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The Canadian Modern Language Review / La revue canadienne des
langues vivantes, Volume 66, Number 3, March / mars 2010, pp.
343-369 (Article)

Published by University of Toronto Press



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Non-native English–Speaking Teachers’ Negotiations of Program Discourses in Their Construction of Professional Identities within a TESOL Program

Roumi Ilieva

Abstract: The professional identity of language teachers has gained prominence in research on language instruction in the last decade. This article adds to work by critically exploring how teacher education programs allow non-native English–speaking teachers (NNESTs) to construct positive professional identities and become pro-active educators. It reports on a study of the discursive constructions of professional identities that 20 NNEST pre-service teachers developed within a Master of Education TESOL program for international students in a Canadian university. Drawing on post-structural and sociocultural understandings of identity, the article offers a Bakhtinian analysis of the negotiations and dialogical appropriations of authoritative program discourses that these pre-service NNESTs reflected upon in portfolios summarizing their learning in the program. The article concludes by describing the implications of this research for TESOL and cost-recovery international programs in British, Australian, and North American universities.

Keywords: language teacher identity, international education, non-native English–speaking teachers

Résumé : Depuis dix ans, l’identité professionnelle des professeurs de langues a pris de l’importance dans la recherche sur l’enseignement des langues. Le présent article se veut un complément aux travaux qui explorent de façon critique comment les programmes de formation des enseignants peuvent aider les professeurs de langues dont la langue maternelle n’est pas l’anglais à acquérir une identité professionnelle positive et à devenir des éducateurs proactifs. L’article porte sur une étude des constructions discursives de l’identité professionnelle acquise par vingt candidats dont la langue maternelle n’est pas l’anglais dans le cadre d’un programme TESOL (qui forme des professeurs d’anglais pour des personnes parlant d’autres langues) destiné aux étudiants internationaux à la maîtrise en éducation dans une université canadienne. Cet article est basé sur des conceptions post-structurelles et socioculturelles de l’identité, afin

d'examiner les négociations et les appropriations dialogiques de discours qui font autorité dans ce programme, dans lequel ces candidats se sont engagés et qui s'est retrouvé dans leur portfolio d'apprentissage à la fin de leur programme. Enfin, l'article discute de la portée de cette recherche pour les programmes TESOL et les programmes internationaux de recouvrement des coûts dans des universités anglaises, australiennes et nord-américaines.

Mots clés : identité du professeur de langues, professeurs de langues dont la langue maternelle n'est pas l'anglais, éducation internationale

Education, in its deepest sense . . . concerns the opening of identities—exploring new ways of being that lie beyond our current state. . . . It places students on an outbound trajectory toward a broad field of possible identities. Education is not merely formative—it is transformative. (Wenger, 1998, p. 263)

The professional identity of language teachers has gained prominence in research on language instruction in the last decade (see, among others, Duff & Uchida, 1997; Miller, 2009; Pavlenko, 2003; Tsui, 2007; Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005). Currently, language teacher identity is seen as having a significant impact on how teaching is played out in the language classroom (ibid.). As Varghese et al. (2005) argue, 'In order to understand language teaching and learning we need to understand teachers; and in order to understand teachers we need a clearer sense of the professional, cultural, political, and individual identities which teachers claim or which are assigned to them' (p. 22).

Historically, much teaching of English worldwide has been and continues to be done by non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs). Canagarajah (1999) estimates that 'more than 80% of the ELT professionals internationally are NNS' (p. 91). In this context, and especially given the pervasiveness of the discourse of native speaker authority in TESOL programs and mainstream work in applied linguistics, research on identity issues NNESTs grapple with is of great significance (Braine, 1999; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Canagarajah, 1999; Golombek & Jordan, 2005; Liu, 1998; Llurda, 2005; Morita, 2000, 2004; Moussu & Llurda, 2008; Pavlenko, 2003). In this article, I attempt to add to work that explores critically the impact of TESOL programs on NNESTs' construction of teaching identities (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Golombek & Jordan, 2005; Morita, 2000; Pavlenko, 2003). My particular interest is in NNESTs'

negotiations of TESOL program discourses in the process of developing professional identities, and the questions I explore below refer to *how* or *if* these discourses are taken up, resisted, or creatively appropriated by NNESTs attending one such program.

The data discussed below refer to the discursive constructions of professional identity that 20 NNESTs from China developed through their participation in a Master of Education (MEd) program in Teaching English as a Second/Foreign Language (TES/FL) in a Canadian university. As part of an increasing trend to offer cost-recovery programs¹ for international students (Raymond & Parks, 2004) in British, Australian, and North American (BANA) universities (Holliday, 1994), this program is designed for international students only. Drawing on post-structural (Norton, 2000; Weedon, 1997) and sociocultural (Bakhtin, 1981; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 1998) interpretations of identity, I examine the identities displayed through the discourses these student NNESTs employ in their end-of-program portfolios. Taking the position that identity processes are dialogical (Bakhtin, 1981)—i.e., that they are not individual acts but rather are co-constructed in a given sociocultural and political context—I focus on the kinds of negotiations and dialogical appropriations of authoritative discourses embedded in the program that these NNESTs engaged with and reflected upon in their self-representations of learning. The article concludes with implications of this research for TESOL and for cost-recovery international programs in BANA universities.

Theoretical frames of reference

In this section, I first outline the concepts of identity that guide me in this study and then focus on explicating the theoretical framework I employ in data analysis below. I then briefly review the literature on TESOL programs and NNESTs in order to situate my work within research on the place of such programs in affording NNESTs the possibility of constructing positive professional identities and being proactive and critical educators.

Notions of identity and agency in language education

In an analysis of studies on language teacher identity, Varghese et al. (2005) identify three ideas central to current understandings of and theorizing about identity in language teaching. The first refers to identity

as crucially related to social, cultural, and political contexts (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Toohey, 2000). The second refers to identity as constructed and negotiated through language and discourse (Weedon, 1997). The third idea, that identities are not fixed, stable, or unitary but instead multiple, shifting, and in conflict (Norton, 2000), is becoming central to theorizing about language learning and teaching. Varghese et al. specify that this particular conceptualization of identity takes into account the primacy of agency in identity formation and the understanding that humans are intentional beings.

These understandings of identity form the backdrop to the analysis that follows. My data specifically point to a variety of ways in which *agency* was apparent (or not) in students' uptake of program discourses. Overall, the analysis is based on the post-structural understanding that the NNESTs were constructing their professional identities by engaging with the discourses circulating in their course and fieldwork in this program. These identities were maintained and negotiated through the discourses that they employed in their own academic work.

Authoritative and internally persuasive discourses

In analyzing the understandings of professional identity these NNESTs develop and display in their work, I draw on Bakhtin's (1981) stance of identity processes as dialogical. Bakhtin highlights in particular the importance of discourses in processes of identity construction. In his view, identity formation, or what he calls 'the ideological becoming of a human being' (1981, p. 341), is 'the process of selectively assimilating the words of others' (p. 341). As sociocultural theorists Holland et al. (1998) explain, drawing on Bakhtin, identity is 'a useful concept that figuratively combines the intimate or personal world with the collective space of cultural forms and social relations' (p. 5). They use the term 'figured worlds' to account for the sociocultural contexts of meaning and action in which social positions and relationships are enacted. According to Holland et al., figured worlds provide the loci in which people develop identities. In each of these figured worlds operate 'authoritative' and 'internally persuasive' discourses. Whereas authoritative discourse refers to the 'word[s] of a father, of adults and of teachers, etc.' and 'demands our unconditional allegiance' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 343), internally persuasive discourse is creative and productive, 'tightly interwoven with one's own words' (p. 345). Examples of authoritative discourses individuals commonly engage with in society include those that parents employ to address

and socialize their children, or that teachers and academics employ to instruct their students in given subject areas. In these contexts, internally persuasive discourses refer to the ones that children/students employ to represent their understanding of, response to, and meaningful application of the authoritative discourses they have engaged with for their own purposes. Figured worlds are replete with authoritative discourse(s) that have 'great power over us' (Holquist, 1981, p. 424). The development of a truly internally persuasive discourse involves a constant dialogue and struggle to insert one's own intentions into the authoritative discourse. In other words, an internally persuasive discourse represents an individual's ideological and identity construction by exhibiting his or her worldview as the selective/agentive assimilation of the discourses within which the person lives. At the same time, in contrast to authoritative discourses, an important facet of an internally persuasive discourse is its 'semantic openness' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 346), its capacity to invite and enter into dialogue with other discourses. A truly internally persuasive discourse is open to dialogizing with other discourses available in a given context/figured world. It is important to note, as well, that Bakhtin notes the possibility for discourses to be '*simultaneously* authoritative and internally persuasive' (p. 342), a point I refer to in particular in the discussion and implications section, below.

In this study, I am interested in the NNESTs' articulations of new, internally persuasive discourses about their profession and their pedagogy as a result of their engagement with authoritative discourses in this TESOL program. More specifically, my research questions are as follows: How do student teachers articulate their professional identities as they engage with program discourses? Do these NNESTs appropriate the authoritative discourses embedded in their TESOL program to serve their own purposes and local contexts and if so, how? What is the nature of the authoritative discourses in the program with which these NNESTs have engaged?

NNESTs in TESOL programs

The last two decades have seen a growing body of research on the issues NNESTs face in professional contexts. Moussu & Llurda (2008) provide a state-of-the-art review of this research. A number of publications address the native/non-native speaker dichotomy as it relates to the disempowerment of NNESTs in both ESL and in EFL contexts (see, for example, Amin, 1997; Morita, 2004; Rajagopalan, 2005; Tang, 1997). Other works reflect on ways to modify teacher education

programs to better serve the needs of NNESTs (Holliday, 2005; Kamhi-Stein, 1999; Medgyes, 1994, 1999). There are also several studies on students' perceptions of their NNESTs (Llurda, 2005; Mahboob, 2004) or the experiences of host teachers in whose classrooms NNEST student teachers had their practicums (Nemtchinova, 2005). I have found particularly insightful the comprehensive volumes edited by Braine (1999), Kamhi-Stein (2004), and Llurda (2005), as well as Moussu and Llurda's (2008) review. As the major focus of this article is the professional identities of NNESTs as constructed and negotiated in TESOL programs, given space constraints, I review briefly here only studies that address this particular topic.

As mentioned, this study builds on research on the impact and place of teacher education programs in affording NNESTs the possibility to construct positive professional identities and be proactive and critical educators (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Golombek & Jordan, 2005; Pavlenko, 2003). As Liu (1998) argues, even though nearly 40% of the students enrolled yearly in TESOL programs in North American universities are NNESTs, teacher education programs have, by and large, failed to accommodate their needs. Similarly, Canagarajah (1999) asks some disturbing questions about the purposes for which 'centre' universities train 'periphery' scholars for language teaching, while also subscribing to the native speaker fallacy that places NNESTs in a position of deficient professional competence. Canagarajah alludes to a possible 'pecuniary motive' (1999, p. 84) for such programs.

As is apparent through the research questions posed in the previous subsection, I am interested in exploring possibilities that NNESTs in TESOL programs in BANA universities might be empowered by viewing TESOL discourses critically and by seeing themselves as agents. According to Morita (2000), discourses with which international students engage within a TESOL program should not be viewed as 'a predictable, entirely oppressive, unidirectional process of knowledge transmission' from instructors to students, but rather as a 'complex, locally situated process that involves dynamic negotiations of expertise and identity' (p. 303). In a study investigating the process of interrogating the nativeness paradigm among NNESTs within a graduate course, Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999) suggest that the process of empowerment of NNESTs is very complex but can nevertheless be generated within and by teachers engaged in critical praxis. In another study challenging the dominance of 'native-speakerness' discourse in TESOL programs, Pavlenko (2003) examines the imagined² professional and linguistic communities available to

student teachers in one second language acquisition course. She argues that classroom discourses play an important role in shaping students' membership in imagined communities and suggests that in her study, the NNESTs' exposure to discourses on multicompetence, linguistic diversity, the relationship of language and identity, and debates on the notion of native-speakerness allowed them to view themselves as multilingual and multicompetent individuals with a legitimate place in the community of English language teachers. Pavlenko sees appropriation of newly imagined identities as an important aspect of a learning journey and argues that teacher education programs need to offer identity options that allow NNESTs to imagine themselves as legitimate members of professional communities. Similarly, Golombek and Jordan (2005) enquire into the identities developed by two NNESTs in a pronunciation pedagogy course in a TESOL program. The authors suggest that these pre-service teachers displayed multiple and conflicting identities as legitimate speakers and teachers of English. Their study supports Pavlenko's argument that teacher education programs need to afford the imagination of new teacher identities and suggests that such programs may provide opportunities for NNESTs to develop alternative instructional practices compatible with such positive imagined identities.

The study below contributes a Bakhtinian analysis of the complex nature of discourse appropriation in developing professional identities to the line of enquiry summarized here. It represents various ways in which the NNESTs respond to and apply authoritative program discourses as they reflect on their learning in the program and imagine their future as teachers and thus display their internally persuasive discourses about teaching.

Methodology

Program context

The program I focus on here is a site for the practice of what has been termed in the literature International Education, which, in BANA universities, has recently expanded to the offering of cost-recovery programs for international students. As Beck, Ilieva, Scholefield, and Waterstone (2007, February) note, International Education as a practice has yet to coalesce as a discipline with a well-articulated conceptual framework. While there is some recognition that internationalization is a response to, and even a product of, globalization, there has not

been much analysis of the implications for higher education. Edwards and Usher (2000) note increasing trends towards the 'business' of education, reflected in policy and practice. They suggest that universities are becoming increasingly corporate and more consumer oriented. In this climate, knowledge itself becomes a commodity and those who 'have it,' presumably 'centre' countries, begin to look for those in 'periphery' countries who presumably want it, believing that this knowledge will position them well in increasingly competitive global and local job markets (cf. Raymond & Parks, 2004).

The program is housed within a faculty of education in a Canadian university. It runs for four semesters and consists of coursework, fieldwork, and a capstone comprehensive examination. The program's academic culture reflects features outlined by Morita (2000): critical thinking, collaborative and independent work, the making of meaningful connections between theory and practice, and personal relevance. Courses include topics on language teaching methodologies, theories of language acquisition, promoting equity in language education, sociocultural perspectives on language education and identity, and broader themes such as the historical and philosophical underpinnings of curriculum and instruction.³ Student teachers are introduced to critical (Pavlenko, 2003; Pennycook, 1995), post-structural (Norton 1995; Pavlenko, 2002b), and sociocultural (Johnson, 2004; Toohey, 2000) perspectives on language learning and teaching. The fieldwork component involves students in observing and participating in school and college classrooms. In the comprehensive examination, students are asked to represent their learning in three ways: (1) writing a scholarly paper on a topic of their choice that extends their understanding about a particular topic in education initially engaged with through a final paper for one (or more) of their courses; (2) presenting to the examining committee a demonstration portfolio⁴ documenting their learning journey in the program; and (3) making an oral presentation, open to the public, that outlines the central ideas in either the scholarly paper or the portfolio.

In seeking ways to align internationalization with ethical practice, instructors in this program, including me, have searched for ways to create a pedagogical space that would allow the students to claim the coursework in a 'centre' country as their own and to develop professional identities that are meaningful for their local teaching contexts. Two questions the instructors have been grappling with are as follows: What role(s) are we as teacher educators playing in the larger structures and discourses of globalization and internationalization? Can international education programs be strategic sites for resisting

dominant 'centre/periphery' power relations? (Beck et al., 2007, February). A chief goal of the instructional team has been to afford space and discursive positions for the NNESTs in the program to participate in the questioning, critique, and re-creation of English language teaching in a simultaneously global and local context.

Study participants

All 20 NNESTs whose portfolios form the data for this study were in the first cohort of this cost-recovery program for international students. They were all from the People's Republic of China and in their early to mid-20s. A small number had about two to three years' of experience teaching EFL, but the majority had just graduated from their Bachelors degree programs and had done some EFL tutoring or summer camp teaching. Thus, most had not developed professional identities as teachers prior to attending the program. Most also came to the program exhibiting a strong belief in the immense cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986)⁵ a Canadian Masters degree had to offer for their professional future and a somewhat uncritical embrace of what the West had to offer China (Beck et al., 2007, February). For example, in the students' letters of intent, which formed a part of their application to the program, the predominant message was of the bright future awaiting graduates of the program in the 'booming industry of English teaching in China' and the longing to learn from the 'West,' which knows 'best,' about how to teach English (ibid.). The data that follow exemplify ways the NNESTs in the program departed from or adhered to these initial investments in it.

The students started the program in August 2005 and completed it in December 2006. Three cohorts of students have already completed the program, the fourth cohort is in its fourth term, and a fifth started the program at the end of July 2009. With the exception of a small number of students from Korea, Japan, and Thailand, the student body continues to be from China and to have the same general characteristics.

Researcher dilemmas

The primary aim of the portfolios was to document students' learning and growth in order to satisfy a capstone requirement, not to serve as research data. As a former international student in the same Canadian university, I worked as an academic coordinator and instructor in the program from its inception until August 2007 and continue my

involvement as an instructor. Upon taking this assignment in 2005, I had no intention whatsoever to conduct research within the program. So why am I bringing here the set of views the students expressed in their end-of-program portfolios, and why am I analyzing them through the eyes of a researcher? The reasons are manifold and are addressed later in this section. I first want to draw attention to some shortcomings that could be associated with using data from student assignments. I am very aware of the possibility that in their 'capstone' portfolios students may 'ventriloquate' (Bakhtin, 1981), i.e., parrot, discourses they assume are expected of them, while holding entirely different views on how to approach teaching in their professional contexts. Since I was the principal evaluator (along with a second reader) of the students' portfolios, I would be facing as a researcher the danger of analyzing data that represented the students' understandings of what I presumably wanted to hear as the assessor of their learning.

In an overview of the comprehensive examination requirements handed to students, the purposes of the portfolio were framed as follows:

The portfolio will consist of artifacts that represent your own learning journey in the MEd International program through written forms (e.g., structured reflections, narratives, argument, poetry, dramatic script) and visual elements (e.g., maps, timeline, photos, video, diagrams) of your choice. It should incorporate significant events in your learning journey and represent specific examples of changes in your learning over time and developments in your understanding of teaching. The aim of the portfolio is to synthesize *what* you have learnt and *how* what you have learnt will influence your thinking and practice as an educator.

It is evident that the goals of the portfolio were to represent the *views* students develop and hold about educational theories and practices. Yet the focus was intended to be on representing *learning about* language education and teaching and not necessarily on *embodying/being* a language educator. In that sense, the theme of empowerment as future professionals and of the agentive function in the use of program discourses in the students' portfolios, discussed below, called for my attention as a researcher. Besides, while it is to be expected that the students would refer in this assignment to the authoritative discourses they were introduced to in the program, I was struck by the variability in negotiation/selective assimilation of these discourses evident in the narratives embedded in their portfolios.

These negotiations are the main focus of this article and I thought it was important to reflect on them as they would add to understanding of NNESTs in TESOL programs. Thus, a compelling reason to analyze assignment responses as research data stems from an imperative evident in the recent review article on state-of-the-art research on NNESTs by Moussu and Llurda (2008), which identifies a paucity of research on how NNESTs conceptualize teaching. The data below is rich in reference to such conceptualizations, and, what is more, offers complex narratives into how these conceptualizations are developing. A related reason is the perceived timeliness of conducting narrative studies in the field of language acquisition and education, as these are viewed as offering valuable insights into 'people's private worlds' (Pavlenko, 2007, p. 164). More specifically, such narratives are considered to represent powerfully the ways in which language learners and teachers make sense of their experiences and of themselves as agents in their own daily lives by creating coherent stories (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000; Tsui, 2007). Discussing the importance of engaging in narrative enquiries to understand language learners, Bell (2002) argues that by examining their stories we 'become aware of the underlying assumptions that they embody' (p. 207). In the context of my research, such awareness allows a focus on the potential internal persuasiveness/dialogicality (or lack of dialogicality) of authoritative discourses the NNESTs are working through and thus opens doors for instructors in the program to understand their work and their students in new ways. While unusual and somewhat problematic, course assignments have been used as research data in other studies as well (see Pavlenko, 2003; Samimy, 2008), and have offered rich insights in teacher identity development at a time when, even though research on various aspects of teacher development has burgeoned, the research on language teacher identity is still limited (Tsui, 2007, p. 657).

Another dilemma in qualitative research involves, of course, the limits of (self-)reflexivity (Lather, 1991) that both researchers and participants can engage in. In that sense, the understanding that the students' representations of their learning and my representation of their voices can be only partial, practised from within particular subject positions and participating in the production of particular discursive knowledge/power relations, underscores the analysis below. As Pavlenko (2002a) points out, 'narratives are not purely individual productions [but] are powerfully shaped by [among other things] the relationship between the storyteller and the interlocutor' (p. 214). The inevitable implication of researchers in the production of data is

evident from a study of two interviews on similar topics conducted with the same interviewee by different interviewers (Mori & Worth, 2009), who discuss the different identity positionings the interviewee chose to display when relating the same events to the researchers. Mori and Worth conclude that qualitative researchers can never be simply fact finders or interpreters of data, but are fully implicated in the narratives their study participants produce. Thus, the discursive knowledge/power relations produced in this article is referred to again in the discussion section.

Methodological perspectives

My first read through the portfolios was in line with a grounded theory approach, in which data collection is not tied to preconceived questions or to frameworks imposed upon it (Charmaz, 2000); it simply reflected my position as a comprehensive exam supervisor for the NNESTs. This reading brought into focus the sense of empowerment and agency as future professionals the NNESTs chose to display in their portfolios. My early subsequent readings again displayed a grounded theory approach, as they were done with the purpose of discerning recommendations for program improvements, given my position as a program coordinator. These readings brought into focus the different ways in which various program discourses were negotiated by the NNESTs. As I began wondering how to make sense of the very strong emphasis on a developing professional *identity* that I found in the portfolios, I turned to Bakhtin's theorizing of identity and processes of ideological becoming, which I had found useful in quite different research with teachers (see Beynon, Ilieva, Dichupa, & Hirji, 2003). Bakhtin's theorizing of struggles in developing one's own internally persuasive discourse and voice in the context of ideological becoming was, I believe, an apt theoretical lens for an analysis of the portfolios, as it allowed a critical look at the engagement the students had with, and thus possibilities for appropriation of, the authoritative discourses circulating in the program.

Given my role in the program, which at that time involved teaching two courses and supervising the comprehensive exams, I requested from the students access to their portfolios *after* they had completed the program. As is customary in qualitative research, I use pseudonyms in my analysis. In the analysis, I discerned references in 16 out of the 20 portfolios to the kinds of negotiations/uptakes of program discourses discussed below. Actual quotations, however, represent

the voices of only seven of the students, as these articulate most coherently the points salient in the data.

Results

Viewed from a Bakhtinian perspective, the data illustrate the complex and varied negotiation of authoritative program discourses in developing professional identities among the participants in the study. In particular, the themes below exemplify various degrees of agency in discourse appropriation. Some of the authoritative discourses seem to have been taken up rather uncritically by the students, while others have allowed for greater possibilities for negotiation. Uptake and negotiation of teacher education program discourses are, in my view, very important questions for the TESOL field because we cannot afford to have students from 'periphery' countries accept without much questioning 'centre' discourses and practices. Perpetuating unquestioning attitudes could perpetuate existing power relations, the march of English linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992), and the dominance of 'native-speakerness' in periphery contexts.

Teacher identity development as ventriloquation of authoritative discourses

As mentioned, while the guidelines for the portfolio instructed students to articulate their pedagogical values as discovered, altered, or confirmed by work in the program, they did not emphasize the idea of addressing issues of identity, either as professionals in general or as NNESTs. In that respect, I view the data on the imagined (cf. Golombek & Jordan, 2005; Pavlenko, 2003) teacher identities of the research participants as representing agentive/selective instantiations of the authoritative discourses about language teaching and learning that they engaged with in the program.

Wendy, for example, writes in her portfolio, 'Many theories and methodologies were very important and influenced me so much.' She then chooses to discuss in detail 10 themes, which encompass both theoretical perspectives and teaching strategies. As she puts it, 'These not only tell me *how to teach* students, but also how to *be a teacher* [*italics added*].' I see this emphasis on 'being' as an example of how program discourses provided materials for Wendy to engage with and construct a particular *identity* as an educator. In that sense,

several authoritative discourses circulating through courses, fieldwork, and other activities within the faculty seem to have had a profound influence on how these NNESTs understand learning and their role with their own students, and to have been taken up wholeheartedly and without question by the NNESTs. These discourses are about (1) sociocultural understandings of learning as legitimate peripheral participation and as gaining access to communities of practice, (2) the importance of attending to equity issues in language classrooms, and (3) linguistic multicompetence.

With regard to the first discourse, here is how one student, Rhonda, analyzes her positive experiences as a communications coordinator of the Faculty of Education Graduate Students' Association (EGSA):

I learned a great deal of what is happening in the graduate student society and *moved from a newcomer to a full participant*. I did not really think about my experience in the [EGSA] community until I took [the course on sociocultural perspectives on education and identity] and learned about legitimate peripheral participation. I realized my experience of being in the community of EGSA was an exact example of how *people learn by doing, by participating and by being given access to resources*. . . . Then I was wondering, [since] legitimate peripheral participation is *a description of how all kinds of learning happens* rather than a brand-new theory of *how learning should happen*, how was that related to Chinese classrooms? How can I incorporate this theory into my own teaching practice in the future? [italics added]

Rhonda describes her participation in the EGSA by employing terminology typical of sociocultural theorizing about learning. The italicized text in particular echoes Lave and Wenger's (1991) work. Viewed from a Bakhtinian perspective, the questions Rhonda poses to herself clearly indicate how the sociocultural discourse on legitimate peripheral participation is not only an authoritative program discourse but also becomes for her an internally persuasive discourse about what is involved in learning, a discourse implicated in her professional identity. Analyzing her experience of joining a community through the lens of this discourse, Rhonda does not question it but evaluates it positively and wonders about ways to apply it in her future teaching.

The second authoritative discourse embraced by the NNESTs is about equity and social justice. Kathryn summarizes some of her learning in the program as follows:

Almost every course has something more or less to do with Social Justice. I had never heard of this word before I came to Canada. . . . Social Justice

inspired me on how to concern myself with language imperialism, race and gender equality, peace education and global education into my English class in my future teaching... *Not until I read Pennycook's article [on English in the world and the world in English] I realized that English can be a tool of colonialism...* However, *the idea of imperialism does not stop me teaching English but gets me to think more about the nature of English language itself...* In my future career, I will integrate the cultural and political implications of English into my curriculum [italics added], and address explicitly that not disregarding students' mother language is crucial for individuals not to lose their original identity.

Kathryn here expresses her understanding of what it means to teach English from a social justice perspective, i.e., to incorporate questions of race, gender, linguistic imperialism, and so forth into the language curriculum and to present to her students views that attempt to counter such inequities. Clearly, Kathryn has grasped some sociopolitical and cultural implications of English language learning and teaching in today's world as theorized in readings she engaged with in the program. She also seems eager to incorporate this knowledge in her teaching practice. Thus, in Bakhtinian terms, the discourse of social justice seems to be an authoritative program discourse that Kathryn takes up unproblematically and considers employing as an internally persuasive discourse in her classrooms in China.

The discourse on multicompetence developed around Cook's (1999) notion of non-native speakers as competent L2 users rather than failed native speakers is one whose power over NNESTs has been clearly documented (Golombek & Jordan, 2005; Pavlenko, 2003). Here is Sarah's use of this discourse in relation to her goals in an EFL classroom:

As an English teacher whose mother tongue is Chinese, how to present English language and its culture to the students constitute a dilemma... *Teaching toward the goal of achieving native-like language proficiency is a misleading mission* [italics added]. Comparing with native English teachers, indigenous Chinese teachers should see themselves as multicompetent language users or bilinguals rather than failed native speakers or deficient language users.

As evidenced here, the program authoritative discourse on multicompetence is viewed enthusiastically and offers a professional identity option these NNESTs eagerly take up, or, as Bakhtin would argue, it interweaves their own words and is becoming an internally persuasive

discourse for them. I wonder, however, whether it is dialogical enough in engaging with the local contexts within which these NNESTs will be working.

Teachers as agents of change

By far the most pervasive authoritative discourse for the NNESTs, a discourse of empowerment that resonates with the focus by Varghese et al. (2005) on the agency or transformative potential of identity, is one that affords the identity option of becoming an agent of change within one's professional context. For Lather (1991), empowerment to act for change involves 'coming into a sense of one's own power [and developing] a new relationship with [one's] own context' (p. 4), and the program appears to have afforded such spaces for most of the students. Below are just two examples of the kinds of identity transformations the student teachers articulated. Joanna states:

I used to always complain that the educational system in China is too centralized and that as teachers we could hardly make any difference no matter how good our intentions or ideas are. My learning experience and fieldwork in Canada has made me realize that as teachers, we indeed can make a difference in students' lives and instead of dwelling on the problems that I have seen and feeling overwhelmed, maybe I should try to be the one to start the change that I want to see in education in China [italics added].

Within the context of a discourse of empowerment, it seems that Joanna has begun to develop a sense of her own power within her local context and is ready to enter into a new relationship with it. The italicized text denotes the contrast in Joanna's views about teachers as agents prior to entering the program and at the end of it. Thus her 'ideological becoming,' as Bakhtin (1981) would term it, seems to reflect how an authoritative program discourse performs as an internally persuasive discourse for her in striving to 'determine the very bases of [her] ideological interrelations with [her professional] world' (p. 342).

In a similar vein, Monica states,

I strongly believe that education is the most important and effective way to change people's life and their thoughts. . . . Intellectuals in China have been controlled by the imperial testing system for thousands of years. So it is not easy to change people's views [on testing] in real practice within a short time. On the other hand, as teachers, we are the people working at the frontline in

the reform. [italics added] It is difficult and may take a long time, but *if we don't try and work hard on changing, who would do that?* [italics added] ... Teacher is not just doing a job and forgetting it after going home, but is a spiritual guider whose work will influence students' whole life.

Monica appears to perceive the role of teachers as professionals who are responsible for initiating change with regard to societal values about assessment practices in education. She seems to have a clear agenda ahead of her and sees it as implicated in the transformative (authoritative) power of teachers in students' lives.

The way in which these NNESTs employ a discourse of teachers as agents of change in their portfolios speaks to the complexity in taking up some authoritative program discourses. On one hand, their narratives could be interpreted as uncritical ventiloquation of what they were presented with through various courses in the program. On the other hand, the intense awareness of teachers' agentive possibilities evident in the narratives speaks to the *potential* of a true sense of empowerment.

Appropriating authoritative discourses on one's own terms

The themes outlined above seem to suggest a somewhat direct implication of some of the authoritative discourses circulating in the program for these NNESTs' professional identities. As Bakhtin (1981) might put it, some authoritative discourses have apparently become internally persuasive for them in the sense of performing 'no longer as information, directions, rules' (p. 342), but rather as determining the 'very bases of [their imagined] behaviour' (p. 342) as future teachers. However, other data in the students' portfolios more saliently represent how they insert their own intentions into program authoritative discourses and develop internally persuasive discourses that make practical sense for their own local teaching contexts. Here is Joanna's representation of her engagement with the discourse of critical pedagogy:

Before taking Equity Issues in Language and Literacy Education, I only had a very general idea of what critical pedagogy is. ... After examining the influence and usefulness of critical pedagogy in ELT, I started to consider *if this pedagogy should be introduced to my own teaching context in China and if so, how to make it more feasible in that context* [italics added]. The whole research ... was remarkable in my intellectual growth. *I learned how to relate an*

educational theory to my own field of interest and teaching context so it could be more practical and meaningful [italics added].

With regard to Bakhtin's theorizing on authoritative and internally persuasive discourses, the excerpt suggests Joanna's intentionality and agency in appropriating the discourse of critical pedagogy on her own terms. She (and others) could benefit from such intentionality and agency to avoid the dangers of employing critical pedagogy discourse as another self-serving imperialistic discourse. Such dangers are evident in Lin's (2004) account of her attempts to introduce critical pedagogy in a Masters course in TESOL in Hong Kong and her insistence on the need to work out in local contexts appropriate critical visions of pedagogical practices.

The kinds of agentive appropriations or insertion of their own intentions into an authoritative discourse presented to the NNESTs in the program seem most evident when they discuss 'centre' classroom methodologies or arrangements that they see as potentially feasible in their local teaching contexts. Jun's discussion of adjusting arrangements that she experienced in the program to fit her local teaching context illustrates this:

Being used to attending classes with nearly 60 classmates in China, I experienced a new class environment—only 20 students in a class, at the beginning of the program. The change is so impressive that *I began to wonder if the small class size is possible in China*. In order to understand this topic more deeply, I chose 'Making large classes seem small' as my term paper's topic in [one of the courses]. Given constraints . . . such as population, resources and so on, *the implementation of small class size may be next to impossible in China*. The aim of this paper was to propose some *realistic alternative* strategies to be used in large classes of Chinese middle school in order to make large classes *feel small* [italics added].

According to Bakhtin (1981),

when thought begins to work in an independent, experimenting and discriminating way, what first occurs is a separation between internally persuasive and authoritarian enforced discourse, along with a rejection of those categories that do not matter to us, that do not touch us. (p. 345)

Thus, Jun implies that she has begun to creatively appropriate some 'centre' discourses on class size to make them relevant to the realities of Chinese classrooms. The alternative strategies she proposes refer

to making use of teaching assistants in large classrooms by modifying the current arrangements for student teacher practica in China as well as incorporating problem, or task-based, learning in large language classrooms.

Similarly, Sonia grapples with how to implement group work in Chinese language classrooms. Here is her thinking on the matter:

Even though students start studying English in elementary school they cannot communicate well. We have the responsibility to change the situation. . . *Group work is important in China, but class size, teachers' and students' traditional roles and limited time make it difficult to use group work* [italics added].

Sonia then suggests that a feasible alternative to group work as she experienced it in the TESOL program is for teachers in large classrooms in China to 'adopt "think-pair-share" as an activity which may only take a few minutes of the class time while every student is engaged.' As the data suggest, Sonia is very aware of the inadequacy for her future teaching of some discourses about communicative practices that she has been exposed to in the program, and she has a clear sense of how to appropriate some group work techniques so that they make sense in her professional context. Overall, the data analyzed in this section speak to the struggles these NNESTs experience in developing some internally persuasive discourses about teaching.

Discussion and implications for teacher education programs

What are the implications of this study for TESOL teacher education programs in general and international programs in particular? This article, like any other, clearly produces particular discursive knowledge/power relations in representing the data. That these NNESTs would be discussing discourses they were engaged with in the program when reflecting on their learning journey through it is quite obvious. Less obvious is the variability in negotiating these discourses, evident as well in their narrative accounts of their learning. What are we to make of this variability?

The TESOL Masters program is viewed here as a 'figured world' in Holland et al.'s (1998) sense and thus as a locus for professional identity construction within particular discourses, relationships, and positionings. From a Bakhtinian perspective, the NNESTs seem to display a varied degree of agency and intentionality in critically or

uncritically taking up the authoritative discourses in the program. For example, discourses on legitimate peripheral participation, equity issues, and multicompetence seem ventriloquated, or parroted, in the students' portfolios. At the same time, many of the student teachers (as reflected in the sections on teachers as agents of change and appropriating authoritative discourses on one's own terms) seem to have found a new relationship with their professional contexts. It appears that for many, the program has created what Pavlenko (2003) calls 'a fertile space for reimagination of professional identities in TESOL' (p. 261). It seems that the readings, arrangements, and theoretical perspectives presented in the program have opened up new discourses and offered new identity options, allowing these NNESTs to begin to develop agency as professionals. Reflected in Jun's and Sonia's words above, the study also confirms Golombek and Jordan's (2005) position that teacher education programs in TESOL may provide opportunities for NNESTs to develop alternative instructional practices that are compatible with positive imagined identities. In developing professional identities through the negotiation of program discourses, many of the students in this study seem to link *being* a teacher with *doing* teaching; professional identity and agency are tied closely to possible future pedagogical practices.

Overall, the study displays the complex nature of discourse appropriation when developing professional identities. It thus confirms Morita's (2000) insistence on the need to be aware of the multidirectionality and unpredictability in discourse socialization. The agentive and transformative potential of identity as discussed by Varghese et al. (2005) is also evident. Holland et al. (1998) identify 'openings and impositions' (p. 270) that discursive locations within figured worlds present to human agents. The 'figured world' of this Masters program seems to provide a community for developing together notions of agency as professionals. Some of the authoritative discourses circulating in the program appear to present openings for the students to insert their own intentions and meanings, whereas others seem to be impositions. According to Bakhtin (1981), while 'the authoritative word demands that we ... make it our own ... quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally,' discourses *can* be '*simultaneously* authoritative and internally persuasive' (p. 342). Thus, when 'someone else's ideological discourse is internally persuasive for us ... entirely different possibilities open up' (p. 345).

Given the data above, some of the program's authoritative discourses appear to have been perceived and experienced as internally persuasive by some of the NNESTs; that is, students have been able

to enter into dialogue with them in the process of 'coming to ideological consciousness' (ibid., p. 348) as teachers, but other authoritative discourses appear not to have permitted 'gradual and flexible transitions' (p. 343). In particular, the data on appropriating authoritative discourses on one's own terms point to instances beyond ventriloquation in the negotiation of program discourses that afford these NNESTs positions to develop a sense of agency as professionals and 'take [these discourses] into new contexts, attach [them] to new material, put [them] in a new situation in order to wrest new answers' (p. 346). But how about a discourse that speaks to the importance of attending to equity issues in the classroom, for example? Has it been flexible enough to allow a more creative appropriation on the side of these NNESTs? And what about the discourse of teachers as agents of change? Does the way in which these NNESTs take it up represent mere ventriloquation of Western discourses or a true sense of empowerment as future professionals?

Regardless of the variability in the uptake of authoritative discourses, the data above clearly represent a somewhat limited resistance to program discourses. One reason could obviously be that the data come from an assignment that inevitably framed the students' responses. But why is it that the NNESTs were able to discuss creative application of group work with their supervisory committee but not critique possibilities of engaging in equity work in their own local contexts? In other words, how dialogical/internally persuasive were some of the authoritative discourses circulating in the program? And, in that context, how can we answer the following question the instructional team asked itself elsewhere: Can an international program disrupt the hegemonic centre/periphery power relations that occupy sites of international education in this era of globalization? (Beck et al., 2007, February).

In reflecting on these questions, I see one implication of this study for teacher education programs in TESOL as the importance of providing curriculum and pedagogy across coursework that engage meaningfully with international students' prior discourses and are specifically geared toward allowing students to actively negotiate their needs/interests/local contexts in their academic work. The study also seems to suggest the importance of attending to issues of positioning and power in the social, cultural, and political contexts of various educational endeavours across TESOL courses.

I am grappling with another question: Where do these teachers go from here? I fully agree with Pavlenko's (2003) reference to the need for future research 'to examine the *long-term* [*italics added*] impact of

discourses and identity options on social and discursive realities in and outside teachers' language classrooms' (p. 266). I am especially haunted by Liu's (1998) claim that BANA-trained international TESOL students 'often return home to face not only the problem of modifying their methods and techniques, but also the conflict between their newly acquired ideas and those still firmly followed by local professionals' (p. 6). My concern in no way implies that local practices need to accommodate 'centre' discourses. Rather, given the impact program discourses seem to have had over NNESTs, it seems to me that BANA institutions should continue to be available to their graduates as they negotiate in the 'real world' their acquired knowledge in ways that make sense in their local contexts.

With regard to programs of the kind discussed above, and as observed in Beck et al. (2007, February), instructors cannot avoid being implicated in the commodification of higher education. The current study speaks to the power of the authoritative discourses in this TESOL program over the NNESTs in it. Thus it is critical that we concern ourselves with the nature of these discourses. Such concern reflects the importance of never losing sight of education as a transformative endeavour, evident in the remarks by Wenger (1998) with which I started. I would like to end this section with an excerpt from Sarah's portfolio, which articulates well the kinds of identity positions these NNESTs have seen as possible through their engagement with discourses in this particular program:

My learning journey with this program is not made up by certain pieces of specific knowledge. It is the courage to see what blinds my perspectives, to understand the valuable points of others' perspectives. It is to take the risk to develop and expand my new identities.

Embracing the challenge to be open to others' perspectives and being comfortable with the inevitable need to continue to expand one's identities as a teacher should, in my view, be the focus of all TESOL programs and TESOL instructional teams.

Conclusion

I have attempted to add to work that critically explores the impact of teacher education programs on NNESTs' teaching identities by focusing on their negotiations of program discourses when constructing

professional identities. The data presented above exemplify the complex nature of discourse appropriation in developing professional identities by illustrating various ways in which the students respond to and apply authoritative program discourses as they imagine themselves as teachers. Some of the authoritative discourses in the program seem to have been taken up unproblematically by the students (e.g., sociocultural theorizing, linguistic multicompetence), while others have allowed greater possibilities for negotiation (e.g., group work in language classrooms).

Overall, while data to some extent present NNESTs' agentive negotiation of program discourses, a departure from a 'West is best' discourse observed in their initial investments in the program (see Beck et al., 2007, February), and referred to here briefly, is not wholly apparent. One uptake of program discourses that needs further probing is the various ways in which student narratives display understanding of teachers as agents of change. Given the empowering effect of consciousness raising such a discourse might produce (Freire, 1970), further work that explores how these NNESTs actually approach teaching in their local context could perhaps answer more satisfactorily whether the position expressed in their portfolios reflected simple parroting of program discourses or a real sense of agency.

Only through the establishment of discursive knowledge/power relations in TESOL classrooms that systematically invite students' voices can we hope to open up possibilities for students' agentive, dialogical appropriation of program discourses. As mentioned, uptake and negotiation of teacher education program discourses is a very important question for the TESOL field to discuss because we cannot afford to have students from 'periphery' countries accept uncritically 'centre' discourses and practices; perpetuating unquestioning attitudes with regard to 'centre' discourses would do little to shift centre/periphery power relations and the dominance of 'native-speakerness' in periphery contexts. Thus it is significant whether TESOL program discourses are experienced by NNESTs as either purely authoritative (i.e., imposed) or also as internally persuasive in the sense of inviting dialogue and meaningful negotiation leading to appropriation/selective assimilation that would make sense in the NNESTs' local professional contexts.

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Notes

- 1 The term 'cost-recovery program' reflects the official discourse employed in the institution at which I collected data to designate a program whose cost is entirely covered by the tuition fees students pay to participate. For example, the fee for this program is much higher than the tuition domestic and international students pay to attend a similar (but not identical) Masters program in the same institution supported through customary channels of Canadian university funding such as government subsidies in addition to tuition fees. In that sense, cost-recovery programs reflect the commercialization of higher education that will be referred to later in this article.
- 2 Kanno & Norton (2003), drawing on Wenger (1998), maintain that imagination allows us to expand ourselves and create new images of ourselves and the world and is an important source of community. They define 'imagined communities' with reference to 'groups of people not immediately tangible and accessible with whom we connect through the power of imagination' (p. 241).
- 3 The academic courses the participants in this study took were entitled Seminar in Second Language Teaching, Developing Educational Programs in Diverse Settings, Second Language Acquisition and Schooling, Curriculum and Instruction in an Individual Teaching Specialty, Equity Issues in Language and Literacy Education, and Sociocultural Perspectives on Education and Identity.
- 4 Further elaborations on the purposes of the portfolio are presented later in the article.
- 5 In Bourdieu's terms, cultural capital refers to resources one possesses and/or acquires that entail powerful positioning in a given society.

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