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Speaking out or keeping silent: International students' identity as legitimate speakers and teachers of English

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Abstract: *Few studies have focused on the identity formation of non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs) as legitimate speakers and teachers of English. Drawing on Norton's (2000) poststructuralist theory of identity as a process of struggling and changing, this study examined whether and how Asian international students studying for a Masters in Education at an Australian University transformed their identity as legitimate speakers and teachers of English through studying a critical pedagogical unit* Language, Society and Cultural Difference.

The findings revealed that the students' transformation of identity depended on symbolic resources from the unit and their imagination of new instructional teaching practices to use in their home countries. Participants' self-perception based on knowledge gained from the unit was, however, sometimes contradictory or ambivalent compared to the ways they saw themselves as speakers and teachers of English in each particular context in practice. I argue that teacher education should offer alternative discourses such as "an awareness of the right to speak" (Norton Pierce, 1995, p. 18), the "native speaker fallacy" (Phillipson, 1992), or bilingual and multilingual speaker (Cook, 1999) to enable student teachers to imagine alternative identities. This helps them not only to develop instructional teaching practices but also to legitimise themselves as speakers and teachers of English.

Keywords: *international students, identity, legitimate speaker and teacher of English*

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Introduction

In the field of teaching English to speakers of another language (TESOL), the question of who owns English internationally has been comprehensively investigated. A review of recent literature in this area suggests that relevant studies are concerned with this question via three different angles. From the perspectives of linguistics, scholars have critiqued the construct 'native speaker' and its underlying misconception, arguing that both native and non-native speakers are owners of the international language - English (e.g. Davies, 2003; Higgins, 2003; Rampton, 1990; Tsui, 2007). From a cultural politics perspective, the postcolonial notions of the Self (the colonizer - the native English speaker) and the Other (the colonized - the non-native English speaker) in English language teaching (ELT) reveal that the image of the Other is merely the imagination and generalization of the Self towards the Other (Holliday, 2005; Pennycook, 1998; Phan, 2004; Phan, 2008 and others). This not only criticizes the Self, regarding their perception of the Other, but also empowers the Other non-native speaker as the owner of English. From a sociological angle, researchers have drawn on Bourdieu's (1977) concept of the *legitimate speaker* of a language to show how language learners and NNESTs can be legitimate speakers of English. Researchers are mainly concerned with the conditions that language learners need to become legitimate speakers of English (Higgins, 2003; Norton, 1997; Norton, 2000; Miller, 2003; Parmegiani, 2010).

Relatively little attention, however, has been given to understanding how NNESTs negotiate their identity as legitimate speakers and teachers of English (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Golombek & Jordan, 2005; Miller, 2007; Pavlenko, 2003), particularly in an Australian context of English learning. In this article, I explore the complex processes of identity formation of five Asian TESOL international students as legitimate speakers and teachers after attending a critical pedagogical unit *Language, Society and Cultural Difference* at an Australian university. Drawing on Norton's (1995, 2000) poststructuralist theory of identity, I examine these teacher students' experience as learners and teachers of English in the context of Australia and their own countries, the processes that were involved as they struggled with multiple identities, and their reconstruction identity as legitimate speakers and teachers of English.

Overview of the unit *Language, Society and Cultural Difference*

The critical pedagogical unit *Language, Society and Cultural Difference* is a compulsory unit in the Master of Education (TESOL International) at one Australian university. Studying this unit, students are expected to raise their own voices regarding language and cultural difference in each particular context, discover their legitimate status as speakers and teachers of English with their own power and capability, as well as have critical views on English language learning and teaching in relation to cultural, political and social aspects.

One of the distinctive features of this unit is that it introduces a poststructuralist view of identity as a theoretical lens to apply to important issues in ELT. Identity, according to poststructuralists, is fragmented, dynamic, multiple and contradictory (Hall, 1996; Hall, 1997; Norton, 2000; Weedon, 1997). Also, identity is constituted within, not outside, language. To show this interconnection between language and identity, Weedon (1997, p. 21) states:

> Language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed.

Language is not conceived of as a neutral means of communication but is understood with reference to its social meaning in a frequently unequal world (Bourdieu, 1977; Hall, 1997; Weedon, 1997). It is this conception of language that poststructuralists define as discourse. Drawing on these notions of language, discourse and identity, the unit examines the social, historical and cultural contexts in which language learning and teaching take place, and how learners and teachers negotiate, and sometimes resist, the diverse positions those contexts offer them; doing so through the readings of Canagarajah (1999), Cook (1999), Holliday (2005), Norton Pierce (1995), Phillipson (1992), Lippi-Green (1997) and others.

Theoretical framework

To examine the transformation of the participants' identities, this study adopts Norton's (2000) viewpoints as its primary theoretical framework. Identity, according to Norton (2000), refers to "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands the possibility for the future" (p. 5). Norton

(2000) persuasively explains three characteristics of identity including "identity and the nonunitary subject", "identity as a site of struggle" and "identity as changing over time" (p. 125 – 128). Firstly, identity is diverse and contradictory in the sense that identity "is produced in a variety of social sites, all of which are structured by relations of power in which the person takes up different subject positions as teacher, child, feminist, manager, and critic" (p. 127). Secondly, the concept of "identity as a site of struggle is a logical extension of the position that identity is multiple and contradictory" (p. 127). Because individuals identify themselves with different subject positions in different circumstances, they may take up one dominant subject position and disregard others depending on a particular context, resulting in their constant struggle for making a final decision. Finally, the transformation of identity just happens as individuals have either of the two following conditions. First, as they are enabled to gain access to material and symbolic resources in society, their sense of who they are and how they relate to their social world begins to change. Second, the change of identity occurs as individuals imagine themselves in a new community with new visions of their future, considered as "imagined community" and "imagined identity" (Norton, 2001, p. 163).

The concept of the *legitimate speaker* owes its origin to Bourdieu (1977), who suggested that a legitimate discourse is achieved with four conditions: it is uttered by a legitimate speaker in a legitimate situation; it is addressed to legitimate receivers; it is formulated in legitimate phonological and syntactic forms. A speaker of a language is considered legitimate in cases when what he or she utters is regarded as worthy of being listened to. Put differently, a legitimate speaker speaks not only to be understood but also to be believed, obeyed, respected, distinguished by a listener. In a later discussion, Bourdieu (1991) argues that legitimacy derives from the cultural and symbolic capital of speakers and receivers. Cultural capital, in turn, refers to "knowledge, skills and other cultural acquisitions, as exemplified by educational or technical qualifications", while symbolic capital means "accumulated prestige or honor" (p. 14).

Norton was one of the first language researchers to bring the concept of the legitimate speaker to bear on English language learning through her study of immigrant women in formal and informal English language learning contexts of Canadian society. According to Norton Pierce (1995), in order to become a legitimate speaker of English, learners of English need to develop

"an awareness of the right to speak" (p. 18). Specifically, while a language learner may be positioned in a particular way within a given discourse, that person might resist the subject position; or even set up a "counter-discourse" which positions himself or herself in a powerful, rather than marginalized, subject position (Norton, 2000, p. 127).

Another condition for becoming a legitimate speaker of English is also highlighted in Norton's (1997) discussion regarding the ownership of English. She argues that "if learners of English cannot claim ownership of a language, they might not consider themselves as legitimate speakers of this language" (p. 442). To claim ownership of English, learners can choose to "invest" in this language, which subsequently helps them acquire a wide range of material and symbolic resources (Norton Pierce, 1995, p. 17).

Miller (2003) explains the legitimate speaker as "having the right to speak, and having value assigned to what is spoken" (p. 175), and also suggests another condition, namely "audibility", which learners of English need in order to assert their legitimacy as speakers of English (p. 47). "Audibility" is defined as the way speakers are heard and then understood by other legitimate users of English. Miller further adds that being audible to others, being heard and acknowledged as a speaker of English, may determine the extent to which learners can participate in social interaction and practices within the educational mainstream in Australia.

The study

The study adopted a qualitative case study approach, where the case was the transformation of identity in regard to participation in coursework, and the participants were Asian international postgraduate students coming from mainland China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea and Vietnam. At the time of the study, they were still doing a Master Course (Master of Education – TESOL International) at an Australian university. Whereas two of them had very little or no teaching experience (Takumi and Ping), others' experience ranged from two (Jing and Lam) to seven years (Sunny).

Data was collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews and guided reflective writing. Before the interviews were undertaken, the participants were asked to produce some reflective writing based on their experiences in English learning and teaching in relation to concepts and issues discussed in the unit *Language, Society and Cultural Difference.* I chose reflective writing as a tool for data collection because it is described as a means by

which students are enabled to connect the knowledge, concepts and ideas that they acquire from the course to their past and present experiences, thoughts, work, and self-reflections or to other books, articles and courses (Hettich, 1976, as cited in Moon, 2006). In addition, the semi-structured interviews allowed me to acquire comprehensive and systematic data while the tone of the interviews still remained quite conversational and informal (Minichiello et al., 2008) (refer to Appendix 1 for a list of the interview questions). I chose thematic analysis as the main tool to analyze the data, and as the coding process was completed, two main themes emerged: identity as changing and identity as ambivalent and contradictory.

Identity as changing

For this theme, two sub-themes were identified, namely knowledge of the unit *Language, Society and Cultural Difference* as the main tool of change, imagining alternative instructional practices of teaching.

Knowledge of the unit Language, Society and Cultural Difference as the main tool of change

As a legitimate speaker of English

To establish how the participants changed their attitudes towards their status as a legitimate speaker of English, I identified how participants employed several linguistic constructs and issues raised in the unit such as "an awareness of the right to speak" (Norton Pierce, 1995, p. 18) (Takumi and Sunny), the discussions of accent (Rampton, 1997) (Lam and Sunny), and bilingual and multilingual speakers (Cook, 1999) (Jing).

First, I noted how participants claimed their right to speak English. This happened not only in the classroom contexts of other units but also through social contacts outside study. As Sunny reported in the interview, she always tried to "speak out or add something" in the research methods class which was so hard and theoretical that most students kept silent. She also took up her subject position as a legitimate speaker in social interaction, which was evidenced as she narrated an incident in which she took up her right to use her voice rather than keep silent. It happened when she went to the post office in Australia to send an Australian university notification back to her friend in Korea. A post office staff member was quite angry with her because she had used a domestic airmail envelope for international delivery, which in fact

she had done one the instruction of another post office staff member:

> At that time … if I didn't know the right to speak English, I would accept the situation and wouldn't say anything about that. But at that time, I … explained the situation to her like another staff gave me this airmail envelope and it was the wrong one and that's why it was not my fault. I explained everything. (Sunny's interview)

Other language learners might keep silent in the above situation, apologizing for having done something wrong. Despite being in a marginalized position, Sunny used her voice.

For Takumi, it was easier to get the right to speak. He socialized with other local friends who wanted to learn Japanese from him, resulting in his opportunity to speak English, and this made him a legitimate speaker of English in the eyes of these mainstream hearers:

> … and they wanna imitate the way I learn English when they wanna learn Japanese. They ask me … just wanna know my ideas so I speak out. (Takumi's interview)

In addition to the linguistic construct, "an awareness of the right to speak" (Norton Pierce, 1995, p. 18), some participants focused on the discussion of accent to mark the change in the way they viewed themselves, from being inferior to being equal to native speakers of English. Lam used to attempt to practice an American accent in order to become a legitimate and "cool" speaker of English. Through the critical pedagogical unit, she realized that there was no need to practice American English because English was a "global language":

> … I don't want anyone to say that I have Australia or American accent. Since I took the unit, I was aware that English was not like … did not belong to any specific groups or any specific countries. It's the language of everyone. It's the global language and everyone can use it. That's why I no longer want to imitate any accent (laughing). (Lam's interview)

Sharing the same perspective as Lam, Sunny expressed how desperately she had practiced American English due to its preference in Korea's ELT context. Then the unit helped her realize that accent was part of her identity, which she did not need to feel "uncomfortable" with or "ashamed" of:

> In Korea, American accent is considered to be norm or standard. Therefore, their local teachers cannot speak American accent English, then they think that the local teacher's English competence is very low even though … how fluent he or she is, and… it was another reason to make me feel inferior as a teacher because I am Korean, that's why I have Korean accent in my English … so I had to try to speak like native speaker but it's impossible because I am Korean (laughing) but I suffered from that kind of uncomfortable feeling in Korea. When I took this unit, I heard that accent is part of my identity, so we shouldn't feel kind of ashamed. (Sunny's interview)

Another concept suggested in several readings in the unit was that of the bilingual and multilingual speaker (Cook, 1999). Before taking this unit, Jing thought that his status was as a legitimate speaker of Chinese (his mother tongue) only, but not of English. However, he subsequently became proud of himself as a bilingual speaker rather than a "failed native speaker of English":

> After knowing the theories of bilingualism and multilingualism, I begin to appreciate that I am able to speak two languages. As Cook (1999) points out, I and other language learners are bilingual speakers of English with multicompetence rather than a failed native speaker of English. (Jing's writing).

Basically, all the participants took advantage of prominent linguistic constructs and discourses presented in the unit to reflect on how legitimate they are as speakers and teachers of English.

As a legitimate teacher of English

The unit allowed these participants to be aware of the constructedness of their own status as a NNEST teacher, which they had not realized before. In the first instance, their realization was all grounded on the linguistic construct, the "native speaker fallacy", and related knowledge of the dichotomy of NESTs (native English speaking teachers) and NNESTs (Phillipson, 1992, p. 195). Jing suggested abolishing "the boundary between native speakers - non-native speakers" (Jing's writing) while Takumi acknowledged that "learning English from non-native teachers is not necessarily disadvantageous" (Takumi's writing). Lam and Sunny expressed how they came to regard their subject position as a teacher of English with their own strengths by drawing on the linguistic construct, the "native speaker fallacy", and Phillipson's (1992) arguments:

> Looking back the time when I was still teaching at that center, I can see clearly how my viewpoint about native and non-native teachers of English has changed. As argued by Phillipson (1992), native speakers are not necessarily the best teachers. Although they are fully competent in the language, it does not mean that they perform well in the classroom. Non-native teachers, or local teachers, have their own advantages in teaching English to their students. (Lam's writing).

> The unit made me have a different perspective with respect to 'native speaker fallacy (Phillipson, 1992). Before I took the unit, I thought that I was inferior compared to the native speaker teacher because I couldn't speak 'standard English' and I couldn't have native-like English accent. However, after taking the unit, I realized that both native and non-native speaker teacher had their own advantages in EFL [English as a foreign language] classroom and had equal chance of success. It meant to me that even though I was a non-native speaker teacher, I could be a good English teacher with more confidence in teaching English. (Sunny's writing)

Evidently this unit helped the participants change their perceptions of and attitudes towards their status as teachers of English. To illustrate how they came to look at themselves as a teacher of English before and after studying this unit, they reported that they had experienced an 'inferiority complex' position before. Some drew on what had happened to them as they cooperated with native English speaking teachers (NESTs) to illustrate their inferior Other status. Sunny, for instance, narrated her situation of puzzlement in which she teamed up with a NEST during a teaching session in Korea and she was misunderstood. She could not defend herself, however, thinking that her position and particularly her competence in English were inferior. Similarly, Lam through the interview, spoke about her teaching experience during the time she worked with other NESTs in a language centre where she "felt inferior to them [NESTs] in terms of English competence" and "did not dare to say them [her ideas] out" in any teaching discussions.

Through the discussions of critical pedagogy (Canagarajah, 1999) and CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) in various contexts (Phan, 2008; and others), some participants started to critically evaluate traditional teaching methods and the failure to apply CLT in their home countries. This simultaneously helped them be aware of their own teaching position as legitimate

teachers. Jing emphasized that any effective teaching method was placed "in a particular context" (Jing's interview), so the traditional teaching method in his country was not necessarily ineffective. Sunny expressed how relieved she felt after knowing that CLT was not as perfect as she had assumed:

> I first heard about the CLT approach when I was a postgraduate student in Korea, which was almost 10 years ago. At that time I accepted the CLT as an icon of English teaching approach without any doubt about its status. It was a kind of standard, or a norm that we had to just follow in teaching English in Korea. Therefore, it was like a feeling that something solid and sound was shaken from the root when I learned in the unit that the CLT might not be a useful and realistic method to teach English in EFL situation. However, at the same time I felt relieved by the fact that I didn't have to be too much obsessed with the CLT and feel inferior as an English teacher, which I felt whenever I failed to teach English effectively according to the CLT in Korea. (Sunny's writing)

Besides the discourses that the participants drew on from the unit *Language, Society and Cultural Difference*, they also took up another means to show how transformative their identity was; namely their imagination of alternative instructional practices for teaching English on returning to their home countries.

Imagining alternative instructional practices of teaching as legitimate teachers of English

Based on their own professional experience and imaginations, the participants created different visions of ways they would teach English on their return home; ways which would help them become legitimate teachers of English. First, through their experiences of living in Australia, they believed that teaching English had to connect to teaching culture. More specifically, they felt this could be done through the use of "cultural materials like music, Western music, and Western movies" in order to "make students unconsciously understand English" (Takumi's interview). Ping and Jing also considered comparing cultural differences between the target language and mother tongue and teaching students to interact cross-culturally:

> I think … combine the knowledge of Chinese in teaching English is a good way to … compare or just contrast two languages and cultures … like when you talk to Chinese people,

> you have to do something like this and when you talk to English people, you have to do something like that. (Ping's interview)

Second, some participants raised concerns about the teaching method they would apply as a legitimate teacher of English in their own ELT contexts. CLT was critically analyzed with the conclusion that appropriating CLT according to the particular EFL context was necessary so that students could learn English to communicate and at the same time meet the requirements of their own English learning policy and assessments:

> I also agree with advantages of CLT. It has a lot of advantages, especially, in Korea, most of students focus on reading and listening because these are parts of examination. Therefore, students cannot speak English in front of … foreigners. So it's really a serious problem, so in this… respect, I agree with the idea that we need to adapt to CLT but I think we need to modify CLT according to EFL context. (Sunny's interview)

In addition, they saw establishing themselves as legitimate speakers and teachers of English as working in tandem with helping their students to realize that they were also legitimate speakers of English:

> The first thing I will do when I come back to teach is to make my students think about their own standpoint, their position. If students view themselves as legitimate speakers of English, they will develop their competence in a positively natural way. Once they know that even native speakers do make mistakes, they will not fear to make mistakes. (Lam's writing)

> .. if I go back to Korea, I would be more … sympathetic with students' reactions and tell them like … accent is not important, it is part of your identity and what is important is whatever accent you have, you are a legitimate speaker of English. (Sunny's interview)

Finally, the participants made use of their recent experiences to imagine how they would teach English and simultaneously help students improve English competency. Jing thought that he could understand his students better and have more sympathy towards them:

> I know how frustrating learning English will be, even now I don't feel I speak perfect English … so I know how to console or comfort my students like … don't be scared, English is a language for you to connect to the world. (Jing's interview)

Other participants like Takumi and Ping said they would draw on their wider experience or education as contributory factors facilitating the process of teaching English:

> I have working experience as a businessman, I can say… English is helpful because in this business situation, if you know this word, you can communicate with people or you can persuade the …customers or something like that. (Takumi's interview)

> I can teach some…some basic psychology knowledge [Ping's undergraduate major] to help students construct their learning strategy to remember something, for example, to memorize a word. (Ping's interview)

Overall, what participants imagined when asserting legitimacy ranged from taking advantage of their own professional experience and strengths, adapting ELT teaching methods to their own teaching contexts, to trying to help students legitimize themselves as speakers of English.

Identity as contradictory and ambivalent

There was ambivalence or even denial among participants regarding whether they could claim ownership of English, even though, as mentioned in the previous section, they used various means for considering themselves as legitimate speakers and teachers of English. Jing and Lam were uncertain about their status as owners of English although they all agreed that it was an international language and could be used by everyone:

> I don't believe that language is owned by certain people like … English, it doesn't belong to native speakers or a particular person but it belongs to everyone … it's like an international language. I never think I own English (laughing)… I don't know … It's interesting and I have to think about it (laughing). (Jing)

> … after I finished the unit, I no longer think English belongs to America or England or Australia but … I don't think that I own English … I'm not sure I'm the owner (laughing) I mean it does not mean that English is mine … I think it belongs to everyone, but it doesn't belong to any particular persons, or any particular countries or group of people cultures. (Lam)

Ping and Takumi, on the other hand, definitely did not look on themselves as owners of English, believing that native speaker competency was the only yardstick to determine ownership:

> I am not confident enough to say I am the owner of English …

> you know I have many grammar mistakes. (Ping)
>
> Oh I cannot be the owner of English yet. I need more time to be the owner of English. (Takumi)

In addition, there was contradiction between what the participants drew on as resources in the unit to perceive themselves as legitimate speakers and teachers of English and the ways they perceived themselves as speakers and teachers of English in practice, depending on each particular context. Jing initiated the notion that "the boundary between native speakers - non-native speakers" should be abolished but still wished to "achieve native speaker competency" so that his Taiwanese students could "learn authentic English" from him. Lam did not see herself as a legitimate speaker of English if she communicated with international friends, but only when she interacted with Australian people, though she acknowledged that English belongs to everyone. Again, her contradictory perception went back to the belief that native speakers are the only owners of English, which has been embedded in ELT over the years.

As discussed earlier, Ping and Takumi greatly appreciated the status of a NNEST, who in their view was not "necessarily inferior" (Ping's writing). Even so, both of them still emphasized native speakers of English as the role model for teaching or speaking English perfectly. This, as they explained, originated from the need of their particular contexts:

> In China, many people think that … native teachers are better than local teachers. In their opinion, local teachers can just teach grammar, words and they can't teach oral English very well. And… in some training institutions, you know in the advertisements, they always write that we have more than ten native English teachers, not more than 10 Chinese teachers of English (laughing)… I think if you want to learn English, learning from native teachers is the most effective way. (Ping's interview)
>
> For us [Japanese people], Americans are ideal English speakers so… if we can imitate like them so we are also like American native English speaker or something like that. (Takumi's interview)

Discussion

To discuss how the identity of the participants as legitimate speakers and teachers of English changed, I will use Norton's (2000) argument that language learners' identity undergoes

transformation as they are enabled to gain more access to material and symbolic resources in society, resulting in a changed sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. In this study, the participants were able to acquire symbolic resources from the unit *Language, Society and Cultural Difference*. Thanks to these resources, their awareness of their own status in regard to English started to change, leading to change in their identity construction, in regard to both their subject positions as speaker and teacher of English.

The participants took from the unit symbolic resources to identify who they are and how they relate to the social world regarding their status as legitimate speakers of English, primarily in social interaction inside and outside of classroom contexts in Australia. The sense of the self was seen through conditions to become legitimate speakers of English, including the right to speak (Norton Pierce, 1995; Miller, 2003), and claiming the ownership of English (Norton, 1997). In regard to their "awareness of the right to speak" (Norton Pierce, 1995, p.10), this can be seen clearly through the case of Takumi and particularly Sunny. They might have been placed in a marginalized subject position such as a customer who was not understood by a mainstream post-office staff member (Sunny) or a learner of English who tried to practice English with Australian students (Takumi), yet they were able to set up a "counter-discourse" which positioned themselves in a more powerful position (Norton, 2000, p. 127). Both participants were able to achieve the status of legitimate speakers of English who speak not only to be understood but also to be believed, respected, and distinguished by listeners (Bourdieu, 1977).

Interestingly, the participants' sense of their legitimate position as speakers of English was not only limited to the two above-mentioned conditions, but also extended to other concepts. They showed how they changed the perception of accent, from trying to imitate an American accent (Lam) or feeling uncomfortable with their strong Korean accent (Sunny), to accepting accent as part of their identity. Moreover, their realization of themselves as bilingual or multilingual speakers of English with "multi competence" was also raised (Jing) (Cook, 1999, p. 191). All of these achievements revealed that the participants were empowered to become legitimate speakers of English. Their identity as legitimate speakers also changed across time.

In addition to the symbolic resources that participants gained from the unit, identity transformation occurred as they imagined

themselves in a new teaching community with new visions of teaching; in other words as an "imagined community" and "imagined identity" (Norton, 2001, p. 136). Within this study, participants were able to imagine how they would teach English when returning home. The "imagined community" was EFL classroom settings where teaching English would be conducted by using Western cultural materials, comparing and contrasting cultural difference, appropriating CLT according to their EFL contexts, empowering their students as legitimate speakers of English and making use of their existing workplace strengths or education. Some of these imaginings, such as placing greater emphasis on cultural factors in ELT, originated from their new relationship with the world in which they were living, in the multicultural context of Australia, where they were gradually interacting more cross-culturally. The other imagined possibilities, like the appropriation of CLT, were driven by their access to knowledge in the coursework unit. These can be considered cultural capital, or as travelling tickets on the journey of reconstructing their new identities. The imagined identities were the new identities as legitimate speakers, and particularly teachers of English, with creative ways of teaching English. Obviously, imagination is also an effective means to show identity transformation alongside the support of linguistic resources from the unit.

Regarding the second position - identity as legitimate teachers of English - participants tended to draw on how they used to view themselves in relation to the social world. The relationship was either placed in a particular setting in which they worked with NESTs (Sunny and Lam) or in a broader context of the whole society of ELT in which NESTs have been accorded priority (Jing, Ping and Takumi). Due to the influence of these given contexts, and the lack of access to material or symbolic resources, the participants originally used to look upon themselves as inferior; the Other, or even as a failed teacher of English in applying CLT, like Sunny. As they became able to gain more symbolic resources through studying such constructs from the unit as the "native speaker fallacy" (Phillipson, 1992, p. 195), the meanings behind the postcolonial notions of Self and the Other and the functions of critical pedagogy in ELT, their awareness as teachers of English and their relationship to the world also underwent transformation. This movement is seen through the suggestion that the *"boundary"* between NESTs and NNESTs should be abolished (Jing), and through the positive attitudes towards English learning and

teaching from NNESTs due to their better appreciation of their own positive status and the realization of how useful critical pedagogy is in evaluating any teaching method. As a result of these resources, their identity as legitimate teachers of English has changed.

Regarding the contradiction and ambivalence of participants' identity as legitimate speakers and teachers of English, this happens as they negotiate between multiple subject positions (Hall, 1996; Norton, 2000). Accordingly, they may take up one subject position, and overlook others, depending on the specific context. As a result, the subject position, which is taken up, might contrast with the others. Within this study, the diversity of the participants' subject positions is seen as consisting of an Asian learner of English, a non-native speaker and teacher of English, and a legitimate speaker and teacher of English. Based on the reality and pressure of a particular context, however, they might take up one subject position, which they consider as appropriate in that context, and disregard others. Take the cases of Lam and Ping as examples to illustrate this point. Why did Lam feel *"natural"* and view English as her language when talking with Australian people? This is likely to have been because of her belief that only native speakers are the owners of English. Thus, when speaking with them, she felt affiliated with the community of native speakers and looked at herself as being like them in communication, the owner and the legitimate speaker. In contrast, due to perceiving international friends as illegitimate speakers of English, she was unable to associate with them as a legitimate speaker, and felt less "natural" talking with them; resulting in her taking up the (shared) position as an illegitimate speaker of English as well.

Similarly, Ping took advantage of the resources from the critical pedagogical unit to see herself as a legitimate teacher of English. In practice, the context of ELT in China in which "everything related to foreigners is better" and the embedded perception that the Self is superior to the Other might have prevented her from taking up the position as a legitimate teacher. Instead, she regarded herself merely as an incompetent learner and inferior teacher of English and at the same time concluded that "learning [English] from native teachers is the most effective way". Taking up one subject position and disregarding another explains why there is contradiction between what participants are able to draw on from the linguistic resources to assert their legitimacy as speakers and teachers and how they consider

themselves in reality. As a result, identity of the participants as legitimate speakers and teachers not only changes across time but is also ambivalent and contradictory.

Conclusion and implications

All participants acknowledged that intelligibility was a very important factor contributing to how legitimate they were as speakers and teachers of English. Thus, investigating to what extent intelligibility can shape international students' identity as legitimate speakers and teachers of English is also a valuable area for research.

The results of this study offer new directions for TESOL education programs in several ways. First, courses in teacher education programs can encourage student teachers, particularly international TESOL students, to develop their own strengths in other ways that can establish their legitimacy; such as enhancing aspects of their teacher identities like their experience of learning English, their understanding of students' needs, their knowledge of appropriate pedagogy in their own teaching contexts and the linguistic and cultural backgrounds they share with students. By allowing international TESOL students to focus on such factors that establish their legitimacy, educators can offer them new directions for imagining identities for themselves that contest the racist stereotypes with which they may have to engage.

Another role TESOL education programs can play is to support the imagination of new teacher identities through alternative discourses (Pavlenko, 2003). Such discourses as "awareness of the right to speak" (Norton Pierce, 1995, p. 18), bilingual and multilingual speaker (Cook, 1999), and "native speaker fallacy" (Phillipson, 1992) from the unit *Language, Cultural difference and Society* provide opportunities for TESOL international students to develop alternative instructional practices. Also, such discourses can help these student teachers to legitimize themselves as speakers and teachers of English and simultaneously challenge dominant beliefs about NNESTs. I therefore suggest that TESOL education programs concentrate on those discourses in relation to contesting the dichotomy of NESTs and NNESTs, thereby helping student teachers develop imagined identities as legitimate speakers and teachers.

Third, since identity as legitimate speakers and teachers of English changes over time, it is necessary to introduce "explicit ongoing orientations" about changing senses of selves before,

during and after a course of study (Phan, 2007, p. 33). These "orientations" act as a forum for TESOL students to express and exchange their perceptions. For instance, before commencing one unit in a course, students can be divided into groups. Members of each group maintain ongoing contact through means such as focus group discussions. In these discussions, students talk about how they identify themselves as legitimate speakers and teachers of English, and how their views change, as they go on with the unit. Those focus groups would not only provide opportunities for students to apply their "right to speak", but act as a channel providing feedback to educators. Additionally, individual reflective writing can be encouraged. Through each session of the unit, students write about how they perceive themselves as teachers and speakers of English. The reflective writing would be collected and given feedback by teaching staff. Students would be allowed to freely debate the comments given by their lecturers. By the end of the unit, TESOL students can compare what they wrote at the beginning and at the end of the unit to see how much they have changed their perceptions of themselves as teachers and speakers of English. Obviously, reflexivity helps students to look inward in a critical and relativistic manner in order to understand how they are situated through discourse.

Finally, if teacher education programs embrace constructs like "an awareness of the right to speak" (Norton Pierce, 1995, p.18), bilingual and multilingual speaker (Cook, 1999), "native speaker fallacy" (Phillipson, 1992), they will benefit not only TESOL international students but also local students – that is, native English speaking students. I believe that such programs will help native English students appreciate the strengths of international students and simultaneously contest racist stereotypes as well as the dichotomy of NNESTs and NESTs which has been firmly embedded in ELT. To what extent these programs might be valuable for native English speaking students is another area in which education researchers might be interested.

Overall, this study supports the value of studying a critical pedagogical unit in post graduate TESOL study, as to some extent the participants were able to form an identity as legitimate speakers, and teachers of English, after studying the unit. However, participants' self-perception based on knowledge gained from the unit was sometimes contradictory or ambivalent compared to the ways they saw themselves as speakers and teachers of English in each particular context in practice. The transformation of identity partially depended on symbolic resources, including the linguistic

constructs and theoretical knowledge from the unit itself, which act as cultural capital that participants could draw on. On the other hand, imagining new kinds of instructional teaching practice was another means participants found to establish their legitimacy, and simultaneously assert their changing identity, as legitimate speakers and teachers of English.

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Appendix 1 - Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about yourself (age, country of origin, length of studying English, educational background, and English teaching experience).
2. What is your story to pursue Master of Education (TESOL international)? What is your plan after you get your master degree?
3. How will you teach English as you finish the TESOL course?
4. Whose English do you speak? Can you explain?
5. How did you participate in interaction with peers and lecturers in the class during studying *Language, Society and Cultural Difference?*
6. Please tell me whether you think you are a qualified/ legitimate speaker and teacher of English or not? (For instance, when you were in your country, in Australia and particularly after you took *Language, Society and Cultural Difference*).
7. Please tell me whether you think you are the owner of English or not.
8. What are reasons people still highly appreciate native English speaking teachers? What is this situation in your country? What is your opinion for that?
9. Is there anything else you would like to add?

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