school; however, as a female child, she could not even think of pursuing her dream. For my grandfather, it was considered a waste to invest money in a girl's education, because a girl would eventually be married to someone else and become someone else's family member. Many times my grandfather yelled at my mother when she expressed her desire to go to school. Instead, he would remind her of her responsibility to raise her younger brother, whose education was certainly more important because a boy would become a major force for their family in the future.

With disappointment, she often hid crying while she saw her peers on the way to school.

After working as a baby sitter for several years, at the age of fourteen, one of my mother's friends told her of a better position in a bookstore. The day before the interview, she stopped by the bookstore for a moment. While facing piles of books in the bookstore, she was overwhelmed with the fear of being illiterate. She was afraid someone else would notice her illiteracy. Thus, she ran off crying and hid herself the rest of the day. She wished she could disappear from the earth. She realized there was no career for her as an uneducated person. For her, education was the key to success.

She worked as a baby sitter and a cook until she met my father. Right after their marriage, my father went into the military. In spite of my mother's illiteracy, with his love, my father wrote her a letter everyday during his service. The only word that she could recognize was her name on the envelope. Being illiterate was always shameful for my mother so she did not dare to ask for help. Everyday she hid in her room crying while she opened my father's letter "feeling" my father's love in the letter. After "feeling" the letter, she would keep the letter in a box and wished one day she would have a chance to read those letters herself. For her, education was the key to gain power in knowledge. Becoming literate was a big dream for her to unlock the mystic box.

To encourage us to learn, my mother often told us her stories in tears and reminded us how important it is to be well-educated. She promised that no matter how difficult it would be for her, she would do her best to send us to school. Dewey

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(1938) sees an individual's experience as a central lens for understanding a person. For him, experience, education and life are highly related. I was learning this most powerfully through my experiences with my mother, learning the importance of learning and how to live through her life.

One aspect of Dewey's thinking is to view "interaction" and "continuity" as the keys to educational experience. The two cannot be separated. It was the message from my mother's stories and my interaction with her that began to frame what "learning" was and why it was important. Stone (1988) explains that family stories often play a role in giving instructions, offering blueprints and issuing warnings in our lives. Through my mother's childhood experience, I learned that I must work hard in learning and do my best to succeed. In Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) words, I paid attention to those elements of experiences that I selected, and I patterned those chosen elements in ways that reflected the stories in my life to make sense of my daily experience.

Through my mother's stories, I constructed the experiences around me and shaped my personal meaning of learning. While I selected the elements from her experiences, I saw the negative impact of being illiterate. I equated education with success. However, one important element I had left out from her stories was the issue of gender injustice in Taiwanese society. What I did not realize is that my mother's stories had established my gender awareness.

Early Awareness of Gender Identity

One day, while I was still a kindergartener, my uncle suddenly showed up at school and asked my teacher's permission to take me home. On the way, my uncle

told me that my mother was seriously injured in a car accident while she was riding her scooter to borrow some money from my relative. Although I was just a small child my uncle angrily shouted at me, "If there is not enough money to get you to elementary school, we will just leave you home! Why does a girl like you need to go to school?" I did not know how important it was to go to elementary school, but I somehow sensed that my mother was being punished because she was trying to get me to school.

After I arrived at the hospital, my father led me to a room. I saw a woman lying on the bed. Her face was twisted and twice as big as usual. Her left arm and leg were injured. While I was wondering why my father brought me there, that woman weakly waved her hand and indicated for me to come over. I was shocked that my mother had totally become a terrible stranger whom I could not recognize. I immediately burst into tears and told her I did not care about going to elementary school as long as I could get her back. Without a word, she gave me a very sharp and angry look, and I knew that meant she would never allow me to do that.

Gender is a part of our social identity which indicates where we stand in relation to others. Weber (2001) sees race, class, gender, and sexuality as four fundamental sources of our identity formation, and these four fundamental sources are not just "ranking of socially valued resources– who has more income or prestige. They are *power relationships*– who exerts power and control over whom – how the privilege of some results from the exploitation of others" (p. 88). My mother, as a Taiwanese female, had been oppressed by my grandfather, who was biologically invested with power in a masculine society. In Taiwanese society, social expectations

of women's work and family roles have been rationalized by the biological fact that women can bear children. A poor woman like my mother must not only take care of her children, but also work hard to support her family's economy. My mother, being in a low social position which was biologically and socially constructed by her family and society, had no power to decide her own life, but had to live her whole life to satisfy society's expectations.

My mother believed in the power of education because she had lived through a difficult life for being illiterate. She admired those who were well-educated and had power to change their lives to become successful. She had been hoping she would have a chance to go to school, so she could change her life. She even wished she had been born a boy, so she would have had a more recognized position in her family. Her childhood dream had been transferred to her own little baby girl. She did not want me to follow what she had experienced. She was hoping to fulfill her dream in me.

Like the oppression from my grandfather to my mother, my uncle accused me of being the cause of my mother's accident. I felt guilty about being a girl; however, I was empowered by my mother's sacrifice and expectation. My mother often communicated to me that to be successful, I must gain power from education. I internalized her experiences and expectations of me into my own meaning of "learning."

Weber (2001) explains that the power relationships change "because oppressed groups struggle to gain rights, opportunities, and resources – to gain greater control over their lives – against dominant groups who seek to maintain their position of control" (p. 71). As a girl, school and education became an agent that could give

me much power to succeed and to change life. Therefore, I studied hard, did my best to be a good student and tried to get to the top of the competition no matter how much I hated learning.

I knew my parents were responsible for my education, but I was also responsible to them. In Taiwan's society, a family's collective welfare is more important than an individual's needs. Without knowing my individual needs or being aware of my own voice, I internalized my mother's expectations as well as cultural expectations into my responsibility for my family. Learning became a way of getting power and honoring my family, especially my mother.

A Promise to Myself

In order to raise her four children, my mother worked hard to support my father running a bakery. To earn enough money for four children's tuition, my parents tried to sell as many things as they could in the small bakery. The small bakery kept them busy all day long. In the early morning, they had to get up at four o'clock to prepare breakfast for our early customers who stopped by for breakfast at six o'clock before heading to work. At around eleven o'clock, when business cooled down a little bit, my father had to ride his old scooter to a food warehouse to get some ingredients for bread. After a brief lunch, my parents had to start making bread and cake in the afternoon so they would be ready for the customers who got out of their jobs at four.

Since it was always busy between four and seven, my mother often cooked dinner after seven and we would eat late. I didn't mind having a late dinner at all because I enjoyed helping my parents in the bakery, and I was always expecting family time after dinner. During the family time, my father would help me do my

homework. The family time was always short, but I enjoyed spending even such a brief time with them before going to bed.

Things changed when I became a fourth grader. My mother did not cook anymore. Instead, she would call food delivery for dinner every day. I did not enjoy the food delivery at all because after taking care of our dinner, my mother would rush out at six. She did not even join us for dinner. And then, she would come home really late after we all were asleep. I was curious about my mother's whereabouts, but my parents would not tell me.

Then one night, my school teacher had a home visit to my house. That night, before my mother was about to rush out, I stopped her and told her that the teacher was expecting to meet both parents. My mother told me she must attend an important meeting so she could not meet my teacher. I was really mad. What could be more important than meeting my teacher? Didn't she always tell me I must value education and respect teachers? I could not control my temper any more and started crying. In order to comfort me, my mother finally changed her mind and decided to stay home with me. However, my father yelled at me and pushed my mother out. I was crying even louder in front of my teacher when my father could not give a reasonable explanation to my teacher.

After my teacher left, my father told me that my mother was learning how to read and write in a "night school" which offered classes for adults who never had a chance to go to school. At the age of 40, when the family economic situation had settled down a bit, my mother finally had a chance to fulfill her childhood dream. She was always excited about going to school and enjoyed reading and writing during the

night, although she was extremely exhausted after working all day at the bakery and taking care of the whole family. I know that was not easy for her, but she appreciated every moment that she was able to learn.

"In every family, stories and family myths are told and retold. As children, we swallow them whole, and they become part of our unconscious map of the world" (Napier, 1993, p.143). It is this family story, my mother's hard work and learning attitude, that inspired me to appreciate every learning opportunity and set a map for my future learning. Although my mother was not able to teach me reading or writing during my childhood, for me, she was the first teacher who motivated me in learning.

Being illiterate was always shameful for my mother. It was even embarrassing for her to let others know she was going back to school. She often reminded us not to tell anyone, including my grandparents or relatives, about her study. For her, being illiterate meant a low social status. If anyone found out she was in school like a little kid, it would reveal her shameful past. I did not understand how difficult it was for her to be an adult learner under such pressure; however, I did understand that being able to go to school was a great privilege for me, and I should not wait until it was too late.

My mother's learning story became a big family secret that pushed me forward and also transformed into an identity that as one of the members in my family, I must be strong and should not reveal any struggles or difficulties outside of my family circle. Many times, while I was having difficulties in study, I thought about my mother's experiences. I knew I had to keep going so I could make my

mother proud. If it was not for my mother, I would never have gone this far. I promised myself to be a good teacher who is willing to teach a poor little girl like her.

Becoming an English Teacher

After I graduated with a Master's Degree in Art Education from an American university in 1996, I worked as an Educational Specialist at the non-profit Children's Foundation in Taiwan, which has a reputation for publishing high quality textbooks, educational toys, and picture books for children, as well as instructional guides for parents and teachers. Since 1997, English had become a required subject in Taiwan's public elementary schools; therefore, learning English at an early stage of life has become a big trend in Taiwan. The Foundation was invited to develop English curriculum and textbooks by the Taiwanese government to aid this growing trend. As a member of that team, I was involved in developing and editing the English textbooks and coordinating English teachers' training for the public elementary schools. At that time, I was one of only a few employees who was influent in English. Thus, I was assigned to travel to oversee participation in the children's book fair each year.

English later become much more than a tool in the work place for me. It became a unique privilege to enrich and expand my sociocultural horizons, and a space for me to negotiate my professional identity. My location in a very traditional work place and my identity as one of the few people who was competent in English gave me an impetus to become an English teacher. Later, English came to be an important tool for me to acquire a socially upward, professional identity.

Later, I also worked as a part-time English teacher for both adults and children at an English language institute. Since I did not have any official English teaching training, my teaching strategies and methodologies were inspired from my art education background and my language learning experiences in the United States. In my class, I incorporated some creative visual art and drama activities into English teaching. It was difficult to teach my students in a "non-traditional" way because the students in Taiwan were used to "teacher-centered" and "goal-oriented" instruction, and often wanted direct answers for exams. Moreover, my creative curriculum and instructional strategies did not seem to be appreciated by my supervisor and colleagues who were used to traditional teaching methodologies. My supervisor often implied that I should follow the standard curriculum and instruction. Therefore, I often struggled between the traditional instruction I was expected to use and the more creative approach I had learned in the U.S.

I remember one of the most "famous" English teachers in my middle school. She was recognized as the most outstanding and successful English teacher by the school principal, her colleagues and the students' parents because her English class always had the highest scores in the whole school. However, she was a nightmare to students because she used severe physical punishment to push students to get high test scores. Every student at my school was scared to death of having her as their teacher. Even when I had the highest score in the class, if it was less than my previous test, I was still punished. Indeed, our English scores were the best in the whole school, but the learning process was incredibly negative.

As I pursued becoming a teacher, I did not want to continue such an unhealthy education for our children. However, under the Taiwanese education system, I was powerless, and had no way to change things, so I had to get more advanced education. Therefore, to promote a positive quality of English teaching in Taiwan and to advance my academic knowledge and skills in the subject, I decided to pursue Ph.D. studies in a TESOL program in the United States.

Professional Teacher Identity Transformation

About a year ago, in one of my qualitative research classes, the instructor invited her doctoral student as a guest speaker to share her phenomenological dissertation. During her presentation, she shared her own stories and identities as a woman, nurse, sailor and researcher, explained the reason she chose the research topic of middle-aged sailing women's lives, and discussed how this study has influenced her life. While many students who were used to posting questions from quantitative thinking were wondering whether this study should be labeled "research," I was extremely touched by her stories and admired her courage in sharing her life experiences so honestly and her passion in searching within herself so openly.

As researchers, if we cannot understand ourselves or make sense of our own experiences, how can we interpret others' lives and experiences? Many social science and education researchers spend their entire lives studying and conducting research on human thinking and behavior to discover the complexity of teaching and learning, but before we do so, we should first understand ourselves. Although I was

never a nurse or sailor, I heard an echo of my own struggle with self-identity as a

Taiwanese woman, English teacher and NNES graduate student in TESOL program.

I began asking questions about myself in relation to my research. I started

wondering why I looked at the world around me from a particular perspective, why I

interacted or responded to people in a certain way and what I was looking for from

my research.

Seeking Identity through Research

While searching for answers for the relationships among teacher beliefs,

teacher knowledge, teaching practice and teacher identity, I thought about my

learning experience in these terms as a doctoral student in the TESOL program. In the

process of preparing myself as a professional I have taken several classes in TESOL

theories and research methodologies. As I examined the courses and research in

which I have been involved, I realized that three research projects - "*Action Research:*

My Role as a Mentor in the Idioms Workshop" (Lu, 2001), "*Professional*

Development in ESL Classrooms: A Collaborative Action Research" (Lu, Fox, &

Hoath, 2004), and "*Self-Understandings of Non-Native English Speakers Becoming*

ESL Teachers: A Narrative Inquiry of Cultural and Identity" (Lu, Suh, & Park, 2004)

– have influentially repositioned my role as an educational researcher and scholar.

These three experiences have had a powerful impact on my thinking in learning and

teaching. My research interest in teacher knowledge, teacher beliefs, teaching practice

and teacher identity has emerged from them.

My research experience as a reflective teacher educator and researcher was

framed from my first study, *Action Research: My Role as a Mentor in the Idioms*

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Workshop" (Lu, 2001) in the TESOL program. The purpose of this six week mini-action research project was to examine my role as a mentor and leader in a collaborative teaching team, and to help me reflect upon my own teaching practice so that I could become a better ESL teacher and teacher educator. Because I came from a teacher-centered educational system in which teachers were worshipped as authority figures, I had been eager to grab as much "knowledge" as I could for preparing myself to be a "good" teacher and teacher educator. By participating in this action research, the concept of "self-reflection" and "self-examination" reshaped my thinking in teaching knowledge. I started questioning my prior concept of "knowledge" and seeking the meaning of knowledge in teaching practice as well as the relationship between "knowledge" and "practice." This mini-action research grounded my research interest in conducting research on teaching practice.

Two years later, I conducted another action research, *Professional Development in ESL Classrooms: A Collaborative Action Research,* with two TESOL student teachers during one semester-long internship (Lu, Fox, & Hoath, 2004). The purpose of this study was to investigate the process of collaborative action research among a small group of ESL practitioners and teacher researchers who systematically participated in a conversational group and collected data from teaching practice for professional growth. By conducting this collaborative action research, I found that it became a self-discovery process that helped me understand myself in different positions and identities as a doctoral student, collaborative teacher researcher, and future teacher educator. As a collaborative researcher in this project, what I have learned was not only the experience of conducting research but also the opportunity

of being a "co-learner" with two student teachers for professional growth. Schön's (1983) notion of reflection-in-action was a powerful influence in my "self-discovering" process. This research also provided an opportunity to resituate my thinking in teaching practice through self-reflection.

While walking through different stages in the teacher preparation program, I did not realize my identity as an NNES had a strong impact on who I am, how I learned and the way I interacted with people until I participated in a self-study, *Self-understanding of Non-native English Speakers Becoming ESL Teachers: A Narrative Inquiry of Culture and Identity*, with two NNES ESL graduate students (Lu, Suh, & Park, 2004). The purpose of this collective self-study was to examine our experiences as NNES pre-service teachers in the process of learning to teach within the U.S. context in relation to our teacher identity.

Our collaboration started from my curiosity of my colleague's identity as an NNES. She came to the United States when she was eight years old. Thus, she has a native-like and accent-free speech. Yet, she often expressed her research interest in NNES scholarship. One day, I could not help but ask if she considered herself an NNES. Although she was giving me an affirmative answer, I still doubted her answer and wondered at her self-labeling as an NNES. For me, a person who is labeled as an "NNES" meant a low proficiency level of English and an outsider in this society. I wondered why a person like her with perfect English and American citizenship wanted to identify herself as an NNES. Wouldn't a native speaker label give her more advantages in the field of TESOL? At the same time, she was wondering why I

perceived her as a native speaker and what prompted my question. Therefore, we started exploring our questions and our identities as NNESs.

This self-study focused on our own NNES graduate students' experiences in the TESOL preparation program. During our collective conversation meetings, we shared our identities, experiences, struggles and dilemmas as NNESs in the TESOL program. We looked closely at our cultural and educational backgrounds in relationship to our beliefs in teaching and learning. Through intimate sharing, I was surprised to learn I was not the only person who had been struggling in the learning process as an NNES. Before participating in this project, when I had problems, I often blamed myself and was afraid to be heard. The atmosphere of our meetings was unreservedly open, warm, and accepting. We all felt like we were coming from the same experiences. As I understood myself better from this project, my confidence in being an NNES increased. I began to believe I could achieve my goals without rejecting my own identity and the past.

Self-discovery

The Tradition Dilemma

See our boxes? Aren't they neat?
I can tell you about every nook and cranny
…in every box.
This one is for emotions: small and tidy.
logical corners…

Just look. They are so straight, tidy,
beautiful and ever so rational.

I'm not sure how they got that way,
but there they are.
I like them. Besides they are good for us
All. Good for all of us…

Oh, my God! I'm having strange feelings!
What shall I do? They must fit in the emotion box.
But, they are running over. I can't stop them.
What do I do? do I do?

Intelligence can be improved by man – ridiculous!
That isn't even logical. Intelligence is a God-given capacity.
Some of us have a lot; others have very little.
Why that notion doesn't even fit into the logic box.

Boxes, boxes, boxes, boxes… boxes everywhere,
And nothing seems to fit in any of them.
Oh, my God! What have I done to deserve this punishment?

You aren't playing tricks on me like the rest, are you God?
There is no doubt in my mind about our boxes, no
doubt… is there God?
God?... the boxes?... all of boxes?... some of the
boxes?... a few?
(N. Haggerson, "The Box Thing", 1971)

On the first day of a research class, the instructor introduced this poem and asked us to share our reflections. It was this poem that stimulated my self-reflection on my past and present experiences as a cultural being.

I used to live in a self-contained cultural box and followed every expectation from the Taiwanese society. Often, I was not sure how things got that way, but there they were. I liked them and believed they were good for us. I carried this cultural box with me without questioning. I was not aware that this cultural box had transformed a cultural identity within me until some strange feelings did not fit into to this box and ran over me. I couldn't stop them.

During my first couple of years in graduate school, I worked hard to get involved in this society, but had been hiding my past and private self in my private "boxes." I thought I could just throw away my past and reshape a new self in my new territory. Looking back, I often struggled between two extremely opposite "I"s, the private self and the public self.

As I started understanding myself better, I found I had lived in "this culture experience [that] pushes and pulls between [my] inner and outer lives. Often the inner life does not know how to be its own advocate" (Metzger, 1992, p. 83). People often saw me as an independent, aggressive and ambitions person who worked hard at school and work, but no one has ever known the other side of me who struggled in seeking the self in relation to the world. Looking back, I was able to manage anything that could lead me to succeed, but none of these superficial ambitions and successes has ever satisfied my deep desire to determine who I am.

I thought being away from Taiwan and living in a new country could provide me with a private place in which no one would know my past; therefore, I would have more freedom to search for what I desire. I thought I could isolate myself from the past and create a new life. I thought I could just rip the boxes that contained my past

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and reshape a new self for who I wanted to be. However, the more I searched, the more I found I could not live without a connection to my past. I realized, to better understand who I am, I must recognize the boxes that contain my culture, experiences, belief system and identities. To understand better who I want to be, I must unpack my private boxes and accept where I came from.

Therefore, I started asking myself, "Who is Yen?" A graduate student? A "bad" student? A female? An Asian? A Taiwanese? An East Asian woman? A certified ESL teacher? An EFL teacher? An NNES? A bilingual? A girl from poverty? A future TESOL teacher educator? All of these cannot fully answer who Yen is, but each of these represents parts of my identity. As a female with ambition, I do not fit into the Taiwanese masculine society. As an East Asian woman, I do not fit into the White society. As an NNES, I do not fit into the English dominant society. Boxes, boxes, boxes, boxes… boxes everywhere, and nothing seems to fit in any of them. Oh, my God! What have I done to deserve this punishment?

As NNES ESL teachers, we often face the challenge of credibility due to our language proficiency and ethnic identities. Drawing on his study among 216 native and non-native teachers working in 10 countries, Medgyes (1992) concludes that the teaching differences between NNESs and native English speakers (NESs) are closely related to their linguistic competencies. Medgyes further asserts that regardless of their language proficiency, non-native speakers are permanent language learners. Although Medgyes does not conclude from this that native speakers are necessarily more effective English language teachers, he concludes that non-native speakers'

language proficiency has an impact on their self-image as professionals and, in turn, influences the way they teach.

Conversations with my two NNES colleagues (Lu, Suh, & Park, 2004) revealed that as NNESs, we all worked very hard to learn English; however, no matter how hard we work we all agreed that our language proficiency and accent will never reach a "perfect" native-like level. If it is true that NNESs' language proficiency would never reach a native-like level, are we still qualified to teach English? Should language proficiency be the only criteria for judging an English teacher? Our concern with language proficiency reflects Medgyes' (1999) argument of the impact of language proficiency on NNESs' self-identity as professionals. To elaborate the relationship between language, identity and the ownership of English, Norton (1997) asks, "Who owns English internationally?" Specifically, it is a question concerning "whether English belongs to native speakers of English, to speakers of standard English, to White people, or to all those who speak it" (p. 422). Norton (1997) explains that identity is complex, contradictory and multifaceted; identity is dynamic across time and place and identity constructs, and is constructed by language.

> [E]very time language learners speak, they are not only
> exchanging information with their interlocutors; they are also
> constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are
> and how they relate to the social world. They are, in other words,
> engaged in identity construction and negotiation. (Norton, 1997,
> p. 410)

To legitimate the use of a language, he suggests that a language should belong to the people who speak it, whether native or non-native; teachers of English, whether ESL or EFL, should have equal role in English teaching. If NNES ESL teachers

cannot claim ownership of the language they teach, they might not consider themselves legitimate teachers. I wonder how many NNES ESL teachers are still struggling with their identities while they have been working hard and devoting themselves to teaching.

Once I was in Your Shoes

The methodologies and pedagogies I have learned from the TESOL program mainly focuses on ESL learners, so I always wondered what an ESL teacher would look like. In particular, I knew that my dissertation research would focus on NNES K-12 ESL teachers in the United States, so I wanted to have a practical experience before I interviewed my participants and before I went into the field as a teacher educator. Therefore, after completing all courses required by Maryland State Department of Education for a K-12 teaching certificate in TESOL, I applied for a 16 weeks of practicum in both elementary school and middle school.

Although my mentor teacher and other colleagues were always curious about why a doctoral student like me would decide to do student teaching, it was really a valuable experience for me as an ESL student-teacher. I had four years of teaching experience in Taiwan, but teaching ESL students was completely a new task. I realized that as an ESL teacher, my role was not only an instructor who taught the language, but most of time I had to be a counselor to help students deal with family issues or negative emotions in learning.

I learned that most of my ESL students had struggles with family relationships. For example, some lived in one house with a big family which consists of an uncle, a cousin, a grandmother, a half-brother or whoever. Some might have

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been transferred to different schools within a year because their parents had to move around different places for jobs. Some had to constantly deal with a new relationship with her single parent's new partner at home. Some were not ready to learn at a grade level because they had never gone to school before coming to the U.S. Some had psychological problems or were not willing to talk in school at all because they might have experienced trauma during their childhood. Therefore, in addition to focusing on my language pedagogy and teaching strategies, I was also concerned with how I could understand my students better and help them deal with emotional needs that might influence their motivation in learning.

Once I had been an English learner, so I felt I was able to put myself into my students' shoes and understand their difficulty in learning a language. However, it's not easy for me to understand their family issues and emotional difficulties. Thus, somehow I felt a distance between the students and me. In order to know a little bit about their world, in my writing class I created a lesson plan to explore their world by assigning an autobiography project as one of their writing tasks. By reading their autobiographies, I got a glimpse of who they are and what their worlds look like.

It's not easy for a student teacher to build a trusting and close relationship with the students within a limited time period, but most of my students liked me because I had tried very hard to know them and understand them. However, when I student taught in middle school, there was a student, Fernando, who did not seem to like me from the first day of the class. He never opened his book and never responded to me during the class. I had tried different strategies to get his attention in class or to encourage him, but nothing helped. The more attention I paid to him, the

less effort he would make in class. Sometimes, my attention caused his unreasonable temper toward me. I did not know how to make the situation better, and that really made me frustrated. To encourage me, my mentor teacher told me that Fernando had big family issues at home and had always behaved like that. No one would be able to do anything for him, and she suggested that I should just leave him alone.

One day, when I was observing a science class to get a sense of how my ESL students learned in the mainstream class, I was shocked to find that Fernando was very active in the science class and smart enough to handle any task the teacher assigned. Several days later, in a social study class, I took off my role as a teacher to act like a middle school student and participated in a group project with the students in class. From that group project, I got to know Fernando's buddy and he helped me get a chance to talk with Fernando after class. After a long conversation with Fernando, I learned that he intended to behave like a bad student in the ESL classroom, because all his ESL teachers did not like him and often yelled at him whatever he did because they thought he was a behavior problem student. Even when he tried to behave sometimes, the teachers still treated him as a behavior problem student. "But, I did not think of you in that way and have never treated you like a behavior problem student or yelled at you! Why didn't you respond to me at all?" I asked. "You are an ESL student-teacher and you listen to them! You all thought I am a bad student so I am not going to behave well," he responded in anger. I tried not to cry in front of him when I heard this statement.

His story reminded me of a similar experience I had when I was in middle school. After I graduated from elementary school, my family moved to a new place.

Due to this relocation, I was assigned to a middle school which had a bad reputation for students who mostly lived in poverty. Because the school had a very low ranking in the National Entrance Exam, most "well-known" teachers were not willing to teach there. Like other parents, my parents did their best to transfer me to another "well-known" school. However, without any social connection, they were unable to do so.

My peers from elementary school often laughed at me for going to a "bad" school, having "bad" classmates and being taught by "bad" teachers. I often cried at home and was reluctant to go to school. Instead of punishing me for not going to school like some parents would do, my mother reminded me that I should appreciate every opportunity for learning. To prove that I was able to succeed, I studied even harder to make my mother proud. With my mother's encouragement, tutelage and expectation that I could do it, I became not only a good student, I became the best in school.

Ladson-Billings (1994) argues that some teacher preparation programs are designed for "urban" education, and the significance of diverse learners' needs are rarely considered in the program. The label of "bad" students at a "bad" school is similar to the label of students at an "urban" school in the United States. Literature indicates that "urban" schools, as a code for social class, are often not welcome among White, middle-class prospective teachers. Teachers often have low expectations for the achievement of poor students of color (Cabello & Burstein, 1995). In a similar situation, most "well-known" teachers in Taiwan were from the middle class. They were reluctant to teach students from poverty and often viewed poor students as a problem.

When teachers hold negative expectations and beliefs toward students, they are less likely to provide students with appropriate learning environments and effective teaching (Terrill & Mark, 2000). Although ideally, social class is not determined by biology and inheritance, it does exist in society (Weber, 2001). Because the upper classes with more power in a social system influence the allocation of resources, "bad" students or "urban" students in the lower classes often have fewer resources.

Further, the image of a "bad" student is often associated with the inferior. Middle-school-age children are often shamed for failure just as toddlers are shamed when they wet their pants. A few failure experiences or being devalued by family members, peers or society can generate negative feelings that will cause a child to avoid engaging in new tasks in order to preclude failure (Newman & Newman, 1991). This is what Erikson (1959) called *negative identity*. With less resources and a negative identity, the "bad" students often drop out of schools. Fortunately, with my mother's encouragement, I was able to transform this negative experience into a motivation. However, in Fernando's case, the label of a "bad" student had eliminated his motivation for leaning in some ways, and created a negative identity in his life.

When I shared Fernando's experience in a Narrative Inquiry research class, I was in tears in front of my peers and instructor. After sharing Fernando's story with my student peers, I decided to share my own story with him and let him know that I was once in his shoes, and I believed that he could be successful no matter how others think of him. I also sent him a card with encouraging words from my heart. After this intimate sharing, he still made trouble in many classes, but he seemed to become

more comfortable with me in the class and was willing to perform the tasks I assigned to him. By the time I completed my student teaching, I did not know how his life would become, but at least I had tried my best. I really hope there is a teacher who will be able to understand his inner world and struggles.

After reviewing my own struggles in linguistic and academic learning and my student-teaching experiences, I realized that as NNESs, we must realize our unfinished self (Freire, 1998) and our relation to the world. Unless NNES teachers understand and embrace themselves as they are, they may not be effective in helping students understand their cultural and linguistic identities. With more developed understandings of ourselves as NNESs, we may become better ESL teachers in our own way.

Chapter 4: Wen-Lin Huang

There are many ways to talk about Wen-Lin. An observer could tell her story in an upbeat, positive way, as a model minority student graduating with high honors, receiving a scholarship for her graduate study in TESOL, becoming a successful ESL teacher in elementary school and having time for her family and friends. However, this version of the perfect student and perfect woman is only a superficial "cover story" (Crites, 1979). The stories Wen-Lin chose to tell me described her continual dissatisfaction and confusion with her studies in Taiwan, her frustration and fear of failing the National Entrance Exam for college in Taiwan and her anxiety about confronting and changing her apparent destiny.

Influence of Cultural and Linguistic Experiences on Identity

I am relating Wen-Lin's stories as an EFL learner in Taiwan and ESL learner in the United States to sketch her experiences as a language learner, focusing on key themes related to language learning as identity reconstruction. Her story illuminates how her dispositions toward language learning can be characterized in terms of a renegotiated identity. That is, where do they come from and how do they change over time as her access to language learning changes in nature?

Early Identity as a Language Learner -- A Failure

Wen-Lin was born in a suburban area near Taipei, Taiwan. Due to the socioeconomic structure in the suburban area, most of Wen-Lin's classmates in elementary school were from working class families. Without making too much effort, Wen-Lin was one of the outstanding students throughout her primary grades. After she graduated from elementary school, Wen-Lin's parents, hoping to better her educational opportunities, sent her to a private middle school which was famous for higher student ratings in the National Entrance Exam. Due to high tuition, only children from the middle or upper class families had the privilege to study in the private school. With pressure from teachers and parents, many of the students in the private school were conditioned to compete with each other.

Soon after she began attending middle school, Wen-Lin was shocked to learn that her peers had received very solid academic training in elementary school and were well-trained in competing with each other. Unprepared for the academic and competitive rigors of her new school, Wen-Lin soon lagged behind the class. In order to push the students into the National Entrance Exam, the teachers in Taiwan often pay attention to the "good students" who have potential for success. Those who do not have high scores, like Wen-Lin, were often accused of laziness. As a young learner Wen-Lin's identity had changed from being an outstanding student to being labeled as "dragging behind the train," which implies that one cannot be helped in anyway.

With such a label, Wen-Lin lost motivation to study. There was not a single subject in which she was interested during her middle school years. For her, the only

reason to study was to pass the National Entrance Exam for college. Wen-Lin never

thought about becoming a teacher because she hated doing the same thing over again

every year like her teachers did in class. From her view, teaching as a profession

reflected an endless repetitive effort. Even if she had ever considered being a teacher,

she never would have dreamed about being an English teacher because her

performance in English seemed particularly bad.

Wen-Lin started learning English when she was a sixth grader. She went to a

private language institute near her house with her sister for a year. After the one-year

learning experience in the private language institute, she started formal English

learning in the seventh grade and continued through twelfth grade. Although Wen-

Lin had started learning English one year earlier than most Taiwanese students, her

grades in English were never as good as her parents had expected. Because the

middle school English curriculum and materials were more demanding and difficult

than the private language institute's conversational-based curriculum, Wen-Lin was

not adequately prepared for studying English in the seventh grade.

As Wen-Lin shared her learning experience as an EFL learner in Taiwan, all

she remembered about English class was memorizing, memorizing and memorizing.

Without adequate instruction and feedback, Wen-Lin believed she did not have the

capacity to study, particularly in English. She thought there must be something wrong

with her. Wen-Lin recalled:

> I had a terrible English learning experience when I was in
> middle school. In English class, after the instructor went through
> major vocabulary in a chapter, he often asked us to memorize
> the whole chapter and had a test on the next day. Back then,
> since I was not interested in English, I would just memorize
> without knowing what the meanings were and what the whole

chapter meant. I just tried to memorize each word and its spelling. It was really hard, especially because I didn't know what it was about. When I went back to school, I had to do the test. I tried to memorize and spell every single word I had memorized the previous day, but nothing came out from my brain because the letters and the words had no meaning or connection to each other. Of course, I did not get a good grade. So, back then, it did not have any meaning to me. All I was doing was preparing for the test to do the best I could without knowing anything. I think I really did my best to study hard, but I did not know what went wrong with me.

As Wen-Lin recalled her school years in Taiwan, she felt studying had no personal connection to her. There was a lot of pressure for her to get good grades and to get into a good university. Studying was only to pass the tests, and she did not understand why she struggled and failed. She said, "I often stayed up until one or two o'clock studying. But then the day after, when taking the test, I still did badly. Somehow, it didn't click for me. I felt I had tried very hard but I still didn't have good grades." Not surprisingly, Wen-Lin failed the National Entrance Exam for college. Just like many other Taiwanese high school students, it seemed her whole world had collapsed. Wen-Lin was particularly disappointed because her high school boyfriend had passed the National Entrance Exam with very high grades, and her failure contributed to them breaking up. Needless to say, the outcome was devastating to her confidence, and she blamed herself for everything that had gone wrong.

Teenage students who failed in the National Entrance Exam faced two choices: give up their dream of going to the college forever, or go to a cram school and spend one more year studying in order to take the exam again the next year. For Wen-Lin, neither way was a good choice. She did not want to give up her dream, but she was not willing to sacrifice another year of her life in cram school, either. The

experience of failing the National Entrance Exam in the Taiwan's hierarchical school system imposed a failure identity on Wen-Lin; however, it also became a self-transforming moment in her life. Her failure forced her to seriously think about her own attitude toward learning. It gave Wen-Lin a new perspective on studying and a motivation to achieve.

As often happens in life, problems can turn into opportunities. At that time, she had a chance to immigrate to the United States. Going to the United States provided new hope for her to prove her ability. She said to herself:

> From now on, I am going to study very hard, and I will show everyone that I am smart enough and I can do anything I want. I told myself that I would work hard to prove that I could make a difference for my life. I would achieve some goals in my life to get something to be complimented.

Transforming a Failure into Someone Who is Full of Capability

Wen-Lin immigrated to the United States with her sister when she was 18 after she failed the National Entrance Exam in Taiwan. She started taking ESL classes at a community college. As a new student, she took reading, writing and grammar during the first year. Although she had received solid English reading and writing training for six years in Taiwan, she struggled in a writing class the first year. She realized she had never learned English in a functional way and was not able to apply grammar rules and sentence patterns to writing. She recalled:

> I was OK with reading, but the most difficult class at that time was writing. I struggled a little bit in writing. I was frustrated with how to put things together. Back in Taiwan, what I had learned was memorizing everything. I didn't know why I used past tense. Well, maybe the teachers explained, but I did not understand. I knew there was a difference between past progressive and past perfect, but I didn't know when and why

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we used them.

Even though she was only at a community college level, she felt intimidated about speaking in class. She was afraid of saying things incorrectly when the teacher called on her. Conversational English was a big challenge for her. However, because her goal was to transfer to a four-year college, she needed to complete ESL classes as soon as possible. With this in mind, she pushed herself even harder. Despite the struggles and frustration she faced, mastering English was her goal, and her self-motivation created a new learning identity which made it possible for her to accomplish her goals. She explained:

> I didn't really see my self as a language learner when I took ESL classes in the community college. It was just a necessity, so I could get into a college where I wanted to go. It was something I had to learn to survive, and I knew I had to accomplish my goal to go to the university. The community college was only a two-year college, so if I didn't do well, then I wouldn't be able to go to a better college. So, everything I did was to accomplish what I planned.

During a conversation with Wen-Lin about what led her to become an ESL teacher, she immediately described a speech teacher at the community college who she vividly remembered because the teacher not only helped with her language, but also boosted her self confidence. If she had never met her speech teacher, Ms. Anderson, she never would have known she was capable in language and had the potential to become a good ESL teacher. It was not until the second year in the community college that she met Ms. Anderson in a speech class. Oral presentations in front of the class were an integral part of the curriculum in many subjects, and ESL teachers try to arm their students with some experience of what, for many students, is an unfamiliar genre at school. There is a marked difference between answering a

question or speaking informally in class, and the stress of speaking in front of a group

in the sustained and structured way oral presentations demand. The latter is nerve-

racking for most students, but especially for linguistic minority speakers. Wen-Lin

was very worried and nervous. What made her nervous was, in part, the thought of

physically standing in front of the students and teachers who were watching and

listening.

Wen-Lin commented that preparing for the speech was one of the most

difficult assignments because she had to memorize the "oral writing" she prepared,

which reminded her of the memorization tasks she had done in Taiwan. It was hard

for Wen-Lin to believe anyone could enjoy learning English, especially while

presenting in front of people. However, she remembered that Ms. Anderson was a

very energetic and outgoing person who always had many interesting projects for the

class. By emphasizing hands-on activity as the organizing theme of the speech course,

Ms. Anderson made the class seem less intimidating. In Wen-Lin's own words:

> She always gave positive compliments to the students as well as
> pointing out things that need work, what kind of sound you need
> to pay attention to and how you practice a right sound. I really
> enjoyed her class. She made the students feel more confident in
> speech by encouraging them with smiling or complimenting
> whatever they had accomplished. She really helped me learn the
> language and sound like a native speaker.

Wen-Lin started gaining confidence in her English after she did the research

project presentation in Ms. Anderson's speech class. The positive compliments from

Ms. Anderson and her classmates during the presentation boosted her confidence in

English. She had never known she was able to manage English until she successfully

completed the presentation. It was the first time she finally felt she was capable of

speaking English and owned the language. She recalled:

> To prepare the oral presentation for Ms. Anderson's class, I did a lot of research and read a lot of articles. Reading for me at that time was not very difficult, but the hardest thing was to put my thoughts into writing, so that I could present in an easy way. I spent a week putting everything together and practicing for the presentation again and again. When I was on the stage and gave my presentation, I felt pretty good about what I had done. During my presentation, everybody looked at me and seemed like they were very interested in my speech. I did not hesitate to say anything during the speech. At the end, everybody clapped. Everybody was so impressed about my presentation. I had a very good reaction from the audience. Everybody came up to me and said, "You did a good job, I understood what you were saying." The teacher also gave me good compliments. So, that was the first time I felt my English was pretty good. I felt like I knew what I was doing, and I had accomplished something important. I had started learning English from the sixth grade, but it wasn't until that moment that I finally got it, that kind of feeling. After that, I felt like I could really speak English.

After she finished her presentation, she realized learning English need not be painful; it could be enjoyable. Making presentations had become rewarding. It helped her think and provided a great sense of accomplishment. Wen-Lin felt she was able to do it well because she was deeply intrigued by the concept that language could be connected to real life. Ms. Anderson taught her multiple ways of organizing ideas and preparing a speech that drew upon her intuitive understanding of language rather than forcing her to completely rely upon a standard procedure of presentation from materials. Equally important, Ms. Anderson always praised her in accepting and respectful ways, and through those interactions, the other students learned to do the same. Ms. Anderson boosted her confidence in her own speech abilities and helped her establish a successful identity in learning English. As Wen-Lin recalled Ms. Anderson, she said:

> She was a very encouraging and very positive teacher. If you did a good job, she would make such a big deal out of it. She would praise you with a very excited and loud voice, "YOU DID REALLY GREAT! EVERYTHING WAS BEAUTIFUL…" That made me feel really good. She did that to everybody. The whole class environment was very welcoming. You felt like you could be successful.

By the end of the year, she felt completely comfortable in Ms. Anderson's speech class, and she did extremely well. Since all her peers in the ESL class were international students, Wen-Lin felt very confident speaking English in front of her peers. Her teachers and her peers were all surprised with her progress and linguistic talent. From that point, she felt very confident and competent about her own ability. She realized that "although I did badly back in Taiwan, it does not matter now because I can prove myself and make my life different."

Ms. Anderson's encouraging style of teaching and recognizing students' accomplishments changed Wen-Lin's perspective about being a teacher. The way Ms. Anderson taught the class and the way she interacted with the students made her feel that she was respected and valued as a person, not a "study-machine" for tests, as she put it. The experience of being in Ms. Anderson's speech class had created a new identity for Wen-Lin, an identity of being capable of doing things and an identity of being successful, and had turned her life around – she wanted to become an English teacher, just like Ms. Anderson. From that point, Wen-Lin started thinking seriously about her career as an ESL teacher. She wanted to be a teacher like Ms. Anderson, who was passionate about students, cared about language learners and really helped students in learning. Her experience as an ESL learner and Ms. Anderson's inspiration have enriched her life and opened up a career she had never imagined.

After two years in the ESL program at the community college, she successfully transferred to a four-year college. But, because the college only offered a TESOL program at the Master's or Doctoral level, and her goal was to become an ESL teacher, she registered as an elementary education major and started learning how to teach math, reading, writing, and social studies. As she started learning theories about learning and reflecting upon her own learning process in Taiwan and in the United States, particularly in Ms. Anderson's class, she realized what a difference a good teacher can make in a student's life. Ms. Anderson was a model for her: "I knew I wanted to be a teacher like her, and I wanted to teach something related to what I had experienced."

Linguistic Identity and Self-confidence

With the rapid spread of English as an international language, the ratio of non-native to native English teachers is steadily growing. Despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of English language teachers worldwide are non-natives, NNES language teachers' contribution to the field are neglected (Braine, 1999) and their constraints, specific needs and professional development are of little concern. This reluctant attitude towards the recognition of non-native teachers not only stems from the ideological myth of native speakers as ideal teachers, but also from the oversimplified dichotomy between NES and NNES which over-empowers NES and dis-empowers NNES.

Apparently, many NNES feel inferior when compared to their NES counterparts, especially in areas of language fluency and communication. Although pronunciation is not the only criterion for evaluating a language teacher's

professionalism, this expectation is not unreasonable. After all, we want language learners to have both good linguistic models and good role models. However, unrealistically high expectations - perhaps especially those held by NNESs themselves - can be overwhelming.

Closely tied to Wen-Lin's self-confidence is the issue of her linguistic identity as an NNES. After the two-years at the community college, Wen-Lin was considered a fluent, accent-free English speaker by many native English speakers. But to Wen-Lin's surprise, there were only a handful of international students in her elementary education class and most of her peers were native speakers. Her confidence soon dropped, and she became a silent person while she was with her European American classmates.

> That's the first time I was surrounded by all native speakers. Most of students at the community college were ESL students. But in the elementary education program, I did not see any ESL students in my class. I was afraid they [the European American classmates] would find out I was not a native speaker. So, I tried to speak as little as I could. When I actually spoke, I would try to sound more like a native speaker as much as possible. It's really hard to pretend to be a native speaker, and I was under the pressure to act like a native.

When I asked why she had to pretend she was a native speaker in front of her peers, she shared with me an unpleasant experience she had as an NNES. This kind of tension and self-consciousness about her own speech and her identity as an NNES actually came from an experience during her first year in the United States. She shared the story with disappointment, "I think a lot of problems and struggles come from language, like not being able to express yourself or not knowing what to say." She remembered a time after she had been in the U.S. some months, when she had to

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take her car to get repaired:

> When I was still explaining the problem, the technician just
> started laughing at me. And he said, "I have never heard about
> this kind of problem. I do not know what you are saying. What
> you are saying is really funny." And, he continued laughing. I
> was really embarrassed and mad. I felt like he was really mean
> and that should not be the way to treat the customer. I think
> language was really a big part of this encounter. I felt he was
> laughing at me because I could not find a right word to describe
> the car problem.

Wen-Lin thought it might be a gender or racial issue because a female is often

considered less knowledgeable or interested in cars. However, for Wen-Lin, her

linguistic identity was the key. She felt the technician looked down on her only

because she had not mastered the language well. As a result, she became very

conscious about what she said and worked hard on her speech to sound like a native

speaker.

> It might also have been a racial or gender bias because he knew I
> am an Asian female. But, if I had enough language to explain the
> problem, the situation would have been different. If this
> happened in Taiwan, even if I didn't know how to explain the
> exact problem or a specific term, I don't think Taiwanese
> technicians would laugh at me. Here, the technician interpreted
> that, "You are not from here and you don't know the language.
> So, you don't have enough language to talk about the problem."
> After that event, before I take my car anywhere or do anything, I
> find out what I need to say for a particular word or how I should
> describe the problem. It's a lesson for me. People look down on
> you and think you are uneducated or unknowledgeable only
> because you do not speak the language well.

In order to feel comfortable and confident, it was important for Wen-Lin to be

well prepared in her speech, and being prepared involved knowing what to say in a

correct way. Feeling she needed to know what to say before she actually spoke was a

continual tension for Wen-Lin. Therefore, she became more conscious about her

speech when she was surrounded by all native speakers in her undergraduate classes. In particular, she noticed that most of her American peers were not very friendly to her. She was shocked that in many of her courses, though they emphasized how a teacher should care for students from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds, her Caucasian peers were behaving in such an uncaring way.

> Most of my peers in class were Caucasian and they were not really welcoming to others. During the class discussion, when a person said something, then the other person would just jump in before the first person had finished. So, they would just talk back and forth without knowing each other's opinion. Thus, for many discussions, I had no chance to talk about what I thought. Even if I finally said something, they would say, "Ok, let's go back to..." something like that. I felt they did not have patience to listen to me when I spoke too slow or could not express myself well. Thus, I did not really have the chance to interact with others, and I would just listen and say nothing. At the same time, I tried very hard to imitate how I should sound and how to speak in a right way.

A Native Speaker Mask

Wen-Lin never shared her future career goal as an ESL teacher with her student peers while she was studying in the undergraduate program. She was afraid that native speakers might think she was not a qualified ESL teacher because she was not a native speaker. The identity of non-native speaker had created a conflict during her study. She wanted to help students who came from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds like herself; at the same time, she was afraid someone would notice she was not a native speaker. She learned as a teacher she must respect and understand students' diverse backgrounds, but no one taught her that to be a successful teacher, she must value herself first. Thus, she worked hard to hide her linguistic and cultural backgrounds for years and to produce a native-like speech.

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When she described her concern with the NNES identity, she directly related her

intellectual ability to linguistic ability. Her self-censoring manifested through her

linguistic overcompensation with regard to her accent, particularly with her

Caucasian undergraduate classmates.

> I was always worried about the way I spoke because others
> might not take me seriously or might see me as unintelligent
> person if I did not speak like a native. So I tried very hard to
> imitate how a native speaker sounds and to say things in a right
> way whenever I could. Especially when I was in front of native
> speakers doing presentations, I would pay extra attention to what
> was coming out of my mouth. You know, I had to sound like a
> native speaker as much as possible. I could not let them find out
> the truth, because they might look down on me.

At the beginning of her undergraduate years, Wen-Lin's confidence about

becoming a teacher heavily relied on an identity as a native speaker. She particularly

felt good about herself when people recognized her English and perceived her as a

native speaker. She felt extremely proud of herself when many of her Caucasian

student peers did not know she was not originally from the United States. Her effort

to establish a self-identity as a native speaker seemed successful and, therefore,

increased her self-confidence in her ability to become an ESL teacher.

> At the end of my undergraduate study, a lot of my Caucasian
> classmates who graduated at the same time with me did not
> realize I was not born in the United States. A couple of my close
> friends who knew I came from Taiwan would say, "Your
> English is pretty good; how long have you been here?" Back
> then, it had been only 4 years. This made me feel like I could do
> this [being a teacher] now.

Influence of Relationships on Identity

In the field of second language education, much of the research has been

motivated by educational theory within a critical tradition or poststructuralist

approach, such as that of West (1992), Bourdieu (1977), and Weedon (1997), and has highlighted the fact that language learning and teaching is not a neutral practice but a highly political one. Researchers such as Norton (2000) and Cummins (1996) investigated the ways in which relations of power affect language learning and teaching. For example, using a critical ethnography approach, Norton (2000) studied five immigrant women who had only just arrived in Canada and were in the initial stages of language learning at the time of investigation. Based upon the results, Norton (2000) argues that identity construction of language learners must be understood with reference to an inequitably structured world and relations of power between language learners and target language speakers. Drawing on Norton's argument on power relationship and identity, I found that Wen-Lin's self-identity and confidence were determined by perspectives or concepts of others who were more powerful.

Perceptions from Powerful Others

Although Wen-Lin's classmates, teachers and colleagues had been impressed by her accent-free English, I found that how others perceived her had tremendous influence on her self-confidence and how she perceived herself. The difficulties inherent in identifying with something she was not, a native speaker, set her up for still another rejection. She shared with me one incident that happened during her internship as a mainstream student-teacher in the undergraduate program:

> During the first half of my last year, we student-taught two days a week. My mentor teacher was really an experienced teacher, but she was more like an old fashioned teacher. I felt she knew I was not a native speaker, so she did not let me teach too much. I think the major reason was that she felt my English was not

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good enough. Thus, during that time, she did not give me much opportunity in teaching. I just did a couple of lessons for an entire semester. Most of student teachers stayed with the same mentor teacher for the second half of practicum assignment, but I was the only one who was switched to another mentor teacher. I was really upset because none of the student teachers was being switched. I think I was the only one. At that time, I felt the mentor teacher did not want me to be in her class because my English was not perfect. She might have thought I was not capable of teaching because I was not a native speaker.

There was no way to prove whether being switched to another mentor teacher was her first mentor teacher's personal bias of NNES student teachers or not. But for Wen-Lin, there was no second reason that could explain the situation. The way others looked at her led Wen-Lin to draw a connection between language proficiency and intelligence. To prove her knowledge and capability, Wen-Lin worked very hard to improve her language proficiency and to act like a native speaker. I wondered what drove Wen-Lin to equate high language proficiency to a native speaker and link a native speaker with teaching competence. Wen-Lin said, "Once you open your mouth, they know if you are capable or not," and then continued:

> If you do not speak like a native speaker, even though you are knowledgeable, you cannot convince people. You may have a lot of knowledge, but when you stumble on your words or make funny sounds in your speech, people will look at you in a different way. Especially, I were to become an elementary classroom teacher in the field, so if I do not speak like a native speaker, others will think I am not a good role model for the kids or won't be a good language source for the kids. And, in reality, if you don't want to experience discrimination from other people then you need to present yourself better in terms of your speech. As a teacher you are consistently presenting yourself to the students, teachers and parents during the class, team meetings, school meetings and parent meetings, so you need to be consistently aware of how you present yourself.

With such perspective about the quality of being a good teacher, acting like a

native speaker was one major issue for Wen-Lin as she prepared herself to be a teacher. In particular, when she was facing her first job interview, she was more concerned with how she should make each sound correctly than with other issues such as how she should answer interviewers' questions or respond to racial bias.

> By the time I graduated from college, I was really afraid I wouldn't find a job. You know, I rarely heard any teacher who is a non-native speaker in a mainstream class. When I went to interviews, I was really nervous and tried not to let them find out I am not from here. When they asked me questions, I tried very hard to concentrate on my language and to sound like a native speaker. Maybe I was a little bit concerned with my racial background because as far as I knew there were not many Asian teachers in the country during that time, but I was more concerned with my speech.

Upon completion of her undergraduate studies, she taught in a mainstream classroom as a second grade teacher. After one semester teaching, she successfully enrolled in a Master's program in TESOL. In the graduate TESOL program, there were more international students than she had expected. Many of her TESOL classmates were from Asian countries such as China, Korea, Japan and Taiwan; some were from South America. For the first time, Wen-Lin finally felt it was acceptable to be a non-native speaker by being in a class with peers from different cultures. She found that, because of diverse language learning and teaching experiences, her TESOL colleagues had more multicultural views. She realized that someday, she and her colleagues would teach ESL or EFL to people who were also from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. As a result, she recognized the importance of language teachers being able to accept and embrace differences. Compared to her experience in the undergraduate program, she felt much more accepted and confident because no one would negatively evaluate others based on linguistic and cultural

backgrounds.

In addition, she had a half-year teaching experience in an elementary school before she started the Master's program. As a result, she could share a lot of classroom practice during group discussions. Sometimes she felt she had more background knowledge about teaching in the U.S. than other international students, which encouraged her to share more in class. Compared to her experience in the undergraduate program, she had more confidence about herself. She said, "Because of my experience, I was able to bring things to the discussion. When I was in undergraduate school, I did not know the school system. So, I was afraid if I said something, they would think I didn't know what I was talking about 'cause you have not been in the school.'" By recognizing her own cultural and linguistic identities and understanding the importance of sociocultural issues in language learning through the two-year training in the TESOL program, Wen-Lin was able to overcome her own misconception of native speaker fallacy and gain self-confidence in teaching ESL. With such confidence, Wen-Lin did not know there were more challenges waiting for her as an NNES ESL teacher.

Oh, You are not a Native Speaker!

Because she had teaching experience as a mainstream elementary school teacher during undergraduate school and professional training during graduate school, Wen-Lin had never felt such confidence. When she started her teaching internship for the graduate TESOL program, she felt much more confident in her language and teaching. As she compared her student-teaching experiences in a mainstream classroom and an ESL classroom, she said:

When I student taught in the mainstream classroom, I had to learn a lot of things I did not learn from the school. Before I first taught in the mainstream class, I had never been exposed to the American public school system; thus, I had to learn little things like how to group the kids, how to mix them up or even how to arrange the desks. Did they need to sit together or sit separately, and how was I to get their attention? How should I do reading group and how should I pick books? I also had to learn how the school system worked and how to use the curriculum. When I student taught in the ESL classroom, I had already taught for a half year in the mainstream classroom and knew the school system and the curriculum. Thus, since I had background knowledge in teaching, I could concentrate more on how to teach when I student taught in the ESL classroom.

With her confidence about herself and her knowledge, teaching in an ESL class seemed to be much easier for Wen-Lin, but how she perceived herself did not equal how others perceived her. In particular, comments from practicum supervisors who held privileged positions had an influential impact on student teachers' self-perception on teaching ability. One incident happened during Wen-Lin's internship during her TESOL program. It proved that other people's perspectives often play a major role in how she perceived herself and her ability in teaching. When Wen-Lin was student teaching in an ESL classroom in middle school during her internship, her university supervisor came to observe her and provided her with another disappointing evaluation. After the observation, without giving comments directly to Wen-Lin's lesson plan, teaching strategies or classroom management, the supervisor told Wen-Lin's mentor teacher that Wen-Lin had an accent in her language and sometimes she made grammatical mistakes during her speech. Needless to say, Wen-Lin was very upset with her supervisor's comments.

When Wen-Lin heard her supervisor's comments, she felt her heart sink. All her effort was suddenly less important; her effort in preparing teaching did not seem

to matter. Although she had received negative comments before, this comment hurt, especially because it was directed at who she was, not at her teaching abilities. In particular, she had tried so hard to act like a native, but all her confidence failed once someone noticed her non-native identity. She realized that regardless of her native-like pronunciation and significant ease in speaking, she could not avoid making errors. Others' perceptions of her language proficiency had negative impacts on her confidence and her sense of self worth as a teacher.

> I was kind of upset, you know. Finally, someone had recognized that I am not really a native speaker and I do make some mistakes in my speech. I was really disappointed because I thought no one would notice my real linguistic identity. But, at that time, I thought I really needed to pay even more attention to my speech because someone would find out who I am again and judge my qualifications based on my language, not my teaching ability.

The supervisor's comment was based primarily on a native speaker model, while other criteria, such as cultural competence, and students' needs, seemed not important. In Davies' term, "the native speaker is a fine myth: we need it as a model, a goal, almost an inspiration. But it is useless as a measure" (1995, p. 157).

In a recent study, Llurda (2005) investigated the perceptions of 32 NNES student teachers' practicum supervisors in the North American TESOL program on NNESs' language proficiency and teaching performance through a survey. The survey involved a written questionnaire in which supervisors were asked to respond to several questions regarding their NNES student teachers' language skills and teaching performance. The questionnaire included supervisors' rating of NNESs' language proficiency; supervisors' assessment of NNES student teachers' teaching performance in comparison with NES student teachers as well as the supervisors'

opinions about the relationship between NNES student teachers' language

proficiency and teaching performance. One of the main hypotheses being tested by

this research was the belief that "high-level language skills are essential for NNES

language teachers' successful teaching" (p. 132). In this study, "language

performance" was the only criteria in assessing NNES student teachers' teaching

performance. Researchers argued that one of major deficits in this study was that it

failed to explain language teachers' performance from a variety of necessary criteria,

such as multicultural competence in understanding ESL students' cultural

background, interaction with students and knowledge in language pedagogy.

As the student population in the United States public schools has become

more diverse, many scholars argue that teacher preparation programs must emphasize

the sociocultural struggles that culturally and linguistically diverse students endure,

and suggest that teacher candidates should acquire cultural competence in learning

another culture, acquiring a second language, integrating their world views,

performing well in the content areas, and adapting their understanding to support the

acculturation process in a mutually adaptive way, building environment, including

the culture of the school (Zeichner, Grant, Gay, Gillette, Valli & Villegas, 1998).

Because ESL teachers, in particular, work with culturally and linguistically diverse

learners daily, cultural competence is also an important criteria for assessing a

language teacher in ways other than language proficiency

The feeling of being disrespected from her graduate internship supervisor as

an unworthy language teacher could have had a deep impact on Wen-Lin's

confidence in teaching. Although Wen-Lin's mentor teacher was very supportive and

did not care too much about the university supervisor's comment, Wen-Lin could not help thinking of a number of concerns regarding how she was perceived as a non-native speaker. As she moved to her second student teaching practicum in TESOL, before her university supervisor went to observe her again, she confessed her own identity as an NNES to her second mentor teacher. That was the first time Wen-Lin had ever revealed her own NNES identity to others.

Wen-Lin's lack of confidence is one of the unfortunate results of the challenges to credibility. As Canagarajah (1999) argues, "If it is one's accent and pronunciation that qualify one to be a teacher, then the sense of professionalism developed in ESL is flimsy" (p. 84). For NNESs, the effect of challenges to their credibility can sometimes be unnerving. Broyard (as cited in Thomas, 1999) claimed that "one of the dangers of stereotypes is that they can make those who are pigeonholed believe in these depictions and unconsciously try to maintain them" (p. 9). Despite Wen-Lin's confidence in her accent and speech of English, the challenge of her credibility in English teaching by her supervisor made her apologetic and nervous. She said, "I found myself stammering and stuttering and making more grammatical mistakes as I talked to native English speaking adults. When this happens, I feel they are criticizing me and wondering how I could possibly teach the language."

A Family Identity Makes her Strong

To succeed in the United States as an NNES is not easy, as Wen-Lin experienced. As Wen-Lin shared her family stories with me, I realized that to understand Wen-Lin, one must know her family background. Her relationship with

her family members, particularly with her parents, not only formed who she has become, but also, influenced the way she interacts with others and the way she sees herself.

Because Taiwan's political situation was uncertain in the 1960's, many parents in Taiwan considered emigrating to a western country as the best choice for their children's future. While Wen-Lin was still in elementary school, her parents had already planned on emigrating to the United States. Her parents strongly believed that living in the west would give them a better life, and English language was the key for survival. Because Wen-Lin's parents wanted their children to take up life in a western country, they seized the opportunity and applied for green cards through Wen-Lin's aunt. When Wen-Lin was little, moving to the United States did not have any relevance to her. However, as she grew up, her parents' plan provided an opportunity for her to escape Taiwan's competitive educational environment.

> When I was little, I knew I would eventually move to the United States after I grew up. And I think that is why I did not study enough for the National Entrance Exam. I knew that even though I passed the National Entrance Exam, I would still move to the United States. I sort of had no choice in making the decision to come to the U.S. because my parents had applied for green cards ten years before our emigration. Their plan was for all of us to study in the U.S.

Since coming to the United States was not her own decision, I wondered what motivated her to succeed while facing difficulties. As Wen-Lin shared her family's details with me, I realized that intimate history had created in her a spirit bent on shaping an identity of success in a new territory. In particular, her grandmother's story revealed how her family's transient history had served as a life model for Wen-Lin. After World War II, because Chinese communists took over in the 1930's, life in

China became difficult. Like many Chinese who worked for the Republican or Kuomingdan military or government, Wen-Lin's grandfather fled to Taiwan, but her grandmother and Wen-Lin's father were left behind in China. After her grandfather settled down in Taiwan, her grandmother took Wen-Lin's father with her and escaped to Hong Kong. At that time, Wen-Lin's father was only six years old. It was not easy for her grandmother as a woman with a small child to travel several days on a train. Although the family members were finally reunited, life in Taiwan after World War II was not easy for them.

Wen-Lin's father told her that when he was little, her grandparents were never around because they had to work and her father had to cook for himself and his younger sister who was born in Taiwan. Her father had to do everything by himself. As Wen-Lin retold the story she had heard many times from her father, her eyes shone in tears. The process of coming from China to Taiwan was really challenging for her grandmother, and the early life for her family was not easy. She learned she had to strive for a better life just like her grandmother. Family stories also taught her to appreciate what she had and made her strong and brave whenever she faced problems. Just as her grandmother did, when she faced difficulty in the U.S., she knew she had no choice but to strive for success.

Like many Taiwanese parents, after Wen-Lin's parents made sure she and her sister were adequately settled into college in the United States, they had to return to Taiwan to run their business. Thus, from that point, Wen-Lin and her sister had to take care of themselves. The challenges she faced included academic work as well as learning to live in a new country. Wen-Lin admitted that during the first couple of

years in the United States, she was really lonely because she had no close friends to

share her life with.

> Since most of my classmates were Caucasian, and, as I
> mentioned before, some of them were not very friendly, I did not
> have any close friends throughout college. Well, I did have
> some friends but just not American. Most friends I met were
> international Asian students, so they came and went. They often
> came here for study and after finishing their study, they would
> go back to their home countries. Toward to the end of my study
> in college, there were a couple of Asian friends in my program
> and eventually we became friends, but I still felt no connection
> with them because both of them were Americanized. One of
> them was Taiwanese but she was born here. So, I still could not
> talk about a lot of things with her because she did not know
> things from Taiwan. Another friend was from Korea who came
> here when she was little, so it was more like she was born here.
> A lot of things we talked about were really different. We really
> could not have a deep friendship.

As a college student, it was important for Wen-Lin to make deep connections

with others; however, as an international student, Wen-Lin found it difficult to make

friends with someone who did not share the same culture with her. She admitted her

life would have been much easier if she had entered a college in Taiwan because

relationships with people in the United States were more distant than with people in

Taiwan. Throughout college, she felt she was really all by herself. If she had been in

Taiwan, she would have had a lot of friends and fun activities in college. Although

coming to the U.S. was not her own decision, she never regretted coming here

because she felt she must strive for success here. Wen-Lin later added that even if she

had had a choice, she would not have gone back to Taiwan.

> Well, I don't really think I would have chosen to go back to
> Taiwan. Even though I was struggling in the United States
> without any friends, I would rather have stayed here. If I had
> gone back to Taiwan, I would have had to start over again and
> go through the same difficulty I had already gone through with

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passing the National Entrance Exam. I knew as long as I studied hard in the United States, I would be able to make my life different. But it couldn't have happened in Taiwan. So, staying in the U.S. was the only choice for me for success. I cannot imagine what would have happened if I had gone back.

Professional Teacher Identity Transformation

While transitioning from a mainstream practicum student teacher to a professional ESL teacher, Wen-Lin gradually changed her perspectives on the qualifications of a language teacher and shifted her own identity from establishing a fake NES identity to reestablishing her NNES status as a professional identity.

Confidence in Who She Is

Wen-Lin described herself as a quiet, friendly and easy-going person in terms of her personality. When she was in college, because it was difficult for her to connect with others in class, she usually sat in the corner. In particular, she was very aware of her own speech; even now she is very shy in front of strangers. She is always a listener in a group. As a result, most of time, she likes to be by herself.

> In the staff meeting, you will never hear me saying anything because I am the shy one and I just listen. But, I am really OK with that. I don't give my opinion. As Asians we often keep our thoughts in our minds. So, during the break, I just sit in my class and prepare my lesson. I don't like to chat with other colleagues in the lounge.

From Wen-Lin's observation, most American teachers are very active or aggressive. She understands that her American colleagues might think she has never contributed anything because she is always a listener. But for her, it's important to do good work instead of making useless complaints.

But, some first year Caucasians or even student teachers like to

make comments during the team meetings. They just say whatever is on their mind without giving any constructive suggestions. They just complain about little things, but I just keep doing what I can do because complaining does not help in any way. A lot of the time, I think their discussion is really nonsense. They are just arguing over and over to each others' opinions. I think they are not really contributing anything. I am used to just listening. You know, I think the more you talk the more mistakes you make. And, when I want to express my opinion, I want to make sure my opinions are really something valuable and useful to the discussion. A lot times, what they say is really out of nowhere and not going to help what we are talking about.

For Wen-Lin, being quiet and listening to experienced teachers' opinions is another way of learning. As a new teacher, she was very conscious about what she said in group meetings. She did not want to upset the experienced teachers.

Another reason I don't want to share much is that as a first year teacher, I don't feel like I have enough experience to share. And experienced teachers might say my ideas are not useful. Some of my ideas may not be feasible, so I just try to avoid having people think of me as stupid or as someone who says nonsense.

Wen-Lin shared that she often did not argue about whatever work other colleagues gave her. As a result, her colleagues often asked her to do extra things beyond her responsibility. From others' point of view, her colleagues might have been taking advantage of her, but this is the way she developed positive relationships with her colleagues and how she survives in her work environment.

I do whatever I can do. I stay late to help with whatever they ask because I don't know how to say no, especially, to the experienced teachers or to the principal. I just don't say no to them. So, a lot of the time, I end up doing other people's work or end up doing things that are about teaching students who are not ESL students. I feel like I finish my work, and I really don't have any planning to do since I've already finished my preparation. So, I could offer to help or I would just be sitting in my room.

Although Wen-Lin is quiet, she learns quickly. As a listener, she has a clearer mind and figures out what needs to be done in an efficient way. As a result, her colleagues often compliment her and talk about her organized and efficient image:

> And, whatever they say I remember it and follow the procedure and organize everything in my mind, so I can do it quickly and efficiently. Many Americans are not organized at all. I have heard some of them saying I am organized, smart, know what to do, and pick up things quickly. Like I said, I am new but I know what I am supposed to do, but the other new teachers often can not follow the procedure. I know all the paper work and I am able to do the work efficiently, so the teachers on my ESL team often think of me as a smart and responsible person. So this is how I have established my identity at school.

Wen-Lin used to be self-conscious and spent way too much time worrying about what other people thought of her and her speech. As she understands that she is able to do what others cannot do, she realizes she does not need to compare herself to others or worry what others think of her. As she becomes more confident with who she is, she is able to share her own cultural background and learning experience with her ESL students.

Appreciation for Where She Comes From

As a practicum mainstream teacher, Wen-Lin had struggled with making herself sound like a native-speaker. To make herself a "qualified" teacher, Wen-Lin tried to hide her own linguistic and cultural background as well as she possibly could. She seldom talked with her students about her own past.

However, after graduate school, as an ESL teacher, Wen-Lin did not hesitate to show her culture and her identity as an NNES anymore. Wen-Lin started feeling a sense of pride in being an NNES teacher in an ESL classroom. Her pride came from

the fact that she had been properly trained and had experienced learning English as a second language. She did not hesitate to show the unique ways in which, as an ESL teacher, she could help ESL students. Her identity as an NNES made her students feel close to her. She realized that her own identity as an NNES and her experience as an ESL learner could draw her close to her students and motivate her students in learning. As she started perceiving herself in a more positive way, she was able to accept herself more and understand her student's needs better.

> I felt more confident in revealing my cultural background and linguistic identity as an NNES since I became an ESL teacher. Walking through my own experience as an ESL learner, I realized that what ESL learners need was not only 'language' itself. As an ESL learner, I encountered the experience of being shamed, denied, rejected, and misunderstood. So, I realized that as an ESL teacher, it's important to be able to empathize with the student's experiences and help them solve emotional problems. I think the strength of being an NNES is that I can relate to my students and I can share my experience with them. The fact that I had once been in their place as an ESL leaner became a motivation for my students. They learned that what has happened to them in English learning had also happened to me, and they could be successful like me once they listened to my suggestions to solve their problems.

NNES ESL teachers bring to the classroom a unique experience as an ESL learner and as an NNES teacher. Wen-Lin recognizes, and has experienced, how an individual struggles to acquire not just a language but also the process of being accepted. Having been there, she can empathize with her students' struggles and share her stories as well. Indeed, because of her friendly and warm personality, she was often perceived as the one who best understood cultural and linguistic learners. She remembers an ESL student who comes from Ethiopia. In Ethiopian culture, the little girl has to wear a wrap on her head on a certain day. One day the little girl was crying

and wouldn't go into her classroom because she felt she looked different from others because of the wrap. Her mainstream teacher did not know what to do with the little girl. The teacher sent her to Wen-Lin's ESL classroom assuming that since she was an ESL teacher, she should understand an ESL student better. As a novice ESL teacher, Wen-Lin did not know how to deal with the little girl either. However, the experience of being an ESL learner taught her the importance of being accepted. Thus, Wen-Lin just talked to her and told her it was OK to be different. To her surprise, the little girl stopped crying and was willing to go back to her classroom. Her experience identifying with the student really benefited her and the student. She could put herself in the child's shoes.

> It seemed she was really more comfortable with me. By talking to me, she felt better, and she smiled and went back to her classroom. So, the reward of being a teacher is when you know you are capable of solving a student's problem and they trust you. There was a time I was focusing on helping students in reading or academic success. But this accident taught me that it's more important to understand the students' need and build the relationship with them. If they like to talk to you, they will share what they think. To help ESL students overcome their life challenges is more important than pushing them in academic learning.

As Wen-Lin became an ESL teacher, she realized that it is important to reflect upon her own learning experience as a language learner. One of the important lessons she learned from her experience was not to force students to memorize things without meaning. Before Wen-Lin moved to the United States, her mother pushed her to apply to a state university. In order to get into the state university, she needed to take the SAT exam. Thus, one day her mother handed her a SAT vocabulary book and said, "Go ahead, memorize all the vocabulary in the book." She got the book and

went to a library near her house and thought she would make it through. While she was sitting in the library all day long without a break, she started memorizing each word from the first page. She vividly remembers that she felt sick but she kept memorizing each vocabulary word. Indeed, she studied very hard, but after the first day, she only got through two pages. The worst part was that when she returned to the library the next day, everything was gone. After only a couple of days, she shut the book and left the library. She was frustrated at herself without understanding why, and thought she just might not be talented in language.

As she recalled, she realized that, "There was no context for each word I was trying to memorize. So, I didn't know how to use them in sentences. I didn't know what they really meant or how to pronounce them. It was really meaningless to me so eventually I just gave up." Given that in Taiwan English is mainly learned as a school subject for academic grades, one will normally not expect the learner to have developed a high level of communicative competence in English. When Wen-Lin learned English in Taiwan, even though she had tried very hard, English had little relevance to her life. As she came to the U.S., English became a part of her life. From her early language learning experience, she learned the importance of meaning in the learning process.

> One of my strengths as an NNES teacher is that I know what learning strategies and teaching methodologies work better for language learners. From my own experience, I learned that it's important to make a connection between students' life and learning. I would never push my students in memorizing things without giving meaning to learning.

Chapter 5: Kuriko Yayama

As an English Literature major in Japan, Kuriko took courses such as linguistics, literature and education, speaking and listening in English at the university, but no TESOL methodology courses were offered. Not being taught pedagogy in a communicative way, many new teachers lack skills in preparation and are forced to teach English in the same way they were taught as students, relying on more traditional methods and not communicative approaches.

Even though there were a couple of NES professors in the department, they basically taught speaking and listening in English. Because the majority of students were lacking speaking and listening skills, the role of native English speaking (NES) professors was only to facilitate or encourage the students to "open their mouths" in basic conversation, so the depth of discussion was limited. As a top student among 40 students in class, the basic listening and speaking lessons from the NES professors were too easy for Kuriko. As she looked retrospectively over this learning experience, she wished that the NES professors would have challenged her speaking and listening skills by discussing a higher level of thinking in TESOL methodology or educational issues.

In order to improve her language skills before she started her Master's program, Kuriko spent one year studying English at an intensive language institute.

Even with the crown of being the best student in Japan, Kuriko found her English was still very clumsy and had many grammatical errors while she was surrounded by native speakers. With her one-year communicative language learning experience in the native language environment in the United States, Kuriko's English had dramatically improved in terms of speaking and listening. However, her confidence in English and self-image as a proficient language teacher did not improve when she enrolled in an MA-TESOL program; instead, the more she exposed herself to native speakers, the more she found herself deficient in English language.

Kuriko's motives are complex in that the themes she evokes relate both to her personal history, and to the broader themes of language ideology, in particular the ideologies of English that are prevalent in the discourses of language teaching. These themes also relate to her desire to make English "real" by learning with and from other people, and eventually to become a language teacher. In this role Kuriko imagines herself as a dynamic, engaged teacher committed to the role of language learning in promoting communicative language learning. Before Kuriko came to the United States, competence in English was both a "dream" and a "mission."

Influence of Cultural and Linguistic Experiences on Identity

Feminists argue that much of women's learning has to do with women's identity and self-esteem, which refers to the positive or negative evaluations women give to their identities. Identity and self-esteem can be changed. Families, histories, cultures, varying contexts, and life situations can contribute to changes in identity and self-esteem (Flannery, 2000). Self-confidence and self-image are important elements that contribute to a teacher's efficacy in successful teaching. Reves and Medgyes's

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(1994) international survey of 198 NNES and 18 NES English teachers from 10 countries in both EFL and ESL settings shows that 68% of the subjects perceived differences in the teaching practices between NNES and NES language teachers. 182 out of 198 NNES language teachers reported having various language difficulties, with vocabulary and fluency being the most common areas followed by speaking, pronunciation, and listening comprehension. The results further indicate that NNES language teachers' perceptions of differences in language practice between themselves and NES, and their awareness of language difficulties, influences NNES language teachers' self-perception and teaching attitudes. Those NNESs who perceived themselves as qualified teachers were probably confronted with fewer language difficulties in the use of English. Based on the findings, Reves and Medgyes (1994) conclude "the higher the NNESs" proficiency level in English, the less self-conscious, hesitant and insecure they will be" (p. 364), and suggest "exposure to authentic native language environments" and "proficiency-orientated in-service training activities" might improve NNES language teachers" language difficulties.

As I unraveled Kuriko's stories about challenges she encountered as an international student in a TESOL program, I found that the exposure to authentic native language environments might improve NNESs' language proficiency, but not necessarily increase their self-perceptions as a proficient language teacher. Kuriko's self-esteem during her graduate studies was highly related to her self-confidence in language proficiency and how she saw her identities as a Japanese and a non-native speaker. As she began to perceive herself as less language proficient when she enrolled in the TESOL program in the United States, her self-esteem as a language

teacher decreased. Her identity as an English teacher candidate and her ways of knowing were questioned and challenged by her native speaking peers, professors and her self-concept as an NNES. From Kuriko's narratives, I found three major factors that influenced her identity and self-esteem: cultural differences, language proficiency, and expectations.

Cultural Difference

With strong training in English literature in college, Kuriko was very confident with her reading and writing skills in English. Compared to her student peers in Japan, her writing was viewed as superb, and she was often praised as one of the best students in Japan. This confidence, however, was completely destroyed when she first took a writing class in the United States. Her first frustration came from the difference between eastern and western writing styles. Japanese or Asian writing often starts with a lot of descriptions to decorate the writing and to set a background to elaborate on the main focus, which is often stated at the end of entire paper. Kuriko eventually realized there were gaps between what she had learned in Japan and what she needed in the United States. She was shocked that what she had learned in Japan did not work in the United States. The cultural differences that emerged as she saw the difference in writing conventions between Western and Eastern writing styles challenged her identity as an English writer. In order to satisfy the writing style in the west, Kuriko had to shift how she implemented her thoughts in writing. She said:

> I still remember when I first came to the graduate school. I had
> to take an ESOL writing class. I thought I had written a beautiful
> paper, but the ESOL teacher told me "Kuriko, I have no idea
> what you are writing about." She asked me, "Where is the main
> point?" I replied, "Right here," as I pointed to the last sentence

of the entire paper. But the teacher told me I was supposed to write my main point in the first paragraph of my paper. I was really shocked because I had never been taught in that way. So, I had to switch the way I thought, the way I wrote and the way I expressed.

Kuriko was poorly prepared to take part in the active social construction of meaning characteristic of many courses in the United States. One of the factors that limited Kuriko's participation was the tendency of American students to compete with one another for personal attention from the professor. They formed tight-knit groups, interacting extensively with each other in class, chatting and sharing information, and excluding Kuriko. Kuriko could not even hear what the professor had to say, because she was surrounded by the other students' conversations. As a reserved, silent Japanese, Kuriko was unaccustomed to the active participation style of U.S. graduate students who expressed their opinions without being called upon. In Japanese culture, during class discussion there is often a group leader who guides the discussion so everyone can take turns. In particular, many class discussions were centered on the American educational system. For Kuriko, there was no knowledge base for her to understand the discussion or to offer any opinions during the discussion. Kuriko studied hard, spending long hours in the library. Unfortunately, this left little time for talk, although it was good preparation for written work. Writing term papers was difficult, but Kuriko managed well.

> In Japan, when we have group discussion, we always have a discussion leader who leads the discussion. The leader will ask each person's opinion, so everybody will have a chance to talk. Here, you really have to jump. It's like jumping rope. If you don't get in, then you don't exit. Some of my peers were frustrated with me because I did not say things. Most of time, I have to read texts. That's the thing. Sometimes, when I was reading the text and they talked about American schools, I just

could not make a clear vision of what I was reading because my background is Japanese education. I am a very visual learner. When I am reading, then I start seeing pictures. When we have to read some texts, I don't have any vision out of the text, so I could not say anything. That's part of Japanese culture. If you are not sure, don't say it because you might make a mistake. That's a culture. I was very frustrated because no one gave me a chance and I was waiting for someone to call on me.

As Kuriko recounted her initial frustration and disappointment during her graduate study, she said, "I was frustrated by not being able to understand my classmates' discussion, because I did not have background knowledge on the discussion topic that is centered on ESL context in the United States." Her frustration and challenges as an NNES graduate student, not only came from her language problem but also from a lack of background knowledge in the American educational system. The teacher preparation program in which Kuriko was enrolled in the United States focused on the importance of learners of English as a second language and the social and political issues of language learning in the ESL context. Faculty members worked hard to enable their pre-service students to develop teaching abilities in multicultural settings. However, coming from a monocultural background in Japan, Kuriko was also confused in linking her goals as an EFL teacher in Japan with what she learned in graduate school about ESL teachers and teacher professionalism. The gap between Kuriko's background in American classrooms and the topic of the discussions in which she had to participate created more anxiety and insecurity for her.

A lot of the time, I did not understand 100 percent of what the professor or my classmates were talking about. Maybe I only understood 60 percent. I am not sure. Because I did not grow up here and I had never taught here, but everything they discussed in class was related to American students, teachers and

classrooms, I did not have any background knowledge on the American educational system. So, everything I could think of was from the books. That made me very insecure and uncomfortable because most of the graduate students were teachers, and they had many years of teaching experience before they came back for graduate study. So, I had all the peer pressure and felt very inferior.

Many international students come to the United States to learn language pedagogy in order to bring new ideas back to their home country. However, without considering students' needs and career goals, the curriculum design in many U.S. TESOL programs focuses on ESL learning. The gap between curriculum and students' career goals often creates confusion in learning or a negative impact on their identity as learners.

Frankly, they focus here on teaching ESL, but I was really thinking about going back to Japan. So, when I was taking graduate classes, I always had to think what I could do with these new ideas to bring back home. I could not really expect the professors or other colleagues to understand my situation. All the concepts were new to me so I always tried to think how I could modify these new concepts and what I could do with them when I go back to Japan. All problems were in my head, but I did not really share with other colleagues about my situation. I thought this was my own problem.

Language Proficiency

Apart from some cultural misunderstandings and lack of background knowledge in the American educational system, another significant challenge seemed to be linguistic in nature. It can be referred to as the non-native speaker syndrome. Kuriko frequently describes her experience as a struggle, both linguistically and socially through participation in interaction. During this time, her image of her competence in English and of herself as a language teacher were repeatedly

challenged. For the first year she took part in activities of the intensive language program and lived with her host family. A year later, she was entitled to enroll in a regular university graduate course. At no point during this time did she achieve an understanding of the university system that would permit her to become fully engaged and to view her studies as productive and useful. She found the graduate work difficult, too difficult, though she seldom discussed that with her peers.

As a hardworking and eager student, Kuriko found herself completely unprepared for the expectations of graduate study in TESOL in the United States. During the four years of study in Japan toward her bachelor's degree and one year of language study in the United States, she had memorized as many words and as many sentence structures as she could, but she found herself not able to participate in graduate school. First, she admitted that she often heard her own grammatical mistakes in her speech. The awareness of self-correction made her nervous and when she was nervous, she could not hear things. Second, during her undergraduate study in Japan, her spoken language ability in English for seminar settings was almost nonexistent.

Kuriko feels that to various degrees, she lacked the linguistic ability to adequately use vocabulary and idioms to express her thought while speaking. The feeling of being inferior to NES peers in speaking affected her self-confidence. Sometimes it took a while for her to formulate questions and communicate with her peers. For her, the most demanding thing was to make herself understood. As she confessed:

> After one year in language learning in the intensive language institute, I started my master study. I knew that I had solid

grammar skills so my reading was good and writing was okay but my listening skills were still very bad. When I first went to graduate school, I really had a hard time. I particularly had a hard time participating in class discussions because everything was new to me of course.

Kuriko was overwhelmed by the various teaching styles used by professors, by the amount of information presented in class, by the amount of reading to be completed before each class meeting, by the weekly writing assignments and by the outspokenness of her classmates. As a result, she kept quiet and tried to figure out how to carve a niche for herself in a new classroom culture. Kuriko tried to speak up when she was very certain of something, but she eventually failed because she was nervous about making grammatical mistakes. She tried several times to focus on basic concepts in the readings and give her interpretations of the concepts during the class discussion. However, she still felt nervous about speaking up in class, as she noticed slightly unnatural tones in her voice. In particular, she was afraid that her interpretation of the concepts was not correct since she was not familiar with the American educational system and most of the concepts discussed in class were based on the American educational context.

> Thus, during the class discussion, I was not able to fully participate. At that time, I was the only Japanese student in my graduate program, so I could not share my concern and stress with others. I really had a hard time and felt very insecure. I was really stressed out. When I began participating in group discussion, I felt intimidated by my NES peers who spoke English much more fluently than I do so I was very aware of my own speech and tried very hard to speak perfectly. I could hear my own mistakes and that made me nervous. When I got nervous, I could not hear what others were talking. Thus, most of time, I chose being silent. My accent and mistakes in speech made me frustrated and feel like an inferior.

Expectation

Despite her struggles with her language proficiency and self-confidence in graduate school, to her surprise, she got straight A's in her graduate courses. At the end of that semester, after receiving a good grade on the paper, Kuriko asked the professor why she got an A and wanted to know what ranking her grade was among the whole class. The professor told her she had done what she needed to do. The comments did not alleviate her fears as a second language speaker in a class of U.S. students who were accustomed to expressing their opinions loudly and articulately in class.

> I seldom participated in class discussion but I still got an A for the graduate course. That really confused me because I knew I was the only Japanese there. I could not really participate in the discussion groups. I always kept silent and nobody asked my opinion. So, when I received an A, I went to the professor and asked my ranking among the other students. From my own observation, I was not an A student. So, I asked that professor where I was in class even though I got an A. I wanted to know my place among the students. The professor said you did your stuff. If you submitted all homework and presented in class, then you would get an A. That really confused me. I received an A, but I knew I did not participate in class. So, I did not trust the grade I received. The first two years, I was really very depressed and kind of scared.

In Japan, due to the competitive nature of education, every student knows where he or she ranks in terms of test scores in ranking. In Japan, whenever she took a test, she always knew she was a top ten student among 300 students in her school. Thus, for her, receiving an A did not explicitly show her ability among her peers in graduate school. In particular, she knew she always kept silent during the discussion and her professor's response did not convince her she deserved the grade. In Japanese classrooms, students intended to compete with one another for personal achievement

in terms of ranking. By contrast, during her study in the United States, she became a silent student with no tool for competition, and the professor was a distant figure with whom she had no personal contact.

The problem caused Kuriko's self-confidence and self-perception to decrease. Her sense of isolation, not only came from her struggles with language proficiency, but also from the cultural difference between eastern and western society, in which she viewed herself as unable to compete. Peer pressure does not exist in the western society. In the United States, as long as you do your job, most likely, you will get an A. However, in Japan or in Asian countries, there is a lot of competition among students. Different educational systems have different approaches for grading. Kuriko was used to the Japanese grading system; her self-perception as a good student or qualified ESL teacher candidate heavily depended on her comparison to others. As one of the top three Japanese students, Kuriko always knew in what area she was superior to others and in what area she needed work, because professors in Japan usually explicitly give advice on each student's work in a sophisticated percentile ranking scale. She became very depressed and less-confident by comparing herself to her native-speaking peers. The professor's answer did not solve Kuriko's insecurity or boost her confidence.

Even though she had a three-year exposure in the authentic learning environment, one year at an intensive language institute and two years in graduate school, this had not given her any confidence in being a language teacher. Kuriko's particular problem was her linguistic competence and her teaching confidence. However, none of her university professors ever addressed these particular struggles

of NNES students. The professors seemed to imply that as a professional ESL teacher she was meant to be too much like the Caucasian students in the class. They had confidence in their native language and knowledge of the educational system, of which she had neither. For Kuriko, her struggle in English and confidence was her own problem. As a result, she often sat quietly and tried to figure out how to make connections with the class and society in her own way.

Kuriko's educational background in Japan had pushed Kuriko to set a high standard on her performance. The nature of competitive education in Japan had shaped her views of learning as being competitive in nature. She wanted to perform well. She needed to know that she would be given a reward because she worked hard enough and she deserved it. Without valuing her own status as a non-native speaker, she compared herself with her native peers. The more she tried to compete with others, the less she found herself able to succeed. She realized she was not able to compete with her native speakers at all due to her non-nativeness; thus, she became very depressed and insecure about herself while she was in graduate school and thought her dream of becoming a "good language teacher" might not come true. After two years of graduate study in the United States, Kuriko knew her language proficiency was better than local English teachers in Japan, but the teacher preparation program did not give her confidence in language proficiency or teaching ability.

> I think before I came to the United States, my English was better than other Japanese teachers; however, when I was a graduate student in the United States, I realized that my English was not perfect, and it affected my self-confidence. Before I graduated, I was afraid of going back to Japan because English proficiency is a professional skill for an English teacher. When I was a graduate

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student, I took graduate courses but I did not feel I was making progress toward being a language teacher because my English was still not perfect. I took graduate courses, but I did not have any practical teaching experience before my graduation.

Fresh from graduate school, she was honored with a Master's in TESOL and eager for a career in language teaching; however, Kuriko found herself without enough confidence to return to Japan to get a teaching position because many Japanese institutes seek native speaking instructors. Without native-like speech or teaching experience, Kuriko did not dare to find a teaching position in a Japanese school. This story presents us with the absurdity of an educational system that prepares one for a profession for which it disqualifies the person at the same time. Why would an educational system train a student for a job it considers unsuitable by its definition of ideal English instructor?

After I graduated from the university, I was not confident. I did not really see that I had done a good job in graduate school. Then, I felt I had to stay here to gain some teaching experience, so I would know if I could make it or not. Although I was accepted as a graduate student, in my mind, I was not good enough. I was not really confident with my own language proficiency and teaching skills.

Kuriko's original plan after her graduation was to go back to Japan. She never planned on staying in the United States. In particular, as an international student, she thought she had to go back to her country immediately once she lost her student visa status. Since she had never thought about applying for a teaching job in the U.S., she did not go through the student-teaching process for an ESL certificate. Not until the last semester in her graduate studies did Kuriko learn she could officially work in the United States with a practical training visa which extends international student legal status upon graduation. When she heard the news, she thought to herself, "This is a

great opportunity for me to apply what I have learned in the United States." Although

Kuriko's career goal was to go back to Japan, she knew that teaching experience in

the United States would improve her credentials in the Japanese market.

> Before I graduated, I was afraid of going back to Japan because I did not feel I had enough knowledge and skills in teaching language. That's why I decided to teach here. When I started taking classes here, I did not know I could teach here for one year as a student teacher with work permit. I did not have enough information about staying here after a graduation. So, after I knew I could stay here for a year, I decided to stay here for another year. I thought this was a great opportunity for me before going back to Japan.

> Recently, there has been some research done from administrators'

perspectives on the process of, and criteria for, hiring NNESTs for ESL programs.

Researchers have pointed out that program administrators generally prefer hiring

native English speaking teachers to NNESTs because administrators perceive that

ESL students do not want NNESTs as their teachers (Brady & Gulikers, 2004;

Mahboob, 2004). The notion of "non-native speakers need not apply" often limits and

intimidates NNESs' career choices. As an NNES without a teaching certificate and

teaching experience or even student-teaching experience, Kuriko was thinking she

would not even hire herself if she were a principal. Before the interviews, Kuriko

confessed she hardly had any confidence about getting an offer.

> I was very afraid and did not know how to sell myself at all. I hardly remember if I brought anything with me. I had a resume, but I didn't have a portfolio or anything to sell myself. I was not confident with my English and did not even have student-teaching experience. So, I was very suspicious that I would get a job. Who would hire me? I would not hire myself, you know. That was my thought.

She remembers thinking the interview was going to be painfully difficult. To her surprise, the principal she met was very warm and very welcoming. During the interview, the principal loosened up and started talking about her own mission in recruiting a culturally diverse teaching staff for her school, and the tension Kuriko felt seemed to melt away. Thus, after a brief interview, the principal offered a position to Kuriko right away.

> I was surprised that she hired me. That is the kind of loyalty that Japanese or Asian people develop. If you hired me, then I would do everything for you - that type of relationship. So, that's why I worked really, really hard.

Influence of Relationships on Identity

As I asked Kuriko her motivation for becoming an English teacher, Kuriko shared how two English teachers, Ms. Takahashi and Ms. Sato, had touched her heart and inspired her to set a goal of becoming an English teacher. Without these two teachers, Kuriko would have become someone else. Through her stories of learning English with Ms. Takahashi and Ms. Sato, Kuriko revealed how deeply her teaching philosophy has been influenced by these two teachers. She hopes her students will remember her just like she remembers Ms. Takahashi and Ms. Sato.

Inspiration from the Teachers Who Touched her Heart

When Kuriko was in the third grade, she started taking a private English conversation class with a Japanese teacher, Ms. Takahashi. An enthusiastic and warm language teacher, Ms. Takahashi had lived in the United States for many years and moved to Japan to open a private language school. She attracted a small but devoted

group of parents who expected their children to learn English. Kuriko still remembers

that the ways in which Ms. Takahashi taught students were just as an English teacher

should teach. Kuriko really enjoyed the class because there were many hands-on

activities, such as role plays and games, which were new for Japanese kids who were

often told to behave themselves and sit quietly in class. It was Ms. Takahashi who

first inspired Kuriko to become a teacher. I was curious if there was any particular

teaching style or particular teaching feature that impressed her. Kuriko responded that

the major thing was mainly her teaching style but also her many forms of

encouragement.

> I remember that the way she taught was just like an ESL teacher, the way I am teaching now, very hands-on, a lot of role play, connecting it to real stuff and reading American children's book. I was very active in class, but what intrigued me was not only her teaching style but also the future picture that she set out for me. I vividly remember the teacher told me, "Kuriko, if you speak English very well, you can make friends from all over the world." I still remember the words she told me and that really made me think I should be a teacher. If I speak English well, then I can be an English teacher. Since then, I have always wanted to be a teacher. As I think of this experience and look at my life now, I finally realized that I just want to be like her. If I had never taken the class with her, I might have become a different person or had chosen a different career.

When Kuriko was in elementary school, she was very active and liked playing

with boys, so she was not a straight A student. She was more attracted to outdoor

activities than studying. As she moved on to middle school, Kuriko had to stop Ms.

Takahashi's class because she started exploring other interests in sports, such as

badminton and tennis. Kuriko started formal language learning in sixth grade.

Because she had learned English with Ms. Takahashi for four years from third grade

through sixth grade in primary school, English class was really easy to her. The

formal language learning in middle school basically focused on grammar and the structure of the language and did not prepare the students for speaking and listening. Kuriko did not remember any particular exciting learning experience during those years; however, she did remember one of her English teachers, Ms. Sato in middle school, who encouraged her to participate in an English speech contest. Ms. Sato spent extra energy and time to correct Kuriko's pronunciation and train her to perform on the stage. The attention from Ms. Sato and the prize from winning the speech contest inspired Kuriko in study.

> From that experience, I realized studying can be fun. Studying is not too hard, you know, if you try. I liked all the attention on the stage and I got first place. So, this experience gave me a very strong motivation to learn more. Learning English for other Japanese students was not easy, but my success in English speech contest gave me confidence. And then that confidence influenced my learning in other subjects. I thought if I could do this, then of course I should be able to do math or social science. It was just naturally connected to the other subjects. I thought as long as I studied hard, I could do better. My grades went up and I became a straight A student from middle school throughout high school. Without that experience, I might not have been interested in learning in general. That teacher really gave me motivation to learn.

Stepping out of the Japanese Society for Self-discovery

As a daughter from a traditional Japanese family, it was not easy for Kuriko when she decided to come to the U.S., especially when she decided to stay in the U.S. after her graduation. Kuriko shared how her parents had played an important role in her decision to come to the United States. Coming from a male-dominated Japanese family meant Kuriko often needed to fight for her decisions and own life with extra effort to convince her parents what she wanted to do. Her relationship with her parents had pushed her to prove that she was able to accomplish her own goals.

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Kuriko's parents were born after World War II. From Kuriko's description, her father was the smartest one of his siblings, but because he was born into a poor farm family, he did not have a chance to go to college. Her mother was also from a farm family in the countryside. She only finished middle school. Her mother is very talented and active. Although her mother did not have a chance to go to college, she is one of those people who can do anything. Living in a traditional family with two successful parents, Kuriko often felt pressure to be a perfect daughter. Her parents always influenced any decision about what she wanted to do. Kuriko described her mother as a very strong and successful woman. Kuriko felt that she could not meet her mother's expectations. Being a daughter of a strong-willed mother, Kuriko found that she was similar, but at the same time she was hoping she would able to step out from under the protection of her parents and establish her own identity.

> My mother is a nurse, and she is also 60 years old. She also retired last December. She is very… I am more like her, very introverted and loving, love taking care of people. But the difference between us is that she is very straightforward about things. I don't become too harsh with people. I don't know how to… like a certain thing, you know you should tell the people, but I don't say it. My mother would say it. My mother tells people when they do things wrong. Because my mother is a very straightforward and strong-willed person, it's very hard to please her as a daughter. I think that is the reason why I felt I wanted to get out of there. If I want to find out who I am, I need to get out of her… I was kind of in a trap. Recently, I saw myself 10 years ago; I was in the trap of being a good daughter. Because my mother is very strong, I could not kind of express myself to my parents. They told me what was wrong or right. I did not have a lot of time to make any mistakes in front of my parents. I think a lot of Japanese students feel that way to please their mothers. When I think about it right now, that might be one of the reasons I wanted to run away from home and run away from being a great daughter…If your parents are so strong, you want to get away from them.

When Kuriko was a junior in college, she came to the United States for language leaning for one month and she met her host family. The host mother was her ESL teacher at an intensive language institute. Because the host mother had lived in Japan as an English teacher for a couple of years, she realized that many Japanese teachers did not speak English well. When Kuriko told her she wanted to be an English teacher, the host mother told her she should come to the U.S. to get a Master's degree and improve her English. The host mother helped her apply to a couple of graduate schools in the United States.

Kuriko describes her father as a very traditional and typical Japanese male who worked hard and never smiled. The Japanese cultural assumptions about women were for helping their husbands and take good care of their families. Her father did not understand why it was important for Kuriko to travel abroad to become a good English teacher. To respect her parents' authority, Kuriko had to plan her study abroad secretly.

After receiving her master's degree from a Japanese university, she worked as a teacher in an after-school institute. In Japan, the majority of teachers in public schools are female. However, it's not common for a female to work as a teacher in an after-school institute because the teachers often teach classes from 4pm until 10pm. Because of their tense work environment and evening schedule, after-school teachers' salaries are much higher than in public schools. In order to earn enough money to come to the United States, Kuriko placed herself in this male dominated working environment. It was not easy.

> When I got a job as a teacher at the after-school institute, I was
> the only female teacher there. Because it was an after-school

institute, it's not a common job. As a female, you don't even think about going to an after-school institute. If a female wants to be a teacher you would go to public school. For me, that was my choice. My choice was to experience teaching in Japan before I came to the U.S. and also to make money. So, I was the only woman and I was the youngest. Thus, I had to prove to the Japanese teachers and principal that I was able to teach. I remember that I always struggled with my role as a Japanese female there because most of my colleagues were my father's age. It was hard and challenging. I think being a female in Japan is challenging.

Kuriko taught English and other content area subjects from first grade through six, at least five 50-minute classes per day. The smallest class had 50 students. Students had textbooks provided by the institute, and teachers were supposed to follow the standard curriculum designed by the institute. In Japan, she never had a problem professionally as a non-native English teacher because there were not many native speakers around to challenge her. In fact, she was highly regarded as a professional in the institute where she worked. Kuriko's English pronunciation was much better than the majority of local English teachers in Japan. Because she could pronounce English better than other teachers, the principal assigned her several pronunciation, speaking and listening classes. Compared to other Japanese teachers, Kuriko was exceptional in English. She had a sense of confidence and self-esteem as a professional. Although she did not have to struggle with her professional identity, the challenge to her social identity came from the hierarchy in Japanese society. As a young Japanese female, her language proficiency and professionalism did not give her any power in her position. Even though she always felt supported and valued because of her teaching, she felt increasingly uneasy about her position in school.

I just did my best to prove to others. I worked hard in teaching and designing English textbooks within one year. I started

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establishing my teaching status there as I worked very hard. But working with fifty-year-old men in Japan, there was no way for me to advance. Because of the hierarchy, they treated me as if I were a little girl. I had to prepare tea for other teachers. I had to do the housework for them too. Of course, it's not fair, but in Japan, it's the way it is.

Growing up in with these kinds of family relationships in a male-dominant society, Kuriko learned that if she wanted to be successful she had to fight.

For one year, I just kept saving money and communicating with my host parents in the U.S. I worked hard to save money and I did not talk about my plan until I was ready. On New Year's Day in 1995, I sat down with my father and told him about my plan of studying aboard. My father was a very traditional Japanese and he had authority to decide everything in the family, but he couldn't say no to my plan because I had talked to my other family members and everybody was on my side. So, everyone helped me convince my father. Finally, he decided to let me go, but it was really a big deal for him.

However, as Kuriko looked back at her relationship with her parents, she realized it was impossible to ignore how her parents had influenced her personality and identity. She understands the ways she values education and the ways she values her students are influenced by her parents and her culture. Kuriko has proven she is able to accomplish her goals, and her parents are proud of her accomplishments. They not only supported her through words of encouragement, but also by coming to the United States for her graduation. This family support extended her identity as a successful Japanese woman beyond cultural, linguistic and traditional gender boundaries.

As she stepped out from her family circle and her own country, she was able to see herself clearer and started appreciating who she is as a Japanese. She knows what she was given by her parents and her culture is valuable as a mirror when she

looks at herself as a Japanese ESL teacher. What she had learned from her parents and her culture became a unique strength in her teaching.

Finding Self through the Significant One

In addition to her relationship with her parents, her husband has played an important role in shaping Kuriko's self-confidence and identity as an ESL teacher. When Kuriko was a graduate student in the TESOL program, due to her low self-esteem, she often compared her ability with her NES peers and blamed herself for not being able to reach her own expectations. The more she expected herself to be perfect, the more she felt disappointed about herself. While she was struggling in graduate school, she met her American husband whom she describes as the most influential person in changing her perspective about herself. Kuriko first shared that as a Japanese she used to sense things from the context clues and expected others to do the same things. However, from the experience she had interacting with her husband, she learned that Americans often need direct verbal explanations for things. This helped her realize the importance of expressing her own voice. She explains:

> When I got angry or upset, I closed myself. When I was mad, I didn't like to talk for a couple of hours. And, I still remember that when my husband and I were still dating, we talked over the phone. He said something that he shouldn't have said. He is more like… you know, he doesn't think. He just says things that a woman does not want to hear. So, I got upset. As Japanese, just from people's facial expression or tone, we usually know what happened to others when people got upset or angry. So, when I got upset, I did not explain why I was upset and expected others to know why I was upset. However, as an American, my husband had no clue to what happened to me so he was waiting for me to talk to him for three hours over the phone. I thought he should know why I was upset and I had no idea how to open up the conversation. He kept saying that he knew I was mad but if I did not say anything, he would not understand what was in my

mind. And, then, after the three hours of silence, I started thinking of that. That's right. If I had not explained my feelings he would have not understood me.

When Kuriko described how she shifted her identity from an inferior student in graduate school to a more confident professional, she attributed her changes to her husband. Kuriko also described her husband as the person who helped her to find herself, accept who she was and become more confident with herself.

> Because of him, I found who I am. He is the one who told me to relax. I was a more goal-oriented person. He was the one who said, "Think, that if you don't enjoy the present time, then you would not enjoy the future." You know, I used to hold myself to a high standard to be perfect, but he told me I don't have to be perfect. That was really helpful because I always felt I had to be perfect for my parents as a good daughter and for my teachers as a good student, and for my students as a good teacher. So he was the one who helped me melt a little bit and find myself.

When Kuriko was in graduate school, she often thought she was so insignificant and had no ability to change things. She was quite stressed out while studying in graduate school. When Kuriko was struggling with her academic life during graduate school, to encourage her, her husband, who was only dating Kuriko at that time, gave her a children's picture book, *The Little Engine that Could,* by Watty Piper. As Kuriko shared the story about the small train engine that helps a train full of toys get over a pass only because it thinks it can, she told me how it had a strong impact on how she saw herself.

It was this book that helped her think that although she may not be significant and different, she has her own unique way of doing things. As she thinks back on her own teaching, she has proven herself that she really can.

> Although I am Japanese, not born here, I know I can help my students in my own way. So, when I was facing difficulties, I had

to say to myself, "I think I can. I think I can. I think I can" like the little engine did in the story. And, I made it. You know, because we are here as graduate students or ESL teachers we are the smallest people in this society; we felt pressured to be the best. People sometimes do not recognize that. People don't recognize how smart we are because we don't speak English as a first language or because we have accents. We always have to prove to other people, even to ourselves, because sometimes we feel we are not good enough to be ESL teachers. But if you think you can, then you can. This book really changed how I thought of myself.

Professional Teacher Identity Transformation

In Wenger's (1998) ideas of learning through community participation, he proposes that the communities of practice exist because people are engaged in actions. The modes of participation are learned through engagement with others. Wenger uses the term participation to describe the social experience in terms of membership and active involvement in social communities. The concept of participation connotes doing, but not just doing in and of itself. It connects meaning with doing in a social context. In this essence, participation has both its personal and social meanings. For Wenger, identity is, in the biggest sense, the who-we-are that develops in our own minds and in the minds of others as we interact in community with others. Learning, then, is taken to be the same thing as the development of one's identity in community. Our identity includes our ability and our inability to shape the meanings that define our communities and our forms of belonging. The concept of identity serves as a pivot between the individual and the society.

In a similar concept, the notion of work has been recognized as central in shaping teachers' concepts of their profession. Within the concept of school as a "learning organization" (Fullan, 1995), there is an argument that what teachers know

about teaching is largely socially constructed out of the experiences and classrooms from which teachers have come. How teachers actually use their knowledge in classrooms is highly interpretive, socially negotiated, and continually restructured within the classrooms and schools where teachers work. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) also describe teacher knowledge as situated within a school landscape. Their professional knowledge is shaped by the interaction of people and events within the landscape of schools which also shapes teachers' professional identities. Thus, schools and classrooms not only provide physical settings for teachers' work, but also play a major role as a social and cultural context in which teachers grow professionally (Freeman & Johnson, 1998).

As NNES ESL teachers participate in teaching communities, they learn the meaning of practice, which is achieved through a process in which people actively engage with others. It is a complex process that combines doing, talking, thinking, feeling, and belonging. NNES ESL teachers' competence, confidence and a sense of belonging within a community of participation can make them either good or bad at what they do, regardless of how much knowledge they have in their heads about what they are trying to do. In this section, I describe how sociocultural contexts influence Kuriko's identity and how Kuriko shifted her identity in the workplace.

With 6 years of teaching experience, Kuriko seemed to have developed confidence in her teaching and her identity as an NNES ESL teacher. The image of Kuriko that I saw during my data collection did not mesh with the image she described as her experience during graduate school. What was Kuriko's early teaching like? How did her colleagues and students perceive her during her initial

teaching? What challenges did she encounter and how did she cope with the demands and stresses of her teaching load? How did she become a mature ESL teacher?

Fresh from ESL graduate school, Kuriko was excited starting her career as an ESL teacher, but she was still discovering herself, her identity, and style of teaching. She regretted not having had student-teaching experience with a mentor teacher to guide her, or having chances to observe experienced teachers before her initial teaching. Without any teaching experience, Kuriko's first year teaching was extremely difficult. She stayed at school until after 7 or 8 pm every night preparing lessons and materials for the class. Almost without any personal life, Kuriko devoted her time and energy to her teaching.

Kuriko remembers that on the first day of class she was nervous. She had only recently acquired a Master's degree in TESOL, and her English teaching experience in Japan gave her little confidence as she first entered the classroom. It was the first time Kuriko had ever stood up in front of an ESL class and taught. At the beginning, she had numerous things to learn; how to talk with small second grade children without shaking, how to talk to low level students who have little English, how to plan a smooth lesson without holding up the learning process, and how to give instructions and explain new words, not to mention the difficulty that as a non-native speaker she sometimes stumbled in her speech when she was too nervous. She not only had to learn how to be a good language teacher, but also learn how to cope with her own linguistic difficulties and low confidence. Kuriko's initial reactions to teaching ESL class were full of uncertainty and self-doubt. She said this was mainly due to her lack of practicum experience during her graduate study.

During the very first year of my teaching, I did not have any idea what I was doing. I was new to the American system and I did not know about the curriculum well. I was not confident with my own teaching because I had not had any practicum experience during my graduate study. I just worked very hard. I stayed in class until 7pm every night to prepare everything for my students. I was basically learning how to teach from my own kids in class.

Establish a Professional Identity as an NNES Teacher

When Kuriko started teaching, there were not many Asian teachers in the county. Thus, most of the teachers at her school were Caucasians. As a young child, she had loved teaching and wanted to be nowhere else but in a classroom. She often pictured herself experiencing all the struggles and joys of living with a group of learners in class for a ten-month period. However, beginning in her first year of teaching, she heard negative comments from those she met outside the classroom – parents, teachers, administrators – about her presence in the school building. Kuriko could often sense other people's attitude toward her, and wondered how others received her as an ESOL teacher.

During the first year, she was not only facing the challenge of being a first year teacher, but also the challenge of being an NNES teacher. She felt that other teachers did not trust her as a qualified teacher mainly because of her identity as an NNES. As her colleagues frowned, she had to wonder if they were having a bad day, if they were always unfriendly, or if they saw her as an incapable person because of her race and her accent? Facing such a challenge of credibility sometimes leads NNES ESL teachers to doubt their own abilities and wonder if they really are good

enough. This lack of confidence and uncertainty about one's abilities is damaging

because it sometimes stands in the way of NNESs realizing their full potential.

> Most of the teachers at my school were Caucasians. As an Asian, I can sense things. You know, as an Asian, certain things that we don't have to be told explicitly but I can sense their attitude toward me, like eye movement or body language. They sometimes ignored me as though I did not exist. I could sense those teachers did not trust me as an ESL teacher. My motivation was to prove I am a good teacher. Thus, that kind of attitude toward me was a motivation for me. I have to do it. Since I am here, I had to do it and I have to prove it.

Kuriko spent long hours preparing her lessons, and she tried to anticipate her

colleagues' questions or attitudes toward her in questioning her as a legitimate ESOL

teacher. To avoid situations where her Caucasian colleagues saw her making mistakes

in teaching, Kuriko devoted more time to preparing her lessons. She was under

greater pressure in the classroom than her white colleagues. In order to prove she was

capable of being an ESL teacher, Kuriko worked twice as hard as other colleagues.

To break down the negative attitude and bias she had sensed from her Caucasian

colleagues, she had to prove her ability.

For her, as an NNES, particularly as an Asian, she felt she was being labeled.

She understood how if one NNES Asian teacher makes any mistakes, all the negative

impressions of that particular teacher will lead people to draw the conclusion that no

NNES Asian teachers are qualified. Therefore, Kuriko not only worked hard to prove

her ability, but also concerned herself with proving that other Asian ESL teachers'

performance might be as good. To avoid the stereotype, Kuriko was trying to be

cautious about what her American collegues thought about her performance. She

often became mad when an Asian teacher did not work hard enough to build a

positive image of Asians in the school. She shared that there was an Asian ESL

teacher who was very lazy. She took advantage of other teachers and did not do her

duties. This particular Asian teacher influenced other colleagues to think all Asians

were like that and destroyed the good image Kuriko had established. She said:

> We are Asian ESL teachers. We have to work very hard. If I see
> other Asian teachers who are not working hard, that makes me
> really mad. It took three years for us as Asian teachers to prove
> to everybody that we are qualified teachers. Most of the
> American teachers finally accepted us as qualified teachers
> because they knew Asian teachers are hard workers and they do
> their job, and they know what they should do. However, this
> Asian teacher did not do her job and ruined the good image of
> Asian ESL teachers. I was so mad because we had finally started
> building a good relationship with other teachers who speak
> English as a first language. Because we do not speak English as
> a first language, we need to use other criteria to prove our
> ability, such as hard worker. Then, this teacher just came and
> destroyed our image at school. And I heard that some of the
> teachers said she does not speak English as a first language. And
> that statement just automatically went to me as one of the
> categories. That's maybe her personality and some American
> teachers might have the same kind of problem. Because
> Americans speak English as a first language, most people would
> think that's their personality and ignore her. However, we speak
> English as a second language. We are a minority so people
> would generalize a particular incident to a whole group. That's
> the reality here as a minority.

When Kuriko heard the quality of Asian teachers was decreasing in the

counties, it made her really mad because of the racial generalization. Being an Asian,

it was important for Kuriko to reflect positive values and contributions that Asians

can contribute to this multicultural country. She was particularly upset when she

heard the level of teaching quality attributed to Asian ESL teachers represented was

not good. And as a result, some Asian graduate students did not get hired in the

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counties, or didn't receive H1 visas. As an NNES Asian teacher, Kuriko associated

her image of a good teacher with the characteristics of hard workers.

> But for me, as Asians, we have to work together and work hard. If one Asian stops working hard, then he or she would ruin Asian teachers' jobs. That's the way it is here. You know, even though we don't speak English as a first language, we can be good teachers here. But, the reality is that some teachers do not work hard enough to prove their skills to other teachers so others get a negative impression on the image of Asian teachers. We always have to prove ourselves because we are foreigners here. So that's why we have to keep working hard.

In Kuriko's mind, to maintain a good image as an Asian teacher and secure a

teaching position, it's important for all Asians to support each other and make the

group strong. She shared how one of her colleagues took advantage from her because

her colleagues thought Asians are often quiet and do not fight. As she learned from

her experience, she realized that in the American workplace she must express her own

voice:

> Because I think Asian teachers are quiet, we do before we say it. If you say it, you will do it. We are a doer so people take advantage of it. Some teachers take advantage of it. For example, we have three duties, morning duty, lunch duty and dismissal duty. If it's your duty, then you have to go, that's one of our jobs. But, some teachers do not show up. I had a big fight with one teacher who is an American. I told her that you have to be on duty on time. She said you don't tell me what to do… that kind of attitude. Because she thought if she said so, I would not fight back because Asians are usually quiet. But, I guess I was so mad and I knew what I was saying was right. So, I said if you have a problem, let's go to the principal. She did not come to the principal. Since then, she showed up once a while but sometimes she still did not show up. But at least, she knew that I was not afraid of expressing things. I knew that teacher was taking advantage from Asian teachers like me because we are quiet. Because we don't complain and we just do the job. Sometimes, even we were frustrated, we did not express them. I learned that I had to express and complain sometimes. Otherwise, people take advantage out of it.

As an Asian, she has experienced racism. She had resolved to help Asians as best she possibly could. For example, she told me that being a participant in my study, to share her experiences, was one way she could help Asians. As an experienced teacher, she has started thinking about sharing her ideas by participating in conferences or accepting a student teacher.

> Other thing is that we have to share or support. I am thinking about participating in the conference to share my ideas. I have been asked a couple times to give a presentation on teaching English language through arts. My personality is that I cannot really be in two boats because I really focus on teaching on a daily basis so I cannot spend any time to prepare for the conference here and there. That's not my strength. Now, since I am very confident with my own teaching, I would like to participate in a conference, so that I can share my ideas with other teachers. Receiving a student teacher is another way for me to share my ideas.

Becoming a Successful ESL Teacher

Medgyes (1994) posits that NNES teachers are usually known for having experiences that result in unfair and undesirable conditions or syndromes. The first is considered an inferiority complex where these NNESs feel they will never measure up to the linguistic standards that are so valued in their profession, such as native US or UK accents. They are led to believe that their interlanguage, or the knowledge of the L2 they possess, is always inadequate (Cook, 1999). The second condition is a type of schizophrenic attitude they develop because of the pressure to lose their identities while assimilating into the target culture.

However, studies indicate that NNES teachers have many unique strengths in teaching English, such as providing a good learner model for imitation, teaching language learning strategies more effectively, supplying learners with more

information about the English language, anticipating and preventing language difficulties better, and being more empathetic to the needs and problems of learners (Medgyes, 1994; Tang 1997). Tang (1997) posits that NNES teachers can be in a favorable position by being able to predict potential difficulties for the students and to know how to help them learn based on their own language learning experiences. Medgyes (1994) also argues that NNESs can establish their credibility by exploring their own strengths.

Without mentoring support or a model NNES and the lack of teaching experience in an ESL setting, Kuriko had to face a greater challenge than any other novice teacher. In order to meet the high expectations from her colleagues, Kuriko had to work harder than NES teachers in order to prove herself worthy of being in the profession (Thomas, 1999). Mostly, Kuriko taught herself how to teach from her own experiences and mistakes. Language proficiency was always the major issue that affected her confidence as a teacher. After facing challenges and difficulties, Kuriko came to accept that being a non-native English speaker was a given which could not be altered and did not need to be altered. She tried various means to improve her teaching, to gain her colleagues' trust and respect and to establish her own identity as an authority on NNES teachers in front of NES teachers. By learning from her own students, she realized that being a good ESL teacher is more than just teaching a language. Her confidence as an ESL teacher actually came from her own students, not from her language proficiency.

> After I became a language teacher, I learned so much from my students. The energy I have is from my students. They are very innocent. If they don't like the lesson, they will tell you or they sigh. If they are motivated, they will tell you what to do next.

The kids want more from me. I have to provide more activities for them, so I can challenge them. I learned that after three years of teaching.

Kuriko finally realized there is no way a non-native speaker can become a native-speaker. A non-native speaker, though, can be a good language teacher, as long as he or she finds her own strength. Kuriko tried hard to find her own way to teach, and she believed that to be a good teacher, she did not have to follow a native speaker's teaching model. When she analyzed herself, she started valuing her unique Japanese culture as great resources in language teaching.

> I started seeing many good things from my parents and my country I had not appreciated before. I started to see how much I did not know about my country, what we have done. Thus, what I have learned from my parents and my culture becomes a valuable resource for my teaching. For example, last year, while the students were learning math, I taught them how to read the clock in Japanese. I made a giant Japanese clock with Japanese characters, so the kids viewed the clock from a different way. The students all felt fascinated. They were actually not interested in math but interested in Japanese characters. However, in this way, they were learning math concepts unconsciously. I also practice martial arts and I utilize martial arts in lessons while I am teaching English. I think I should utilize everything from my culture to motivate them in learning. Sometimes, I wear a Japanese kimono while I am teaching. Those little surprises really motivate them in learning. And, I also teach how to say hello, goodbye and thank you in Japanese. So, when my parents are visiting me next week, then I can use that as teaching. I already asked my mother to bring her kimono. So, when she comes, both of us will wear kimonos. That's a great pleasure for my students to see.

To find her own way of teaching, Kuriko worked hard and consistently to analyze her own weaknesses and explore her own strengths.

> My weakness at that time, of course, was language proficiency and lack of teaching experience. I was not born here and I did not grow up here. So, those are all negative facts that influenced my teaching confidence. But then I thought about my strengths: I

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can sing, I can dance, I can act, and I can make things. Then, I started to see, oh, I can teach this and I can bring my own strength like artistic skills. Many American teachers do not have those skills. I learned things from my students and adjusted my teaching strategies from them. That's how I gained my confidence from my own strength. You know, we are not going to be American teachers. Our language will always be the issue, but it's OK. You just need to find your strengths.

Kuriko's self-reflection on her own weakness and self-discovery of her own strengths are important because, as Brady (2002) has pointed out, teaching is very much about empathy, and unless teachers see themselves honestly and as others see them, their empathy is likely to be limited. Rather than feeling inferior to NES colleagues, Kuriko gradually realized that her own strengths in arts and her creative way of teaching made her proud to be an NNES ESL teacher. Therefore, she has accepted who she is as a non-native speaker. Kuriko remembered during the first two years of her teaching, her American colleagues did not trust her as a language teacher due to her non-native status. After two years of hard work, she started feeling she was doing the right thing for her ESL students, and her colleagues began to look at her differently. They realized Kuriko had strong artistic skills that indeed help the ESOL students learn the language.

With discovery of her artistic skills in arts, music, and dance, Kuriko gained more confidence in teaching. By using her artistic skills, she created hands-on activities for her ESL learners. Her artistic skills even gave her a leadership position in creating a school-wide project in world peace and friendship. Two years ago, fourth graders were reading about a girl who died because an atomic bomb was dropped on her city, Hiroshima, at the end of World War II. Kuriko's artistic thinking and skills gave her an idea about doing a project for combining language and arts to

promote the concept of world peace and friendship. Combining Japanese culture with language learning, she proposed a project of teaching all the fourth graders to make paper cranes, which represent peace in Japanese culture. Thus, while the fourth grade students made paper cranes, they discussed what happened during World War II. Kuriko says she is a very opened-minded person. Unlike traditional Japanese, she is willing to accept her own mistakes and to make things different. This is part of her philosophy in teaching that has helped her succeed.

> OK, as Japanese, we made a mistake and we made a lot of enemies. To me, I don't have to protect myself as Japanese. Some politicians do not apologize. To me, we made a mistake, so we must learn from the mistakes. That's what I taught my students.

To connect learning with the real world and to encourage the students in learning, Kuriko told the students that when they had made a hundred paper cranes, she would take the cranes back to Japan and put them next to the statue of the little girl. Thus, after the children completed their cranes, Kuriko and her husband took them back to Japan. Kuriko told a Japanese news reporter interested in Kuriko's project that her students in the United States had read an article about the little girl and made a hundred paper cranes for world peace. Kuriko and her husband also made a 10–minute movie out of the event which focused on the laying of the cranes near the statue, and they showed the movie to her students. The year after, Kuriko received a thank-you letter from the Mayor of Hiroshima. This project became the most popular topic among the students for a whole year. The students all became engaged in the little girl's story, and learned about world peace.

> For them, oh my goodness, it was really a fun project. The students were so interested in making paper cranes and they

really wanted to work for world peace. So, then next year, which was last year, we made another six hundred paper cranes all together. I taught 26 classes from kindergarten to the sixth grade. And then, I told them we are supposed to make one thousand this time. Once we make a thousand, I will take them back to Japan again. Some of the kids were still talking about this project. So, they keep asking when I am going back to Japan. That's the lesson I can give them. Learning can be so real for them.

From the students' response, Kuriko knows that she has done a great thing for the students and realizes that she can be an outstanding and successful teacher because she has found her own strength and extended that strength into her teaching.

To be a good ESL teacher, Kuriko does not limit herself to the standard of a good "language teacher." She remembers during her first year, she was told that as an ESL teacher, she had to focus on oral language teaching, while leaving reading and writing for the mainstream teachers as their responsibility. However, from her own observations, she saw how being an ESL teacher meant she must incorporate not only every skill, but also more basic and essential lessons into her classroom. Particularly because many ESL students come from impoverished families, they need more than language learning. For Kuriko, to be a good teacher is to be able to "touch students' hearts," just like Ms. Takahashi and Ms. Sato did.

> For me, to be a good teacher means I want my students to remember me after 10 or 15 years. I want my students to remember me as a teacher who touched their hearts. So, that's one of my goals to be a good teacher.

It was these kinds of learning experiences with Ms. Takahashi and Ms. Sato that pushed Kuriko to be a good teacher. The more she cared about her students, the more she found she gained confidence from them. Students' learning progress and feedback proved that her teaching was valuable. She finally realized that language

proficiency was not the only criteria for good teaching. Her hard work and dignity had proven that being a successful ESL teacher was a tough, but rewarding job. She felt she gained more confidence as she actually taught more and received feedback from her students. Her hard work has paid off as she senses her students' progress and hears the students say, "Ms. Yayama, I like your lesson."

Kuriko only remembers two or three out of a hundred teachers in her life, but she knows those teachers had the most powerful impact on who she has become. Thus, she not only has been trying hard to teach English language itself, but also teach life experience. Whenever new comers enter her class, they always remind her of herself when she first came to the U.S. Although she understands these students need to take risks and to make effort to adapt themselves effectively to U.S. culture, she encourages them and their parents to value and maintain their own culture, so they can respect themselves as cultural beings. She shared one story to show how her hard work has become rewarding for her.

> I have a particular story about a girl who was from Africa. She was in the second grade when I taught her. She basically only knew how to write her name when she was in the second grade. She did not speak and her parents apparently were not well educated. I did my best to help her and to make learning more meaningful for her life. When I taught math, I opened a store and tried to make the lesson more meaningful to the kids. Then, last year, one of my friends who was teaching in the middle school told me that one child in her class told her she knows Ms. Yayama. I thought it's impossible because all my students that I had ever taught were still in the fifth grade. Then, I found out that girl was actually older than the second graders when she was in my second grade class. So, after she acquired language skills, she had to jump to upper grades. She told my friend, "I know Ms. Yayama who is from Japan. She is the teacher who really cared about me, and I still remember her as my favorite teacher." That made me cry because that's what I want. When I heard that girl said she remembered me, I knew what I had done

was valuable for her and that really gave me confidence for what I was doing.

Her experiences with Ms. Takashi who opened her mind and helped set up her future, and Ms. Sato who recognized her linguistic strengths and helped her develop further have become her teaching philosophy. As Kuriko looks at herself, she uses a bridge builder as a metaphor to describe her role.

> As an ESL teacher, in my mind, each student brings different types of bridges. Some bridges are made of wood, and some bridges are made of metal. Some bridges are falling apart and some bridges need to be polished. Each child is different. My role as an ESL teacher is like an artist and architect. I have to fix those bridges or fill in those spots. When they leave my room, they can cross that bridge and move to the next level. So, that's how I feel. I feel I am an artist and architect to help them go to the next level, the next step.

A New Identity as an NNES Mentor

After several years teaching in an ESL classroom, Kuriko heard that some teachers described her as a creative, effective and artistic teacher. Ironically, her identity as an NNES is now valued by other teachers who view her as a good role model for ESL learners. Kuriko had been asked to be a mentor teacher many times, but she had not accepted the position, until just before I interviewed her. After hearing the same positive comments for many years, she began to become confident about these comments.

> I was asked to have a student teacher a couple of times before, but to me, I wanted to ensure I was good enough to share ideas with other teachers to be a good mentor. I have a lot of ideas, but I am not sure…. Even though other teachers always said that, "You are great. You have this and that..." But I was not sure because if I didn't have 90% confidence, then I wouldn't have done it. I wanted to be very confident to be a mentor. To me,

being a mentor is to be responsible for that intern, and I have to touch that person's heart.

For the first time, after six years of teaching, she finally accepted an intern. Although she had a mentor teacher during her first year of teaching, she had never physically been an intern in the mentor teacher's class. She was responsible for her own 40 kids in class all by herself since the first day of teaching. Thus, she had to deal with numerous problems all by herself. How would an NNES student teacher benefit from being mentored by an NNES mentor teacher? I wondered. Kuriko chimed in before I completed the question:

As an NNES mentor teacher, I know the NNES student teacher not only needs to deal with classroom management and teaching styles like a general teacher needs to go through, but they also need to face their psychological confidence and identity in their cultural, linguistic identity as an NNES.

The conversation moved to Kuriko's mentoring. Kuriko confessed there is a difference between NNES and NES in terms of teaching and mentoring style and strategies. I asked, "Do you think that NES mentor differently for an NNES student teacher?" Kuriko responded without any hesitation in her tone.

Yes, I think so. As an NNES, I know what the NNES student teacher will be going through and what support the NNES student teacher should receive. The NES mentor teacher might focus on teaching technique and classroom management and might not understand what mental and psychological difficulties an NNES student teacher will encounter.

How has Kuriko's own experience as an NNES contributed to her mentorship? What's her mentorship style? What did she expect from her intern? How did she encourage her NNES intern? How did she look at her intern's language proficiency?

Of course, to keep the quality of being a language teacher, you have to keep a certain level of language proficiency. You have to know the English language, right? You have to understand grammar features and phonics. But, self-acceptance is very important. The key point is to accept yourself. We have to accept ourselves. I want to say to all ESL teachers who don't have English as a first language that it's OK if you don't speak perfectly, you still can be a good teacher. In order to be a good teacher, you have to find your own strengths and analyze your weaknesses. We have to work twice as much as American teachers, because we already have this bag to carry as non-native speakers.

Chapter 6: Xuen Zhang

After 15 years as an assistant professor at one of the most reputable Chinese universities, when most professors in China could just sit back and watch their seniority grow, Xuen decided to come to the United States. She came to the United States because of her compulsion to create herself anew in a context where her social options were broadened. Her choice of the United States, influenced by language mythologies, was a bid for success in a life of language teaching refinement. Her story helps to elucidate the importance of personal history, imagination, and desire in learning and teaching. Her story also brings into focus the significance of access to social networks, or the marginality within such networks, in the process of negotiating and (re)constructing a coherent and satisfying identity.

Influence of Cultural and Linguistic Experiences on Identity

Before Xuen came to the United States, she had never been to any other country, but she had dreamed about teaching abroad someday and as a result change the direction of her life as a teacher. In order to take part in the international English teaching community, Xuen participated in international TESOL conferences for years. After her divorce in 2000, Xuen decided to make a definitive change in her life. In 2001, Xuen boarded a U.S. aircraft to Salt Lake City carrying her suitcase and her

resume. The 24-hour flight was her time for transition from one world to another, from her hometown in China to an unknown world, America. She reflected upon her daily life as a daughter, a mother, a wife and the thousands of days with college students as an English teacher and textbook writer. She stepped off the aircraft in Salt Lake City and into another world. In her mind, she felt totally different and was hoping this new world would give her a new future. Xuen's story portrays a happy immigrant, hungry for a place to improve her language teaching, who welcomed the educational and linguistic challenge offered by public schools.

> It was not usual for someone like me who only held a bachelor's degree, to be promoted as an assistant professor at the university. I was proud of myself as an assistant professor in English Department, but I was not satisfied with the routine teaching life in China. I had taught English in college for 15 years, but I always wondered what happened in another world and how teachers in an English speaking country teach English. Thus, I always had a dream to challenge myself by teaching English in an English speaking country.

Near the end of the decade of her experience teaching EFL in a college in China, she traveled to the United States in search of jobs, and she was very confident with her proficiency in English. Xuen remembered how excited she was to be finally attending to a conference in Utah where she had been able to set up her first job interviews in the U.S., eager to learn what the interviews could offer her. However, from the beginning there were many occasions when she felt very awkward and thought she was incompetent in certain situations.

For example, when she first arrived at the airport in Salt Lake City, she realized she was almost late for her first interview. Thus, she took a cab to the convention center and ran directly to the registration center for her badge. As soon as

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she reached the registration area, she saw many people were gathered there. Luckily, she thought, there was no one waiting right in front of the registration booth, so she ran directly to the booth bypassing an American lady. She immediately heard that lady shout loudly in a very angry tone behind her, "Excuse me, young lady, stay in the line." Xuen did not know that in a western society, there are often designated lines with a space between patrons and the registration booth. Thus, she was confused at first. When she finally noticed a red line in front of the lady, she finally realized that people behind her were all in lines for registration. She was rather embarrassed and did not know how to react. Her identity as an experienced assistant professor in no way helped her with this little cultural encounter. She recalled:

> She looked at me as if I was an uneducated person. So, I felt very embarrassed. In China, there was no such a rule. There is no space between the receptionist and the clients. So, when I saw a huge space in front of the receptionist I was assuming that no one was waiting. I had never traveled in another country before, so I had no idea about the western society system. From that moment, I knew living in a new country was going to be hard, but I decided to take the risk.

During the four day conference, Xuen went through three interviews. Within a month, right after returning to China, she received three acceptance letters from the conference interviews - two graduate study admissions and one ESL teaching position. With consideration of her financial situation, she decided to take the ESL teaching offer.

Xuen did not seem to feel particularly disadvantaged as other English teachers were in China. However, life as a teacher in the ESL context has challenged her professionally and personally. She has always felt like a learner here because there were so many obstacles she needed to solve. There might be cultural aspects she did

not understand, administrative procedures she did not know how to follow, students'challenges to her credibility, or her personal life in a new country. Challenges that surfaced in Xuen's narratives during her first year of teaching can be classified into three areas: teacher credibility, pedagogical and methodological issues, and teacher/student relationship.

Teaching Credibility

At 16, Xuen enrolled in a regional teacher's college where students financed their education in entirety through government-based financial support. At this time, she began college-level language study, enrolling in two sequential introductory English teaching courses.

Fresh from a four-year English teaching training at the teacher's college, full of enthusiasm for her career, she was put in a remote village more than a day's journey from her hometown. In China, within a heavily bureaucratic educational system, it was not common for someone to be hired just after graduation from a college and put to work straight away as a college instructor. Xuen though, because of her outstanding performance in college, was hired as a teacher of English at a college level without a Master's degree.

Xuen remembers the first challenge she encountered as a first year teacher in China. She did not remember what the exact details were, but she remembered she had a confrontation with one of her college students in class. The student questioned her teaching ability due to her low academic credentials and lack of teaching experience.

Xuen vividly remembered that the student yelled at her in front of other students in class. Because she was a first year teacher, she did not know how to respond and felt very embarrassed and frustrated. However, this event gave Xuen motivation to prove to herself and the students that she would be one of the best English teachers in China, and she knew she had to improve her English and teaching skills. Therefore, after one year of teaching, she went back to graduate school for a year, taking linguistics and language pedagogy courses to improve her credentials.

After the one-year advanced teacher training program, Xuen went back to the college at which she formerly taught. It happened that there were two foreign English teachers teaching at the same college. In order to improve her pronunciation and other oral language skills, Xuen visited one of the foreign English teachers for oral communication every day for a year. This private, face-to-face interaction dramatically enhanced Xuen's oral language skills.

> I was eager to improve my English, so that my students would respect me more. Thus, I visited one of the foreign professors at my department every night after school for a year. At that time, both of us were single. She was lonely because she was in China alone. So, after dinner, I would go to her place and chat with her. We just talked and chatted. She also wanted to learn about Chinese culture so I visited her every single night without any stop. After one year of visiting, we became friends and my oral English improved a lot.

The opportunity of having daily conversation with a native English professor not only improved her language proficiency, but also boosted Xuen's self-confidence in language and teaching.

> Daily conversations with her in person really helped my oral English and that's why my oral language was much better than anyone else in my department. Especially I had never studied English in an English speaking county. I am proud of my oral

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English. Really, I am not trying to boast about myself or something. I could not find any of my classmates back in China who could speak English like me at that time.

Xuen's professional competence as an English teacher was put into question again when she first taught in the middle school despite her 15 years English teaching experience in China. In order to receive a teaching certificate in the U.S., she was required to take several courses. In addition, within her first two years of teaching in the United States, she had to pass the PRAXIS exam, which includes three components: listening, writing and mathematics. For her, the listening and writing parts were easy, but the mathematics part was challenging. Given that she had not reviewed mathematics since graduating from high school, she felt it was difficult to prepare for the mathematics. In order to pass the PRAXIS exam and to be an official qualified teacher, Xuen spent most of her time in preparing for the test. Back home, she was somebody who was respected as a promising professor at a university. Here she was a nobody struggling to pass a mathematics test to get a job in middle school.

> I had taught English in college for 15 years. So, I was very confident with my knowledge of English and teaching strategies. In China, I never had a problem professionally even though I was one of the few teachers who taught in college with only a bachelor's degree. In fact, I was highly regarded as a professional in school and I had published one book, entitled, "How to Write in English," before I came to the Untied States. However, I was rather frustrated that my teaching credibility seemed to be challenged by the official testing procedure in the United States.

As a middle school ESL teacher, her first challenge was that not only did she have to relearn language pedagogy in an ESL setting in the U.S., which is different from an EFL setting in China, but she also had to adapt to teaching multiple subjects to middle school students. In particular, teaching in a new country, she was not familiar with the

educational system in the United States. Xuen remembered that it was extremely difficult for her to understand all the administrative procedures as an ESL teacher during her first year. Without a supportive system for international teachers, Xuen often had to figure out the procedures all by herself. With her identity as an experienced teacher with 15 years behind her, it was even more difficult for Xuen to ask some basic questions. For example, Xuen laughed at herself and said, "It took me a year to figure out what A day and B day meant!" Xuen did not know that in middle school, some courses are only taught on alternative days: A day is for Social Studies and B day for Science. Behavior patterns that were known by others in the U.S. presented new concepts for her. The problem was that the contrast of U.S. culture to her own overshadowed her excellent linguistic abilities. The beliefs, values, and norms that governed her behavior in China no longer seemed to function well for her in this new environment.

The challenges that Xuen faced as a foreigner stemmed not only from the system itself, but also from the personalities and expectations of her non-native students. Displaying confidence in front of students is an issue with which all teachers wrestle. This is true not only for novice teachers, but for all teachers throughout their careers. It is undeniable that NNES teachers experience this lack of confidence even more acutely, often feeling that students do not respect their credibility as a language teacher. In China, Xuen was considered one of the few English teachers in the field who were able to speak fluent and correct English. However, due to her Asian appearance and Asian accent, certain students often challenged her and tested her sense of confidence about her pronunciation.

> Due to my Asian appearance, many of my students did not trust
> me as a qualified ESL teacher. Some of my students often

questioned my pronunciation, and I felt that my students did not
respect me as a language teacher at all due to my Chinese accent.
The students often asked me in a doubtful tone, "Ms. Zhang, are
you sure that you pronounced the word correctly?"

Xuen's credibility in teaching was challenged by the issues of race, language

and assumptions about language teachers, not her ability to teach. Her story is similar

to Thomas' (1999) narratives, as he was disappointed when his non-native students in

an intensive English program made comments about his teaching, "You know when I

saw you enter the class on the first day, I was disappointed. I had spent a lot of money

to come to the United States and I was hoping to get a native speaker to teach the

class. When I first saw you, I felt certain I wouldn't like your class" (p. 8). Students'

assumptions about good language teachers are directly related to racial appearance.

Both Thomas's and Xuen's students did not even give them a chance to speak or

teach, their conclusion about liking English teachers or not was initially determined

by their impression of the person's racial and linguistic features.

Pedagogical and Methodological Issues

In this section, Xuen's narratives illustrate how her educational experience in

China and her resulting strongly held beliefs about the teaching and learning process,

as well as how those beliefs created an identity, conflict with her identity as an ESL

teacher in the United States. Although Xuen had 15 years of teaching in China, the

classroom and the students in the United States were new to her. She started

understanding how her teaching style arose out of the experience she had as a student.

Back in China, language knowledge and teaching strategies were very

important criteria for a teacher to master in order to gain students' trust. When Xuen

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was learning English in college, being taught by a non-native speaker or native speaker did not seem to bother her. From her perspective, there were advantages as well as disadvantages in having a native speaker or a non-native speaker as an English teacher. In terms of knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, non-native teachers seemed to be better than native speakers as teachers. She respected her teachers as long as they were able to demonstrate their knowledge and skillful teaching technique. She vividly remembers two of her favored professors whom she respected because of their pronunciation, linguistic knowledge and teaching strategies which were, for her, the three most important criteria for a good language teacher.

> When I was a student in China, I really respected two English teachers. One was a female Chinese professor. Her pronunciation was very good. When she started teaching me, I knew I wanted to learn her intonation and pronunciation. The second one was a male professor. His pronunciation and intonation were not that good, but he was very knowledgeable. Because he was very knowledgeable, I didn't care much about his pronunciation. He was just like a dictionary, and he could use a higher level of vocabulary. This male professor just knew so many things. I liked his class because when the class was talking about one topic, he could address different aspects of this particular topic. He also could relate other content area knowledge to our discussion. Thus, as a good English teacher, your pronunciation must be very good, and you should be knowledgeable in English and teaching.

As a language student, Xuen expected her teachers to be people who were knowledgeable enough to be able to answer all her questions. As a language teacher, she had tried to be a perfect teacher who was able to demonstrate her knowledge and utilize effective teaching strategies to help students learn the language. However, Xuen found that these criteria did not manifest in the same way in an American classroom. The gaps between her teaching experience in college in China and her first

teaching experience in middle school created a lot of personal conflict about her

beliefs in language learning and teaching. She was shocked that the class did not go

as she expected. The students did not respect her as she had respected her teachers.

She found that knowledge and teaching strategies were not a major concern for her

students in the ESL classroom.

Xuen was often proud of her solid background in English literature. But a

couple of months into the first quarter in middle school, she realized the literature

background she had was too much for teaching ESL children, and did not help her

deal with the new teaching environment. When she physically left the Chinese world

behind, she carried her teaching experiences and credentials as stuffy, old artifacts

with her. As a result she was not able to function perfectly in this new society. These

experiences and artifacts connect to countless stories coming from her life in China

and constituted her work identity.

> To be a good teacher in China and to be a good teacher in the
> U.S. is kind of different. I was an English teacher in college back
> in China, but I started my first teaching career in the United
> States as a middle school teacher. In China, to be a good teacher
> or a good language teacher, you have to be very good at
> academic knowledge. Your student will respect you if you can
> demonstrate your knowledge. ESL students in the United States
> need more than academic knowledge from the teacher.

Xuen not only had been taught, but also taught English, using grammar

transition methodology, an approach requiring teacher-centered classroom activities.

The more communicative language teaching approach in the U.S. context demanded

more student-centered activities. In particular, the language learning methodology in

an ESL setting heavily emphasizes elicitation, and Xuen found it a constant challenge

to elicit information from her students. Instead, she kept falling back on teacher-

delivered information, an approach she was accustomed to. In the following narrative, she struggles to accept the value in eliciting information from the students.

> I think many ESL teachers in the United States are good at leading the class in a very active and communicative way. From my observation, I found many teachers kept on emphasizing the importance of students' responses, so that the students would have more chances to participate in the class activity. By allowing the students to have the opportunity to speak out, they would concentrate more on the lesson and would not feel like they were only getting input from the teacher. However, it was somewhat difficult for me during the first couple of years to perceive this. I spent much time participating in different workshops and conferences to learn such an approach. I had to relearn the way I learned and the way I taught English.

Yet Xuen does not completely agree with student-centered activity. For her, student-centered activity gives students too much freedom which causes students to behave poorly and take time away from learning structural information from the instructor. In the following comparison, Xuen believes the less structured learning environment makes teaching and learning more difficult and sees the value of her structured approach in this less structured environment and how it could be used.

> In China, teachers were supposed to write everything, such as grammatical structures and sentence patterns, on the blackboard and students would write down everything in their notebooks. Here, students never write anything in their notebooks. How can they review the lesson they have learned in class at home without any notes? Students in the United States do not have a sense of responsibility in their own learning. Teachers are often blamed for students' failure.

Teacher/Student Relationship

There is a Chinese saying, "Respect your teacher like a father, even if he or she only teaches you one day." This Chinese philosophy taught her that teachers have the authority of a father, and fathers in Confucian society are like gods. As a result,

she learned to follow whatever the teacher asked her to do. This is evident in the fact that Xuen's career was determined not by herself, but by her English teacher in high school. Learning English in China was a lonely enterprise. English was not a particularly interesting subject for Xuen; however, there was one significant event in Xuen's early learning experience that led her to be an English teacher: Xuen's high school English teacher wanted her to become an English major.

When Xuen was in high school, she was one of the top five students. In general, she had very good grades in each content subject, but she was particularly good at math and English. In China, high school students must decide their major in college before they take the National Entrance Exam for college. Due to the competitive nature of the educational system, an instructor's reputation would increase if his or her students had higher scores on the National Entrance Exam. Therefore, as one of the top five students, Xuen's English teacher wanted her to major in English, but her math teacher wanted her to major in math. To respect both teachers, Xuen did not dare to make her own decision about her future academic career. One day she found that her future had already been decided:

> One day, when I went into my classroom, I found that my desk and chair had been moved to my English teacher's classroom. My English teacher told me, "From now on, you don't have to worry about math. All you have to do is prepare in English, so that you can major in English in college." I was kind of surprised, but I accepted what my teacher asked me to do.

Even though Xuen was good in English, her ability in English and as an English major student was not validated until she passed the oral test on the National Entrance Exam for college. Xuen remembers that the professors who tested her oral language during the National Entrance Exam were all impressed with her fluency.

They gave her extremely positive comments on her oral proficiency, which made her feel secure enough to explore her future as an English major student.

When Xuen was a student, she respected whatever her teachers expected her to do. She seldom took risks to challenge her teachers' knowledge or teaching credibility. For example, there was an English teacher in her college who was famous for her inflexible teaching style and old-fashioned English language knowledge. Often, Xuen noticed the teacher did not present correct information about what she was teaching. Several times, Xuen had to use a dictionary or other resources to reconfirm or correct what she learned from the teacher. Xuen often proved that the teacher was wrong, but she did not dare to correct the teacher. As a well-behaved student, she learned she must respect her teachers and not challenge their authority.

> In my generation, we never argued with teachers about what we learned. We did not fight for what kind of materials or teaching strategies we liked. We did not speak out loud even when we did not like the class or the teachers. We learned that as students, we had to respect teachers and follow whatever the teachers offered to us.

In turn, when she became a teacher, she had the same expectation from her students. These kinds of expectations created challenges for Xuen's relationship with her students in the United States. During the first two years of teaching in the United States, what seemed to be most challenging to Xuen was not her language proficiency as an NNES ESL teacher, but the gap between her understanding of American culture and her expectations about ESL students. Although Xuen had taught English to college students in EFL settings for 15 years, she had no experience teaching English in an ESL setting. Whatever was contradictory to her expectations always seemed to be a shock to her. For instance, Xuen expected her students to be quiet in class to

show respect toward her, but she found that her students constantly talked with others while she was teaching, and she felt offended but did not know what to do.

Xuen felt extremely offended and uncomfortable when her students often stood up and walked around the room or sharpened pencils without asking her permission. In Chinese culture, this behavior is not acceptable because it is perceived as disrespectful to the teacher. Here in the United States, nobody in class seemed to care. Pragmatic incompetence apart, her lack of cultural experience on many occasions aggravated her frustration in her new career. She found that what she knew did not help her solve students' behavior problems. She often felt confused:

> I thought the students should respect me as long as I played a good role in teaching and helping them learn the language. However, I found that the students in the United States were so different from the ones in China. The students have too much freedom here. They can do whatever they want to do in class without any respect to the teacher.

In China, she never had to worry about behavior problems because every student in China was well-disciplined and respected teachers. During her first quarter of teaching, Xuen used strict disciplinary measures and set classroom rules which she expected everyone to follow. Her rules were posted in the center of the classroom: "(1) No talking during the class while the instructor is teaching. (2) Ask permission if you need to do anything other than class work. (3) Turn homework in on time without any excuse. (4) Sit at an assigned seat unless the instructor reassigns you." For Xuen, there was no excuse for the student not to follow her rules.

She was very rigid and really tough during the first year teaching. If a student broke her classroom rules, she would send them to the Student Service Center immediately without giving them a second chance. However, Xuen found that the

students in the United States did not buy into her authority at all. Instead, she had to adjust her interpersonal skills within her teaching style and establish a respectful relationship with her students. This was the most important lesson she learned during her first year. The middle school students in the United States expected her to be their friend. The teacher-as-father model did not work in the United States. As she shared how she re-created her image as a teacher, she looked pensive. She recalled that, "Establishing my authority as a teacher did not work for them at all. Instead, my rigorous personality created more problems between my students and me. My students did not like me and did not like my class." She continued:

> In the United States, students have too much freedom. So, they expect to have fun in class and expect teachers to be their friends. Some of them didn't like to be in my class because I have high standards in language learning and rigid discipline in classroom management. They thought I was expecting perfection from them, so they felt pressured being in my class.

On one occasion, one of her students was not satisfied with the grade and demanded Xuen to change the grade right away. Although Xuen avoided the confrontation in class, she felt insulted and ignored the student's demand. As a result, the student complained to the principal and said the students were having a difficult time understanding Xuen's teaching. Thus, the principal called her and arranged a classroom observation with her. Although she was nervous and anxious about the principal's observations, she believed her knowledge in teaching and her confidence in teaching would win the challenge. In fact, the principal was very satisfied with her teaching. Although she won the principal's trust in her teaching, she realized that although knowledge in language teaching is important, classroom management and

the skills used in interacting with students are more important in order to gain their

trust. She realized that:

> To be a good ESL teacher, first you have to know about the
> students and care about them. The kids love you only if you care
> about them no matter what your academic background is.
> Second, you must make the class interesting. I think one of the
> problems in the U.S. education is that the kids have too much
> freedom, especially in middle school. As a teacher, I have to try
> my best to keep my students focused in class, which is a big
> challenge. If you don't make your class interesting, everyone
> will be talking, sleeping, and walking, or doing whatever they
> like.

Influence of Relationships on Identity

The relational view of women's identity is built on the notion that women

develop and gain a sense of identity in a context of connections with others rather

than through individuation and separation from others. In this model, women's sense

of self is organized around building and maintaining relationships (Flannery, 2000).

There has been a significant amount of literature in the past suggesting that

connection, in some form, is integral to women's learning. Much literature has

focused on how women rely on interactions and relationships with others in their

learning. For example, Gilligan (1982) found that women saw a world that was

composed of relationships. In her theory, a woman's self is delineated through

connection with others.

Miller (1986) portrays women's sense of self as organized around making and

maintaining affiliations and relationship with others. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger,

and Tarule (1986) have also developed the notion of "ways of knowing in

connection" in *Women's Ways of Knowing*. The authors discuss how women learn

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through interactions in relationships with others. Being an ESL teacher involves much more than teaching classes. Xuen's narratives reveal that becoming and being a teacher involves connections with self and other people. These relationships with others include a range of student peers, students, colleagues, students' parents and family members.

In my conversations with Xuen, I found that who she was had to do with whom she was connected and why, and what those people valued and the things they talked about. Our family is our first community where we learn to see the world and understand our relationship to it. It provides an entry into society and sets an initial framework in which children develop identities. I found interaction with family members, in particular with Xuen's grandmother, played a significant role in how she saw herself, and had an enormous impact on her life. In other words, the relationship with her grandmother was reflected in the decisions she made and the experiences she had as she constructed who she is and who she wanted to be as a teacher.

As Xuen shared some of her remembrances of family history as it relates to who she has become, I learned how her grandmother played an important role in her life. "I don't have many things to say about my parents and siblings during my childhood, but I always remember my grandmother." Xuen shared that her grandmother, who helped raise her, had years of traveling experience with Xuen's great-grandfather who was a ferryman. Having grown up meeting different people and listening to different stories along the way, Xuen's grandmother developed an open-minded character. For Xuen, her grandmother's home was a refuge - a place of great natural beauty where she could enjoy stability, peace and tranquility. Although

her grandmother did not actively encourage her to consider becoming a teacher, she was nonetheless instrumental in her decision to go forward with that future goal, despite the fact she had no financial means and little moral support from the rest of her family.

A Childhood Memory

It was after World War II, right after Xuen was born, when her father was exiled to a borderland due to the intimidation of intellectuals that went on during the Cultural Revolution. Because her mother was not able to earn enough money to raise Xuen and her two brothers, the three children were sent to her grandmother's house in a rural area. Because she was young during the tumultuous Cultural Revolution, a time when the only legitimate and noble ambition an individual could have was to express a nihilistic attitude toward any Chinese tradition and culture, she had to pursue any intellectual desires on the sidelines - in fact, in private.

As she recalled her childhood with her grandmother, she remembered an incident when she was six years old. Her grandmother's house was in a rural town by a huge bamboo forest. Most kids from the neighborhood like playing together outside. As a child, they felt safe playing outside and doing adventurous things together.

One spring, on a sunny and lovely day, Xuen and her chums set off on an adventure in the bamboo forest. They walked up to hills with thousands of bamboo in front of them. The baby bamboo looked delicious as they shone under the sun. After playing all day outside and hearing their stomachs growling with hunger, they were all excited about biting into the tenderest of bamboo shoots as they had seen their parents do. As soon as they had pulled out the shoots, a community guard came by

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and scorned them for what they had done. In communist society at that time, everything belonged to the community and everyone had to share everything they had. Thus, the community guard became an authoritarian and he, very angrily, brought them back to the community for punishment. Xuen and her friends were all scared and thought they would be punished severely.

As Xuen was waiting outside, she heard the community guard yelling at her grandmother telling her that she had made a grievous mistake, that she should be severely punished; otherwise, the grandmother would be charged for her sin against the community. Xuen recalled, "I was so scared and thought that I would be tremendously punished or spanked like other parents would their own children." However, instead of punishing her, her grandmother called her in and comforted her, telling her not to worry. She said she knew Xuen did not intend to make trouble, and she had paid five dollars to the community guard so no one would punish her. That experience really shocked her.

> I knew that five dollars meant a lot to my family at that time. I did not know how my grandmother was able to save money in a communist society and was willing to pay for my mistake. At that time, no one had money and everyone had to go hungry. Five dollars could have fed our family for months.

A Spirit of Love

Since then, she realized how her grandmother's love was important to her and learned the importance of forgiveness. Although Xuen had only lived with her grandmother for six years until she went to elementary school, what Xuen learned from her grandmother not only became a childhood memory, but more importantly a

life lesson. As a teacher, she always reminds herself to forgive her students like her

grandmother, and to love her students from her heart like her grandmother did.

> Although my grandmother never had a chance to get an
> education, she was the best teacher in my life. When I was little,
> she was the only person who cared about me because my parents
> were never with me. I believe that the other kids who pulled out
> the bamboo with me were punished by their parents. But my
> grandmother comforted me instead of punishing me. I learned
> the importance of love.

When Xuen became a mother, she knew how to love her daughter. If her

daughter makes a mistake, she forgives her first and then guides her in the right

direction. As a teacher, when her students make mistakes, she always thinks of

positive ways to forgive her students just like her grandmother did to her, and to look

at things from the bright side and look forward. Because of the kindness she learned

from her grandmother, she is able to think of positive ways to move forward when

she encounters poor student behavior in the United States.

> As a middle school ESL teacher, I have been facing a lot of kids
> with behavior problems. They curse in front of me. But what I
> try to do is to help them understand their own problems with my
> love. They are just teenagers and they need love. Sometimes,
> they curse at me and then the next day they smile and say, "Hi
> Ms. Zhang, Good morning." They do not even remember what
> happened the day before. My grandmother helped me become
> patient with my students. You know what? I am going to write a
> book about my grandmother. She was such a great woman. She
> was just amazing and incredible. She always looked at things
> and beyond their superficial meaning. She looked forward, into
> the future, without limiting her own ability. Though she did not
> have any educational background, she was a very smart,
> encouraging, caring and loving person. My life was influenced
> by her tremendously.

Professional Teacher Identity Transformation

Like many nonnative English speakers in the United States, Xuen had to go through her process of adaptive cultural transformation. Her adjustment period in the U.S. was not easy. The biggest challenge was finding a balance between her Asian cultural background and the U.S. cultural environment. She was in between her dual identities – in the Chinese and U.S. communities. Xuen was highly motivated to instrumentally adapt to the U.S. educational system, gaining new experience in order to understand and appreciate the target culture and system. That transformation required determination and a willingness to recognize her native culture, and to understand and respect the target culture.

Balance between Chinese Culture and American Culture

After she was confronted by ESL students in the United States, gradually her Chinese cultural boundaries became more permeable and flexible. She saw how she had been holding onto her culture and her established teaching philosophy too tightly. It was a shield that blocked her from constructing a knowledge base for professional growth and developing her relationship with her students. She became more open-minded and was willing to participate in various social activities to give herself opportunities to experience and understand the target culture and educational system. By changing her expectations of students' behaviors, Xuen gradually was able to balance her Chinese expectations and her students' American expectations. Thus, she started changing what she expected from her students and the ways she managed

them. After shifting her thinking from teacher-as-a-father to a teacher-as-a-friend, Xuen started seeing her identity as an ESL teacher differently:

> I started seeing my role as an ESL teacher somewhere between a student's teacher and a student's friend. To maintain my own authority in teaching and class management, I still kept some classroom rules so that the students would know what they were expected to do and how to follow in my class. However, at the same time, I tried to understand my students' needs, made my class interesting, or made jokes to get close to my students. As a result, many students trusted me as a friend. Sometimes, I became my students' mother. My students could come to me and told me their family problems or personal struggles.

In the United States, Xuen was regarded as a visible minority due to her Asian appearance. In order to achieve the cohesion in her second language social identity she looked for acceptance as a member of the target culture. That was a very important factor for success in her profession. She focused her attention on improving her teaching skills and her interactions with others. To gain new perspectives in teaching ESL, Xuen would participate in different workshops and conferences as often as she possibly could. Spending much of her spare time participating in different workshops and classes, she realized that to be a good ESL teacher, she had to adjust some of her beliefs about learning and teaching and adapt new teaching methodologies and classroom management. For example, changing her teaching style to cater to the students' needs seemed to work effectively for her. In China, classes are usually big, and therefore the class size is not conducive to group discussion, but this is not true for ESL classes in the United States. Usually, there are about 20 to 25 students in the class, and Xuen finds the group discussion format was extremely effective as it allows every student a chance to talk.

Xuen learned many useful strategies and perspectives from the workshops in which she believed some of her Chinese values fit and which would benefit her ESL students. She started integrating her own strengths in teaching and what she learned in the United States. For example, Xuen believed that her main strength in teaching ESL was her ability to present learning materials in a manner that not only appealed to the students but also resulted in their retaining the material.

> Some student activities and teaching strategies I learned from the workshops were very useful for me in my class; however, I am very surprised that the students in the United Sates are unorganized. They have no idea how to organize learning materials and often cannot locate the material when they need them the next day. My learning experience in China has trained me to be a very organized person and that helps students learn in a more efficient way. So, as I started to use new teaching methodologies and classroom management that I learned from the workshops, I also integrated some Chinese teaching and learning skills and strategies such as managing materials, organizing student activities and preparing for tests.

Teaching Strategies from NNES Perspectives

In Arva and Medgyes's (2000) study of five NNES and five NES English teachers in an EFL setting on differences between NNES and NES language teachers' teaching behavior, they show that one of the primary advantages an NES teacher has is their native language competence. Still, Arva and Medgyes note, they were often challenged by students' questions regarding grammar explanations. On the other hand, given their own leaning experience and pre-service training in language teaching, NNES teachers have more in-depth knowledge of the structure of English as well as an awareness of how the grammar works.

Based on Xuen's language learning experience in China and English teaching in the EFL setting, she knows how ESL students struggle in English learning in terms

of language structure. Because of her rigorous language training in China, she has very strong knowledge of English grammar. Once a language learner herself, she is able to predict her students' linguistic mistake patterns. Initially, some of her students did not trust her as an English teacher due to her non-native status. However, because of her strong knowledge in grammar and the structure of English, her students often found it more beneficial to be in her class because Xuen was able to explain and answer students' questions from a learner's perspective.

> It's very obvious that my students knew I was not a native speaker from the first day, and they often showed their skepticism toward my ability in teaching. However, later they realized that having me as their ESL teacher was actually an advantage because they could look up to someone with a similar experience in learning English as a second language. I had the feeling they considered me as one of them, but, with both knowledge and training in the specific field of English teaching. I think this is an advantage. Students get the sense that they also can become good English users without being native speakers.

Xuen's solid English literature background had contributed to her unique teaching style in reading and writing. With tangible chunks to teach, Xuen was able to help her students from a step-by-step approach. When all of her level 2 ESL students passed the State Language Assessment, Xuen was acknowledged as one of the most efficient ESL teachers in the school. Xuen's expertise in teaching reading and writing, and her students' success in the state assessment confirmed Samimy and Brutt-Griffler's (1999) findings in their study of 17 NNES graduate students' self-perceptions as professionals. In their study, NNES English teachers were perceived as being aware of the psychological aspects of learning, specifically negative transfer. They were also being sensitive to the needs of students and more efficient in teaching

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the structure of the language. Plus they had exam preparation as one of their goals. All of these are advantages and contributions NNES English teachers can make.

It is argued that teachers who are aware of the language which their students find difficult are more likely to be effective in teaching because they can focus their attention on learners' actual needs (McNeill, 2005). In Xuen's case, although she does not share her students' first language, she is able to sensitively identify her students' potential difficulties from a learners' perspective. Xuen's narratives confirm Tang's (1997) argument that NNES English teachers can be in a favorable position by being able to predict potential difficulties for the students and to know how to help them.

As a result, the increased positive relationship with her students makes her aware of her successful reputation at school. She hears students' complimentary opinions about her teaching regardless of her Asian appearance and Chinese-accent. This increases her self-confidence and gradually enables her to attain students' trust. Because her students appreciate her teaching methods and the emotional support that Xuen can provide her students, she feels more confident about her teaching methodology and skills. Xuen's narratives reveal that as an NNES ESL teacher, she is able to actively reflect on and use her own language learning experience to develop techniques and methods helpful to her students, and thus develop a personal language pedagogy. Xuen also shares her own experience studying and taking tests with her students. She has become a model for her students. Her successful learning stories are authentic images of what students can aspire to be. Xuen's students realize their teacher has more experience and knowledge than they thought and has much to offer.

> I became more confident with my teaching after I tried to
> understand my students' needs. I believe that my teaching has

contributed to making my students better users of English. I
hope that those who were skeptical about a non-native's ability
in teaching English in an ESL setting will come to see that a
non-native can be just as capable of teaching a language that is
not her native language.

The narratives also reveal that NNES ESL teachers like Xuen, even though

they may not sound like native speakers and their ESL students may hold that against

them, can work hard on their lesson plans and use their experience to teach their

classes, and thus be respected. The more Xuen was able to understand her students'

need by establishing a positive relationship with them, the more confident she became.

Xuen admitted that she is not a native English speaker and never will be, particularly

in her accent. But she believes the quality of language teaching is not merely

determined by native or nonnative speaker status. By establishing her relationship

with her students and proving her ability through her students' progress, her students

came to recognize her as excellent regardless of her nonnative status.

Even now, with four years of ESL teaching experience since 2000, at the

beginning of each academic year, Xuen continues to be questioned about her

knowledge and teaching credibility by her students, inquiries often posed to discredit

her because of what they see as non-nativeness. It seems that some of the students

wait for Xuen to make a mistake, and she wins grudging acceptance at first because

she is able to answer her students' questions. It provides her first a chance to say, "As

a non-native speaker, you might have an accent compared to a native speaker. But the

most important thing is that you must be confident in who you are and where you

have come from."

Chapter 7: Narrative Understandings

The bridge I must be
Is the Bridge to my own power,
I must translate
My own fears
Mediate
My own weakness
I must be the bridge to nowhere
But my true self
And then
I will be useful

(Donna Kate Rushin, cited in Andemicael, 2002, p. 40)

I have so far narrated individual NNES's experiences and journeys in becoming and being ESL teachers in the United States. In this chapter, I use our narratives as a collective story to address themes and issues that emerge from our narratives and discuss how TESOL teacher preparation programs can equip NNES teacher candidates for special challenges they will face in this profession.

Richardson (1985) intertwines narrative writing with sociological analytic writing in a research-reporting genre that she calls "the collective story." The collective story "gives voice to those who are silenced or marginalized" and "displays an individual's story by narrating the experiences of the social category to which the

individual belongs" (Richardson, 1997, p. 22). To Richardson, the collective story is

not just about the story tellers' past, but also about their future and social change.

> By emotionally binding people together who have had the
> same experiences,… the collective story overcomes some of
> the isolation and alienation of contemporary life. It provides
> a sociological community, the linking of separate individuals
> into a shared consciousness. Once linked, the possibility for
> social action on behalf of the collective is present, and
> therewith, the possibility of societal transformation.
> (Richardson, 1997, p. 33)

Resonating with Richardson's notion of using the collective story as a form of

social action with transformative possibilities, I want to use our narratives not only to

report and interpret our experiences, but also to shape future action. I first use

Sternberg and Spear-Swerling's (1998) idea of "personal navigation" to analyze our

narratives as a collective story that addresses obstacles in NNESs' professional

development. Then I apply feminist poststructuralist notions of understanding

women's identities through their own voices to analyze how we learned to develop

voices and how we use voices to establish our professional identities. I also discuss

some suggestions that TESOL teacher professional programs might use to help

NNESs overcome obstacles, develop voices and cross the bridge to the future.

Obstacles in NNESs' Professional Development

Beyond existing psychological constructs such as intelligence, personality,

and motivation, Sternberg and Spear-Swerling (1998) use the term, "personal

navigation" as a metaphor for understanding why some people find success in adult

life and others do not. For Sternberg and Spear-Swerling, personal navigation refers

to a person's control of his or her voyage through life, including goals, plans, beliefs in his or her own capability and ability to overcome obstacles effectively.

While navigating one's life, a person encounters different obstacles; Sternberg and Sper-Swerling illustrate five different types of obstacles one may face in personal navigation: visibility obstacles, resource obstacles, barrier obstacles, resistance obstacles, and sabotage obstacles. As I look back at our personal navigations as NNESs in the United States, I find these five metaphors well illustrate NNES's experiences in the field of TESOL.

Visibility obstacles are analogous to "darkness or fog, and occur when one finds oneself unable to see where one is going" (Sternberg & Sper-Swerling, p. 226). Many NNESs, like Kuriko and I, for example, with an initial goal to improve English teaching in our home countries, come to the U. S. to advance ourselves. However, because of different teaching pedagogies and expectations in ESL and EFL settings, we often struggle with how to apply ESL pedagogies to EFL settings in our home countries and sometimes find ourselves unable to see a clear path for our goals. Although ESL pedagogies might be applicable or transferable to EFL teaching, without explicit discussion, NNESs might not be able to see a route clearly.

Resource obstacles are analogous to "lacking proper navigational equipment, or the vehicle one would need in order to make progress in the terrain one will encounter" (Sternberg & Sper-Swerling, p. 226). NNESs might not have capital to start their career due to lack of resources needed to get where they want to go. For example, from the narratives in this study, we learned that in order to be a better English teacher, we leave our home countries, live in a new territory for improving

our own English and pursue knowledge and techniques in teaching English; however, within the dominant society, if TESOL educational course design and pedagogy are not concerned with NNESs' particular linguistic and cultural needs, then NNESs might not have enough resources for what they need.

Barrier obstacles are analogous to "mountains in land journeys or land-mass barriers in sea journeys, which block one from proceeding any further" (Sternberg & Sper-Swerling, p. 225). From the narratives in this study, for instance, we found that a non-native speaker, like Wen-Lin, Kuriko and Xuen, might have all the intellectual abilities required for a career as an ESL teacher, but be miserable because of facing other obstacles such as language ideology or racial prejudice. A non-native speaker might be a talented language teacher, but be unable to tolerate different educational or cultural differences or political obstacles. These barrier obstacles in an NNES ESL teacher's life might include self-rejection that comes from low self-confidence due to the misconception that a native speaker is an ideal language teacher, and rejections from others due to visible appearance or non-native-like speech which was judged by the dominant society with racial or ethnic prejudice, ensuring that opportunities go to the most 'qualified' native speakers.

Resistance obstacles are analogous to "heavy snow or rain in a journey, which do not block one's path but, rather, make it harder to follow the path" (Sternberg & Sper-Swerling, p. 226). For example, although Wen-Lin, Kuriko and Xuen are able to get a position, from their narratives we learn that they need to work twice as hard or even do other things unrelated to teaching to prove their abilities in teaching and to survive in the English dominated society. Without support from the system, once

NNES ESL teachers have done many other things to prove their ability, the attractiveness of teaching might start to decrease and they might leave the work.

Sabotage obstacles are "attempts by others to render more difficult one's progress along the path of one's choosing" (Sternberg & Sper-Swerling, p. 226). In the workplace, people are competing for the same or similar resources, so some more powerful ones might take advantage of their power and resources to sabotage the progress of other people. For example, NESs' negative reaction toward NNESs' linguistic limitations and teaching performance might make the NNESs' path to success more difficult.

There is a small but growing body of literature focusing on the perceived advantages and disadvantages of being a non-native English speaker in the field of TESOL (Medgyes, 1994; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999), the attitudes of ESL and EFL students toward NNES teachers (Amin, 1997; Tang, 1997), and the struggles and triumphs of non-native professionals (Brain, 1999; Thomas, 1999). However, there is little information regarding how teacher preparation programs are incorporating curricula related to non-native professionals in the TESOL field. Research indicates that NNES teacher candidates who came from a variety of countries, such as Vietnam, Korea, China, Guatemala, Mexico, El Salvador, Spain, Iran, Taiwan, and Japan, represent over 70% of the program enrollment (Kamhi-Stein, 1999). How do teacher educators address the issues of credibility when they struggle in the program, and how do teacher educators help NNESs to face the challenges they will encounter because of linguistic and cultural differences? How do teacher educators prepare NNES teacher candidates professionally?

From the narratives in this study, we learn how the misconception of "native speaker fallacy," which is a belief that a native speaker is an ideal language teacher, has led us to overlook some very important issues in preparing professional ESL teachers. The term NNES seems to become a negative identity that labels NNES teachers as inferiors in comparison with the term, NES. Pasternak and Bailey (2004) argue that without the proper professional preparation and the experience of learning new languages themselves, NESs may have declarative knowledge about knowing the target language, target culture and how to use the language, but may lack procedural knowledge about how to teach the language in culturally appropriate ways. For example, it is not unusual to hear untrained NESs respond to students' grammar questions by saying, "I don't know why. That's just the way we say it." This is evidence the NES lacks procedural knowledge about how to explicitly teach the language.

On the other hand, given years of study and formal instruction, NNESs may have much stronger declarative and procedure knowledge about the target language and how to teach the language. Pasternak and Bailey further argue professionalism is not the same thing as nativeness, and it should not be equated with language proficiency. Neither a native nor a nonnative speaker without any formal training can be said to be professionally prepared. Like language proficiency, professional preparation is a continuum in a teacher's professional development. It's possible for teachers to become relatively less prepared if they don't keep up with new developments and research and are unable to meet students' changing needs.

Both NNESs and NESs need training for their professionalism. However, with specific obstacles and needs described above, NNESs need a different curriculum design for overcoming their obstacles and developing their professionalism. What follows are some suggestions TESOL teacher education programs may use to help NNESs overcome obstacles and prepare them in a professional way.

Helping NNESs Overcome Obstacles

To bring more visibility to non-native speaker issues, George Braine (2004) organized a colloquium titled, "In Their Own Voices: Non-native Speaker Professionals in TESOL," at the 30th annual TESOL convention, held in Chicago in 1996. An idea for a TESOL caucus for nonnative speakers was first proposed during this colloquium. In October 1998, the Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL caucus was established to create a nondiscriminatory professional environment for all TESOL members regardless of native language and place of birth, and to encourage research and publications on the role of NNES teachers in ESL and EFL contexts. The TESOL NNES caucus has played an important role in encouraging formal and informal gatherings of NNESs at TESOL and affiliate conferences, and in promoting the role of NNES in TESOL and affiliate leadership positions. However, not every graduate student has a chance to travel to the TESOL annual conference because of economic and academic demands. Thus, the teacher education programs where NNESs enroll play a critical role in helping NNESs overcome obstacles and grow professionally.

Curriculum Design and Seminar

As students in TESOL teacher education programs, the NNES ESL teachers in this study experienced challenges and obstacles as they strived to become ESL teachers. From Kuriko's and Wen-Lin's narratives, we learn that the issues of NNESs were not explicitly addressed in their programs. While they were struggling with their academic work and cultural and linguistic issues, they could not find a way to share their concerns. They internalized these struggles and issues as their own inferior qualifications. As a result, these struggles decreased their self-confidence as ESL teachers.

To prepare NNESs for becoming professional ESL teachers, Kamhi-Stein (1999) makes a strong case for integrating instruction on issues related to nonnative speakers across the curriculum in TESOL preparation programs. The main guideline that directs Kamhi-Stein in designing this cross-curricula approach to instruction is centered on two questions: What types of discussions within the TESOL curriculum could promote an improvement in the self-image and self-perception of the NNES teacher candidates and at the same time, prepare them for addressing some of the situations that they are likely to encounter in their professional lives and in what ways, if any, would it be possible to increase the visibility of NNESs and the issues that concern them in the MA TESOL program as well as in professional organizations at the regional and state levels?

Such an approach to instruction provides teacher candidates with multiple opportunities to systematically examine their nonnative speaker status in relation to theories of language acquisition, methodology, and curriculum design. It also allows

them to examine the cultural and social factors affecting second language development. I believe if Wen-Lin and Kuriko had ever participated in such curriculum and programs, they would have been able to develop a better understanding of their assets, beliefs, and values to promote their self-confidence in learning to teach. Such programs would also provide an opportunity for them to criticize the notion that the native speaker is the best model in English language teaching.

To demystify the dichotomy, the NNES term was recently replaced by new concepts and new terms, such as the second language (L2) user (Cook, 2002). In Cook's (2000) definition, the L2 user is "a particular kind of person in their own right with their own knowledge of the first language (L1) and the L2, rather than a monolingual with an added L2" (p. 47). The concept of an L2 user is based on the point of view of multicompetence, which emphasizes the knowledge of two or more languages in developing language acquisition. To emphasize NNES teachers' strength in teaching language, Kelch and Santan-Williamson (2002) argue that "non-native speakers not only can and do possess the same professional attributes and qualifications as native speakers, but they can further contribute to a healthy learning environment by displaying great sensitivity to the needs of L2 learners and serve as more realistic role models than native speakers" (p. 58).

To understand the influences of cultural differences on theories of language learning and teaching, some TESOL teacher education programs have designed courses that encourage teacher candidates to critically examine the relationship between language and culture. For example, a doctoral level graduate course, entitled

"East meets West: Cultural Influences on Theorists of Language and Language Education," now taught in the TESOL program where I am studying, is designed to investigate the role of culture in the specific theories of language and language acquisition, and classroom-based language learning and teaching. This course explicitly addresses the topic of NNESs and NESs as part of a language critical theory thrust. The class discussion topics are drawn from Eastern and Western traditions which allow both NNES and NES graduates to examine their own "personal theories" about language and language education from their cultural perspectives (Oxford, 2005).

In what way can TESOL teacher educators explicitly address the language ideology and misconceptions in the field that might become obstacles for NNESs? Samimy and Brutt-Griffler (1999) describe a TESOL education program offering a graduate seminar titled, "Issues and Concerns Related to NNES Professionals," in which NNES teacher candidates read about and discuss issues related to NNESs in the profession. The syllabus includes a group of NNES teacher educators as guest speakers and weekly discussions based on assigned readings, such as "*The Non-native Teacher*" by Medgyes (1994), "*Models for Non-Native English*" by Kachru (1992), and "*My Language, Your Culture: Whose Communicative Competence?*" by Nelson (1992). In view of the findings from this study, many participants felt that the opportunity to share their experiences with other non-native speaker professionals during the seminar empowered them personally and professionally and transformed them from a negative identity as NNESs to a more positive identity as L2 users.

As the discourses of the native speaker appear to be particularly disempowering for new teachers, I believe the seminar courses described above have demonstrated a way to help students open a meaningful discussion toward dismantling the native/nonnative speaker dichotomy and help NNESs overcome some potentially disempowering discourses in TESOL teacher education programs. To promote such seminars and discussions in the field of TESOL, international TESOL organizations or the NNES caucus at TESOL might consider helping TESOL teacher education programs launch seminars on the issues of NNESs and designing a curriculum based on NNESs' needs.

Language Training

Narratives in this study indicate that NNESs are often concerned with their language proficiency or accents which are highly related to their self-confidence and professional identity as NNES ESL teachers. Speaking a second or foreign language well can be challenging for anyone, but nonnative teachers face an additional challenge: the expectation that language teachers will have excellent speaking skills. Liu (1999) stresses that an excellent command of English is "extremely important for quality ESL teaching" and NNES teacher candidates are often not confident in their language proficiency. In a survey of 59 nonnative TESOL students, Liu (1999) found that only 14% felt they had the English language proficiency needed to be a "truly qualified teacher." Almost half (49%) were not sure, and 37% replied with a definite "no confidence."

Narratives from the participants in this study tell us that speaking and listening and pronunciation accuracy are areas in which NNESTs feel their English proficiency

is lacking. In particular, because of colloquialisms in different regions, learning a language from different local accents and idioms becomes a new task for NNESs. However, in undergraduate and graduate TESOL programs, speaking and listening are often not formally taught, as these programs tend to assume their teacher candidates already know how to speak English. In other words, such programs apparently assume that the majority of these teacher candidates are high language proficiency.

However, Medgyes (1999) sees native speakers as those who "have acquired English in comparison with non-native speakers who are still acquiring" (p. 12). Unlike native speakers, non-native speakers are permanent language learners; however, nonnative teacher candidates' need in language proficiency have been overlooked as it relates to their future success as language teachers (Pasternak & Bailey, 2004). Because language improvement is not considered to be a key issue in the TESOL teacher preparation programs, NNES teacher candidates are not likely to become near-native speakers of English.

Morley (1991) stresses that NNES teacher candidates who plan to teach ESL or EFL "need special attention to communicative skills in general and to pronunciation intelligibility in particular" (p. 492). In order for NNESs to be effective, self-confident, and satisfied professionals, it is important for teacher preparation programs to include language training in pre-service education to help NNESs enhance their language proficiency. TESOL teacher preparation programs that focus on training NNES teacher candidates in these areas, will both improve their English proficiency and their self-confidence as qualified English teachers.

Collaboration between NNESs and NESs

From Wen-Lin's narratives about her university supervisor's comments on her speech, we learn the evaluation of teacher development has tended to be based on the deficit model, in which teachers are individually evaluated only in terms of qualifications they have (competence) and those they do not have (deficits). Based on such an either-or model, NNES and NEST teacher candidates are viewed as discrete (NNES or NES) or competitive (NNES or NES). In contrast, Matsuda and Matsuda (2004) argue for a both-and model to provide a collaborative model of NNES and NES teacher development in which both NNES and NES teachers see themselves as members of a collaborative community, and share their special strengths to help each other out (Matsuda, 2000).

Many, if not most, teacher education programs in English-dominant countries enroll both native and nonnative speakers; collaboration between NNESs and NESs is not only desirable but may even be necessary. From NNESs' experiences, we learn relationships with others play an influential role in shaping teachers' identities in their teaching life. In particular, when many NNESs leave their home countries and start a life in a new territory, friendships and connections with others are important to support them academically and emotionally. From the perspective of pre-service teachers, collaborative teacher development not only makes the learning experience more positive and productive but also helps NNES teachers develop the ability to work with NES teachers more effectively.

From the perspective of teacher educators, collaboration is desirable because it can contribute to the creation of a community in which teachers learn from their

differences. In such a learning community, the professional, cultural and linguistic diversity that teachers bring with them becomes an asset rather than a liability. The experience of collaborative development in the context of a teacher development program can encourage teachers to develop a collaborative learning community in their own classrooms and, in the long run, to continue their professional development by collaborating with their colleagues.

Drawing on the belief that native and non-native English speakers have a lot to learn from one another, teacher candidates engage in collaborative projects, including evaluating ESL/EFL textbooks and developing instructional materials designed to meet the language needs of a specified student population. These collaborative projects allow NNESs to excel, because they have a first-hand understanding of the linguistic, social, and cultural needs of their target audience and the language teaching situation. The contributions of NES teacher candidates are equally important because, as noted by Widowson (1994), "they are in a better position to know what is appropriate in contexts of language use, and so to define possible target objectives" (p. 387).

Matsuda and Matsuda (2004) describe an example of a collaboration project among two NNES and two NES graduate students using online journal sharing to exchange ideas and experiences in a practicum course in teaching ESL writing. This collaboration project successfully maximizes each teacher's strengths and encourages teachers to learn from the diversity in the group. Because this model focuses on the learning community created by teachers and on the development of the teachers as a group, learning takes place through sharing stories and adopting, adapting, and

learning from others' approaches and strategies that are informed by different linguistic, cultural and educational backgrounds. Through collaboration, NNES and NES teacher candidates see themselves as equal partners, sharing their unique perspectives and learning from one another.

NNESs who often lack confidence in their oral skills may discuss issues related to oral language teaching and target culture with NESs. Similarly, NESs who are often perceived as lacking understanding of language grammar can benefit from discussing how NNESs present and teach various grammatical points and what methods they use to explain problematic issues to the ESL students. NESs can also benefit from talking to NNESs about their experiences as English language learners. This might include a discussion of linguistics and other areas that NNESs have found problematic in their own learning of the language, and ways in which they overcame these problems. A discussion of these issues will provide an opportunity for NNESs to reflect on their learning experiences and use them more actively in their own teaching.

Practicum and Job Interview Preparation

NES and NNES novice teachers alike face complex classroom demands such as managing the classroom, and designing and implementing lesson plans (Almarza, 1996; Johnson, 1996). In addition, novice NNES teachers often suffer from a lack of confidence in their English language skills caused by their perceived language needs (Kamhi-Stein et al., 1998; Wei, 1998). From Kuriko's experience, we learn it is crucial for teacher preparation programs to provide NNES teacher candidates with

practicum experience that allows them to develop confidence in their language and teaching skills.

For this purpose, Kamhi-Stein (1999) demonstrates how the TESOL program at the California State University at Los Angeles (CSULA) encourages NNES teacher candidates to work with different departments where knowledge of ESL/EFL pedagogy is welcome. Examples of some of the teaching positions held by NNES teacher candidates include working as computer trainers at the computer center, teaching reading for academic purposes to L2 freshmen, teaching database research skills to undergraduate and graduate students, teaching a variety of ESL classes in an after-school program offered by the Intensive English Program on campus or working as graduate teaching assistants in special programs offered by the MA TESOL program.

Although a job interview process may be stressful for all new TESOL graduates, it is often twice as stressful for NNESs. From Wen-Lin's narratives in this study, we learn that in the course of job interviews, NNESs become self-conscious about their language skills and make grammatical mistakes they would not make under different circumstances. Therefore, in order to ease NNES teacher candidates into the interview process, teacher preparation programs may encourage NNES teacher candidates to participate in professional conferences at the regional or state TESOL affiliate level. In this way, the teacher candidates have a chance to present their papers or to network with professionals and program administrators in a formal but relaxed atmosphere. In addition, teacher preparation programs may provide

NNES teacher candidates with an interview seminar addressing essential interview techniques and skills.

Role Model and Support Network

Through telling stories of NNES ESL teachers' lives, I have learned that, in order to ease NNES teacher candidates' concerns and to assist their professional growth, it's important to have NNES teacher educators in the teacher preparation program as a role model. Experienced NNES teacher educators may advise NNES teacher candidates on responding to or dealing with possible challenges or biases from student peers or administrators. NNES teacher educators may also serve as role models by providing NNES student candidates with authentic examples of success stories to promote deeper and expansive dialogues among a community of teacher candidates and professors. In addition to having an educational purpose, NNES teacher educators may also provide a network for emotional and other types of support to nonnative students who may be new to the United States.

Voices and Identities

Identity is the essential core of who
we are as individuals, the conscious
experience of the self inside.
(Kaufman, as quoted in Anzaldua, 1999, p. 84)

Literature in women's study describes voice as a pervasive and powerful image in women's stories that illustrate women's ways of knowing and expressing their identities. To explain how voice is linked with learning for women, the authors (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986) of *Women's Ways of Knowing* suggest that voice implies communication and connections with other people, an

orientation to relatedness that has frequently been associated with women in United States culture. To explain different meanings of voice in connection with women in a metaphorical sense, Hayes (2000) uses a metaphor of *voice as identity* to indicate that women use voice to express their identities. Women's identities are reflected in what they say, in the ideas they express, and in the confidence they express in their own thought. In a political sense, Hayes also uses an analogy of *voice as power* to emphasize the impact of power relationships on women's voices, and how women use voice as a power to challenge oppression.

Feminist poststructuralists explore women's identities through women's experiences, and link women's experiences and social power in a theory of subjectivity. Subjectivity is defined as "the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world" (Weedon, 1997, p. 320). Poststructuralists depict the individual as diverse, contradictory, dynamic and changing over historical time and social space. Norton (2000) summarizes three characteristics of subjectivity related to the issue of identity: multiple identities, identity as a site of struggle and identity as changing over time.

Drawing from the concept of identity as non-unitary and contradictory, authors writing from a feminist poststructuralist perspective have offered new ways of understanding women's identities and voices. I found these ideas from this perspective to useful in understanding NNES ESL teachers' identities through voices.

As I unraveled NNES ESL teachers' stories about our challenge in learning and teaching, and our identity formation in relationship with others, I became aware

of the various voices that were interwoven through our narratives. During the post-analysis, my questions were no longer about what stories the three NNES ESL teachers shared with me; they became questions about in what voice the teachers represented their stories and how they developed their voices in their identity formation. To respond to these questions in this chapter, I want to discuss what voices tell us about our identities as NNES ESL teachers and how we use voices to represent who we are.

Studies indicate that an oppressed group, such as women in a male dominant society or a minority group of color in a white society, often choose silence, or deny their voice in response to the oppressive nature of social and cultural expectations from the dominant values. For example, a study done by Rogers (1993) indicates that women often use silence as a means of self-protection, to avoid threats to relationships that could result from the voicing of unacceptable thoughts and emotions. Ultimately, this public silence affects women's internal voices.

From the NNES ESL teachers' narratives in this study, we learn NNESs often chose silence and self-isolation as strategies to protect themselves from shameful and hurting experiences among their peers. Kuriko, for example, described her experience in graduate school as a silent person who was afraid of expressing her own voice during the group discussions. During graduate school, because of her limited language proficiency, Kuriko often sat silently in her classes to avoid making any mistake in her speech. Although there was a linguistic explanation for her silence, there was a psychological one too. She felt she was not as capable as her counterparts, native-speakers. Without any support, Kuriko had to struggle by herself. She felt

helpless because her knowledge of English, which was mainly obtained from books, did not help her feel comfortable in daily communication. In Japan, Kuriko was very proud of her English, but she started seeing herself as inferior compared to NES peers.

From Wen-Lin's narratives we learn there are some explanations other than language proficiency for being silenced. When Wen-Lin was in college, she often sat quietly in class because she was afraid someone would recognize her "true" identity as an NNES once she opened her mouth. She consistently used an NES mask to hide her true identity as an NNES. Under the mask, there was psychological fear. She thought an NNES identity was seen as unintelligent and inferior; thus, to avoid revealing her true identity, she would rather keep silent.

In addition to linguistic and psychological factors, there is a cultural explanation for the silence. Coming from the same cultural background, my own experience is echoed in Wen-Lin's experiences. From our culture, we learn "Silence is golden. The more you talk, the more mistakes you will make." After living in the United States for six years, Wen-Lin became very confident with her language proficiency and her identity as an NNES ESL teacher; however, from her narratives we notice Wen-Lin is often concerned about her opinions and prefers to listen to others. For Wen-Lin, being a talkative person does not mean that person is smarter, and being a silent person does not mean that person is not knowledgeable.

She explains that because she was a first year teacher, it was important to respect experienced teachers' opinions, so she preferred to be silent. She noticed some teachers liked to complain or tried to gain attention from others by giving

opinions. She believes that some people like talking because they want to show their presence or show their power over others, although their opinions are not really beneficial. They just want to show others that "I am here." For her, since each colleague had a different idea of what things should be done, it was better to keep silent and just follow what the majority of teachers decided. Being silent was her strategy for surviving in the workplace as a first year teacher.

Similar to Wen-Lin's narratives, Kuriko also believes that instead of saying something trivial, before she spoke she would make sure her opinions are valuable. From Kuriko's culture, it's better not to say anything if you are not 100 percent sure your idea is correct or can make a positive contribution. Thus, when she was not fully confident about her opinions, she would never say anything. That is why she often sat silently in the staff meetings during her first two years of teaching and hesitated to accept a student teacher until she was 100 percent sure she was able to do it. Being silent for her was also a way of respecting others.

To explain the voice as identity formation, Hayes (2000) states women often express their identity by developing and giving their own voice. Kuriko's narratives illustrate ways in which voice can be associated with women's identity-related learning and expression. For example, although Kuriko valued the importance of being silent as one way of respecting others, she learned that to survive in the United States, she must learn to express her voice to protect her rights. From Kuriko's narratives, she tells us how she learned the importance of giving voice to express her thoughts from her interaction with her husband and gradually developed her own

voice to assent her rights in the workplace when her colleagues placed a "quiet Asian" label on her.

Xuen's narratives illustrate another way of developing an NNES's identity through voice. As a first year ESL teacher in the U. S., Xuen's ESL students often questioned her teaching credibility due to her Asian appearance and accent. Without enough confidence and experience, Xuen often felt shocked with her students' questions and did not know how to respond. However, as she started seeing her strengths in using her own language learning experiences in China to teach ESL students in an efficient way, she was able to develop her own voice as an NNES to be a positive influence on her students.

The idea of multiple voices reflects the assumption that "as individuals, we have diverse identities that are expressed differently in different situations" (Hayes, 2000, p. 98). As NNES ESL teachers in the United States, we face the challenges of linguistic and cultural identities. In our home counties, linguistic and cultural identities might not be an issue for us as English teachers; however, gender and social class identities become the issue. Our social identity has multiple dimensions, which have different functions in different contexts. We present ourselves as a different person in different social groups and communities.

Our experience echoes Samimy and Brutt-Griffler's (1999) conclusion from their study on non-native speakers' self-perspective on their professionalism. The researchers conclude that self-image or self-confidence as a professional may be very context dependent. For example, in Japan Kuriko was very quiet in her workplace as a sign of respect for elder or male teachers; however, in the United States she became

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more active, and she learned she must be outspoken, otherwise, no one would notice her existence. In China, Xuen was very successful in the workplace regardless of her academic background; however, her professional identity was no longer the same when she taught in the United States. We have to maintain different identities in different contexts and to vary our communication styles depending on when and where we speak about what and to whom.

As I listened to NNES ESL teachers' stories and read my own autobiography, I often heard multiple voices fighting within us that made us uncertain and ambivalent. One voice might have told us to do something that we were eager for, but the other voice might have reminded us of our limitations in terms of cultural, gendered and linguistic obstacles. If the goal of TESOL teacher education is not to indoctrinate or train teachers to robotically perform prescribed teaching behaviors, but to educate teachers to strengthen their unique characteristics and to use their own voice and knowledge in sound teaching practice, then helping NNES teacher candidates develop their own voices and establish positive identities becomes an essential pedagogy. What follows are some suggestions for TESOL teacher preparation programs to incorporate NNESs' cultural backgrounds and experiences into the curriculum helping NNES ESL teachers develop their voices.

Helping NNESs Develop Voices

According to Sternberg and Spear-Swerling (1998), effective self-navigation requires many skills in pursuit of one's goals. Finding a right direction in life involves understanding one's intellectual strengths and weaknesses so that the person will be able to find his or her own voice in life's journey.

In her research, Amin (2004) interviewed eight minority immigrant women who had taught or were teaching ESL to adult immigrants in Toronto, Canada. The purpose of the study was to investigate how nativism, in particular the concept of the native speaker, is manifested in the context of ESL, and how minority immigrant women teachers of ESL negotiate nativism. The participants in Amin's study were visibly minority women who grew up in the Third World where English was a major language in their lives and continued to be a major language in their lives as ESL teachers in Canada.

In spite of the challenges faced by the minority teachers, such as non-acceptance by their students and colleagues, the study suggests they became more effective in the classroom when they found their own voices and built their pedagogies on their nonnative identities, rather than followed the native speaker norm. When NNESs recognize their own weakness and strength in language learning and teaching, they are able to build community with their students on the basis of their commonalities and thus provide a bridge between two worlds.

In Liu's (2004) narratives, he provides two examples of how he as an NNES instructor empowered his NNES students when he taught ESL composition. In the first example, Liu illustrates how his identity as an NNES enhanced a peer review activity in his ESL writing class. As a participant in the peer review activity, Liu served as a role model to empower NNES students in the academic writing by sharing his own learning experience, anticipating difficulties in writing English.

Another successful example in Liu's narratives demonstrates how NNES teachers' learning experience can be provided as a source for empowering ESL

students in writing. In order to show the process of composing and revising in his ESL writing class, Liu often used his own writing piece as an example for discussion. He would invite students to critique the paper in small groups in class, and then he revised the writing based on the students' input. When he showed the students the final draft, he would claim authorship and share with his students the dilemmas he faced in the writing process. Often, he would share his own struggles as an NNES writer in transitioning from writing in his first language, Chinese, to writing in his second language, English. Liu found that being open about his own NNES identity and honestly sharing his own struggles in language learning often became a powerful voice to assure his teaching. His true voice in language learning also provided a role model for his NNES students and resulted in a closer relationship with his students.

Similar to Liu's experiences, after acting like an NES for years, Wen-Lin finally accepted her true identity as an NNES ESL teacher. By accepting who she is, she started seeing her language learning experiences as a way of understanding her ESL learners and as a way of refining her teaching strategies. By accepting herself and expressing her own voice, she was able to construct her identity as a teacher in her own way. Her identity as an NNES became a power that accelerated her teaching. By realizing their unique cultural heritages and strengths, Xuen and Kuriko were also finally able to find their own way of teaching.

The stories from the participants in this study have opened up possibilities for their students and for NNES teachers by showing that although native speakers are privileged by linguistic power, non-native speakers can also lay valid claim to full competency in language and language teaching. Once NNES teachers overcome their

struggles in cultural and linguistic identities to establish their confidence as language teachers, they can see themselves as a useful resource for their students. They also show that good pedagogy is not the province of the native speaker, but is dependent on multiple factors, such as competency in ESL teaching pedagogy, understanding ESL learners and cultural influence on language learning.

The participants' narratives in this study indicate that the strength of being an NNES teacher includes providing a good learning model for ESL learners, teaching language learning strategies more effectively, supplying learners with more information about the English language, anticipating and preventing language difficulties better and being more empathetic to the needs and problems of learners. These become a power that can strengthen NNESs' voices in constructing their teaching identity.

To highlight the importance of recognizing cultural differences, Ladson-Billings (2000) calls for quality teacher education in preparing teachers to teach African American students by presenting the uniqueness of the African American historical and cultural experiences to develop African American teachers' own voices in their teaching. Gay (2002) also emphasizes that culturally responsive teachers must have a knowledge base about cultural diversity. Similarly, to understand culturally diverse ESL learners, it is important for ESL teachers to understand their own cultural characteristics and the contributions of their cultures, so they will be able to establish their teaching identity through their own voice. In what follows, I discuss ways of helping NNESs develop their self-understanding and voices.

Self-understanding

NNES ESL teachers often face the challenge of their identity as NNESs. To establish their own way of language teaching, it is important for teacher educators to help NNESs know themselves through self-realization in learning to teach. NNESs must recognize their own cultures, understand their prior beliefs about teaching and learning and be aware of their own self-images as teachers, elements which often have an influential impact on their identities.

It has been argued that the social identity of NNESs is not fixed but rather shaped by social attitudes towards NNESs that, in turn, influence the role of NNES teachers in the ESL classroom (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Tang, 1997). Drawing from sociocultural and cultural identity perspectives in learning to teach, NNESs' prior beliefs about teaching and learning would translate into their "ways of knowing". While scholars in the field of general teacher education urge teacher education programs to understand the perspectives and experiences from teacher candidates of diverse backgrounds as the basis for designing teacher education programs that will prepare them to be successful in teaching (Au & Blake, 2003), it is particularly crucial for TESOL teacher preparation programs to understand NNESs' challenges and issues, to recognize NNESs' need for acceptance and to acknowledge their unique contribution in the field.

As I explored the participants' family values, cultural experiences and language learning experiences as well as my own, I gained a new perspective for who we are as NNESs. Because a teacher's beliefs and their self-identity as a teacher often influence the way they teach, it is crucial to investigate the forms, processes, and

elements of NNESs' identity as TESOL professionals in learning to teach. A major function of education should be able to help students understand their strengths and weaknesses, make the most of their strengths and also find ways to compensate for or correct weaknesses (Cronbach & Snow, 1977). The better we understand and define what English language teachers need to know beyond the subject matter itself, the sooner we can move away from the current situation in many education markets: "If you speak English, you can teach," and help NNESs develop positive voices and identities, empowering them to fulfill a vital role within the ESL community.

On-going Self-discovery Process

As Brady (2000) points out, "the process of self-discovery helps one to see how one is as a teacher, to see one's strengths both as a language learner and as a language teacher, and to see how one's personal history has shaped one's professional growth" (p. 6). The process of self-discovery may be particularly useful for NNES teacher candidates. First, as we see from the NNES ESL teachers' narratives in this study, many NNES teachers lack self-confidence and are often very self-conscious about their own language. Having NNES teachers reflect on all they have learned about English and teaching, asking them to honestly assess what they can and cannot do, will help them understand themselves better and provide effective teaching and new techniques. Second, for NNES teachers, English is the medium of the primary discourse that plays a major role in forming identities. Therefore, self-discovery help NNESs see how language relates to their identities. The process of self-discovery becomes part of professional growth in becoming a more effective teacher.

For these reasons, teacher education programs should provide opportunities for their NNES student teachers to engage in a self-discovery process. Examples of such discovery activities may include writing an autobiography and reflective journals.

Autobiographical Writing

To encourage self-reflection, writing an autobiography has been credited as an effective tool to explore one's own identity (Curtis, 1998). To elaborate on how people gain an understanding of their life through autobiography, Birren (1987) emphasizes that "life can only be understood backward; but it must be lived forwards" (p. 91). We search for an identity that is more than a name or a title can fully explain. We don't know where we are going unless we know where we have come from. Through autobiographical writing, we may give our present lives a new meaning or perspective by fully understanding our past.

For example, the process of writing my own autobiography in this study has revealed the contradictions, paradoxes and ambivalence in my life allowing for new perspectives. By revisiting my own past, I saw my experiences at home, school and work woven into a pattern. This pattern restores my sense of self-definition and personal identity. Phillipson (1992) argues NNESs bring to the classroom a personal understanding of the L2 learning and teaching process. In order to develop a better understanding of the ESL/EFL learning process, teacher educators may encourage NNES teacher candidates to analyze their own L2 learning experiences in relation to teaching methodologies, curriculum and materials deign, and cultural and social factors affecting L2 learning. Further, sharing NNESs' English language learning

histories allows NNESs to view themselves as sources of information, and ultimately leads them to improve their self-image because they are put in a position of authority based upon their learning experiences.

Reflective Journals

As noted by Richards and Lockhart (1994), teachers' instructional practices reflect their knowledge and beliefs. With this view in mind, teacher preparation programs may provide NNES teacher candidates with opportunities to reflect upon the sources of their beliefs as teachers during the course seminars or practicum. These beliefs may arise from a combination of factors, including ESL/EFL teaching and learning experiences, personality and attitudinal factors, and established practices in their countries. They can then examine how these can be translated into classroom practices (Kamhi-Stein, 1999; Richards & Lockhart, 1994). For example, if Kuriko had ever had a chance to write a short reflective essay on the issues of her learning during her graduate study, such as her concern with her instructor's expectations, she would have had a better understanding of the cultural differences in the grading system.

To implement reflective journals, NNES student teachers may meet regularly with their advisors or supervisors to explicitly explore their knowledge of language leaning and teaching, their intellectual and professional growth, and most importantly, the relationship between English and their identities, so that when they complete the program they may have a sense of themselves as English instructors with confidence in their professional identities. Some of the elements teacher educators may encourage NNES student teachers to explore in their reflective journals include

elements of language they don't feel comfortable about, particular area of language they need to improve, elements of English they know better, and ways of teaching that are beneficial.

Involvement in Professional Organizations

The NNES teachers' narratives clearly convey the importance of establishing a community among NNESs. For doing so, it's important to encourage practitioners to participate in regional or state conferences to share their practitioner knowledge. Involvement in professional activities, such as participating in regional or international organizations, doing conference presentations, or taking leadership roles in the organization, is one of the strategies that can raise the profile and visibility of NNES ESL practitioners in the TESOL field (Kamhi-Stein, 2000).

There has been a dramatic increase in the representation of NNES scholars in professional conferences at the regional and state levels. For example, at a recent international TESOL convention, some presenters reported the results of research investigating the classroom practices and challenges faced by novice and experienced NNES teachers, and the relationship between race and language identity. However, little research was presented by NNES K-12 practitioners. NNES K-12 practitioners' experiences in designing curricula to enhance the language skills of ESL learners are crucial resources for novice NNES teachers.

In his presentation, "NNESTS: More than Native Speakers" at the 2004 Fall WATESOL Convention, Brock Brady launched an NNEST (Nonnative English Speaking Teacher) caucus. The purpose of the caucus is to build awareness of the strengths NNESTs can bring to English teaching, to build awareness of unconscious

prejudices that some may have against NNESs, to support NNESs and NESs in their professional development, to encourage collaboration between NNESTs and NESTs, and to expand research activities on NNEST issues. Involvement in such organizations will help NNES ESL teachers become visible and establish their voices throughout the organizational network.

Conclusion

In this dissertation study, I aspired to tell stories about four ESL teachers, Wen-Lin Huang, Kuriko Yayama, Xuen Zhang and myself, who speak English as a second language. Through these stories of our language learning, teaching experiences and life histories, I wanted to capture the experience of becoming and being an NNES ESL teacher in the United States from each individual teacher's perspective. Particularly, this study emphasizes the meanings of our experiences as language learners, ESL teacher candidates, and ESL practitioners in relation to our identity construction and reconstruction, and highlights cultural, linguistic, social, personal and interpersonal elements in our professional identity transformation.

The stories I collected, based upon in-depth life history narrative interviews with the teachers, suggest that the process of becoming and being ESL teachers as NNESs in the United States is a struggle because the issues of teacher identity for NNESs are both complex and challenging. Through narrating my own autobiography and the three teachers' life histories, this inquiry offers a more nuanced understanding of the struggles and challenges NNES ESL teachers may encounter in the United States, and presents an in-depth look at how NNES ESL teachers use their own cultures and language learning experience to develop instructional and classroom

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management strategies that promote success for ESL students in their classrooms, and how they use unique ways of teaching to establish their voices and transform their professional identities. I discovered that for Wen-Lin, Kuriko, and Xuen, becoming an ESL teacher with an NNES identity in the United States required more commitment, perseverance, and courage than I ever could have imagined.

The experience of telling stories about NNES ESL teachers' lives has been an incredible personal and professional journey. Personally, I have reflected upon my own experiences as an NNES, unafraid to ask some questions that had once intimidated me. The findings of this narrative inquiry suggest that the journey of making the transition from an English language learner to an NNES ESL professional is a bumpy road. There have been ups and downs in the processes of learning to teach; however, by uncovering my own past and understanding my present as an NNES, I have been able to witness my own developmental growth. The process of writing my autobiography has helped me embrace myself and understand myself in constructing knowledge of language teaching from a variety of perspectives, thereby reaching a new level of acceptance and understanding of my teaching self.

The experience of narrating NNES ESL teachers' life histories has also promoted my professional growth as a scholar. In exploring and writing about NNES ESL teachers' life histories, not only has this study taken a step towards extending our understanding of NNES ESL teachers' lives within a social, cultural and historical framework, but I also have learned a valuable lesson about the relationship between life experiences and teacher professional development. With more developed understandings of NNES ESL teachers, teacher educators may be able to help

language teachers embrace their identities and encourage them to cultivate their unique cultural backgrounds into teaching resources so that they may better serve culturally and linguistically diverse ESL learners in the United States.

Base upon the limitations of this narrative inquiry, two new storylines could be developed through future research. First, storylines that involve the voices of NNES ESL teachers who are from other cultural backgrounds, such as South America or the Middle East, could broaden our understanding of NNESs' experiences from diverse cultural perspectives. In this study, I limited my participants to the East Asian region in the initial phases of the project because this study started from my own cultural and linguistic experience as an NNES and I wanted to focus on the cultures with which I am more familiar. Since we know that NNES teachers' stories may look different according to cultural groups, it would be extremely important for further research to involve as many NNES ESL practitioners as possible in order to better represent the range of NNES ESL practitioners' cultural backgrounds and perspectives.

Second, there are more and more NNESs enrolled in TESOL teacher preparation programs. Although many of them are immigrants, others have come to the United States to pursue graduate studies in TESOL and plan to return to their home countries. After graduation, NNESs may stay in an English-dominant country, or move to countries other than their own and begin careers as English teachers. Similarly, many opportunities are available for NES teacher candidates who are interested in teaching English in countries where English is not the dominant language. In any of these teaching options, all of which are common in the TESOL

profession, one is likely to be working with students or colleagues who have linguistic, cultural and academic backgrounds that differ from one's own. Consequently, the ability to understand the different challenges teaching in ESL or EFL settings is essential for building a successful career and for providing effective instruction for one's students.

Although this study mainly focuses on NNES ESL teachers in the United Sates, several important themes emerged from the participants' narratives, such as (a) the significance of cultural and linguistic experience in shaping teachers' perspectives on language learning and teaching; (b) the role of professional development resources (e.g., graduate course, in-service workshops, and community organizations); (c) the influence of personal and interpersonal relationships in shaping teachers' identities (e.g., family members, school teachers, student peers and colleagues); (d) the impact of political language ideology or racism. These narrative themes may provide an initial direction for further research in EFL contexts because those NES teacher candidates who are interested in teaching English in countries where English is not the dominant language may encounter similar experiences to those NNESs have experienced in the United States. And those NNESs who return to their home countries after their study in the U.S. may encounter a reverse cultural shock and may need to relearn educational expectations in their home countries.

In conclusion, as we pursue new avenues for narrative research on teacher identity, we need to acknowledge the "unfinishedness" (Freire, 1998) of identity. Freire (1998) stresses that as human beings we must understand our own unfinishedness and have awareness of being conditioned. In his words, our identities,

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"in regard to others and to the world, constitutes [our] essential and irrepeatable way of experiencing [ourselves] as a cultural, historical, and unfinished being in the world, simultaneously conscious of [our] unfinishedness" (p. 51). As educational researchers, we have the unique opportunity to hear and share the practical stories of practitioners – whether they are NNESs or NESs, whether they teach in an English speaking country or a non-English speaking country. The stories we choose to tell may extend our understanding of the possibilities in language learning and teaching.

Appendix

Appendix A: Life History Narrative Interview for NNES ESL Teachers

Introduction

This is an interview about your life experiences with language learning and teaching. Teachers' lives vary tremendously, and teachers make sense of their own linguistic experiences in a variety of ways. The goal of this interview is to better understand how teachers live through their language learning and teaching experiences. Therefore, this narrative interview allows you to describe who you were as a language learner and who you are as a language teacher.

Content
This interview consists of five major parts that allow me to explore your life as an East Asian woman and understand you as an ESL teacher. The five parts of the narrative interview are: (1) Life Stories and Personal Myth (2) Language Learning and Becoming a Language Teacher, (3) Stories of Border-crossing (4) Teaching Experience in the U.S., (5) Self-description and Future Career.

PART ONE: Life Stories and Personal Myth

In the first part of this narrative interview, I would like you to recall several major events that stand out in your life. A key event should be a specific happening, a critical incident, a significant episode in your past, set in a particular time and place. It is helpful to think of such an event as constituting a specific moment which stands out for some reasons of who you were or who you are as a Chinese, Japanese, Korean or Taiwanese, a female, daughter, mother, or any other role in society.

For each event below, describe in as much detail as you can what happened, when and where it happened, who was involved, what you did, and what you were thinking and feeling in the event. Also, try to convey what impact this key event has had in the story of your life-experiences and what this event says about who you are or were.

Event #1: Important childhood scene
I would like you to describe a memory from your childhood that describes who you were or who you are. It may be a positive or negative memory at home, at school or any other place. Please describe exactly what happened, when and where it happened,

who was involved, what you did, and what you were thinking and feeling in the event, what impact this experience may have had on you, and what this experience says about who you were or who you are as a person. If you do not have any significant childhood memory, you can describe an important memory from your adolescence or adulthood.

Event #2: Family myth
Family is one's first map into the world. Family stories often play a role in helping us understand our relation with the world. Now, I would like you to concentrate on a specific incident in your family history that communicates something about your family and family values. It could be a story that was told by your family members and passed down from generation to generation before you were born but has had a significant impact on you.

Event #3: Stories of being a female
Now, I would like you to think about what it means to be a female in your home country, how the role of a female is defined in your family or your home country's society. Then, tell me a specific incident that describes who you were/are as a Chinese, Korean, Japanese or Taiwanese female. What happened? When and where did it happen? Who was involved? What did you do? What were you thinking and feeling in the event? What impact has this incident had on your identity as a female? What does this experience say about who you were/are.

Event #4: Novel/Short Story/Poem
I would like you to think about a novel, short story or poem that you have read. I am particularly interested in a novel/short story/poem that has had an impact on your identity as a Chinese, Japanese, Korean or Taiwanese female. Please first briefly describe the novel/short story/poem. Then, tell me in what situation you read this novel/short story/poem, how it spoke to you and how it moved you, whether made you laugh or cry, and what impact it has had on your life.

PART TWO: Language Learning and Becoming a Language Teacher

In the second part of this narrative interview, I would like you to concentrate on a few key events or significant experiences in language learning and becoming a language teacher that stand out in your life. You may consider your language learning and teaching experiences either in your home country or in the United States. You might also want to compare your language learning experiences between your home country and the United States.

Event #1: Peak experience in language learning
A peak experience would be a high point in your story about language learning in your life. It would be a moment or episode in the story in which you experienced extremely positive emotions like joy, excitement, great happiness, uplifting, or even deep inner peace about language learning. Tell me exactly what happened, when and where it happened, who was involved, what you did, and what you were thinking and

feeling in the event. What impact has this experience had on you as a learner? What impact has this experience had on you becoming a teacher?

Event #2: Nadir-experience in language learning

A "nadir" is a low point. A nadir-experience, therefore, is the opposite of a peak experience. It is a low point in your language learning experiences. Thinking back over your life, try to remember a specific experience in which you felt extreme negative emotions about language learning. You should consider this experience to represent one of the 'low points' in your language learning life history. What happened? When and where did it happen? Who was involved? What did you do? What were you thinking and feeling in the event? What impact has this experience had on you as a learner? What impact has this experience had on you becoming a teacher?

Event #3: Turning point for becoming a language teacher

In looking back on one's life, it is often possible to identify certain key 'turning points'- episodes through which a person undergoes substantial change. I am especially interested in a turning point in the understanding of language learning and teaching. Please identify a particular episode in your life-story that you now see as a turning point for becoming a language teacher. What happened? When did you first develop an interest in becoming an English teacher? Was there any particular event or person that most contributed to your decision?

PART THREE: Stories of Border-crossing

In the third part of this narrative interview, I would like you to recall several major events that stand out in your life as an immigrant, an international student, a non-native English speaker or a foreigner in the United States.

Event #1: Motivation in coming to the U.S.
In the first event, I would like you to describe your initial motivation and story in coming to the U.S. What was your initial motivation to leave your home country? Why did you decide to come to the U.S.? Was there any particular event or person that most contributed to your decision in coming to the U.S.? Did you consult anyone in your decision making?

Event #2: Peak experience of living in the U.S.
Now, I would like you to describe a high point of your life in the U.S. Tell me exactly what happened, when and where it happened, who was involved, what you did, and what you were thinking and feeling in the event, what impact this experience has had on you, and what this experience says about who you are/were as an East Asian woman in the context of the U.S. I am particularly interested in the issues of gender, racial, ethnic, cultural and linguistic identity in your story.

Event #3: Nadir-experience of living in the U.S.
In this event, I would like you to describe a low point of your life in the U.S. Looking back over your life and interactions with others, please describe one greatest life-challenge that you have faced in the U.S.

PART FOUR: Teaching Experience in the U.S.

In the fourth part of this narrative interview, I would like you to share your experiences and stories of becoming and being an East Asian, female, non-native English speaking ESL teacher. I would like you to recall several major events that stand out in your ESL teaching life in the United States. I am particularly interested in the issues of gender, ethnic, cultural and linguistic identities in relation to your teaching life in the United States.

Event #1: Seeking a teaching position in the U.S.
Please tell me your stories when you were in the process of seeking a teaching position in the U.S. What did the interview process look like? Have you encountered any difficulty while seeking a teaching position? How did you deal with difficulties? What were you thinking or feeling during the job hunting process?

Event #2: Description of Current Teaching Experience
Please describe your typical day as an ESL teacher in the current position. What does your class look like? How do you organize your class? What is your relationship with your students and colleagues at school?

Event #3: Peak experience as an ESL teacher in the U.S.
A peak experience would be a high point in your story about language teaching in the U.S. It would be a moment or episode in the story in which you experienced extremely positive emotions like joy, excitement, great happiness, uplifting, or even deep inner peace as an ESL teacher. What impact has this experience had on who you were/are as an ESL teacher in the U.S.?

Event #4: Nadir-experience as an ESL teacher in the U.S.
Thinking back over your teaching life, try to remember a specific experience in which you felt extreme negative emotions as an ESL teacher in the U.S. You should consider this experience to represent one of the 'low points' in your language teaching life history. What impact has this experience had on you as an East Asian, female, non-native English speaking ESL teacher in the U.S.? What does this event say about who you are as an ESL teacher?

PART FIVE: Self-Description and Future Career

1. Self-Description
  ➢ If you were to tell someone who you really are, how would you describe yourself?

- ➢ Do you see yourself differently when you talk with people in your native language or in English?
- ➢ Would you describe yourself differently when you are at home or in the workplace?
- ➢ Is the way you see yourself now different from the way you saw yourself in the past? What led to the changes?
- ➢ If you were asked to use a metaphor to symbolize yourself, what image comes to your mind?
- ➢ If I ask how you picture your life, what image comes to your mind? What is your life metaphor?

2. Future Career
- ➢ You have told me about who you are. Now, I would like you to consider the future. I would like you first to imagine a future in your life. That is, please describe what you would like to happen in the future with regards to your career, including what goals and dreams you might accomplish or realize in the future.
- ➢ How do you see yourself changing in the future? What will you and your life be like fifteen years from now?

This interview protocol is adopted from McAdams's (1993) eight key events for interviewing a person's life and Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule's (1986) interview questions for understanding women's ways of knowing.

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

<div align="right">November 2004</div>

<div align="right">_____ (Initial)_____(Date)</div>

Identification of Project/Title	Stories of Teacher Identity: A Narrative Inquiry into East Asian ESL Teachers' Lives
Purpose	This study is being conducted as a dissertation research by Yen-Hui Lu, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Maryland, College Park, under the direction of Dr. Valli, Associate Professor, University of Maryland. The purpose of this study is to explore how East Asian ESOL teachers navigate through the complexities of learning to teach by reflecting on their teaching beliefs, practices and identities.
Procedures	To provide complex understandings of East Asian ESOL teachers' lives within a social, cultural and historical framework, the participants will be asked to engage in narrative inquiry through three one-on-one interviews, two focus-group interviews and on-going email interviews within a six-month data collection period. These interviews will be guided by an unstructured, open-ended interview protocol. Examples of interview questions are: (1) Please describe a significant educational experience during your school years; (2) Please describe a significant family story or event in your life that contributes to who you are as a teacher; and (3) Please describe an important teaching experience or event you had as a non-native English speaking (NNES) ESOL teacher in the United States. Each interview will last approximately one and a half hours. All interviews will be conducted outside of participants' working places. The researcher will ask to audio-record these interviews. These interviews will be recorded in a digital form and saved in the researcher's personal computer which only the researcher can access. All interviews will be transcribed. These digital data and transcriptions will be used for research purposes only.
Confidentiality	I will protect the participants' privacy. No school or individual will be identified by name in any research reports or publications. Pseudonyms will be used for both the institution involved and individuals interviewed in write ups of the study. The digital data will be deleted from the computer and the transcriptions will be shredded at the conclusion of the study. Participants are free to decide not to have their conversations and interviews taped. After retelling participants' stories in written form, I will ask the participants to double-check content to ensure accuracy.
Risks	Risks are minimal in participating in this study. No real name will be used in this study. No data will be used for personal evaluation. You may experience some mild anxiety at being tape-recorded."

Benefits	This study is not designed for personal benefit, but the participants may consider using their own written reflections for their personal professional development plan.
Freedom to Withdraw, & Ability to Ask Questions	Your participation is totally voluntary. You have a right to withdraw from participation at any time and without penalty. You may also refuse to answer any particular question without penalty. Questions about the nature of the project and the implications it has for you can be directed to me at 301/935-5149 or Yen_Hui_Lu@yahoo.com By signing this document you are agreeing to participate. You are, of course, free to change your mind at any point.
Contact Information of Investigators	Principal Investigator: Name: Dr. Linda Valli Phone: 301/405-7924 Email: LRV@umd.edu Student Investigator: Name: Yen-Hui Lu Phone: 301/935-5149 Email: Yen_Hui_Lu@yahoo.com
Contact Information of Institutional Review Board	If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact: Institutional Review Board Office, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, 20742; (e-mail)irb@deans.umd.edu; (telephone) 301-405-4212

Sincerely,

Yen-Hui Lu
Second Language Education/TESOL
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
University of Maryland, College Park

Name of Subject

Signature of Subject

Date

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