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Nonnative Speaker Teachers' Professional Identities: The Effects of Teaching Experience and Linguistic and Social Contexts

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and Linguistic and Social Contexts

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in Applied Linguistics

by

Ka Hye Chung

2014

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Nonnative Speaker Teachers' Professional Identities: The Effects of Teaching Experience

and Linguistic and Social Contexts

by

Ka Hye Chung

Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics

University of California, Los Angeles, 2014

Professor Katrina D. Thompson, Chair

While a growing number of second language courses are taught by both native and nonnative speaker teachers, the assumption that native speakers are inherently more effective teachers is still quite prevalent, bringing challenges to the construction of nonnative speakers teachers' professional identities. This study problematizes the dominance of "nativeness" in second language learning and teaching precisely because the concept greatly influences and shapes the ways in which nonnative speaker teachers establish their expertise and credibility in the classroom. Even though issues related to these teachers are not limited to the field of teaching English as a second language, to date, the majority of studies on this topic have centered on speakers and teachers of the English language. As societies become increasingly multilingual and multicultural,

however, the dichotomy between native and nonnative speakers needs to be reexamined by taking into account speakers of languages other than English. Similarly, the self-perceptions of nonnative speaker teachers need to be investigated in terms of the unequal power relations involved in the labeling of native and nonnative speakers. Using semi-structured interviews with nonnative speaker teachers of English, Spanish, Japanese, and German, this study investigates the factors that affect both teaching practice and the ongoing construction of teachers' professional identities. The most critical factor contributing to teachers' self-empowerment is the notion of their "near-nativeness," a concept which reflects their nonnativeness as well as their experiences learning a second language and their attainment of a high level of proficiency in their second language. Identifying as near-native speakers enabled and empowered teachers to confront and alter their students' prejudices and negative stereotypes about nonnative speaker teachers. At the same time teachers still report a certain degree of insecurity as nonnative speakers particularly in the presence of heritage language students in their classrooms, precisely because teachers conceived of these students as potential native speakers with more intrinsic access to the target language. The findings of this study suggest that nonnative speaker teachers can become successful teachers by embracing their nonnative speaker identities and by capitalizing on their particular awareness of the language learning process. The study findings provide insight into the construction of the professional identities of nonnative speaker teachers, thus further contributing to their self-empowerment.

The thesis of Ka Hye Chung is approved.

Marianne Celce-Murcia

John H. Schumann

Katrina D. Thompson, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2014

To my parents,

In-Jin Chung and Young-Hae Kwon

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1. INTRODUCTION

Nonnative speakers teach a growing number of university-level language courses in the U.S., yet the myth of the native speaker as an inherently model speaker and ideal teacher is still widely accepted. This fact presents challenges for nonnative speaker teachers and can result in their professional marginalization. Furthermore, the assumption that native speakers make better teachers reinforces the unequal relationship between the two speaker groups in the field of second language learning and teaching.

At the center of nonnative speaker teachers' identity construction lies the dichotomy of native versus nonnative speakers as well as the construct of the idealized native speaker and issues of language ownership. The native versus nonnative speaker dichotomy becomes more complicated and controversial as societies become more multilingual and multicultural. The social construct of the idealized native speaker needs to be called into question because it does not appropriately reflect language use in reality and involves other factors such as race, ethnicity, national origin, and accent. Also, nonnative speakers' professional identity formation needs to be understood in relation to language ownership because identity is interactively negotiated in the power dynamics between nonnative speakers and the target language community. That is, negotiation of identity occurs as an interplay between individual self-positioning and others' positioning of the individual (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). In reference to this dynamic, Davies (2003) claims that it is possible for successful second language learners to gain native speaker membership, a possibility which is determined by their level of confidence and their identity. The present study aims to investigate how nonnative speaker teachers

negotiate their professional identities and teaching practices vis-à-vis the social construct of the native speaker.

The vast majority of research on nonnative speaker teachers' professional identities have centered on English language teaching, leaving issues related to nonnative speaker teachers of other languages rarely discussed. Including a study of English, *a lingua franca*, along with other languages that do not hold such a prestigious status, the present study aims to examine whether or not power relations involved in nonnative speaker teachers' identity negotiation emerge differently depending on the status of the language in question. It also aims to investigate any language-specific challenges that nonnative speaker teachers face in their profession. In order to gain a broader understanding of how nonnative speaker teachers' identities are constantly negotiated and transformed by their experiences in their profession, participants who are teachers of various languages were selected. By probing the nonnative speaker teachers' lived experiences, the present study seeks to explore how nonnative teachers of various languages form their professional identities, revealing the factors that are involved in their self-perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs about their teaching practice.

Identity construction is not fixed but an ongoing process that is impacted by one's social, cultural, and linguistic experience (Norton, 2000). In order to bring to light the defining factors involved in their identify formation, the study will explore the effects of these nonnative speaker teachers' experience of learning the target language, as well as the impact of their teaching expertise and their target language proficiency in their self-conceptualization and their teaching practices. Also, because identity is not fixed but dynamic and contextually shaped, it is important to look at how participants negotiate

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their multiple identities as second language learners, speakers, and teachers. As Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999) suggest, "the issues involved in nativeness must first be articulated through the experiences and self-representation of both nonnative English-speaking teachers and native-English-speaking teachers to challenge the professional boundaries and their ideological basis" (p. 429). By including teachers who have experience teaching both their native and nonnative language, this study hopes to scrutinize the teachers' self-perceptions. Their on-site experiences are a window through which we can see how they make sense of their teaching profession and how they frame their native and nonnative speaker identities with respective languages. The ways in which they make meaning out of their on-site experiences allow us to see how they frame their native and nonnative speaker identity with respect to the language they teach and allow us to examine the validity of the notion, which Phillipson (1992) coined as *the native speaker fallacy*, which is that native speakers are more effective than nonnative in teaching target languages.

The present study is therefore designed to look into how nonnative speaker teachers establish credibility and empower themselves as language teaching professionals as they encounter various challenges and difficulties in their daily practice. While investigating the social and linguistic experiences that disempower these teachers, the study will at the same time examine the factors that contribute to their self-empowerment, including how they take advantage of their nonnative speaker status and qualify themselves as legitimate teachers. Phillipson (1992) and Kramsch (1998) claim that non-native speakers, with their own language learning experiences, have certain advantages that in fact make them highly qualified teachers. Likewise, Medgyes (1992, 2001) argue

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that, though they necessarily have different strengths, both native and nonnative speakers can be equally successful teachers in their own terms. In order to explore the participants' self-images as target language teachers, the study will analyze their perceived strengths, the source of their insecurities, and the ways in which they present themselves to the students. The focus of the present study therefore lies not in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of nonnative speaker teachers, but in finding how they develop a sense of agency, how they understand their roles in class, and how they negotiate their identities in the profession.

Several studies have problematized the binary division of native versus nonnative speaker, and have criticized the use of the term "nonnative speaker" in particular because of the misleading notions it implies (Rampton, 1990; Davies, 1991; Kachru & Nelson, 1996). As Moussu and Llurda (2008) argue, "there is still no theoretical evidence for the need to distinguish between these two categories" (p. 318), particularly as it is often difficult to categorize individuals into either one of the two groups (Rampton, 1990; Liu, 1999b; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 2001). A few studies have suggested alternative terms though none of them have caught on; the distinction between the two speaker groups as well as the terms "native speaker" and "nonnative speaker" remain widely used in the literature for practical reasons (Arva & Medgyes, 2000). Likewise, Braine (2010) noted that in TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages), the term "nonnative speaker," rather than the alternative ones suggested in the literature, has been commonly used in presentations and publications on nonnative speaker issues. The present study will use the terms "native" and "nonnative" precisely because nonnative speaker teachers themselves have consented to use the term "nonnative" when they

established TESOL NNEST (Nonnative English Speaker Teachers) Caucus in 1998 and the distinction of the two speaker groups is central to the discussion of nonnative speaker teachers' professional identities.

The purpose of the present study is not to generalize the participants' experiences and self-conceptions but to shed light on the ways in which they construct their identities and establish themselves as qualified professionals. In order to identify the major factors that are involved in the ongoing formation of their professional identities, the present study employed one-on-one interviews that included open-ended questions, a format which allowed themes to emerge naturally. I hope that the findings of this study provide insight into the construction of nonnative speaker teachers' professional identities and further contribute to their self-empowerment.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Who is a native speaker? Who is a nonnative speaker?

Nonnative speaker teachers' identity construction needs to be first examined in relation to the ways in which the terms "native speaker" and "nonnative speaker" are defined. Deciding who is a native speaker and who is a non-native speaker is a complex matter in two respects. First, the definition of native speaker tends to circulate, resulting in nonnative speaker being negatively defined against native speaker (Davies, 1991). That is, rather than being defined on its own terms, the nonnative speaker is defined as a speaker who is considered not a native speaker; one that does not have the characteristics of the native speaker. Second, the defining features of the native speaker involve notions that are socially constructed. While being born into a language and learning it in early childhood are commonly discussed features of native speakers (Davies, 1991; Kramsch, 1997; Cook, 1999), other social factors also come into play, making the issue far more complex than it may initially appear. For example, Davies suggests that membership into a community of native speakers is "a matter of self ascription … that members decide for themselves" (p. 8). Accordingly, a speaker who describes himself as a native speaker has to "identify with other native speakers" (p. 8) in the speech community. In this sense, confidence and identity is central to claiming native speaker membership. Davies also suggests that one's social acceptance into the respective speech community is a defining element; this view is shared by Kramsch, who states that birth, education, and linguistic competence are not sufficient for claiming a native speakership and that "one must also

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be recognized as a native speaker by the relevant community" (p. 363). In her study, however, Kramsch did not further explore the specific factors that play a part in the community members' judgment of whether or not someone is native speaker. As these studies therefore show, there is no agreement on the definition of native speaker or nonnative speaker in the literature, which has accordingly generated debate on the validity of the notion of native speaker in general.

While there is no clear definition of the native speaker, many factors have been found to be associated with the notion. The major factors discussed in the literature are race, ethnicity, accent, and national origin. For example, Amin (1997) shows that ESL (English as a Second Language) students assume that a teacher's race, nativeness, and language ability are connected. They assume that "only White teachers can be native speakers of English" (p. 580), a notion that excludes teachers of color. This assumption, combined with the students' belief that only native speakers speak English properly results in the false assumption that teachers of color must be nonnative speakers, and that they are therefore less capable of teaching English than their White counterparts. In a similar vein, Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999) find that national origin and accent are the major characteristics that are "socially held to represent those of the native speaker" (p. 416). This finding is supported by the results in Chen and Cheng (2012), which demonstrate that, because of their foreign names and accents, nonnative English speaker teachers at a university in the U.S. were frequently pegged as nonnative speakers by their students. Chen and Cheng also found that those nonnative teachers who had a more American accent felt more secure than those who did not when they had to deal with their students' questions about their cultural identity. What the findings of these studies show

is that the notion of the native speaker is socially constructed, and is a notion that involves several biological and social factors that are assumed to represent characteristics of native speakers. With reference to this, Leung et al. (1997) state that even though language, ethnicity, and social identity are interrelated, the relationship among the three factors is not fixed but changeable. Likewise, Rampton (1990) argued that one's ethnic background and national origin do not correspond with language ability.

2.2 Different approaches to the issue of native and nonnative speakers

Researchers have taken two differing approaches to the study of nonnative speaker teachers. The first approach suggests a binary division of native speaker versus nonnative speaker, and asserts that the different levels of language proficiency between the two groups ultimately lead to significant differences in instructional practices, which were mostly language-related. For example, though he does not clearly present what factors define one as a native speaker aside from using the language as a first language, Medgyes (1992) divided speakers of English into two distinct categories based on their native speaker status. Medgyes' claim is that native speakers have linguistic competence that nonnative speakers can never achieve no matter how much time and effort they invest in learning the second language. In the same sense, Medgyes made a clear distinction between native proficiency and near native proficiency, presenting the latter as the highest attainment for nonnative speakers. According to these distinctions, nonnative speakers are permanent learners who can never cross the border between native speaker and nonnative speaker. Furthermore, Medgyes claims that recognizing such differences is

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beneficial for both groups of teachers because it helps them to be aware of their own limitations as well as their own potential, and to ultimately become successful teachers. In addition, he argues that both groups of teachers, with their different strengths and weaknesses, can be equally effective teachers on their own terms. Also, Medgyes (1994) and Reves & Medgyes (1994) investigate differences between native and nonnative English speaker teachers in terms of teaching behavior, and concluded that the discrepancy in their levels of language proficiency is the primary factor in the differences in their teaching practices. This study is supported by Arva & Medgyes (2000), who maintained that nonnative English speaker teachers would never be on an equal level with native English speaker teachers in terms of linguistic command in all four areas (reading, writing, listening, and speaking).

These approaches that maintain a binary division between native speaker and nonnative speaker (Medgyes, 1992, 1994; Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Arva & Medgyes, 2000) are grounded in the concept of linguistic deficit, which is defined as the language proficiency of nonnative speakers measured against that of native speakers. In this approach, nonnative speakers are positioned as second-class speakers, and the gap between the two speaker groups is permanent. Cook (2005) addresses the problem using the native speaker as the target for second language learners, meaning that nonnative speakers are not described in their own right but only in comparison with native speakers.

Furthermore, Medgyes (1994) viewed being born into a language as a defining characteristic of all native speakers, which consequently decides one's proficiency in the language. He claims that nonnative speakers are less reliable sources of both linguistic and cultural knowledge, while native speakers are by birth representatives of English

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language and the cultures of English-speaking countries. Even though, in these studies, there is no clear definition of native speakers as pointed out earlier, if we use birth and acquisition in childhood as defining elements, the nonnative speaker can never become a native speaker no matter how competent he is in the target language simply because he can not go back and change his language learning history. Cook (2005) argues that if we define native speakers as people who use the first language learned in childhood, "nothing learnt in later life could qualify you as a native speaker" (p. 49). Examining the concept of native speaker within the framework of second language acquisition, Cook (2005) concludes: "L2 users should be judged by what they are, L2 users, not what they can never be by definition, native speakers" (p. 50).

In contrast, the second approach to the issue of nonnative speaker teachers calls into question the idea that native speakers and nonnative speakers are two distinct groups. Davies (1991) challenges the idea that "a native speaker is uniquely and permanently different from a nonnative speaker," instead placing speakers on a continuum rather than a dichotomy (p. 45). Additionally, he insists that it is possible for adult second language learners to move along the continuum and to acquire native speaker competence. He also refers to this competence as a source of confidence that is essential for individuals to claim native speaker membership. In this respect, he believes that native speaker status is decided not only by linguistic competence but also by self-ascription, meaning that one identifies oneself with other members in the native speech community.

In similar fashion, as the basis for their argument against the dichotomy of native versus nonnative speakers, Kachru and Nelson (1996) referred to "the great variety of users and uses of English today" (p. 77-78). Their claim is that the labeling of native and

nonnative speakers is too simplistic as it overlooks diversity, more evident today than ever before, in the use of English. Drawing attention to the status of English as an international means of communication among speakers of various sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds, they point out the, in fact, complicated nature of deciding who will be labeled an English speaker. Kachru & Nelson further assert that the labeling of native and nonnative speaker that "used to be so comfortably available as a demarcation line between this and that type or group of users of English must now be called into serious question" (p. 81). Though the languages in the present study do not hold such a prestigious position as *a lingua franca* and therefore may have less diversity in terms of users and language varieties, the binary division of native versus nonnative speakers is nevertheless a complex issue that can be observed in every language, especially as societies become more multilingual and multicultural.

A number of studies have questioned the native speaker versus nonnative speaker dichotomy within the framework of second language learning and teaching (Phillipson, 1992; Amin, 1997; Kramsch, 1997; Braine, 1999; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Liu, 1999b). Phillipson (1992), for example, coined the term *native speaker fallacy*, arguing that the belief that the ideal language teacher is a native speaker of the target language has no scientific validity. According to him, the primary qualities that make a good teacher are knowledge of the target language and insight into the language learning process, qualities which are not innate but are instilled, whether a teacher is a native or a nonnative speaker of the target language, through teacher training. In addition, he asserts that teacher training can help nonnative speakers to acquire assets assumed to be exclusive to native speakers. Furthermore, according to Phillipson, nonnative speaker

teachers who have undergone the process of second language learning and have successfully achieved near native proficiency may have deeper insight into the students' needs, which may in fact make them better qualified to teach target languages than their native speaker counterparts. Additionally, he rejects the idea that language teaching intrinsically involves imparting the culture of native speakers, insisting instead that nonnative speakers who do not have such a cultural background can still teach the target language successfully.

2.3 The notion of the idealized native speaker

Other researchers have questioned the dichotomy of native versus nonnative speakers by critically scrutinizing the constructs of the native speaker and the mother tongue. Essentially, these studies have concluded that there exists no such thing as a "native speaker" or a "nonnative speaker." In his book *The Native Speaker Is Dead!* (1985), Paikeday examines the meaning of the term native speaker, concluding that the concept "represents an ideal, a convenient fiction, or shibboleth rather than a reality like Dick or Jane." A similar stance is revealed in Kramsch (1997), who draws attention to the disparity between the conventional concept of the native speaker and language use in reality. She asserts that the native speaker is an imaginary construct that fails to adequately reflect the linguistic repertoire of many speakers in real life. This approach is also shared by Ferguson (1982), who states, "The whole mystique of the native speaker and the mother tongue should probably be quietly dropped from the linguist's set of professional myths about language" (p. vii).

Calling into question the widely held notion of the native speaker, other studies put forward alternative concepts for describing the relationship between people and language. These studies take into account the speakers' agency and the social context in which language is used, placing particular emphasis on the changing nature of the relationship between people and language. Leung, Harris, and Rampton (1997) also challenge the notion of the native speaker, instead calling it *the idealized native speaker* because the term describes White monolingual speakers as ideal speakers of English while marginalizing ethnic and linguistic minorities. Their argument is that the notion of the native speaker assumes a fixed relationship between one's ethnic background and one's language use, thereby overlooking the complex ways in which one's linguistic repertoire is formed through the negotiation between ethnicity and social identity. In addition, they put forward the concept that Rampton (1990) proposes as an alternative conceptual framework for describing speakers' relationship to language: *language expertise, language inheritance,* and *language affiliation*. The term *language expertise* refers to one's level of proficiency in a language, *language affiliation* refers to one's sense of attachment to a language, and *language inheritance* refers to one's birth into a social group traditionally linked to a particular language. Introducing these concepts that separate linguistic competence from sociolinguistic identities, Rampton (1990) insists, "the notion of expert shifts the emphasis from 'who you are' to 'what you know'" (p. 99).

Even though several scholars have criticized the binary division of native and nonnative speakers, the terms "native speaker" and "nonnative speaker" continue to circulate, perpetuating the assumption that native speakers are permanently superior to nonnative ones (Rampton, 1990). For these reasons, scholars have proposed alternative

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terms, including: *expert speakers* (Rampton, 1990), *members of a speech fellowship* (Kachru, 1985), *proficient users of English* (Paikeday, 1985), etc. Even though these terms are justifiable on both linguistic and ideological grounds, none of them have been widely used to replace the terms "native speaker" and "nonnative speaker" (Arva & Medgyes, 2000), both of which continue to be extensively used in the language teaching profession. Noting this, Clark and Paran (2007) argue that emphasis on language competence has not succeeded in eliminating the use of the labels native speaker and nonnative speaker. In addition, Medgyes (1992) argues that the alternative terms do not offer definitions that are any more accurate than the original terms do.

2.4 The power relations in the labeling of native speakers and nonnative speakers

The power relations in the labeling of native and nonnative speakers and their attendant professional issues have been frequently explored in the literature. For example, Davies (1991) maintains, the binary division of native English speaker versus nonnative English speaker is "power driven, identity-laden, and confidence-affecting" (p. 166, cited in Liu, 1999b, p. 86). Furthermore, Armour (2010) posits that speakers using a second language are involved in power struggles with native speakers, and are consequently positioned in the margin by native speakers. Likewise, linguistic and sociopolitical power dynamics between the two groups disempowers nonnative speaker teachers, thus influencing the construction of their professional identities (Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999). Sharing this argument, Tsui (2007) suggests that "identification is both relational and experiential" (p. 660) and that power relationship plays a critical role in the processes

of identity formation, concluding that asymmetrical power relationship leads to the marginality of membership. Phillipson (1992) is particularly concerned with English language teaching, making a distinction between Center and Periphery English-speaking countries. In Phillipson's framework, the Center consists of powerful Western countries such as Britain, the U.S., Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, in which English is used as a native language, whereas the Periphery refers to the dominated countries such as India, Nigeria, Japan and other countries in which English is used as a second or foreign language. Phillipson focuses on the unequal relationship between Center and Periphery, explaining it in terms of the spread of English and the worldwide hegemony of English, which resulted from the policies that dominant Center countries adopted for their own economic benefits. Phillipson (1992) further argues that *the native speaker fallacy*— defined as the belief that the ideal teacher is a native speaker—has reinforced the linguistic norms of the Center while preventing the flourishing of local pedagogical initiative, thereby causing an ideological and structural dependence of the Periphery-English countries on the Center. In addition, the prevailing unquestioned acceptance of the belief can further perpetuate existing unequal power relations (Phillipson, 1992) as well as the dominance of nativeness (Ilieva, 2010).

Other studies examine the discrimination that nonnative speaker teachers experience in employment practices. Mahboob et al. (2004), for example, investigated employers' attitudes towards teachers' native status in the hiring process. The study was carried out in the ESL context in the United States and the results indicate that the "native English speaker criterion" greatly impact employers' recruitment decisions. Basing their study on Mahboob et al. (2004), Clark and Paran (2007) explore the extent to which, in

the United Kingdom, ESL employers' perceptions of teachers' nativeness was regarded as an important factor in hiring decisions. The findings of this study were consistent with those of Mahboob et al. (2004) in that the "native English speaker criterion" had a considerable influence on hiring decisions. Similarly, Liu (1999b) presents the phenomenon of nonnative English speaker applicants minimizing their nonnative speaker identities by using English names in order to not be overlooked before their qualifications for employment are reviewed. These studies reveal that nonnative speakers are discriminated against and are marginalized in employment, which results from the prevalent assumption that native speakers of English are better qualified to teach the language.

Pre-service nonnative speaker teachers as well as those who are actually teaching face challenges that have the potential to undermine their credibility as teachers. This matter has been one of the most frequently discussed themes in the literature. This body of research describes their struggles to establish themselves as authentic teachers (Widdowson, 1994; Braine, 1999; Brutt-Griffler and Samimy, 1999). Due to their nonnative status, the nonnative ESL and EFL teachers in Braine's (1999) study often had their experience and their expertise and professional legitimacy questioned by their students and colleagues. Likewise, the stereotypes that students and parents have about authentic language teachers cause nonnative speaker teachers to feel disempowered (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999). Widdowson (1994) claims, "The notion of authenticity, then, privileges native-speaker use as the proper language for learning. But it also, of course, privileges the native-speaker teachers of the language" (p. 387).

The argument against the *native speaker fallacy* leads us to two fundamental

questions: 'Who is an ideal teacher?' What are the essential qualities that make an ideal

teacher? A number of studies have identified the factors affecting teacher efficiency; at

the center of the discussion lie teachers' own experiences of learning second languages

successfully. For example, Medgyes (1992) maintains that the ideal native speaker

teacher of English is the one who has attained a high degree of proficiency in the students'

first language, while his or her nonnative counterpart is one who has successfully attained

near native proficiency in English. Sharing this viewpoint, Phillipson (1992) asserts that

an ideal teacher of English, whether he or she is a native or a nonnative speaker, is one

who has an experience of successfully achieving near native proficiency in his second

language as well as familiarity with the language and culture of his or her students. Even

though Phillipson does not suggest separate models for each speaker group, these

qualities imply that an ideal teacher is one who has substantial knowledge of both the

target language and the students' native language. If this is in fact the case, then why do

these scholars take firsthand experience of learning a second language to be crucial to

teachers' professionalism? The answer can only be that effectiveness as a teacher can be

largely gained from actually going through the complex process of acquiring a second

language, a process which lends insight into the differences between one's native and

one's second language as well as aids in understanding students' difficulties in second

language learning.

2.5 Nonnative speaker teachers in the classroom

The linguistic, cultural, and learning experiences that nonnative speaker teachers share with students are considered to be the most powerful resources that contribute most significantly to teachers' professional strengths. For example, Ling and Braine (2007) show that university students feel that the main strengths of nonnative English speaking teachers is their empathy for students' experience and their shared cultural background with students. Medgyes also (1994) identified positive characteristics of nonnative English speaking teachers, which were later summarized by Moussu and Llurda (2008): "1) They provide a good learner model to their students; 2) They can teach language strategies very effectively; 3) They are able to provide more information about the language to their students; 4) They understand the difficulties and needs of the students; 5) They are able to anticipate and predict language difficulties; and, 6) In EFL settings, they can use the students' native language to their advantage" (p. 322). Similarly, in his investigation of ESL students' perceptions of nonnative speaker teachers, Mahboob (2004) found that students considered the teachers' own experiences of learning second languages to be their biggest strength. Students felt that this factor enabled teachers to give more satisfactory explanations and to be more empathetic. In accordance with these findings, Cook (2005) claims, nonnative speaker teachers "provide models of proficient L2 users in action in the classroom," and "present examples of people who have become successful L2 users" (p. 57). Furthermore, Ellis (2004) maintains that nonnative speaker teachers of English have multilingual and multicultural experiences from which their particular knowledge and insight about successful teaching may develop. In addition, these teachers can establish solidarity with their students and become models of successful second language learners, thus motivating and encouraging their students.

Supporting this argument, Tang (1997) adds that a shared first language between nonnative speaker teachers and students can be a useful tool for instruction. Moreover, nonnative speaker teachers are insiders who are more knowledgeable about the particular social and local context in which learning and teaching take place (Widdowson, 1994; Tang, 1997).

On the other hand, a number of studies have explored the shortcomings of nonnative speaker teachers. The findings of Reves & Medgyes (1994) show that the most frequently mentioned areas of difficulty were vocabulary, speaking and fluency, and pronunciation. Cook (2005) also notes that nonnative speaker teachers feel at a disadvantage in terms of their level of fluency. Reiterating this, Mahboob (2004) explains that nonnative speaker teachers received negative comments from their students with respect to teaching speaking, culture, and pronunciation. Additionally, the students did not regard nonnative speaker teachers as good learner models, a conclusion which contradicts the findings in Medgyes (1994) and Cook (2005). In addition, though negative aspects were considered to be influenced by the local context, Ling & Braine (2007) reveal the weaknesses of nonnative speaker teachers in Hong Kong, which include using an exam-oriented teaching approach, over-correcting students' work, and exhibiting limited use of target language.

2.6 Self-perceptions of nonnative speaker teachers

In particular, a body of research has drawn attention to nonnative speaker teachers' self-images and perceived needs and concerns. Kamhi-Stein (2000) summarizes and

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addresses the major issues from the extant literature on nonnative English speaker teachers: 1) "low confidence and self-perceived challenges to professional competence"; 2) "self-perceived language needs"; 3) "lack of voice and visibility in the TESOL profession"; 4) "self-perceived prejudice based on ethnicity or nonnative status" (p. 10). Medgyes (1992) asserts that nonnative English speaker teachers, despite their potential, have a sense of insecurity and a low level of self-confidence caused by their realization of their limited knowledge of the target language. This "inferiority complex" (p. 348) hampers their professional growth as teachers (Reves & Medgyes, 1994). Similarly, Samimy & Brutt-Griffler (1999) describe how nonnative pre-service teachers enrolled in TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) teacher preparation programs are influenced by the disempowering discourses of nativeness, which resulted in their having low levels of self-confidence with regard to their capacities as language teaching professionals.

Teachers' self-perceptions are of great importance because they substantially shape the ways in which teachers construct their teaching practices, which ultimately affects students' motivation and attitude towards learning (Kamhi-Stein, 2013b). That is, teachers' self-images as teachers play an important role in how they present themselves in the classroom, how they interact with their students, how they design their classroom instruction, etc. Duff & Uchida (1997) assert that teachers' role identities are closely associated with their instructional practices, which then guides their professional development. On the other hand, teachers' self-images are constantly changing as they "confirm, validate, and sometimes modify and change these images with additional experience" (Duff & Uchida, 1997, p. 474). Nonnative speaker teachers in particular are

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continuously reconstructing their identities in relation to their students' attitudes towards them, their self-perceived needs and concerns, and their positioning in employment situations (Chen & Cheng, 2012). These facts demonstrate the importance of exploring teachers' self-perceptions with respect to the context in which their teaching practices take place, including factors such as their relationships with students, the level of the classes they are teaching, the policy of the language program, etc.

2.7 Nonnative speaker teachers of various languages

While research on nonnative speaker teachers has predominantly explored issues in English language teaching, studies on other languages are rare, having begun only recently, and, thus far, cover rather limited topics. For example, Callahan (2006) conducted a study that explored university students' perceptions of native and nonnative speaker teachers, comparing a group of students learning English as a second language and another group of students learning Spanish as a foreign language. The findings of the study indicate that, compared to those learning Spanish, who gave varying responses in different areas in their ratings of the teachers, ESL students had a stronger preference for native speaker teachers. In both groups, however, native speaker teachers were regarded as more effective at teaching pronunciation and culture, while nonnative ones were seen to be better at teaching grammar and were rated as more empathetic. Also, in both groups, students who had a native speaker of the target language in their family had a stronger tendency to identify themselves with and to prefer native speaker teachers.

Hertel & Sunderman (2009) investigated students' attitudes toward native and

nonnative teachers of Spanish, finding that students in advanced level courses showed a preference for native speaker teachers with regard to the teachers' knowledge of the subject matter and teaching ability and rated their own potential to learn from these teachers more positively. In addition, they rated native speaker teachers higher than nonnative ones in teaching pronunciation and cultural knowledge—which reiterates the findings in Medgyes (1992) and Phillipson (1992) that studied teachers of English—and rated nonnative speaker teachers of Spanish as more effective in teaching grammar and better at understanding student difficulties in learning than native ones. Acknowledging the unique strengths and weaknesses of each speaker group, the students did not show a clear preference for either group.

In another study, however, Thompson & Fioramonte (2013) examined self-perceptions of nonnative speakers of Spanish who teach at the university level. These teachers did not attribute their limited oral skills to their nonnativeness, explaining instead that native speakers do not always speak perfectly. These perceptions, however, were inconsistent with those regarding pronunciation, which they felt consistently revealed their nonnativeness and was the factor most commonly considered to be the main indicator of their second language proficiency. Based on this result, Thompson & Fioramonte problematized using pronunciation as the critical measure of linguistic ability, arguing that it strengthens the negative stereotypes/images of nonnative speaker teachers. Pronunciation is generally framed in the literature as one of the major disadvantages that nonnative speaker teachers report (Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999; Mahboob, 2004). Furthermore, Lecki (2011) investigated the challenges nonnative speaker teachers of various Asian and European languages encounter as well as these

teachers' contributions to language teaching. The findings of the interview and questionnaire confirmed those in previous studies, which include nonnative speaker teachers' concerns about maintaining and improving their proficiency in the target languages, their limited knowledge of the target culture, their qualification and authority being questioned by others because of their nonnative status, the fact that those teachers belonging to a visible minority were judged more negatively, etc. Nevertheless, the participants believed that their multilingual backgrounds enabled them to design their courses more effectively and empowered them to be role models for the students.

Furthermore, Lecki (2011) was the first to draw attention to the issue of nonnative speakers teaching heritage language students of the target language. While the teachers considered those students' linguistic and cultural knowledge to be resources that support their teaching, at the same time, they felt that the students have a tendency to become authoritative gatekeepers who challenged the teachers' credibility. These results reveal the double roles heritage learners may play in the classroom as well as the power dynamic between nonnative speaker teachers and their heritage language students. However, Lecki (2011) focused primarily on the heritage language students' roles in the classroom and did not further investigate the underlying reasons that nonnative speaker teachers perceived their heritage language students as such. Since the vast majority of studies on nonnative speaker teachers have looked at English language, a language that has predominantly second language learners, issues pertinent to nonnative speakers teaching heritage language students have not yet received attention.

While presenting a comparative analysis of students learning English and Spanish, Callahan (2006) did not closely examine the relationship between the students'

preferences for native speaker teachers and the status of the language in question. That is, the study did not specifically look at whether or not the privileged position that English holds as *a lingua franca* impacted the students' beliefs regarding the native speaker as the ideal teacher. In the field of English language teaching, *the native speaker fallacy* (Phillipson, 1992)—defined as the fallacious belief that native speakers make the best teachers—is explained in relation to the unequal power relationships, rooted in the spread of English and its worldwide hegemony, between native and nonnative speaker teachers. For example, Callahan (2006) shows that English language learners, compared to students learning Spanish, have a stronger preference for native speaker teachers. This finding implies that students who learn languages other than English may be similarly but relatively less affected by *the native speaker fallacy*. By including participants who are teachers of Spanish, Japanese, and German, the present study attempts to investigate whether or not the notion of the idealized native speaker that has been frequently discussed in the literature on nonnative speaker teachers of English similarly applies to students' conceptualization of nonnative speakers who teach languages that do not have the privileged status of *a lingua franca*.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Participants

The participants in the present study are eight teachers who have experience with teaching language(s) of which they are nonnative speakers at the university level in the U.S. They were recruited through personal contacts, through snowball sampling, and through recruitment emails sent to instructors in a language program.

As for meeting the eligibility criteria to participate in the study, some participants identified themselves via the recruitment email as nonnative speakers of the language they were currently teaching or had taught, while others were identified as such by others including myself and those who referred me to the participants. In the latter case, the prospective participants claimed their nonnative status either by agreeing to participate in the study or by confirming with me that they were eligible for the study. At the outset of the study, the participants were informed that the purpose of the study is to explore nonnative speaker teachers' professional identities. They were also informed that confidentiality about their identities would be maintained through the use of pseudonyms.

The languages the participants have taught as nonnative speakers included English, German, Japanese, and Spanish. The length of the participants' teaching experiences varied, ranging between one and five years. The eight participants were teaching at a major research university in the U.S. at the time of the data collection. Some of them had previously taught at other universities in the U.S., or at high schools in or outside of the U.S. Five of the participants also had experiences teaching their native language, which they listed as either English or Korean. The positions the participants

held during the period of data collection were either lecturer or teaching assistant, and most of them were the sole instructors of the courses they were teaching. The majority of the participants were raised and educated in the U.S., and all of them had either received a PhD or were currently enrolled in graduate programs in the U.S. The teacher training they had received varied significantly, ranging from having been enrolled for one quarter in a teaching assistant practicum course to having received a Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) certificate. It is worth noting that some of the teaching practicum courses were not designed specifically to train them as second language teachers, and did not therefore provide the participants with language teaching techniques and procedures. The following table presents a summary of basic information about the participants.

Table 1. Information about Participants

	Name	TL teaching	Years learning TL	Years teaching TL	NL	Position	Place of teaching	NL teaching	Teacher training received
1	Angela	Spanish	13	3	English	TA: instructor	Florida, California	None	Language methodology & practicum course (1quarter), 2 separate TA conferences (1 week each)
2	Monica	Spanish	19	2	English	TA: instructor	California	None	Language methodology & practicum course (1quarter), TA conference (1week)
3	Phoebe	Spanish	11	4	English	TA: instructor	Illinois, California	University, English as a foreign language	Language methodology & practicum course (1quarter), TA conference (1 week)
4	Sunny	Spanish	16	1	Korean	TA: instructor	California	None	Language methodology & practicum course (1quarter), TA conference (1 week)
5	Eunice	Japanese	13	1~2	Korean	TA	California	University, Korean as a foreign language	TA practicum course (1quarter)
6	John	Japanese	14	1	English	TA: instructor, TA	California	High school, Korean as a foreign language	TA practicum course (1quarter)
7	Jane	English	25	5	Korean	Lecturer	California	University, Korean as a foreign language	MA - TESL certificate
8	Ethan	German	15	1~2	English	TA: instructor	California	High school, English as a foreign language	Language methodology & practicum course (1quarter)

(TL: target language, NL: native language)

3.2 Data collection

The data collection for this study took place in March 2013. I met with each participant in a library study room on a university campus or in the participant's office. I asked the participants to first complete a questionnaire and then engage in an interview. The whole procedure lasted for approximately ninety minutes in each case.

Completion of the background questionnaire took approximately fifteen minutes. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: the first part inquired about demographic information, and the second part concerned the participants' language and professional background. The demographic data included the participants' age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and place of origin. The second part elicited information about the languages they speak and their respective proficiency levels, their language teaching experiences, the language programs in which they work, their positions in the program, their workload, the level and kind of courses they teach, their majors and degrees, what kinds of teacher education or teaching credentials they have, etc. Some of the topics drew on the questionnaires designed by Reis (2010) and Lecki (2011).

I interviewed the participants individually for about an hour upon completion of the questionnaire. I conducted the interviews either in English or in Korean, depending on the participant's choice. The interviews served to confirm the information collected from the questionnaire as well as to elicit further responses pertaining to research questions. I employed semi-structured interviews that included predetermined questions for guiding the interview but also allowed for open-ended and spontaneous questions, which enabled a more in-depth investigation into the issues raised. The interview

questions focused on the following points: (a) the participants' social, cultural, and linguistic experiences, (b) their experiences of being labeled as non-native speaker teachers, (c) their self-perception of their status and their roles in the professional setting, (d) the linguistic and social context of their teaching practice, (e) the languages and levels they teach; and, (f) their language learning and teaching experiences.

I began the interviews with a question based on the participants' answers to the background questionnaire asking about the participants' second language learning experiences. By asking the participants to share their stories of second (or often times third, fourth, and even fifth) language learning, I was able to get a sense of the participants' language-related experiences and to observe the major themes running through their language learning and teaching experience. This approach to opening up the interviews allowed me to look at significant events or issues the participants encountered during their language learning process, events which may have eventually influenced, either positively or negatively, their self-perceptions as nonnative speaker teachers of the languages.

Throughout the interview process, I encouraged the participants to elaborate on their thoughts and experiences. This enabled me to identify the individual and contextual factors involved in their conceptualization of self and the ongoing construction of the participants' professional identities. By using semi-structured interviews that had the flexibility of incorporating impromptu questions, I was able to obtain more insightful reflections, thereby enriching the data.

3.3 Data Analysis

This study used qualitative data analysis. First, I audio recorded each interview and later transcribed it. Second, in order to analyze the data, I read the transcripts several times, looking for naturally emerging themes, categories, or patterns from an open-minded perspective (Mertler, 2006). Similarly, Rossman and Rallis (1998) emphasize the importance, when searching for themes, of approaching the data with an open-mind. Using this method, I identified similarities and differences among the participants' responses, particularly regarding their self-perceptions and attitudes towards their teaching practice. The purpose of themes identification, however, is not to generalize the participants' reflections, but to shed light on the ways in which nonnative speaker teachers construct their professional identities within the larger social and linguistic context. After clarifying the major themes from the data, I scrutinized each theme in more depth, highlighting the passages that had significant meanings. In the following section, I present the themes that emerged from data analysis.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Who is a native speaker? What is a native language?

During my interview, I asked the participants what languages they speak and how they learned them. Though I did not explicitly inquire into participants' perceptions of their native language, the reasons participants provided for identifying a specific language as their native language are illuminating in that they reveal the central characteristics participants associate with native speakers. These characteristics are: acquisition in early childhood, use of the spoken language at home, a high proficiency level, and the ability to fully function in the language in all registers. Most importantly, the participants regarded acquisition in childhood as the most critical factor in deciding whether one is a native or a nonnative speaker of a language, a finding that agrees with previous studies (Davies, 1991; Kramsch, 1997; Cook, 1999, 2000, 2005).

Participants also listed other factors as being involved in the determination of who is a native speaker, a fact which demonstrates the complexity of the matter. While the participants who grew up speaking a single language at home described their native languages in a relatively straightforward way by pointing to their age at acquisition, those who were exposed to a more linguistically diverse environment as children offered alternative insights into the definition of a native speaker. For example, John did not consider Korean to be his native language, despite the fact that he was born into a Korean-speaking household and grew up speaking Korean at home, factors which are considered to be the major defining characteristics of native speakers in the literature (Davies, 1991; Kramsch, 1997; Cook, 1999). John's claim was that, though he had

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spoken Korean since he was a child, his use of Korean is limited to casual conversations, a fact which led him to believe that his Korean is not sufficient for making him a native speaker. Instead, John identified English as his native language not only because he grew up speaking it, but also because he can participate in it in all aspects of life, including academic events, casual conversations, business matters, etc. He believes that this ability, not the age of his acquisition, enables him to be a full-fledged member of the native English speaker community. John's self-identification with regard to his two languages concurs with Davies's (1991) claim that native speaker membership is self-ascribed, meaning that one has the confidence essential to membership and identifies oneself with other members in the speech community. In addition, Davies suggests that one's social acceptance into the respective native speaker community is central to claiming a native speaker membership. A similar attitude is reflected in Kramsch (1997) who remarked that birth, education, and linguistic competence are not sufficient for claiming native speakership; instead, "one must be recognized as a native speaker by the relevant community" (p. 363). For example, another participant, Monica, identifies herself as a native speaker of English and a nonnative speaker of Spanish despite her exposure to Spanish in childhood and near native competence. She states as her reason that it is difficult for someone to be considered a native speaker of both languages by others unless that person grew up in a bilingual household or with a bilingual education. In sum, native speaker membership can be ascribed to those who identify themselves as belonging to the native speaker community and are accepted and recognized as a member by the relevant community.

The language learning history of the participants in this study supports the argument that the concept of the native speaker needs to be reassessed (Rampton, 1990; Leung et al., 1997). For example, Angela, who grew up in a bilingual English-Arabic household for a certain period of her early life, identified herself as a native speaker of English only. She was once a heritage speaker of Arabic because her father, who is from Egypt, spoke Arabic to her. Due to a decreasing contact with Arabic-speaking family members as a result of her parents' divorce, Angela gradually lost her Arabic ability. She now no longer considers herself to be an Arabic speaker at all, let alone a native speaker of Arabic.

Despite the differences in their length of learning and their exposure to the heritage language, the language learning histories of John and Angela show that every person's language learning experience is different, and that language learning involves a wide array of social factors that clearly demonstrate the difficulty of defining who can be considered a native speaker of a language and who cannot. As Leung et al. (1997) states, the prevailing view on ethnic and linguistic categories fueled by the native speaker construct does not adequately describe the complexity of language use in reality, as it fails to fully acknowledge the changing nature of the inextricable link among ethnicity, language use, and social identity. That is, people are constantly forming linguistic and social identities and, thus, their language use and learning must be understood within the sociocultural context in which it takes place. In the present study, a number of intertwined factors are involved in defining native speaker identity, including one's self-confidence with regard to the target language, one's affiliation with the target language community, the conditions of one's birth, one's acquisition of language in childhood, and

others' recognition of one's belonging to the linguistic community. The participants' understandings of native speaker membership indicate that there is no clear-cut definition of a native speaker, a finding which is in line with many academic studies (Phillipson, 1992; Kramsch, 1997; Leung et al., 1997; Norton, 1997; Cook, 1999) that call into question the validity of the notion of native speaker itself. As the participants' conclusions about their status as native speakers imply, the notion of the native speaker is a socially constructed concept.

Intuition was another factor participants in this study considered to be a critical factor in determining one's native speaker status, even though the ways they interpreted intuition varied greatly from participant to participant. Knowledge of correct pronunciation, the ability to discern subtle differences between two words, the ability to make correct grammatical judgments, and the emotional connection with the language were all suggested to be evidence of having an intuition into a language. Despite the inconsistency among the participants' areas of focus in discussing intuition, it is noteworthy that they had a general tendency to make an association between intuition and proficiency. That is, the participants saw intuition not as an ability that is innate, fixed, or belonging to native speakers exclusively, but as something that can be developed through study and training. The participants' understanding of intuition corresponds to that of Davies (1991), who also argues that intuition is not innate and that second language speakers, like native speakers, can acquire intuition about the target language. The participants who identified themselves as nonnative speakers of the languages they teach stated that they have a strong sense of intuition into the target language, which, for the most part, does not fail them. At the same time, they did not equate their intuition with

native intuition, saying that their version is not a perfect foundation. That is, even though it is possible for nonnative speakers to enhance their intuition to some extent, it is not comparable to native speakers' linguistic intuition. This distinction between native and near-native intuition is in line with participants' description of their own proficiency in the target language, which was "near-native." For example, Angela equated near-native proficiency with a strong intuition, saying, "I would say that I'm near native with a lot of things now. That I do have a really strong intuition in Spanish." Similarly, John, who stated that he has an intuition for Korean, regarded himself as a near native speaker of Korean because his Korean is limited to colloquial usage. On the other hand, Monica attributed her strong intuition to the early age of her linguistic acquisition, describing it as one of the advantages that she has over other nonnative teachers. Her belief that the development of her intuition was influenced by the age of her acquisition is consistent with the commonly held notion of native speakers (Davies, 1991; Kramsch, 1997; Cook, 1999), which considers acquisition in early childhood as an essential characteristics of native speakers.

4.2 Being labeled as a nonnative speaker and use of the term

In general, the participants stated that they did not feel offended when they were described by others as a nonnative speaker of the target language. They did not find the term "nonnative" inappropriate, and instead saw it as a factual description of someone, like themselves, who did not grow up speaking the target language. They did not feel that being called a nonnative speaker was particularly disempowering or discriminatory. Even

in cases where the participants had insecurities as nonnative speakers, they did not

particularly relate their sense of insecurity to the term itself. However, some participants

suggested that the term could be used to disempower nonnative speakers by connoting a

sense of ranking in terms of proficiency. Similarly, Liu (1999b) brings into question the

power relations reflected in the labeling of native and nonnative speakers, arguing, "the

labels reinforce the idea that native speakers are better at using and teaching the language

than nonnative speakers are" (p. 97). Likewise, Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999) argued

that notions of nativeness and nonnativeness are socially constructed through discursive

practice, confining second language speakers to the status of permanent learners and

setting up boundaries that define and limit their capacities. Because the concept of the

nonnative speaker is negatively defined against the concept of the native speaker (Davies,

1991), the term "nonnative speaker" could potentially be used to insinuate that the

speaker lacks the qualities that native speakers have.

4.3 What is near-nativeness? Why is this important?

The majority of the participants in this study described their own level of

proficiency in the target languages as "near-native," and all of them identified themselves

as nonnative speakers of the languages they teach. Participants made a distinction

between native proficiency and near-native proficiency, and some described the former as

speaking perfectly without making any mistakes. This idea that equates native

proficiency with perfection is an idealized abstract that does not fully recognize language

use in reality where even native speakers make mistakes all the time. In these

participants' perception, near native competence in the target languages did not qualify

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them as native speakers of the languages; only those who grew up speaking the language qualify as native speakers and attain native-level competence. According to this logic, those who did not acquire the language in childhood cannot attain the characteristics of native speakers or become native speakers. In sum, native speaker membership is ascribed to someone based on acquisition in childhood. If this is the case, then heritage language students are potential native speakers, even though their proficiency level is currently low, whereas nonnative speakers, no matter how proficient they are in the target language, can never be native speakers of it. Accordingly, while acknowledging their attainment of near native competence in the target languages, participants did not believe that it was possible for them to penetrate the boundary between the two speaker groups, a belief which is shared by Medgyes' (1992), who makes a clear distinction between native speakers and nonnative speakers in terms of language proficiency. Then, what does it mean to be a near native speaker of a second language? The present study looks specifically at teachers with near native proficiency and the relationship between their self-perceptions regarding their near-nativeness and their teaching practice.

First, for participants in this study, to be a near native speaker means that the speaker has attained linguistic competence that is comparable to that of native speakers. Using a continuum of proficiency, the participants described their target language proficiency as near-native. Although they identified themselves as nonnative speakers of the languages they teach, thereby applying the binary division of native and nonnative speakers (Medgyes, 1992), they also placed themselves close to native speakers on the continuum. In other words, near-native speakers are speakers who started out as nonnative speakers with no understanding of the target language but have successfully

moved along the continuum, attaining proficiency that is close to the native-speaker level.

While using the dichotomy of native and nonnative speakers and recognizing the differences between near-native and native competence, participants also acknowledged that they have accomplished a high level of competence comparable to a native level. What this implies is that being a near-native speaker of a target language is a source of both self-confidence and insecurity. In exploring how the participants interpret near nativeness, what is most significant is the inconsistency among them with regard to their self-positioning vis-à-vis native speakers. Regardless of the relative consistency with which participants described their level of proficiency in the target language and the similarities of their stances on being described as nonnative speakers, the meanings they made out of the concept "near-native" varied greatly from person to person. While some of the participants regarded it as a source of empowerment that represents the highest level of accomplishment for nonnative speakers, others thought of it as a limit that represents a permanent boundary between themselves and native speakers. The quotes from Monica and Angela below illustrate this.

Being a nonnative speaker, even with near native proficiency, was a source of insecurity for some of the participants. For example, Monica and Ethan both described feeling inferior to native speakers in terms of their level of proficiency. The concepts they associated with native speakers were "utter perfection" and "speaking without mistakes." Ethan asserted that, as he is fully aware of his nonnativeness and his abilities, he does not find the term nonnative incorrect. He also believed that he would never be able to catch up to native speakers or have the intuitive understanding of German that they have. Because native speakers have been hearing, speaking, and thinking in German constantly

since birth, Ethan believed that the language was ingrained in them, freeing them from worrying about making mistakes. In contrast, Ethan expressed his fear of speaking and making mistakes, defining it as a self-stigma that stems from his own perception of his linguistic competence rather than from his experiences of being outwardly disapproved of or being questioned by others. This shows how the dichotomy of native versus nonnative speaker has been internalized, leading to Ethan's self-stigmatization and low self-confidence. Such a finding corresponds to that of Reves and Medgyes (1994), who propose that nonnative speaker teachers' negative self-images and feelings of inferiority result from a realization of their limitations in using the target language. In a similar vein, Monica regarded the speech of native speakers to be "utter perfection" because native speakers do not make the mistakes that a nonnative speaker, like herself, even with near native proficiency, tends to make. Furthermore, Monica sees the divide between native and nonnative speaker as unbridgeable.

> "For me, native-like is somebody that speaks very well and for the most part, speaks, you know, has a large vocabulary, that doesn't tend to make a lot of mistakes. But I guess, in my mind, native is just utter perfection? And, so, it's hard for somebody, unless you grew up bilingual, like in a bilingual household even or with bilingual education, to be a native, to be considered a native speaker. That's why I say native-LIKE because I'm NOT native. I'm NOT. I feel like I'm bilingual in some terms but then sometimes, you know there are different types of bilingualism and I don't feel that I'm like the perfect bilingual like fifty-fifty…" (Capital letters indicate the participant's emphasis) (Monica, Participant #2)

In contrast, other participants evinced relatively positive stances on the notion of the near native speaker. This stance results from their respective understandings of the concept of nativeness, which separates the matter of one's linguistic proficiency from a

consideration of whether or not they grew up speaking the target language. For them, acquisition in childhood does not determine competence in the target language, meaning that being a nonnative speaker does not necessarily signify a lack of competence. Davies (1991) problematizes the way in which nonnative speakers are often negatively defined against the notion of the native speaker, a definition that often results in the biased perception that nonnative speakers lack the qualities that native speakers possess. The participants who interpreted being a near-native speaker in a positive way rejected those commonly accepted notions of native speaker, instead defining the term *nonnative speaker* as someone who has learned the target language as an adult and has attained a certain level of competence. In this conception, near-native speakers are those who have achieved the highest level of proficiency. Angela's statement below presents this approach to the notion of near nativeness.

> "I like the term near-native because it sort of has in the definition that it's not your first language nor are you a heritage speaker but that you've attained probably what will be YOUR HIGHEST FLUENCY and that it's SIMILAR to a native; that I would be able to sort of navigate native circles very well, I'd be able to, you know, live in that target culture and get jokes and watch movies and function, completely like someone who is a native. But then there might be things that I might not understand. Dialectal things or very specific regional things. But the same way that like in English, like, when I lived in Tallahassee, I was introduced to Southern culture. There were tons of idioms and phrases and cultural things that I had to learn in my native language. So I feel like if that happened to me in Spanish that wouldn't be like a symbol of my lack of fluency or anything. I feel like I've attainted the HIGHEST that I will and that it's as close to native as I'll be." (Capital letters indicate the participant's emphasis) (Angela, Participant #1)

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Here, Angela conceptualizes target language proficiency by saying that one can be a nonnative speaker and at the same time be a highly proficient speaker of the target language.

Participants also stated that, to be a near native speaker, one must have knowledge of the target culture that enables one to participate in the cultural practices of the target language community. Second language learning is not merely an acquisition of a linguistic form, but rather a struggle of socially constructed and situated beings participating in another culture (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). In order for a learner to be validated by the new speech community, the learner must have familiarity with the target culture, have an awareness of the differences between his own and the target culture, and must respond appropriately to various social and cultural practices. An understanding of the sociocultural context of target language use is suggested as an essential component of the abilities of a successful nonnative speaker.

On the other hand, some of the participants found it difficult to have an adequate understanding of the target culture, especially in cases where the target language is spoken in a wide variety of countries and cultures, such as is the case with Spanish. As they obviously cannot be familiar with every single Spanish-speaking country, the nonnative speaker teachers of Spanish must learn on their own about different Spanish-speaking countries introduced in the textbook in order to prepare for their classes. Even the participants who had experience studying or working in Spanish-speaking countries or who grew up in Hispanic-dominant neighborhoods in the U.S. recognized their limitations in terms of cultural knowledge. In sum, the participants' perceptions of near-native competence with regard to cultural understanding were, therefore confined to

being able to use the target language in accordance with the target culture, and being able

to participate in social and cultural activities in appropriate ways.

At the same time, other participants believed that being a near-native speaker does

not necessarily mean that the speaker identifies himself as belonging to the native speaker

community. This belief concurs with Kramsch's (1997) argument that second language

learners do not always have a desire to identify themselves with the native speakers of the

target language, and that the pleasure of learning a second language may lie in merely

expressing oneself in another language. She further claims that multilingual speakers

have multilingual perspective that enables them to migrate between different languages

and to appropriate the language of others, thus forming linguistic and sociocultural

identities on the border. Sunny, a nonnative speaker of Spanish, stated that she does not

have any specific Spanish-speaking culture to which she can relate, a fact which makes it

hard for her to be native-like no matter how much effort she puts into improving her

Spanish. Similarly, Eunice stated that understanding oneself as a native or nonnative

speaker is an identity-laden issue; she reports that she never felt badly about being called

a nonnative speaker of Japanese precisely because she clearly identifies herself as Korean

and does not therefore understand herself as primarily affiliated with Japanese native

speakers, regardless of her near-native Japanese. These participants' understandings of

the meaning of being a native speaker not only include linguistic proficiency, but also an

emotional attachment to the culture in which the language is spoken, as well as a self-

identification with other members who belong to that culture. Davies (2003) shares this

perspective, proposing self-affiliation, along with proficiency and acceptance by others,

as one of the factors that decides native speaker identity. Similarly, Inbar-Lourie (2005)

puts forward affiliation and confidence as markers of native speaker identity. Furthermore, some participants regarded being born into and growing up in the culture as an important factor that allows a speaker to develop such a sense of belonging. The participants' descriptions show that one's level of proficiency does not necessarily correspond with affiliation or identification with the target language community.

4.4 Disclosing nonnativeness and self-presentation

The present study explores nonnative speaker teachers' self-perceptions by looking at how they frame their nonnativeness and how they present it to their students. It focuses on the ways in which these teachers establish themselves as authority figures in the classroom. In particular, the study examines how teachers disclose their nonnativeness to their students, which gives insight into how they intend to position themselves as nonnative speaker teachers and how they build relationships with their students. Teachers reported that their self-introductions to the class generally include their educational and personal background; how much and what kind of information they reveal about themselves as well as how they deliver it to the students varies widely from one teacher to another. Why, then, are teachers' self-perceptions important? Kamhi-Stein (2013b) has attempted to answer this question by claiming, "Self-perceptions are important because they affect how teachers position themselves in the classroom (Kamhi-Stein, 2013a), contribute (positively or negatively) to instructional practices, and ultimately affect students' motivation and learning (Butler, 2004)" (p. 591). By looking at

how the participants disclose their nonnative status in the classroom, the present study examines how they view their nonnative status with regard to their instructional practices.

While some teachers choose to include their nonnative speaker status in their self-introduction, others choose not to for various reasons. Whether the participants in this study voluntarily informed their students of their nonnative speaker status or whether they were asked by the students about their status, every participant in this study had to negotiate the disclosure of their nonnative status at some point during the course.

Five participants chose to perform a full disclosure of their nonnative status on the first day of class. The disclosure included information about their status as a nonnative speaker of the language, how they learned the language, their experiences with the target language communities, their ethnic background, etc. Some participants told the students that their knowledge of the target language may not be perfect, that they may make mistakes, and that they may not be able to answer some of the questions student raise in class. Participants provided these caveats because, they reported, they found it beneficial for their instructional practices as well as for building credibility with the students. At the same time, their self-presentations shifted the focus from their nonnativeness to the assets they gained from their target language learning experiences, thus qualifying themselves as qualified teachers. The second language learning experience of the participants was a central aspect of their abilities to conceptualize language and language learning. They were fully cognizant of how the linguistic and educational experience that they share with their students contribute to their teaching practice and how to capitalize on those experiences in order to better present themselves as qualified professionals.

At the same time, these participants clearly had some insecurities about their target language competence. They were very conscious of their limitations in terms of proficiency, and dealt with their insecurities about their proficiency in the target language by straightforwardly admitting their imperfections. This disclosure helped them to avoid any prospective criticisms from the students while simultaneously building a foundation for rapport. In other words, participants dealt with the disclosure of their nonnative speaker status not by simply stating their nonnative status but by strategically presenting their status so that it could play a part in their teaching practice and, ultimately, in the students' target language learning. In this respect, validating and being aware of their own potential as language teaching professionals in the field is the first step toward having a more positive self-image and, ultimately, achieving self-empowerment (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999).

Monica, for example, explained that she does not feel the need to hide her nonnative status from her students and added that she feels comfortable disclosing her status on the first day of class. However, she also makes sure to focus on the fact that she has already passed through the target learning that her students are currently experiencing, taking care to explain that her insights into learning Spanish makes her class a safe place for learning in which students and teacher learn together. Emphasizing their shared nonnative speaker status, she makes her classroom a learning community in which she, as an advanced learner, guides the students to successful Spanish learning. As she believes that students learn by making mistakes, she wants everyone in the class to feel comfortable making and correcting mistakes, including her own. She also admits that by making the classroom a safe place for both the students and herself, she can more

effectively circumscribe the students' potential criticism of her teaching. While previous studies have revealed the influence of shared learning experiences on the teachers' self-images (Medgyes, 1994; Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Tang, 1997; Ling & Braine, 2007; Benson, 2012), Monica's approach to her classes implies that those experiences could also bring about the students' empathic attitudes towards the teacher. In this way, she is moving back and forth between being an authority figure and a fellow second language learner.

Similarly, when Eunice taught Japanese, her third language, she candidly told her students on the first day of class that she is a nonnative speaker of Japanese, that she is from Korea, and that if she cannot answer a question in class, she would bring the answer to them in the following session. Her intention behind this disclosure is to let the students think of her as a more advanced learner of Japanese rather than a teacher, someone who has gone through the same learning process that they are going through and someone who can therefore help them with their learning process. Reflecting on this strategy, she added that positioning herself as a facilitator rather than an absolute source of knowledge at the beginning of the course might have been, at least in part, the result of her desire to protect herself from any potential criticism regarding her imperfections in Japanese. Similar to Monica, Eunice believed that presenting herself as a nonnative speaker of the target language resulted in the students' increased empathy for her, which gave her something to fall back on. She also noted that her position as a teaching assistant whose duty was to help the students to practice in their section what they had previously learned in the lecture, might also have affected her self-positioning. In short, Eunice's nonnative

speaker status was the means of establishing empathy between the teacher and the students.

While Reves and Medgyes (1994) attributed nonnative speaker teachers' empathetic attitudes towards the students to their sharing a mother tongue, the result of the present study indicates that the shared language does not necessarily have to be the teachers' first language. For example, Eunice's first language was Korean and, taking into account the linguistic diversity of Los Angeles, it is also very likely that English was not a first language for at least some of her students. This fact implies that empathy is not only linguistically but also emotionally grounded; the ability to understand the students' emotional responses in target language learning itself could be considered empathy. In the same sense, for Eunice to position herself as an advanced learner allowed the students to identify with her, an identification which may have been particularly helpful when facing difficulties in learning. In short, Eunice was not only a teacher but also a model of a good learner who had undergone a very similar learning process successfully. From the perspective of the students, nonnative speakers can be learner models in a way that is fundamentally not accessible to native speaker teachers who have not been second language learners of the target language. Nonnative speaker teachers are, in a way that native speakers can never be, living examples that demonstrate the real possibility of attaining a high level of target language competence, thus motivating the students.

Angela is another participant who reveals her nonnative status to her students as she introduces herself on the first day of class. Even though no one has ever outwardly questioned her authority, she feels that the students come to class with prejudices against nonnative speaker teachers. Prejudices and stereotypes based on the students' perceptions

of the teachers' ethnicity or nonnative status have been suggested to be one of the major areas of concern for nonnative speaker teachers (Kamhi-Stein, 2000). Also, Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999) note that nonnative English speaker teachers feel disempowered by the social construction of the nonnative that often prescribes boundaries for their abilities. In order to quash those preconceptions and to establish herself as an authority figure in the classroom, Angela focuses on proving herself as a competent user of Spanish on her first day. At the same time, she performs a full disclosure of her nonnativeness, which includes her non-Hispanic background and her history of learning Spanish as a second language. Her need to focus on her level of proficiency can be explained by the findings of previous studies that explore the relationship between proficiency and self-perception (Reves & Medgyes, 1994) as well as between proficiency and qualifications as a teacher (Phillipson, 1992; Medgyes, 1994). Reves and Medgyes (1994) note that nonnative English speaker teachers who have higher levels of proficiency in English are less self-conscious and insecure, and that self-confidence is essential to successful teaching. In that sense, for Angela to demonstrate to the students her near-native command of Spanish upon their first encounter could contribute to breaking down their potential stereotypes about nonnative speaker teachers as well as to building her self-confidence as a teacher. This finding implies that native-like proficiency in the target language is vital for nonnative speaker teachers to be successful teachers.

Gaining credibility with the students is another goal of a voluntary disclosure of nonnativeness. For example, Sunny reveals her personal and educational background on her first day of class so that the students would have increased trust in her teaching. Included in her self-introduction are details about her ethnicity and background, how she

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learned Spanish in Spain and Korea, her degrees in Spanish linguistics, and more. Even though she had feared that the students might be biased towards her because of her nonnative and non-local status as well as her Asian ethnicity, she realized that revealing her personal and educational background was actually beneficial for gaining credibility with the students. In addition, several classroom observations of both native and nonnative speaker teachers enabled her to identify and appreciate the unique strengths and weaknesses of each group of teachers from the perspectives of the students, which led her to realize that she could benefit from her nonnative speaker status and thus promote the students' learning. Even though she initially felt constrained by the social construction of nativeness (Kamhi-Stein, 2000; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999), Sunny later became aware of her own strengths as a nonnative speaker teacher, thus validating not only her nonnative speaker identity but also her professionalism. The key aspect of empowerment is "people coming into a sense of their own power, a new relationship with their own contexts" (Fox, 1998, p. 2 cited in Lather, 1991, p. 4).

Three participants choose not to volunteer their nonnative status at the beginning of the course, a decision that helps them to boost their personal self-confidence by embracing their nonnative speaker identity, as well as their professional self confidence by helping them to realize that students value them for their teaching skill. For example, Jane's self-introduction on the first day of class includes her educational and professional background and her teaching experiences but not the fact that her first language is Korean and that she is from Korea. Although teachers of color are commonly assumed to be nonnative speakers of English, considering the fact that she has been teaching in Los Angeles where native English speakers of Asian ethnicity are frequently found, Jane may

have thought that her students would not be able to judge her English speaker status based solely on her appearance unless she told them what her first language was and where she was from. With regard to this selective disclosure, she explained that when she first started teaching she was worried that international students in the U.S. might not like the idea of learning English from a nonnative speaker. This concern reveals her fear of being recognized as a nonnative speaker of English by her students. In this study, Jane is probably the one who is in the most difficult position because she is teaching English in an English-speaking environment, whereas the other participants are teaching foreign languages, a context in which students are more likely to expect to find nonnative speaker teachers. She reports, however, that her insecurity gradually diminished as she witnessed how much her students appreciated that she understood their learning process, that she empathized with their needs, and that she provided them with her insights into English language learning from the perspective of a second language learner. The students' positive reactions played a role in her realization of her own strengths as a nonnative speaker, which therefore gave her more confidence in teaching and helped her to construct a positive professional identity. This finding shows that teachers' self-perceptions are not fixed but are realigned and change over time, greatly influenced by the students' attitudes towards the teachers. In other words, teachers' professional identities are relationally and contextually shaped.

Even though Jane now has less insecurity regarding her nonnative speaker status than she once did, she still does not reveal her nonnativeness initially, thinking it not necessary. She cites as a reason that many other instructors in the program do not necessarily say where they are from when they introduce themselves to students.

Typically, she ends up telling her students later in the quarter that her first language is Korean and that she is from Korea. Yet, she also quickly shifts the focus from the fact of her nonnative status to her experience learning English, thereby qualifying herself as a teacher who has a solid understanding of the students' needs as well as a grasp of effective pedagogical skills. In fact, Jane reports that she feels more qualified to teach English than to teach her first language, Korean, a fact that she ascribes to the teacher training she received as part of the TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) certificate program. This finding implies the important role of teacher training in teachers' professional development, while at the same time indicating the problem of the simplistic extrapolation of linguistic competence in measuring one's competence as a language teacher, which places too much emphasis on language ability while overlooking social and pedagogical criteria.

Cook (2000) argues that nativeness is not the decisive factor but one of many factors that affect the students' judgment about teaching. In accordance with this finding, Phoebe, like Jane, does not volunteer information regarding her nonnative status or ethnic background unless her students specifically ask her about it. What she focuses on instead is to establish her authority in class by proving her competence in Spanish, as she believes that that is what the students really care about. Insofar as they see her as a proficient user of Spanish, she automatically becomes a legitimate teacher. According to Phoebe, what determines her credibility with students is not whether or not she is a native or a nonnative speaker, but rather her competence in Spanish. Believing that using Spanish competently and authoritatively helps her to set forth who she is and who she is going to be in the context of the class, Phoebe starts every first day of her class speaking

Spanish exclusively except for the part where she has to explain the course syllabus. Additionally, she includes some discussion of her experiences studying in Spanish-speaking countries in her self-introduction, believing that those also contribute to her qualifications as a teacher.

On the other hand, John, a teacher of Japanese, is candid about his nonnative speaker status for two reasons: one is that he assumes that students can tell that he is not Japanese from his family name, which is available on the online course enrollment, and two is that he understands the matter of linguistic competence as separate from teaching ability. John freely told his students that he is still learning Japanese precisely because he believes that this does not mean that he is not capable of teaching, just as the fact of being a native speaker does not necessarily mean you would teach the language well. While the vast majority of studies have presented nonnative speaker teachers feeling disempowered by the construct of the native speaker (Davies, 1991; Amin, 1997; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 2000; Saito, 2003), the present study shows John rejecting the *native speaker fallacy*, which is a term coined by Phillipson (1992), in order to question the simplistic equation of native speakers with effective teachers. John's self-confidence in teaching is based on his belief that his nonnative speaker status has little to do with his teaching ability, and that it is not necessary for the teacher to speak native level Japanese to be able to teach beginning level Japanese.

Participants in the present study position themselves in the classroom to use their nonnativeness to their advantage, while at the same time acknowledging the possible imperfections they have in the target languages. Taking advantage of their own experiences of learning the target languages, they present themselves as teachers who can

effectively guide students through the learning process, as teachers who are good learner models, and as teachers who have empathy for students. In addition, participants often rejected the dichotomy of native versus nonnative speakers by proving their linguistic competence in the target languages and presenting themselves as proficient and confident speakers rather than fearful and disempowered nonnative speakers. Furthermore, many students make a distinction between native speaker status, language ability, and teaching competence. As Amin (2004) suggests, nonnative speaker teachers are "more effective in the classroom when they build their pedagogies on their nonnative identities, rather than when they try to follow the native speaker norm" (p. 68). Furthermore, as studies have shown, what the students are really concerned with is the teachers' level of professionalism, not their status as native or nonnative speakers (Liu, 1999b). Effective nonnative teachers construct their professional identities by capitalizing on their linguistic resources and incorporating their learning experiences into their instruction.

4.5 Experiencing challenges as a nonnative speaker teacher

One of the major challenges that participants reported facing was the necessity of confronting and altering students' prejudices about nonnative speaker teachers. Participants were conscious of the negative images students have about nonnative speaker teachers, which included that nonnative speakers are never going to be like native speakers, that nonnative teachers are not giving the full experience that native speakers are giving, and that, therefore, the students would not learn from nonnative speaker teachers as much as they would from native speaker teachers. Seven participants thought

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that the students would come in with a certain level of skepticism and that it would be critical to change that perception as soon as possible in order to establish themselves as an authority figure in class. Regardless of the amount of teaching experience, the issue of proving oneself at the beginning of the quarter was a common theme that appeared across the seven participants' interviews. Previous studies show that nonnative speaker teachers may feel disempowered by students' stereotypes (Amin, 1997; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 2000; Rajagopalan, 2005). Furthermore, in the struggle to prove themselves as competent teachers, participants cited the necessity of presenting their target language proficiency at a near-native level as the most critical and challenging factor. This finding suggests that near-native proficiency is an essential quality for making nonnative speakers confident and effective teachers.

It is important to note that to confront the students' prejudices about nonnative speaker teachers did not always mean to be actually questioned or challenged by students. That is to say, participants were often concerned that their students would negatively judge their ability to teach the target language based on their nonnative status, but this was not necessarily because they actually had students who questioned their authority in the classroom. In their descriptions of their teaching experiences, the participants did not frequently present actual experiences of being criticized or challenged by students. There may be different reasons for this. One possibility is that the students recognized the particular strengths of their nonnative speaker teachers. Another possibility is that the university where the present study was conducted has a large number of nonnative speaker teachers, which may have caused the students to become familiar with and more accepting of them. Alternatively, the students may have simply not verbally expressed

their distrust. Whatever the reason, it is important to note that the biggest challenge for the participants was to confront *the native speaker fallacy* (Phillipson, 1992) and to prove its invalidity. That is, what they really had to deal with was their own insecurities as nonnative speakers (Medgyes, 1992; Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Kamhi-Stein, 2013b) rather than any of the students' negative reactions. This fact illustrates the fundamental role that self-esteem plays in building one's professional identity. Along with target language proficiency, which, as we have seen, is considered by the participants to be a crucial factor in proving themselves to be effective teachers, acknowledgement of their own assets as nonnative speaker teachers also significantly contributes to their self-empowerment.

Eunice's description of her first time teaching Japanese shows that a nonnative speaker's self-perception can be substantially affected by *the native speaker fallacy* and the discourse of nativeness (Phillipson, 1992; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999), thus shaping an individual's teaching practice. Even though she never experienced any outward discrimination based on her Japanese ability or her teaching skills, she was nevertheless very self-conscious and felt intimidated, constantly evaluating herself vis-à-vis native speaker teachers in the program. Similarly, while her students never blatantly challenged her nonnative speaker status, she was constantly worried that it would influence the students' assessment of her. Eunice felt particularly insecure about her lack of intuition in Japanese, which she believed to be something exclusively owned by native speakers. Because she was concerned with her relative lack of intuition, she was nervous in particular about students asking her unanticipated questions in class. Initially, to obviate this problem, she prepared her lessons extremely thoroughly by spending much

time reviewing sample sentences in the textbook and examining nuances between two similar words. Only after she finally received positive course evaluations from her students at the end of the quarter did she finally realize that what the students really cared about was not whether or not she spoke native-level Japanese, but instead how satisfactorily she met students' needs and promoted their learning. Because the course was designed in such a way that the students had one lecturer and one teaching assistant, the students placed more importance on how effectively she helped them to review what they had learned in the lecture session and less importance on whether or not she was a native speaker of Japanese.

In a similar fashion, the biggest challenge for Ethan was his own insecurity, which he described as self-consciousness rather than from being outwardly questioned by others. He described this insecurity as a "self-stigmatizing of fearing speaking." Initially, he had a relatively high level of insecurity regarding his target language proficiency, which illustrates how he was disempowered by the myth of native speaker prevalent in second language teaching. Furthermore, Ethan's self-image as a second language speaker had a significant influence on the way he perceived various situations he encountered in teaching. For example, in cases where he could not answer the students' questions on the spot and instead had to tell them that he would have to look them up, he felt that his authority and expertise in German was challenged. The majority of participants felt comfortable in similar situations.

Another participant, Jane, the most experienced teacher in the study, also felt pressure to prove herself as a competent second language speaker, especially at the beginning of a course. In the university writing program where she has been teaching for

five years, she reported that she did not feel that her nonnative status was much of a challenge. She reported, however, that she felt that, at a new university to which she was about to move, she would have to prove her English proficiency and teaching skills all over again. Whether it is a new university, a new program, or a new group of students, it is clear that when one goes into a new teaching environment, proving oneself to others is a challenge. Furthermore, the challenges the nonnative speaker teachers face are dependent on the context in which the teaching practice takes place. For instance, Sunny, a nonnative teacher of Spanish who grew up in Korea and was spending her first year teaching at a university in California, explained that the challenges she faced were multi-dimensional because of her Asian ethnicity and because of her status as a non-local and nonnative speaker of Spanish. Being non-local, she had to develop an understanding of the things that were specific to the local context, such as teaching methods widely used in the U.S., the administrative issues in the department and the university, and the particular relationship between the teaching assistants and the students. Additionally, she had to adhere to the shared syllabus used in the Spanish program, to use the communicative language teaching approach emphasized in the Spanish program, and to comply with the Spanish-only policy in the program. Most importantly, she had to take into consideration the sociocultural context of Spanish use and teaching in Southern California by altering her European Peninsular variety of Spanish to the Mexican and South American varieties more widely used in the textbook.

The ways in which nonnative speaker teachers present themselves to students have a substantial effect on students' perceptions of their teachers. Phoebe never had any students who outwardly challenged her authority and believed this was because of the

way she presents herself in the classroom. She explained: "I don't apologize for being a nonnative speaker. Certainly, not. I don't give them the chance to say things like that or to feel that way." Likewise, on the course evaluations, she never received any commentary referring to her nonnative status or indicating the students' wish that she was a native speaker. Phoebe explained that she had a high perception of her own Spanish ability as well as her teaching skills, and that she even felt that she had more advantages than native speaker teachers because of her own experience of learning Spanish as a second language. Her self-confidence was largely based on the ways in which she focused on her nonnative status as an asset instead of a liability. Though it may be true that a teacher's native or nonnative status may in some cases influence the way the students perceive the teacher, what is clear is that the way the teacher makes meaning out of his or her nativeness and nonnativeness is far more important. If a teacher takes his or her nonnative status as a defect or a limitation, he or she makes him or herself prone to students' negative assessments. If a teacher is well aware of the particular attributes and assets of nonnative speakers, however, students are very likely to positively respond to the teachers' nonnative speaker status. Self-confidence and self-awareness is essential for self-empowerment (Kamhi-Stein, 1999, 2013b; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999; Pavlenko, 2003; Ilieva, 2010). This is precisely why it is often the focus of teacher-training programs.

Another important factor that comes into play when teachers decide how they are going to present themselves to students is their understanding of their duties and responsibilities as teachers. If a teacher understands his role as the absolute source and conveyer of knowledge from whom the students learn, he or she claims perfection,

presenting him or herself as someone who speaks without error. This is, of course, impossible in reality. On the other hand, a teacher can position him or herself as a guide, a facilitator for learning, and a more advanced learner of the target language. In so doing, the teacher can shape his or her role as someone who guides the students through the learning process rather than as someone who provides students with absolute knowledge of the target language. Speaking to this difference in teaching style, Jane reported that she wants her students to think for themselves, especially since they are at university level. This kind of approach gives the teacher the flexibility to move between being a learner and a highly proficient speaker of the target language, thus allowing the teacher to make the class a learning community in which the teacher and the students take part. Consequently, if the teacher encounters a situation in which he or she does not immediately know the correct answer to a student's question, he or she can make that a teachable moment by honestly admitting his or her lack of knowledge, thereby showing him or herself as moving with the student through the learning process.

In a similar vein, Monica points to the impact that a teacher's self-presentation has on the way the students understand the teacher's role in the classroom.

> "I think the comments you get from students tend to depend on how YOU present yourself and your own knowledge of the language. If you walk into a classroom and you lay down the law, and you're constantly so certain about everything that you're just so right. Then if you make a mistake, students are instantly going to start to QUESTION you. Also, if you're asked a question and you respond without really knowing the truth, you can be wrong a lot of times, and the students won't respect that and will make comments. But as I introduce myself, I tell them that I'm going to make mistakes, that I don't know every single word in Spanish just as I don't know every single word in English, and that I may not know the answer to their question but I'm going to be very honest with them and tell them. I think that they view it as an ADVANTAGE to have someone who's honest and straightforward

with them. That will also kind of show them that I'm not professing, like I'm not claiming perfection." (Capital letters indicate the participant's emphasis) (Monica, Participant #2)

Whether a teacher is a native speaker or a nonnative speaker, proving oneself and building credibility with the students can be a very challenging task. Being a native speaker, however, does not necessarily guarantee that a teacher has complete knowledge of the language, that he or she is going to be capable of gaining the students' trust, or that he or she is completely free from insecurity regarding his teaching ability. In a similar fashion, as we have seen, being a nonnative speaker teacher does not necessarily mean that a teacher is not capable of teaching the target language or of establishing one's authority as a teacher. In fact, the way a teacher presents himself—including his or her nonnative status, his or her role in the classroom, and his or her approach to the students and to second language learning—can have a substantial effect on the students' perceptions. What is critical in nonnative speaker teachers' self-empowerment is their full awareness of their own strengths based on their own learning experience as a second language learner (Kamhi-Stein, 1999, 2013b; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999). Furthermore, Amin (2004) states that nonnative speaker teachers can be more effective pedagogues when they construct their teaching based on their identities as nonnative speakers. Kamhi-Stein (2013a, 2013b) similarly emphasizes the importance of teachers' self-perceptions, noting their influence on the teachers' instructional practices and the students' motivation and learning. In sum, it is clear that the students appreciate the teacher's acknowledgment of both of their strengths and weaknesses as a nonnative speaker, and take note when the teacher's nonnative status is used to contribute to the students' learning.

4.6 A power relationship between nonnative speaker teachers and their heritage language students: the case of Spanish

This study includes nonnative speaker teachers of Spanish and Japanese who have taught heritage language students, which gives us an opportunity to look at how heritage language students influence the ways in which teachers perceive themselves and what impact this may have on teaching practices. In the context of the U.S., the term *heritage language learner* refers to "a student of a language who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or merely understands the language, and who is to some degree bilingual in English and the heritage language" (Valdés, 2000, p. 1). The literature on nonnative speaker teachers has predominantly looked at teachers of the English language, which has the privileged status of *a lingua franca* (Paikeday, 1985; Rampton, 1990; Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Widdowson, 1994; Norton, 1997; Tang, 1997; Liu, 1999a, 1999b; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999; Pavlenko, 2003; Cook, 2005; Ling & Braine, 2007; Clark & Paran, 2007), and leaves issues relevant to other languages rarely explored. Among the nonnative teachers of languages other than English, nonnative speaker teachers of Spanish in the U.S. have received the most attention (Callahan, 2006; Hertel & Sunderman, 2009; Thompson & Fioramonte, 2013), perhaps due to the growing number of students, including heritage speakers of Spanish, who sign up for Spanish courses in the U.S. every year (Potowski, 2010). Nevertheless, nonnative Spanish speaker teachers' self-perceptions with regard to heritage language students have not yet received much attention. The case is the same with nonnative speaker teachers of Japanese.

The majority of participants who teach Spanish or Japanese in this study had heritage language students enrolled in their classes. The common experience that participants shared was feeling more nervous and intimidated when they had heritage language students than when they had non-heritage language students only in class. While participants were aware of the fact that these heritage language students rarely had any formal education in the target language and that their intuitions were not always perfect, they still felt that their target language had to be perfect, fearing that the heritage language students would notice any mistakes. Even when they were teaching beginning level classes such as Spanish 1, 2, and 3, or first year Japanese, the participants were nevertheless highly conscious of and more cautious with their use of the target language. This fact implies that the heritage language students' level of proficiency is not necessarily the central factor that evokes feelings of insecurity in teachers. This raises the following questions: What are the reasons behind this emotional response? How differently do nonnative speaker teachers perceive heritage and non-heritage language students? What are the particular characteristics of heritage language speakers that make nonnative speakers feel intimidated?

How nonnative speaker teachers position themselves vis-à-vis heritage language students ultimately leads to the question of who is a native speaker (Rampton, 1990; Davies, 1991; Kachru & Nelson, 1996; Amin, 1997; Kramsch, 1997; Cook, 1999, 2000). The fact that nonnative speaker teachers in this study felt intimidated by heritage language students who obviously occupied a lower level on the proficiency spectrum indicates that one's proficiency does not significantly factor in when deciding one's nativeness. In other words, one does not have to be fully competent in a language to be

considered a native speaker of that language. Instead, if one meets the biodevelopmental definition of native speaker, one can be identified as a potential native speaker (Cook, 1999). In a similar fashion, how much education one has had in the target language does not much matter when deciding the degree of nativeness of his language. Speaking to this, when answering my questions about heritage language students, the participants repeatedly called them "native speakers," referring to the fact that these students were exposed to the target language at an early age and grew up in a target language-speaking household. The participants' identification of heritage language students as native speakers implies a strong biodevelopmental aspect, which explains why acquisition in childhood is often considered to be a fundamental factor in others' perception of one's linguistic identity. Participants believed that if a heritage speaker whose proficiency level is currently low continues to learn the language, that heritage speaker could ultimately attain native level proficiency and become a full-fledged member of the target language community. In contrast, they thought that they would never be able to improve their second language proficiency to the same native speaker level. In other words, part of their insecurities with heritage speakers results from believing the biodevelopmental definition of a native speaker, which leaves second language learners with a distant and unattainable goal (Medgyes, 1994; Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Arva & Medgyes, 2000). For example, when asked where her insecurity comes from, Phoebe answered: "Probably some sense of insecurity like 'I may be really good but I'm never going be as good as you could be.' I know that no matter how much I know I will never be a native Spanish speaker because that would mean that I would have had to grow up speaking Spanish. That is never a possibility for me. But, I can get close, so that's the concept of near-native to me. I can

approach that but I will never actually get there." In other words, Phoebe's insecurity comes from the thought that she never will be a native speaker, whereas her heritage language students are potential native speakers.

Even though participants felt pressure to prove themselves to students in general, when facing heritage language students the pressure had some distinctive features. Both the teachers of Spanish and Japanese feared that heritage language students have a certain linguistic intuition that tends to be more reliable than those of nonnative speakers, enabling them to notice any mistakes the teacher might make in class. Angela explains: "I get more nervous around heritage speakers who grew up in a Spanish-speaking household, because as a native speaker they have these linguistic instincts. My fear is that they're going to know more than me." Angela and Phoebe explained that heritage speakers have good conversational skills and tend to know a lot of colloquial vocabulary for casual conversation. In a similar fashion, Eunice thought that heritage language students, even though they do not currently demonstrate a full competence in Japanese, have been exposed to Japanese in their homes for an extended period of time, which gives them a keen awareness of what sounds right and what sounds wrong.

It is noteworthy that participants were at the same time well aware of the fact that heritage language students' intuitions had imperfections, too. In some cases, the heritage language students had internalized incorrect grammar or syntax, demonstrating grammatically inaccurate intuitions. For example, Phoebe taught a grammar course designed to train pre-service teachers, which enrolled about half heritage speakers and half non-heritage speakers. She knew that the heritage language students had little education in Spanish and that the non-heritage speakers in the class tended to be far better

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at the grammar. Even though she did not think that the heritage speakers were necessarily judging her Spanish, she still felt that her Spanish had to be perfect so that she could prove herself to the class. She states: "My first time teaching that grammar class, I had about half and half and that was really intimidating. I felt very intimidated. Even though I don't think that they were necessarily judging me because a lot of them hadn't had a lot of instruction in Spanish, I still felt like 'Oh I have to be perfect, my Spanish has to be perfect.'" Similarly, when she had heritage language students in her second year Spanish class, she reports becoming hyper-conscious of her Spanish even though she knew that their knowledge of pronunciation and spelling was often incorrect. Being self-conscious, when she knew that she made a mistake, she made extra sure to fix it, which is something she does not always do in classes with non-heritage language students only. In sum, the participants' feelings of self-consciousness and the pressure to prove themselves in front of heritage language students is driven by the feeling that the students were judging their target language ability, even though they knew these students were not more advanced than they were.

What the participants' feelings of pressure and insecurity indicate is that the power relation between native speakers and nonnative speakers (Davies, 1991; Phillipson, 1992; Nayar, 1994; Armour, 2010) is reproduced between heritage language students and nonnative speaker teachers. Davies (1991) suggests, "the dichotomy of nonnative speakers of English versus native speakers of English, like majority-minority relations, is power-driven, identity-laden, and confidence-affecting" (p. 166, cited in Liu, 1999b, p. 86). Similarly, Armour (2010) claims that nonnative speakers using second languages are involved in power struggles with native speakers and are often

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marginalized, and Phillipson (1992) problematizes the dominance of the *native speaker fallacy*, insisting that it serves the interests of those in power while perpetuating existing power relations. Additionally, Nayar (1994) explains the ownership issue in terms of the power dynamics between native speakers and nonnative speakers. Even though heritage language students may be more knowledgeable in certain areas, nonnative speaker teachers are clearly closer to native speaker competence on the proficiency continuum in most areas. The participants' self-positioning vis-à-vis the heritage language students is therefore affected by the unequal power relationship between native speakers and nonnative speakers, rather than any lack of proficiency in the target languages.

On the other hand, participants sometimes considered heritage language students to be a good resource in the classroom. For instance, while she worries that heritage language students may have more knowledge of Spanish than she does, Monica also thinks that this is something to take advantage of rather than something to be afraid of. For this reason, she often directs questions specifically towards the heritage language students, and they often have knowledge that she does not. She adds that it is interesting to compare what the heritage language students believe is correct with what she believes is correct. Every heritage speaker has had different degrees of exposure to Spanish and knows certain things more thoroughly than others. After four years of teaching, Phoebe, like Monica, now tries to involve her heritage language students and to better incorporate them into her class. She often first tells the class how she says something and then asks the heritage language students how they say it or how their family members say it. In sum, as participants gain years of teaching experience, they realize that they can benefit from having heritage language students in their classes, and can strategically draw on heritage

speakers' everyday knowledge of the target language. Participants find this approach to heritage language students beneficial for the class as a whole because the teachers can expose students to various ways of saying things or to different varieties of Spanish.

In this way, heritage language students can be a source of affirmation of nonnative speaker teachers' linguistic competences in the target languages. Phoebe, a nonnative speaker teacher of Spanish, recalled the heritage language students' reactions to her on the first day of class: "Every so often I'll have Latino kids the first day and they'll say 'man, your accent is really good! Where are you from?' And those are the ones that ask. Or, they'll compliment me on my accent, and that generally means they know I'm not a native speaker but they think I'm good." She finds it interesting that it is always the heritage language students who make such affirming comments. With their long-term experiences with Spanish, heritage speakers judge whether one is a native speaker or not as well as how proficient the nonnative speaker is. While the remarks Phoebe received are positive, her experience helps us to understand what causes the nonnative speaker teachers' sense of anxiety around heritage language students. Here, the authority of the target language rests with the heritage language students rather than the teachers, thus mirroring a power relationship between them.

Nonnative speaker teachers' responses to the heritage language students in their classes involve a number of issues that are power-driven and identity-shaping, and are quite distinct from the issues involved in teaching non-heritage language students. First, the cause of the participants' self-consciousness and feelings of insecurity around heritage language students are distinguishable from those around non-heritage language students in that there is a power relation and a question of linguistic authority between the

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teacher and the students. Speaking to this, participants feared that the heritage language students might be more knowledgeable than them about the target language, might recognize the errors they make, or might negatively judge their target language ability. On the other hand, with students in general, the pressure on the participants seemed to derive from the need to establish themselves as an authority figure in class, to break down the students' possible negative stereotypes about nonnative speakers, and to prove their target language proficiency. One of the primary resources of nonnative speaker teachers is their experience of learning the target language as a second language, an experience that they share with students. Taking advantage of this experience as well as their insights into learning, they are able to build rapport with students and present themselves as model learners. This experience, however, cannot really be considered a resource when the class contains heritage language students since, from the viewpoint of the participants, heritage language students have gone through a learning process that is more similar to that of native speakers.

At the core of participants' insecurities, then, lies the issue of who has native speaker membership. As Tsui (2007) posited, the marginality of membership results from an asymmetrical power relationship, which has a significant impact on one's self-esteem and identity. Accordingly, participants defined heritage language students as native speakers or potential native speakers, insisting that, because they grew up in target language-speaking households, heritage speakers are already in a position to achieve native speaker competence. That is, heritage speakers already have the potential to become full-fledged members of the target language community, a possibility that is not available to nonnative speakers regardless of how much effort or time they invest in

target language learning. While previous studies have examined the power relationship between native and nonnative speakers and have shown that nonnative English speaking teachers are marginalized in their professions (Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999), the findings of the present study show that similar kinds of power dynamics emerge between heritage language students and nonnative speaker teachers, thereby confirming the way in which the discourse of nativeness disempowers teachers' identities. What these findings imply is that it is not the privileged status that English has as *a lingua franca*, but rather the assumed definition of native speaker that determines the unequal power relationship between native and nonnative speakers. The issue of the native speakership, although there is no clear definition of the native speaker, similarly applies to languages such as Spanish, German, and Japanese that do not have such a privileged status. Also, in the participants' perceptions, what plays the decisive role in the ascription of native speaker membership is acquisition in childhood rather than current level of proficiency. Accordingly, nonnative speakers of Spanish and Japanese in this study, despite the fact that they are more advanced than their heritage language students in terms of target language proficiency, do not have the native speaker membership that their heritage language students have. This power inequality and the marginality of membership cause the teachers to feel nervous and intimidated when they have heritage language students in class. Similarly, participants' description of heritage language students being a source of affirmation who validate the teachers' target language ability can be explained in terms of the unequal power relationship between the speaker groups. Participants' conceptualization of the native speaker has been problematized by Cook (1999, 2005), who maintains that if we use acquisition in childhood as the defining characteristic of the

native speaker, then it is impossible for second language learners to ever be native speakers because nothing they learn as adults will qualify them. Davies (1991, 1995) also challenges the notion of the native speaker, insisting that second language learners can accomplish native-like competence and have the confidence to claim native speaker membership. If we take this argument to be true, the results of the present study beg further questions: Are heritage speakers really the same as native speakers? Is acquisition in childhood a primary factor in the prediction of where one would ultimately fall on the proficiency spectrum? The findings of the present study imply that unequal power relationships between the teacher and the students profoundly affect the teachers' identity formation, leading us to ask the question: What would give nonnative speakers a stronger sense of the target language ownership? The following chapters attempt to answer this question by showing that embracing their nonnative speaker identities is the first step toward developing a sense of agency.

4.7 Teacher's race and ethnicity

The teacher's ethnicity and race was another theme that emerged as a significant factor in shaping the students' perception of the teacher, particularly during their first encounter. More often than not, physical appearance was regarded as a reliable clue that instantly indicates whether one is a native or a nonnative speaker of a certain language. Previous studies have problematized the set of assumptions that intertwines race and ethnicity with language ability and nonnative or native status (Paikeday, 1985; Rampton, 1990; Amin, 1997; Leung et al., 1997; Norton, 1997; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Liu,

1999a, 1999b; Kamhi-Stein, 2000; Ling & Braine, 2007). Supporting the respective conclusions of these studies, the present study shows that students often associate nonnative speaker teachers' racial and/or ethnic background with his or her competence in the target language, thus charging these nonnative speaker teachers with the additional task of building credibility with their students.

One's nonnative speaker status is often judged based on his or her ethnic background, which should match the notion of the idealized native speaker (Leung et al., 1997). The power relations involved in the labeling of native speaker and nonnative speaker further reinforces the perception that native speakers are better teachers (Liu 1999b). This notion of the native speaker mistakenly emphasizes biological factors, thus overlooking the social factors that play a prominent role in the relationship between people and language (Rampton, 1990). In addition, the relationship between ethnicity, language, and social identity is not fixed but changeable (Leung et al., 1997). Phoebe, who is Caucasian and does not explicitly reveal her nonnativeness unless she gets asked, thinks that her physical appearance in combination with her non-Latin name contributes to her students' assumption that she is a nonnative speaker of Spanish. On the other hand, every so often, her students ask if she is from Argentina, which she believes to result from their tendency to make the connection between race, ethnicity, nationality, and language ability.

In a similar fashion, the present study shows that students tend to assume a teacher's heritage speaker status based on observations of the teacher's physical attributes, which primarily focus on assumptions about his or her race and ethnicity. These prejudices are driven by the notion that language use can be successfully equated

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with ethnicity. Included in this notion is the idea that a language is owned by a certain

ethnic group and, by extension, the idea that belonging to a certain ethnic group means

speaking the language that is spoken by the majority of the members of that group. In this

view, the descendants of an ethnic group naturally inherit the language and, similarly, the

ethnic origin of a person is the predominant factor that decides his language abilities.

Leung et al. (1997) questions these beliefs, arguing that membership in an ethnic group

does not necessarily mean inheritance of the language used by the group.

Some of the participants have experienced and were conscious of their students'

tendency to associate racial and ethnic background with the language taught in the

classroom. This might influence or shape a teacher's self-image as a speaker and a

teacher of the target language. For example, if she does not explicitly tell them that she is

a nonnative speaker of Spanish or that she is half Caucasian and half Arab when she

introduces herself on her first day of class, students often assume that Angela is of

Hispanic descent. Although her explanation that she grew up in a Latino neighborhood

speaking Spanish may factor in, she thinks that her ambiguous appearance plays a

significant role in her students' assumption. Ethan, who is Caucasian and teaches German,

shares a similar experience. Once his students become aware that he is a nonnative

speaker of German, they often ask him whether or not he is of German descent. He

interprets this question as a result of the assumption that only people who have an explicit

connection to Germany would be interested in learning and speaking German. Phoebe's

understanding of her experience is comparable to that of Ethan. Since she does not

explicitly include the fact that she is a nonnative speaker of Spanish in her self-

introduction on the first day of class, the students sometimes ask her straight out if she is

Latina or Hispanic, or in a more indirect way ask if she grew up speaking Spanish. In both cases, the students are making an association between one's language learning history and use and one's ethnic and/or heritage background, thus overlooking many other factors that may be more pertinent to one's language learning experience (Paikeday, 1985; Rampton, 1990; Leung et al., 1997). In fact, in the language acquisition process of children of immigrant families, a number of social, cultural, historical, political, and economic factors other than the ethnic origin of the family are intertwined. What should also be recognized here is the assumption, for example, that Ethan's Caucasian appearance is similar to the stereotypical ideas in students' minds about what Germans look like, and the added influence this idea has on the students' assumption that Ethan is of German descent and possibly a heritage speaker rather than a nonnative speaker who has no ethnic link to Germany.

What these cases show is that students have a tendency to relate a teacher's racial, ethnic and/or heritage background with his linguistic repertoire, which could sometimes result in erroneously assuming that a nonnative speaker teacher is actually is a heritage speaker of the target language. This finding is comparable to those of previous studies (Paikeday, 1985; Rampton, 1990; Leung et al., 1997; Norton, 1997) in that one's racial, ethnic, and/or heritage background is to some degree used as the basis for an assumption of how one acquired the target language as a child. The results of the study show that these same erroneous beliefs may result in the assumption that a teacher is a heritage speaker of a language rather than a nonnative speaker.

Furthermore, participants felt that the students had a tendency to assume their level of target language competence and teaching ability based on how native or

nonnative the teacher's appearance was perceived to be. For example, Angela, a teacher of Spanish whose appearance is ambiguous, believes that it is easier for her to gain credibility whereas it is harder for the more Caucasian-looking teachers. Those teachers are more likely to get negative reactions when they walk into a class or are introduced to the students because students assume they will not be proficient speakers of Spanish. Monica shares a similar perspective on this issue. She thinks that her appearance, which is Caucasian with blonde hair and blue eyes, plays a significant role in the students' initial impression of her as a speaker and a teacher of Spanish precisely because of students' tendency to assume the teacher's linguistic competence based on their perceptions of her race and ethnicity. She has noted that the students often appear surprised at her appearance when they walk into her classroom. What the experiences of these two participants illustrate is that a teacher's nonnative speaker status is accentuated by his or her appearance particularly if it contradicts the stereotypical image the students have about speakers of the target language. Nevertheless, Monica reported that she believes that her nonnative speaker status and appearance are factors that are easily overcome when she starts speaking fluent Spanish to the students.

These cases illustrate the notion of the idealized native speaker (Rampton, 1990; Amin, 1997; Leung et al., 1997; Kramsch, 1997; Norton, 1997), which equates language with race and ethnicity and marginalizes ethnic minorities. Teachers who belong to a visible minority contradict the students' image of an ideal authentic ESL teacher, causing the teacher to feel disempowered by the students' stereotypes and to experience more difficulty gaining students' approval (Paikeday, 1985; Amin, 1997; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999). Similar to these findings, the teachers of various languages in this study

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had to go through some kind of linguistic verification process in order to prove themselves as competent speakers of the target language and to establish their authority as teachers.

The assumed relationship between language and race and/or ethnicity in the definition of the native speaker plays a significant role in nonnative speaker teachers' self-perceptions. Regardless of how much the teachers actually experienced the effects of the stereotypes students may have about nonnative speaker teachers, teachers were still highly conscious of and concerned about the students' potentially negative reactions. This was particularly true for teachers whose appearances do not correspond with the stereotypical image of the native speaker of the target language they teach. Furthermore, teachers' actual experiences with students were not very different from their predictions, thus confirming the socially constructed idea of native speaker of the target language that students tend to have (Leung et al., 1997; Norton, 1997).

Jane, who is Korean and who teaches English, explained that she would feel more native-like if she were Caucasian because it would help her to blend in more easily and pass as a native speaker of English. Jane's comments are in accordance with the finding that the teacher's self-image and self-confidence can be affected by students' stereotypical idea that native English speakers must be Caucasian (Paikeday, 1985; Amin, 1997; Leung et al., 1997; Norton, 1997). Even though she has been living and teaching in Los Angeles, where native English speakers of various racial and ethnic backgrounds can be found, for several years, she still feels that people tend to judge her English speaker status based on her appearance. Despite the great ethnic and linguistic diversity of Los Angeles, and despite the fact that people of Asian descent often speak

English as their native language, Jane still feels that English is commonly regarded as a language that belongs to Caucasians. That is, speakers of color are often excluded from the notion of the idealized native English speaker.

The widely held belief that a particular group of people can claim ownership of a language affects the way Jane sees herself as a speaker of English, which could ultimately disempower her professional identity. In Jane's perception of herself as a speaker of English, not only her linguistic proficiency but also her racial and ethnic background comes into play. Depending on how much a nonnative speaker's appearance corresponds to the socially constructed image of the native speakers of the target language, his or her nonnative speaker status could be either diminished or accentuated, ultimately affecting his professional identity construction.

In a similar fashion, Sunny described how being of Asian ethnicity, in addition to being a non-local, nonnative speaker teacher, was a primary source of her insecurity as a teacher of Spanish. She worried that the students would be biased against her because of these characteristics, and her impression of the first class meeting was that the students, who had expected either a Hispanic or an American teacher, were very surprised to see an Asian teacher. She was highly self-conscious about being the only Asian and nonnative teacher in the Spanish language program, to the point that her reaction to the long wait list for Spanish 1 (there are multiple sections for Spanish 1) was one of relief that her class would not be cancelled despite her Asian ethnicity. Once she started teaching the course, however, she got positive reactions from her students, especially from those of Asian descent, which allowed them to feel comfortable with her and to want to take her classes again in following quarters. This result reveals how a shared racial background, in

addition to the shared experience of learning the target language, creates a rapport between the teacher and the students. Jane shares a similar experience, which is that her Asian students have a tendency to identify themselves with her. In Sunny's case, while it is not clear if the shared racial background has directly caused the positive responses of her students of Asian descent, it is notable that such responses had a consequent effect on the teacher, resulting in Sunny's preference for students of Asian descent. Even though, at the time the interview was conducted, it was only her third quarter teaching Spanish and though Sunny had not had any negative experiences with any students, she still stated that she felt more comfortable with students of Asian descent. While being Asian was a source of her high self-consciousness, having students of the same race ultimately helped her to feel more confident and secure, encouraging her to have a more positive self-image as a Spanish teacher. This suggests that a teacher's race might not always be a factor that disempowers, but could promote the teacher's positive self-perception, depending on the context.

The findings of this study show that the assumed intrinsic connection between ethnicity and ability in a certain language and the stereotypes of an authentic teacher are the most significant factors in students' perceptions of teachers. Additionally, this study presents data on the influence that a teacher's physical appearance has on the students' conjectures about his language learning background, whether those be that a teacher is a native, a nonnative, or a heritage speaker of the target language. What is it that drives the students to rely on the teachers' appearance in their judgment of the teachers' target language learning and competence? One possible factor, as suggested by some of the participants, is that the course levels the participants in this study have taught are mostly

beginner or low intermediate; therefore, the students were not proficient enough in the target language to correctly judge the ability of the teacher. Instead, the teacher's physical appearance was the only clue easily accessible to students of all levels. It is also possible that students do not have previous experiences with nonnative speaker teachers, and therefore have had no reason to challenge their stereotypes. In conclusion, students' perceptions of a teacher's racial, ethnic and heritage background is not clearly separated from their judgments about the teacher's competence as speaker and a teacher of the target language. This may challenge a teacher's authority and ultimately disempower him or her, or it may promote identification between teacher and student, depending on the context.

4.8 Accent and nativeness

Despite the fact that I did not specifically explore the participants' perceptions with regard to accent, it emerged as a significant issue in participants' descriptions about second language proficiency and nonnativeness. What is noteworthy is that accent is similar to race, ethnicity, family name, and country of origin in that the participants reported that others frequently identified their nonnative status, making judgments based on how closely their accent conforms to the pronunciation of the native speaker. That is, the degree of foreign accent in the target language was an important factor that the nonnative speaker teachers perceived as an indicator of their nonnativeness, linguistic proficiency, and teaching ability in much the same way that the assumed connection between race, ethnicity, native or nonnative identity, and linguistic competence shaped

the students' perception of the teachers (Paikeday, 1985; Rampton, 1990; Amin, 1997; Leung et al., 1997; Norton, 1997; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Liu, 1999a, 1999b; Kamhi-Stein, 2000; Ling & Braine, 2007). Brutt-Griffler & Samimy (1999) state that accent is one of the major characteristics that are "socially held to represent those of the native speaker" (p. 416); therefore, those with foreign accents are usually labeled as nonnative speakers (Chen & Cheng, 2012), a pigeonholing which reinforces the idea that they are less capable of speaking and teaching the target language than their native speaker counterparts.

Accent is often regarded as a vital measure of achievement in second language learning (Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Cook, 1999). The more a speaker's accent conforms to native speaker norms, the more successful he or she is considered as the learner of the target language (Cook, 1999). Cook's claim is that while every speaker has an accent in his first language and is still accepted as a member of the speech community, second language speakers are deemed failures at second language for sounding foreign. Even though the goal of most second language learning is not to produce students with native accents, and even though accent is only one of the multiple factors indicating one's linguistic competence, accent is one of the central factors that determine how listeners judge one's success in second language learning (Thompson & Fioramonte, 2013). Furthermore, participants with native-like accents are sometimes mistaken for native speakers and are accepted on this basis into the native speaker community, which signifies the exclusiveness of native speaker membership (Thompson & Fioramonte, 2013) and the power relations involved in the labeling of native and nonnative speakers. Liu (1999b) problematizes this labeling, insisting that it reinforces the erroneous belief

that native speakers are more competent than nonnative speakers are to use and to teach the language. Likewise, Thompson and Fioramonte (2013) point to the problem of the way that accent is used as a measure of linguistic competence, claiming that this perpetuates the negative stereotypes of nonnative speaker teachers. In other words, foreign accents often label nonnative speaker teachers as deficient speakers of the target language, without regard to their overall linguistic proficiency or teaching ability.

While the participants in the present study did not make a direct association between accent and competence in teaching the target language, they still felt that accent had a significant impact on the ways in which they are perceived by others. Their experiences reveal that the degree to which one's accent conforms to native standards is an important factor in others' assessments of their target language proficiency. Accent differs from other factors in that it clearly reveals one's nonnative status, while other factors such as grammar may go unnoticed, especially in speech (Thompson & Fioramonte, 2013). The findings of the present study correspond with those in previous studies (Hertel & Sunderman, 2009; Thompson & Fioramonte, 2013) in that the participants framed the notion of accent such that accent was judged a primary indicator of linguistic proficiency.

Despite the fact that accent is not the sole element of which proficiency or teaching skills consist, nonnative speaker teachers are still liable to be evaluated by others based on their accents. Native-like accents work to nonnative speakers' advantage, leading others to be less judgmental or critical of the speakers' abilities than they would of nonnative speakers who do not have such accents. On the other hand, nonnative speaker teachers who do not have native-like accents are prone to be negatively judged

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by others, thus making these teachers feel challenged and disempowered. For example, Ethan reports that people often assume that he is a native speaker of German because of his native-like accent; they are not likely to pick up his mistakes.

> "People usually tell me that I have a REALLY GOOD ACCENT. Like, a lot of people I think I'm a native speaker of German. So, if I do make a mistake, they're a little more confused as to why I sound like that? Why is he making, why does he talk a little funny. That's what German speakers would tell me. It's like, they can tell I have an accent kind of, they can't really tell where from, or maybe sometimes they think it's from like a weird part of Germany or something. And, so, I think in that way they're a little LESS PRONE TO JUDGE MY LANGUAGE because they kind of ASSUME IT'S NATIVE." (Capital letters indicate the participant's emphasis) (Ethan, Participant #8)

Ethan feels that his native-like accent acts as a buffer that keeps his German from being judged harshly by others. Similarly, Phoebe felt that there was a correlation between nonnative speaker teacher's accents and the evaluations they received from students. According to her, those teachers who received commentaries that explicitly point to their nonnativeness on the course evaluation (e.g. "It was obvious that she was not a native speaker") or display the students' preferences for native speaker teachers over nonnative speaker teachers tended to have less native-like accents than those who did not.

What is evident here is that accent has an important bearing on nonnative speaker teachers' perceptions of the ways in which others judge them, thus affecting the teachers' sense of confidence. Eunice thought that her foreign accent was a highly noticeable clue to her nonnativeness, which caused her to feel reluctant to take an active role in the audio recordings that her colleagues took turns making for course listening tests. Often, accent is perceived to be an easy aid in assessing where one falls on the proficiency spectrum.

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For instance, when one of her colleagues in the Spanish program made a comment about her strong accent, Phoebe felt that there was an implied sense of comparison and ranking in terms of proficiency. In a similar fashion, when her heritage language students complimented her on her accent, she interpreted this as their knowing and acknowledging that she is a fluent nonnative speaker.

The problem of unquestioningly interpreting accent as a primary indicator of language competence is that it reinforces the negative stereotypes of nonnative speaker teachers and existing unequal power relations between the two speaker groups. The subject of nonnative speaker teachers' accents has often been investigated in the literature, but the discussion is mostly framed by the consideration that their accents are one of the main disadvantages that nonnative speaker teachers confront (Thompson & Fioramonte, 2013). Similarly, even when they do not receive any negative comments with regard to speaking and pronunciation from their students (Mahboob, 2004), nonnative English speaker teachers cite speaking skills and pronunciation as their major areas of difficulty (Reves & Medgyes, 1994). Nevertheless, Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999) maintain that nonnative English speaker teachers can empower themselves as English language teaching professionals regardless of their accents by raising self-awareness and constructing an identity of their own. The notion of accent should be examined within the framework of the native speaker construct in the same way that race, ethnicity, family name, national origin, and heritage background are.

4.9 Teaching one's native language versus teaching a nonnative language

The majority of the literature on native and nonnative speaker teachers has investigated each group separately, making comparisons between the two groups mostly with regard to their strengths and weaknesses. The present study, in contrast, includes teachers who have experience teaching both their native and nonnative languages. By looking at these teachers' self-perceptions, the present study sheds new light on how one's professional identity is shaped and reconstructed by this unique experience.

The participants were aware of the respective strengths and weaknesses they have in teaching each language. These were largely decided by their native or nonnative speaker statuses with regard to the respective language. The findings show that native-level proficiency was the primary source of the advantages of being a native speaker, while sharing the same learning experience with the students was cited as the primary strength of nonnative speaker status. When one is in the opposite position, however, the same source of strength becomes unavailable. Obviously, no one can be a native speaker of a language and at the same time have the firsthand experience of learning the language as a second language. For this reason, participants did not necessarily feel that they were at an advantage when teaching their native languages. In fact, some teachers felt that they were better qualified to teach their nonnative language due to the teacher training they had or due to their own experiences of learning the language, which functioned in a similar way as the training did. The participants' self-perceptions with regard to their own teaching practice of each language confirm Phillipson's *native speaker fallacy* (Phillipson,

1992) and underscore the importance of self-confidence and expertise in the construction of one's professional identity.

For example, Jane, who has taught both her native language (Korean) and her second language (English), expressed different kinds of insecurities she had teaching each language. When she was teaching first year Korean at a university in the U.S., she did not feel that she was really qualified to teach Korean and had a sense of anxiety, which she ascribes to her lack of proper training. The most difficult part for her was to give satisfactory explanations to the students about how Korean works, even though she knew what the correct answers were. This shows that knowing how to speak the language is different from being able to explain how the language works. In fact, she felt far more comfortable and confident teaching English, which is her second language, and ascribed this fact to the TESOL certificate and certain teacher training courses she had to take before she actually started teaching ESL classes. Due to these, Jane felt confident about explaining different rules or presenting various ways to approach English writing. Furthermore, she was able to better predict what the students were going to have difficulties with, thus incorporating the difficulties into her lesson plans in advance.

On a similar note, Ethan had insecurities teaching English as a native speaker. Before he started teaching, he had studied linguistics and taken an English as a Foreign Language teaching course that included teaching methodologies, classroom activities, and a teaching practicum. With these experiences, he had believed that he had a solid foundation for explaining the rules of English. When he actually started teaching English at a high school in Germany, however, he could not always give clear explanations; his knowledge of how to say things was intuitive, but he could not explain how to determine

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if a sentence or phrase was correct. Another participant, Phoebe described how her adherence to the *native speaker fallacy* (Phillipson, 1992) was broken down by her experience of teaching English, her native language. Despite the online Teaching English as a Foreign Language certificate she got before she went to Mexico, she did not quite feel that she was ready and properly trained to teach. Nevertheless, she thought that teaching English would be fun and easy and that she would be good at it simply because she was a native speaker. She quickly realized, however, that her original belief was wrong because she was not able to give proper explanations for the students' questions regarding verb conjugations or spelling. Her recognition was that the ability to tell if something sounded right was not the equivalent of knowing the rules that make grammar and spelling comprehensible to students. She reports that she therefore had to do a lot of study on her own and consult what was explained in the textbook in order to figure out how English works and how she could explain it to the students effectively. In this way, she had to improve her pedagogical skill by self-training as well as dealing with different problems she encountered in her everyday experience of teaching English. This shows that language teaching is a professional skill that can be developed through practice and training. Having taught English for a year and Spanish for four years, she feels far more comfortable teaching Spanish, which reveals the importance of teaching experience in one's professional confidence as a teacher.

Quite the opposite of when she was teaching English, Phoebe felt that she was better equipped to teach Spanish due to her knowledge of the language and the learning mechanisms which she gained from her own Spanish learning experience. She was able to explain the grammar rules, the formulas, and the history of Spanish effectively to her

students. Moreover, she could provide the students with emotional support because she herself had gone through what they were going through; she knew how challenging and mystifying the learning process could be. For these reasons, she felt that she had more advantages than native speakers of Spanish who teach their native language.

> "And I actually feel, as though in the opposite way of when I was teaching English, I feel WAY more equipped to teach Spanish. I know all the rules. I had to learn it myself, you know. I know all the formulas, I know the history of the language, I know, you know, all these other things. So, I even felt that I had sort of a leg up on them, sort of a, even more advantage than they did, even as native speakers teaching their native language. I felt it. I could do it better! Being a nonnative speaker of the language, I think I understand my students' experience more. I had to go through what they're now going through and I know how hard it was, and how challenging, and how mystifying at times." (Capital letters indicate the participant's emphasis) (Phoebe, Participant #3)

In some ways, Phoebe's description of her strengths in teaching Spanish reveals that she perceives her own learning experience as functioning in the same way as self-training, helping her to develop insights into how Spanish works which eventually contributed to her ability and confidence in teaching the target language. Her perception shows that nonnative speaker teachers' multilingual experiences and knowledge of the target language are powerful sources of professional strengths.

In contrast to Phoebe, Eunice was able to approach the Korean language, her native language, from the viewpoint of the students due to the teacher training she received and her years of teaching experience. Stating that not every Korean native speaker can teach Korean, she emphasized the importance of the teacher's ability to view Korean learning from the perspectives of the students. This ability has repeatedly been found by researchers to be the major strength of nonnative speaker teachers (Saito, 2003;

Cook, 1999, 2005; Ellis, 2004). Eunice believes that her training in Teaching Korean as a Foreign Language enabled her to develop skills for explaining Korean, particularly the grammatical rules that she has fully internalized as a native speaker, to students from the perspectives of second language learners. Through her teacher training, she was able to counterbalance her weaknesses as a native speaker, thus developing a good understanding of learning Korean as a second language in addition to her native speaker command of Korean.

The two major themes that emerged in the participants' description of teaching their native and nonnative languages were as follows. First, to be a native speaker of the target language does not necessarily mean that one is qualified to teach it. In other words, speaking a language is one thing and knowing how to teach it is another altogether, precisely because teaching is not an innate ability but an expertise that is developed through training and practice. This finding challenges the dichotomy of native versus nonnative speakers and instead stresses the importance of a teacher's training and professionalism. Accordingly, if well trained, it is possible for one to feel more confident and better equipped to teach a second language than to teach a native language.

The second theme was the importance of having a solid understanding of the target language from the perspective of the students, which is central to constructing a teaching practice that is sensitive to students' needs. Insight into the process of learning the target language enables teachers to explain the linguistic rules effectively, to anticipate the students' difficulties in learning, and to provide them with emotional support. This pedagogical sensitivity springs from the unique multilingual competence and perspective developed from their own second language learning experience. In this

respect, nonnative speaker teachers have an advantage over the native speaker teachers who learned the language as a child. In order for native speakers to better understand how language acquisition works from the perspective of second language learners, they will also need to go through teacher training.

While Medgyes (1992) and Reves and Medgyes (1994) insist that proficiency level is the most critical reason for discrepancies in teaching behavior between native and nonnative English speaker teachers, it can also be inferred from the results of the present study that the route of language acquisition is in fact the primary factor that drives the differences. While Reves and Medgyes (1994) focus on nonnative speaker teachers' deficiencies in the target language, on the other side of the issue lies what native speaker teachers are lacking: the experience of learning the target language as a second language. One fundamental factor that is only available to nonnative English speaker teachers and helps them to offset their weaknesses is their firsthand experience of learning the target language. In short, nonnative speakers can become successful teachers in their own terms, and recognizing their own assets and potential is critical for them to have a positive self-conception.

5. CONCLUSION

The literature on nonnative speaker teachers reveals that these individuals are challenged by the notion of the idealized native speaker as well as the ubiquitous assumption that the ideal teacher is a native speaker. These factors shape the ways in which nonnative speaker teachers establish their authority and expertise in the classroom and construct of their professional identities outside of the classroom. The present study probes these teachers' lived experiences, revealing the major factors involved in their self-perceptions of and attitudes toward their teaching practices. Furthermore, by including nonnative speaker teachers of various languages, this study fills a gap in the literature, thus providing a broader understanding of the power relations involved in the negotiation of their identities. Teachers' reflections regarding their experiences of teaching both their native and nonnative languages provide further insights into their respective strengths and weaknesses in teaching each language as well as into the important roles that target language competence, teacher training, and teaching experience play in their sense of confidence and professionalism.

This study began by looking at how nonnative speaker teachers define a native speaker and a native language. Participants agreed that acquisition in childhood is, in their perception, the most critical determinant of who can be considered a native speaker. Based on this understanding, because they viewed the term nonnative speaker to be a neutral descriptive term rather than a pejorative term, participants identified themselves as nonnative speakers of the target languages they taught. Participants were nevertheless

still aware of how, in the way that it insinuates a sense of ranking, the term could also potentially be used to purposefully disempower teachers.

While these teachers describe themselves as nonnative speakers, the concept of near-nativeness was an important factor in their self-empowerment as teachers. For them, it meant that they had successfully moved through the process of learning their second language and had attained a high degree of linguistic proficiency almost comparable to that of native speakers. Rather than conforming to the dichotomy of native versus nonnative speakers, participants therefore placed themselves on a continuum of proficiency. That is, one can be a nonnative speaker and, at the same time, be a competent speaker and teacher of the target language.

In order to establish their authority and build credibility with their students, these nonnative speaker teachers shifted the focus away from the fact of their nonnativeness and toward the insight they had gained from their own learning experiences. Specifically, they stressed how these experiences contributed to their teaching practices and, ultimately, to their students' learning. Included in their strengths were: their insights into the target languages, their understanding of the difficulties students experience in learning, their ability to provide a good second language learner model, their attitude of empathy towards students and their learning process, etc. Also, participants positioned themselves in the classroom as guides, more advanced learners, or facilitators for learning rather than a source and provider of absolute knowledge. This made their classrooms true learning communities.

Along with these assets and approaches to teaching, participants considered their proficiency in the target language central to both proving themselves as qualified teachers

and to confronting and altering their students' possible prejudices about nonnative speaker teachers. These findings support the claims of previous studies that assert that native and nonnative speaker teachers have different strengths and weaknesses, and that improving nonnative speaker teachers' proficiency in the target language should be one of the primary goals of teacher training. The teachers' emphasis on their near native level of proficiency in the target language can be explained in relation to the potential stereotypes they felt that students might possess about nonnative speaker teachers. Participants consistently noted this as one of the major challenges they faced in the classroom, particularly at the beginning of the course. Even those teachers who did not necessarily have experiences in which students questioned or criticized them outwardly still had a sense of insecurity as nonnative speaker teachers, which implies that the discourse of nativeness greatly influences their self-perceptions. Furthermore, the nonnative speaker teachers in the present study agreed that being a native speaker does not automatically mean that one is able to teach the language effectively; instead, participants made a distinction between language proficiency and teaching ability. Also, for some of the teachers, the positive reactions of their students reinforced their belief that students were more concerned with teachers' expertise than with their status as nonnative speakers.

The presence of heritage language students in the classroom heightened the power relations inherent between native and nonnative speakers. Participants who had heritage speakers enrolled in their classes indeed displayed a stronger sense of insecurity and a higher level of self-consciousness that affected their teaching practices accordingly. The reason for this anxiety was that, although teachers were well aware of the linguistic

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imperfections these students possessed as well as their current low level of proficiency, teachers still described heritage language students as potential native speakers who could become even more proficient speakers of the target language than the participants ever could. This perspective was guided by a tacit agreement regarding the definition of native speaker—that the native speaker is biodevelopmentally grounded in that, to be a native speaker, one must be exposed to the language in early childhood—which drew a permanent and impenetrable boundary between native and nonnative speakers. This understanding was concurrent with participants' self-identification as near native speakers. At the same time, some teachers regarded heritage language students as a source of affirmation, students who might validate their target language ability and might prove to be good instructional resources in the classroom. In a way, the power dynamics between native speakers and nonnative speakers were therefore reproduced between heritage language students and nonnative teachers.

This study also revealed that the notion of the idealized native speaker that tends to marginalize racial and ethnic minority speakers also influenced students' perceptions of their nonnative speaker teachers, thus presenting the nonnative speaker teacher with an additional challenge. The assumption that a language is owned by a certain ethnic group, an assumption that makes an association between teachers' racial and/or ethnic background and their competence in the target language, overlooks other factors that may be more decisive in one's language learning experience. In a similar way, these teachers experienced students' identification of their nonnativeness as well as students' judgment regarding their level of proficiency based on students' perception of teachers' foreign accent in the target language. Accent was often considered to be a primary indicator of

one's achievement in second language learning, a belief that has the effect of labeling nonnative speakers as deficient speakers and which tends to reinforce negative stereotypes and perpetuate the dominance of nativeness.

By also presenting the reflections of the teachers who have taught both their native and nonnative language, this study strengthens the claim that being a native speaker is one thing and that being a successful teacher is another, unrelated thing. Participants did not necessarily see themselves as more effective in teaching their native language as their nonnative speaker counterparts. Some agreed that their own learning experiences as second language speakers enabled them to more effectively and more sensitively meet the students' needs. In addition, these teachers pointed to the important role of teaching experience and teacher training in the development of their professionalism.

This study calls into question the dominance of nativeness and challenges the unequal power relation in second language learning and teaching. The findings of this study extend the current literature on nonnative speaker teachers by exploring these teachers' construction of professional identities. The results show that the initial step in their self-empowerment is their full awareness and acknowledgement of their own strengths, specifically those gained and developed from their own experience of learning the target language. By embracing their nonnative speaker identities, teachers can capitalize on their linguistic, cultural, and educational resources and more effectively incorporate their experiences into instructional practices. This approach to teaching helps them to enhance their sense of agency and self-esteem, and aids them in becoming successful teachers on their own terms.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Background Questionnaire

Part 1. Demographic information
1. What is your name?
2. What is your gender?
3. What is your age?
4. What is your ethnicity?
5. What is your nationality?
6. Where did you grow up?

Part 2. Language and professional background
1. What languages do you speak? (first, second, third…)
2. How would you describe your proficiency level in each language?
3. What language(s) do you teach and/or have you taught?
4. How many years of experience do you have as a teacher of the language(s)?
5. In what kind of institution or program do/did you teach?
6. What position do/did you hold?
7. What is/was your average workload per week?
8. What level(s) do you teach and/or have you taught?
9. What kind of courses do you teach and/or have you taught?
10. What is your major and degree? (If you hold multiple degrees, please list them)
11. Have you ever received any language teacher training? (If so, please list them)
12. Do you have any teaching credentials or certificates? (If so, please list them)
13. Does your institution or program monitor or evaluate language instructors?

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. What languages do you speak?
2. How did you acquire the language you are currently teaching or have taught in the past?
3. Have you ever received any teacher training? What was it like? In the program in which you are currently teaching, does your teaching ever get evaluated?
4. When you applied for the teaching position, were you required to prove your language proficiency? Did you have to do an interview or submit a CV or resume?
5. How did you get the teaching position?
6. What is your position in the language program? What are your responsibilities and duties?
7. Does your language program have both native and nonnative speakers teaching the target language?
8. In your department, are courses assigned based on a teacher's nativeness or nonnativeness? Have you ever witnessed any preferential treatment towards native speakers?
9. As a nonnative speaker teacher of the target language, what do you think your strengths and weaknesses are?
10. How do you introduce yourself to your students? Do you tell them that you are a nonnative speaker of the language?
11. How do you empower yourself and prove your qualifications as a teacher of the target language?
12. Have you ever felt challenged or questioned by others, including your students and/or colleagues?
13. Have you ever experienced feelings of insecurity while teaching your native language?
14. As a teacher of your native language, what do you think your strengths and weaknesses are?
15. As a speaker of the language you are teaching, how would you describe yourself?
16. How did you develop your teaching expertise?

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