

The Teacher Identity Construction of 12 Asian NNES Teachers in TESOL Graduate Programs*

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This article explores the construction of teacher identities through a narrative analysis of 12 EFL teachers pursuing TESOL graduate programs in the US. Using poststructuralist view of identities, the present study examines the narratives of 12 EFL teachers throughout their two years of studying in the US, the process that were involved as they negotiated multiple identities to be legitimate members of a US academic community. Narrative data were collected from in-depth individual interviews, focus group, and documents. The study found two major findings. First, although many have warned against the use of nativeness as a determining factor in constructing NNES teacher identities, the narrative analysis indicates that linguistic identities continue to be central in NNES identity construction. Second, teacher identities can shift. In the present study, the shift was particularly mediated by the critical pedagogies encountered in the program. Finally, the identity shifts led to some subjects' concerns about navigating their way back to their home countries as US-trained teachers. Pedagogical findings of the findings will also be addressed.

Key words: nonnative teachers, teacher identities, critical pedagogies,

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multicompetence, narrative analysis

**WHY STUDYING NONNATIVE¹ ENGLISH SPEAKER
(NNES) TEACHERS IDENTITIES?**

It has now been agreed that teacher professional identity is considered a critical component in language teaching and classroom practice (Tsui, 2007; Varghese, Morgan, Johnston & Johnson, 2005). Boomer (1998) believes that every classroom takes on the ethos of the teacher. Thus, if teachers are not aware of the identities they bring with them into their classroom, they will be unaware of the harmful and helpful contributions it brings to the learning dynamic and the interpersonal interactions in the classroom environment. In studying eight ESL NNES teachers, Amin (2005) found that teacher participants became more effective in the classroom when they were aware of their NNES identities and built on them, rather than followed the native English speaker (NES) norms. Studies on personal narratives by Liu (2004) and Morgan (2004) illustrate that teacher's own identities can be rich teaching resources to draw upon and enhance a closer relationship with their students.

Understanding teacher identities is not only beneficial for classroom practice but also for teachers' own professional development (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005). Vinz (1996) contends that becoming a teacher is "a continuous process" (p. 6). Thus, he continues, learning to teach involves a constant examination of teacher identity. Nelson (2003), who

¹ In this study, I use the term 'nonnative English speakers' or hereafter NNESs to refer to individuals who study in a language other than their first in an academic setting. Although I am aware that I risk stigmatizing or essentializing these individuals, I use these labels to highlight the fact that the students are simultaneously learning a second language and academic content/practices. I use the terms also because they are commonly used not only in the literature but also at this study's research site. However, the description of the subjects and their classroom experiences shows that they are multidimensional, complex social beings.

onducted a study on the formation of teacher identities, found that by asking her subjects to be attentive to their shifting teacher identities they gained a significant personal sense of confidence and a sense of “wholeness and life” (p. 154).

For researchers or teacher educators, understanding teacher identities can lead to insight into how teachers construct the images that they use to reflect on their personal teaching practices (George, Mohammed, & Quamina-Aiyejina, 2003). Williams (2007) notes that images provide “a primary model for a metaphor of teaching” (p. 309). Therefore, investigating teacher identities enables researchers to access the images of teaching to which a teacher strives to achieve. Most importantly, Ball and Goodson (1985) believed that understanding teacher identity construction allows the researcher to analyze “ways in which teachers achieve, maintain, and develop their identity, their sense of self, in and through a career [which] are of vital significance in understanding the actions and commitments of teachers in their work” (p. 18). Hence, understanding teacher identities is critical to gain deeper insights of the factors that influence a teacher’s decision-making process, their attitudes, and beliefs as well as their “sub-identities” (Mishler, 1999, p. 8) guiding their everyday educational practices.

Given the growing population of Asian EFL teachers pursuing a higher degree (M.A. and Ph.D.) in North American colleges and universities, understanding how these NNES teachers negotiate their identity options in their new academic communities and cultures is critical. Researchers have shown that academic socialization is not simply a matter of acquiring given knowledge and sets of skills but involves a complex process of negotiating multiple identities, competence, cultures, and power relations (Her, 2005; Pavlenko, 2003; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). Thus, this study closely examines 12 NNES Asian teachers’ narratives about their teacher identity construction while studying in TESOL graduate programs in the US.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

My research is situated within a poststructuralist view of teacher identities. In this view, teacher identities are constructed around three major characteristics. The first characteristic, as identified by Tsui (2007) is the multidimensional or “multifaceted nature” (p. 657) of teacher identities. This means that teacher identities are not composed of one unified professional identities (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Danielewicz, 2001). Studies on NNES teacher identities demonstrated that the identity constructions of these teachers were constructed on the nexus of other identity options such as gender, cultural, and linguistic identities (see Li, 2007; Liu, 2006; Samimy, 2006).

The multidimensionality of teacher identities, in particular, includes the interplay between the personal and professional dimensions of the teacher selves although the relationship between the two is somewhat varied. For Morgan (2004) his personal identities accommodated his professional identities as he was able to draw on his personal life as material for reflection and critical thinking in the classroom or what he called “teacher identity as pedagogy” (p. 172). A study by Ha and Que (2006) illustrated that the professional identities of the seven Vietnamese English teachers appeared to shape their personal selves. Ha and Que concluded that the participants’ behaviors were guided by the professional roles of teacher as moral guides upheld in the Vietnamese society.

The studies on the multidimensional nature of teacher identities point to the complexities of weaving the different aspects of teacher identities into a coherent narrative. According to Tsui (2007), the complexities mainly resulted from the debate on whether these dimensions could be or should be “well balanced” (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004, p. 122) or whether balancing these facets of identities is “a continuing site of struggle” (MacLure, 1993, p. 313). Specifically studies on NNES teacher identities (see, among others, Achugar, 2009; Her, 2005; Lin, Wang, Akamatsu, & Riazi, 2002; Williams, 2007) tended to lean toward viewing teacher identities as a

continuing site of struggle between “positioning” (Davies & Harré, 1999, p. 32) competing identities.

The second characteristic of teacher identities is situatedness. The situated nature of teacher identities is related to “the stories to live by” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 4). According to them, teachers’ stories to live by are informed by the ways teachers make sense of their role according to the socio-cultural contexts of teaching. For example, a study conducted by Ha and Que (2006) demonstrated that the identities of a teacher in Vietnamese contexts were closely related to the expected role of a teacher as a moral guide. Studies on NNES teacher identities in particular show that credibility appeared to be central to the identity construction of NNES teacher. This credibility factor was primarily mediated by the NNES teachers’ own perceptions of their linguistic competence (Li, 2007; Liu, 1999), students’ perception of their competence (Liang, 2002; Moussu, 2002; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999) and others’ perceptions of their nonnativeness (Li, 2007). The situated nature of teacher identities implied that teacher identities can shift when these teachers shuttle between one context and another due to immigration or participating in professional development programs.

Last but not least, Danielewicz (2001) perceives becoming a teacher is “an identity forming process” (p. 3). Danielewicz further notes the identity formation of a teacher was constructed not by the teachers themselves but also by others. In other words, teacher identities are co-constructed and the process of co-construction by the teachers themselves and others are not always in accordance with one another. This can be illustrated from Varghese’s study (2001). She investigated three NNES in-service teachers participating in a professional development program in an L1 context. The teachers-in-training seemed to show resistance when they were positioned as complete novices. The teachers in the study seemed to be seeking, on one hand, expertise from an instructor who they saw as having bilingual-specific knowledge and on the other hand, a discourse which did not position them as complete novices but allowed them to admit their fears and doubts. Varghese concludes that in cases where professional identities are under construction

such as in teacher educational programs, her participants seek experts with whom they can construct their professional identities and at the same time acknowledge their expertise and not treat them like complete novices.

For the purpose of this study, my analytical framework is founded on the synthesis of teacher identities discussed above. I acknowledge that teacher identities are multidimensional and constructed along with other identity categories such as class, race, and linguistic and cultural background. Teacher identities are also situated, varied, and shifting according to the sociocultural context in which a teacher works and lives. Additionally, I believed that the process of becoming a teacher is in itself an identity-forming process as pointed out by Danielwicz (2001). I therefore employ the term “teacher identities” rather than the more static “identity” to depict the multidimensional and dynamic nature of teacher identities.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Data Collection and Procedures

The study employs narrative research (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998; Riesman, 2008) to explore the experiences of twelve Asian teachers. Connelly and Clandinin (1999) define teacher identities as related to “the stories to live by” (p. 4). Therefore, the data collection instruments focused on collecting participants’ stories or narratives. Narrative data for this study were collected through in-depth one-on-one interviews, focus group, and documents. The data collection process lasted for approximately 9 months.

The individual interviews were semi-structured. I divided the interview into three stages aiming to elicit subjects’ past, present, and future lives as teachers. Each stage in the interview process lasted for at least 60 minutes for each participant. In the focus groups, I centered discussion on the role of cultural and/or national identities in subjects’ conceptualizations of being an EFL teacher. It lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes. It was conducted at

the end of individual interviews.

Shortly after each interview, I transcribed the interview, numbering each line so that passages were easy to refer to. I carefully read each transcript at least three times to identify information gaps (Woods, 1996). As pointed out by Woods (1996), when individuals tell stories, the sequence or meanings of the stories are often missed such as gaps in chronology or unclear passages (for example, too few details, descriptions too vague). When I identified information gaps in the transcripts, I did member checking. I emailed participants to ask for clarification or schedule another interview. While looking for information gaps, I also looked for further questions behind the stories I might have from the interview transcripts, and revised the next interview protocol.

After each participant confirmed and clarified information gaps in the transcripts, I printed them. They became the master copy for data analysis. I created one folder for each participant for individual interviews and supporting documents (teaching philosophy, reflective journals from class assignments, and CVs). Similar procedures were used for the second and third stages of interviews as well as for the focus group interview. Table 1 provides a summary of the data collection instruments.

TABLE 1
Data Collection Instruments

Methods	Data collection period (December 2007-August 2008)	Data
Individual Interviews with the subjects	Interview 1	•Audiotaped and transcribed interviews
	Interview 2	•36 interviews total
	Interview 3	•Average 50 minutes each
Focus group interviewed (based on nationalities)	Once with each group toward the end of the data collection period	•Audiotaped and transcribed interviews •4 interviews total
		•Average 1 hours each
Documents	Ongoing	•Curriculum vitae (CV) •Classroom assignments

(focused on personal narratives,
cross-cultural and academic
adjustments, and issued on
second language identities)

Participants

The study was conducted in a mid-size university in Pennsylvania, USA. Twelve EFL teachers participated in the study. All of the participants were enrolled in TESOL graduate programs at PhD or MA level in the present university. They came from four countries in Asia, namely Indonesia, Japan, Korea, and Thailand. All of them agreed that English was a foreign language in their home countries. Prior to studying in the present graduate program, all the participants had been English teachers. They varied with regards to their teaching experience, age, and cross-cultural experience. It is important to point out that none of the participants were immigrants in the US. In fact, they came to the US to study and then, return to their home countries to continue teaching English in their respective institutions. Personal names that appear in this paper are all pseudonyms.

Data Analysis

The first stage of the data analysis procedures involved reading the transcripts collected from the first, second, and third interview as well as information obtained from the subjects' documents. Then, I constructed a "life story" (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998) for each subject. In constructing the life story for each subject, I employed a holistic-content analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998; Riessman, 2008) and did not have any preliminary categories. As a result, the categories in some subjects' narratives could be different from one another. After constructing each subject's life story, I analyzed the narratives using a categorical-content analysis (Lieblich et al., 1998) to identify emerging themes. For each theme, I assigned a different color, and each time I identified narratives utterances referencing

the themes I highlighted them accordingly. Examples from subjects' narratives were placed into these identified themes for further analysis. It needed to be noted that only qualitative results of the analysis were presented, as quantitative information about the number of references to particular issues would be meaningless in this type of narrative analysis.

Data analysis is an ongoing process that could go on forever. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest researchers use four specific criteria to decide when to stop gathering data. One criterion is the exhaustion of resources. A second criterion is saturation of categories, which is reached at the point that continuing data collection only produces insignificant amounts of new information. A third criterion is the emergence of regularities, data continually generating similar results. The final criterion is over-extension, in which new information no longer applies to the categories that have emerged, nor does the new information contribute to any viable new categories. In this study, I used saturation of categories and emergence of regularities as signals to end the data analysis process.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Multiple Identities Subsumed by NNEs Identities

The narrative analysis suggested that during the beginning of their stays in the US many subject's teacher identities were mostly or in part were subsumed by their identities as NNEs. They appeared to develop this type of identity based on the difficulties they were experiencing when communicating with NESs. Audrey, Nesiani, and Pen were all concerned to varying degrees about being viewed as less competent because their different pronunciation from the mainstream US English. Pen, for instance, shared an experience of ordering chicken nuggets from a drive-through counter. She expressed frustration in failing to get her order despite her repeated attempts enunciating "chicken nuggets" through the speakerphone. At the end of the

incident, she admitted feeling “upset to them [the server] and to myself” for her inability to say even the simplest word correctly. Pen’s annoyance towards the server at the fast food restaurant, however, can be understood as an attempt to resist the less-abled identities of a NNES casted down on her by the NES server.

Pen’s frustration was echoed by Kentaro Saeki. In the following excerpt, he recalled a time when he went shopping:

For example, [when I was] in supermarket, sometimes, I can’t understand what the clerk said. [So] I ask her, “Pardon?” She said again. I still couldn’t understand her pronunciation so I said, “Oh I am very sorry; my English isn’t good so I couldn’t understand; could you please say again?” [Then] she made a face like disliking me or something. She said nothing more. I know that my English is not good, but she doesn’t need to do that to me (5/7/08).

Kentaro Saeki’s narrative illustrates that natural language learning is not always supportive of his nonnative status. Bremer et al.’s (1996) argue that interaction between NESs and NNESs will be productive when both parties work actively to achieve understanding. The narrative data implies that the NES speaker, the server, did not seem to be invested in the conversation as Kentaro Saeki did, and this affected Kentaro Saeki’s identity construction. What I found interesting from Kentaro Saeki’s narrative is his attempt to negotiate his identities. Although he showed strong desire to communicate (I ask her “pardon?”) and appeared to accept the NNES identities cast on him by the seller (“I’m very sorry my English isn’t good”), he wanted his “difference” to be respected.

A devastating effect of constructing one’s identities with regard to NNES identities could be seen from the narratives of Seeyeon, a part-time university professor from Korea. Prior to coming to the US, she already earned a PhD in linguistics from a Korean university. When asked why she wanted another PhD she explained in Korea most universities only granted tenure to those teachers who had a doctoral degree from the US. Thus, she came to US with

a strong motivation to acquire her second PhDs. A major challenge she faced was not being able to communicate fluently in English as much as she desired. During the first three months in the US, she started to question her validity and competence as a PhD graduate and an English teacher. The following excerpt is Seeyeon's personal narrative that she wrote for one of her classes:

*I was an English teacher? Is it right? I could not acknowledge that I taught English. In spite of many years of learning and teaching English, I couldn't say or understand it. It was a dead language. But I was living and should live with English. I had to survive in academic matters as well as in language problem. Having a doctoral degree, which idea made me depressed more, but above all the fact that I do not understand English was frustration in itself and I felt I was like a child who has just learned how to speak (Seeyeon, Class Assignment 1, *Being a teacher through learning names*, 2007).*

Due to her lack of English competence, Seeyeon doubted her competence as an English teacher despite years of learning English. For her, English appeared to be "a dead language" which she could not relate to. The feeling of powerlessness was exacerbated by her identity as a PhD graduate. In her imagination, an English teacher and a PhD graduate was supposed to understand and speak fluent English; an ability that she did not possess. Thus, she metaphorically described herself as "a child who has just learned how to speak."

The pressure to perform well in the classroom affected Seeyeon's maternal identities as well. She shared that her ten-year-old son often complained because she was unable to cook for him and made him sandwiches instead. On a rare occasion when she did have a chance to cook for him, she resented it as the following narrative illustrates:

Papers are due just around the corner. But I am now cooking him salmon for half an hour as an answer for bothering me. Crazy! If it were not for you, I could study late at night in the library. Were it not for you, I could

read more articles and write better papers (Seeyeon, Class Assignment 1, *Being a teacher through learning names*, 2007).

Omoniyi (2006) maintains that an individual's various identity options are often navigated according to "a hierarchy of identities" (p. 11). Each of those options is allocated a position on a hierarchy based on the degree of salience it claims in a moment of identification. Seeyeon's narratives illustrate the way she organized her array of identity options around her linguistic identities as a NNES. Her NNES identities were foregrounded and made most prominent at that particular moment while other identity options, in this case her maternal identities, fell beneath it. As a result of her negotiation, she felt like a bad mother.

Among all the subjects, Ido appeared to be least affected by his NNES status. Different from Nesiani who felt inferior when interacting with US nationals, Ido admitted not feeling inadequate as an L2 English teacher although he continued to believe NESs as the model of English competence. He stated during the interview that in the classroom, he most often contributed to classroom discussion especially when there were native speaker peers. The sense of confidence Ido felt might stem from his strong academic background prior to studying in the US. In addition to having a bachelor's degree in teaching, he had attended several teacher education programs such as Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Linguistics and a Short Course on Language Curriculum and Materials Development both at SEAMEO-Regional Language Centre, Singapore under a Jack. C. Richards' Scholarship. During those times, Ido published three articles in peer-review journals in the areas of teaching writing and grammar.

The narrative analysis of the subjects at the beginning of their stays in the US demonstrated that for most of them linguistic identities appeared to be significant in their identity constructions. Seeyeon's narratives in particular show that identity negotiation presented a significant challenge, and that this negotiation process influenced and was influenced by other identities options available to her (e.g., identities as a mother, an English teacher and a PhD graduate). In the case of Ido, his solid professional background seems to have

enabled him to resist the identity of a being less-able NNES.

Embracing Teacher Identity Shift through Critical Pedagogies

A major finding in the present study was the effect of critical pedagogies encountered in the graduate classes to teacher identity construction. In the present study, the term ‘critical pedagogies’ did not refer to a course subject per se but course readings challenging the monolingual bias in the profession (e.g., Canagarajah, 1999; Cook, 1999; Norton, 1997; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000) and offering students a nuanced and complex understanding of their second language identities as English users and teachers (e.g., Cook, 1992; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Norton, 2000; Pavlenko, 2003; Seidlhofer, 1999).

The narrative data showed that the subjects in the present study responded to the critical pedagogy in different ways and with various outcomes. Several subjects felt empowered after readings and engaging in discussion focusing on issues related to issues of multicompetence (Cook, 1999) and second language identities (Block, 2007; Pavlenko, 2003). Pen and Audrey admitted to be more confident in being a teacher of English. Others expressed that critical pedagogies appealed to their teacher self. It inspired them to liberate local students from the confinement of the native speaker myth and used English to promote local cultures. For example, Al wanted to open a course in World Englishes once he started to teach in Thailand. He believed the course could inspire students’ to be proud of their English.

For Dark Vader and Ido, the critical pedagogies appealed both to their teacher and professional selves. Ido articulated that in the past he only perceived his role as a consumer of knowledge. This means he used to teach based on textbooks and/or materials produced by Western scholars. Through reading theories such as post method teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) introduced in the graduate courses, he was reminded that he too was capable of producing knowledge. Dark Vader voiced out his concerns of seeing many publications about Thailand that were mostly written by Western scholars. This condition urged him to be a publishing teacher to represent his own

culture.

However, subjects like Kentaro Sacki and Soongoory did not seem to be affected by these discourses and continued to “position” (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 43). NESs as the model of English they would aim to emulate, even though they sometimes suffered much from being positioned as a nonnative speaker due to their accented English pronunciation.

Fatur, however, was conflicted with his identity shift. After participating in classes discussing issues of nativeness and bilingualism, he experienced profound identity shifts:

Here [in the US] I really change. There is a process that I’ve been going through because in the past I’ve been constructing my belief [of] the role of teacher as someone who provides knowledge. Now it’s changing. I deconstruct that and then I reconstruct a new way of viewing teacher as the one who facilitate knowledge building. In the past when my teacher says that’s bad way of teaching I tend to follow. Right now if they [*he meant the teacher*] say it’s [*by ‘it’ he meant a certain methodology, materials, etc*] bad, I’ll still try [to consider it]. Maybe it will work for a certain context. When I came here [the U.S.], I have to deconstruct my belief of teachers as someone that always right (5/5/08).

Fatur achieved his transformations when he reconceptualized his view of teacher from an authority who holds and “provides knowledge” to one who “facilitate knowledge.” His identity shift allowed him to liberate himself from following and believing what the teacher said as he did in the past. Rather, he attempted to find alternative ways to apply things that his teacher indicated as bad.

What makes Fatur’s identity shift compelling is that his identity shift led him to question his US-accented English. When I asked why he viewed having a American-accented English was problematic for him, he responded:

because I believe in World Englishes, sometimes I wonder if I should change my pronunciation. My Indonesian friend said, “You are so funny [*what he meant was contradictive*] you believe in World Englishes, but

you use American English.” He [*Fatur*] said, “Well, nothing wrong with that [having American pronunciation].” I mean, I am not prescribing students to follow me (5/5/08).

In the narrative, Fatur appeared conflicted in his identity shifts. On the one hand, he believed in World Englishes and wanted to project that belief and understanding through his accent. On the other hand, his American English as he and his friend described, did not show a trace of foreign accent. At the end of the excerpt, Fatur attempted to reconcile the disjuncture between his belief of World Englishes and his US-accented pronunciation by explaining that he would not force his students to model his accent. In addition, Fatur’s narrative implied a sense of resistance. He did not want to be positioned by his Indonesian friend as subscribing to a native speaker fallacy because he had US-accented English.

Overall the subjects’ narratives supported the idea that teacher identities can shift. In the present study, the subjects’ shifting identities were mediated by the discussion and readings on critical pedagogies they encountered in the graduate program. For most subjects, issues in critical pedagogies enabled most subjects to position themselves with regard to their NNES status. For Fatur, however, his identity shift led him to question his US-accented pronunciation.

Future NNES Teacher Identities

Most of the subjects expressed their excitement of going home as US-trained English teachers. All of the subjects took the role of agents of change when discussing their imagined future teacher identities. Al and Fatur were excited to bring the concepts of World Englishes to their teaching contexts because they believed the learners would benefit from learning such concepts. Pen, Audrey, and Nesiani intended to create a community of learners where learners could be encouraged to be critical, reflective, and independent of their own learning. Other subjects such as Seeyeon, Dark Vader, and Ido aimed to be publishing teachers, an identity that was promoted in the

graduate program.

A few teachers, however, expressed mixed feelings when discussing their re-entry process into home universities. Al stated the need to apply the theories he learned in the graduate program carefully. He mentioned that even though he disliked referring to bilinguals as ‘nonnative speakers,’ he would continue to use it when talking to other Thai teachers. Although he preferred to refer to bilinguals as ‘L2 users of English,’ using such a term would make him run the risk of being constructed as arrogant, which would impede his reentry process. When asked about his feeling about going home and teaching English, Fatur appeared to construct his future community as hostile towards his shifting identities as an agent of change. Fatur believed he will “see a lot of challenges and rejection” because his intention of introducing the concepts of World Englishes to the curriculum might come across as “challenging” the senior teachers in the department.

Overall the subjects’ narratives on future teacher identities illustrate that identities are not only about negotiating the past and present but also future trajectories (also in Block, 2007; Kanno, 2003; Norton, 2000). The narratives of the subjects in this study illustrated the significance influence of the trajectory of going home to teacher identity construction. When asked about their future teacher identities, most subjects took on the identities of teachers as agents of change. A few teachers, however, voiced concern of navigating their way back to their home countries as US-trained teachers.

CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

This paper reports on a study intended to explore the teacher identity construction of 12 EFL teachers studying in a TESOL graduate program. The study found three major findings. First, although many have warned against the use of nativeness as a determining factor in constructing NNES teacher identities (e.g., Cook, 2006; Simon-Maeda, 2004; Williams, 2007), the narrative analysis indicates that linguistic identities continue to be central in

NNES identity construction. To this end, the study recommends the importance of integrating language aspects in teacher education program.

Second, the findings of this study point to the significant effect of critical pedagogies to NNES teacher identity construction (also in Her, 2005; Pavlenko, 2003). At the beginning of their stays in the US, most subjects viewed their teacher identities negatively; seeing themselves mainly in terms of nativeness. After reading and actively engaging in classroom discussions focusing on critical pedagogies, all subjects began to construct their identities with regard to their competence, that is, perceiving their roles as agents of change. If the goal of TESOL teacher education is not to indoctrinate or train teachers to robotically perform prescribed teaching behaviors, but to educate teachers to strengthen their unique characteristics and to use their own voice and knowledge in sound teaching practice, then helping nonnative teachers develop their own voices and establish positive identities becomes an essential pedagogy. One way to establishing positive identities for teacher candidates is by incorporating issues of critical pedagogies in the TESOL education programs.

Finally, two subjects in the study, Fatur and Al, allowed us to underline the importance of including reintegration issues of returnee teachers in the university program. Teacher returnees are no longer the “personas” that they were when they left their home countries. Due to the fluid nature of identities of teacher returnees, attempts need to be taken to establish “an effective mechanism” (Lave & Wenger, 1991) to ease and assist their reentry processes into the home institution. Providing a space where teacher returnees can share their experiences while they were studying and living abroad might be useful. Such information-sharing activity can be useful for teachers who are planning to study abroad as well as for the department to accommodate the needs of teacher returnees to ease their re-entry process into the department.

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