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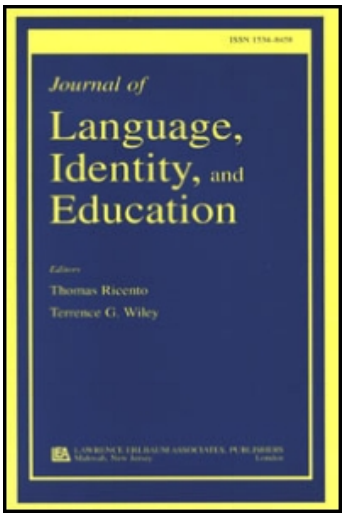

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Theorizing Language Teacher Identity: Three Perspectives and Beyond

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Theorizing Language Teacher Identity: Three Perspectives and Beyond

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Language teacher identity is an emerging subject of interest in research on language teacher education and teacher development. Yet relatively little attention has been paid to the ways in which teacher identity is theorized. The present article explores ways of theorizing language teacher identity by presenting three data-based studies of teacher identity and juxtaposing the three different theoretical frameworks that they use: Tajfel's (1978) social identity theory, Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of situated learning, and Simon's (1995) concept of the image-text. It is seen that each theoretical perspective allows us to investigate different substantive and theoretical aspects of language teacher identity and that there are strong conceptual resonances among the different approaches. While in isolation each theory has its limitations, an openness to multiple theoretical approaches allows a richer and more useful understanding of the processes and contexts of teacher identity.

Key words: language teaching, language teacher identity

The last few years have seen the appearance of a significant strand of applied linguistics research devoted to the topic of language teacher identity (e.g., Duff & Uchida,

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1997; Johnston, 1999, 2003; Morgan, 2004; Pavlenko, 2003; Varghese, 2000). The need for this work emerged from two relatively independent lines of thinking about language teaching. Among many applied linguists, for a long time language teachers were seen as technicians who needed merely to "apply" the right methodology in order for the learners to acquire the target language. As classroom-based research became more popular, it became increasingly obvious that classrooms are in fact very complex places in which simplistic cause–effect models of teaching methodology were inadequate (e.g., Allwright, 1988; Nunan, 1988). A great deal else needed to be understood within the classroom. In particular, this research revealed that the teacher plays a huge role in the constitution of classroom practices; thus, the teacher became the focus of research attention. Initial explorations of teacher beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, and so on (e.g., Johnson, 1992; Woods, 1996) also made it clear that such attributes could not be seen atomistically but that it was the teacher's whole identity that was at play in the classroom. This line of thinking, then, sees teacher identity as a crucial component in determining how language teaching is played out.

At the same time, a separate line of research was beginning to explore the sociocultural and sociopolitical dimensions of teaching (e.g., Kubota, 2001; Norton, 1997; Pennycook, 1994, 2001). This research revealed among other things that many aspects of identity—including, though not restricted to, matters of race, gender, and sexual orientation—were of the utmost importance in the language classroom. By the same token, the teacher too was not a neutral player in the classroom, but on the contrary, her positionality in relation to her students, and to the broader context in which the teacher was situated, was vital. For example, Vandrick (1999), in looking back at her missionary upbringing in India through her current experiences as an English as a second language (ESL) teacher, acknowledges "the unconscious racism that infects almost everyone with privilege, including 'colonial privilege'" (p. 70), and poses "the possibility of a 'colonial shadow' over our profession" (p. 63). Thus, the teacher's own identity came to be seen as a critical component in the sociocultural and sociopolitical landscape of the language classroom.

From two different directions, then, it became apparent that in order to understand language teaching and learning we need to understand teachers; and in order to understand teachers, we need to have a clearer sense of who they are: the professional, cultural, political, and individual identities which they claim or which are assigned to them. It is worth mentioning that a project of this nature was initiated by Casanave and Schecter (1997) in their collection of autobiographical narratives of language educators.

At the same time as this line of research began to develop, a particular conception of "identity" was gaining acceptance in anthropology, sociology, and related fields, including general education and language teaching. The new understanding of identity revolved around certain central ideas. First, identity is not a fixed, stable, unitary, and internally coherent phenomenon but is multiple, shifting, and in conflict (Gergen, 1991; Norton Peirce, 1995; Sarup, 1996; Weedon, 1987); by the

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same token it is transformational and transformative. A crucial component here is that of the primacy of *agency* in identity formation, a movement away from a structurally deterministic view of the fashioning of individuals (as implied in early theories of social reproduction and Marxism) to understanding individuals as intentional beings. Second, identity is not context-free but is crucially related to social, cultural, and political context—interlocutors, institutional settings, and so on (Duff & Uchida, 1997). An important aspect of this is the relation between *assigned identity*—the identity imposed on one by others—and *claimed identity,* the identity or identities one acknowledges or claims for oneself (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002). Third, identity is constructed, maintained, and negotiated to a significant extent through language and discourse (Gee, 1996; MacLure, 1993).

This view of identity is particularly appropriate for the study of identity in language teachers, for a number of reasons connected with the substantive issues that researchers have found salient. These issues have arisen as researchers have increasingly frequently looked not just at what happens in classrooms but at how outside conditions shape both classroom teaching and teachers' lives outside the classroom. The following substantive concerns have been particularly prominent. First, many teachers experience professional and even social marginalization both in schools and outside them (Casanave & Schecter, 1997; Johnston, 1999; Pennington, 1992). Second, the position of nonnative speakers, who constitute the vast majority of teachers worldwide, has come under scrutiny, resulting in a close critical analysis of the hegemonic relations between native-speaker and non-native-speaker teachers in a great many contexts worldwide (Braine, 1999a; J. Liu, 1999; Pavlenko, 2003). Third, the status of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in particular, and language teaching in general, as a profession has been questioned; this process has included an interest in what teachers know, and in teacher preparation in formal teacher education contexts (Edstam, 2001; Johnston, 1997; Ramanathan, 2002; Varghese, 2004). These concerns are related to the significant instability and changeability found in language teachers' lives and work in many contexts (Centre for British Teachers, 1989; Johnston, 1997; McKnight, 1992). Last, there has been an interest in teacher identity in relation to the teacher–student relation, especially its intrinsic hierarchical nature (Barcelos, 2001; Cummins, 2001; Johnston, 2003).

However, the view of identity outlined above does not in itself form a single, coherent theoretical approach. Rather, it constitutes a set of features that may be common to various theoretical frameworks. Just as the substantive issues looked at in the research have differed widely, so has there been a range of different theoretical approaches to the study of language teacher identity. Also, the variety of substantive and theoretical interests has been mirrored by a wide and expanding range of methodological approaches, with interview data frequently being enriched and given perspective by the use of observational data, found data, and data from other sources.

The one thing that has not been done is to juxtapose alternative theoretical approaches to see how different underlying assumptions alter our perception both of what is interesting and of what the research reveals to us. Much as in other research in applied linguistics and language education, researchers continue to pursue their work in a given theoretical paradigm; dialogue across paradigms is extremely rare.

In this article, we are seeking to create just such a dialogue. We present three examples of data-driven research in the area of language teacher identity. Each is valuable in itself as an example of empirical research in the field. Additionally, the three theories that are used in the three studies illustrate most compellingly some of the salient themes in language teacher identity, which have been just discussed. We return to this point after providing summaries of the three studies. Taken together, these studies illustrate the range of substantive focuses, methodological approaches, and theoretical frameworks that are available to researchers. We hope to do more, however. By juxtaposing these three reports and by explicitly drawing parallels between them in terms both of similarities and differences, we aim to open up the possibility of dialogue across theories. Our goal is not to evaluate one theory against another but rather to use one to enlighten the other. Our work is conducted in the spirit of Feyerabend's (1988) view that "proliferation of theories is beneficial for science" (p. 24). We do not see the role of theory as providing all-powerful grand narratives but instead as bringing understanding, at whatever level of generality is appropriate, to the complex questions of language teacher identity as they develop at the meeting-point of cultures and social practices. In fact, we actively oppose the concept of a grand narrative or metanarrative in this article, since that would imply a rationalistic and deductive universal model that claims ideological neutrality. On the other hand, we hope to both underscore the value of considering and examining how theories are constructed and used and create space for a theory of praxis (Pavlenko, 2003; Pennycook, 2001) which emphasizes a continuous theory/practice dialogue.

Our first example uses social identity theory (Hogg & Abrams, 1998; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) to analyze the development of a teacher's identity as nonnative speaker of English within the context of a U.S. master's in teaching English to speakers of other languages (MA TESOL) program. The second example employs Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of situated learning and communities of practice to look at the way identities are formed in the course of an undergraduate bilingual teacher education program in the United States. Finally, the third example draws on Simon's (1995) poststructural work on identity as image-text in considering the way in which an experienced teacher creates and maintains a particular identity within an adult English as a second language (ESL) program in Canada.

After the three examples, in the final section of the article we return to the themes of identity previously mentioned; we consider how the theoretical approaches address these themes and how these theories bring understanding to the different aspects of language teacher identity that we have highlighted.

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STUDY 1 (JOHNSON): SOCIAL IDENTITIES AND THE NONNATIVE MA TESOL STUDENT

In this first study, Johnson drew on the social identity theory of Hogg and Abrams (1998) based on the work of Tajfel (1978) to investigate the language teacher identity of a new teacher—a nonnative English speaking graduate student in an MA TESOL program. Social identity theory espouses the concept of identity based on the social categories created by society (nationality, race, class, etc.) that are relational in power and status. Individuals derive identity, or understanding of self, "in great part from the social categories to which they belong" (Hogg & Abrams, 1998, p. 19). This self-definition is a dynamic process, "temporally and contextually determined, and … in continual flux"; furthermore, identification with a negatively valued group, for even a short while, will have a "negative impact on one's level of self-esteem" (Sherman, Hamilton, & Lewis, 1999, pp. 88–89). Social identity theory recognizes the membership of individuals in many groups (ingroups and outgroups), of which membership in one group may at times be more salient than membership in another.

Despite questions about the legitimacy of the idealization of the native speaker as the best teacher of English (Phillipson, 1992) or the motives and validity of maintaining the distinction between native English speakers (NES) and nonnative English speakers (NNES) (Canagarajah, 1999; D. Liu, 1999), the two categories do exist in English language teaching today, and there is little question that the social category of NES still enjoys a power and status that the category NNES does not. This difference in power and status is also evident in hiring preferences for NESs (Amin, 1999; Braine, 1999b; Brown, 1998; J. Liu, 1999; Medgyes, 1992) and the underrepresentation of NNES professionals in scholarly journals (Flowerdew, 1999).

Notwithstanding the positivistic "either-or" tone of much of social identity theory, it does mirror the current division of English language teachers into categories of native English-speaking teacher (NEST) and non-native English-speaking teacher (NNEST), and thus, with its emphasis on group membership, may have particular relevance for understanding the perceptions and self-identifications of NNES students enrolled in U.S. graduate programs. These MA TESOL students, in the process of establishing a self-identification as *ESL teacher,* must reconcile the tension of their concurrent membership in the social group of *nonnative English speaking teacher,* a tension exacerbated by the profession's continued adherence to NES dominance. Many NNES students in U.S.-based MA TESOL programs are consistently reminded of their NNES group membership in their own comparison with peers, their confidence about academic work, and interactions with faculty and students (Milambling, 2000; Saylor, 2000), at conferences (Thomas, 1999), or in job announcements that advertise explicitly for native speakers (Norton, 1997). Given all this, social identification as a NNES, in the English language teaching profession as

a whole and in MA TESOL programs in particular, may become more salient and significant than membership in other groups, including that of ESL teacher.

In this study, Johnson followed Marc, a Mexican woman in her late twenties, enrolled in a 2-year MA TESOL program in a large urban university in the United States. There were few NNES graduate students in the program, and the faculty and administrative staff and teachers at the university Intensive English Program were all native English speakers, hence Marc found herself a member of a numerically small minority in the department. Data were collected over a one and a half-year period through interviews, informal discussions, and a collaborative reflective journal, which began during Marc's second year in the MA program and continued for 6 months following the completion of her degree.

Like many new teachers, Marc sought to reconcile her conflicting identities as student *and* teacher (see Britzman, 1991). The situation was further complicated by the fact that she was both a student of teaching and a student of the language. Keenly aware of her overlapping and multiple identities as a TESOL graduate student/ESL teacher/English language learner, Marc's attempts to balance these identities presented challenges not only for her but for peers and colleagues as well.

During Marc's teaching practicum, for example, her multiple identities as both language teacher and language student seemed troublesome for her NES mentor (or cooperating) teacher, who appeared willing to accept Marc as a new and emerging *ESL teacher* (her shared ingroup status which stands in relation to the outgroup ESL student) but struggled with Marc's concurrent self-identification as an *ESL student*. Her affirmation of Marc as a teacher was vital (as it would be with any new teacher), but her hesitation to acknowledge Marc's appeal for language help marked Marc's social identification as an ESL student and increased Marc's awareness of the "negative" associations of the NNES categorization.

And Marc herself struggled with the tensions of multiple and sometimes conflicting identities. In a discussion of the language proficiency required to be an effective language teacher, Marc revealed an underlying tension caused by her awareness of herself as a language learner and her need to be "ahead of … students" or her nervousness about consulting her colleagues on language questions because "after all, I'm an ESL teacher, I should know, shouldn't I?" Most preservice language teachers certainly deal with nervousness, but NNESTs may have additional worries born out of an awareness of shared status as ESL students (but with a need to be distinctive within that group, i.e., proficient enough to be teachers), and membership as NNESTs (as opposed to the more powerful and influential group of NESTs). This latter point may be of particular importance, resulting in a "maximiz[ation] of intergroup differences" (Terry, Hogg, & White, 2000, p. 72)—primarily language skills—encouraging an insecurity in their faith in themselves as expert speakers.

The saliency of her self-identification as a NNEST surfaced throughout her practicum experiences. Although she called it a "good experience," there were difficulties, especially with her mentor teacher's tendency to interrupt when Marc was

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teaching. Marc felt that these interruptions not only questioned her competence as a new teacher in front of the learners but also focused attention on her status as a nonnative teacher. It is likely that the mentor teacher's perceptions and understandings differed concerning her reasons for interjecting while Marc taught. It is self-perception, however, that is significant in the forging of Marc's professional identity. Embedded in Marc's perceptions lurked the issue of self-confidence as seen through the lens of one aspect of her social identity: her membership in the group *nonnative English speaker.* For Marc, struggling to move from student to teacher, and struggling with a mentor teacher who was "getting into my class," meant the risk of being seen as illegitimate by her students, especially because she was a NNEST.

More significant than her dual identities as teacher and student for Marc in this graduate school context, however, was her consciousness of her status as a NNES, considerably influenced by the attitude of the people around her. When asked how she felt about her personal identity, Marc gave this account of Americans' perceptions of her in the United States; the majority of these descriptors (or "labels") focused on her nonnativeness and the "otherness" in her language, race, and culture:

> I always compare my identity in Mexico and how it changed when I came here to the U.S. In Mexico I was a woman, young adult, from middle class with a profession. From a Catholic family, single.
>
> When I came here, after a few months I start to realize all the LABELS that people put on me and sometimes without even asking me or giving me the chance to show who I am. Here I was/am an ESL learner, Latina, Mexican, woman, single, Catholic, student of color, NNEST, minority, Hispanic, bilingual, and I don't know what else … people just label me.

Finally, and in keeping with the motivations outlined in social identity theory, Marc's desire for positive self-esteem compelled her to establish an ingroup identity that was both positive and supporting. In her first year of graduate school she attended the TESOL Convention, where she encountered other NNESTs involved in the NNEST Caucus. For Marc, involvement in TESOL and her membership in the NNEST Caucus allowed her to focus on the positive distinctions between this group and others. Joining the NNEST Caucus gave her comfort in the fact that she was not "the only one" and gave Marc the support that she felt was missing from her graduate program.

The limitations of using social identity theory to understand Marc's language teacher identity lie in the reliance on oppositional and static social categories. First, this does not allow us to look at the *evolution* of Marc's teacher identity and the moment-by-moment production of that identity. In addition, the way different networks and memberships (different from NES and NNES) interacted to produce an understanding of her professional self are not investigated in this framework. Last, by using such dichotomous and static categorizations, this framework does

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not allow much for individual variation; in this instance, the question remains how another NNES language teacher identity would be constituted in similar circumstances, one that would be different from that of Marc.

On the other hand, there is also value in using social identity theory as a framework for understanding aspects of NNES teacher identity. Social identification as a NNEST is significant to preservice teachers' understanding of themselves if for no other reason than that their awareness of their status in this outgroup is continually emphasized, as in Marc's case. While those in the majority ingroup of NESTs can work to establish a professional identity as ESL teachers without worrying about "the nativeness part," NNESTs must also find ways to forge a positive identity as a NNEST in order to avoid the risk of what Braine (1999b) calls an "identity crisis" (p. xvii).

Marc's situation may or may not be typical, but close examination of the realities of the teaching and experience of NNES graduate students in studies such as this can add to our understanding of how teachers develop a professional identity and what factors play a significant role in that development. And although there is no single key or framework to understanding NNES teacher identity, social identity theory can offer useful insights into teacher self-perceptions. Marc's experiences present a good example of the situated nature of identity, of how the personal and the professional self intertwine, of how the priorities and understanding of self are influenced by our social identifications and self-categorizations. To this end, social identity theory can certainly make a positive contribution in any discussion of language teacher identity.

STUDY 2 (VARGHESE): BILINGUAL TEACHERS AND SITUATED LEARNING

In the second example, Varghese looked at language teacher identity formation through situated learning—as a process of becoming part of a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). This was explored through an ethnographic study, where Varghese followed a group of bilingual teachers (preservice and in-service) in the United States, who were for the first time participating in a federally funded professional development program that was addressing bilingual-specific concerns, such as theories of second language acquisition and bilingual programmatic models. Varghese first observed and interviewed teachers and instructors in the professional development series for 6 months, and next, observed and interviewed four teachers in their classrooms for 6 months (for the full study, see Varghese, 2000).

This study was first initiated to see how bilingual teachers involved in the professional development series implemented their training in their classrooms. However, during the course of the study, Varghese observed that teachers were actually

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involved in a more challenging process wherein they actively sought and negotiated an identity as bilingual teachers and often developed conflicted and marginalized professional identities. Situated learning, in turn, makes the link between learning and identity by viewing learning as an identification process. Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest that learning and understanding occur as people participate in activities where they become increasingly active participants. Learning is seen as an "evolving form of membership" (1991, p. 53), which is neither completely internalized nor externalized. The community of practice, in this framework, consists of multiple identities and levels of participation—the community is not a well-defined entity but rather "an activity system about which participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for their communities" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 98). Learning is located in coparticipation, and the focus is on what kinds of social engagement produce distinct types of learning rather than what kinds of cognitive processes are involved in these learnings. Such a view is especially congruent with newer conceptualizations of professional development that emphasize teachers learning about their environments in addition to learning about classroom skills (Darling-Hammond, 1990). Lave makes explicit the relationship between learning and identity: "learning is, in this purview, more basically a process of coming to be—of forging identities in activities in the world" (1992, p. 3).

One of the key elements by which situated learning helped Varghese formulate the experiences of the teachers in relation to bilingual teaching was that of the range of participation from being a full member to a nonparticipant (Wenger, 1998). She found that the teachers participated in the bilingual teaching profession in different ways—some became advocates and took their role beyond the classroom, others saw their role mainly as classroom teachers, while yet others abandoned their profession. Looking at this continuum of participation helped Varghese to formulate bilingual teaching not as a set of standards but as different ways of being and engaging. Moreover, it revealed that the language teaching profession, as other professions, needs to be seen as a profession that can be understood and enacted in a multitude of ways.

Linked to participation and nonparticipation is motivation, which is an integral part of learners becoming members of a community. Learners are seen to have more motivation when they are co-constructing the curriculum and co-developing what has to be learned and why, with the "masters." In general, this happens when learning does not take place didactically and by reproduction, but through learners developing their own curriculum in conjunction with peers and "masters." In other words, "engaging in practice, rather than being an object, may well be a condition for the effectiveness of learning" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 93). Varghese observed that the professional development was designed and delivered in the model of a "knowledge-for-practice conception" as described in Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) in their understanding of the different models of teacher education, where univer-

sity-based researchers are seen as generating knowledge for the teachers. Moreover, the decontextualized and modularized course content and delivery were barriers for many of the teachers in identifying with bilingual teaching. As Johnston and Goettsch (2000) observe, the knowledge and delivery in most language teacher education classes is delivered through facts and separated into different courses, which is dissimilar from the way teachers learn and become a member of their profession.

Another important concept that is explored in situated learning, and related to how participation in a community is defined, is that of access to resources and support in becoming a full-fledged member of the bilingual teaching community. Access is viewed as crucial to "legitimate participation" and when access is denied, knowledge can become abstract, making meaning less visible and more difficult to see for the learner. Here, access is defined as the interaction between learners and the layers of sociopolitical-economic structure surrounding the community and the activity. The often politicized and marginalized nature of second language teaching makes the notion of access central to language teacher education. However, in the context of bilingual teaching, lack of access is often solely characterized in terms of the mainstream antagonistic discourses surrounding bilingual education in the United States. Access is then described as being difficult because bilingual education and its ideologies stand in opposition to mainstream education's goals. It is significant that the state where these teachers were pursuing their certification did not offer bilingual teaching certification. Varghese found that in addition to this barrier for bilingual teachers, the often disorganized and bureaucratic issues within the bilingual administration in the school district created difficulties of access for teachers.

In applying situated learning, as with other theories, it is also important to be aware of some of the limitations of this framework in terms of teacher education. One of the issues is the focus on how individual identity develops within the structure of group practice rather than considering other ways in which identities are discursively created. The unit of analysis in Lave and Wenger's work has traditionally been the group, while what came out in Varghese's study was the variation in how teachers identified with bilingual teaching according to their personal experiences and motivations. Moreover, individual teachers came with numerous contradictions and tensions in their belief systems. For example, many of the bilingual teachers Varghese followed espoused bilingual education but at the same time were critical of how it had been implemented in their local context. The second limitation is the difficulty of applying the model of apprenticeship used by Lave and Wenger in educational settings. This is explicated more fully in Wenger's (1998) expanded investigation into communities of practice, where he describes a community of practice as having three defining characteristics—mutual engagement and negotiation by participants, involvement in a joint enterprise, and a sharedness of repertoire. Most teacher education programs are not set up like apprenticeships nor do they necessarily have these defining characteristics. Related to this last point is the problem of defining a collec-

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tive sense of bilingual teaching. Sykes and Bird, cited in Putnam and Borko (2000), articulately define this problem in the following way:

> Finally, the situated cognition perspective draws on the image of apprenticeship in a guild or a professional community as a powerful form of learning. But this image requires a stable, satisfactory practice that the novice can join. If the aim of teacher education is a reformed practice that is not readily available, and if there is no reinforcing culture to support such practice, then the basic imagery of apprenticeship seems to break down. (p. 8)

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The last, but critical, limitation of this theoretical framework is its weak consideration of power relations and underlying ideologies within groups. In Lave and Wenger's (1991) analysis of different apprenticeship groups, they note that butchers do not have access in a true sense to their community of practice because of the authoritarian roles of their masters—however, it is not a point that is investigated fully, as in other theories of identity formation. Issues of access, participation, and social engagement are always reflections of larger institutional, national, and global ideologies, which are not a focus of exploration in situated learning and communities of practice.

Varghese's study, and its use of situated learning to understand bilingual teacher identity formation, demonstrates the strengths in viewing teacher education/learning as a process of becoming rather than how it has traditionally been viewed, exclusively as what teachers should know. This perspective allows us to approach teacher education, especially for second language teachers, as a process of being, which is inevitably filled with conflict and difficulty. Hopefully, this can help us in conceptualizing the design of language teacher education programs as evolving communities of practice. However, although situated learning and the notions it has popularized have helped us conceptualize this identification process, as teacher education programs stand at present, situated learning cannot completely capture the complexities of a novice teacher entering, participating, and engaging in the language teaching profession.

STUDY 3 (MORGAN): IDENTITY AS PEDAGOGY

In the third example, Morgan investigated the notion of a teacher's identity as a form of pedagogy. Through self-reflection and participant observation notes collected over several months in a community-based ESL program, Morgan gained insight into the perceptions his students had of him—an "image-text" (Simon, 1995)—and how these perceptions, in many ways, underpinned both the relaxed and mostly positive atmosphere of the classroom and the types of language learning that took place within.

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An image-text is produced through the everyday practices of schooling and reflects the close, affective relationships that often develop between teachers and students (Simon, 1995). It is a composite portrait, based on interpretations of immediate and observable phenomena—teacher–student interactions, formalized instruction, evaluations, and so on—but shaped as well by indirect and often imperceptible factors—the attitudes a student might have toward a teacher based on the latter's race or gender, or conversely, a teacher's low expectations for a group of students based on the socioeconomic status of the neighborhood where the school is located. A teacher's life stories, gestures, clothing, and how these articulate with students' own prior experiences would also be inscribed in the image-text produced in class.

The notion of image-text explored by Morgan can also be characterized as *poststructural* (see Cherryholmes, 1988; Morgan, 2002; Norton, 2000; Pennycook, 2001; Weedon, 1987) for several reasons. For one, it is a text that is *heteroglossic,* in Bakhtin's (1981) sense, reflecting a plurality of voices both complementary and contradictory. Competition between individuals' memories of schooling and dominant discourses concerning "appropriate" teacher–student behaviors, for example, would vie for prominence in the evaluation of daily classroom interactions. Second, an image-text does not purport to represent a singular or timeless "reality" outside of the meanings and desires (i.e., for academic achievement, or close mentor–devotee relations) invested in its co-construction. Thus, an image-text is always open to new "readings" and new accents superimposed upon prior ones. A third and related point: an image-text is *performative* (cf. Butler, 1990), creating or encouraging the forms of conduct and self-awareness it appears to name. Such textual practices enable both conformity and resistance. Through repeated performance of the roles assigned to them, teachers and students learn ways to subvert or modify the prior norms assigned to their positions.

These poststructural insights highlight the point that as teachers we are always, in part, invisible to ourselves. Students "read" us, and respond to things about us of which we might not be aware. As Morgan found in his study, those aspects of his personal or professional identity that might be of pedagogical value would need to be contingently discovered, based on emergent factors in the classroom.

The classroom in his study was located within a Chinese community center in one of Toronto's oldest "Chinatowns." The program offers continuous intake classes, which tends to promote mixed levels of ability. All of the students in class claimed Chinese ethnicity. Most of them were women and most were seniors (see Morgan, 2002).

The initial incident that precipitated this discovery was, for Morgan, a surprising "double standard." One day, Morgan commented positively on a movie featuring Chinese actor Gong Li. One of the women in his class responded by saying, "Chinese people don't like Gong Li. … She stole another woman's husband." Later that day, during a lesson on vocabulary to describe personal qualities such as "constantly changing" and "unpredictable," the same student formed the following

analogy in front of the whole class: "Just like Elizabeth Taylor," whom the student said she admired. After the laughter subsided, Morgan tried to suggest that this was a contradiction (i.e., Elizabeth Taylor had "stolen" other women's husbands, as in the case of Eddie Fisher). How could she "admire" Elizabeth Taylor yet hate Gong Li? The student simply stated that it was okay to admire Elizabeth Taylor because "she isn't Chinese."

The same day, during lunch at a local restaurant, a male student from the class was teased by classmates for allowing his wife to pay for their share of the bill. To avert this apparent loss of face and patriarchal authority, Morgan began discussing his wife's preeminent role in their financial decision making and her superior income, which came as a surprise for several students—and not a flattering one in the eyes of some.

Both events, and the lack of consensus they seemed to engender—a couple of students later expressed their appreciation of Gong Li—alerted Morgan to the negotiation of students' collective identities taking place in response to dominant Canadian values. Inspired by the dynamic, complex, and relational notions of teacher identity discussed earlier, Morgan then explored the possibilities of transforming and utilizing his image-text in ways that might provoke new and challenging understandings of culture, gender, and family relations among his students. For him, the "unmarked" privileges of being White and of being male—combined with the "symbolic capital" (cf. Bourdieu, 1991) of his being a doctoral student, a former teacher in China, and a long-standing member/employee at the community center—might enable a degree of positive reception, or provocation, that others in the same setting might not be permitted.

Soon after, in class, Morgan began foregrounding aspects of his personal life previously unshared with his students. Domestic chores such as cooking, cleaning, and child care were discussed informally or as part of lesson content, Morgan utilizing these opportunities to demonstrate his expertise and the sharing of such responsibilities in his own home. Over time, several incidents in class seemed to indicate that a new, reconfigured image-text—one that challenged students' traditional notions of masculinity and familial responsibilities—was beginning to circulate amongst his students. One day, for example, a student mentioned that she would be very busy all weekend cleaning the house and preparing food for her out-of-town guests. Another student then admonished her by saying, "That's out of date. Ask your son and husband to help you." A third student then commented, "Brian does housework."

The frequency of such incidents varied over time, depending on the content and focus of lessons. Gong Li, as well, acquired an ongoing, "special" status in the class. Several students playfully referred to her as "Brian's imaginary lover" based on the initial incident mentioned earlier and Morgan's professed interest in her film career (he had seen five of her movies). Adding to the humor, one student, a talented artist named Leung, even painted a watercolor of her image and presented it

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to Morgan in class. Interestingly, this same student/artist later gave Morgan an unassigned composition he wrote called *The Applicant for Husband* (see Morgan, 2004). He asked that it be corrected and distributed to his classmates. Together, they edited and revised the composition, and Morgan then used it to generate discussion and response papers from his students.

In the context of identity and language learning, Morgan was struck by the norms of age, culture, and gender critically addressed in this composition. *The Applicant for Husband* describes the story of a recently widowed senior returning to China from abroad and advertising locally for a new husband. After selecting a much younger man from many applicants, the story offers a conclusion rich in metaphor and moralistic overtones:

> God bless you, my lady. You ignored the strange eyes of your countrymen and broke the generation gap in the old village full of feudalistic ideas: The women never have the right to choose their spouses as the men do. You will have a joyful and golden evening in your old age. Held in strong arms, you will walk through the last journey in your life.

Leung's composition and the response papers it generated—evenly balanced "for" and "against" his views—were placed on the classroom bulletin board, there to remind those present of the complexities and contradictions of their juxtaposed lives and their desire for both continuity and change within their new surroundings.

The chain of events described by Morgan confirms the importance of a teacher's identity in the knowledge received or rejected in classrooms. The interpersonal relations generated between teachers and students are not simply a *context* for language learning. At times, they are *texts* themselves, indivisible from the meanings produced through schooling (see, e.g., Cummins, 2001), as facilitated by Simon's theory of image-text.

A major shortcoming of viewing language teacher identity as image-text is that like other poststructural theories, its applicability is not immediately obvious. As scholars who have studied multicultural teacher education pedagogy and the use of poststructuralism in teacher education programs have noted, there are numerous dilemmas and difficulties in weaving in such theories into practice (Kumashiro, 2002; Lesko & Bloom, 1998). Moreover, such a view of teacher identity, with its concentration on reflexivity, can often lead to teacher self-doubt and inaction, especially in a field such as language teaching, which is already mired in limited resources and marginalization (Hornberger, 2004; Johnston, 1997; Vandrick, 1999).

On the other hand, teacher identity as pedagogy through image-text can help us see that though teachers cannot act in ways that guarantee prescribed outcomes, they can (re)present themselves in ways that open up identity options not previously imagined, or they can inspire, by example, social practices or forms of participatory citizenship not previously considered. At the same time, teacher identity

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as pedagogy is always potentially "dangerous." Teachers have considerable influence and, in some settings, substantial power over students' futures. Therefore, the notion of image-text helps us to see that as teachers, we need to present ourselves in ways that are not directly threatening or disrespectful but perhaps in the same poststructural sense described briefly earlier: always open to new accents, reinterpretation, and critical readings.

MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES ON LANGUAGE TEACHER IDENTITY

In our introduction, we outlined three predominant themes in recent theoretical understandings of language teacher identity:

1. Identity as multiple, shifting, and in conflict;
2. Identity as crucially related to social, cultural, and political context; and
3. Identity being constructed, maintained, and negotiated primarily through discourse.

In addition, we listed four substantive areas of interest in research on language teacher identity:

1. Marginalization;
2. The position of nonnative speaker teachers;
3. The status of language teaching as a profession;
4. The teacher–student relation.

The three studies outlined above reflect both the theoretical themes and the substantive issues. In Johnson's study, which draws on Tajfel's (1978) social identity theory, identity is clearly seen to be multiple (theme 1) and to be tied primarily to social group membership (theme 2). In fact, in Marc's struggle with the labels others placed on her after her arrival in the United States—Latina, student of color, nonnative speaker teacher—we see how the conflict between claimed identities and assigned identities combines processes associated both with theme 1 (the conflict-ridden and transformational nature of identity) and theme 2 (the crucial relation between identity and cultural and political context). Marc's story clearly also combines two substantive issues, recounting the particular experiences of a nonnative speaker teacher whose assigned identity as nonnative speaker leads to dangers of increased marginalization. Indeed, this assigned identity is also seen to impact Marc's relations with her students. Yet also, the agency and transformative potential of identity is glimpsed as Marc re-values her identity as NNEST through membership in TESOL's Nonnative English Speaker Teacher Caucus.

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Varghese's study, based on Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of situated learning, also shows identity in the process of formation and growth, and also reveals the complex interplay between themes 1 and 2. While in her study, identity formation takes place in a particular interlocking set of social, cultural, and political contexts (theme 2)—the teacher education program and the public schools in which the teachers worked—the identities that were formed were multiple and often in conflict (theme 1), revealing a wide range of ways in which the work of the bilingual teacher can be understood. As with Johnson's research, in Varghese's study the development of a professional identity was played out against the backdrop of the real-life marginalization of the profession, and the contested status of bilingual education (another link to the centrality of political context). Finally, Varghese's study also revealed tensions between claimed identity and assigned identity, once again underlining the ways in which the agency of individual teachers is a crucial mediating factor in the process of identity formation in teacher education contexts.

Morgan's study, drawing on Simon's (1995) concept of the image-text, also shows identity to be fundamentally relational in character (theme 2): What matters here is not Morgan's identity in some abstract sense but his identity in relation to these particular students. It is his study that most fully addresses the substantive issue of the teacher–student relation. Furthermore, Morgan's study reveals the transformative power of identity in affecting both the seer and the seen (theme 1). It is also in this study that theme 3 is most visible: the way in which discourse provides the materials from which identities are co-constructed and negotiated. Furthermore, Morgan points out that not only does text become identity: it is also the case that identity can become text. From this we see the truly intimate relationship between language and identity.

Last, it is worth pointing out that all three studies speak not just to a relational but also to an interactional understanding of identity. Adams and Marshall (1996) describe identity development as a transactional process: "An individual's personal or social identity not only is shaped, in part, by the living systems around the individual but the individual's identity can shape and change the nature of these living systems" (p. 432). This aspect of the notion of the "person-in-context" (Adams & Marshall, 1996) is most clearly seen in the way Morgan's identity affected his students; it can also be seen in the negotiations of identity that formed part of Marc's story as told by Johnson and of the bilingual teachers Varghese studied.

What do these theories have to say to each other? We must repeat here what we said in our introduction: We are not interested in evaluating theories against each other and in "picking the winner." Quite the opposite: With Feyerabend, we argue for the importance of multiple theories because only in this way can we hope to gain a fuller picture of an immensely complex phenomenon such as teacher identity. Some of these strengths and shortcomings, which are summarized here, were also included in the outlines of the studies.

Social identity theory requires us, when we talk about multiple identities, to specify exactly what identities these are; when we talk about identity as being linked to social context, social identity theory makes us say which social groups we are talking about. Furthermore, this theory offers a concrete way of conceptualizing the hegemony—that is, unequal power and status relations—inherent in conflicting identities. This would seem a useful tool in dealing with a disempowered and marginalized profession such as language teaching.

Situated learning, on the other hand, reminds us first that identity is something that is constructed, not ready-formed; and second, that the process of construction is a social one that takes place in social settings. Indeed, the strength of situated learning theory is precisely the fact that it views learning not primarily as the cognitive acquisition of knowledge but as a process of *identification*—that is, of acquiring an identity, of becoming someone or something. In this regard, it would seem to have much to offer the field of research in teacher identity, especially those interested primarily in the emergence of identity in formal learning programs such as those found in schools of education.

The notion of the image-text, in turn, allows us to specify rather precisely exactly *how* identities emerge through and in language. It requires careful attention to the details of discourse and is also compatible with narrative experience, the centrality of which has been persuasively argued in contexts such as teacher knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) and language teacher development (Johnson & Golombek, 2002). The idea of the image-text helps us to see how the multiple facets of identity, their anchoring in particular social contexts, and their transformational power (that is, the potential for agency inherent in identity), are both revealed in, and constituted by, language.

Of course, all three theoretical frameworks have drawbacks too although it should be pointed out that there is no final consensus on these drawbacks, as discussed here.

As pointed out, social identity theory has a positivistic bent; as such, it has limited capabilities for handling notions such as the linguistic performativity of identity suggested by postmodern approaches. Methodologically, as pointed out by Hansen and Liu (1997), there has traditionally been an overreliance on questionnaires, observations, and interviews that "do not allow for dynamism, as they are typically onetime occurrences" (p. 572). McNamara (1997) has argued that poststructural critiques of Tafjel's theory "often miss the mark" (p. 564), and in using his study of native Hebrew-speaking Israeli families emigrating to Australia, makes the case that social identity theory takes into account multiple identities, conflict, and the historical situatedness of identity, as poststructural critiques call for.

Situated learning and communities of practice, as also indicated in the outline of Varghese's study, primarily focus on individuals in relation to groups and is less well equipped to handle individual experiences of identity formation or individual agency in this process as well as the power differentials inherent in teacher–student

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relationships. The methods used in situated learning have focused much more on observations than on interviews and the discursive (especially linguistic) constitution of individuals; inherent in such an approach is the lack of participant voice and interpretation. Although communities of practice have been criticized because of their inadequacy in terms of understanding power relations within groups (Lemke, 1997; Pon, Goldstein, & Schecter, 2003; Walkerdine, 1997), Eckert and McConnel-Ginet (1998) view them as effective exactly in these terms. They state that "the community of practice is where the rubber meets the road—it is where observable action and interaction do the work of producing, reproducing, and resisting the organization of power in society and in societal discourses of gender, age, race, etc." (pp. 182–183). In their definition, participants are seen to have memberships in multiple communities and draw on the resources from each to modify forms of practice.

The concept of the image-text shares many of the same problems faced by other postmodern approaches: For instance, a strong emphasis on language and the linguistic and discursive construction of reality makes it harder to anchor findings in actual reality—that is, to find a point of purchase outside of language with which to analyze proceedings and to realize applications. This observation relates to the possible methodological concerns associated with image-text, relying mainly on narrative and the use of intimate stories. In using student stories to claim greater authenticity, students can be positioned in ways they do not claim for themselves. Although in postmodern theories, the point is also that researchers do not claim an objective truth outside that of the researcher/interpreter.

We end the article by reiterating the strengths we see of the proliferation of theories. We argue that any one theory limits one's perspective on language teacher identity, its formation, and its contexts. It is also clear from our discussion that the ways different theories are defined and used need to be considered when researchers are attempting to place value on each. As Kumashiro (2002) writes, "all research is framed by the researcher's ideologies, epistemologies, theoretical frameworks and methodologies" (p. 81). Our point here is that an openness to multiple theoretical possibilities, and more particularly a juxtaposition of those possibilities, allows us to keep in mind the complexity of what we are studying. We would argue that other theoretical approaches to language teacher identity are equally valuable—the theory of narrative ways of knowing (Johnson & Golombek, 2002), sociocultural theory (Duff & Uchida, 1997), postcolonial understandings (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999), and others. Different perspectives will help us understand different facets of the complex nature and processes of teacher identity and in this way shed light on the substantive concerns that motivate our research.

Two of the major substantive concerns are how theories of language teacher identity explain and account for power and agency, as the three examples very clearly brought out. Poststructural theories help us understand teacher identities as constituted through discourse. There is still a lively debate about what constitutes discourse, where poststructural critics claim that power is seen to reside too exclusively

in language and not enough in the material world. But for many poststructuralists, like Weedon, "meanings of the material world are produced within discourse" (1999, p. 107). In the field of language education, Harklau (2003) proposes that "in light of the increasingly prominent role that language is seen to play in constructing the social world, it may be argued that all socialization is language socialization" (p. 83). We can, therefore, argue that poststructuralist theories of language teacher identity present a concept of identity-in-discourse. In the social or group theories of language, teacher identity on the other hand presents a concept of identity-in-practice—language teacher identity is seen to be constituted by the practices in relation to a group and the process of individual identitification or nonidentitification with the group. Power is viewed as localized in the material world or relationally between stakeholders and defined in terms of access for the individual in the group.

In considering how language teacher identity can be viewed in relation to teacher education, we can argue that aspects of identity-in-discourse and identity-in-practice can help us in conceptualizing language teacher education more comprehensively, at least at a theoretical level. In "identity-in-practice," teacher agency is seen as action-oriented and focusing on concrete practices and tasks in relation to a group and mentor(s). In "identity-in-discourse," agency is discursively constituted, mainly through language, focusing primarily on critical reflexivity. As is happening in the circles of multicultural teacher education (Kumashiro, 2002), there needs to be a recognition that in language teacher education we must incorporate simultaneously a focus on shared practices in communities as well as individual "meta-awareness" (Ramanathan, 2002) and critical reflexivity in future teachers' roles as co-creators of the knowledge that is produced. Ramanathan (2002) writes that

> it is crucial for all language teachers to engage in peeling away the layers that make up the common sense or the natural if only to understand how their knowledge/cognitions are being shaped. Encouraging this meta-awareness of their socialization process is the first step toward making them critical, proactive educators. (p. 65)

In order to sustain teachers as critical and proactive educators, we also need to understand how language teachers form their identities in communities, among others, in their teacher education programs, and beyond that, in their schools and classrooms.

Teacher identity is a profoundly individual and psychological matter because it concerns the self-image and other-image of particular teachers. It is a social matter because the formation, negotiation, and growth of teacher identity is a fundamentally social process taking place in institutional settings such as teacher education programs and schools. It is a process that is inextricably intertwined with language and discourse, insofar as all identities are maintained to a significant degree through discourse; yet it is also very much a real-world phenomenon that impacts

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teachers' standing in their communities as well as affecting their wages and working conditions.

In light of this complexity, an equally complex theoretical response is called for on the part of researchers. Our work needs to take account of the way teachers' identities are discursively constructed, but it must also recognize the real social pressures being brought to bear on the teachers themselves. It must be able to capture the social and institutional settings in which identities are formed, but it must also acknowledge the effect of such processes on individual minds. We need the poststructural and postmodern sensitivities to discourse and agency that the theory of the image-text provides, but we also need the nuanced conception of learning in social settings that community-of-practice theory offers. We need the concept of knowledge and understandings as socially constructed that both these theoretical orientations include, but we also need the kinds of ways of conceptualizing individual psychological states that is offered by identity theory. In a word, multiple theoretical approaches are absolutely essential if we are not to lose sight of the real-world complexity of our subject.

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