

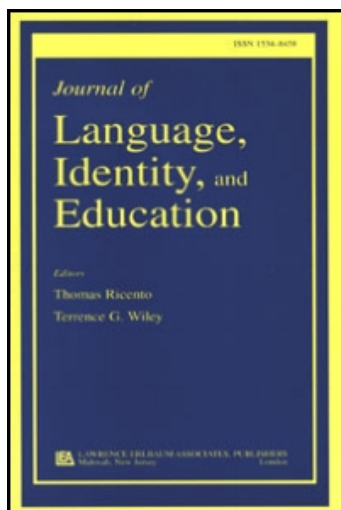
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### "I Never Knew I Was a Bilingual": Reimagining Teacher Identities in TESOL

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## “I Never Knew I Was a Bilingual”: Reimagining Teacher Identities in TESOL

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This study examines imagined professional and linguistic communities available to preservice and in-service English as a second language and English as a foreign language teachers enrolled in one TESOL program. A discursive analysis of the students' positioning in their linguistic autobiographies suggests that the traditional discourse of linguistic competence positions students as members of one of two communities, native speakers or non-native speakers/L2 learners. The analysis also suggests that contemporary theories of bilingualism and second language acquisition, in particular Cook's (1992, 1999) notion of multicompetence, open up an alternative imagined community, that of multicompetent, bilingual, and multilingual speakers. This option allows some teachers to construe themselves and their future students as legitimate L2 users rather than as failed native speakers of the target language.

**Key words:** autobiographies, imagined communities, multicompetence, teacher education, TESOL

In the past decade, the English teaching profession engaged in a lively debate on the status of non-native speakers (NNSs) in the field, pointing to numerous ways in which NNSs are treated as second-class citizens (cf. Braine, 1999). To address this problem from the perspective of critical pedagogy, Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999) conducted a pioneering study of a graduate seminar in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) where students, all second language (L2) users of English, were invited to examine the native/non-native speaker (NS/NNS) dichotomy, drawing on their own teaching experiences and learning trajectories. The authors' findings indicate that although the process of empowerment is neither simple nor linear, teacher educators can help NNS students to generate a new sense of professional agency and legitimacy.

This article aims to contribute to the discussion of critical praxis in teacher education in TESOL by building on some aspects of the earlier work and by challenging others. I argue that current pedagogical attempts “to empower the NNSs” exhibit a number of problems. To begin, approaches that criticize the NS/NNS dichotomy while using the same categories may end up reproducing the oppressive social order, albeit in more politically correct terms, such as *international English professionals* (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999). Furthermore, akin to poststructuralist feminists pointing out that gender is a system of social relations rather than a “women’s issue,” I suggest that inequitable hierarchies are an issue that should be addressed not only within the marginalized group but also within the profession as a whole. As Pennycook (2001) points out, “empowering individuals within inequitable social structures not only fails to deal with ... inequalities but also reproduces them” (p. 39). Consequently, I argue that authors who view the NS/NNS dichotomy not as a linguistic construct but as a socially constructed identity (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999) underestimate the power of linguistic theories to legitimize social identities. In this article I aim to show that Cook’s (1992, 1999) theory of multicompetence offers a compelling alternative to the dual competence model. Reframing the notion of linguistic competence, this view offers new possibilities for critical praxis in TESOL.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

My view of critical pedagogy draws on feminist, poststructuralist, and postcolonial advances in the field (Luke & Gore, 1992; Pavlenko, in press; Pennycook, 1999, 2001; Stanton & Stewart, 1995), which distance themselves from the modernist liberalism and emancipatory assuredness of the earlier leftist pedagogies, question the notion of empowerment, fundamental to the work of Paolo Freire and Ira Shor, and urge teachers to examine their own assumptions and to problematize their own everyday practices. One important aspect of poststructuralist critical pedagogy is engagement with imagination (Pennycook, 2001). To theorize this engagement, I draw on the work of three scholars not commonly associated with critical pedagogy—Vygotsky (1978), Anderson (1991), and Wenger (1998)—as well as on the work of Norton (2000, 2001), who brought the notion of imagination into the field of TESOL.

These four scholars focus on different but highly complementary functions of imagination. For Vygotsky (1978), imagination is extremely important as a new psychological function, which children master in the process of play. He argues that developing imagination allows children to acquire rule-based behaviors and to achieve better self-regulation and greater control over the world around them. Thus, he sees play, based on imagination, as creating a zone of proximal development for the child (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 102) and providing a wider background for changes in his or her

needs and consciousness. In his view, imagination, linked to development of learner's consciousness, acquires an important educational function.

Anderson (1991), who coined the term *imagined communities*, provides the social context for the work of imagination and argues that imagination takes place on a societal and not just on an individual level, in the form of ideologies of nationhood. In his analysis, the invention of printing technology acquired an especially important role as a way to influence public imagination and to aid in the creation of nation-states, which he sees as imagined communities "because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (p. 6). For Anderson (1991), then, imagination is a way to appropriate meanings and create new national identities; as such it has important ideological and identity functions.

Wenger's (1998) situated learning theory expands Anderson's view of imagined communities to any community of practice an individual may want to seek entrance to. In his view, imagination is a distinct form of belonging to a particular community of practice and a way in which individuals locate themselves and others in the world and include in their identities "other meanings, other possibilities, other perspectives" (p. 178). In this perspective, imagination plays both an educational and an identity function.

Norton's (2000, 2001) work firmly connected the notions of imagination and imagined communities with the processes of L2 learning and use and with classroom practice. Norton (2001) shows that at times L2 learners are most uncomfortable speaking to people they see as members of—or gatekeepers to—imagined communities they are trying to enter. Thus, their behaviors and choices are linked to their investment in particular imagined communities. For Norton (2000, 2001) imagination plays both an educational and an identity function: She argues that if we do not acknowledge the imagined communities of the learners, we may exacerbate their nonparticipation and impact their learning trajectories in negative ways.

Consequently, my discussion will not deal with the concept of imagination as a whole but focus on the nexus of the three functions identified above: ideological, identity, and educational. The ideological function allows us to consider imagination not as a personal attribute but as a terrain of struggle between different and often incompatible ideologies of language and identity in particular sociohistoric contexts. The identity function allows us to view appropriation of newly imagined identities as an important aspect of a learning trajectory, which transforms apprentices or peripheral community members into legitimate participants. And the educational function underscores the need for teacher education to offer identity options that would allow teachers to imagine themselves and others as legitimate members of professional communities. It is within this framework that I posit questions that have not yet been sufficiently addressed in the scholarship on critical praxis in TESOL: How are the students' imagined communities linked to their

perceived status in the profession? How can critical praxis engage the students imagination and broaden their options?

## RESEARCH DESIGN

### Data Collection Method

To gain insights into ways in which preservice teachers imagine their linguistic and professional memberships, I appeal to linguistic autobiographies, a data collection method shown as fruitful in previous research in teacher education (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Okawa, 2000). The autobiographies were collected from two different cohorts of MATESOL students in a large urban university. Both groups were enrolled in a Second Language Acquisition (SLA) class in the spring of 2000 and in the spring of 2001. As part of their course requirements all students had to submit a linguistic autobiography reflecting their current understanding of second language teaching and learning. This assignment was worded in the syllabus in the following way: "Write an autobiographic essay which reflects upon your own language learning and teaching history linking it to concepts and issues discussed in this class (approximately 5 pages)." At no point were the students explicitly told to write about the NS/NNS dichotomy, the theory of multicompetence, or their own and others linguistic and social identities. At the end of the semester, long after the essays had been graded and given back to students, volunteers were asked to return the essays to create the data corpus for the study. All of the students chose to participate in the study and signed appropriate consent forms. The data collected this way has a number of advantages and disadvantages. Although it lacks the richness of the data collected through triangulation of observations, interviews, and discussions, it allows the researcher to examine discourses of language and identity, or imagined communities, the students draw on when not explicitly asked to reflect on nativeness or linguistic membership.

### Participants

Forty-four students participated in the study, 34 women and 10 men, between the ages of 22 and 78. The group was extremely diverse ethnically, racially, and linguistically. Twenty-four among the 44 participants were Americans, 2 of them Puerto Ricans. The other 20 included 14 Koreans, 2 Japanese, 2 Chinese students, as well as 1 student from India and 1 from Albania. Some of the L2 users, in particular students from China and India, were multilingual. Among the 24 Americans, most were also multilingual and multicultural, with competencies in a variety of languages, including French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, German, Arabic, Japanese, Russian, Ukrainian, Thai, and Somali. All of the students had previous teach-

ing experience, mostly teaching English as a foreign or second language; a few also taught French and Spanish. All of the Americans have traveled abroad and many lived and worked in non-English speaking countries, including Switzerland, Kenya, Thailand, and Palestine.

## Data Analysis

The narratives in the corpus were analyzed within the framework of discursive positioning developed by Davies and Harré (1990) and Harré and Langenhove (1999). The term *discourse* refers here to a way of organizing knowledge through linguistic resources and practices, or, in other words, to a concatenation of terms and metaphors drawn on systematically to characterize and evaluate actions and events from a particular perspective (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 138). *Positioning*, following Davies and Harré (1990), refers to the process by which individuals are situated as recognizable and observably coherent participants in story lines.

Of particular importance for this analysis are two sets of linguistic means. The first, typically seen as reflexive or self-positioning, encompasses lexical choices made by individuals when describing themselves as former, present, or future members of particular groups. An analysis of reflexive positioning patterns illuminates people's cultural beliefs and allows us to see which identities are available for appropriation to individuals in a particular time and place. In this study it shows which imagined communities TESOL students draw on in their linguistic autobiographies. The second set of linguistic means involves changes in tense and aspect and change-of-state verbs, the use of which signals perceived changes in linguistic and social memberships. Paying attention to identity terms linked to change-of-state verbs allows me to pinpoint instances of repositioning with regard to particular communities.

## RESULTS

To contextualize the results of the study, I start out by outlining the structure and the goals of the TESOL program in question. The program consists of six core and two elective courses taught by two full-time, tenure-track faculty members who share a commitment to linguistic diversity and social justice and aim to challenge the monolingual bias of the profession and to offer the students a complex and nuanced understanding of multilingualism, second language learning, and linguistic diversity through readings (e.g., Baker, 1996; Braine, 1999; Heller, 1999; Lippi-Green, 1997; McKay & Hornberger, 1996), discussions, group and individual projects, service-learning opportunities, and numerous professional events and conferences. In the SLA class in question the students read and discussed recent articles, which: (a) challenge the monolingual bias in SLA and offer the notion of

multicompetence as an alternative to the dual competence model of linguistic proficiency (Cook, 1992, 1999; Kachru, 1994; Sridhar, 1994); (b) point to the unstable nature of first language (L1), or the so-called native-speaker's competence and examine L1 loss and L2 influence on L1 (Pavlenko, 2000; Tao & Thompson, 1991; Waas, 1997); (c) challenge the standard English ideology and highlight linguistic and cultural diversity (Bailey, 1997; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996); and (d) argue for the critical role of identity in the process of second language learning (Norton Peirce, 1995; Pavlenko, 1998; Siegal, 1996). In the spring of 2000, the students attended Bonny Norton's invited lecture on imagined communities, and in the spring of 2001 a lecture by Monica Heller on commodification of bilingualism in Canada.

Preliminary content analysis of students' autobiographies demonstrated that not all of the students engaged with the NS/NNS dichotomy. Thirty students discussed the dichotomy or at least made references to "native-speakerness"; the other 14 linked their linguistic trajectories to the critical period hypothesis, first language transfer, or communicative competence. Among the 30 students, 12 (out of 24) were Americans and 18 (out of 20) international students. It is not surprising that the dichotomy engaged many more international students than American students. For them it had tremendous personal relevance: It was their competence and professional legitimacy as English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL) teachers that were oftentimes challenged by colleagues and students alike (cf. Braine, 1999). In contrast, most Americans were or were planning to be teaching their native language. As will be shown below, it was mainly Americans whose professional careers and personal trajectories were linked to foreign languages, who paid more attention to the dichotomy and surrounding debates. Furthermore, only 6 of the 30 respondents were men. Whereas this predominance of female voices mirrors the demographics of the classroom, it may also be indicative of women's heightened sensitivity to the issues of public voice and authority (Pavlenko, 2001).

The 30 narratives were analyzed from the perspective of discursive positioning. This analysis demonstrated that the students drew on two alternative discourses of language and identity that offered them three imagined communities in which they sought and claimed membership: (a) native speaker community, (b) non-native speaker/L2 learner community, and (c) multilingual/L2 user community. Below I show that the students' views of themselves, their relationship with the L2 and their own professional legitimacy differed depending on what community they decided to invest in. I also argue that instances of repositioning identified in the texts suggest that for some of the students classroom readings and discussions of the NS/NNS dichotomy opened up new discourses and offered new identity options.

## Native Speaker Community

One powerful discourse that informs preservice and in-service teachers' views of themselves and of their students is that of standard language and native speakerness. In the case of English education, this discourse portrays standard English as the only legitimate form of the language and monolingual native speakers—who are also implicitly White and middle class—as its only legitimate speakers and “owners” (for an in-depth discussion see Lippi-Green, 1997). Fourteen international students revealed that their English instruction led them to see English exclusively as a language of the White majority: Some were previously unaware of the African American vernacular and others heard disparaging comments about it. As a result, they used to see the speech of African Americans as erroneous and inferior, and not as “native speaker” production. Some Korean and Japanese students commented on ways in which the discourse that validated “native speakerness” as the only worthwhile form of competence permeated their early learning of English. Thus, Jung, a Korean woman, portrays her attempts to acquire the membership in this community as an almost lifelong and unsuccessful “struggle”:

(1) I have been struggling to acquire a native-like competence since the first English class in the middle school, almost for 18 years. (Here and further on, original spelling and grammar have been preserved.)

Another Korean woman, Jihae, states,

(2) I used to think that learning English was to follow the exactly same models and patterns of native speakers (without any mature reflection on native-ness). In other words, I spent a lot of time to take lessons about English pronunciation and intonation in order to imitate native speakers' accents, and to practice them rather than attempted to verbalize my thoughts towards various phenomena around me.

Jihae's comments illuminate the fact that in its focus predominantly on form, the discourse of native-speakerness emphasizes native-like phonology and grammar, and de-emphasizes meaning, in particular pragmatics and literacy, which often turn out to be critical forms of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991) in the students' linguistic trajectories. Interestingly, not only L2 users of English remember feeling deficient with regard to their linguistic competence. Some Americans also recall that they aimed to be native-like in their target languages and, in trying to do so, focused on form rather than on meaning:



(3) Subconsciously I aimed to achieve nativelike competence in phonology as a way of distinguishing myself from a “typical American” L2 user. (Kerry, American woman)

Cook (1992, 1999) has repeatedly argued that adoption of a native-speaker standard results in a “failed enterprise” view of second language learning in adulthood. Some of the L2 users in the study experienced this “failure” to enter the imagined community of native speakers and describe its negative effects on their self-perception:

(4) During the first two years, I was in a regular class not with second language learners but with American students who were native speakers. It was totally different from those times when I associated with my classmates who were also learning English with me. Most of my classmates did not seem to understand my speech. ... Outside of the classroom, there were not only people who did not understand my English but also people I could not understand. (In Kyung, Korean woman)

(5) I felt I had a kind of deficiency because I was a non-native English speaker and my English is not enough comparing either Korean American or Native English speaking teachers. (Keumsil, Korean woman)

(6) When we meet a native speaker of English, we even cannot open our mouth. (Jehyun, Korean man)

These devastating effects are particularly visible in the story of a Japanese woman Ikuko, who, after many years of English study in Japan, arrived in London and had difficulties in communicating with the people around her. She blamed herself for the failure and experienced a profound loss of confidence, seeing herself as a childlike creature, not worthy of attention:

(7) Soon after I arrived in London, I was shocked to find my poor English ability. I had a hard time communicating with people there. ... I lost confidence and was feeling tiny, unimportant and invisible.

Classroom readings and discussions forced Ikuko to ponder upon what happened in London. Consequently, she blamed the internalized discourse of native-speakerness for her attitude at the time:

(8) There was a message inside me, though I did not remember where I got this, which was, “In this country, if you do not speak English ‘properly,’ you are less than human being.”

Here it is important to point out that the imagined community of native speakers may be prohibitive not only in terms of self-representation but also in terms of professional choices, and that the discourse of native-speakerness may be as damaging for Americans as it is for L2 users of English in the United States. Jane, an American student, recalls that her prestigious undergraduate institution also taught her a painful lesson:

(9) I would never be a French teacher, or at least not one of any merit: I was not, and could never be, born of French parents. ... Our French department ... prided itself on having only teachers who, if not born in a French speaking country, were raised bilingual by NSs of French.

These quotes clearly show that the discourse of native-speakerness exerts a price on those who believe that in order to validate their personal and professional identities they need to enter this imagined community. At best the aspiring members may feel second class and at worst "less than a human being." This discourse impacts not only the interaction between native and non-native speakers of English but also professional choices and careers of American language educators who, driven by the native speaker bias, may opt out of foreign language teaching in favor of EFL and ESL instruction where their linguistic capital is of higher value.

### Non-Native Speaker/L2 Learner Community

If one cannot join a native speaker community, one has no choice but to adopt one of the two remaining identity options offered by the dominant discourse of native-speakerness: "non-native speaker" or "L2 learner." The self-positioning as a NNS and, oftentimes, as a perpetual L2 learner is an unavoidable corollary of internalization of the dominant SLA discourse, which portrays L2 learning as a never-ending elusive quest for NS competence. In this study, some students stated that, even though they had already been teaching English in their native country, moving to the United States forced them to shift their identities from teachers to students and to see themselves as less competent than they thought they were. Junghee, a woman from Korea, stated that although the goal of her study in the United States was to acquire more professional confidence and linguistic and sociocultural competence, she found herself increasingly frustrated and unable to perform the classroom tasks and, as a result, lost the confidence she already possessed:

(10) As a non-native L2 teacher of the last two and half years in Korea, I have felt sorry for my students for not speaking good English. So I decided to study TESOL in America to be a more qualified and more confident teacher. Now as a L2 learner here, I am sometimes frustrated in my bad speaking and listening abilities in English because I often cannot be a good participant in my classes.

The fact that the L2 learning trajectory, which aims at native-speaker competence, is an extremely painful one is visible in the analysis of lexical choices made by the narrators in qualifying their reflexive positioning. The students who position themselves as non-native speakers/L2 learners talk of embarrassment, frustration, desperation, and torment, and describe themselves as passive, incompetent, stupid, and childlike (reminiscent of quote (7) where Ikuko recalled feeling “tiny, unimportant and invisible”):

(11) Despite my incessant efforts, I have been tormented by learning and using English in the U.S. associated with my adaptation to new cultures of this country and the academic system; regarded myself as a passive and incompetent person to wonder constantly if my speaking or writing in English is appropriate, logical, or grammatical. (Jihae, Korean woman)

(12) When I was in upper beginner and low intermediate level, I sometimes felt embarrassed and too stupid because I could not express myself with lack of English proficiency. It made me feel losing self-esteem and becoming like a child. (Keumsil, Korean woman)

(13) How could you become so proficient in English? Sometimes people ask me. I feel embarrassed because I don't have nativelike proficiency at all. (Kim, Korean woman)

Jane considers “faking” her belonging to the French community and ultimately rejects the idea of trading the self for a “legitimate” professional identity:

(14) Still, and although it eventually became my major, I could not see myself as a French teacher—college professor, maybe, but not of French. The position called for an adopted identity that would completely eclipse the individual: the dusty Eiffel Tower statuette next to a framed snapshot, taken five to ten years earlier, of someone smiling in front of a café, someone who had gotten so *much* out of Madame Bovary. ... The image was not of me. I did not want to spend the rest of my life as “Frenchy,” la Francophone.

Together, these quotes suggest that the imagined community of NNSs/L2 learners is not an appealing alternative to the NS community. Rather, the narrators construct it as a temporary-turned-permanent location from which they would like—but are unable—to move. Some of the narratives also suggest that, at least prior to entering the TESOL program, these students did not know of any viable alternatives to the native/non-native speaker dichotomy and thus did not have any other identity options available to them for appropriation.

## Multilingual/L2 User Community

The analysis of tense choices and of the usage of change-of-state verbs in the corpus suggests that exposure to contemporary theories of bilingualism and multicompetence (Baker, 1996; Cook, 1992, 1999; Grosjean, 1998), debates on the notion of "native speakerness" and linguistic diversity (Braine, 1999; Lippi-Green, 1997; Pavlenko, 2000; Tao & Thompson, 1991; Waas, 1997), and the research on the relationship between language and identity (Lippi-Green, 1997; Norton Peirce, 1995; Pavlenko, 1998; Siegal, 1996) created a fertile space for reimagination of professional identities in TESOL. In other words, it appears that readings and discussions, which aimed to transform and solidify the students' knowledge base, also offered them a new imagined community of multilingual individuals and legitimate L2 users.

Twenty-four among 30 narratives exhibited evidence of repositioning that took place in response to classroom readings. This evidence was seen in the use of change-of-state verbs, such as "to become," and in tense shifts used by the students to mark the "then," the "now," and the "future." For instance, in quote (2) Jihae uses past tense to state that she "used to think that learning English was to follow the exactly same models and patterns of native speakers" and she did so "without any mature reflection on nativeness." Classroom discussions and reflection offered her an alternative trajectory, which she outlines with the help of conditional and future tenses, stating that from now on she will identify with a community of multicompetent speakers:

(15) As concluded, I do not mean that learners including me should take all of the responsibility for negative identity construction and inefficient language learning. ... I could be a multicompetent speaker, not a miserable being who have trouble with the loss of the first language and failure of target language if I would regard L2 learning as the process to acquire the capabilities beyond those of a monolingual as Cook mentioned. ... Anyway, I intend not to drive myself into a tight corner any more due to the lack of English proficiency. Rather, I will continuously identify myself as a multicompetent speaker and encourage to investment English speaking and writing in both L1 and L2 more and more.

The reimagining of themselves as members of the multilingual community requires significant reconceptualization on the part of the students, because (as will be seen in the following quotes) lay discourses of bilingualism confer the status of bilinguals only on individuals who have grown up with two languages from birth. In contrast, contemporary scholarship in bilingualism (Baker, 1996; Grosjean, 1998; Romaine, 1995) with which the students got acquainted both in the SLA class and in another class, Bilingualism, paints a very different picture of who can

be considered bilingual: anyone who uses more than one language for particular purposes at some point in their daily lives. This definition is not based on either proficiency or chronology and encompasses all who live their lives through the means of more than one language.

A theory that works particularly well in conjunction with this definition is Cook's (1992, 1999) notion of *multicompetence*, which suggests that people who know more than one language have a distinct compound state of mind, not equivalent to two monolingual states, and can be considered legitimate L2 users. It is through discussions of multicompetence, bilingualism, and the instability of first language competence that can be subject to L2 influence (Pavlenko, 2000; Tao & Thompson, 1991; Waas, 1997) that students begin to see their own competence differently. Several stated that prior to these classes they had never considered a possibility of seeing themselves and their future students as multicompetent users and as bilinguals and multilinguals rather than as NNSs or L2 learners. The notion of multicompetence offered an appealing alternative to some students eager to reframe their own and others' competence. As seen in the following quotes, the new identities of multicompetent and multilingual speakers allowed some international students and some American educators to reimagine themselves in a new and much more positive light and to position themselves differently with regard to their languages:

(16) Every day, I learn a new insight about English and sociocultural aspect of the language, which knowledge empowers me. For instance, I hesitated to see myself as a bilingual person until recently, and I kept thinking that my English was not good enough and ultimately I should be able to speak or write like native person until I learned the concept of multicompetency by Cook. (Ikuko, Japanese woman)

(17) Although I can communicate well in these three languages [Italian, French, and Spanish], I have never liked when people refer to me as "fluent" in them or "bilingual." These terms make me very uncomfortable, and I have always corrected those who use them in regard to me. For me, these terms could only be used for those who were able to communicate equally well in their first and second languages. I felt that these could never apply to me because it requires growing up with two languages, or spending many years in the target language environment, to reach that level. Although my understanding of these terms has now changed, and I realize that a bilingual can know very little of a second language, I still don't feel comfortable using them to describe myself. And although I have always rejected these terms, I have never known what to replace them with, until now. The term multicompetent, as described by Cook, seems to accurately fit the way I perceive my language abilities. ... It is a term that accurately and positively de-

scribes the majority of second language learners, and a term I can finally be comfortable with. (Meredith, American woman)

(18) I think that this view of my own French skills is analogous to the situation with the terms "bilingual" and "multicompetent." The traditional view of a bilingual was someone who had attained an equally high level in two languages. The term "multicompetent" simply means that someone has some type of competency in another language. The term "multicompetent" includes someone like me who has some skills in another language. (Stephanie, American woman)

For some L2 users of English the concept appeared almost therapeutic, affecting not only their view of linguistic competence but also their self-esteem, transforming them into agents in charge of their own learning:

(19) I used to be afraid of speaking in English in public. I mean I didn't want to be embarrassed. And I also used to judge other non-native speakers of English for their English. ... But I have not judged at all since my identity was changed. I caught myself talking much in public and in classroom. I am speaking in English which is one of my languages. (Keumsil, Korean woman)

(20) More recently, I changed my social identity from "subject to" to "subject of" after I read the Peirce's article (1995) "Social identity, Investment, and Language learning" and Cook's (1992) "Evidence for Multicompetence" and so on. I reshaped myself as a L2 user and a good bilingualist who has a larger and richer repertoire of linguistic, and cultural knowledge. I am not a reluctant speaker anymore, and this makes my English much progressed. (Su, Korean woman)

Interestingly, construction, reshaping, repositioning, and imagination emerge as key concepts in these students' descriptions of their experiences, suggesting that imagined communities is not yet another abstract—and perhaps even random—framework but rather a way to capture a real live phenomenon:

(21) Six months have passed since I began my study here. ... If God allows, I want to continue my studying here, in the United States for more than 5 years. I imagine myself as one of the native speakers who can speak and write English very fluently. Although my skin color and accent may not change, I will feel myself as a wonderful speaker of English. (Mae, Korean woman)

(22) Further, my limited knowledge of French has enabled me to help some of the French speakers with their knowledge of English. For example, one

day after class I showed two guys how the French *imparfait* vs. *passé composé* relates to the English Simple past vs. Past Progressive. In Debbie's class my sophomore year of high school, I never would have imagined that six years later I would be using my knowledge of French to teach English grammar! (Stephanie, American woman)

Notably, for Mae the classroom discussions also reconfigured the native speaker community, opening up the access she previously saw as blocked both on linguistic and racial grounds. Seeing English as a language that belongs to individuals from all national, racial, and ethnic backgrounds is an empowering experience, and one these preservice teachers are eager to transmit to their future students. Ikuko states that the first thing she would like to do in the classroom is challenge the students' beliefs about English and language learning:

(23) I suspect that many Japanese people suffer from inferiority complex in English language. ... English is taught based on Anglo-American monolingual context: the ideal speaker is always an American (sometimes British), and it seems to me that we have an unattainable goal, which contributes to lack of confidence and inferiority complex in English, and eventually we are unwilling to communicate in English. And this is what I would like to emphasize for my future students.

Another student, Jin, a Korean man, recalls appealing to the new discourses when challenged by a student in his class:

(24) When I taught the listening and speaking class to intermediate level students, one student raised his hand and said: "I don't want to learn English from non-native speaker. I did not pay my money in order to learn English from non-native." He seemed quite serious. Some of students told him to stop being rude to the teacher. At that time, because I was preparing the comps, I was able to respond to him about the label of native speaker. First of all, to make him calm down I asked students about advantages of native speaker model in ESL teaching. I also added other advantages such as the case that those who speak standard English would be advantaged because most of language tests are tests of standardized language. However, I also accounted for the fact that teaching one native target model could be problematic such as the case when they have to communicate better with their customer who are not speaking standard English, the learners have to be introduced to a particular vernacular English.

In turn, Jihae states that now she challenges monolingual, ethnic, and racial biases not only within but also outside of the classroom:

(25) Though there exist some problems, fortunately I constantly reflect on them while reading articles and debating with classmates who have different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and promote the spread of implications in everyday life. For examples, after reading "Communication of respect in interethnic service encounters" written by Bailey, it was about the different conception of politeness or respect between Korean immigrants and African Americans that I talked with one of my church members who runs a sneaker store in the resident area of African Americans. Even though I did not use the terms such as socially minimal vs. socially expanded service encounters or restraint politeness vs. involvement politeness, I had her understand the reason why unintentional tensions between her and her African American customers had occurred. To my surprise, she showed startling change to ameliorate tensions, although she had always complained of her neighbors.

Most important, as already indicated earlier, some students acknowledged that their readings and coursework allowed them to view their involvement with languages—and in particular with English—in a different light, whereby "linguistic assimilation," and thus membership in the imagined community of native speakers, is not necessarily a desired outcome and where they opt to invest in all of their multiple languages, and join an imagined community of multilingual and multicompetent individuals. Clearly, as seen in the previous section, not all students repositioned themselves or reimagined their own identities. And although some preservice teachers are still unsure about what will happen when they face their own classes, others have a very clear agenda. Ikuko, formerly a "tiny, unimportant and invisible" outsider in the English-speaking world, and now an engaged and informed TESOL professional, summarized it as follows:

(26) I was long trapped by monolingual bias; I set a norm of English as one spoken by monolingual speakers and set somewhat lower status on English spoken by L2 speakers including mine, and it took me years to break the spell....As a future teacher of English, a language of power, I shall take into consideration of the power English language has in many ways. I hope I can make use of my unique experience of using as well as learning the language in different contexts and share my stories: the struggle to acquire my voice in English with my future students.

## CONCLUSION

To sum up, I argue that imagination is an important form of belonging to a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) and as such can be productively exploited in criti-



cal pedagogy. Whereas earlier explorations focused on imagination on a social or individual level, the discussion above demonstrates that classroom discourses play an important role in shaping students' memberships in imagined communities and legitimizing new identity options. To begin with, the narratives discussed here support Anderson's (1991) contention that imagination is a way to appropriate meanings. In the present case, the meanings reinvented and appropriated are those of "bilingualism," "legitimate language ownership," "legitimate belonging," and "linguistic diversity." The shift in the students' imagined communities also supports Wenger's (1998) and Norton's (2000, 2001) contention that negative self-perception with regard to an imagined community may lead to nonparticipation. Finally, the study also supports Vygotsky's (1978) understanding of the links between imagination, consciousness, and control. In this case, reimagining themselves as multicompetent and bilingual allowed some students not only to view themselves positively but also to transmit these views to others and to engage in active attempts to reshape the surrounding contexts.

At the same time, this study is only an initial attempt to pinpoint a new direction for critical praxis in TESOL teacher education. In future research, it would be crucial to continue examining reasons for which some teachers engage in the process of reimagination and others insist on working within the framework of the NS/NNS dichotomy. The present study suggests—not surprisingly—that among those most engaged in challenging the NS/NNS dichotomy and embracing the new imagined community of multicompetent speakers are preservice and in-service teachers whose legitimacy is challenged most often, namely L2 users of English or other languages. I contend, however, that marginalization within the profession will continue unless those who use the target language as their first join the process of critical reflection on language ideologies and linguistic theories that inform our practices. Above, it was shown that Cook's (1992, 1999) notion of multicompetence offers intriguing possibilities in terms of reaching this audience. Finally and most importantly, reimagination is only worthwhile if it is followed by continuous reflection, action, and change. Consequently, future work has to examine the long-term impact of new discourses, new identity options, and new imagined communities on social and discursive realities in and outside of language classrooms.

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