Modern English Education, Vol. 16, No. 1, Spring 2015

A Qualitative Inquiry of Non-native English Teacher Identity in US ESL Classrooms: Based on Bakhtinian Dialogism

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Kim, Jungyin. (2015). A qualitative inquiry of non-native English teacher identity in US ESL classrooms: Based on Bakhtinian dialogism. *Modern English Education, 16*(1), 107-126.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to contextualize teacher identity of non-native speakers of English as both an individual and a social issue at a U.S. secondary ESL setting because research on teacher identity has become increasingly important to understanding English language teachers and their professional practice. The study draws on Bakhtin's dialogism, and examines how non-native teachers of English make sense of themselves through past histories and present environments. Their understanding of self is also interlaced with the perceptions of administrators and their relationships with students in this study. The study took on a case study method because of its specific focus on a particular group of teachers. The findings are largely based on classroom observations and open-ended interviews. To confirm the findings, data sources (interviews and observations), multiple informants (students, administrators, and teachers), and Bakhtin's theory on dialogism were triangulated. Pedagogical implications are also discussed.

**[Bakhtin/linguistic dichotomy/non-native English speaker/teacher identity/
바흐친/언어의이분법/비영어권 화자/교사의정체성]**

I. INTRODUCTION

Research on teacher identity has become increasingly important to understanding English language teachers and their professional practice. The concept of situated, multiple, and dynamic identity forms a common feature across studies in multiple theories (Kubota & Lin, 2009; Moussu & Llurda, 2008; G. Park, 2012). This line of inquiry examines layers of structural influences on language teaching and professional development. The classroom

is seen as a space where teachers negotiate their sense of self (Cote & Levine, 2002) in relation to their students and the sociopolitical environments in which they are located (Alsup, 2006; Clarke, 2008; Gao, 2012; Mockler, 2011; Varghese, 2006). The significance of teacher identity is explained by Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, and Johnson (2005) when they note the importance of having a clearer understanding of teachers' professional, cultural, political, and individual identities. One issue in language teacher education particularly pertinent to the study of teacher identity is non-native teachers of English (hence, NNES).

The binary that categorizes English language teachers into native (hence, NES) and non-native speakers has been extensively studied because linguistic membership is enacted to define the ideal English language teacher based upon one′s country of origin and first language (L1) rather than teaching preparation. This phenomenon, known as the native speaker fallacy (Phillipson, 1992) can be traced back to the 1961 Commonwealth Conference on ESL in Makerere, Uganda, where it was widely believed that native speakers could perform a language and represent the culture of that language more accurately than their non- native counterparts. This fallacy has had a significant impact on the hiring process and the view of students on authentic English speakers. One professional tension with which NNES continue to wrestle is that their English competence is often viewed as deviating from the native norm, in particularly, English with British or American accents. Therefore, NNES′ linguistic expertise is seen as insufficient to establish their credibility as English language teachers. Teacher identity studies have focused on the asymmetrical relationship between native (NES) and non-native teachers, based on larger social dimension. The teaching strengths of native and non-native teachers have been described to emphasize the contributions that each group can make to the classroom (Braine, 2010; Cheung & Braine, 2007; Kamhi-Stein, 2004; Ma, 2012; Mahboob, 2004, 2010; Moussu & Llurda, 2008). Nevertheless, the image of NNESs seems rigid and one-dimensional in the field of language teacher education.

Although being a language teacher illustrates the multifaceted memberships to which individuals subscribe, a problem in NNES studies is placing NNES into a single group rather than focusing on their diversity. For example, Kubota and Lin (2009) discuss the racialized aspect of native and non-native speakers to acknowledge the experiences of ESL/EFL professionals of color, given that ″native speaker″ is often associated with ″White.″ In their article on NNES, Moussu and Llurda (2008) claim that there is a need to deepen our knowledge of language teaching and how different factors among individual teachers may affect their performance. Likewise, G. Park (2012) observes that ″attention to diversity within these [NNES] has been limited″ (p. 129). These differences include instructional contexts, education levels, and teacher backgrounds.

Next, there is little classroom observation-based research that explores the situated

NNES teacher identity, i.e., how NNES′ understandings of self emerge from their interactions with groups and how they occur in institutions. Questionnaires identifying the attitudes of students and administrators toward NNES are the most common form of data collection. Findings from several studies suggest that preferences for NES tend to prevent NNES from employment, and students have a strong desire to study with NES. Furthermore, even when both NES and NNES make similar teaching mistakes, NNES′ ability as teachers is more likely to be challenged (Clark & Paran, 2007; Evrim, 2007; Mahboob, 2010). In contrast, other studies conclude that administrators and students have similar perceptions of NES and NNES. Results from Nemtchinova′s (2005) questionnaire study on the perceptions of NES teachers with regard to non-native student teachers in the United States indicate that their accents and grammatical errors are not considered problematic. Additionally, the survey conducted by Grubbs, Jantarach, and Kettern (2010) on college students′ opinions in Thailand finds that students perceive both NES and NNES as effective English speakers and indicate their preference to study with both NES and NNES. Methodologically, Grubbs et al. (2010) emphasize that studies on preferences for NES/NNES need to be examined carefully in terms of how extraneous variables might affect conclusions.

Along the same lines, there is much research on NNES that has been conducted in the EFL context and university-level ESL courses (e.g., Braine, 2010; Grubbs et al., 2010; Ma, 2012; Mahboob, 2010; Moussu & Llurda, 2008; G. Park, 2012). Little is known, however, about how the K-12 ESL setting is made up of individual perceptions of NNES and constructs their professional images and practices. The uniqueness of K-12 ESL schooling lies in its culturally and linguistically diverse student population. Many U.S. educators promote a more diverse teaching force, similar to the students′ backgrounds, to better prepare them for academic success (e.g., Banks & McGee Banks, 2009). Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) goes against the native speaker fallacy by arguing that nativeness is not very relevant when evaluating teacher qualifications in an ESL context ″where the learners can hear, read, and often also interact with native speaker models everyday if they desire this″ (p. 38). For many NNES, the process of building a positive teacher identity can be haunted by beliefs with regard to nativeness. Empirical research is, therefore, needed to improve our understanding of the NNES identity at a secondary ESL level as both a social and an individual matter. This is the goal of the current paper.

The purpose of this study is to examine the social aspect of NNES identity and how it can be contextualized by a qualitative approach with the goal of portraying the nature of research settings and weaving the perceptions of administrators, students, and teachers themselves. The diversity of NNES is addressed by examining how teacher participants interpret the NNES category. The analysis is also based on biographies of the teachers, which illustrate their individual differences, including nationality, education, and familial

background. The diversity will be further analyzed by looking at the teachers′ classroom practices. The existing literature often generalizes the teaching characteristics of NNES. This practice can oversimplify teaching embedded in knowledge about the professional discipline, personal history, and schooling structures (Alsup, 2006; Mockler, 2011; Varghese, 2006), and the teacher′s ability to use English is equally important. What follows is a theoretical framework, grounded in Bakhtinian dialogism, which is used to explore the formation of NNES teacher identity in secondary ESL programs in the U.S.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for NNES identity is Bakhtin′s dialogism. Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (2003) state that dialogism portrays the concept of identity as similar to a conversation. Dialogism views meaning-making that is built upon others′ perspectives and stratified with social values. Citing Bakhtin, Morris (1994) notes, ″[the word] exists in other people′s mouths, in other people′s contexts, serving other people′s intention: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one′s own″ (p. 77). One responds to and takes on the words of others to cast one′s understanding of self based upon others′ perspectives. These self-understandings, based on the multiplicity and contradiction of language use, guide one′s behavior, way of thinking, and speech. For example, the ethnographic study of Holland et al. (2003) on female identity in Naudanda illustrates how girls are defined and claim themselves as female. The female image that these girls articulate is constructed through activities they participate in daily. They are brought up by enacting their roles as good daughters, wives, and mothers who do house chores, respect men and eventually should give birth to a son in order to get a higher status in the family. These social rules that girls internalize are gossiping and preaching that they have been exposed to. Although the girls carry out the expected life path and are expected to portray these ′good female′ characteristics, they are critical to take on their marginalized position in relation to others. The gender role is challenged and contested when the girls compare themselves with boys who are entitled to inherit property and receive education. Being a woman in Naudada shows that identity is not categorical, but dynamic social interactions and competing voices.

The reason for presenting this example is to show we can apply identity as a dialogical process to the current study on NNES, which means examining activities and the contexts that constitutes in building a sense of self. The ways NNES talk about their non-native status and promote their teaching roles is constructed through past histories and present setting. Their belief about who they are as NNES is also made available by students and school managers. Interwoven personal trajectories and certain social situations help

examine internal differences among the NNES.

This study addresses the following research questions:

1) What is the school setting where non-native speakers are employed as full-time ESL staff?
2) How do ESL program administrators and students perceive NNES?
3) How do NNES think of their status as non-native speakers and how do they perform their teaching practices?

III. METHODOLOGY

This study is part of a longer, qualitative study of three full-time NNES and an interview with four school administrators and six students between 2009–2012. The study took on a case study method because of its specific focus on a particular group of teachers (Merriam, 1998). Case studies allow the researcher to detail a relatively unknown phenomenon over a period of time. Since what is missing from the existing literature is the contextualization of NNES′ issue, the qualitative methods are useful to examine how the particular field of secondary ESL education and local agents co-construct NNES′ self-perceptions and professional experiences. The sampling process was the snowball strategy (Merriam, 1998). One of the teacher participants, the author met in a teacher development workshop at University A, referred the author to her colleagues in the ESL department at Markham Secondary School. She also said that some NNES worked at Schertz Secondary School. The author then contacted University C ESL department head to recruit teacher participants for this project.

The findings for this particular study are largely based on classroom observations and open-ended interviews. Because of the ethnographic nature of this study, the author thinks it is important to position herself in relation to the study participants. The author identifies herself as a NES. The author grew up in Korea and began learning English when she moved to the US at the age of six, but later returned to Korea during her middle school years. As a graduate student studying in the US and working part-time in a K-12 classroom context, the author's English proficiency is often applauded in the United States as being almost native-like. However, there are moments of discomfort as the author recognizes tension between her coexisting identities as an English teacher and her international "ESL" graduate student identity forged upon her by the University (US). At the research sites, the administrators and teachers saw the author as a native-speaker international student who studied at a state research university and was interested in English language teaching and learning. The students perceived the author as a comfortable friend who was good at

English and gave quick advice on classroom assignments.

1. Data Collection

The author spent two days every week in each teacher′s classroom, observed, and took field notes about teaching activities and student–teacher interactions. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) claim that field notes are highly contextual and capture a study participant′s actions. These field notes were written accounts of how the teacher participants behaved and talked about themselves. In addition, the author attended staff meetings, ate lunch with the teachers, and assisted them whenever any help was needed. Informal conversations with teachers, students, and administrators were also recorded in the field notes.

Also, open-ended interviews with each teacher were conducted twice through the year and each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes. The first interview focused on the teachers′ personal and professional profiles and the second interview on the teachers′ comments about teaching and learning. The data used to explore the students and administrators′ biography, their views on ESL teacher competence and perceptions of NNES came from their interviews. The author interviewed each student and administrator once for 40–50 minutes. The student interviewees selected were the more vocal students in the classroom. Seidman (2005) asserts that an open-ended interview complements the classroom observations and allows the researcher to contextualize what and why people think the way they do.

2. Data Analysis

The author analyzed the data using reflections that were written in the margins of interview transcripts and field notes to describe what, how, and why things happened. Each participant was viewed as a case in order to examine how and why individual perspectives of NNES were different or even similar. The data were grouped based upon themes (personal biography, professional experience, views on qualified teachers). To confirm the author's findings, data sources (interviews and observations), multiple informants (students, administrators, and teachers), and Bakhtin′s theory on dialogism were triangulated (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Bahktin′s dialogism shows one′s viewpoint that is filtered through an ideology that echoes Tuchman′s comment: ″Even if an event is not controversial, it will have been seen and remembered from different angles of view by different observers″ (as cited in Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 267). Triangulation attempts to strengthen the conclusions of this study to contextualize the issue of NNES.

3. School Setting

There were two research sites in the US located in the midwest. One was Markham Secondary School and the other research site was Schertz Secondary School. Both schools enrolled the largest ESL student population in both the urban and suburban district near University A. The schools were located near college towns in which most of the residents worked or studied in the nearby college. The Markham and Schertz ESL departments were unique in that many of the faculty members were foreign-born and NNES. The ESL director of Markham was Ms. Jenson, a white NES. She said that her school district had a relatively long history of immigration. The mid 70s was a Southeast Asian era, when a large flow of immigrants settled in the area near Markham. The residents did not originally welcome the immigrants, but they eventually appreciated their bilingual backgrounds when the schools needed NNES who bridged ESL students′ home and school communications (interview 56).

The Suburban School District of Schertz has recently changed into a multi-ethnic district since a flow of immigrants from Somalia and Ukraine impacted the demographics of the population. At Schertz the ESL department head, Ms. Patty, formed a separate ESL department in the school. She is a white NES and the senior teacher in the department. She was always available to her ESL staff, who wanted to borrow resources. The daily lunch gathering functioned as an informal network where teachers exchanged news about students, updated in-service teacher trainings or discussed teaching situations that had occurred (field notes 42).

IV. FINDINGS

1. Situated Practice of NNES

This section consists of an analysis of the perceptions of administrators and students about NNES, in addition with the teachers′ understandings of their non-native status. The findings show that NNES teachers could be characterized by their use of a non-dominant variety of spoken English, their confidence in their skills with English which was validated by their administrators, students, and family members. These interlocutors with whom the NNES teachers interact daily helped them recognize their full and capable participation in private and professional circles. The students in this study considered NNES′ accent as less important in comparison to a NNES teachers′ ability to use English and knowledge about teaching. The findings are divided into three sub-sections as the following indicates.

1) Perspectives of ESL Administrators

This sub-section is categorized based on three themes. First, it summarizes the individual backgrounds of four administrators, particularly relevant to their second language (L2) learning. Second, it discussed the administrators′ feedback on the English competence of NNES teachers. Finally, it describes how NNES′ linguistic feature was seen based on professional qualifications.

The ESL administrators had similar backgrounds. They had learned a second language, worked in the ESL field for several years, and lived outside the United States. Park, the ESL specialist for Schertz, grew up in Korea and settled in the United States after graduation from college. She viewed herself as a NNES. Patty had known only basic French before living in France for a time with her husband and children. Jenson′s five-year experience living in the Republic of Congo got her interested in the NES/NNES issue, because she was then a struggling non-native French speaker in Congo. Ms. Jin, the Markham ESL department head, is a Tawainese American who had experienced the loss of her first language (L1) fluency in second grade because of the English-only policy at her school. In college, she decided to relearn her first language for the foreign language requirement in order to graduate. The experience of being a non-native speaker of a language played a role in the lives of these administrators.

Moreover, the NNES′ English competence was praised. Patty noted that she never labeled her ESL staff members as NNES, although she was aware of the teachers′ non-native status because of their subtle mispronunciations. She emphasized that the NNES teachers ″are fluent enough, and I think that they are pretty comfortable in their English″ (interview 37). Likewise, Jenson and Jin acknowledged the NNES′ speech intelligibility and strong command over English.

In addition, the administrators talked about accent in relation to the NNES′ professional qualifications. Patty and Jin heard that the NNES′ accents were singled out as a weakness of their teaching; however, they noted that they were unable to comment on these incidents because of insufficient insiders′ information. Only Jenson related a personal experience. One Chinese speaker′s accent made it difficult for Jenson to understand the speaker's intention and the interview committee questioned how well the speaker could communicate with students. After the interview, the interviewee asked for Jenson′s feedback on her performance. Jenson said, ″I think that it was a courageous thing to do, so I wrote down a few examples of her speech where kids′ might misunderstand, but her teaching was solid. We debriefed about 15 minutes, and she′s been grateful for my feedback. Well, she was hired (smiling).″ Park told her story to show that being a NNES forces her to make greater efforts to complete tasks than a NES; however, one's NNES status should not be perceived as the main criteria to discredit professional qualifications

when one is a well-trained and experienced ESL teacher.

As revealed in the biographies of the administrators′, Park worked hard to build her NNES legitimacy while the others had been positioned as NNES across time and context. Their daily interactions with NNES created opportunities for the administrators to assess and evaluate NNES′ English competence. Despite these opportunities, accent was a potential barrier to teaching.

2) Perceptions of ESL Students

According to the literature, biased attitudes toward NNES tend to be attributed to their non-dominant ways (e.g., speaking with an accent) of speaking English (Kamhi-Stein, 2004; Mahboob, 2010). Thus, the interviews with students focused on their comments on why they did or did not view the accents of NNES teachers as an issue, as well as what they perceived as being important in their English learning.

The students pointed to accent as a characteristic of the NNES teachers, and the students noted the diverse forms of English to which they were exposed, both in and out of class. For example, Nami from Kenya said, ″People cannot take away all the accents because they learn English when [they are] older.″ Maria from Bolivia and Stefan from Ukraine believed that their African American classmates had distinctive styles of speaking English, as did the NNES. Ting from China talked about one of her favorite TV shows, ′America′s Next Top Model', and said that one of the final contestants on the show had a Russian accent. She commented on the accented English of the NNES and the top models and said, ″American models with accent in their English looks cool, so American teachers having accents is not something bad."

Of the interviews with the students, Xing from China was the only one who had felt frustrated when taking classes with NNES. However, the linguistic diversity within which Xing was situated gradually changed his attitude. He remembered complaining to his instructional assistant, ″I came to improve my English. If I learn from a teacher that is not a native-speaker, then my American classmates and teachers will have a hard time understanding me.″ Xing thought imitating and learning from a NNES teacher could negatively impact his verbal interaction with NES. However, he benefited from his ability to understand accented English when he worked in a Chinese -American restaurant where he was the only waiter who understood the varied accents of English that ethnic customers used to place their orders. He commented that [. . .] I′ve changed my perceptions of non-native teachers. It's ironic I feel that I can understand different people who pronounce English differently.″

The characteristics of favored ESL teachers and access to native speaker models were mentioned. The students showed concern on how well their ESL teachers could explain

concepts in an English environment. A case in point, Sophie said she liked teachers that "showed lots of examples of how to use a word in a sentence." The students were confident about their NNES teachers′ English because they could illustrate American slangs and idioms. These students also emphasized the various ways where they had to learn English outside the classroom environment (eavesdropping on campus and watching TV).

3) Self-perceptions of NNES

This section shows a description of the personal histories of three teachers. Additionally, it illustrates their understanding of being NNES as well as their NNES status in relation to their students. The relocation of these NNES in the U.S. had shaped their linguistic habitus, and English had become their dominant language. While the three teachers saw themselves as NNES because they had spoken another language before learning English, there were slight differences in terms of their understandings of being NNES.

Baang was raised in South Korea (hence, Korea) and her L1 was Korean. She immigrated to the U.S. when she was in her second year of middle school. Her strong literacy skills allowed her to attend a renowned university after high-school graduation. Baang recounts, ″I really never thought seriously about this non-native, native term until now. If I can communicate with others, I never thought it so important which way I was labeled [native or non-native speaker]”. Thus, for Baang, the NNES status did not have a pivotal role in her life because she had not reflected upon it until our interview. What had mattered to her was her ability to effectively communicate in English.

A noticeable issue emerging from Tatiana and Ella′s interviews is concerned with the linguistic differences between monolingual U.S and the multilingual Europe. Tatiana, from Ukraine, believed that NNES may feel somewhat alienated from NES but encouraged NNES to identify themselves as a bilingual, a feature often held in high regard by monolingual native speakers. Tatiana explains in her own words: ″a bilingual speaker has knowledge in more than one language, but not a native speaker.″ Tatiana′s upbringing was multilingual and privileged. She finished her K-12 education at a bilingual school, was an exchange student at a U.S. high school for a year, and learned Chinese in her graduate program. Ella, a Finnish student, had learned English in primary school. She had also been an exchange student at a U.S. university, and had received a scholarship to complete her Master′s program in Germany. She noted that it was mandatory for European students to learn a foreign language in the fourth grade and a second one in secondary school. She notes, ″Knowing several languages in Europe is very common, and people should understand its value.″ The personal backgrounds and up-bringings of Ella and Tatiana were an integral part of their multilingual education.

In the classrooms, the status of NNES between students and teachers was sometimes

mentioned to solidify student–teacher relationships (field notes 68). Often times, Baang′s students were curious when they noticed her chat with me in Korean. They would ask why Baang talked like an American person, but could speak fluent Korean. She explained that she had used English for more than 20 years. The first week of the semester, Ella noted that she was from Finland, and spoke English with a Finnish accent, noting that English was her second language. Teaching part-time in a level 1 Chinese class, Tatiana told her American students that one could learn a second language if they worked hard and were interested in learning a new language (field notes 72).

Worth noting in the teachers′ interviews was the significant role of English in their personal and public spaces. After marrying American citizens, both Tatiana and Ella had moved to the U.S. Tatiana commented that her father was unhappy that she spoke Russian improperly and spoke too much English. Ella seldom had the chance to speak Finnish or Swedish, except with her parents over Skype. Baang had raised her family in the U.S., and mainly spoke English at home. Each of the teachers′ L1 in this study seemed to have become mere memories in their current lives.

2. The Professional Practice of NNES

The section is made up of vignettes of each teacher′s classroom practices. It documents their teaching roles and external influences on their teaching. It also shows that the ways the teachers saw themselves as teachers were mediated by their trainings as teachers and multiple identities.

1) Baang: A Mother-like Figure

Baang called herself a surrogate mother to her students. She notes, ″As a teacher, my role is not just about being teachers of ESL students; sometimes, I′m a counselor and a second mother to them. And, you will understand when you teach that we all take on various roles″ (interview 60). Throughout the school year, Baang purchased school supplies and brought used clothing to her students but asked them to ask her individually what they needed in school. She believed that when students feel at ease with asking for personal help, a trusting relationship between the teacher and students forms. The ESL students in her class used the history classroom to practice Mexican dancing for the Schertz multicultural festival, and it was also the place for Baang′s after-school program (field notes 33).

Although Baang approached students at a personal level, her subject-matter expertise as a social studies teacher might not involve students learning history. Institutional structures could sideline Baang′s expertise. Continuous discussions had occurred on whether or not

an ESL history class should be structured under the mainstream program, since the ESL curriculum at Schertz mainly focused on language studies. Being the only social studies teacher in the ESL department, Baang had little support from her colleagues to discuss her teaching issues. Her class had a few students who had basic understanding of content materials covered in social studies (e.g., integrated study of the social sciences and humanities), some students had just started to learn English, and others who were illiterate. In order to adapt her teaching for students with divergent literacy skills, the social studies materials for these students were below a 3rd-grade level. Therefore, the more advanced students in social studies (and English) often showed indifference toward Baang′s efforts to explain and solve a very easy question. More often many students simply copied whatever she wrote on the board, and the students with limited literacy backgrounds were grouped in a corner, where they just sat in their seats without taking any notes (field notes 29). Baang felt frustrated whenever asked to discuss her ESL students′ social studies learning progress. She shied away from her views on teaching social studies using religion: ″I believe in the Buddha. They [ESL students] are the students I must accept as my challenge. Perhaps this is my fate″ (field notes 31). Baang did not relate herself to a professional teacher of social studies, but deflected the learning struggles of social studies of her ESL students to her faith.

2) Tatiana: A Lover of Language

Because Tatiana had professional and personal interests in languages, she saw that her instruction centered on building students′ English skills and her ESL students as foreign language learners. A typical schedule in Tatiana′s class included reading, writing, and grammar. She utilized ideas from her early language experiences for many of her vocabulary warm-up activities in her class (field notes 22). She noted: ″I wished [the teachers] played language games in their classes. We had so much fun in class.″ She incorporated her prior learning in her teaching, which interested her students to be on task. Tatiana believed that language learning should be enjoyable and interactive; yet, the activities led by teachers were a dominant form of instruction. For example, students were asked to recite a portion of a text, and Tatiana modeled correct pronunciations whenever they struggled. Question-and-answer interactions were incorporated as part of class activity in order to elicit students′ responses to the text exercises (field notes 24).

In addition to her teaching responsibilities, Tatiana was an elected ESL program manager and described herself as ″a reporter with the counseling program for those with questions about the [ESL] program.″ She thought that her first year of administrating the program went relatively smoothly because ″the department head did a lot of these tasks herself,″ said Tatiana (interview 28). During the week of state standardized tests she was

the busiest; the author asked if she needed any help when she was moving in and out of the building alone, collecting testing materials and checking room locations, while other ESL teachers stayed in their classrooms. Tatiana whispered, ″I′m busy because everybody thinks that I do a better job than anyone else.″ Her perceived support system and capacity kept her optimistic if she met an uncooperative staff: ″I don′t expect everyone to be cooperative or everything to be perfect. Otherwise, there wouldn′t be a need for my role″ (field notes 23).

3) Ella: ESL Literature and Language Teacher

Ms. Ella had high academic expectations of her students. Her classroom management skills were more authoritarian compared to the other ESL teachers. For instance, she expected her students to sit straight and not slouch at their desks. Nevertheless, her teaching style involved lots of student discussions and interactions. Many of her students respected her teaching style and said that Ella facilitated readings through similar teaching strategies. Ella′s reading curriculum included abridged literature and drama. She invited students to share the author′s biography, paraphrase the readings, and then check their knowledge of the characters and storyline. The following scenario represents one of her Macbeth lessons:

> Ella: What do you know about Shakespeare? What information did you find?
> Students (sifting through their notebooks): Born in England, in the 15^{th} [16^{th}] century. . .He wrote poetry.
> . . .
> Ella: Shakespeare used historical figures to write this play. What we′re going to read is Shakespeare′s original writing. Don′t worry if you do not understand his English. Remember! Shakespeare′s English is very old and several hundred years old. We′re going to experience his writing. Who wants to read? Any volunteers? (Field notes 44)

Reading was facilitated through discussions; students kept a reading reflection journal to write about the characters and plot. On the last day of the lesson, students did group presentation to report why Macbeth was a tragic hero. Ella saw herself as a literature and language teacher, which was embodied in her high academic expectations and teaching approaches. In return, her students progressed and showed interest in English learning.

Though Ella′s was a competent teacher, she did not associate herself with colleagues at Markham. She ate lunch alone and rarely stayed after school (field notes 39). ″I don′t feel like I am part of the school. This is just a job. I do a lot of independent work and some work with the ESL department. I get used to it,″ commented Ella. For Ella, school was a

place where she worked as a teacher, not a place to which she had personal connections. Her alienation from Markham could be further intensified because of Markham′s ESL department′s budget crisis. She may be laid off in the following school year because of her status as the most junior teacher in the program.

V. DISCUSSION

The study contextualizes NNES′ identity by examining the perceptions of administrators, students, and the teachers. The sympathy shown by the administrators toward NNESs may be oriented toward their own personal experiences as L2 learners who could understand that NNES have varying degrees of competency in any setting. It is interesting to note that some of the administrators′ avoiding to comment on accent and professional qualifications could imply their awareness of the underlying contentious issue of NNES teachers. Although the administrators' responses may not have originated from personal witnesses, Bakhtin reminds us that one′s thought is influenced by others′ voices; that is, ″Any concrete discourse (utterance). . .is entangled, shot through with shared thoughts, points of view, alien value judgments and accents″ (as cited in Morris, 1994, p. 75). Holliday and Aboshisha (2009) are reserved about anti-discrimination tenets that strive to achieve professional equity, given that the superiority of a native speaker is ″hidden within the discoursal structure of the profession and much harder to address″ (p. 670). In fact, Nemtchinova (2005) theorizes that limited information of the administrators′ backgrounds may reflect a discomfort to partake in critical discussion of the linguistic binary at educational institutions. Describing the meaning and value of a NNES is contingent on one′s understanding in response to some ideological perspectives in a specific institutional context.

Moreover, the students in this study considered a NNES′ accent as less important in comparison to a teachers′ ability to use English and knowledge about teaching. This may be because of the linguistically diverse context in which the students were part of (ESL program). The linguistically diverse context means that the students were language minorities and English was learned as an academic language, needed for them to know it well enough to succeed in school. The linguistically diverse context also suggests that students were attentive in listening and observing the behaviors of English speakers—how Americans speak English and in which forms, for instance, the English of youth and Black cultures. ESL students are often observed to differentiate classroom English from the types of slang used by their peers throughout the campus and the English that is used on TV (Olsen, 1997; Ibrahim, 1999). While the students′ awareness of new styles of English showed their desire to learn colloquial English, they could recognize that the individual use

of English is closely tied to the speaker′s age, ethnicity, profession, and education. The ideal image of a native speaker as White and using standard American English (Lippi-Green, 1997) can be disrupted and becomes unstable when American English is divergently used in academic settings, the mass media, and everyday life. Therefore, the students′ opinions about NNES teachers′ accents may have been less harsh because they may have been more aware of the teacher′s English fluency and their competency as teachers in making subject-matter content accessible to the students.

The diverse and social aspect of NNES shows that the teachers perceive themselves as effective English users and multilingual speakers. These NNES′ identification with the NNES identity was positive, reflecting the praise that they had received for their proficiency in English. Bakhtinian dialogism has more to explain the results above. The ways in which individuals create meaning about themselves is relational, resembling interpersonal dialog. Identity formation is not neutral, but marked by power and status as what one says is built upon quotations and available sources. The possibilities and constraints allowed the teachers to position themselves to a positive self-perception of being NNES. Thus, there is value in examining this in more detail.

The middle-class backgrounds of the teachers could possibly be traced back to their early exposure to learning Standard English, international travel, and the experience of becoming bi or multi-literate. These teachers′ pride of their academic success was evident in their accounts of their education. By looking at children from affluent family who exhibit the valued ways of learning, Lin (2008) maintains that familial socioeconomic status distributes the capital that individuals possess, thus enabling them to construct lifestyles that are even more powerful and prestigious. Although the NNES teachers could be characterized by their use of a non-dominant variety of spoken English, their confidence in their skills with English was validated by their administrators, students, and family members. These interlocutors with whom the NNES teachers interact daily helped them recognize their full and capable participation in private and professional circles.

Additionally, the teachers′ length of stay in the U.S. and the widespread use of English in everyday life were factors as well. The teachers′ L1 is more of a language inheritance (Leung, Harris, & Rampton, 1997) rather than a language that they prominently used in their current lives. Given the relatively privileged status of NES, Bakhtin′s dialogism is useful for examining the NNES teachers′ self-understandings as being comfortable English speakers. Such confidence is the result of living in the local context. Varghese (2006) concedes that ″structural influences and agentive factors often feed into each other″ (p. 222). As illustrated by the teacher cases examined in this study and as demonstrated in the literature, NNES teachers who have a friendly environment and colleague support are better able to build a positive sense of self and pursue professional growth (e.g., Braine, 2010; Mahboob, 2010; G. Park, 2012).

The ways the teachers conduct teaching activities and take on professional roles provides additional insight into the NNES teacher identity. In many cases, NES/NNES teaching practice is often perceived in terms of dominance and difference. Dominance may implicitly point to the NES′ language expertise, and difference emphasizes the professional strengths of NNES teachers (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Moussu & Llurda, 2008). These two approaches do no more than illustrate this linguistic binary. Yet, these teachers′ classroom practices were dynamic and individualized, which came from their life stories as well as from their relationships with and understandings of the students. The warmth and knowledge that they brought into the classroom were mediated by their own language learning experience and other identities. For instance, Tatiana′s past English learning influenced her current teaching, and Baang projected a motherly image. There were no notable differences between the teaching styles of NNES teach and NES. The ways NNES teachers utilize their teaching roles represent who they are.

VI. CONCLUSION

This qualitative study contextualizes the diversity of NNESs by examining their self-perceptions and classroom practices based on the interaction between societal structures and human responses. It examines how NNES are perceived differently from NES, what elements builds these differences, and what influences the NNES′ classroom practice in the relatively under-researched context of U.S. secondary ESL education. This study sees NNES identity formation as a continuous process based on the teachers′ personal experiences and professional environment. The teachers′ stories and practices of being a NNES highlight the situation in which ″a variety of alien voices enter into the struggle for influence within an individual′s consciousness″ (Morris, 1994, p. 79). The NNES status through which the teachers view themselves as effective, multilingual speakers of English emerges from their personal histories, and it is oriented toward the local context of secondary ESL education.

The study situates the issue of NNESs by exploring their relationships with the world and their understandings of self, as filtered through values and ideologies. Viewed through the Bakhtinian lens, the NES/NNES relationship is not neutral; it is constituted within a sociopolitical discourse in which the teachers′ L1 can be a professional privilege. Nevertheless, Bakhtin does not imply a deterministic view in which individuals must simply accept socially imposed conditions. Although agency is fragile, it is possible for people to have opportunities for developing alternative visions of the world (Holland et al., 2003). This is reflected in a small way through the thoughts and stories of the administrators and students seen in this study.

This study offers a few pedagogical implications. First, it is important to create conversations between NES and NNES, particularly for those who influence job screening and practicum opportunities. This study acknowledges that Standard English should be one of the knowledge bases for language teacher education. However, making decisions on hiring processes more transparent could help address issues that arise from actual linguistic hierarchy between NES and NNES. As documented by Holliday (2008), although some stakeholders have good intentions with regard to removing the native speaker fallacy, programs and schools often place a premium on NES. When developing graduate seminars and using other forums (e.g., the NNEST meetings in TESOL) to address the NES/NNES dichotomy (e.g., Mahboob, 2010; Varghese et al., 2005), language education scholars should pay greater attention to raising awareness of these issues, being sure to include practitioners, educators, and program directors regardless of their linguistic profiles.

Next, this study shows that the students in this study are part of a linguistically diverse environment where English is spoken by those from a variety of ethnic and racial groups. This contextual factor may lead students to evaluate the competence of NNES teachers based upon their professional capabilities. The students in this study acknowledged their progress in learning Standard English and their opportunities for their access to multiple native speaker models. These findings suggest that one instructional goal for language teachers involves educating students to reflect on this linguistic binary (NES vs. NNES). The curriculum can be used to engage students in exploring texts written and spoken by English speakers from different ethnic, racial, and national backgrounds, thereby calling into question the image of native speakers on textbooks and other materials (e.g., advertisements,) and examining the local use of English. The concept of world Englishes can be introduced to learn how English has globally indigenized and evolved (Coupland, 2013). Exposing students to the multifaceted landscapes of English may enable them to ″liberate themselves from the authority of the other′s discourse″ (Morris, p. 79). This would extend the linguistic repertoires of students to include these varieties of English, along with British or American English, which have legitimate and equal status for worldwide communication to serve academic, political, and social purposes.

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Examples in: Teacher Identity English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Levels: Secondary

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Received 10 December 2014
Revised 28 January 2015
Accepted 15 February 2015