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Unheard Voices: Narratives of Developing TESOL Professionals in a Graduate Discourse Community

Mai A. Hassan

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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Unheard Voices: Narratives of Developing TESOL Professionals in a Graduate
Discourse Community

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements For the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Mai A. Hassan
Indiana University of Pennsylvania
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Indiana University of Pennsylvania
The school of Graduate Studies and Research
Department of English

We hereby approve the dissertation of
Mai Hassan

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Jeannine M. Fontaine, Ph.D.
Associate professor, Advisor

Jean Nienkamp, Ph.D.
Associate professor

Michael M. Williamson, Ph.D.
Professor of English

Accepted

Timothy P. Mack, Ph.D.

Dean

The School of Graduate Studies and Research

Title: Unheard Voices: Narratives of Developing TESOL Professionals in a Graduate Discourse Community

Author: Mai Hassan

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Jeannine M. Fontaine

Dissertation Committee Members: Dr. Michael M. Williamson

Dr. Jean Nienkamp

The present study is a narrative inquiry into the experience of 9 international graduate students' critical reflection on the practices of their TESOL graduate discourse community, participation modes, and the negotiation process. This study created a space for the NNEs to reflect and articulate their own inquiries about the discourse and their socialization process in The TESOL field. This study also describes the multitude of obstacles NNEs ESL teachers overcome in developing the power of their minds.

The importance of this study is that it explores the TESOL discourse community as one of the sources that may contribute to empower/disempowered NNEs in the TESOL field. In other words, it is looking at the TESOL discourse community of prospective teachers as a potential locus for in interactions that can be observed influencing their socialization process.

Data collected during the year of 2009 included one in depth individual interview with 6 of my participants, and two rounds of interviews with a focus group which include 3 of my participants. The benefit of having two interviews in this study was to generate collective dialogue in order to support participants in reconstructing their experiences.

The findings of this study reveal that the international graduate students' perceptions of their respective TESOL graduate programs were varied, depending on the availability of assistance, support, and equal opportunities. Furthermore, when they could relate what they learned, based on their personal experiences and their future teaching environments, their perceptions of their discourse communities were positive, and their academic discourse socialization processes progressed. Academic discourse socialization processes, however, were not only social and political, but also personal and individual. Nevertheless, this study found that international graduate students in the U.S.-based TESOL discourse communities do not simply embrace the practices and knowledge of their discourse communities; rather, they negotiate, resist, and strategize.

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I am very proud to dedicate this dissertation to my mother. Mothers are such a subtle influence in the shaping of our characters, our life philosophies, and goals. We may not recognize how good mothers set themselves to model and teach their children about the world around them. My mother encouraged me to develop myself to the best of my ability. I owe her more than words can express. Thank you for every minute, Mom!

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Native Vs Nonnative Teacher

In the first semester of my master's degree, I took a required course that introduced students to the TESOL field. This course was usually offered to the new members of the program to enable them to understand the basics of the field. For instance, in this course students discovered some of the major issues in the field such as questions regarding grammar correction or teaching the target culture. In addition, they read about popular theories of the TESOL field.

One of the sessions of this course was devoted to a debate about non native teachers' creditability in the field. We started the discussion by listing the difference between a native and non native English teacher. Most of the class consisted of non native students who had had at least 2 years experience in English teaching in their home country. Most of the students sat quietly without commenting on what they had read in an assigned article, which dealt with the relative strengths of native and non-native speaking English teachers. The students who voiced their opinion were convinced of what the author was arguing, namely that native speakers are more familiar with the target culture, while non native teachers are more capable of teaching grammar.

During that conversation, I gradually became upset with my classmates as they made me feel that they were not confident enough about their own teaching. At the same time, they were subtly undermining my own confidence. Eventually, I raised my hand and said "I do agree that there is a difference between native and non native speakers, but we are all English teachers. We can learn anything that

will help us to improve our teaching. For instance, if we are not familiar with the target culture, we can read or even visit the target culture to learn about anything we don't know about. Also, we now are talking about World Englishes, so why are we still focusing on the nativeness and forgetting about the quality of teaching?" I expected that my classmates would join in and support my point, but they remained voiceless for the rest of the class. My fear is that they may remain so for the rest of their careers; it is this concern that has led me to conduct the present study.

In 1966, the international organization, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), was initiated in the United States to meet the demands of a wide variety of groups. More and more foreign students were pouring into the U.S. to be "served by the programs of some 150 colleges and universities" (Alatis & Straehle, 1997, p. 12). This was also evident in the educational globalization occurring within the universities in the United States as indicated by the "increasingly diverse ethnic and linguistic composition of the student population of Western universities" (Singh & Doherty, 2004, p. 9). Additionally, there was a massive demand from other nations in the areas of English language learning and teaching expertise (Alatis & Straehle, 1997). This globalization of English language teaching heralded an increase in the number of NNEs matriculated in the TESOL teacher preparation programs in the United States (Braine, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 2000).

Although TESOL began as an international professional organization to promote teaching, research, and the professional development of its members

around the world, it has also become involved in the preparation both pre-service and in-service teachers seeking to become English language teachers in different contexts (Garshick, 2004). With the numbers of students gaining admission into U.S. TESOL teacher education programs,, the worldwide importance of promoting mastery of the English language has increased considerably (Braine, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 2000). Mastering the English language and/or teaching the English language are seen as, inevitably, bringing economic and political power as well as opportunities to individuals in different communities all over the world where English is used (Butler, 2004; Nunan, 2003).

Over the past 10 years, there has been considerable growth in writing and research about NNESs and their experiences in school and society.

Professionals and scholars alike have voiced different opinions on issues related to non-nativeness, such as perceived advantages and disadvantages of being a non-native English speaker in TESOL (Medgyes, 1994; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999), challenges to NNES credibility (Thomas, 1999), the self-perception of the NNES (Liu, 1999; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999), the attitudes of students toward NNES teachers (Amin, 1997; Tang, 1997), and differences in classroom behavior between NNESs and NESs (Medgyes, 1992). On the whole, the existing body of literature has arisen as a by-product of having both NNES and NES professionals in the TESOL field.

In fact, this kind of research creates a dichotomy that has come under increased scrutiny during the past decade (Davies, 2004; Medgyes, 2001). When we focus on issues involving the supposed differences between native and

nonnative teachers in the field, many have come to feel that this actually drives us away from other important factors which should play a role in hiring teachers. For instance, in other fields such as business, the focus is on the quality of teaching and not on a candidate's first language. Many professionals are coming to feel that the same should now hold true in the English field. For one thing, it is increasingly argued that we are talking about World Englishes and not one or two kinds of English. Scholars have coined phrases such as English as an International Language, English as a Global Language (Crystal, 1997), English as an Additional Language (Kachru, 1997), English as a World Language, and World Englishes (WE) to suggest the worldwide importance of English language learning and teaching (Gorlach, 2002; Graddol, 1997; Smith & Forman, 1997). Specifically, the proponents of a WE viewpoint have been advocating for an enhanced conceptualization of WE to "recognize the functions of the language in diverse pluralistic contexts" (Kachru, 1997, p. 215). Research on this has indicated that some of the functions of the language include its use in school subjects, scholarly publications, communication in transportation and travel, and in personal and business communication in aural, written, and electronic forms (Gorlach, 2002). This range of contexts and functions, it is argued, leads potentially to much greater flexibility in the forms that may ultimately be accepted as varieties of English.

In relation to the notion of WE, Kachru (1997) coined three phrases to label different groupings of countries: Inner Circle, Outer Circle, and Expanding Circle. These distinctions were intended to represent the spread of the English

language, and they are based on the functional use of the English language in each country. In 'Inner Circle' countries, English has typically been a first language; in the 'Outer Circle,' the language tends to have a colonial history, while in the 'Expanding Circle,' neither of these holds and English has been a foreign language. Others have expanded Kachru's notion further to suggest a more diverse breakdown; however, even with the original distinctions, it becomes clear that English varieties are facing inevitable diversification. According to Alatis and Straehle (1997), Kachru's notion of pluralizing the word, "Englishes" symbolized a "vital concept of pluralism, of linguistic heterogeneity, of cultural diversity" (p. 16). Pakir (1997) concurred, stating that Kachru's work on WE pointed to "multi-identities...in English today" (p. 173). The notion of WE pushed the English language and its teaching beyond the borders of the United States and Great Britain (Pakir, 1997).

In this context, many questions arise. One of the most basic is, "How can we actually label 'nativeness'?" Many scholars (Brutt-Griffer & Samimy, 1999, 2001; Davies, 1991; Liu, 1999; Nayar, 1997; Pennycook, 1994, 2001; Widdowson, 1994) argue that it is hard to determine who can be labeled a NS or a NNS since a single norm for standard English no longer exists, particularly at a global level. As Higgins (2003) has pointed out, these researchers also have critiqued the NNESSs/NESs dichotomy for being "more of a social construction than a linguistically based parameter," and have asserted that speakers' own ideological stances toward their linguistic identities should be more significant than the label they are given by others. Higgins goes on to elaborate further,

speaking of others who “have critiqued the dichotomy for dividing groups of speakers into *haves* and *have nots* from a top-down approach without taking the speakers’ own perspectives into account” (p.15).

In fact, these questions are only the start of our exploration into a complex phenomenon; the lack of work on the generally unstated issues in this area leaves a critical gap in the literature. One issue relatively under-explored involves the social and political effects of the NS/NNS dichotomy. Yet, another issue, which has been entirely unexplored, is the source of this thinking—where do the dichotomy and the inequalities rooted in it come from? This dissertation is relevant to answering this question. The English teaching profession needs to better understand the origins of this NNS/NES dichotomy if the English teaching profession is to thrive in today’s global environment.

In undertaking this work, I hypothesized that the TESOL discourse communities may themselves be one of the major contributors to the construction of the divisive NNS/NES dichotomy. Since scholarly attention on academic literacy activities and learning has shifted from autonomous and neutral activities to socially constructed and conventionalized practices, learning is now seen as crucially dependent on socially situated activities (Gee, 1990, 2000; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Accordingly, the TESOL community not only introduces the target academic discourse community to NNS/NES issues, but it also (re)shapes the academic discourse community through interaction.

Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) have developed an apprenticeship model in which apprentices (newcomers) learn about their

communities of practice (discourse communities) through observation, interaction and participation in the practices of the community. Newcomers increase their engagement more over time until they participate fully in the communities of practice and become experts. The core concept of *situated learning* that Lave and Wenger argue for is that learning takes places as “an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice” (p.31) and through participation at multiple levels. Moreover, it is important to note that novices are not simply replicating the transmitted knowledge and culture of their discourse communities; they are transforming the communities of practice through critical reflection and active engagement. However, their learning process is not always open and easy because established members can restrict new members’ access to information and participation through selection and control; therefore, the dynamics of power relationships, one of the inherent characteristics of every discourse community, also play an important role in TESOL professional training communities.

Statement of the Problem

With an increase in the number of teacher candidates gaining admission into U.S. TESOL programs from diverse linguistic and ethnic backgrounds, an urgent need has arisen to prepare non-native English speaking (NNES) teachers (e.g., Braine, 1999; Graddol, 1997; Medgyes, 1999; Singh & Doherty, 2004). Given that over three quarters of the individuals in the global English language teaching community are NNESs (Liu, 1999), it is crucial to explore the influence on the TESOL discourse community of the NNET/NET dichotomy in the field. Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999), who investigated the critical perspective of

NNES student teachers in a TESOL program, assert that current TESOL practices tend to silence international TESOLers. In view of that, this research investigated the non native graduate students' perceptions of the socialization process in one graduate TESOL discourse community.

Graduate study ushers students into their professional academic discourse communities by engaging them in the topics under discussion, familiarizing them with the language (e.g., rhetoric, technical terms) and the conventions and practices (Berkenkotter, Huckin & Ackerman, 1988; Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995) of the field. Graduate study, as such, constitutes a significant part of the target academic discourse community. Prior (1998) contends that SL (Second Language) graduate students adjust themselves over time into their new academic discourse communities through participation, interaction, and negotiation. This becoming or transforming process occurs through a complicated and multi-dimensional process with the system, the diverse cultural environment, and the participants acting together (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In *The Politics of TESOL Education*, Ramanathan (2002) states that NNESs teachers should reflect critically on the discipline's social practices, and on their individual participation in these practices. She suggests that prospective teachers should be encouraged to be aware of their socializing process into their respective discourse communities through active reflection and questioning of the discipline's practices and norms. In this way, educators can be aware of how their program shapes their thoughts, how their larger profession functions, and how they can transform discourse communities.

The main concern of the present research is to explore international graduate students' critical reflection on the practices of their graduate discourse community, participation modes, and the negotiation process. It is hoped that the study helped in creating a space for the NNESs to reflect on and articulate their own inquiries about the discourse and their socialization process. Ultimately, it may be possible for those who develop professional training programs in TESOL to generate the conceptual tools that will empower NNES graduates students to overcome the limited role now felt to be prescribed for them in the profession.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following questions:

1. Does the discourse of the graduate TESOL preparation program seem to affect (e.g: to encourage or to diminish the importance of) the NNES/NES dichotomy, judging from the views of NNESs graduate students who are practicing or developing teachers? If so, in what ways do these developing TESOL professionals see this dichotomy as being expressed in their experience?
2. How do these developing NNES professionals describe the experiences that are relevant to the broad question in (1)?
 - 2a. What social dynamics seem to operate within the TESOL training community, again judging from the views of NNES graduate students participating in this community?
 - 2b. How are these dynamics understood differently by participants with various backgrounds?

- 2c. In what ways do these dynamics seem to empower/disempower the NNEs to overcome the NES/NNES dichotomy, judging from the views of these NNE graduate student/teachers?
3. How are the past experiences of the participants relevant in shaping the dichotomy? That is, what attitudes have they experienced in their previous learning in their home country?
 4. How do the interactions that can be observed in teacher the training program classrooms possibly contribute to or work against, the NESs/NNEs dichotomy?

Significance of the Study

This study is important in that it explores the TESOL discourse community as one of the sources that may contribute to the creation of the NNE/NES dichotomy in the TESOL field. In other words, it is looking at the TESOL discourse community of prospective teachers as a potential locus for interactions that can be observed as influencing the present dichotomy, which is recognized by researchers such as Nayar (1994) and others mentioned earlier.

Llurda (2004) speculates that the native-speaker model has not died out because most non-native English speakers still believe that they are speaking English as a foreign language, not English as an international language. The results of studies such as the present one may provide a basis for these teachers to view their own situation in a more active light and in particular to feel more empowered in their relationship with their language. In addition, it is hoped that this study will draw attention to a group of pre-service teachers, representative of

a growing number of individuals in TESOL programs across the United States, and whose lived experiences in these programs, heretofore, have been virtually invisible in the literature. Ultimately, the findings may be instrumental in designing and implementing a curriculum for TESOL teacher education programs which house a large number of international graduate students.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

..., [e]very other serious contender for that status has been eliminated. French is dying outside France. "Francophone" Africa is turning to English. Portuguese Africa is abandoning Portuguese. German made a small, temporary advance across emergent Eastern Europe but elsewhere outside Germany it is dead. Russian, which we once thought we would all have to learn, is finished. The Japanese are learning English, China will resist, but Mandarin and Cantonese are not advancing beyond their native speakers. More of the world's new Muslims are learning English than Arabic. Parris, 2005.

As this quote from *The Times* of London shows, the international arena seems to be constantly gravitating towards English. Llorca (2004) asserts that the rise of English has occurred at the expense of many languages. In 1992, Phillipson referred to English as a force defining a dominating empire since it has become the language of critical domains such as science, technology and international trade at the global level. Other researchers consider English to be the world's lingua franca (Kachru, 2005; Seidlhofer, 2005).

In 1985, B. Kachru divided the English speaking world into three concentric circles (cited in Kachru, 2005). The First circle is the 'Inner Circle' which consists of the native English speaking countries such as the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The second

circle, the 'Outer Circle'; consists of countries formerly colonized by the British such as India, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Singapore. In these countries, English is an official language and plays an important role in education and popular culture. The third circle, called the 'Expanding Circle's, consists of countries where English is widely studied as a foreign language without serving as a first language or having colonial contacts with English. Such countries include China, Japan and countries in South America. In each of these circles, English has been nativized to some extent; as a result, we do not have one English but many Englishes in the twenty-first century (Kachru, 2005). In this chapter, I will address the questions of power and ownership, who is the native speaker, who is the nonnative speaker, native versus non native, discourse community, and the critical pedagogy in TESOL.

Questions of Power and 'Ownership

In the context of this globalization of English language learning and teaching, Inner Circle countries have continued to gain political and economic power over Outer Circle and Expanding Circle countries. Although it has not been explicitly stated, it can be inferred that English communication fluency, which tends to be equated with a native English speaker status, can serve to facilitate economic and political power in the world economy. Extending this notion of power into the TESOL profession, individuals from Inner Circle and certain Outer Circle countries have tended to have power over those from Outer Circle and Expanding Circle countries (Kachru, 1997; Oda, 1999).

It is clear that fluency and competence in the use of English is needed, as well as pedagogical skills, for good language education. Nunan (2003) surveyed some of the Expanding Circle countries in order to better understand the impact that the globalization of the English language has had on their educational policy and pedagogy. Nunan's findings for teacher preparation indicate that "[t]eacher education and the English language skills of teachers in public-sector institutions are inadequate... [and] of even greater concern is the widespread use of nonqualified English teachers" (p. 606). Instead of pouring economic resources into hiring NES teachers from overseas, as a solution, however, Nunan argued that it would be beneficial "to enhance the proficiency and professional skills of local teachers" (p. 608).

The necessity of supporting local teachers through English language training and boosting of communication skills was also documented in Butler's (2004) study, which examined the proficiency levels of EFL elementary level teachers in China, Taiwan, and Korea. Similarly, Liu, Ahn, Baek, and Hahn (2004) found that Korean English teachers would need to gradually increase the amount of English language that they used in classrooms, since most did not have the proficiency level needed to use English a great deal of the time. Their study also indicated that, in order for Korean teachers to use more English language in their teaching, "curricula and assessment at both the national and local levels should be revised to focus on using the language" (p. 633). The challenges and limitations of curricula and assessment of the communicative competence of both teachers and students learning English in Expanding Circle

countries have been documented in other studies (e.g., Butler, 2004; Li, 1998; Nunan, 2003).

In this context, Widdowson (1994) addressed the problem of 'ownership' for the language,

The question is which community, and which culture, have a rightful claim to ownership of standard English? For standard English is no longer the preserve of a group of people living in an offshore European island, or even of larger groups living in continents elsewhere. It is an international language. As such it serves a whole range of different communities and their institutional purposes and these transcend traditional communal and cultural boundaries. P. 382

As pointed out above, the expansion of English has triggered a struggle over its ownership or "custody". 'Ownership', here is meant to identify who has the right to determine policy regarding English teaching and learning. A central area where this struggle over the ownership of the English language is clear emerges in the academic debate over the relative status and role of native speaking English language teachers (NEST) and non-native speaking English language teachers (non-NEST) in English Language Teaching (ELT).

In the next section, I will include an overview of the definition of the native speaker, non native speaker, and cover the debate over the NNES/NES dichotomy. The second section of this chapter focuses on the notions of critical pedagogy and discourse community in TESOL.

Who is a Native Speaker?

In general, participants in the debate on this question can be categorized into one of three groups: those who support the dichotomy and view NESTs as superior, those that support the dichotomy but believe that NESTs and non-NESTs complement one another, and those that oppose the dichotomy.

Debaters on all sides of the NEST/non-NEST dichotomy use theories drawn from a variety of disciplines such as sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and critical theory in order to support their views. But before engaging these positions, it is necessary to look at the problem of defining the 'native speaker'.

Although the phrase "native speaker" is extensively used by applied linguistics and TESOL researchers and practitioners, no satisfactory definition of this term exists in the field. According to Davies (1991), the first recorded use of native speaker occurred in Bloomfield's (1933) classic text on linguistics: "The first language a human being learns to speak is his *native language*; he is a *native speaker* of this language" (p. 43). In other words, an individual is a native speaker of a language if s/he has learned it in childhood (Kachru and Nelson, 1996). Stern (1983) says that native speakers have a subconscious knowledge of rules, an intuitive grasp of meanings, the ability to communicate within social settings, a range of language skills, and creativity in language use. Davies (1996, 2003) adds to this definition that native speakers have the ability to produce fluent discourse, knowledge of differences between their own speech and that of the "standard" form of the language, and the ability "to interpret and translate into the L1 of which she or he is a native speaker" (p. 154).

However, Cook (1999) emphasizes that all of these characteristics are variable and not a necessary part of the definition of a native speaker. For example, a monk sworn to silence is still a native speaker. Some native speakers, such as physicist Stephen Hawking and the deaf educator Helen Keller need to communicate via alternative means other than the conventional ones (p.186). Moreover, some native speakers may not be able to function linguistically appropriately in social settings (Rampton, 1990).

Kachru and Nelson (1996) state that the casual label of “native speaker” came to be used as a demarcation between two groups of users of English. However, they assert that being labeled a native speaker is “of no particular prior significance, in terms of measuring facility with the language “(p.79). They further comment on the potentially undesirable consequences of making this distinction:

When we say “English as a second (or even third or fourth) language” we must do so with reference to something, and that standard of measure must, given the nature of the label, English as someone’s first language. This automatically creates attitudinal problems, for it is almost unavoidable that anyone would take “second” as less worthy, in the sense, for example, that coming in second in a race is not as good as coming in first (p.79)

Who is the Nonnative Speaker?

Some definitions of NNEs are based on the teacher-student relationship. For example, Tang (1997) defines NNEs as “bilinguals, especially those who share the L1 of their students, who are employed to teach ESL or English as a

foreign language (EFL) in the schools of their native countries” (p.577). Kramsch and Lam have observed that native speakers can be distinguished from nonnative speakers based on the “degree of ‘foreignness’ that the language displays when it is represented in writing, in print, or in electronic form” (cited in Braine, 1999, p. 57). Medgyes (1994) coined the term “pseudo-native speaker” to highlight the characteristics of someone who is close to but not a native speaker of English. Pseudo-native speakers:

1. Are most frequently and easily recognized by their strange pronunciation;
2. Have a lower level of idiomaticity than average. Some pseudo-natives, consciously or unconsciously, prefer unmarked forms, refraining from the use of colloquialisms, catch-phrases, and slang, while others tend to be over-idiomatic;
3. Have gaps in the conceptual knowledge usually acquired by children during their linguistically most formative years (games, stories, nursery songs...etc.);
4. Use repetitious and routine language less efficiently;
5. Are less aware of the context at large. This may imply referential gaps in certain situations or slips in register which may lead to social gaffes;
6. Are less coherent and consistent both in their own language use and their judgment of other people’s language use. (Medgyes, 1999, pp. 14-15)

Another possible way of viewing the concepts of native and nonnative speaker is to consider an imaginary line which Medgyes (1994) calls “the interlanguage continuum” (P.11) on which the ability to speak the language can vary from zero

to absolute proficiency. There is a point on the continuum when the nonnative speaker is clearly distinguishable from the native speaker:

(N)on-native speakers may constantly improve along the continuum as long as they learn-to-use/use to-learn English, but at certain point their progress is halted by a glass wall. They can catch a glimpse of natives thronging on the other side of the wall, but they cannot walk through it or climb over it. The wall is bullet-proof, entirely isolating natives from nonnatives. (Medgyes, 1994, p.12)

According to Medgyes (1994), nonnative speakers fall into two categories: the first one includes those who want to learn English for specific goals, like being able to read a magazine or pass an exam. In the second category, nonnative speakers need English to function in the community where they live; this group includes immigrants or those who use the language in their professions, such as NNESTs.

A solution to the elusive distinction between native and nonnative speaker would be to let each person decide by self-ascription whether they want to call themselves native or nonnative speakers (Medgyes, 1994) because membership “is largely a matter of self-ascription, not of something being given” (Davies, 1991, p.7-8). Using this criterion, speakers choose whether they want to belong to one group or another.

Despite the controversy over the distinction between the native and non native speaker, the dichotomy is “as widely used in the professional jargon of both teachers and researchers today as ever” (Arva and Medgyes, 2000, p. 356),

yet, it is difficult to find agreement about the meaning of each term (Ferguson, 1992; Medgyes, 1994). For example, Davies (1995) believes that “the native speaker is a fine myth: we need it as a model, goal, almost an inspiration. But it is useless as a measure” (p. 157).

Although the terms “native speaker” and “non-native speaker” are still commonly used, alternative terms have been suggested such as

- Second language speaking professionals
- English teachers speaking other languages
- Non-native speakers of English in TESOL
- Non-native professionals in TESOL
- Non-native English speaking professionals
- Second language teaching professionals
- Non native English teacher

Yet as the list shows, alternatives still tend to use the term “nonnative”. In this work, I am going to use this term not because this is the only term that is commonly used, but also because it has begun to be used to show pride in a context where “non-native” speaker professionals are beginning to become conscious of the way the dichotomy works against them.

Native versus Non Native

A plethora of studies have described the pervasive “dichotimization” (e.g., othering or categorizing the NNESs to be different due to the way they look or the way they sound), without demonstrating how variations in prior schooling and educational experiences could have influenced these NNES professionals in

particular. By promoting this “dichotimization” of NES and NNES professionals, these studies appear to categorize the individuals as polar opposites, disregarding the notion that NES and NNES identities could be fluid and multiple instead of binary (Norton, 2000; Pavlenko, 2003). In other words, this “othering” process tends to overlook the notion of a NES and NNES continuum in that many may fall on different points of the continuum. In addition, this binary view ignores the situation of individuals who purport to be bilinguals, trilinguals, and even multilinguals. Similarly, the different lived experiences between international and immigrant NNESs have not been examined as a way to further acknowledge the diversity within the NNES continuum (e.g., Nero, 2000; Pavlenko, 2003; Pavlenko & Blackridge, 2004).

Cook (1999) asserts that teaching English as an international language makes the NESTs/NNESTs dichotomy unnecessary. However in practice, based on the literature that will be reviewed here, equality based on linguistic background seems to be often ignored in the practice of teaching English as a second language. The use of the phrase “nonnative-English-speaking teacher” by TESOL professionals has created a tight dichotomy in the ELT profession that creates an “us versus them” mentality (Kachru and Nelson, 1996, p.79).

Much writing in the TESOL field has treated NNESs and native English speakers (NESs) dichotomously rather than on a continuum (e.g., Hinkel, 1994; Hoekje & Linnell, 1994; Kobayashi, 1992; Tyler, 1992). Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999) argue that the research on NNESTs can be divided into two approaches : the dominance approach and the difference approach, each of

which takes nativeness as its focus in creating two opposite camps of TESOL professionals:

The dominance approach (e.g., Medgyes, 1994) describes the NNEST in juxtaposition to the native-English speaking teacher, basing itself either implicitly or explicitly on the paradigm of *deficit linguistics* [...] The difference approach to the NNEST attempts to highlight what it sees as the positive elements that NNESTs bring to the profession by emphasizing, for example, the value of being a good model of the learner of the language and of being an empathetic teacher. p. 467

In other words, the supporters of the dominance approach believe that the native speaker should be given priority. The difference approach, in contrast, claims that it is necessary to distinguish between native- and nonnative-English-speaking teachers in terms of their differences; in this view; in fact, the strengths of both groups should be recognized. In what follows, I will cover the basic positions held in these two camps, then will go on to speak of another position, the 'critical' position. Those who oppose the dichotomy feel that differentiating among teachers based on their status as native or nonnative speakers perpetuates the dominance of the native speaker in the ELT profession and contributes to discrimination in teaching the language.

The Dominance Camp:

The argument of the dominance camp is based on the idea that NESTs are the only reliable sources for the language and its culture (Ferguson, 1992; Kachru, 1996; Nayar, 1994, Sifakis, 2004, Widdowson, 1994). In other words,

the language belongs to its native speaker. The origin of this idea has been claimed to be the Chomskyan notion of the ideal native speaker (Braine, 2004; Davies, 2004). This group views NESTs as more qualified than non-NESTs because of their greater ability to demonstrate fluent, idiomatically correct language use and because of their understanding of the cultural connotations of the language (Phillipson, 1992a; 1992b). Proponents of this view base their argument on two concepts. The first is an extended version of the well known 'critical period hypothesis' (Lenneberg, 1967) and the second one is the knowledge of the target culture.

The notion of the critical period hypothesis suggests that "there is a fixed span of years during which language learning can take place naturally and effortlessly, and after which it is not possible to be completely successful" (Ellis, 1996, p. 484). In other words, younger learners can reach native-like levels, but older people, cannot and the age turning point is around puberty. Lenneberg (1967) "links the close of the critical period to the completion of cerebral lateralization of language function (ordinarily lateralized to the left hemisphere)" (p.6). Thus, according to Lennberg's idea, the brain is fully lateralized at puberty; that is to say that everything is in its place and the brain has lost considerable flexibility in areas like language learning. Subsequent research has largely shown that, for second language learning, the only solidly valid claim associated with the critical period hypothesis involves phonology. More specifically, adult learners do tend to have foreign accents when learning a language; however, the

complex literature on this topic has produced no clear evidence of deficits in other areas of language learning (Ellis, 1997).

The second concept cited by dominance approach supporters involves the knowledge of target culture, which they claim is interwoven with the texture of the language (Byram & Feng, 2005; Chastain, 1976; Heusinkveld, 1997). Scholars have argued that learning the syntactic and semantic rules of the language is necessary but not sufficient for communication in that language (Sapir, 1949; Chastain, 1971; Canale and Swain, 1980; Samovar, Porter, & Jain, 1981; Hammerly, 1982; Seelye, 1984; Brown, 1987; Buttjes, 1990, Heusinkveld, 1997, Tseng, 2002). Naturally, NESTs tend to be more capable of teaching and explaining the target culture to the language learners since they were raised in the culture. Accordingly, the dominance approach emphasizes this as a strength of the NS teacher.

The Difference Camp:

This group attempts to explain how NESTs/NNESTs are different without claiming superiority for one group or the other.. As Cook (1999) states “comparisons between groups yields differences, not deficits” (p.194). Medgyes (2001) adds that NESTs and non-NESTs are different, and that difference does not mean superiority or inferiority. He adds “...the ideal NEST and the ideal non-NEST arrive from different directions, but eventually stand quite close to each other. Both groups of teachers serve equally useful purposes... In an ideal school, therefore, there should be a good balance of NESTs and non-NESTs” (p. 441).

This camp accepts the assumption that non-NESTs do not have native-like language levels (Davies, 2004). However, it also assumes that non-NESTs can gain high levels of proficiency, and moreover, that they can develop the pedagogical skills needed for good teaching (Davis, 2004). In 2000, Arva and Medgyes analyzed the differences between NESTs and non-NESTs working in Hungarian schools and concluded that NESTs and non-NESTs differ in their language abilities. This difference leads NESTs and non-NESTs to adopt different teaching behaviors and attitudes; nevertheless, no group's behavior or beliefs can be seen as superior. For example, non-NESTs had better meta-cognitive knowledge of grammar, but NESTs were better informants of the culture of the English speaking world. As such, it was proposed that, while NESTs made better conversation teachers, non-NESTs made better grammar teachers.

Studies such as that of Moussu (2002) tend to be cited by people in the difference camp. Moussu investigated the attitudes and emotions of learners toward NESTs and non-NESTs. The subjects of the study were 84 learners from 21 different countries studying in an English program in the U.S. The study showed that the learners had positive attitudes towards their non-NESTs and did not believe that the nativeness of the teacher made any difference.

The Critical Camp:

This group is unlike the previous two; in fact, it constitutes something of a response to and critique of the dominance camp. The foundational ideas of this camp are found in linguistic imperialism theory (Phillipson, 1992a; 1992b) and

critical applied linguistics (Canagarajah, 2005; Pennycook, 2004). This camp argues that the NEST/NNEST dichotomy is part of a larger scheme designed to serve the powerful at the expense of the weak. Phillipson (1992a) questions the notion of the native speaker as the ideal English teacher, referring to it as the 'native speaker fallacy.' According to this fallacy, NESTs are seen as ideal since they enjoy greater facility in expressing fluent, appropriate language, and they understand the culture; therefore, they are the final arbitrator of what English is. The pervasiveness of the native speaker fallacy has created a number of challenges for the nonnative speaker in both the workplace and in daily life (Maum, 2002).

Canagarajah (1999) states that the fallacy helps NESTs not only keep the jobs available in the center (Inner Circle) but also monopolize those in the periphery (Expanding Circle). Braine speaks of this prejudice as also involving different forms within the native-speaking world: "Ironically, the discrimination is spreading to NS as well. Some Hong Kong institutions ... insist on teachers with British accents at the expense of American or Australian accents" (1999, p.26). In Kelch and Santana-Williamson's (2002) study of ESL students' attitudes toward their teachers, they found that students were more critical of teachers with nonnative standard accents and pronunciation. Clearly, NNESTs face challenges in at least two areas: the battle for one or the other 'native' standard and student attitudes in the workplace.

Another challenge, for NNESTs is proving their credibility and effectiveness as teachers. Seidlhofer (1999) conducted a survey of the attitudes

of Austrian English teachers and found that 57% stated that being a non-native made them feel insecure rather than confident. Yet, as Canagarajah (1999) and Phillipson (1996) have pointed out, many multilingual speakers have both a sophisticated awareness of language and the ability to relate to students' needs. Teachers who share language and cultural backgrounds with their students have an even greater advantage. Their acute sensitivity to their students' needs makes them better able to develop effective curriculum and pedagogy.

The greatest challenge for NNESTs is the construction of social identity. According to Kamhi-Stein (2002), NNESTs' self identification as teachers, immigrants, and language learners profoundly affects how they construct their classrooms and instructions. Attitudes toward NNESTs' English proficiency and expertise as well as their own self-identification shape the role of teachers in the ESL classroom (Tang, 1997). Canagarajah (1999) warned that the native speaker fallacy could threaten the future of the TESOL field by preventing its democratization and hindering the balanced development of TESOL as a profession.

Discourse Community

Gee (1990, 2000) and Swales (1990) characterize a discourse community as a group of people that has shared experience, expectations, rules, interests, and vision as well as a shared language pattern. Gee (1990) lists six categories for defining a discourse community:

- A broadly agreed set of common public goals
- Mechanisms of intercommunication among its members

- Provision of information and feedback
- Genres creating discursal expectations
- Some shared specific lexis
- A threshold level of expert and novice members

Members in a discourse community may have nothing in common except their shared interests (Swales, 1990) and certain psychological predispositions that attract them (Bizzell, 1992). Individuals can join a discourse community for various reasons. One can even be a member of a variety of communities simultaneously, and one's involvement within communities can change over time as interests or circumstances change. That is to say, one can change from being an active to an inactive member and vice versa.

Unlike some communities related to individuals' daily lives, academic communities are selected and voluntary. Academic literacy is acquired by students in academic discourse communities. Students entering academic disciplines have to learn the ways of communication and disciplinary knowledge that are commonly employed by members of the disciplinary discourse community if they want to acquire membership in that discourse community. Without this knowledge, students are still outsiders to the community's discourse.

Yet acquisition of the conventions of the discourse communities is not enough for both novices and experts to maintain their membership. They must also learn what Bazerman (1994) called *conversations of the discipline*, which refers to "issues and problems that are currently under discussion within the community" (Berkenkotter and Huckin, 1995. p. 118). The acquisition of both

conventions and conversation of academic literacy normally occurs through some form of formal or informal apprenticeship, mediated by involvement with experienced practicing scholars.

Swales' criteria allow individuals to conceptualize disciplinary discourse communities as being "relatively systematic, albeit generally implicit, rules regarding membership, goals, participation, and patterns of communication" (Ramanathan & Kaplan, 2000. p. 176). Although Swales' view of discourse communities has been very insightful and influential, it has also been controversial on a number of points. One of these concerns the extent to which membership of a discourse community involves assimilating its world view. While Swales maintains that it is possible to participate in a discourse without necessarily subscribing to its world view, Bizzell (1992) argues that discourse communities maintain not only conventions' regulating social interactions, but also canonical knowledge regulating world views. According to Bizzell (1992), in a discourse community, members' world views are unavoidably affected by their membership on a daily basis although the members themselves may be unaware of it. Bizzell further maintains that gaining access to a discourse community entails the phenomenon that outsiders, through assimilating the world views of the communities, begin to share the same world view with becoming insiders themselves. On the other hand, besides maintaining the view that participation does not necessarily entail assimilation, Swales also, to some extent, encourages instrumental purposes for entering a discourse community, so outsiders can gain the advantage of the discourse without sharing the world view

with insiders. The debate over these positions raises important questions about the process of joining a discourse community. “Overall, the extent to which discourse is constitutive of world view would seem to be a matter of investigation rather than assumption” (Swales, 1990, p.31).

Another criticism aimed at Swales’ view of discourse communities is that he seems to ignore the fact that discourse communities are not as stable as they appear. Prior (1998), drawing on Bazerman (1988), argues that discourse communities are not as homogeneous and closed as implied by Swales, but in contrast, are dynamic, situated, open and subject to change. Responding to such views, Swales has now modified his approach to discourse communities, recognizing that “the purposes, goals, or public outcomes [of genres] are more evasive, multiple, layered, and complex than originally envisaged” (Askehave & Swales 2001, p. 197). Yet he still maintains that structural properties are very important components of the genres of discourse communities and an essential part of academic literacy.

To summarize, academic literacy is acquired by students in particular discourse communities which are both stable and dynamic. Novices acquire academic literacy through disciplinary knowledge widely recognized in the field in order to communicate with their peers and accomplish the change from novices to experts. At the same time, both novices and experts have to follow the conventions related to the current trends in the field and make changes according to changing sociocultural needs. The acquisition of academic literacy requires not only the understanding of a discourse community, but also

disciplinary knowledge popular in the relevant discourse community which is imperative for individuals to effectively communicate with other members.

As proponents of the critical approach point out, the NESs/NNESs dichotomy creates two English language teaching discourse communities: a 'Center' which consists of the native speaking countries versus a 'Periphery' which is made up of the non-native speaking English countries (Canagarajah, 1999; Phillipson, 1992). New members of a discourse community learn their communities of practices through observation and participation (i.e., a form of apprenticeship) (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Accordingly, if dominance mentality prevails, the Center will not only have economical and political power over the Periphery, but will also lead the Periphery by setting the acceptable norms and criteria on a global scale. In other words, it will give authenticity and power to the native speakers in English language teaching (Canagarajah, 1999b, Phillipson, 1992; Tollefson, 1995). Moreover, it could perpetuate "a particular inherited discourse" that, potentially, may for a disempowering force in teacher preparation in the TESOL program (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999). Nayar (1994) argues that whether native English speakers own the English language or not, they have laid claim to "the rights and responsibilities not only of controlling the forms and norms of English globally but also of dominating the theory and practice of its teaching and research" (p. 4).

Critical Pedagogy in TESOL

..., we conceive critical pedagogy in TESOL as the construction of a subjectivity that includes both NSs and NNSs and that works toward the

goal of eliminating the colonial construct of nativeness in ELT. Defining a critical pedagogy for TESOL integrally involves recognizing the multicultural setting of ESOL teacher preparation programs that serve international students. Brutt-Griffler and Samimy, 1999, p. 418-419.

Deconstructing discursive practices can play a central role in constructing an identity for NNESs that neither prescribes a limited role for them in the profession nor specifies definite boundaries to their abilities within the context of their preparation. Given this, critical pedagogy can serve as an important tool for the NNES teacher. According to Paulo Freire, students' ability to think critically about their educational situation allows them to recognize connections between their individual problems and experiences and the social contexts in which they are embedded. On a similar note, Weedon (1997) states that language influences consciousness and the construction of identity, a claim that is often cited and virtually never challenged. Given the importance of this link, it should be clear that forms of professional discourse play a crucial role in the teacher preparation process.

Kumaravadivelu (2001) advocates a pedagogy of particularity, practicality and possibility in second language (L2) learning/ teaching and L2 teacher education. The pedagogy of practicality promotes a "teacher-generated theory of practice", while the pedagogy of possibility advocates equal power relationships inside and outside the education system (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, p. 541). The pedagogy of particularity highlights context-specific and location-specific pedagogy considering the particularity of a group of teachers, learners, and

goals, in their specific institutional context and sociocultural surroundings. In L2 teacher education, Kumaravadivelu (2001) suggests that teacher educators should incorporate prospective teachers' experiences, voices, and visions into the curriculum through dialogues. Pedagogies that ignore lived experiences will ultimately prove to be "so disturbing for those affected by them so threatening to their belief systems-that hostility is aroused and learning becomes impossible" (Coleman, 1996, p. 11).

Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999) who investigated the critical perspective of NNES student teachers in a TESOL program, assert that current TESOL practices tend to silence international TESOLers by unconsciously reinforcing Western cultural hegemony. Although international students are valuable resources bringing with them their experience and values to TESOL discourse communities, the researchers add that international students do not see themselves as active, contributing members in the field, but are rather domesticated into an ESL ethos.

Ramanathan (2002), in her *Politics of TESOL Education*, encourages teachers to reflect critically with regard to the issues of the discipline's social practices, and their individual participation in these practices. She suggests that prospective teachers should be encouraged to be aware of their socializing process into their respective discourse communities through active reflection and the questioning of the discipline's practices and norms. As a result, they can become aware of how their program shapes their thoughts, how their larger profession functions, and how they can transform discourse communities. In this

light, I believe that my study will help provide the space to international graduate students to reflect and to raise their concerns within TESOL discourse communities, particularly, TESOL graduate programs.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

As the main focus of my study was to understand how the TESOL discourse community may itself be one of the major contributors to the construction of the divisive NNEs/NESs dichotomy, the research paradigm of my study was aligned with social constructionism. From a constructivist point of view, individuals do not construct their understanding of the meaning of their experiences in isolation, but they interpret experience's meaning within historical and sociocultural contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). In other words, to understand the NNEs/NESs dichotomy, I considered the meaning of the experiences teachers construct within the context. My research questions were:

1. Does the discourse of the graduate TESOL preparation program seem to affect (e.g. to encourage or to diminish the importance of) the NNEs/NESs dichotomy, judging from the views of NNEs graduate students who are practicing or developing teachers? If so, in what ways do these developing TESOL professionals see this dichotomy as being expressed in their experience?
2. How do these developing NNEs professionals describe the experiences that are relevant to the broad question in (1)?
 - 2a. What social dynamics seem to operate within the TESOL training community, again judging from the views of NNEs graduate students participating in this community?

- 2b. How are these dynamics understood differently by participants with various backgrounds?
- 2c. In what ways do these dynamics seem to empower/disempower the NNESs to overcome the NES/NNES dichotomy, judging from the views of these NNES graduate student/teachers?
3. How are the past experiences of the participants relevant in shaping the dichotomy? That is, what attitudes have they experienced in their previous learning in their home country?
4. How do the interactions that can be observed in the teacher training program classroom possibly contribute to, or work against the NES/NNES dichotomy?

For three major reasons, this study followed a qualitative approach. First, this study was field-focused and heavily concerned with specific individuals in specific contexts. The main focus of this study was to understand specific native and nonnative teachers' experiences in the context of their professional development. A central goal was to understand how their development as TESOL professionals empowers or disempowers them to overcome the professionally constructed dichotomy of NNESs/NESs. Second, as a researcher, I am not neutral to the study. My own experiences as an NNES were integrated into the study. In other words, as I am an insider in this study, both my voice and participants' voices were addressed. By weaving my own story of experience throughout the study, I became a "real, histor[ical] individual with concrete, specific desires and interests and not an invisible, anonymous voice of authority"

(Harding, 1987, p. 9) Third, story-telling was a major character of the study in the process of data collection and data analysis. In this study, the understanding of NNES/NES teachers' experiences and teaching practices within the TESOL discourse community was based on participants' dialogues with their past, present, and future.

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

While considering these different methodologies, I found that narrative inquiry would best enable me to explore my research interest. Narrative inquiry allowed me as a researcher to understand participants' experiences and the impact of those experiences, and it also provided me with tools to understand and to explore the tacit assumptions of participants. I wanted to understand the impact of the TESOL discourse community on the NNES/NES teachers and how their experiences within this community reflected in their professional lives, particularly in- the way they see themselves as TESOL professionals.

Narrative Inquiry

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

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

education, elaborate on the process of collecting narrative field notes and discuss the writing and structure of a narrative study. Later, these two authors expanded their ideas into a book entitled *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research* (2000), which includes detailed guidelines for “what narrative inquiries do” (p. 48).

According to Clandinin and Connelly (1994), narrative is both phenomenon and method. All those who experiences experience this world lead storied lives and retell their own stories, whereas narrative inquirers collect, describe, retell such storied lives and write narratives of experience. In Clandinin and Connelly (1994) own words, “narrative names the structured quality of experience to be studied, and it names the patterns of inquiry for its study” (p. 416). In the broad field of education, narrative work has focused on teacher education, looking at the ways in which teachers’ narratives shape and inform their practice (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Thomas, 1995). Cortazzi (1993) identifies three factors that influence the development of narrative research in teaching practice.

First, there is currently an increased emphasis on teacher reflection. Second, more emphasis is being placed on teachers’ knowledge—what they know, how they think, how they develop professionally, and how they make decisions in the classroom. And third, educators seek to bring teachers’ voices to the forefront by empowering teachers to talk about their experiences. The recent emphasis on reflective practice (Schön, 1983) and teacher research has strengthened the focus on listening to the voice of teachers and hearing their

stories. In their study on teachers' personal, practical knowledge, Clandinin and Connelly (1992) work closely with teachers to achieve, through observation, conversation, and mutual construction, an understanding of how teachers know their practice. Some scholars (Neumann & Peterson, 1997; Thompson & Tyagi, 1996) have since moved their research beyond the immediate technical issues of curriculum and classrooms, as a result, to encompass teachers' biographies. Other scholars (e.g. Russell & Munby, 1991) have sought an understanding of teaching practice through investigating teachers' personal experiences and narratives. The central concept of practitioner knowledge through reflective storytelling in teaching and teacher education is central to the organization of knowledge and the processes of comprehension and thinking (Carter, 1993). Recording and retelling classroom practice enables teachers to organize their growing knowledge of teaching. For instance, following Schön's (1983) notion of "reflection- action," Russell and Munby's (1991) study of 15 teachers focuses on understanding how the interaction between teachers and their experience gives rise to knowing how to teach. In their narratives, the researchers demonstrate that one of their participants, Diane, was able to clarify her puzzles in teaching activities through the process of "reframing experience" (p. 165). The stories of the participants' experiences of exploring the relationship between beliefs and action also illustrate how the process of reframing experience shapes the development of teachers' professional knowledge.

The tradition of providing narrative accounts of patterns of language use is well established in the field of language education and has been fostered by the

gathering of data from learner autobiographies, diary studies, life histories, and case studies (Bell, 2002). However, many scholars have issued warnings against treating narratives simply as factual data subject to content analysis (Pavlenko, 2002). Scholars argue that narrative inquiry requires going beyond the use of narrative as rhetorical structure (Bell, 2002). Recent research convincingly demonstrates that narratives are not purely individual productions—they are powerfully shaped by social, cultural, and historical conventions as well as by the relationship between the storyteller and the interlocutor.

Inquirers into narrative research focus on individuals' experiences. This focus on experience draws on the philosophical thoughts of John Dewey (1938), who saw that an individual's experience was a central lens for understanding a person. One aspect of Dewey's thinking was to view experience as continuous, where one experience led to another. Drawing from three criteria, *continuity* (past, present and future), *interaction* and *situation*, Dewey's theory of experience, experiences in narrative inquiry are both personal what the individual experiences – as well as social – the individual interacting with others.

Viewed from within Dewey's framework, this present study focused on individual NNES/NES teachers' past experiences as English teachers and their present experiences as TESOL professionals in relation to their TESOL discourse community in a graduate TESOL preparation program. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Creswell (2002) stated that an individual's past experiences become important in how those experiences contribute to present and future experiences.

Research Design

Role of the Researcher

I am a female international graduate student in my late twenties pursuing a doctoral degree in a TESOL training program in a university in the US. I finished my master's degree at the same university. Before I came here, my background was in business. I had no English teaching experience before joining the program. Although I have 16 years of English learning experience, my adjustment to the U.S.-based TESOL discourse community has been challenging, not only because of a lack of academic language proficiency, but also because of a lack of background knowledge of the ESL discourse community. I feel that my experience has found few outlets for expression, and it has taken me a lot of effort and time to find an academic space and voice in this new discourse community. My experience as an international graduate student in a TESOL discourse community initiated this research and sets up the inquiries of this study.

Due to the nature of qualitative research as being interactive and interpretive (Creswell, 1994), the researcher's bias (i.e., researcher's worldview, assumptions, and theoretical orientation) affects the overall research design, data collection, and analysis and interpretation of the data. From the traditional positivist perspective, a researcher's bias in qualitative research has been questioned as a barrier that should be removed to increase the validity of the research. This validity is a matter of truth and any constructivist researchers agree that in qualitative research, there exist multiple truths (Shank, 2002).

These truths are constructed through the researcher's perspective. As a result, Merriam (1998) and Shank (2002) argue that it is critical that the researcher's worldview or "bias" or "basis for creating reality" should be revealed explicitly at the beginning of the study (Shank, 2002, p. 92-93). In so doing, readers can know how the researcher's values influence the conduct and conclusions of the study.

Furthermore, postmodern thoughts and feminist qualitative research theories reject the claims of the positivist view that good science should be "free of individual bias and subjectivity" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.10). Harding's (1996) call for self critical examination of the researcher and Haraway's (1988) *situated knowledges* are seminal works about the importance of the researcher's reflexive subjectivity, which increases the trustworthiness of the knowledge presented. Haraway urges that the researcher's position be grounded in a historical, cultural and social context. Thus, the researcher's partial and imperfect views are not only legitimate but also ethical in that the researcher takes full responsibility for the knowledge presented—that is, *situated knowledge*.

Hence, espousing postmodern thoughts and embracing notions of feminist qualitative research theories, I positioned this research and my study in a way that became embodied and situated. My location as a researcher shaped the design, findings, and interpretation of this research

Participants

Merriam (1998) states that "selecting the sample is dependent upon the research problem. In qualitative research, the most appropriate sampling strategy

is non-probability sampling. Purposeful and theoretical sampling are well-known and widely used in qualitative research” (p. 67). LeCompte and Preissle (1993) use the term criterion-based selection instead of purposeful sampling, and suggest that “in criterion-based selection you create a list of attributes essential to our study and then proceed to find and locate a unit matching the list” (p. 70). Thus, Merriam (1998) maintains that the criteria for the establishment of purposeful sampling reflect the purpose of the study and guide in the identification of information-rich cases.

In order to fulfill the purpose of this research, I invited nine participants, selected according to the following criteria:

1) Participants had ideally taken the same classes in the MA/TESOL in the chosen setting. Thus, they had the same learning experiences. In addition, they had at least one semester in the program to be able to talk about the research problem. Priority was given to graduate students with longer experience in the program.

2) Participants who were chosen had different ethnicity and first language background (native and nonnative English speakers). For this criterion, the circle model suggested by Kachru and Nelson (1996) were useful. The reason for choosing diverse participants was to examine the research problem from various point of views.

3) Participants with teaching experience were given priority, as they were able to talk about their experiences as students and teachers.

Setting

This study was conducted at a rural university in the Eastern area of the United States. The university offers both Doctor of Philosophy degrees and Master of Arts degrees in English. The participants of this study are enrolled in the M.A.TESOL and PhD TESOL and Composition program. Both Programs welcomes prospective professionals in the area of TESOL from the U.S. and abroad and also who would look for increasing the professional qualifications and teaching effectiveness. The programs are designed to enrich students' understanding of advanced theory and current practices in TESOL. Theoretical exploration and practical experience are well balanced providing students with expertise in the contemporary applications of TESOL, theories, methodologies, and pedagogy.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection procedures of this study occurred in the following chronological order. First, the research project was approved by the dissertation committee. The second step was identifying the prospective participants, according to the criteria listed earlier.

Participants of this study were nonnative students who enrolled in and completed at least one semester in a TESOL program in the US.. In order to select my participants for this study, I: 1) prepared a questionnaire that asked students to comment, respond, and explain their opinion about issues of NNES/NES, 2) sent the questionnaire via the EGO email list (and posted it on the C&T program listserv), 4) Collected the questionnaire, 5) did document analysis

of the students' answers, and 6) contacted selected participants to conduct the first interview based on the profile that emerged from the analysis.

The questionnaire for the study consists of three sections: 1) the individual teacher's background (gender, age, nationality, native language, years of English teaching experience, training in English teaching, their strength and weakness as English teachers); 2) their role as English teachers and as students within the classroom in their teaching preparation program; 3) their views and comments on widespread beliefs of the TESOL field.

The collection of the questionnaire data were done during the fall semester of 2008. I started the interviews in spring of 2009. I had one round of interviews with the individual group and two rounds of interviews with the focus group. Following the interviews, *member checks* were carried out and further questions that needed to be investigated were asked through E- mail correspondence.

Instrumentation

This section presents the main data collection techniques of this study: Interview and Focus Group Interview.

Interview

The interview is the major data collection device that was used in this study. I have adopted Lincoln and Denzin's (2003) perspective that, "[an] interview is a negotiated text, a site where power, gender, race, and class intersect...interviewers and respondents carry on a conversation about mutually relevant, often biographically critical issues" (p.239). The interview technique for

this study was be a semi-structured interview, which, according to Merriam (1998), is between highly structured (e.g., oral form of a survey) and unstructured interviews (e.g., flexible and exploratory conversation). She claims that a semi-structured interview has the following characteristics:

The largest part of the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time. This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic. (p.74)

As Silverman (2001) states, "interviews share with any conversation an involvement in moral realities. They offer a rich source of data which provide access to how people account for both their troubles and their good fortune" (p.114). Because the goal of interviewing is to understand the respondents, reserchers must put themselves in the role of respondents and attempt to see issues from their prespective rather than impose preconception upon them (Fontana & Frey, 1998). By employing the format of the semi-structured interview, I was able to investigate specific inquiries efficiently and with less time and effort than would be possible with either structured or open interviews.

Focus Group Interview

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) state that Merton et al. coined the term "focus group" in 1956 to apply to a situation in which the interviewer asks group members very specific questions about a topic after considerable research has already been completed. Kreuger (1988) defines a focus group as a "carefully

planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions in a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment" (p.18). Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) state that two of the common uses of focus groups are "learning how respondents talk about the phenomenon of interest which may facilitate quantitative research tools" and "interpreting previously obtained qualitative results" (p.15). This kind of interview was used in order to get more stories and reactions to each others' perceptions and narratives. In fact, a new set of participants was identified for the focus group interview, as the original participants were no longer in the area and could not be brought together for a group discussion. I contacted three new participants who matched my original inclusion criteria, and I arranged a meeting for these new participants to sit together and discuss some of my findings and their perception about the issue of NESTs/NNESTs dichotomy.

Data Analysis Procedures

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) distinguish the difference between the text collected from the field as "field texts" and the text the researcher reconstructs as "research texts." When individuals tell stories, the sequence or meanings of the stories are often missed. In order to construct meaningful research texts, I engaged myself in the texts and explored the meaning and significance of the stories from the field text. In addition, I retold the participants' stories by using their own words and analyzed them in meaningful ways by connecting key elements of the stories and provided links among events. I also adopted Clandinin and Connelly's (1990) techniques in presenting research texts by

connecting stories with “place” and “time” in reporting on the experiential quality of the narratives. According to Clandinin and Connelly, place is the context of the stories and consists of characters and physical environment. “Place” in this study is a cultural and social context where the NNESTs/NESTs teachers live out their stories, such as their current graduate TESOL community, the places they were previously educated, and the places they taught or are teaching. “Time” in this study consists of teachers’ stories in past, present, and future.

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

In order to get into participants’ stories, I transcribed the interview tapes of their stories and analyzed them in three ways. I narrated each event, story, and experience the participants shared with me. I also retold the stories by connecting the place and time in meaningful ways. In addition, I analyzed the stories and arranged the complexity of them into themes under categories that connected them to the research questions. Finally, to make deeper sense of what participants experienced, I used cross-cases analysis technique (Creswell, 1998) to find patterns that emerged from stories, and analyzed their experiences by linking them to the current discourse of the TESOL community.

Triangulation and Related Issues

Creswell (1998, 2003) sorts out eight procedures for qualitative data: prolonged engagement and persistent observation, triangulation, peer review or debriefing, negative case analysis, clarifying research bias, member checks, rich, thick description, and external audits. He suggests that qualitative researchers engage in at least two procedures in any given study. Merriam (1998) explains that “qualitative research is an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena.” (p.5) in her book, *Qualitative Research and Case Study Application in Education*, Merriam lays out five major characteristics of qualitative research: understanding participants with an ‘*emic*’ perspective, utilizing research as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, including fieldwork, employing an inductive approach, and conducting a rich descriptive report. Guided by such studies, I employed three procedures in conducting this study, they are: prolonged engagement and persistent observation with an ‘*emic*’ view, member checking, and rich, thick description.

Prolonged engagement and persistent observation with an emic view:

One of the central concepts of this study is that the dichotomy which divides NNES/NES and chooses one over the other should be studied from the viewpoint of TESOL professionals. The participants’ point of view has been termed ‘*emic*’. The advantage of using this type of perspective is that such an approach may minimize a tendency to be ethnocentric (Mckay, 1992). According to Creswell (2003), by spending prolonged time in the field a researcher can

“develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study and can convey detail about the site and the people that lends credibility to the narrative account” (p. 196).

Member Check

Member-checking is a method for determining the accuracy of qualitative findings (Creswell, 2003). Researchers can determine whether their participants feel that their observation and interviews are accurate by checking the final report with each one of their participants after each draft. In this study, I conducted member checks after writing my drafts to have an opportunity for more explanation and the adding of information.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the study. It is divided into two major sections according to the research data collection. In my data collection, I worked with two groups of participants. The first group took part in one round of individual interviews. The second group is a focus group whose members met for two rounds of interviews. In reporting the research results in this chapter, I have discussed how the participants of this study perceive their respective TESOL graduate discourse communities, and how their academic socialization is evolving in TESOL graduate discourse community. These two issues have guided this research. In the process of exploring them, a number of specific themes emerged in the course of the study. This chapter will introduce the participants through a brief exposure of their profiles, and will then present the data, organized according to the themes that emerged in the interviews.

As Coffey and Atkinson (1996) argue, analysis is not simply categorizing and identifying patterns from data; rather, “Most fundamentally, analysis is about the representation or reconstruction of social phenomena” (p.108). Therefore, analysis implies choice and representation, and the researcher is inseparable from this process. Having stated this in this chapter, however, I strove to depict the data faithfully—staying as close as possible to the reality presented by each research participant, and deferring more interpretive discussions to the next chapter. I will also provide my participants’ responses largely via direct

transcription; however, these transcriptions were made from spoken interviews, and the originals contained some material that would have been difficult for the reader to follow. Consequently, I have made some changes in the quotes, where the speaker's meaning is unclear in the original form.

In designing the interview questions regarding the research participants' perceptions of their graduate program and their academic socialization, I felt that each participant's background should provide an important basis for understanding their findings. In fact, I found that each participant's personal situation, past experience and future vision exerted the most notable influences on his/her perceptions and socialization processes. It is of great importance to understand each participant as a whole human being. It is with this understanding that I have viewed and will present the findings of this research, beginning with portraits of my first group of participants.

Participants' Profiles of Individual Interview

The international/TESOL teachers who made this study possible are profiled below:

Sawsan

Sawsan was a female native speaker of Arabic who was in her mid 20's when she obtained her bachelor's degree in English literature in Jordan. She had no teaching experience before joining the program. She came to the United States with her husband so he could complete his master's degree in TESOL. After her husband finished his master's degree, he joined the PhD program at the same university. Sawsan was a house wife taking care of her only daughter. Her

husband and her parents convinced her to join the TESOL program in order to gain a background in the teaching field. She also knew that getting a degree from an American university would be highly valued in any Arab country if she decided to seek employment.

Sawsan was in her last semester in her MA TESOL program at the time of the study. She was excited and motivated about her program since it was going to teach her practical methodology in language teaching rather than concentrating on literature and what she described as “boring English stuff.” Although Sawsan had studied English for 18 years and had been in the United States for four years before starting the program, she felt reserved because she sometimes could not make herself understood well in English. Sawsan was wearing veil for religious purposes. She thought her veil would attract people’s attention and show her individuality, and in keeping with that perception she felt that her professors viewed her as an Arab Muslim student. She was open-minded in class, hoping to show her classmates and her professors that she did not fit the stereotype of an oppressed Muslim woman. However, she was not able to make friends because she had no chance to go out with her classmates or get close to them due to her family duties. In addition, she felt that only people who had had good experiences with Arab Muslim people would talk to her. During her graduate studies program, she had only a 6-month co-teaching experience with a native speaker, which she felt showed the negative side of being a non native in the field. Her future plan was to go back home and teach in a English as a foreign language in one of the private schools in Jordan.

DV

DV was a male from Thailand in his early 30s. His bachelor's degree was in psychology and his master's degree was in communication arts. DV's dream of becoming an English teacher had not been fulfilled, since he had not been able to pass an education test required for teachers in Thailand. He worked in a company for a while, until one of his friends, who knew how much DV wanted to teach English, encouraged him to interview for a position as an English teacher for a high school. He got the job because he was a fluent English speaker based on his interviewee's feedback. DV had no teaching experience at that time, but he acquired experience through his new position. At the time of the study, he had worked as an English teacher in a Thai high school for four years. During that time, DV had also worked part time as an adjunct professor in one of the universities in Thailand. Although he was already working in the field he was dreaming about, DV was tired of being a teacher who only prepared for classes and had no extra time for his career development. DV wanted to work as a full-time professor in a university so that he would have time for publishing and the ability to create his own curriculum without the restrictions that apply to high school teaching. With all this in mind, DV decided to pursue his studies, move to the United States, and start his PhD.

From his first class in TESOL, DV became interested in researching new topics in the field. He was excited, curious, and motivated to learn as a future researcher and a teacher. He was amazed by the large database that the school

offered him to use for whatever research he needed. Due to DV's interest in second language writing, he had published a couple of his papers in a Thai journal. He intended to explore this field more in order to publish papers in a second language writing journal.

Aly

Aly was a female native speaker of Russian in her late 20's. She had a bachelor's degree in history. She initially disliked the concept of becoming a teacher, but one of her former English teachers had asked her to join the English department since she had a good command of English. Aly found that her interest in teaching grew from the experience and ultimately persuaded her to consider a graduate program in education.

Aly had studied English since she was in the third grade. Her mom used to send her and her brother to a private institute to learn English during her elementary school years; then when Aly was in high school, she participated in a student exchange program and came to the United States for a year. After she finished her undergraduate study in Russia, Aly's English teacher asked her to join the English teaching staff in the department. She had had no formal training in teaching. However, the English department was following a specific curriculum, and she felt it would be easy for her to teach in the program since she had seen this curriculum in action. However, after being a teacher for five years, Aly began to get bored with the system and began looking for a change. She came to United States in order to get a practical master's degree that she could use to improve her teaching ability.

Aly was extroverted, talkative, cheerful, and liked to help other people. She was willing to learn about new things, such as new cultures and how people think in different cultures. She didn't have much knowledge about theories or second language teaching methodologies. Aly wanted to learn up-to-date theories and teaching methods to become a better teacher. She was eager to learn about everything in the field during her master's degree study.

Sherry

Sherry was a female native speaker of Chinese in her early 40's. She had 15 years of English teaching experience in China, 2 years of English teaching in the United States as a TA, and one year teaching Chinese in the United States. At the time of the study, Sherry was in the last phase of her doctoral studies writing her dissertation. Sherry used to teach in a university in China. She was a passionate teacher who felt that an educator should be responsible for each student, both in class and after the class. She came to the United States because she felt that she was teaching her students the same thing again and again using the same textbook and teaching methodology. Sherry did not feel challenged enough, and came to look for new ways of teaching. More important, Sherry was looking to learn how to be a researcher.

Sherry had two children whom she took care of while she was doing her studies. As a mom and a student, Sherry experienced difficulty when she tried to plan her schedule. She had to attend classes when her children had no school. She would bring them with her to the university and leave them in the computer lab to keep them busy until she finished her class. Sherry had some negative

experiences regarding her professors' attitude toward her children. She was upset that some of her professors didn't understand that a mother had obligations toward her children even if she was studying. She felt that her professors were not helping her since she was a single mom coping with life in a new environment. Sherry was an outgoing person. She was not a typical Asian student, as she tended to talk and discuss her ideas in front of the whole class. She was confident about her language in class, though she sometimes felt anxious about her knowledge.

Skylette

Skylette was a female Chinese student in her early 30's. Her undergraduate degree was in English education. She had started her master's degree in China but she had not finished it. Later she came to the United States as an exchange student and completed her master's degree in TESOL. At the time of the study, she was in her first semester of her doctoral program in TESOL and Composition. She had taught in China while she was doing her master's degree, but had given up teaching, due to the large class sizes in China, which imposed a considerable load on her.

Skylette was energetic, optimistic, and creative about her teaching career, in spite of the problems she had encountered. She seemed born to be a teacher. She used to teach her classmates as a child when she was in middle school. She was enthusiastic and active when it came to talking about teaching English. Through all of the initial part of her interviews with me, Skylette kept emphasizing that she was not a native speaker of English, which forced her to do extra work in

order to improve herself in the field. The main purpose for her in joining her current program of study was to look for innovative ideas to implement her teaching. In addition, she believed that a degree from an institute in an English speaking country would give her more credibility than a degree from a Chinese university. Her degree, according to her expressed view, would make a big difference when competing with others in the job market.

Anne

Anne was a female from Japan in her late 40's. Her bachelor's degree was in English education. She had learned English as a foreign language since high school. She had taught English in a public school for 15 years. She had taken a leave of absence from her high school teaching to complete her master's level graduate study in the United States. In the meantime, she had kept her teaching position at her high school in Japan. Anne was not looking for a better career opportunity after finishing her degree; however, she was interested in improving her English ability through her graduate study. She had no interest in doing any more studies after her master's degree program, since her plan was to return back to Japan to teach at her old school. In other words, her main goal was to improve her language in order to develop her teaching methods, not to become a researcher.

This was the first time that Anne had studied abroad in the United States, which had been her dream for a long time. She seemed to be introverted in her talk with me, and she said that she preferred to be a listener in class. She was very excited to learn from native speakers of the language and to experience

American culture, but she had no idea what this culture was or what it was like. She felt anxious and worried about learning in a new cultural and linguistic environment because of not having been confident in her ability to understand English. She confronted many difficulties in understanding the professors' lectures and in doing course assignments. She also felt pressured when she had to interact with Americans in her everyday life.

Young

Young was a male native speaker of Chinese in his early 30's. His bachelor's degree was in education and he held a certificate for teaching English in high school in Japan. He had taught in a public high school for five years. Although he was a teacher in a public high school in China, he came to the United States for his professional development in order to earn a master's degree in TESOL, using a leave of absence with approval from the Chinese Ministry of Education. His teaching position in China was guaranteed when he went back to China after two years with his master's degree.

He came to the United States previously as a participant in special program for students to live with an American host family. He later came back to see his host family for the summer using another special program, and at that stage, he traveled around in the country with his friends. He liked to explore new things, cultures and meet new people. He seemed very open-minded, extroverted, outgoing, talkative, communicable, and full of energy.

Young had studied English since he was 10 years old. He mentioned that his mother had insisted on giving him private lessons in English. However, he

started to learn English in school formally only when he was in high school. His language class in middle and high school had focused mostly on grammar and reading; he asserted that his private lessons were the main source that helped him in learning the language

Group 1: Individual Interview

Supportive Networks and motivations to join the English teaching profession

In the first section of my individual interviews, I asked my participants to tell me why they decided to become teachers. The reason behind my question was to get a sense of what had influenced them to pick this occupational field. In addition to asking about their professional choice, I wanted to know how their goals were affected by their experience in their graduate program. In other words, I wanted to understand both how the program enabled them to pursue their original goals, and how, if at all, the program changed those goals in any way.

The participants' responses varied. For instance, some of my participants' narratives indicated that their passion for the language made them study hard to be able to use the language comfortably in everyday contexts. Others felt that their culture drove them to this field because this professional choice fits their role in their society.

Addressing professional work, each one of my participants gave me his/her own reasons for joining the teaching profession. For instance, DV mentioned that he dreamed about being a teacher without knowing the reason

behind that dream. He had not been able to pass the teaching exam in Thailand, so he had been forced to pick a different field of study. However, he had not forgotten his dream, and when a friend alerted him to an opportunity to work as a teacher he quickly accepted the position. Sherry and Anne, both of whom had taught English for over fourteen years, cited reasons involving their love for English language rather than just the desire to become teachers. Sherry, for instance, answered my question about what influenced her to become an English teacher in these terms:

I am passionate about the English language. I love to study English and never get bored with it; I also enjoy teaching others to appreciate and love the language as much as I do

Likewise, my exchange with Anne shows her focusing on her feelings about the language, and in particular about the functional benefits of knowing English:

Anne: As my appreciation and love for the English language grew, I found myself wanting to use the language more and more;, so I decided to get a job where I could use English every day rather than rely on textbooks alone. I felt that I could combine my enthusiasm for learning English and my desire to teach English by searching for an English teacher position.

M: And why did you want to use English every day?

Anne: Because I want to further develop my English ability. English is an international language. You can use it anywhere. For example, if I want to read a book that is written in Arabic - you speak Arabic right?

M: Yes

Anne: Ok, if I want to read a book that is written in Arabic, I won't be able to read it because I don't know Arabic; but I will try to find a translation for it. Living in America, all the books that we say are good books/novels [are] written in English. So I need to learn English to be able to read those books that were written for example in Arabic. Do you understand what I mean? English is the language that connects the whole world. To sum it up, if you want to be connected to the whole world, you need to learn English. This is my original goal for learning and teaching English. I want my students to be able to understand things from around the world.

Young agreed with her on both counts, as he combined his personal feelings for the language with his awareness of the important position English holds on the global scene:

I love English, and as I grow older I can see that the English language is the lingua franca. For example, people in Asia and Europe, as well as other countries around the world, speak a different language; however, English is the language that is taught in their schools. So it's the language that we can use to be able to communicate at any time with anyone in the world. That's why I wanted to be a teacher to be able to teach this important and universal language.

While Sherry, Anne and Young describe their passion to be English teachers as a desire to learn English, Sawsan shared a very different reason to be a teacher. In fact, Sawsan said that she didn't choose to be a teacher, but she was forced, in a way, to become one. She explained that in her Middle

Eastern culture, teaching is the best job for women, since this profession allows mothers to spend as much time as possible with their children. She explained that when she became a teacher she was able to return home at the same time as her children and would have been able to take her vacations or days off at the same time as the children. She added that almost all working women in her country are teachers. Her narrative led me to share with her my story too. I explained to her how my family was trying to convince me to join the teaching field for the same reasons. I remember that my mom was usually trying to get me interested to join the teaching field. One reason my mom was using always to convince me, was that by becoming a teacher I can work at the same school which my children go to. Accordingly, I would be able to know the best teachers in school for my kids' sake, and at the same time I would be able to know how my kids do at school instead of waiting for the report at the end of each month.

But when I asked my participants why they specifically picked the English language to be a focus of their career choice, almost all of them pointed out the powerful influence of their former English teachers who were nonnative English speakers. These developing or experienced teachers all recognized the role of mentor teachers in their language learning development. They talked about English language teachers that served as a sort of “attention-grabber” for them. This kind of teacher was different from others, as s/he introduced a different kind of culture, people, food, music...etc. They felt that, in their English classes, they had a chance to learn something different every day, sometimes something that would be strange or exotic to them. Young mentioned that his teacher usually

impressed him when he introduced any language point because it was new. He pointed out that he had learned about things that were different from the practice in his culture, for instance, regarding things as simple as greetings. Addressing this last theme, he said,

My teacher once [greeted us by saying] “What’s up?” All of us replied ‘the sky’. He started to laugh and he said, “No, that’s a way of informal greeting...in English’. I remember that we couldn’t understand it, but now, after I came here I found that he was right and that we could use this form of greeting with our friends.

DV identified foreign language teachers in his school and college as mentors and recognized them as a positive influence in his decision to continue studying foreign languages. Sawsan, though she felt pressed to become a teacher at the beginning because of the people around her, still thought of her English teachers when she had to pick the language she wanted to teach. She said that she preferred to teach English rather than her native language just because of her memories she had with her teachers:

When I think about the cool teacher, the nice one, and the one who rewarded us, I immediately thought of our English teachers. We had good relationships with them. They laughed with us, brought songs to class, and asked us to come to their offices and just talk. And when you speak English you feel that you learned something new.

Skyllette shared similar memories related to her experience of not only having a good English teacher who helped her to learn the language, but also having an English teacher who led her to think in new ways:

My English professor in China was very responsible, knowledgeable, and conscious; he also taught us ways to think rather than [just presenting] a chunk of specific knowledge.

Aly, in recounting her reason for being an English teacher, said that she entered the field by chance. Her bachelor's degree was in history and politics, and she had not planned to be a teacher at any stage of her life because of her mother's experience. Aly's mother was a teacher; Aly testified that she used to see how tired her mother looked after teaching, and she said to her herself that she would never pick her mom's career. Her exchange with me explains this pattern:

Aly: I actually got in [to] teaching all accidentally. My language teacher invited me to stay at [i.e. work in] the department. It was a very low-paid job but I didn't have any leads. I had no idea what to do at that time so I decided to stay for a year because I was thinking of joining a graduate program. My undergrad has nothing to do with TESOL and nothing to do with English; it was more history and politics. But I liked English and my English was good; so she [my teacher] invited me to stay and I did. First, I was really scared and it was a shocking experience; the students were a few years younger than me and they knew that I am new teacher and they used that.

M: Did you want to be a teacher before but you couldn't for any reason?

Aly: No, at all. My mother was an elementary school teacher and I knew how tired she was everyday and how crazy it was. I told to myself that I will never, ever become a teacher; and I still think I will never teach high school, middle school, or elementary school. College kids are easier. So it's still funny because I thought I will never teach anything in English. However, I learned to like it and I was excited to see that the kids can learn something and change their opinion about English and start to like it It was really amazing for me.

Although almost all of my participants said that they felt good about their English ability and that they had a good English teaching experience, they still felt they needed to learn more about the language and how to teach it. They all agreed that being good at the language doesn't mean that they are qualified to teach it. As a result, they have tried to look for opportunities to continue their studies, both in the language and in pedagogy. What was striking, and somewhat potentially puzzling in their interviews, was that although their former teachers were non-native users of English and they had learned much from them, they were seeking to continue their studies in the USA to be taught by native speakers of English. Skylette, for instance, answered my question about her decision to study in the U.S by saying

My undergraduate is English education, but I am non-native speaker, and I need to learn more English to be able to teach; that is why I came here, to the US.

In his response, Young contrasted his previous models to those he hoped to find in his current situation:

I always learn English from a non-native teacher and they taught me a lot; but I wanted to be like an American and speak like them. That is why I decided to come here to learn more about the language from its origin.

Other participants, including Aly, felt that earning a degree from the US would be more practical than enrolling in programs in their home countries. Sawsan also said,

I wanted to take a higher degree because I have already studied English for four years and my family told me there will be no better place to do my studies than US. Plus when you take a degree from here and go back home to work it would make a big difference.

They also felt that they would have a better chance of learning the theory and method of teaching the language from its country of origin. I recall that I told Sawsan “Oh, your family seems to think like mine exactly, I remember that my father told me the same thing when I asked him to join the American university [in my country].” Almost all of my participants claimed that their weakness lies in teaching methodologies, although they had years of teaching experience. Sherry and Anne said that they knew about teaching techniques since they have been teaching for over 10 years, but that they needed to know why some methods work with their students and why others don’t. In other words, they needed to learn about the theories behind the methods they have been using in their teaching. In addition, Sherry mentioned that the program in the U.S. would help

her, not only in terms of her teaching methods, but also in terms of giving her experience with teaching native speakers of English as well as developing her abilities in teaching ESL students in the American context.

Although each of my participants had different reasons and expectations for entering their TESOL graduate programs, most of the participants perceived their graduate community in ways that depended on the availability of appropriate support and opportunities in their discourse communities. Most participants in this study had acquired little knowledge about their TESOL graduate community before they started their academic programs of study. Almost all of the participants had identified TESOL graduate programs through an Internet search. When they chose a TESOL graduate program, factors such as assistantships, cost, safety, and/or spousal circumstances were considered first, rather than a particular curriculum or specialty focus of the program.

Once they enrolled in their program, their perceptions of their discourse community were driven by the factors that gave them a sense of being in a supportive environment, such as financial support, assistance, and professional opportunities. Research participants' perceptions of their TESOL graduate program were particularly divided into two main categories. These categories involved their general perceptions of their programs, and their views of the knowledge gained through courses. It appeared that the participants' perceptions of their graduate programs varied depending on the availability of support, and training opportunities within their graduate discourse communities. In contrast, when addressing the textual and other knowledge they were acquiring in their

courses, their perceptions seemed to depend on their past personal experiences, their background knowledge about TESOL, and their future career goals.

Perceptions of TESOL Graduate Discourse Communities

All the participants agreed that the choice to enroll in a TESOL program in the United States made a difference in various aspects of their academic life.

Other students coming to a new culture and new environment, my participants struggled at the beginning to adapt to their surroundings. However, all of my participants felt positive about their decision to enroll in the TESOL program. In general they told me that all of their classes were memorable for various reasons.

DV was very impressed with being exposed to scholarly journals and articles. He said that back home he had limited access to articles and research. He also noted that graduate students have equal opportunities to access almost all libraries through interlibrary loan. DV asserted that the more resources he could access, the more views he was able to encounter in his discussion and his writing. I did agree with DV regarding the infinite resources that we could get in American universities rather than our home countries. Another participant, Skylette, pointed out that the significant difference her TESOL program represented for her was to be introduced to technology and be able to use it for almost all classes as a tool for learning and teaching the language. She recalled an incident when it was too snowy and one of her classes was held online through WebCt. She mentioned that due to utilizing technology within the courses in the program, she felt that nothing would stop her from getting the knowledge she wanted.

Young was impressed by being enrolled in a multinational class. He had expected that his class would be almost all native speakers of English. He mentioned that he used to learn in a monolingual society, which exposed him to mainly one point of view. Now with his multicultural classmates, he noted that he is able to learn about different views and gain various perspectives on an issue. However, he also noted that a downside to this feature: sometimes he felt lost because of the different accents and ways of expressing ideas in class.

Anne and Sawsan also talked about theories and concepts that they had not heard about before joining the program, such as the critical period hypothesis and fossilization. Sherry added a comment on the way the program enhances the ability for critical thinking and provides rich ideas. Echoing one of Young's statements above, she felt that graduates of the program would not be bound to one egocentric or ethnocentric way of thinking to judge the world, since they had been exposed to so many different perspectives from different cultures.

Academic Socialization

What shapes the participants' academic socialization and how it takes place turned out to be a complex, multi-layered, and dynamic process. The participants' felt that both their TESOL graduate program and their personal situations have also played a significant role in their academic socialization processes. Based on each participant's description about how he or she participates in various academic activities, I was able to obtain a broad picture of each student's academic socialization process. These pictures revolved around major academic activities such as oral participation, writing papers, doing

research, and teaching. This led me to discuss in detail their experiences with professors, classmates, and course content. Although the same interview guide questions were asked of each participant, each account of the participants' academic socialization took a different shape. Each story was complex, contextual, and individual. Still, I found it possible to extract certain themes that often emerged in more than one of these individual narratives. Rather than enumerating all the issues brought up in the interviews, I have drawn out a few of central issues regarding the participants' academic socialization processes. In the following section, I will discuss the following themes: professor's roles, classmates, course content, and experiences beyond the graduate classroom

Professor's Role

The first topic of note involves the professors, as the participants agreed that the main prerequisite for a successful class is the professor. My participants mentioned that their professors were very knowledgeable about the material covered in their classes. They added that the professors emphasized critical thinking within their coursework and class discussions. Students in the department are encouraged to critically reflect and question the context of their discipline and the politics of the field. DV explained that because of his professors' positive feedback he was able to pursue his research and study aspects of language that he had not previously thought about. They also helped him to research new fields and develop new interests. Skylette supported his notion by pointing out, for instance, that her writing had improved greatly because her professors had started to correct her grammar and style of writing.

She actually compared her professors positively to her previous professors in her other school. She really appreciated her current professors' constructive feedback. She believed that her professors now supported her and gave her more opportunities to learn.

Consistent with other participants' narratives, Aly also pointed out the importance of the professor to the class. She mentioned that one of her professors taught her critical thinking and was challenging the whole class on just about everything, which she found hard but at the same time interesting. She said that you could not anticipate the professor's questions; at the same time, you could not end one of his class's without having a question that keep you thinking for a long time. She recalled one incident that happened in her class,

He [the professor] usually asks you at the beginning of the class, "Why are you taking my course?" This time one of the PhD students said to him, "Because I want to learn the best method of teaching English." We looked at each other -you know [those] who took his classes before- and laughed because we knew that it was the wrong answer for this professor. The professor kept asking him questions and critiquing almost all of his answers till the guy said, 'Ok so I think there is no best way to teach English then.

As Aly continued her story, she emphasized that critical thinking is important to students especially in this field. But she also spoke of some uncomfortable moments that were more potentially negative and that she felt should be avoided.

She felt that professors need to place some limits on critical approaches because they sometimes make students uncomfortable in class:

But in critical thinking or learning how to think critically, he [the professor] challenges all the beliefs. And you start to question everything around you. It was interesting at the beginning, but at some point when he was presenting it, we had uncomfortable feelings. I am Christian and we have a lot of Christians in the class. We also had Muslims, lots of them, as it was a very diverse class. And the professor asked a question which made many people upset. I don't remember exactly what that question was, but what made me think is that we question if there is a God or not. We should not ask that, and I know that he would never ask that because of his religion too. But at some point I felt, "Does he really believe in it or is he just following tradition [i.e., is the professor just raising this religious question as a matter of course because of the discourse practice in the graduate program]?" So I don't think he actually doesn't believe in a God, but he was very critical. And in another undergrad class he did the same thing.

But I can believe that he was trying to push them to think and he had different goals for them. And he said it directly: he would not talk about God's existence because people have different beliefs. I said, "Oh good." But in that class just with the questions that students asked, there was no absolute truth and everything was relative and we had to look at everything critically. And people started to ask questions, which had no

direct relation to religion, but which could be [religious] just for me at least...It was evident they were thinking about that because they started to ask about gender roles. Women are supposed to take care of children, men are supposed to make money. This is widely accepted worldwide.

Aly's story suggests that professors play an important role in helping or hindering students' comfort levels while they are learning, especially in groups that are multicultural and include students with diverse beliefs. I shared with Aly my experience with the same professor. I mentioned to her that his class had been the hardest class for me because we knew that he would question all of our responses to his questions. This feeling sometimes kept me from engaging in the class discussion. However, all of my classmates and I were still recommending the class to other students because we felt that his class was presenting the critical approach in a very interesting way. I felt that his classes were trying to teach us how to use the critical approach in our teaching but in an indirect way in addition to the course's objective.

Addressing a potentially related classroom issue, Young believed that professors are sometimes unable to control the class. In particular he felt that, to show respect for diversity, professors sometimes allow unproductive discussion to take up too much class time. He said,

We are a multinational class, and I don't expect that each professor learn about all of our cultures; but because they [professor] are so sensitive and they don't want to embarrass us, we waste a lot of our class time in useless discussion. We talk on things that may be out of the topic and the

professor doesn't want to stop us; maybe they just want us to speak up in class, as sometimes we sit silent the entire class. I don't know, but sometimes I feel lost because of this useless discussion and sometimes I feel we are wasting our time.

The issue of the emotional climate in the classroom emerged as complex and multifaceted. While Young spoke of professors whose behavior may have been too sensitive, Skylette mentioned a case where more sensitivity might have been appreciated. Her example illustrates how professors can hinder students' feelings of comfort in class. In this case, the story involves a time when a professor publicly criticized her in a tone that could be taken offensively, or at least as insensitive to her feelings. In the same class session, the students also showed a marked lack of interest or respect to her presentation:

One time, one of my professors when I was doing a presentation made me feel uncomfortable. Maybe my Asian culture background made me present my presentation in a particular way, and he may not have understood or felt interested. But before I finished my presentation he stopped me and said, "We can read the whole passage by ourselves". I was shocked that he told me that and I felt for a second that I couldn't continue. But I said, "If you can read, it's ok, but if I present it, it will be much better." He was little embarrassed and he let me say what I wanted to say. Actually, all my classmates, especially native classmates, watched the professor. Some were very impolite. They just left while I was doing my presentation, and some of them left before I started! You know I

thought, “I may not be as good a presenter as you, but how could you know before you attend my presentation?”

Classmates

From the example above, it is clear that professors are not the only factor that affects comfort levels in class; classmates also need to make each other feel that they are in a safe environment. As Skylette’s experience shows, her classmates aggravated her when they left the class in the middle of her presentation. This led me to move on and ask about the participants’ experiences with their classmates. Before answering that question, they told me that they were surprised when they found that most of their classroom was full of international students rather than Americans. They actually were looking for native speakers, so they would become better able to understand the culture and language; but they were surprised to realize in time that they were able to accept this issue as a positive experience. They agreed that they were annoyed at the beginning at not having more American classmates; but later during their studies they felt differently. They mentioned advantages to being with international classmates in their classes: for instance this diverse group of classmates helped them to learn more about teaching the language all around the world without having to take the effort to read or go to each country. Aly says,

I am... happy to have all of those international students in my class because they can broaden your horizon and you can see that teaching is different [in different contexts, but that there are also] similarities among

countries. Like, wow, you have the same problem on the other side of the world. So the overall experience is good.

Along with Aly, Sherry acknowledged that having international students in classes allows for more exposure to language teaching around the world:

This is really something that I never expected before I came to the program, and you probably feel the same way. I meet so many good classmates who are [definitely] not ... American people but who are international. At the beginning, I really didn't think that I will learn so much from them but later I realized that their language, their cultural background, and their knowledge can be equivalent to [that of] their American counterparts. This is like my first gain from this program: the kind of friendship with international peers. And another one: I have learned so many critical ideas and ways of thinking that now I always keep this in my mind—I shouldn't use one egocentric or ethnocentric way of thinking to judge because there are many different perspectives in this world. So we should be tolerant and try to understand each other's differences.

The examples above show that, despite looking forward to having a degree from the U.S. in order to learn from native speakers of the language, participants admitted that they learned much from international students like themselves. In fact, they asserted that, in some cases, they benefited a lot more from having international students as compared to having American peers. According to them, international students help create a dynamic environment in a

class. In addition, involving international students in classes helped my participants to feel more comfortable in discussion and participation.

One particular viewpoint surfaced that was critical of the American students: the participants felt that some native speakers say whatever comes to their mind, whether it's insightful or not to others. They agreed that this may be due to cultural difference, or that it may be a behavior that was taught to Americans and encouraged in their schooling. But while acknowledging that this behavior may have some positive effects, the participants felt that the Americans' eagerness to talk in class also may have a negative side, as it may lead them to speak out before thinking through their message.

Young shared with me one negative feeling about having non native speakers in the TESOL program:

I think having international students did [reflect] badly on the teaching style. What I mean is we are international, so the professor has to accommodate the level of each one of us. So in order for them to do so they don't push us or our limits in order to improve our skills. I do understand they get disappointed when they ask us to read a certain amount of articles and then we show up with no clue about the readings. If we have native speakers more in class our professors and the class work atmosphere will likely force us to work more.

Addressing issue of classmates more generally, but in ways that reflect on the cultural makeup of the class, DV spoke of several situations in which he felt uncomfortable. These involved being called on by classmates, feeling pressed to

express an opinion on a controversial topic, and feeling uncomfortable when classmates (in particular from the same culture) disagreed with each other. This long excerpt from DV's interview covers all of these points:

DV: Sometimes classmates make you uncomfortable in class. For instance, I don't like to be called by name to answer or comment on something, specially [by] my friends because they know me and they know my personality.

M: Can you give me an example?

DV: Once I [was] called upon by a friend. I was like, 'why me?' I had to talk. I can add to the point; I don't mind if a professor calls on me to answer and if my friend wants me to talk, they can call on me nicely, not just point to me and say, "You have a point and talk about it." Plus I don't like to be on just one side of a discussion.

I remember that one time they were discussing an issue that affected the whole class because one group agreed with an idea and the other group agreed with the opposite. I don't really like it when they have a discussion and they are looking for people to support their idea. I don't like taking sides. They asked me about my opinion so I commented on both sides. Also, I remember in one of my classes we were sharing our experience about our students back home. So one of my classmates said something about his students. What was so surprising to me and the whole class was that another student in the class from the same culture opposed his idea. Usually we like to support anyone from our culture, but this guy kept

opposing his friend all the way. We sat in the class trying to reach an end, mentioning that it's just one experience and that one of us may encounter a different experience.

M: Why are you laughing?

DV: Because this incident rarely occurs, but it happened a lot between [people from] that same group. Students from that culture usually disagree with each other, and we just want to move one, so stop disagreeing.

Sawsan reflected on her participation in classes where individuals share the same nationality and cultural background:

M: How comfortable do you feel in your classes?

Sawsan: I think I usually feel comfortable, but in my practicum class this semester, I was really struggling because there were a lot of Middle Eastern guys in the classroom. They are from all over. And there was also a Muslim guy who didn't speak Arabic. At the beginning, they avoided me. Every time we made a study group, the teacher put us together and they stayed away from me. They kept speaking sometimes without asking me to share my opinion. I didn't like this, and interrupted the talk and told them, "I am sick of this, come on, I am like you! I am a student and I study [for] the same degree; just because I am a Middle Eastern woman wearing a veil does not mean that I am different.' In their culture, they avoid women from their own culture; but when they talk with Asians or other women, it's completely normal. It's not a religious thing; it's a cultural thing, so I need to work with it.

Sawsan believed that her participation in classes was controlled by the nationalities of her classmates. Given the testimony above, it comes as no surprise that she felt more relaxed in participation when she mingled with classmates from other nationalities rather than her own. Sawsan mentioned that she had to work hard to prove to others, especially from her own region, that she deserved to be treated like other classmates. In the following extended story, Sawsan elaborates on her feelings about being in class with Middle Eastern men. In particular, she points out that the problem may seem to be 'solved' and a difficult relationship may seem to become more comfortable; but then the original awkwardness, rooted in cultural tradition, may return later to cause difficulty for the same pair of students:

At the beginning I was quiet and let them talk because Middle Eastern guys don't want to feel that a female is more educated than them; but I wanted to speak, and sometimes they need to listen because I have good ideas. In one class, there were three Middle Eastern guys and me. I had a point but they didn't want to speak to me. They kept talking amongst themselves, and one man also turned his back on me and ignored me. And I said, 'What shall I do [about] this?' It was very problematic to me. If I was with American students, maybe my only problem [would] be that I was veiled and felt shy; but even then I would stand up and share my opinion. But now there are different problems. Male classmates don't want you to speak. They may say that this woman is trying to show off that she is educated. Maybe she was oppressed in her country and now she want to

show that she is learning and living in America, and these things are not very easy.

Till now I tell you that the guy refused to talk to me; he kept avoiding me. But once, he observed my practicum and he saw that I was like an American. I worked hard; I tried to improve myself. And [then] he started to talk to me and then told me that he wanted to bring his wife to my class. And I was very happy that we broke the ice. But after a while he [again] stopped talking to me and started to avoid me and then talk to me and so on. All I was thinking was, 'Why they are doing this to me?'

Her feeling of being ignored by her male Middle Eastern classmates followed her from one class to another. Unfortunately, she could not stand up for herself at the beginning. She mentioned that other classmates sometimes encouraged her to assert herself. Sawsan was grateful to an Asian student who seemed to understand her situation; however, she ends her story by suggesting that the situation was still embarrassing for her.

In one of my classes other than the practicum course, I had a group of three males and I was the only female, and I wanted to speak about something. And I tell you, if there had been a camera recording the session, you would be laughing. I wanted to say something and they didn't allow me; and I was thinking, 'Why I am not letting me speak?' They were Middle Eastern, but there was an Asian guy, and he was telling me, 'Come on just say your point.' An Asian man understood how I felt when people from my own culture didn't. Most of the time I pretended to show that I was

fine, but he kept telling me, “Ok now talk about your point.” At this point I felt that I really wanted to leave the class and just forget everything.

This story about Sawsan’s experience opened our discussion on comparing how she felt when she joined any group with American classmates, and how this experience was different from joining a group of students from her own nationality. Of particular interest here is Sawsan’s feeling that, although she felt positive toward her American classmates, she felt it was difficult and “didn’t come naturally” to pursue the close friendships she might have enjoyed with these classmates:

I think American love to talk with Asians more. They feel comfortable with their culture and their food. Some of them [American], who have had experience with Middle Eastern people, like to speak to me. They say to me, for example, “I have a friend from Jordan in my other class. Where are you from?” And I think, “Ok, this person has a background, and isn’t afraid.” But again we don’t have many Americans. I remember having one American girl. I think she was a very nice lady; she was educated and nice, [and] I thought that I can be a friend to her. But it didn’t come naturally. You know, there is another friend which I taught a practicum course with her. We spent a lot of time together because we had to prepare for the class and we sent each other emails a lot. And if she were an Arab student, we would have become best friends; but of course she is an American. I feel now that the semester is finished and I still don’t know her and she doesn’t know me. I tried hard to have a good relationship with

her but she seems to be uncomfortable to be around Arabs. This particular friend had her BA in education and she came to TESOL. She was not familiar with TESOL and other cultures, so I had a hard time being with her. Although she was nice and hard working, we didn't end up with a good relationship.

For Sawsan, her religion and nationality played an important role in her socialization process in the program. She felt she was an outsider, not only because of the media and how they profile Arab Muslim communities but also because her Arab classmates took part in marginalizing her. Actually, she offered excuses for her international and American classmates because of the false pictures that the media project of Middle Eastern women. In contrast, she felt really angry with her Arab classmates because they looked down on her although she was an educated woman and had been accepted by the same program as them. So, she asked rhetorically, "What are their reasons for ignoring and embarrassing me in class?" In fact, in her opinion, her culture created boundaries that would not really exist, seen from outside her cultural group. As a result of these obstacles, instead of focusing on how to show her beliefs in the interview, she felt compelled to be more focused on how her culture prevented her from being treated as an equal in class.

Course Content

The participants' perceptions of the courses that they have taken were varied, being conditioned upon the practical usefulness and benefits of the

knowledge that they had gained through these courses. Most of all, their perceptions of what they had learned in their graduate communities were affected by their future teaching careers, their background knowledge about TESOL discourse, and their personal experiences. Overall, the participants felt that they were empowered by the knowledge they had gained from the course content and the discussions they engaged in during their studies. Being exposed to the literature in TESOL and related areas has helped them to express their opinions on the different educational and social realities of the field. When students could relate their personal experiences to textual knowledge, their learning appeared to be more meaningful to them. It is also noteworthy that personal experiences allowed those students to more actively participate in class discussions, making a positive impact on their discourse socialization processes. The interviews showed that the participants realized the importance of both being able to see beyond the confines of the classroom and of being aware of critical issues in education not usually visible. The participants showed that the social academic context they found in the program enabled them to make sense of their teaching and learning experiences. Their courses helped them to think critically about these experiences. Judging from their responses, it seems that the dynamic social and educational context of the TESOL program encourages my participants them to constantly analyze issues in the field that they will face in their future teaching careers.

However, although my participants praised the environment of the program, they also pointed to some concerns. For instance, participants

mentioned that they were introduced at the beginning of the program to the native and non-native dilemma. They mentioned that they were “shocked” from their first class to encounter evidence that they could not become native speakers. They mentioned to me that they were seriously studying English to become native speakers one day, but and then, when they came here, they found that they are never going to be native speakers.. In fact, when they had been taking English classes back home, no one had mentioned anything about non-native or native speaking competence. They only had the notion that they needed to learn English to speak like Americans. Therefore, my participants took for granted that if they learned English, they would be able to acquire the American accent and they would become native speakers of English. Sawsan said,

I was shocked that I will never be a native speaker, although when we study at my college they never mentioned to me that I can't be native speaker. They told me to practice my English a lot so I could talk like them. I thought our only problem is that we don't practice English in our countries all of the time, so when I came here I thought I will be like them because I am practicing all the time.

M: Why are you laughing?

S: Because this was not the only problem that I faced as a non-native teacher.

M: What are your other problems?

S: I found that some articles name us as ‘handicap teachers,’ and native speakers are the ideal. I can’t remember which article; but I remember that I said to myself, ‘So why I am here now?’ I remember that I kept laughing through my whole first week because they presented this topic to us every class. I know we have to address this topic and we to get the advantage and disadvantage of each group; but I think its sounded like a discrimination because it’s not like this in any other field. I know in our countries they prefer native speakers but we still don’t look at non-native as bad teachers.

Aly shared the same opinion, but expressed it in an ambivalent picture. Her interview data shows that she appreciates when students or teachers encourage her by referring to her English as being “as good as” that of a native speaker. But on the other hand, she feels inferior when she hears the same support from a native speaker. She feels the power of the native speaker over the language she loves and has spent her whole life trying to master, and that power colors the native speaker’s compliment, making it take on a condescending tone:

The thing that bothered me was that when you think of a native speaker as a model, you end up striving to be like a native speaker. And it’s always frustrating to me when somebody says you are not. You study hard, you imitate them, you listen and speak, and you pass your tests and your studies in American universities. Then somebody says, “Oh you have good English. Where are you from?” Or, “You have an interesting accent.” When a teacher tells a student that they have good English, it’s a

compliment. [But] when a native speaker says it to a non-native speaker, it's like from a top down perspective. So it's as if they're saying, 'I own the language you speak very well.'

As for the rest of my participants, Anne had the same feeling, though I could say her frustration about the native and non native dilemma came out in a different way. Although she focused more on her advantages in being a non native and the disadvantages of a native speaker within her response, she ends it by acknowledging that, in her view, native speakers are still the winners in the field.

Before coming here and taking the class 'Introduction to TESOL' I thought I wanted to be a native speaker, but I understood that I couldn't. Of course, native speakers speak English correctly and also know vocabulary more than foreigners; however, foreigners have good parts [i.e. advantages]. For example, teaching in foreign countries, teaching experiences and native languages are important. Native speakers... have native languages and English. We have multilingualism and multiculturalism; native speakers do not [have these advantages]. Almost all of them are monolingual which is very narrow. But they are still dominant.

However, the course content and discussions presented a complex picture when the issue of native-ness arose. Admittedly, the participants mentioned that professors had shown them the positive side of being a non-native speaker. Some professors even said that we should overcome these labels (native/non-

native), implying that professionals in TESOL need to move beyond that dichotomy. DV deliberates on the advantages of non-native status:

I didn't learn about these terms before I joined the program. I think it plays a pretty big role in my profession. In our courses, we talked about the issue of nativeness and non-nativeness. In some classes students prefer to use "L1" and "L2" because these didn't have the hidden agenda or ideology attached to those words [i.e. "native" and "non-native"]... I remember some of our professors said that we should use [the terms] "native" and "non-native," but you should know what you are talking about and what is hidden in [this usage].

Others mentioned that we should overcome this issue, and that we should just know about these terms, so we can understand what they mean. So if you know this, it will not matter if you use them [i.e. the terms] or not. The research I am working on it right now supports that non-natives should use the term "non-native," because we want a correct word for native and nonnative, but we want to emphasize that non-native speakers have the ability to be a model for other non native students as well.

Thus, some participants felt that it was best to use the terms associated with this dichotomy, while emphasizing the strengths of the non-native speaker. However, other participants worried about the heavy emphasis being placed on these terms in their courses. These respondents said that, if we need to overcome this issue and we just need to know about it, why do we keep repeatedly discussing this issue in each class? They said that they realized that

repetition in class content can be seen as advantageous, given that it allows students to see the same concepts or ideas from different perspectives. But on the other hand, my participants asked, since most of us are non-native and our professors want us to overcome any worries over this status, why are we not repeating material on more significant issues? The numerous discussions on NNES status led the participants to feel uncomfortable, as they felt that the repetition itself amounted to a kind of emphasis on the subject. As Aly pointed out:

Actually we have this issue everywhere in almost all of our classes. One of our professors said that if we ignore this issue it will disappear; but they still talk about it. And this is not an issue that doesn't exist; it does exist, and it's very political. There are [discussions] of that everywhere. English is the lingua franca and being native and non-native is something that you can't ignore. And in the US I think we have a huge problem of discrimination. If you are non-native speaker of English, if you are an MA student in TESOL and you are not a native speaker, it's hard to find a job here from what I understand, not from my experience.

Experiences beyond the Graduate Classroom

Besides raising concerns about their graduate courses' treatment of the native and non-native dichotomy, participants shared narratives that underlined the sometimes striking emphasis that is placed on nativeness in professional situations.

Sawsan describes her own experience; she did not view the discussion of the native and non-native issue as an important issue at the beginning of her course work. Like the other participants cited above, she claims that she could not understand the reason for the repetition of this issue in almost all of her classes:

In the Introduction to TESOL course, we discussed NS and NNS issues. I thought, 'What was that? Why they are speaking about that?' Also, I read an article written by Nuzghat Amin and how hard she was trying to change her image in front of her students, and how they still see her as a non-native speaker. And after that I start to realize, 'What is the difference?' And I thought that there wasn't a problem with that in America. You know, when you go anywhere, they don't look at you as non-native or foreign and say, 'Does she have a heavy accent or not? Can she communicate well or not?' What they look for is if you have good ideas or not. So if you are good, you are good. Our professors usually mentioned this subject, not just to show the advantage and disadvantage of each group, but [to show that] nowadays we have started to overcome this issue. I remember one of the professors mentioning to me that there is nothing called native and nonnative [i.e. there is no importance to these terms]; we just use these terms to differentiate between [groups]. So I said 'Ok, everything is ok, then even if I am not a native speaker.

However, later she mentioned that there is a difference between reality and theory. When she encountered a real teaching situation, she was struck by the

stark difference in the way that one student treated her as compared with her native-speaking co-teacher. In this excerpt, she moves from her comments above about her graduate class to this story about a real classroom experience. However, at the end of her story she returns again to the issue of repeated class discussions on nativeness:

When I started to teach it was a shocking experience. We were co-teaching, me and a native speaker, and I was teaching non-native [students], and I saw a big difference. They were mostly Asian, and I saw that they favored her because she was a blonde, white American, and I had a veil. I really didn't care about it, but I had the experience where you feel that people are rejecting you because you are not a native speaker. I didn't want to show them that [i.e. that I noticed the difference]; and I kept treating them as if I am a teacher, [whether] I am a native or non-native. But once there was a guy from Taiwan and he was lost and my friend (the native one) and I were waiting in the classroom for the rest of our students to come, and I went to ask him where he was from and things like that. He didn't know anything, just a few words in English; and when I spoke to him he kept speaking in his language, and I thought he was crazy, and he told me that he is going to another class. But I kept telling him that today is Monday and this was the [right] class; but he kept denying [i.e. disagreeing], and talking back in his language. But suddenly everything changed when the other American teacher came. He started to speak to her, and he said, "Oh, United States [America]."

And she was very happy that he spoke to her. And after that I felt that she saw herself as superior because he talked to her and not me, although we were friends and talked to each other and worked together. She took him to the board and wrote what she wanted to say, and he kept looking at her [as] if she was a god; [as if] she was going to save him and she would give him the key to the language. But I was speaking to him in English too, and I also knew how to solve his problem.

So we learned lots of theories on how to teach second language students, and I know what he was facing because when I came to US my English was not good either. But when he saw her, he talked to her, wrote to her, and her confidence grew. I have tried to put this scene aside and ignore it because I don't want to lose my confidence. So I want to say that we should think about this issue and if this was not that important they won't keep repeating it in almost all of our classes.

Young shared his own professional experience with me, noting how he felt discriminated against in a job interview situation:

I had an interview for an internship here in US. The funny thing was that on phone, everything went really well, but when I had a face to face interview everything changed. I found that they were using hand gestures to make me understand what they want. They also started to ask their questions slowly as if I am not applying for an English position. It was a very funny experience.

Sawsan's and Young's narratives, along with the comments of other participants cited earlier, reveal that despite the effort of the program to boost their self confidence about their teaching through discussing the advantages and disadvantage of L1 and L2 speakers, they still view this issue as a factor that they will face in their future careers. In other words, my participants feel that there is a hidden agenda behind repeating the same issue over and over across the courses. Moreover, their experiences have shown them that a non native teacher is still invariably measured against a native speaking teacher who has acquired the target language as a birthright; this comparison takes place in the real-world context of students and hiring officials who bring their own ideas to learning and hiring situations. Taken together, it seems that these two patterns affect the self-confidence of these developing international TESOL professionals in achieving the goals that they had set for themselves in the program.

Group 2: Focus Group

This section discusses the findings of my second group of participants. The three participants in this section are three classmates who attended two focus group meetings in order to discuss the same issues raised with the first group of participants in individual interviews. They are master's degree students taking the same courses, and all had enrolled in the Master's degree program in TESOL only one semester before they were interviewed. I preferred to invite classmates who had shared experiences and knew each other, so they would be able to comment on each other's point of view and share their experiences openly with one another. I interviewed this group twice in order to get a clearer vision about their socialization process into the program. The discussion will be

divided into three main sections, according to the three themes that were covered in most detail in the meetings: Becoming an English teacher, Reflecting on TESOL graduate studies, and Looking forward and imaging future possibilities.

Participants' Profiles of Individual Interview

The international/TESOL teachers who made this part of the study possible are profiled below.

SU

Su was a female native speaker of Korean in her mid 40's. She obtained thher bachelor degree in English education in Korea. She had 14 years of English teaching experience in Korea. At the time of the study, she was in her second semester in the MATESOL program. Although Su had studied English since middle school and has been an English teacher for a long time, she felt that she still needed to work on her English ability to become a better English teacher. Su was a passionate teacher who felt that each student deserved to have a teacher who not only knows e language but has also experienced the language. She decided to come to the United States in order to learn about the culture behind the language, and to enhance her communication abilities

QK

Qk was a female native speaker of Chinese, who was in her early 20's. She had obtained her bachelor's degree in English education. Although QK believed that in China they had started to try to change their attitudes toward certificates earned abroad, she came to the United States to earn her degree. in

other words, rather than insisting on teachers with experience in English-speaking countries, China has been looking for alternative sets of requirements, such as asking for more teaching experience. Still, QK decided to come to the United States to do her master's degree.

HJ

HJ was a female native speaker of Korean in her early 20's. She obtained her bachelor's degree in physical therapy. HJ changed her field of study when she came as an exchange student to the United States. She joined the TESOL program to earn her master's degree.

Becoming an English Teacher

Su began learning English in middle school and then continued her language education in high school. Her classes were geared toward improving students' ability in grammar and reading in order to pass their English tests. Because of her middle school English teacher, Su dreamed about being an English teacher. This echoes the claims of the first group of participants, who identified an inspiring teacher in talking about their reasons to become English teachers. In order to pursue her dream, she entered the school of education and earned a teacher's certificate in English. She talked about her teaching experience with a lot of passion:

I have a lot of things to say because I have a lot of experience, and I think I have been developed [over] time. First, [when] I was a novice teacher it was hard work. For us in Korea, teachers work a lot on classroom management as much as teaching the language because we have big

classes. Now, I start to enjoy teaching English since I now have more experience in the teaching field than before.

However, it is interesting that, even as she speaks of her years of experience, she immediately interjects, suggesting that her confidence is somewhat undermined by her consciousness of operating in a second language. She uses this, in fact, as a springboard to move to a second implied reason for enrolling in graduate study, namely to improve her communication skills, particularly in light of the shifting emphasis in English teaching in Korea:

Because I am not a native speaker of English, I always prepare my class more than any teacher. I feel that I need to prepare for everything before class because I don't want my students to ask me a question that I can't answer or lose trust in me. And as you know in Korea, teaching English is always focusing on teaching reading skills. So in order to [help] my students succeed I let my students read more to be better; and I taught them a lot of vocabulary to help them to read more efficiently. But 6 years ago teachers started to learn that communication is also important, so we tried to let students speak. We also asked teachers from America to co-teach with our Korean teachers to improve our communication skills. But still our tests focus on reading more, so we still work on reading with students.

Although Su has a long experience in the English teaching field in her country, she felt that she still needed to work on her English ability to be a better English teacher. Su identified her English language skills as the area that she needed to

work on more. Moreover, she believes that in order to learn and understand a language well, one needs to learn about the culture behind the language. She also mentioned that nowadays new teachers and students tend to spend some time studying English abroad. In order to be able to compete with the new generation of teachers, Su had thought for a long time about doing a master's degree or a certificate in an English speaking country. She decided not to apply to an education program. Su asserted "I think I had enough from my experience as a teacher to control and manage a class. What I am looking for is to improve my English, since I am not a native speaker—and to understand the culture more, to be able to understand the language more." For Su, it was important to experience studying the language and learning about the culture in an English speaking country.

QK, my second participant, came to the United States after she finished her undergraduate degree in English education. She tried to find a job in her field after her graduation but could not find a position, so she decided to pursue her studies in order to open more opportunities in the future. She dreamed about being a journalist; but because in her country all majors are determined by passing specific tests, she could not pursue her dream there. QK went for her second option, which is teaching English. She decided to choose this field for various reasons. For instance, her mom was a teacher, so she knew something about how a teacher works. Plus, teachers are well paid in her country and can have more vacations to spend with their children than any other job; so for practical reasons, she felt that teaching was a very good option for her.

She decided on getting her master's from an American university in order to teach in college rather than teaching in public schools. Again, her choice here was a practical one. To teach in the public schools in her country she would need to pass certain teaching tests, a path which she felt was more complicated than getting a master's degree. She mentioned that her previous teachers and friends advised her to join the TESOL program, since this is more practical than any other English field such as literature or rhetoric in China. Furthermore, getting a degree in English from an English speaking country is perceived as more prestigious in her country. As noted above, QK believes that in China they have started to try to change their attitudes toward certificates abroad by looking for more teaching experience as an alternative option. However, she still felt that studying in an English-speaking country would be to her benefit.

HJ, the third participant, originally came to the United States one year earlier as an exchange student to study English for one year. At that point, she was thinking of enrolling for an undergraduate degree in physical therapy once her year's study was over. However, her experience in her English class led to a change. In the first semester of her exchange study, HJ found that her English teacher was from India, which changed her views on English teaching as a field:

Actually I came here to study English for a year. After I finished my study I was thinking about working towards a physical therapy undergraduate degree. When I was in my first semester of the exchange program I met my English teacher from India and to me this was a shock. I never imagined non-American people can teach English in this country. She was

a very good teacher and she took good care of me. She was eager to teach me English and was a very patient teacher. I learned a lot from her and because of this teacher I changed my mind to be an English teacher like her. That class was English 101.

This experience changed HJ's future. It sparked her interest in English language and motivated her to immerse herself in English language learning and English language education. This particular teacher was a role model in that she had been able to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers in order to teach English. HJ chose to remain in the United States to avoid repeating her undergraduate work in Korea. Also, English education in Korea means studying literature and the English language. HJ was not interested in learning literature or on concentrating on the formal linguistics of the language, so she picked the TESOL program in order to learn how to teach the language instead. In Korea, in order to become an English teacher, students have to take courses to cover the language literature and linguistics in details. In addition, she believed that being in an English speaking country would force her to practice the language and understand it much better than just studying it as a foreign language in her home country. HJ asserts that anyone who is interested in the English language needs to stay in an English speaking country for while to get immersed in the environment and understand the culture.

Reflecting on TESOL graduate studies

Su

Su started her master's degree with two main goals in mind. The first goal was to improve her English ability in order to teach more professionally; and her second goal was to bring back more information about the language and the culture in order to improve her students' English learning experience. She had stopped studying years before, and it was hard for her to go back to school. She now felt that she was struggling to be a student one more time in her life. In addition, being in a foreign country and speaking only English for communication was very difficult for her. She felt it was demanding to adapt to a new culture and use English every day.

The program for Su was challenging but still memorable. Although her classes focused more on theories than practicality, she felt that she had learned about new trends and issues in the field that she was not aware of before. As a foreign English teacher, Su felt that her students had not trusted all her answers about the language, since she had no experience with using the language in real life. She felt that her time in the TESOL program would help alleviate this problem. "I feel now that my students will trust me when I tell them that Americans do [this] and don't do that, because they know that I have been there and this will help me to let them understand the language aspect better than before. Usually our native speaker teachers were their only source to answer these questions; but now I consider myself one of those sources."

In reflecting on her experience in TESOL program courses, she felt that her command of English was very poor compared to her non-native classmates. Her feelings about her limited English ability often hindered her in participating in

classes. It is hard for her to discuss readings and communicate her thoughts. “I tried to participate in class, but I felt that I need to practice more to be able to say what I want or to be more proficient.” She was more comfortable when she had to talk in a small group rather than in a whole class discussion. She felt that if she spoke in front of her professor and could not express her thoughts, the professor would judge her; but in front of her classmates the discussion was easier for her, since almost all of them were non-native like her. “I can have more time to express my thoughts in a small group, but in whole class we have a lot of students so it’s hard to talk for a long time to explain for them what you want to say.” Although she felt that her participation is limited in classes, she thought that her language ability was improving through listening to her classmates. She recognized that the program is not designed to improve English ability; but by sitting in the classroom listening to everyone speaking English, and by thinking in English, her experience is helping her to improve her language. Su’s classes were very interesting to her, although she found it difficult to get used to the pace of the learning:

I remember my first course in the program, as it was an introduction to TESOL. I didn’t expect an introduction course like that. When I saw the course syllabus I was shocked. It wasn’t an introduction; it was everything in the field. I think the course was focusing on the quantity of information and not the quality. We couldn’t get deep enough in any topic. We just read about the topic for a week, and then on the next week we go to a new topic. The entire topics were interesting for me and new too; but again, I

didn't feel that I got deep into it since I had to read a new topic each week. On top of that we had to write on blogs; a page every week, which was a lot. I think teachers should know that we are international students and couple of sentences is enough at the beginning.

Su complained that her native speaker classmates had an easier time with the courses than international students. She claimed that they have a better chance of reading the requirements in the given time, and this gives them more ability to discuss the readings in class. Therefore, they get better attention from professors and better grades at the end of the course. She claimed that the courses involved a lot of reading, which forces students to skim the reading and not to go deeply into the material. Skimming, for Su, does not help her in understanding the materials. Su felt torn between being an international student and being treated as a native speaker. She wanted to be treated as equal to the native speakers in classes. In other words, she did not want to be singled out as different. But at the same time she wanted her professor to understand that international students like her are not used to this pace of learning. Su commented that almost all the students in the TESOL program are international students, and they need to be prepared, at least at the beginning, for this way of learning, which they had never dealt with.

While addressing this topic, Su again brought up the issue of the native speaker. She refers to native speakers as the superior teachers in the public viewpoint, since English is their native language:

As an English teacher, I, as a non-native speaker, feel inferior to native speakers. Native speaker means ideal and perfect. So I wanted to overcome that notion and come to America to become a native speaker, to talk like them and eventually become one of them. But now it's changed; I learned that native speakers also have disadvantages like us. Now I learned about different English dialects, and I am a little flexible about that. When I was in Korea I always wanted to be native speaker; but when I came here and learned about disadvantages of being a native speaker, I started to overcome that and accept myself. I know I have to gain the native-like proficiency because I am an English teacher, but still, I am not a bad teacher.

On the makeup of her peer population, Su also echoed the feelings expressed in the individual interviews. Although she came to the United States to learn from native speakers of English, she found that her international classmates helped in learning more than she expected. She believes that international students add value to the class discussion. Su feels that native speakers often leave the space to international classmates to speak because they want to learn about other cultures and ideas, and they (i.e. the American students) feel it is very interesting to interact with the international students.

Native speakers in our classes don't actually speak a lot, especially if it is something deals with things around the world. Our articles in TESOL are written by foreigners who gave native speakers a hard time in understanding what they want to say; so sometimes they are like us [i.e.

sometimes the native speaker has trouble with following the content of readings]. And most of them don't have experience overseas, which means that they can't share anything with us. But of course if it is something related to US, they are the only ones [that] speak.

I commented that she has a lot of experience, so "I bet that you have a lot to say in class." To my comment she responded, "We learn that if the one in front of you has more experience than you, you should listen to them and understand their point; but if the professor or classmate has less experience than mine, I do talk. But the problem again is that my English ability is poor." She observed that, when any international student shares his/her thoughts or experience, everyone, especially the native speakers, values the contribution and gains something from it. She differentiates between teaching proficiency and language proficiency. She recognizes that she can never be a native speaker, but she has something that she feels is more valuable than that; she has experience that can change her teaching life. For Su, experience is the most important asset for any successful teacher.

QK

Since QK was looking for a practical program, she had few options in her search. She followed her teachers' advice and entered the TESOL program. She had no trouble fulfilling the requirements for admission into the program, and she started her study directly upon her arrival to the U.S. QK's expectations from her TESOL program were clear. She wanted to learn practical ways to teach. "I want to learn how to be a teacher." QK yearned for an enriching experience in her

Master's program. She wanted to learn everything about being an effective English teacher. She felt the degree would not mean much to her if she could not 'get something' from it. For QK, having an enriching program means going beyond sitting in class and learning about theories, she wanted more. She was here in this specific program to gain a different kind of learning experience compared to what she had gained in China. She wanted to do more practical teaching on this educational journey. Nevertheless, most of her courses were focusing on theories and critical thinking about current issues in TESOL. QK spelled this point out in her interview:

As I told you before, I came to USA to start my masters in order to have a practical method of teaching. I wanted to learn how to teach English effectively. I know that theory is important and you can't have practical courses all the time, but I am afraid that when I go back and try to apply what I [learned] here it will not work. You know, I feel that as a non-native teacher, I need a guideline to follow. This makes me feel safe, and I think this applies to all of us because this is what we learn. Plus, I am sure that critical thinking is important, but we are not going to use it in our countries, and we never learned about it before. I started to learn and now it's easy for me; but again, it's useless because it's hard to ask kids in school in my country to do so [i.e. follow the pedagogical theories learned in the program]; and in college we have huge [number] of students, so we will never be able to make a discussion and think critically about an issue.

From the beginning of her Master's TESOL program in the U.S, QK had felt that her limited experience in the field stopped her from feeling comfortable in class. Almost all courses ask students to dig deep into their experiences and reflect on them during class discussions and in reflection papers. It was hard on QK to write a reflection paper on an experience she never had before, or comment on an article by an experienced professional writer in the context of a classroom discussion. QK felt she was spending most of her time trying to listen and absorb others' experiences. Although she admits that her professors and experienced classmates were not assessing her negatively on her inability to access experience, she was trying hard to learn how to connect her learning experience as a student to what was being covered in class so that she would be able to participate in discussions as fully as others. QK had learned that even if one does not have experience in the field s/he can connect his/her learning experience as a student to the discussion. In addition, she had discovered that there is no right or wrong answer to many of the questions in the TESOL field, which made her feel more comfortable discussing her ideas. So even if she had little experience, she could still discuss her feelings about the topic.

On another issue related to speaking in class discussions, QK had difficulty understanding her professors' reaction to her contributions. In particular, she did not see the difference between some of her own contributions, which seem to have been rejected, and the comments made by her native speaking classmates:

Sometimes when I answer or respond to a question, my professor says that it was not related to our topic; but when I hear my classmates, especially native speaker, I feel that they are the same as me. Their answer has nothing to do with the question, but the professor gave them good feedback. I remember once I wanted to say something, but I felt that it may not be in relation to the topic; so I went to the professor in the break and tell him my idea. But he showed me that he is not interested about it or didn't give me a positive feedback as I thought. So this issue is still confusing me. I couldn't tell when my answer will interest my professor or not.

She believes that native speakers can say whatever they want because it is their language, and no one will judge them or their ideas.

The picture of diversity in the program's classes is complex and leads to wide-ranging reactions, both negative and positive. One of QK's American classmates told her that the program was easy for them and they were able to understand the material. This other student felt that, without having international students in the classroom, they would not have such valuable experience or learn as much as was now possible. This fact, and QK's other chats with her native classmates, have helped her to develop and understand the idea of the ideal English speaker through a lens that shows more than simply language skills. Through her courses in the TESOL program, she feels she has come to better understand the construct of native and non native speaker. She has come to realize that the ideal English teacher is not only the native speaker, because

she can have more valuable ideas to share with her students than some native speakers.

When I learned about the native and the non-native dilemma, I felt that I will be inferior in this field. But when I found that our native classmates need us to learn more and when I learned about the world dialects, I started to realize that I can still [be] a valuable teacher in this field.

QK believes that courses in the program which highlight the value of non-native speakers enable her to be more confident about herself as an English teacher. Interestingly, and tellingly, however, she reports a puzzling difference between native and non native professors in discussing this specific issue:

I am not sure whom I believe actually; our native professors always mention that we should ignore the issue of being native and non-native and all of us are English teachers. But when our non-native professor tells us about her stories and how she couldn't get a job at some stages, I feel that what is written in books is not real. This issue will not affect me that much because we don't have this, since we are all non-native. But I feel it's good that we have both sides and hear them in real.

QK knows that she is a non native English teacher and she cannot change this fact; but she mentioned that with experience she will become more capable of teaching the English language. At least this idea is what she felt she has gained from the TESOL program. She believes that being exposed to the terms and thinking in-depth about them has encouraged her to move on and forget the feeling of being an outsider. She also recognizes that she can teach English

anywhere around the world, not only in China. She found non native English teachers in the United States are not rejected as she would have expected. However, she asserts that it will take her time to prove herself and be prepared for the future, since almost all the job ads she has found were looking for a native speaker or near-native speaker.

Like Su, another issue within QK's learning experience in the TESOL program was the pace of learning, which she felt interfered with her learning experience. It was hard for her to read multiple articles, and sometimes a whole book in a week, and then come the following week to discuss the readings. In summary, QK criticized the reading quantity, the assignments, and the ways of teaching, especially when the class focus was on theories.

Theories scared me because we [could learn about] the topics from one or two articles each week. But the professor assigned more than two articles, and at first I didn't know that there was a connection between them, and we had to figure it out. So I was reading that bunch of articles just to finish reading, and I didn't get anything from it. And each week we have a new topic. So it took us a week to first know about it and learn about [it]. It was too much because I just came to America and my English was not good at that time, and I wasn't used to speaking in class and discussing.

Professors need to give us clear instruction about the reading and their expectations. They need to consider that we are non native and that this atmosphere is new to us. They need to make a balance. We have professors who let us discuss the reading throughout the entire class, but I

don't get much from it. I need the professor to tell me the main points of the reading and direct information to make sure that I get the core of the reading. I do like discussion in class but sometimes I felt lost from it. Other professors give us lectures, which are good, but it's in English, and my listening is not that good. I can only follow him for about 15 minutes, and then I get lost.

QK acknowledges that these problems are not unique to particular classes and that they are present everywhere. She noted that some professors provide balance by letting students speak, whatever their English abilities are, and then in the end, the instructors wrap up the class by reviewing the main points.. She added that a few of her professors changed their teaching strategies to accommodate the students' needs. One of her professors mentioned that she would speak slowly in order for the students to comprehend her speech, while another professor changed some of the requirements for the international students. QK believes that her professors are trying to show politeness to international students.

On a note that seems somewhat contradictory to her testimony cited above, QK also affirmed that there is no difference between her or any native speaker in the program. It may take her time to do the same assignments, but she is trying her best. She feels that both native and non native students need to be treated the same, since they entered the same program and will reach the same goals at the end. Basically, her feelings about nativeness can best be described as mixed, as she struggles with assignments that she feels are

overwhelming, but she also wishes to be able to complete the same work as any other student.

HJ

HJ became interested in TESOL during her undergraduate study in the U.S. for a multitude of reasons. These include the experience she had from her English 101 course cited above, as well as her fondness of the language. In addition, universities in South Korea do not offer programs like TESOL that she could enroll in. She wanted to learn the language from its origin so that she could also learn the cultural and practical aspects of the language. She viewed being in a TESOL program as getting one step closer to becoming professional in the field of English language learning and teaching.

In HJ's TESOL program, she felt comfortable interacting with international students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. For her, it was comfortable to be around many non native English speakers in her TESOL courses. She believes that this mixture avoided her being judged by students regarding her language skills in class discussion. "The good thing in our program is that almost all of us are non native speakers, so we don't judge each other when make mistakes or when keep silent in class. We do have native speakers, but they are so few." However, she feels uncomfortable due to her limited teaching experience. HJ felt that her lack of experience hindered her from participating in class discussion, and she needed to be a listener almost all of the time. On a note that recalls one of the individual interviews, she also noticed that

because each one of them is from a different country, she feels that they cannot understand each other sometimes because of their varying accents:

Sometime in a small discussion my partner has a strong accent because he or she [is] from another country, like me. I know that in some countries they have a strong accent and it's hard for [others] to understand.

She speaks of a particular instance where she was having trouble.

Following in a discussion:

In this discussion, I didn't understand and it [was] hard to respond or continue the discussion; so I responded as "Ooh, or aah." So I just pretended that I understood; but I felt shy to ask him or her to repeat what he had just said, so this made me uncomfortable.

In order to avoid such embarrassing situations, she prefers to form a group with her friends, even if they are not from the same nationality, since she has become used to their accents.

In any case, her professors in the program have played a great role in comforting her in class. She believes that some professors understand the non native student's situation and their problems, so they try to help them in the classroom. However she contrasts this kind of positive experience with another where she did not feel supported. She first sketches the situation that she felt was comfortable for her:

Actually the first class was methodology class and I was nervous and uncomfortable. The first thing that the professor said was, "I will try to

speak slowly to you, and if I speak fast, please tell me.” All of us were international students, and she made me feel comfortable.

She then goes on to talk about another class, where she felt intimidated, and where she felt that nothing about the course design, the professor’s demeanor, or the material helped her to feel more at ease:

When I went to intro to TESOL I was scared, and the professor introduced so many articles and theories that I couldn’t follow her. The problem was that this professor didn’t help us to be comfortable like in the methodology class. And the content: the methodology was easier than introduction to TESOL. Intro to TESOL needs to cover a general idea about the field. The professor also gave us a lot of assignments. To me it’s not easy to cover all the assignments and theory.

She continued with this mixed picture of professor responses, addressing an experience she found intimidating:

Also we have professors who encourage you to speak, and even if you can’t say what you want, they give you clues and direct you to the answer. They want you to talk, they want you to feel comfortable and say what you want. Not all of them, though. One of my professors -this didn’t happen to me- but my classmate asked a question, and [the professor] answered. He was direct in that, and I was very embarrassed for her, and I can tell you that since that time I was too afraid to answer any question or comment in his class.

By 'direct,' HJ presumably meant that the professor's response seemed harsh, rude or dismissive in the context of the particular discussion.

From the beginning of her TESOL program, HJ was surprised to encounter so many theories about teaching a language. She asserted that being a part of a teacher preparation program was a really an important step in terms of being empowered to identify herself as a professional and understand the TESOL field. Yet, this experience will not be counted toward her credentials in the TESOL field in her country. She explained:

I will not be able to teach when I go back home because I don't have an undergraduate in education or a certificate. If I want to teach in school or university I have to do my undergraduate and then do a teacher certificate; so my master's is useless for me. I took this master's degree in order to introduce me to the field, and now I have two options: either to go back and teach in an English institute or pursue with my PhD, which I am not at all sure if it will be easy or not.

Second Interview

At our second interview, my three participants were more passionate about discussing their experiences in the program than before. They were very excited to attend our meeting to talk about their socialization process and what they had gained from the program. At this second interview, they started to rethink their status in the program and how the program influences them as English teachers and TESOLers. Although they were classmates in all of their classes, in our first interview they had not commented on each other's answers.

They were just answering my questions as if they were by themselves in the room. In stark contrast, during our second interview, they were completing each other's sentences and were eager to express themselves more. They started their interview by telling me about an incident that had happened in one of their classes, and that they felt bad about. The incident involved a Middle Eastern woman who had been challenged by a more conservative male from that region. Apparently, the woman had made reference to relaxed dress standards in her particular department, and in spite of her disclaimer that other departments may be different, her male classmate insisted on criticizing her.

The participants all wanted to share this experience with me, and they all felt negatively about it.

Su: I want to tell you about something happened in one of our classes last week.

HJ: Yes, in our culture class. We felt uncomfortable, even our professor felt so.

Su: I think critical view is important. But in one of our class, one classmate gave a presentation. Her presentation was about her culture, so one of our classmates, a man from the same country, attacked her. In my opinion, all of us didn't feel well. I think it's related to the presenter's behavior; she wasn't veiled, so that guy attacked her.

M: Can you explain more?

HJ: She was talking about the culture in the teaching field and gave some examples. Like in [her] English department; she didn't want to use 'open

minded', but she mentioned that they are close to the Western cultures, so they can dress casually, not formally like other departments. [She acknowledged that] maybe it's different from other departments. But the man kept telling her that he worked in an English department and he has a lot of friends wearing formal attire, and they are not like what she said, so she kept telling him that maybe [what she described] [was] the case in [her] university and not in all universities.

M: But what made you feel uncomfortable? It's just different ideas.

Su: No, the attitude he was using in addressing her was not appropriate

HJ: The presenter was giving examples because she didn't say all they do. She said, 'I am just showing an example'; but the man continued. The man was so sure. He didn't say [i.e. directly], "You are wrong"; but he said, "Believe me; I am sure that this is not the case.

QK: Even the professor later sent us an email to show us that she wasn't comfortable [either]; and I think she met with both of them; but I don't know who asked for this meeting.

Although my participants were not a part of the argument that occurred in the class they still felt uncomfortable. It seemed that they were not used to this kind of discussion in the classroom. They commented that they were used to keeping their opinions to themselves, especially not to embarrass their classmates. This anecdote recalls the testimony of a female Middle Eastern student in the individual interviews, and is a reminder that friction can exist among international students from other cultures, even similar ones, in a diverse classroom.

Later, after they explained further how they felt about this particular class, we moved on to our interview questions. My question was how the program had helped them to change the views they held about teaching back in their home countries. Su was the only participant who had extensive teaching experience. She commented:

I can't explain exactly, but the biggest thing is the change of my view, for example the view about me. I always felt that I am a non native teacher and my English is not standard. Now my view changed: non-native also has advantages in teaching and my students should have the points [i.e. benefit from these advantages]. England and America's English aren't the only perfect ones; other English is also ok. I will try to change my students' view as I changed mine, so we will have less stress in learning. Before coming to America it, being non-native was an excuse. I've never been to an English country before and I didn't know the situation; but after experience here I can present the language and culture. I can face my students and say that I can teach them. Another thing I learned from my experience is to respect other cultures and be open minded. We don't need to follow them [English speaking countries] in their customs. Like I used to tell them that they needed to make eye contact with their native teacher; but from now on I will not tell them to do that, because making eye contact is a Western custom. So I will negotiate. I will tell a native teacher to follow our custom and not make eye contact. Before I come here I told them to follow American customs to learn English, it's a part of

learning the language. But now I changed; I will just introduce this and I will introduce [to] native teacher our custom, and they need to meet us in the middle, not like before when I thought we need to follow the native speaker custom.

From the beginning Su's main goal from the program had been to improve her English skills, not her teaching ability. She claimed that there was a gap between her goals and the program goals. Yet, she found that her main gain from the program was to experience a feeling of equality to a native speaker in the English teaching field. She felt that she now had power and confidence in her teaching that she had never had before. In her country, Su explained that native teachers are always co-teachers, since they don't know the language or the culture of the country. Still, although throughout all her teaching experience Su knew that native speakers could not teach a classroom by themselves in her country, since they lacked fluency in the students' first language, she usually felt inferior as a nonnative. After attending the program, Su started to recognize that a non-native teacher carries more important qualifications in her country than a native teacher. She mentioned that her power came from reading nonnative writers and listening to her nonnative classmates' discussions.

QK and HJ commented on her statement, stating that their non-native professors usually focus more on the nativeness and non nativeness issue than any other professor in the program. They felt that this has helped them deepen their understanding of the issue and of their place in their profession:

QK: I feel that non native professors in our department actually feel for us more, so they try to cover the issue of native and nonnative in the field.

Maybe they try to make us feel safer in the field.

HJ: I guess also because our two non native professors had difficulty searching for job.

QK: One professor said that she was teaching in a college at that time and she had qualified teaching experience, and she looked like a native. She taught in English college in Korea and she wasn't a PhD yet, and her PhD program was in America. Her main background was schools in America. And that Korean college accepted her and she lived there one semester, then [she] came back to US and continued her PhD, and after her graduation she applied again in Korea, but she was denied because she was a non native teacher.

Su: In Korean universities, they prefer native speakers because they need the language accent; but at middle and high schools they prefer us because we can control the students more.

My participants in the focus groups were not concerned about the native and non native dilemma. They feel confident that they could go back home and teach there. They mentioned that this problem would only concern them if they thought about teaching English in US. I shared with her and my other two participants my concern about this issue. I mentioned to them "in my country, they still prefer the native speaker. Sometimes it makes me nervous, and this was one of my

reasons to continue my studies in order to overcome some of any upcoming problems.”

For the other two participants, aside from Su, the main gain for them was the idea that teaching English is not only about grammar and reading. They knew that they needed to adapt their teaching styles based on their students' future goals. They also added that they needed to let their students speak; and as long as they were understood by others, teachers should not focus on the “native standard.” HJ's and QK's goals were different. They wanted to learn how to teach the language. They asserted that professors helped them by asking them to create activities and apply what they learned within the classroom. They were looking for more practical courses in order to enable them to apply theories they learned into real situations. They did feel that professors were trying to strike a balance between theory and practice within the coursework, even though they would have liked to have more practical experience. They mentioned that after they finish the semester they would look for internship opportunities to have more practical experience.

We also discussed their main concern in the program after their first semester. They pointed out various worries. Yet, as QK pointed out, they all felt that the program is designed for “native speakers of English who would like to teach non native speakers in US.” QK explained that most of their class discussion and readings covered issues that teachers might face when they teach multicultural classes, or how to teach multicultural classes. She added that the pace of learning in the program is also too fast, since the content is

addressed to native speakers. Because they covered so much in so short a time, they could not go deeply into the material provided. HJ agreed with her: "It's hard to understand all of those articles in one week and make a connection to discuss it in class. If [we had] a chance to reread the articles, or maybe half of those articles, each week, I think we [would] be able to comprehend everything and contribute more." Su built on this point: "We are not native speakers, so they need to put this in their minds when they design courses. I know, for native speakers these reading will be easy; but for us we need more time to understand all of this because of the language." My three participants agreed that the program pushed them to learn; but unfortunately, all too often they felt that the desired learning does not take place for them. International students keep silent in classes since they don't comprehend the readings; or they try to skim the reading in order to say a couple of sentences in order to show that they understand something. I shared a story with them

In my classes, I had a student, an Asian one, who always had an electronic dictionary with him. I remember that he was focusing on getting the meaning of each word in his own language more than trying to get the meaning from context. I remember that I was joking with our classmates that his translator will crash with all of those words. But I do agree with you that it's hard sometimes to follow a discussion, especially if they talk about things from the American culture. But to be honest, it just needs practice.

The other main concern for Su was the requirements for joining the program. She stressed that the program needs students who have had

experience; but most of them do not have any, or may have experience in fields other than teaching. She claimed that she doesn't feel comfortable because the class is not equal in teaching abilities. She said,

I feel that we don't talk in the program - not me, but my classmates- because most of the discussion [is] around our experience in teaching and what we face in the field. Our department doesn't require having experience; and at the same time they don't provide you with teaching experience, which only allows people who have only experience to talk and the rest are listeners, since they don't have anything to share. I feel it's not fair for both of us, because we can't ignore students who sit silent in class; and at the same time we can't just focus on them. The same [applies to] learning how to design a syllabus. I have been teaching for over 10 years, so I know how to make a syllabus. But because we have new teachers in the field they teach us how to design a syllabus from the beginning; sometimes we spend half of the semester trying to do it. I don't say it's useless, everything is important. But this is too much for someone like me. But what I have learned from it will be useful if I teach multicultural class not in my country. I don't know if this is because the department accepts all of us even if we don't have experience, or...because they have native speakers in mind so they want to teach them how to address multicultural class.

Since my other two participants had no teaching experience, they could not comment on Su's opinion. However, they mentioned that they try their best to

learn from other people's experience, and they are looking for teaching opportunities to overcome the problem. QK admitted that it was hard for her during the first semester to join a discussion since she doesn't have anything to share; but later she learned to dig into her learning experience and use it in class discussion.

Looking forward and imaging future possibilities

As noted earlier, when she joined the program in the United States, Su was looking to improve her language ability, not her teaching ability. She admits that she did not pick the right program to reach her goals. According to her, the program focused on critical thinking and learning in order to have a critical point of view on current issues in the field. Su believes that a non native teacher who is going to teach in an EFL context does not need to learn about critical views; what they need is to improve their language ability in order to teach the language effectively. However, Su affirms that being in a program here in the U.S. has taught her many things she had not thought about before, and that she intends to think about in her future teaching career:

I don't think I will go for publishing in my future because I'm still learning. I also need to focus on writing, which is also my biggest weakness. I always felt that I am a non-native teacher and my English is not standard; now my view changed. I will try to change my students' view as I changed mine so we will have less stress in learning. Before coming to America it [i.e. being a non-native speaker] was an excuse, and I had never been to an English country before and I didn't know the situation. But after experience here I

can do it: I can face my students and say that I can teach you. When I go back to Korea I will teach my students the importance of learning the American culture, but [that] they don't need to follow it. I will teach them to respect other cultures and be open-minded. We teach our students when they have American teacher they need to make eye contact. You know that we Asian in general feel that eye contact is rude but we try to let them learn that Americans make eye contact and you need to do like them. This time I will teach our native teachers our traditions, so they can meet [us] in the middle. So no one gives up his tradition for the other group. Do you know what I mean? Also I used to teach them, if you want to be like a native speaker you have to act like one. This is wrong, each one has his own culture and we have our accents that we don't need to change... We still can learn English and be ourselves.

At first, while taking courses in her master's program, QK did not realize the usefulness of coursework and the different assignments for each class. However, she has come to realize that a lot of courses that she took were useful and helpful. "When I took the observation class, which [was] my first practical course in the program, I started to realize how important my other courses were. I was able to understand why the teacher was doing this action, plus I was able to ask her questions because I had a theoretical background for my questions." Throughout her observation class, where she had to observe a class and interview the teacher, she had to connect what she was learning as an observer

to what she was reading in textbooks. For QK, the contents of her textbook become reality in her observation class.

Imagining her future in China, QK expressed a lack of satisfaction with what she had gained in from her master's program in the U.S., since she felt that her experience in the program would not help her do an effective job as a teacher in China. QK believes that the program focuses on American teachers who want to teach non-native speakers in the United States, and does not prepare teachers like her to teach in her home country.

HJ pondered the idea of whether to return to Korea or to stay in the United States. If she stayed in the U.S. she feels that she needs do her PhD, something she feels ambivalent about. But if she chooses to return to her home country, she has to choose either to do her undergraduate study again in education or to teach in a language institute, which doesn't suit her interest. At the time of her interviews, HJ did not as yet see herself as a professional. She still felt that she lacked experience in the field.

There are a lot of theories in this field. I didn't know that teaching needs all those theories. I need to understand them all and try to apply them in real situations to be able to call myself as a teacher. After my first semester I can say I know something about the field but I still don't feel safe in teaching. The advantage of being in this TESOL program is that I can learn about other experiences from around the world; but I don't have my own experience still.

Concluding Comments

My participants in this study were not simply striving to fit themselves into an American TESOL community. As Prior (1991, 1998) has claimed, the students' disciplinary enculturation process was not a simple, unilateral process of receiving the knowledge, culture and tradition of their new communities of practice; their academic socialization processes represent processes of negotiation and transformation. Likewise, the notion of communities of practice, proposed by Lave and Wenger (1991), helps to shed light on the international graduate students in the TESOL discourse communities in the U.S. The authors stress that what keeps a community of practice is not only continuance of the culture, custom, and practices of the community, but also the changes that newcomers bring into the community. Without change, the communities will cease to exist. The participants' elevated critical awareness when they become non-mainstreamers, and the strategies they adopted, negotiated, and evolved, illustrated that these international students were not simply a marginalized group of students. The students' experiences in two different contexts as EFL and ESL learners and/or teachers allowed them to raise their critical awareness of the practices and contexts of their new graduate discourse community, and their relational positions in this community. On the surface, the students are at a disadvantage not only because they perform academic activities in their second language, but also because U.S. TESOL communities have different practices that they did not experience in their home countries. However, this study shows that these students can contribute much to their TESOL graduate discourse

communities, and that they show promise in terms of their integration into further professional TESOL communities.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of this research in relation to relevant previous studies in order to shed light on some of the issues raised by this study. With the global spread of English, TESOL programs in the United States attract a large number of international students who pursue their graduate degrees in the TESOL area in order to become teachers or teacher educators. These international students come from different EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and ESL (English as a Second Language) discourse communities with different cultures, languages, and educational systems. When their home communities are characterized by divergent assumptions that contrast with those of their new graduate TESOL program in the United States, these discrepancies add to the task these students face in adjusting to life in their graduate programs and in developing their professional skills. In short, students with different discourse backgrounds may face more challenges than their NES counterparts as they pursue graduate studies in TESOL. To understand the dynamics that underlie this situation, research is needed on international students' perceptions of their discourse communities and their views on their socialization in these programs. The present study has aimed to contribute to the needed research by exploring the perceptions of a small group of international graduate students regarding their U.S.-based TESOL discourse community and their socialization processes in that community. This study was conducted in the spirit of the notion that

learning takes place through participation in communities of practices. Applying the notion of community of practice to TESOL teacher education, Kumaravadivelu (2001) promotes constructing equal relationships between prospective teachers and teacher educators, developing context-specific pedagogies, and incorporating students' voices and visions into curriculum.

Lave and Wenger's (1991) related notion of Situated Learning is also instructive in thinking about the academic socialization processes of the participants of this study. The notion of situated learning proposes learning by participation in the practices of communities. In particular, the concept of legitimate peripheral participation, which studies how newcomers increase their participation over time, moving toward full participation, offers a way of seeing how graduate students such as those in the present study can gradually move toward full participation in their new community. In regard to academic socialization issues, Casanave (1995, 2002) and Prior (1991, 1999) describe the students' disciplinary enculturation processes as being historical, social, and situational as well as personal. The present study has explored issues regarding the participants' academic socialization processes, and has produced data that can be understood in terms of these ideas about community.

In particular, the experiences reported in this study's results serve as a call to those in the fields of TESOL and general teacher education in terms of increasing understanding of and uncovering the ideological nature of the lives of non-native English speakers (NNESs), as individuals (Amin, 1997; 2001; Kubota, 2005; Ladson- Billings, 2000; Pavlenko, 2003). Through their narratives, we

come to understand their desire and drive to become legitimate members in the world of English language teaching (Canagarajah, 2006; Widdowson, 1994). This was echoed by Lawrence-Lightfoot's (1994) national TESOL plenary address regarding the need to accumulate rich and various stories that stir the normative discourse in the TESOL profession and shape a new public discourse.

Looking more closely at the data reported in the previous chapter, a number of themes can be identified with regard to students' perceptions of their discourse communities. These are discussed in the following sections, which I divide broadly into two areas, positive themes and problem areas or obstacles. The first category (positive views) in turn breaks down into three claims. First, students in this study appreciated their TESOL graduate discourse communities when they felt they were able to receive proper assistance and support. Second, collegial relationships and equal opportunities were important factors affecting their perceptions of the practices of their discourse communities. Third, the participants spoke of having gained knowledge from the program's courses; their perceptions of this knowledge varied depending on the relevance of their personal experiences, their future teaching goals, and their background knowledge about the TESOL area. However, it is worth noting that, in each of these positive areas, some participants felt that their experience had been disappointing.

The obstacles in question, discussed in the second main subsection below, can be analyzed according to Sternberg and Spear-Swerling's (1998) five

types of obstacles: visibility obstacles, resource obstacles, barrier obstacles, resistance obstacles, and sabotage obstacles.

Positive Themes

Assistance/ support

Based on my findings, all of my participants were looking for a program that offered good support and opportunities to learn and practice English teaching. However, their determination of the quality of the program they had chosen changed and evolved depending on the availability of appropriate support and opportunities in their new discourse community. The participants spoke of having support from professors, and they generally felt appreciative of the teaching opportunities that were offered by the program. DV mentioned in his narrative that his professors were very supportive of him. He mentioned that one of his professors encouraged him to explore more interesting areas in language teaching and to learn more about them. He added that he had changed his area of interest because of guidance and support from one of his professors. Sherry added that her professors were very knowledgeable about their topics, and that had enhanced her ability to learn about the field. Similarly, Young felt that his professors were very cooperative, especially in one-on-one conferences. In contrast, Skylette and Anne mentioned that some of her professors were not used to the international students background and felt offended by their unfamiliarity; this discordant note will be discussed further in the section on “obstacles” below.

Regarding the teaching opportunities, some of my participants felt fortunate in having the opportunity to teach and apply what they learned in the program. Sawsan, for instance, was offered an internship to team teach at a language institute with one of her native speaker classmates. But again, the results in this area were not unanimous: Su, Qk, and Aly were quite disappointed in the lack of practical classes in the program. Qk mentioned that she would need to go back home to find teaching opportunities to put what she had learned into practice.

Thus, all of the participants' perceptions of their TESOL graduate discourse communities are closely linked with the availability of support and help from people in their discourse community. Participants spoke of equal access to resources such as internship opportunities and teaching associateships. Basically, it is fair to say that, while the participants felt they had experienced support of various kinds, several also felt that the program overall failed to provide broad access to teaching opportunities. It is worth noting that internship assignments at this institution are somewhat idiosyncratic; moreover, full teaching associateships are limited in number and available only at the doctoral level.

The importance of support/assistance has been noted by Ramanathan, Davis, and Schleppegrell (2001). They view that the practicum serves as a justification supporting the department, a training ground, and research site for graduate students in TESOL programs. Furthermore, it provides opportunities for

students to practice what they learn throughout coursework, preparing themselves for work after graduation.

Collegial relationship

Classmates were one of the factors that play an important role in the participants' perception of the program. Judging from my participants' narratives, classmates were one of the sources that helped (though also sometimes hindered) them in their attempt to negotiate and adapt to their new roles in the TESOL community.

Although I originally set out to assess views on the NS-NNS dichotomy, our conversations in the interviews tended to turn to collegial relationships among the international students. This is not surprising, given the international nature of the graduate student population in the program.

Young was originally hoping to have native speakers' classmates rather than international students, since he believed that working with native speakers would improve his language skills. Participants had generally arrived at a positive attitude toward diversity in the program, however. Sherry, Aly, and DV did not expect that having international classmates from all around the world would be one of the most positive aspects in the program. They agreed that they had been dissatisfied at the beginning at having more international students than American students as peers in their classes. However, as they gained more experience in classes, they came to appreciate this multicultural flavor of the program. They felt that having a multinational class give them opportunities to discuss issues from different aspects and different points of view. They also

found much common ground, noting that they were often facing the same problems as students from different backgrounds than their own.

Su, Qk, and HJ mentioned another positive feature arising from the diverse student population, namely that interacting with international students helped them to overcome their lack of familiarity with ESL discourse communities. They expressed that they were not comfortable enough to participate in class discussions, particularly in their early years of study. But later when they found that all of their classmates were challenged in the same way as they were, they overcame their self-perceived limited proficiency and their unfamiliarity with the practices of their new discourse community.

Interestingly, little was said in favor of interacting with colleagues from one's own background. One participant, Anne, claimed to be more comfortable when she engaged with classmates who shared her cultural background, since this minimized the chance of miscommunication due to cultural differences. However, this was not a universally shared preference. Sawsan, for instance, felt that her classmates who shared her culture were giving her a hard time as she tried to fit in with the community's practices. She was uncomfortable when she had to join them in a group discussion or project. She preferred to participate with classmates whose cultural background was different from hers.

Generally, data from the present study confirm the importance of collegial relationships and peer interaction, as noted and advocated by Ramanathan & Kaplan (2000), Askehave & Swales (2001), and Bizzell (1992).

Gained knowledge and its relationship to other factors

The participants' perceptions of courses that they have taken were varied, being conditioned upon the usability and practical benefits of the knowledge that they have gained through courses. Judging from my participants' narratives, almost all appreciated the program's observation course, since it helped them to gain a practical experience in the field. Su, Qk and HJ emphasized their view that the observation course was one of the few courses in the program that enable them to see pedagogical theory put into practice. Observations were often focused on classes for NS students taught by NS professors; these were often writing courses as well, rather than language teaching situations. However, the participants felt that they had gained from attending and observing these classes, in spite of the differences between these and their own future classrooms. For instance, most of the English teachers observed shared basic common understandings of language and culture with their (American) students. Given this, it could be said that, in a sense, the observation course helped to prepare EFL teachers who will teach a linguistically and culturally homogenous group of students.

Still, this sense was outweighed by the concern that the few English teaching courses available involved ESL classes with enrollment from diverse cultures. Thus, my participants noted that experience with most of these courses was more likely to prepare ESL teachers for teaching students with diverse language and cultural backgrounds. Moreover, they also felt that the discussions in courses like Second Language Acquisition focused on the ESL situation. This led them to perceive that almost all of the TESOL program courses were not

helpful for them, since they would be teaching students with homogeneous characteristics in an EFL setting. Thus, these research participants' future teaching plans turned out to be one of the most important elements to impact their perceptions of their graduate courses.

The participants' perception of their graduate courses was also closely related to their background knowledge about TESOL. HJ, who had no formal education in TESOL, and who did not have background knowledge of the field, evaluated basic TESOL-related introductory and methodology courses as being helpful and useful. Likewise, Sawsan, Aly, DV, Su, Young, Anne, and Skylette, who all had had English as an undergraduate major and had not learned about TESOL theories and practices before they joined the TESOL program, appreciated some of the courses that helped them understand the TESOL field. However, they remarked that some of their courses were repetitious, and their later courses sometimes included material that they had already covered in their early course work in the program.

In addition to the above, when students could relate their own experiences to the knowledge that they learned through courses, they appreciated those courses more. This not only facilitated their participation in classroom discussions, but also affected their perceptions of the knowledge they gained through coursework. Participants like Qk, HJ, and Sawsan, who had no teaching experience, mentioned that they had had a hard time participating in class at the beginning since their professors typically asked them to reflect on their teaching experience. The importance of taking students' background and needs into

account has been noted by Kumaravadivelu (2001), who suggests that teacher educators should incorporate prospective teachers' experiences, voices, and visions into the curriculum.

Obstacles in NNESs' Professional Development

In order to discuss how TESOL teacher preparation programs can equip NNES teacher candidates for the special challenges they will face in this profession and address other themes that emerge from their stories, I will use Sternberg and Spear-Swerling's (1998) idea of "personal navigation" to analyze our narratives in terms of the obstacles they represent or embody in NNESs' professional development. Sternberg and Spear-Swerling's (1998) article illustrates five different types of obstacles one may face in personal "navigation," using an extended umbrella metaphor of personal development as a journey (cf. Lakoff and Johnson 1981, 1999): visibility obstacles, resource obstacles, barrier obstacles, resistance obstacles, and sabotage obstacles. As I look back at our personal navigations as NNES in the United States, I find these five metaphors helpful in understanding the NNES's experiences in the field of TESOL as they emerged in the present study.

Visibility

Visibility obstacles are analogous to "darkness or fog, and occur when one finds oneself unable to see where one is going" (Sternberg & Spear-Swerling, 1998, p. 226). Many NNES, like Sherry, Qk, and Su, for example, came to the U.S. to advance themselves with an initial goal to improve their English teaching. However, because of the different teaching pedagogies and expectations in ESL

and EFL settings, they felt that they would have to struggle to apply these ESL pedagogies in their home countries. In other words, they found themselves unable to see a clear path toward meeting their original goals.

Although ESL pedagogies might be applicable or transferable to EFL teaching, NNEs might not be able to see this route clearly without explicit discussion on how to navigate in their own expected educational terrain. Su particularly felt that M.A. TESOL programs in the U.S. meant to prepare native English teachers who would teach ESL learners in ESL environments and not nonnative teachers who would teach in EFL contexts. Qk shared the same feelings of dissatisfaction with the tenor of some of the graduate program courses. She spoke of contextual differences between ESL and Asian EFL contexts and the need she felt for having correspondingly different courses to address each of these contexts. In ESL contexts, for instance, teachers need to know about their students' different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, whereas in Asian EFL contexts, teachers and students share the same culture and language.

Resources

Resource obstacles are analogous to “lacking proper navigational equipment or the vehicle one would need in order to make progress in the terrain one will encounter” (Sternberg & Sper-Swerling, p. 226). NNEs might not have capital to start their careers due to lack of the resources needed to get where they want to go. This notion can be applied to some of the results from this study. For example, Aly, Skylette, DV, and Qk mentioned that in order to be better

English teachers, they wanted to learn more practical methods of English teaching and to be exposed to more varied technology and resources. To meet these goals, they left their home countries and came to the United States. And their quest was in part successful. For instance, my participants were able to experience online classes as a new teaching resource. Skylette addressed how she was able to use online tools like WebCt in her courses as a mean of teaching and learning at the same time. Also, DV talked about the library services such as interlibrary loan. He was fascinated with the range of books and articles he could check out or have access to through the university's library system.

However, the issue of context actually arises here again. If TESOL graduate course design and pedagogy are not concerned with NNEs practical needs and instead focus only or primarily on the needs of teachers within the dominant society, then NNEs might not obtain the kinds of resources they need to achieve their goals and grow professionally. DV's experience is illustrative here. DV had a chance to teach an optional course during the program as a practicum course. However, it was not a successful experience. DV explained that the class he taught dealt with presentation techniques for undergraduate students. He complained that the class would have to be organized differently by the department if they wanted to consider it as a practical course for graduate TESOL students. DV's basic criticism would be relevant for all TESOL graduate students, regardless of whether they were training for the ESL or EFL contexts; that is, access to realistic teaching experiences need to be provided, in which students are expected to attend, and in which the goals of the course that the

graduate student teaches are clear. However, it is also true that the problems with such courses are compounded for EFL teachers, in that the American undergraduate context is so different from anything they will experience in their home country. In DV's case, there were additional problems of an even more serious nature: since the course assigned to him was not a required course, no one attended, which resulted in his losing the chance to practice his teaching at all for the most part.

Barrier

Barrier obstacles are analogous to “mountains in land journeys or land mass barriers in sea journeys, which block one from proceeding any further” (Sternberg & Sper-Swerling, p. 225). From my participants' experiences in this study, I found that nonnative English speakers, like Sawsan and Skylette, might have all the intellectual abilities required for a career as an ESL teacher but may face other obstacles grounded in language ideology or racial prejudice. Although NNES teachers possess advantages because of their cultural and linguistic sensitivity and empathy to students' learning processes (Medgyes, 1999; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999), the native speaker fallacy leads to a situation where NES teachers are given more power as compared with NNES teachers, regardless of their qualifications (Canagarajah, 1999a; Phillipson, 1992). The native speaker fallacy claims that the ideal English teacher is a native speaker, in spite of the fact that a NNES teacher, who has undergone the laborious process of acquiring English, can be a qualified teacher as well (Phillipson, 1992).

Generally, NNES teachers tend to be construed as being less competent teachers (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Rampton, 1990).

A non-native speaker might be a talented language teacher but be unable to overcome problems rooted in political or ideological obstacles, such as the pervasive 'native speaker' preference shown in many contexts. These barrier obstacles in an NNES ESL teacher's life might ultimately lead to self-rejection and low self-confidence due to the teacher's accepting the misconception that the ideal language teacher must be a native speaker. Such problems can be exacerbated by rejection from others due to visible appearance or non-native-like speech. Sawsan provides relevant narratives to illustrate this problem. At the beginning of her masters' program, Sawsan felt rejected by one of her teachers because of her head scarf. Sawsan explained that her teacher changed her attitude toward her when she learned that Sawsan had an undergraduate in English and was knowledgeable in the field. Later, when Sawsan was co-teaching with a native speaker, she found that from the first day, students treated her differently from the way they treated her native co-teacher. She felt that they were rejecting her just because she is a non-native speaker. To overcome this problem, Sawsan felt that she needed to be more active than her native co-teacher just to prove to her students that she could teach them the language.

Resistance

Resistance obstacles are analogous to "heavy snow or rain in a journey, which don't block one's path but, rather, make it harder to follow the path" (Sternberg & Sper-Swerling, p. 226). This category of obstacle overlaps with the

previous one. For example, Young, Sawsan, and Su all found that they need to work twice as hard as others to prove their abilities in teaching and to survive in the English dominated society. Without active support to help them deal with these obstacles, once NNES ESL teachers have worked hard to prove their ability, the attractiveness of teaching might start to decrease for them and they might leave the work. Alternatively, the developing NNES professional may become obsessed with the need to meet these challenges on his own. Young mentioned that many times in his coursework, he felt he needed to work twice as hard just to prove to his teachers that he could be a better teacher than a native speaker. He mentioned that his focus sometimes was not on doing his work well, but on challenging himself to show how proficient he was in front of others.

Sabotage

Sabotage obstacles are “attempts by others to render more difficult one’s progress along the path of one’s choosing” (Sternberg & Sper-Swerling, p. 226). In the workplace, people are competing for the same or similar resources; so more powerful members of a professional community might take advantage of their power and resources to sabotage the progress of other people. Some of the testimonies offered by this study’s participants seem to fit into this category. For example, negative reactions from NESs, like Skylette’s professors, regarding the NNESs’ linguistic limitations and teaching performance, might make the NNESs path to success more difficult. In addition, tensions among the NNES professionals themselves caused problems in some cases. Sawsan for instance, observed that even some NNES students came to class expressing prejudice

against non-native English teachers. This experience made her realize that being rejected as a non-native teacher comes not only from her native speaking peers but can also come from non-native students too. Methitham (2009) in his study found that Thai EFL teachers generally accepted the preferential treatment given to NS teachers in Thailand. Again this overlaps to some extent with the problems mentioned in the previous two categories; however, these stories regarding negative professor feedback and non-native peer attitudes add up to additional obstacles for the NNES, which can be seen as falling into this category of “sabotage.”

Concluding Note

During the interviews, the participants pointed out positive and negative factors that played a role in their graduate TESOL program experience. They praised the environment of the program and the program’s focus on raising awareness of critical issues in the field of TESOL. They pointed out that the program in general prepared them to critically analyze situations and take a stand for their positions on issues in the TESOL field. They acknowledged the advantage of having experienced two different contexts as EFL and ESL learners and/or teachers. Overall, their experience in their graduate program allowed them to raise their critical awareness of the practices and contexts of their discourse communities and their relational positions in those communities.

However, my participants were divided into two groups, both of whom felt they had some negative experiences in the program. The first group, who were separately interviewed at the beginning of the study, described the pedagogical

approach of the program as repetitious on issues related to native and non-native dilemma. This led them to suspect that there may be a hidden agenda behind this approach; thus, even where the stated intention was to minimize the dichotomy, the ironic effect seems to have been to heighten the participants' concerns about their NNES status. They also were concerned with their course's emphasis on theory contrasted with the lack of opportunity to apply this theory to practice. My second group, who were interviewed as a focus group, emphasized a quite different problem, namely their sense of being in a program that they felt was basically not designed for them. They felt that the pedagogical approach of the program was designed for native speakers of English who would like to teach ESL, and not for non-native speakers who would like to teach in an EFL context.

CHAPTER 6

RECOMMENDATION

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section reviews and summarizes the process of this research. The following section presents implications of this study. This involves what the findings of this study imply and suggest for those who are involved in the TESOL education and discourse communities. Finally, the limitations of this study are addressed, along with unanswered questions and recommendation for further research related to this topic.

Research Overview

This study was designed to build upon research conducted by others examining the broad issues of non-native English-speaking (NNES) professionals in the field of TESOL. This study was guided by the following questions:

1. How does the discourse of the graduate TESOL preparation program seem to affect (e.g: to encourage or to diminish the importance of) the NNES/NES dichotomy, judging from the views of NNESs graduate students who are practicing or developing teachers? If so, in what ways do these developing TESOL professionals see this dichotomy as being expressed in their experience?

Participants offered a range of responses relevant to this question. They generally had been relatively unaware of the NNES/NES dichotomy before beginning their graduate study. In their courses, the strengths of the NNES

professional were covered, and they were encouraged not to worry about being NNES teachers. However, participants tended to feel suspicious about the way this conversation arose so often in so many of their courses. Moreover, they sometimes interpreted their interactions with professors in the light of their NNES status. In addition, few of my participants, mainly from the focus group, feel this dichotomy is addressed in the program because it focuses on the teachers who are going to teach in the United States and not in their home countries.

2. How do these developing NNES professionals describe the experiences that are relevant to the broad question in (1)?

2a. What social dynamics seem to operate within the TESOL training community, again judging from the views of NNES graduate students participating in this community?

2b. How are these dynamics understood differently by participants with various backgrounds?

2c. In what ways do these dynamics seem to empower/disempower the NNESs to overcome the NES/NNES dichotomy, judging from the views of these NNES graduate student/teachers?

Based on my participants' narratives, there were complex pictures of the social dynamic within the TESOL training community. Almost all of my participants were disappointed at the beginning, finding they had more international classmates than American classmates, but at the same time they felt that they could enjoy a relaxed environment and feel confident with each

other. In other words, they found that all of their international student classmates were challenged in the same ways they were; this helped them to overcome their self-perceived limited proficiency and their unfamiliarity with the practices of their new discourse community. However, little was said in favor of interacting with colleagues from one's own background. A few of my participants felt they were more comfortable when they engaged with classmates who shared the same cultural background, since this minimized the chance of miscommunication due to cultural differences. However, this was not a universally shared preference, since some felt uncomfortable when they had a class with classmates who shared the same cultural background.

3. How are the past experiences of the participants relevant in shaping the dichotomy? That is, what attitudes have they experienced from their previous learning in their home country?

My participants' narrative showed that they had been unaware of the dichotomy. However, most of them also repeatedly mentioned that they had come to continue their studies in the United States because they were not native speakers of English. They felt that the fact that they were not native speakers really affected their teaching, and they needed to overcome that potential disadvantage by pursuing their studies in the United States. Participants had the perception that they would become native speakers of English when they interacted with native speakers in the United States. Some of my participants were taught by native speakers of English in their home countries, an experience

which caused them to feel that they have to be native speakers to teach like these teachers

4. How do the interactions that can be observed in teacher training program classrooms possibly contribute to or work against the NESs/NNESs dichotomy?

From my participants' narrative, the interactions within the teacher training Community had both a negative and positives influence on the NESs/NNESs dichotomy. NNES participants' felt negatively toward the dichotomy when they compared themselves with native speakers' classmates in their communications skills and discussions. At the same time, the interaction between NNES and NES showed that native and non native speakers shared the same struggles during their projects, which diminished the feeling of superiority of one group over the other. Participants cited concerns over having insufficient support, in some cases, from their graduate program professors. On this point, participants expressed some ambivalence, saying that they wished to be treated as equals with their NES peers, but at the same time they felt they needed assignments and activities that were geared to their own backgrounds and needs.

The study uniqueness, though, is that it focused on NNES from their own perspectives. This study gives them the opportunity to talk about themselves in the profession through their own eyes and not in the way other researchers perceive them. Although my participants have been visible in U.S. TESOL teacher education programs, they have not had a chance to talk explicitly about their own experiences in these TESOL education programs. Furthermore, for

some of my participants, who had much experience teaching English in their home countries, non-native status was never in question and did not seem to be an important issue. However, when they were relocated to a native English environment (i.e., an ESL discourse community) where the majority of their TESOL graduate faculties were native English-speaking teachers, they suddenly found that they were positioned as non-native teachers, and their qualifications were questioned. In addition, their awareness of their ESL discourse communities, as well of their native EFL discourse communities, was heightened. This created a complex picture full of positive and mixed changes. The TESOL discourse community broadens their horizon by experiencing and interacting with other TESOL professionals from different cultures. At the same time, they question their competence as non-native English teacher which leads them to feel insecure in the new ESL environment. This developing awareness particularly involved the questioning of power differentials in the English teaching field as well as the contextual differences. For instance, Culture and Language courses need to reveal the awareness of contextual differences of ESL and EFL contexts. In ESL contexts, teachers should know students' different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, whereas, in EFL contexts, teachers and students share the same culture and language.

The study results suggest that mutual efforts on the parts of students and others in their TESOL discourse communities are pivotal in order to support international students' successful academic socialization and to increase their satisfaction with their programs. It is vital to create supportive environments to

help people participate fully in their academic discourse socialization process. Some of the graduate students in this study felt isolated during their period of study, as they lacked interactions with people in the same discourse community (e.g., their peers and professors). Personal issues (individual personality traits and behaviors) were a contributing factor to their isolation to some degree; some students, like DV, were successful in their discourse socialization and displayed quick acquisition of knowledge about the practices of their American ESL community. However, the feeling of being outsiders that many participants expressed was not solely their own individual responsibility. They cited genuine concerns over the difficulty of obtaining appropriate support from and interactions with people in the same discourse communities, as well as easy access to resources. In the view of the participants, these appeared to be a key to international students' successful academic discourse socialization processes. The degree of supportiveness they felt in the environment also affected their perceptions of their discourse community. Although no generalizations can be drawn from this study, it is likely that the issues raised by these international graduate students reflect perceptions that are not limited to the one location where the study was carried out.

Within the profession as a whole, some progress has been made toward providing the kind of supportive environment that NNES professionals need. For instance, in 1998, in order to create a nondiscriminatory professional environment for all TESOL members regardless of their native language and place of birth, and to encourage research and publications on the role of NNES

teachers in ESL and EFL contexts, the TESOL professional organization established a TESOL NNES caucus, which has been active in supporting its members and raising awareness about issues of special interest to NNES teachers. The TESOL NNES caucus has played an important role in encouraging formal and informal gatherings of NNESs at TESOL national and affiliate conferences. In addition, the caucus helps in promoting the role of NNES educators and researchers in TESOL and TESOL affiliate leadership positions. However, not every graduate student has a chance to travel to the TESOL annual conference because of economic and academic demands; moreover, the support available at the national, or even the regional level, is limited. Thus, teacher education programs where NNESs enroll play a critical role in helping NNESs overcome obstacles and grow professionally. In the following section, I provide a set of recommendations and suggestions to improve the quality of these TESOL graduate programs, based on the findings of the present study.

Recommendations and Suggestions

Pre-Program Preparation

Narratives in this study indicate that NNESs are sensitive to the terms used within their TESOL program; also the expectations of their program are highly related to their self-confidence and professional identity as NNES EFL teachers. Speaking a second or foreign language well can be challenging for anyone, but nonnative teachers face two additional challenges. The first one is to understand the language of the TESOL professional discourse community, and the second challenge is to fit in with the new learning atmosphere, with its

assumptions and practices. Because some of my participants have no teaching background, they felt lost at the beginning of the program as they struggled to simultaneously meet the challenge of using academic English at the graduate level and also to operate successfully with the unfamiliar jargon used in the various courses in which they were enrolled, jargon that it was assumed they could use within a short time. Furthermore, as they took on these daunting requirements, they felt under siege, and this jeopardized their own view of themselves within the classroom community. In addition to the new learning they needed to undertake on multiple levels, it was difficult for them to now see themselves as equally competent compared with their NES peers and equally able to succeed in the program. The participants' ability to negotiate these multidimensional struggles were exacerbated by lingering problems they had with English fluency.

Some participants in the study were not used to the expectations involved in the American learning context. Some of the confusion related to practical matters. For example, the rigid demands of scheduling required considerable adjustment for these students. Moreover, there were deeper problems involving intangible matters. These international participants had no experience with certain assumptions, such as that good students are students who engage easily in self-reflection, who readily join fast-paced public conversations, are able to criticize advanced texts both in writing and in speech, and who have developed skill in skimming a reading to gain a quick overall perspective. To meet these alien expectations in a new environment, and to use a second

language proficiently, places a heavy burden of demands on the newly arrived NNES graduate student. Again, such expectations are well known to experienced TESOL professionals, yet no effort was being made, it seemed, in acknowledging the need to render these struggles visible and to address them for these novices. Interpreting the testimony of my participants, it would seem desirable for such support to be offered as part of the culture of the graduate TESOL program.

TESOL programs tend to assume their teacher candidates already know how to speak fluent English, including the particular language of the discourse community. It is also assumed that they already know how to operate as Americans in terms of social interaction in the classroom. Programs such as the one in which the participants were enrolled acknowledge World Englishes in principle, and the classes offered discuss different learning styles based on cultural differences. However, discussions of these issues happen on a theoretical level and often do not filter down to inform the goals, organization and measurable outcomes of the graduate program. Moreover, the newcomers' straightforward need for more linguistic experience is glossed over and never acknowledged. In other words, such programs apparently assume that the majority of these teacher candidates are fluent in English, able to participate in discussions at a sophisticated level, and either used to the American/Western style of instruction or are able to adjust to this quite radical change smoothly. Basing their practice on these unexamined assumptions, graduate faculty in TESOL preparation programs further assume that their international TESOL

graduate students will be capable of learning in their new environment as a result.

Addressing yet another important factor unearthed in the present study, it seems to be assumed that these teachers will be returning to professional lives in which they are both willing and able to reproduce the learning models they experience in their American program, based on a universally shared set of professional commitments. This particular assumption poses two problems. First, in many cases, the NNES graduate student, particularly when she is just beginning her studies, has yet to become aware of the complex world of her new ESL environment and of the assumptions made in U.S. educational contexts. Second, if she is able to assimilate to the prevailing ideas about what is ideal in these Western contexts, she may find that there is a huge disconnect between these contexts and the conditions under which she will need to teach in the future. To cite only one specific example, class size in most of the world's educational systems is far larger than what is assumed to be the case in the 'ideal' pedagogy taught in most American TESOL programs. Yet given the testimony of the participants in this study, their graduate training does not include discussion of the practical problem: how to implement 'ideal' solutions in very divergent conditions, some of which are far from consistent with the assumptions made by those developing the ideal pedagogy.

This list exposes a detailed and complex list of needs, and it may be unrealistic to think that a single change, or a few changes, would provide a magical solution to the challenges faced by graduate student TESOL

professionals studying in the West. However, some steps could be taken in order to recognize and overcome these problems. As an essential first step, graduate TESOL programs could provide an introductory set of meetings for new students in the program, perhaps lasting for two to four weeks before the students attend their first classes. This program could create an informal environment in which new students could learn about the program expectations and requirements, and could have a chance to get acquainted and become familiar with the diverse backgrounds from which their peers have come. Such a program could be directed (or at least addressed) by the graduate program director, who would best be able to discuss what is expected from the students during the TESOL program. The program director could also invite other professors from the department. After participating in such a preparatory program, the students could be better prepared to encounter and adjust to what they will face in the program. This pre-program series of discussions could at least minimize the “surprises” that new international graduate students encounter in their full-time graduate work. Of course, depending on circumstances and on how a particular program is structured, participation in such a preparatory program could be made optional for some students (for instance, those who have studied in the U.S., have a high degree of fluency in academic English, etc.). These introductory set of meetings may allow students to overcome the resource and barrier obstacles that were mentioned as one of the challenges that face international graduate students in their discourse community.

Native/Nonnative Course Design

To prepare NNEs for becoming EFL professionals and teachers, as well as equipping them for work in ESL contexts, researchers such as Kamhi-Stein (1999) make a strong case for integrating instruction on issues related to nonnative speakers across the curriculum in TESOL preparation programs. According to Kamhi-Stein, instructions on the non-nativeness issue could provide teacher candidates with opportunities to systematically examine their nonnative speaker status in relation to theories of language acquisition, methodology, and curriculum design. Such instruction, he claims, could also allow them to examine the cultural and social factors affecting second language development. However, the present study suggests that caution needs to be exercised here; there may be multiple ways to address this area, and not all are equal. Judging from my participants' responses, it seems they felt that issues related to the NNS topic were addressed repeatedly in their program. In fact, one has the impression that this discussion had perhaps the opposite of the intended effect: in fact, they felt almost haunted by the reminder that they were non-native speakers. Far from being helpful, this repeated emphasis on their non-native status made them suspicious, even leading them to believe that there may have been a hidden agenda behind the way this issue was addressed. Ironically, due to the shortage of time available in any given classroom discussion, they also felt that the issues were dealt with in a superficial way; they never felt that they ended their discussions with a conclusion on the topic or covered everything relevant to the issues raised.

In order to avoid these uncomfortable feelings, one class might be offered in the program to address, explicitly and in depth, the language ideology and misconceptions in the field that might become obstacles for NNEs. This class could allow them to focus on sharing their concerns in the field. Such a class could also help them to be prepared for addressing some of the situations that they are likely to encounter in their professional lives in their own home context. In addition, it could improve their self-image and self-perception as NNE teacher candidates. This course will be opened mainly for NNEs. However, NNEs who had teaching experience with NNE professionals, or who intended to teach in EFL contexts, could join the course.

Samimy and Brutt-Griffler (1999) describe a TESOL education program offering a graduate seminar titled, "Issues and Concerns Related to NNE Professionals," in which NNE teacher candidates read about and discuss issues related to NNEs in the profession. The syllabus includes a group of NNE teacher educators as guest speakers and weekly discussions based on assigned readings, such as "The Non-native Teacher", by Medgyes (1994); "Models for Non-Native English," by Kachru (1992); and "My Language, Your Culture: Whose Communicative Competence?," by Nelson (1992). According to Samimy and Brutt-Griffler's findings, many participants felt that the opportunity to share their experiences with other non-native professionals during the seminar empowered them personally and professionally and transformed their view of themselves from having a negative identity as NNEs to enjoying a more positive identity as L2 users. The inclusion of such a course could represent a great

source of support for developing TESOL professionals from diverse backgrounds. It could help to provide the environment needed for NNES educators to express their own concerns even as they study (in other courses) more general pedagogical principles.

As the environment that seems to privilege the native speaker appear to be particularly disempowering for new teachers, I believe that the seminar course described above demonstrates a way to help students open a meaningful discussion toward dismantling the native/nonnative speaker dichotomy and help NNESs overcome some potentially disempowering assumptions that subtly but powerfully seem to affect TESOL teacher education programs. Combined with the pre-program suggestion offered in the previous section, this seminar could also help give international TESOL professionals the confidence that they need to make the transition to the American education practice. I also believe that this course may help NNES to overcome the barriers, resistance and sabotage obstacles that my participants face during their graduate study.

Professional Practice

Most of my participants have no teaching experience. Given the focus on teaching in their graduate courses, it is not surprising that they felt that this lack of background hindered them from participating fully in many class discussions. Even for those who were able to gain teaching experience through internship opportunities offered in the program, these experiences were not designed to be close enough to their prospective real teaching situations, and so these internships did not make up for a participant's lack of real teaching experience.

The implications of this pattern are worth looking at closely. Basically, this pattern means that the graduate professional's future students will face a teacher who, in spite of having graduate training in the United States, may be teaching for the first time in her life, particularly in the kind of environment where her future employment will develop.

In order to avoid this, two suggestions may apply. First, professors may open their undergraduate classes, for instance ESL college writing or research writing, to graduate students so that students may observe the way professors apply theory in practice in real classrooms. In addition, professors could ask the graduate students to prepare a lesson plan for some specific unit in the undergraduate course. The graduate student would be under the professor's supervision. Later in the class, the professor may reflect on the lesson plan either individually with the graduate student or in the context of an organized activity to discuss, and evaluate these practice teaching opportunities in the context of the whole graduate class. This form of interaction would give the graduate student an overview of applying theory to a real life class, although further follow-up would be needed to acknowledge differences between the context of this experience and what graduate student may encounter in her future work.

To address the disconnect between Western and other contexts, a second mean of providing an authentic teaching experience to the graduate students could be invaluable for graduate students who have plans to return back to their home country for teaching. In this case, the student reaching the middle of her graduate TESOL training program could contact the university where s/he would

like to teach after her graduate program (or an equivalent university). The graduate student could provide a list of professors' names to the director of this program in the student's home country, and this director could choose a professor for the student to work with as an intern. This internship would be a semester long. In this internship, the TESOL program in the United States would make arrangements with the school where the student would prefer to work as a graduate student. During this internship, the graduate student would attend the classes with the chosen professor, and would observe how the teaching takes place at the university. This arrangement would involve considerable complication in terms of administration; however, it would provide the prospective international TESOL teacher with a realistic, and more satisfying, internship experience. I believe that this suggestion may help in overcoming the visibility obstacle and enable the NNEST apply ESL pedagogies they learned during their graduate study in their home countries.

Limitations of the Research

Although this study has shed light on international graduate students in U.S. based TESOL discourse communities in terms of their perceptions and socialization, this study has inherent limitations. First, this research is mostly based on interviews with only nine participants. Moreover, the data collection instruments have been limited. In similar research, where studies were conducted regarding academic socialization issues (Morita, 2002, 2004; Prior, 1998), the researchers included other data collection methods such as classroom observations. The present study did not include observations, due to both the

difficulty of access and time constraints. In addition, this project was carried out over a short period of time, which made it difficult to follow students' actual socialization processes over time. Although participants recalled and reflected on their past experiences, their memories (and thus their reflections) could be incomplete or even distorted. In the process, there might be issues that were not fully addressed in the interviews for the present study. In addition, this study was intended to reveal a broad sketch of international students' perceptions and their academic socialization processes. In other words, this study provides more a view of the proverbial "woods" rather than the "trees," in relation to the international graduate students' academic socialization processes in their U.S.-based TESOL discourse community. It has been left to future studies to examine the issues raised here in closer detail.

Secondly, the participants who participated in this study do not represent all international student populations in U.S.-based TESOL discourse communities. Those participants who were willing to participate in this research study, and who were attending and presenting at conferences where I initially contacted them, cannot be said to represent the majority of international graduate students. The focus of qualitative research is not representative of an entire population; rather, it is representative of the participants' worlds. For this reason, it is worth remembering that the results of this study cannot be generalized to other students or other populations.

Thirdly, as a researcher who is deeply involved in the entire research process, I am solely responsible for selecting and analyzing data, and discussing

it. Although it is my strength to have an insider's perspective and understanding of some of the issues that have been investigated, it is important to recognize that this research may not be fully objective. However, as mentioned before in the Research Design section of this study, the researcher's bias in qualitative research is inevitable. Thus, even though the findings of a qualitative study such as the present one are partial and situational, they can be seen as legitimate (Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. 1998).

Final Thoughts

I came to this study because of my recalled experience in the program that was under study. In the course of my studies, I found myself meeting colleagues doubting our qualifications as NNESTs in teaching English. My inner voice urged me to investigate the circumstances and the context that contributed to the disempowering feeling that I myself experienced, and that my NNEST friends seem to develop toward themselves and other NNEST teachers. Of course, I could not interview my friends whom I considered competent, though I found them as good examples of English teachers in spite of their lack of confidence about themselves due to their non-nativeness. Therefore, I had to search for participants who were willing to share their experiences with me. I had a very hard time finding participants willing to speak freely and without being shy about sharing their own experiences.

In particular, I realized, in the course of the study, that gender issues may have combined with cultural issues to compound the usual problems of conducting research. I recall that I asked many males from my own culture, who I

thought would be happy to share their experiences. However, they did not contact me after they agreed to participate. I was disappointed at this puzzling refusal; but after conducting my interview with Sawsan, a female participant who is my friend and is from the same culture, I started to understand why other males did not want to be interviewed by me. Although those males were engaged in class discussion with other international and American students, they were still conservative when it came to interacting with Middle Eastern women.

I remember, also, that one of my participants cried after her interview because she felt that her language proficiency hindered her from making friends and adjusting to the program and the social life in the US. I recall that our interview took three hours which was more than usual compared to my other interviews. She kept explaining her point of view and her answers to make sure that I understood her. Although I kept mentioning that I understood her very clearly, she had a feeling that I could not understand her because of her language proficiency. As a result, her interview took more time to transcribe and analyze than any other participant's.

I had not been able to foresee these responses on the part of my participants. I had struggled to construct questions that were clear and would make the participants feel safe while answering them. Since my participants came from different backgrounds than my own, it took me time to understand their behaviors while answering my questions. For instance, they tended to give very short answers to my questions. They also tended to answer some questions with yes/no answers even when I asked them to give me examples or elaborate.

Moreover, they were very careful when they recalled their stories and mentioned professors' names, although, I kept mentioning to them that I would never use professors' name or real names. However, when I started to engage with them in a discussion with back and forth questions they started to elaborate on their answers. An example of this occurred between my first and second group of participants. At an early stage in my data collection, I had felt discouraged, as many of the first participants had seemed unwilling to reveal themselves in the interview. However, in stark contrast, in my second interview with my focus group, the participants were excited to meet me and share their experiences. I felt that I was with a very new group of participants, almost as if they were experiencing a different reality from what was revealed in my first round of individual interviews. I was hesitant myself at the beginning of this second group interview. I was not sure that I understood how and why the participants' behaviors were different. I remembered when my Asian classmates told me that it was hard to interview Asian students since they preferred to be interviewed by Asians like them since they take time to feel safe with other interviewer from other cultures. However, this did not provide an answer to why my second round of group interviews was so much more successful than my first round of individual interviews.

As a closing comment, in spite of all of the obstacles I faced collecting the data, I enjoyed the journey of exploration. And I hope that I have been able to help make my participants' voices be heard by the TESOL community, and by

the English-speaking world at large, as the English language works toward finding its own place in the international community of the twenty-first century.

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AltaMira.

APPENDICES

Questionnaire

Please provide the information in this initial section, then respond to the questions below. You may respond electronically to M.A.Hassan@iup.edu (no record will be kept of your identity, unless you give your contact information at the end of the questionnaire); or you may print out your form and put it in the mailbox of Dr. Jeannine Fontaine (marked "Mai Hassan, c/o Dr. Fontaine") in the English office at IUP.

Gender:

Age:

Nationality:

Native language:

Years in English speaking countries

Years of English learning experience

Years of English teaching experience

Other language learned

For the items below, please circle which answer best represents your views:

1. In comparison with fellow non-native English teachers in my TESOL classes, my command of English is

Excellent good average poor

2. I feel that my command of English affects my participation in the classroom

Almost always often sometimes rarely
almost never

3. I feel that I participate in class discussions in my graduate courses

Almost always often sometimes rarely almost
never

4. When I do speak in class, I enjoy expressing my ideas

Almost always often sometimes rarely almost
never

5. When we form a discussion group in the classroom, I prefer to be with

NS NNS a mixed group people from my own culture does not
matter

6. I think the other international students support my opinion

Almost always often sometimes rarely
almost never

7. I think native speaker students support my opinion

Almost always often sometimes rarely
almost never

8. Professors in my graduate program can be unsympathetic to the ideas I express in class

Almost always often sometimes rarely
almost never

9. When deciding whether to offer an opinion in class, I tend to worry about negative reactions and I hesitate to speak if I think others may object to what I say

Almost always often sometimes rarely
almost never

10. I feel that professors in at least one of my graduate courses have reacted negatively to ideas that I expressed.

Strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

11. If professors or students in my classes disagree publicly with my opinions, I feel personally embarrassed

Almost always often sometimes rarely
almost never

12. When I read or write about an issue in this field, I incorporate my experience

Almost always often sometimes rarely
almost never

Please complete the following statements briefly in a way that you feel represents your views

1. When I speak out in the classroom, I tend to feel-----

If a classmate makes a statement that I disagree with, I-----

2. I feel best about a class discussion in my graduate program when-----

3. I am most uncomfortable after a class in my graduate program when -----

4. When classmates offer an opinion that I think may be viewed as strong or unpopular, I -----

5. I think my strongest point as an English teacher is-----

6. I think my weakest point as an English teacher is -----

7. My biggest challenge in this field is -----

My biggest concern after I finish my degree may be -----

Thank you for your responses to this questionnaire.

OPTIONAL: I am conducting interviews in which I hope to be able to explore your experiences in more detail. If you would be interested in participating in such interviews, please provide contact information here, which I might use to get in touch with you and explain the next phase of the study.

Name: _____

Email: _____

Telephone: _____

Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your experience as an English teacher before you joined the TESOL program. What do you think influenced you to become an English teacher?
2. (For participants who have been teachers before joining the graduate program) In your experience so far, how would you characterize yourself as a teacher? Can you say a little about your teaching philosophy? Have you written a teaching philosophy statement, and if so, do you remember the main points you made in that statement? What do you think were your strengths as a teacher, and what areas did you feel you needed to work more on?
3. What made you decide to enroll in a graduate program in TESOL? What made you choose this particular program?
4. Tell me about your experience in the program. What is your overall feeling about your graduate study? Do you enjoy your classes?
5. Can you think of a class that you enjoyed especially? What was that class? Why did you feel that way in it?
6. Can you think of class that you felt uncomfortable in it? What was that class? Why did you felt so?
7. How comfortable/confident do you feel in your classes, especially when you contribute to class discussions? Can you talk about specific instances of interactions in class that you felt good about, or that you saw as problematic?

8. How do you see yourself in the program?
9. How do you think others see you in the program?
10. Who are the people you like to interact with the most in the program?
Why?
11. Could you describe your experience with your classmates in the program? Do you work outside class with some of your classmates, and if so, which ones? Do you think you tend to collaborate with some classmates more than others, and if so, why do you think this is so?
12. Think about times when someone expresses a disagreement in class?
Can you describe what happened? What was the mood in the classroom?
How did others react?
13. What about when you speak in class? How do you think people respond to you?
14. Tell me a little more about how you see yourself as a professional?
15. What do the terms 'native' and 'nonnative' mean to you? Do you think these terms play an important role in professional life?
16. Do you think of these 'labels' as part of the way you define yourself as a TESOL professional?
17. How did you first learn about these labels? How has your experience in the TESOL program affected your view of them?
18. Can you talk a little bit about any advantages or disadvantages you see with your being in the TESOL program?

19. When you think of your role in classes here, does one word come to your mind? If so, what word is it?
20. What do you think you may contribute to English language teaching after you finish your degree? Do you see yourself as primarily a teacher in the future, or as a contributing researcher, and what do you think is most important in forming your future plans?

Invitation to Participate in Research

Dear potential research participant:

I am writing to solicit you to be my research participant. I am currently writing a dissertation on the narratives of developing TESOL professionals in a graduate discourse community. Specifically I am interested in including an international group of students who have teaching experience and have completed some coursework in the IUP TESOL program. The following information is provided in order to help you to make an informed decision whether or not to participate. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.

The purpose of this study is to explore some of the dynamics within the TESOL discourse community in terms of the relationship between this graduate study and the graduates' position within the TESOL field. Participation in this study will require approximately two (2) hours of your time for two one-hour interviews. In addition, I may ask your professors' permission to observe classes in which you are enrolled twice in the semester. You will also have the opportunity to participate in a focus group of approximately two (2) hours in which you will be able to discuss the findings of the research up to that point and to interact with other participants of the study. You will have the opportunity to review, add to, or to reject portions of the interview transcriptions current at the time of the focus group. Finally, you will have the opportunity to review the research findings in their entirety before their formal submission to the dissertation committee if you so desire, and to provide a letter for an appendix reflecting on your experience in this research.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigator. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw from this study at any time by providing a signed document to the researcher clearly stating your desire to terminate your involvement in the study and stipulating whether data collected from you up to that point may or may not be used in study outcomes. Any data you do not wish to allow to remain a part of the study will be destroyed.

If you choose to participate, all information will be held in strict confidence; you will never be identified by name in formal documents emerging from the study. All data collected for this study will be stored electronically and password protected. No information with subject identifiers will be released to anyone except the researcher's dissertation director, though focus group participation will not be anonymous as it is meant to give you an opportunity to make professional

connections as well as provide feedback to the researcher on the data collected to that point.

No copy of any recordings of interviews (individual or focus group), observation, or of any written material obtained for this study, will be released in any form in which you may be recognized without your review and explicit consent. All data collected for this study will be retained for at least three years in compliance with federal regulations. The information obtained in the study may ultimately be published in professional journals or be presented at academic meetings, but your identity will always be kept strictly confidential unless you have given explicit permission that you may be identified.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the statement below

Project Director:

Mai Hassan

Doctoral Candidate, Indiana University of
Pennsylvania

Department of English (Composition & TESOL)
Indiana, PA 15705

Dissertation Director: Dr. Jeannine Fontaine

This project has been approved by the Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone:
724/357-7730).

Voluntary Consent Form

I have read and understand the information on the form and I consent to volunteer to be a subject in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this informed Consent Form to keep in my possession.

Name (PLEASE PRINT)

Signature

Date

Phone number and/or email:

Best days and times to reach you:

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

Date

Investigator's Signature