

Exploring the Professional Identity and Professional Agency of Non-Native English–Speaking
Teachers within TESOL Programs in Canada: An in-Depth Literature Review

Shohreh Shahrouyan

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By: Shohreh Shahrouyan

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complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality. Signed by the final Examining Committee:

_____ Chair
Dr. Miranda D’Amico

_____ Examiner
Dr. Elsa Lo

_____ Supervisor
Arpi Hamalian

Approved by _____
Dr. Saul Carliner, Chair of Department

March 2024 _____
Dr. Pascale Sicotte, Dean of Faculty

Abstract

Exploring the Professional Identity and Professional Agency of Non-native English–Speaking Teachers within TESOL Programs in Canada: An In-depth Literature Review

Shohreh Shahrouyan

Identity and agency play pivotal roles in shaping teachers' commitment, involvement, and personal autonomy throughout their professional growth journey. This literature-based thesis seeks to explore the creation of transformative professional learning experiences to foster the positive growth of non-native English-speaking teachers' (NNESTs) identity and agency. It begins by addressing challenges in defining NNEST's professional identity and reevaluating current notions of NNEST's growth. Shifting the discussion to NNEST growth, the thesis examines the interconnectedness of identity and agency. This study argues for a broader understanding of transformative learning as a theoretical framework for supporting NNESTs. Drawing on transformative learning theory, the thesis suggests strategies for facilitation methods that empower NNESTs to realize their full potential in international education programs, particularly in TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages). The research findings shed light on the negotiation of linguistic and cultural aspects, challenges faced by NNESTs, the role of discursive constructions, and teachers' emotional responses. Demonstrating how professional development can facilitate transformative learning, the study highlights the importance of creating supportive environments that encourage critical reflection and validate multiple identities. It also discusses implications for promoting positive identity construction and professional integration.

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Abbreviations and Acronym

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

EGP: English for General Purposes

ELT: English Language Teaching

ELL: English Language and Literature

ESL: English as a Second Language

ESP: English for Specific Purposes

L2: Second Language

LTEs: Language Teacher Educators

LTA: Language Teaching Agency

LTI: Language Teaching Identity

NEST: Native English Speaking Teacher

NNEST: Non-Native English-Speaking Teacher

NNES-TC: Non-Native-English-Speaking Teacher Candidates

NS: Native Speaker

SCT: Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

TESOL: Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

WE: World Englishes

Chapter One- Introduction, Personal Interest, Problem Statement, Research Questions, and Outline of the Thesis

Introduction

In our increasingly interconnected world, effective cross-cultural communication has emerged as a vital component of global interactions. As a result, the role of language teachers and the development of their professional identity have garnered significant attention in educational discourse. It is important to recognize that teachers' professional lives are intricately positioned at the intersection of local, national, and global educational policy contexts. The deliberate actions they take (i.e., agency) and how they perceive themselves and their roles as educators (i.e., identity) dynamically interact with these multifaceted contexts. This dynamic interaction plays a pivotal role in shaping the effectiveness of language teaching in an increasingly globalized society (Lord, 2016).

Over the past decade, there has been a growing focus on the professional identity of language teachers in research related to language instruction. This increased attention is reflected in various studies, such as those conducted by Duff and Uchida (1997), Pavlenko (2009), and Tsui (2009). Currently, it is widely acknowledged that the identity of a language teacher has a substantial influence on how teaching is carried out in the language classroom. As argued by Varghese et al. (2005), to gain a comprehensive understanding of language teaching and learning, it is essential to delve into the world of teachers. This entails obtaining a clearer grasp of the professional, cultural, political, and individual identities that teachers either assert or have ascribed to them.

Teacher agency also has garnered increasing attention within the field of language education (Bao et al., 2020; J. Huang & Yip, 2021; Tao & Gao, 2017). The literature demonstrates that the development of agency is intricately shaped by individual characteristics and the context in which teachers operate, ultimately influencing the feasibility of agentic choices (Bonner et al., 2020; Jiang & Zhang, 2019). Teachers possessing agency tend to view themselves as active learners capable of making informed decisions and reflecting thoughtfully on the outcomes of their actions (Priestley et al., 2015). Furthermore, this confidence in exercising agency is closely tied to perceiving their profession as meaningful (Priestley et al., 2015), consequently reinforcing their commitment to becoming effective educators and intensifying their dedication to professional growth. Therefore, teacher agency plays a pivotal role in advancing the professional practice of language teachers (Bao et al., 2020). Given the continued prevalence of English in various realms of human interaction and knowledge production, addressing the agency of English language teachers holds particular importance.

The increasing number of English language learners globally has driven a growing demand for proficient English teachers (Wright, 2010). It is worth noting that non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) constitute a majority of English teachers in the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) field worldwide (Canagarajah, 2013). NNESTs are often recognized for their enhanced knowledge of grammatical issues and heightened sensitivity to cross-cultural matters, derived from real-life experiences (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Phillipson, 1992a). Some argue that non-native speakers, who have undergone the process of learning a second language, may be better qualified to teach than those who are native speakers (Braine, 2018; Phillipson, 1992a), thanks to their deep understanding of the challenges and needs their students encounter.

However, many well-qualified NNESTs grapple with the challenge of asserting and negotiating their identity as legitimate English-as-a-second/foreign-language (ESL/EFL) instructors, primarily due to the persistence of the native speaker myth (Phillipson, 1992a). Given the widespread prevalence of the discourse promoting native speaker authority in TESOL programs and mainstream applied linguistics, it is imperative to underscore the importance of research addressing the identity struggles faced by NNESTs, as evidenced by different studies (Braine, 2013; Canagarajah, 2013). The dynamic interplay between identity, agency, and transformative learning within the context of language education is a crucial element in understanding the challenges and opportunities faced by NNESTs and the broader implications for the field.

In the landscape of language education, teacher cognition has traditionally played a central role in discussions surrounding teacher learning and second-language teacher development. However, a significant shift in learning theory has unfolded over the last two decades, moving away from cognitive orientations and towards social perspectives (Pennington, 2014). This transformation has accentuated the importance of considering identity in our comprehension of the fundamental aspects of teaching and teacher learning (Pennington, 2014).

Within this evolving educational context, Mezirow's transformative learning theory becomes a pertinent framework for my investigation. Mezirow asserts that social change can only materialize through the individual transformations of its members, as emphasized by Merriam and Baumgartner (2020). Additionally, as highlighted by Frenk et al. (2010), transformative learning is centered on cultivating leadership attributes and aims to produce enlightened change agents. According to Mezirow (2000), the ultimate goal of transformative learning encompasses a broader, more inclusive comprehension of the world, the ability to

discern diverse aspects of society, greater openness to alternative perspectives, and the capacity to integrate various dimensions of personal experience into meaningful and holistic relationships.

In light of these considerations, the field of education, particularly within TESOL programs, should emphasize a profound interrelation between the construction of professional identity and the active exercise of agency to enable NNESTs to realize their utmost potential. Highlighting the close connection between professional identity construction and the enactment of agency, this analytical-based study aims to delve into the experiences of NNESTs within a TESOL program in Canada, with a specific focus on their professional agency and professional identity. By doing so, this study seeks to shed light on the challenges they face, the strategies they employ, and the transformative potential of fostering a positive professional identity and agency among NNESTs. In addressing this critical issue, we hope to contribute to the broader discourse on language education and promote inclusivity within the field.

My Personal Interest

My interest in this research was sparked in 2018 when I first arrived in Montreal. With a B.A. in English Language and Literature (ELL) and an M.A. in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), as well as seven years of teaching English experience with both children and adults in various institutes in Iran, I have always found teaching English to be intriguing. It has cultivated in me a strong desire to be creative to engage my students using a wide range of teaching methods. Upon arriving in Montreal, as someone whose life has been shaped by education, I made the decision to apply for English teaching positions in different institutes.

However, I encountered closed doors on multiple occasions due to reasons such as insufficient teaching experience, being deemed unsuitable for teaching advanced levels, and most importantly, not having a Canadian certification. Surprisingly, in some cases, being a native

speaker was deemed more important than prior teaching experience. Viewing this as an opportunity to enhance my teaching skills, I enrolled in the TESOL program offered by the Oxford Seminars Institute. During the course, I experienced a sense of crushing disappointment. Despite my strong familiarity with teaching methods, I was so taken aback that I struggled to speak up and answer questions. Whenever I did manage to speak, students in the front rows would turn around, curious about the accented English they heard. The atmosphere felt stifling, and I gradually grew more isolated from my peers.

Throughout the course, I came to realize that, from their viewpoint, there was a very real and significant difference between the English I spoke and the English they spoke, a difference that seemingly granted them academic and social advantages. The limited ethnic diversity within the class made me perceive being a visible minority as a disadvantage. Despite receiving positive evaluations from my mentor teacher, her endorsement was overshadowed by my lingering apprehension that, irrespective of my abilities and aspirations as an educator, I would forever remain an outsider. During this formative phase, I engaged in a constant internal dialogue, questioning my identity, aspirations, and passions. I found myself oscillating between different roles: a TESOL student, someone proficient in both Persian and English, a former teacher who guided students in passing English proficiency exams, and an Iranian language instructor who drew inspiration from my students. I pondered over the significance of these identities and why they seemed to fluctuate over time. I wondered if my classmates experienced similar shifts in their own identities. What is my own sense of agency? I kept asking myself these questions and wanted to find the answers.

My study seeks to contribute to the theoretical understanding of how non-native English-speaking teachers perceive and navigate critical moments and areas of growth in their

professional teaching careers, leading to transformative effects on their professional identity and sense of agency as language educators. Specifically, this research delves into the impact of categorization as non-privileged on the professional identity of non-native English-speaking teachers working in a foreign context. This research will employ analytical frameworks to explore the broader developmental factors that drive transformative changes in teachers' professional identity and agency.

Statement of the Problem

Professional learning and development of teachers are crucial not only for the development of schools and teachers but also for student-centered and meaningful learning. Professional identity and professional agency can promote and facilitate professional learning for teachers, in particular to help novice teachers become experienced teachers (Schleicher, 2012). However, the autonomy and power of teachers can be undermined by educational policies and school contexts, resulting in a tension between contextual structures and professional agency (Biesta et al., 2015). To address this issue, it is necessary to understand how teacher agency and identity contribute to professional development, particularly in the context of language teaching.

The existing literature primarily emphasizes the significance of teacher identities (Hoban, 2007; Olsen, 2008). English language teaching, historically and currently, is predominantly carried out by individuals who are not native English speakers. According to Canagarajah (1999), approximately 80% of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers globally are non-native speakers of English. Research dedicated to the exploration of NNESTs' identities is still in its nascent stages (Ilieva & Ravindran, 2018; Larsen–Freeman, 2019). Consequently, NNESTs have not received adequate support beyond mere practical and functional aspects within the realm of professional development literature. This underscores a noticeable gap in our

understanding of and assistance for the holistic development of NNESTs' professional identities as language educators.

Thus, to the best of my knowledge, the professional literature has often focused primarily on the practical aspects of non-native-speaking teachers' development while largely neglecting the deeper dimensions of their professional identity and agency, especially within TESOL programs. Consequently, there is a pressing need for thorough research to understand how teacher agency and teacher identity underlie the professional development of educators in TESOL. Furthermore, it is imperative to explore the extent of NNESTs' awareness of their agency and their capacity to make informed choices regarding their values and interactions with others. In essence, the professional identity and agency of teachers, especially NNESTs, remain understudied areas that require comprehensive examination.

Therefore, in this analytical study, my aim is to contribute to the existing body of research by conducting a comprehensive literature review that explores perceptions and understanding of language teacher identity, along with the underlying assumptions related to growth, development, and learning that warrant attention. Specifically, I seek to investigate whether NNESTs are aware of their agency and their capacity to make informed choices regarding their values and interactions within the TESOL program. By shedding light on these critical aspects, this literature-based M.A. thesis strives to enrich our understanding of the growth, professional development, and learning trajectories of NNESTs, ultimately providing valuable support and guidance for their educational journeys.

Research Questions

The research questions in this study are multidimensional, stemming from a personal experience as well as my own status as an immigrant, a non-native English speaker, and a language teacher. This study, driven by its broader implications within the field of teacher identity research, seeks to analytically examine the perceptions of NNESTs regarding the transformative elements of their professional development and the evolution of their sense of agency. This investigation aims to uncover insights into the critical junctures and areas of growth that significantly influence the professional identity and agency of language educators. To this end, the central question guiding this inquiry is as follows:

- 1) How do language teachers comprehend the turning points and developmental areas in their professional teaching trajectories that significantly impact their professional identity and sense of agency as language instructors?

To gain a deeper understanding of the overarching question, subsidiary questions have been formulated as follows:

- 2) How do these developmental aspects contribute to the transformation of NNESTs' professional identity and agency?
- 3) Within the context of TESOL program, how do NNESTs navigate and negotiate their professional identity?

By addressing these analytical questions, this MA Thesis endeavors to enrich the existing body of knowledge in teacher identity and teacher agency, offering insights for advancing the professional growth and well-being of language educators, particularly non-native English-speaking teachers.

Methodology

Data Collection

A thorough and systematic review entails several essential components, including (1) clearly defining the research question; (2) conducting a comprehensive search for relevant studies; (3) establishing clear criteria for study inclusion and exclusion; (4) assessing the methodological quality of studies; (5) employing strategies to minimize bias in selection and review processes; and (6) maintaining transparency in the methodology used for the review (Evans & Benefield, 2001). Adhering to these principles and guided by the research questions, the data collection procedure followed a standard systematic review approach. Searches for articles on second language teacher identity and agency were conducted across various electronic academic literature databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, Education Source, ERIC, and Google Scholar, along with specific journal issues such as *TESOL Quarterly*, *TESOL Journal*, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *System*, *The Modern Language Journal*, and *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*.

The article selection process involved utilizing keywords such as ESL, TESL, TESOL, English as a foreign language, teaching English as a second language, teacher, educator, instructor, identity, professional identity, agency, teacher program, teacher education, Canada, Mezirow's transformative learning theory, and non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) and native English-speaking teachers (NESTs). A total of 130 relevant articles, including journal articles, MA theses and dissertations, and book chapters, were identified. Only empirical studies published in English and peer-reviewed journals, books, and book chapters were considered, while review articles, book reviews, book chapters, conference reports and proceedings, and theses were excluded due to a lack of rigorous peer review processes. Following

inclusion/exclusion criteria, 71 articles were systematically reviewed to address the research questions posed.

Data Analysis

The data analysis involved three main steps: screening, full-text review, and data extraction. Obsidian, a specialized software, was utilized to support these processes. During the screening phase, the titles and abstracts of the identified articles were carefully evaluated based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. This step aimed to select relevant articles for further review while narrowing down the initial pool. In the full-text review phase, a thorough examination of the selected articles was conducted to gain a comprehensive understanding of their content. Factors such as methodology, findings, and relevance to the research questions were critically analyzed. Obsidian facilitated the organization and annotation of the full-text articles, allowing for note-taking, highlighting important information, and linking related ideas across different articles. Finally, data extraction was performed to systematically collect and organize relevant information from the selected articles. Obsidian supported the creation of structured data tables or spreadsheets, aiding in the organization and categorization of the extracted information. This step facilitated the identification of key themes, theories, methodologies, and findings across the literature.

Outline of the thesis

This thesis comprises four chapters, as follows. Commencing with the first chapter as an overall introduction to the research, the second chapter examines literature in relevant fields of language teacher identity, language teacher agency, and the link between identity and agency. Chapter three focuses on the growth and development of NNESTs within a TESOL program,

using Mezirow's transformative learning perspective. My choice of a TESOL program is because the context aligns with my own experiences. Finally, the fourth chapter presents the findings, provides a conclusion, highlights essential implications, and offers recommendations for future research.

Nature of Identity

The concept of identity poses a challenge in its definition, as noted by various researchers. Menard-Warwick (2005) highlighted the confusion in defining identity within the literature, citing instances where authors presented multiple definitions for the same term or merged different terms, using them interchangeably. Moreover, she emphasized that definitions of identity persist in being diverse, flexible, and subject to contention. However, Norton (2000) offers a perspective defining identity as understanding one's connection to the world, shaping this bond across time and space, and envisioning potential paths ahead (2000). Similarly, Cummins (2011) views identity as a collection of unique traits forming a composite whole. Certain aspects of identity originate from genetic inheritance, while others develop gradually through experiences and social interactions. Some facets are conferred by external sources, like positions granted or elected, while others, such as group affiliations, are personally chosen. This understanding acknowledges identity as a dynamic, ever-evolving phenomenon (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

Identity is a multifaceted construct that exists both within an individual's mind and within a social context, as highlighted by Heisey (2011) and Beauchamp and Thomas (2009). It encompasses not only the concept of self but also how this self is perceived within an external framework shaped by others' perceptions and characteristics. It extends beyond a static representation of oneself at a given moment, evolving into a mental model that combines the current self-concept with aspirations and desired traits relative to valued criteria, such as kindness or academic success. Additionally, identity encompasses traits attributed or perceived by others, forming an intricate amalgamation. Tajfel's (1974) theory further contributes to this

understanding by emphasizing the role of group membership in shaping identity. He defines identity as a component of an individual's self-concept derived from knowledge of belonging to a social group, underscored by emotional significance. This membership isn't fixed and may change over time, as individuals might opt to abandon a group and adopt a new one, driven by various factors like dissatisfaction.

Rather than conceptualizing identity merely as a collection of defining traits, it can be better understood as a form of performance—an active enactment and positioning of the self within specific contexts and societal frameworks (Hall, 1997). This perspective views identities as ongoing narratives consciously constructed and projected through various mediums such as clothing, body language, actions, and speech (Block, 2014) via intentional acts of identity (Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985). These intentional acts of identity (Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985) contribute to the ongoing creation and expression of one's identity. As an individual's identity is developed through interactions with the surrounding context and other people, it is inherently influenced by external factors, undergoing a continuous negotiation, positioning, and counter-positioning in response to perceived contextual elements and the stances of others.

Teacher Identity

Examining the experiences and beliefs that shape a teacher's identity is crucial, not just for NNESTs in TESOL profession but for all educators. Understanding the core beliefs held by teachers is vital for improving educational practices and effectiveness in teaching. Teacher identity is pivotal in supporting effectiveness, resilience, motivation, and job satisfaction. It acts as a mental framework guiding teachers in their roles, shaping how they perceive and perform their duties. Each teaching field possesses its unique model of teacher identity, influencing how educators perceive and enact their roles. This internal model aligns individual teachers with the

broader identity within their field, shaped by personal experiences, educational background, and interactions. It intertwines with personal history and teaching experiences, influencing self-perception and guiding choices in classroom roles, instructional approaches, and interactions with students and colleagues (Pennington, 2014).

The existing body of literature in the field of teaching and teacher education consistently highlights the dynamic nature of teacher identity. Hsieh (2010) defines teacher identity as the combination of an individual's beliefs, values, and commitments specifically related to being a teacher, emphasizing different facets like urban teaching or beginner teaching. Johnson (1996) views teacher identity as an activity constructed within the social sphere, necessitating the interpretation and negotiation of meanings within the classroom setting. Sachs (2005) accentuates the fluidity of teacher identity, highlighting its evolution through experiences and the subsequent sense-making process derived from those experiences.

Scholars have acknowledged that a teacher's identity undergoes changes over time, influenced by a variety of factors. These factors can be categorized into those originating from within the individual, such as emotions (Rodgers & Scott, 2008; Van Veen & Slegers, 2006), and those originating from external sources, such as job and life experiences in specific contexts (Flores & Day, 2006). While these insights contribute significantly to our understanding of teacher identity, it is worth noting that defining this concept has often presented a challenge for researchers and authors.

In their comprehensive research examination of teacher professional identity, Beijaard et al. (2004) observed the recurring absence of a universally accepted definition in the literature they reviewed. Their systematic analysis, spanning the years 1998 to 2000, revealed four key features that shed light on the dynamic nature of professional identity. It was clear that

professional identity is an ongoing and continuously evolving process. One notable aspect of professional identity is its intrinsic connection to both the individual and the contextual environment. Teachers acquire professional characteristics within specific contexts, but the way these characteristics are adopted and personalized can vary among individuals. Within a teacher's professional identity, sub-identities exist, with some playing a more central role and others remaining peripheral. Maintaining a balance among these sub-identities is essential to prevent potential conflicts. Additionally, the concept of agency, which involves actively pursuing professional growth in alignment with a teacher's goals, is a fundamental component of professional identity. They also highlighted the challenges posed by differing interpretations of identity, particularly the intricate relationship between one's identity and their self-concept, as well as the blurred boundary between personal and professional identity. It is evident that while a precise, universally accepted definition of identity remains elusive, there is a widespread consensus among scholars in the field regarding its multifaceted and ever-evolving nature.

Researchers approach the understanding of teacher professional identity from various perspectives. Gee (2001) provides a foundational understanding of identity, suggesting that it denotes the type of person one is within a specific context. While an individual may possess a core identity, there are various manifestations of this identity as they navigate different contexts. Gee identifies four distinct ways in which identity can be perceived: Nature-identity (i.e., this type of identity is rooted in one's natural state and intrinsic characteristics); institution-identity (i.e., the identity arises from a position officially recognized by an authority or institution); discourse identity (i.e., this identity is shaped by the way others talk and engage in discourse about an individual); affinity-identity (i.e., the identity is determined by an individual's practices and affiliations with external groups). Gee's (2001) emphasis lies in highlighting the multifaceted

nature of identity and how it undergoes changes under the influence of external factors and varying contexts. This framework acknowledges that identity is not a static, singular concept but rather a complex interplay of these different dimensions.

From a sociocultural perspective, scholars such as Olsen (2008) and Sfard and Prusak (2005) provide an alternative lens through which to understand the concept of identity. In this view, teacher identity is perceived as both a product and a process. This perspective emphasizes the dynamic nature of teacher identity, where it is not a fixed entity but a result of influences on the teacher and an ongoing interaction within their professional development. Teacher identity, in this context, can be viewed as a label for the amalgamation of influences and effects stemming from immediate contexts, pre-existing self-concepts, social positioning, and meaning systems. These elements are in a constant state of flux, and together they form an ever-changing construct. This construct becomes intricately intertwined within the flow of a teacher's activities as they simultaneously respond to and negotiate the specific contexts and human relationships they encounter in their teaching journey (Olsen, 2008). This perspective underscores the notion that a teacher's identity is not a static entity but is instead a dynamic and evolving aspect of their professional life.

Similarly, within the realm of discourse, the concept of identity is closely linked to how collective discourses play a role in shaping individual realities, and how individual voices coalesce to form the collective voice of a community (Sfard & Prusak, 2005). This perspective underscores the dynamic and interwoven nature of identity as it is influenced and shaped by the broader discourses and narratives within a given social or professional context. It highlights the idea that individual identities are not isolated but rather intricately connected to the larger social and communal identity.

Sachs (2005) offers a compelling starting point that underscores the fundamental role of teacher professional identity within the teaching profession. According to Sachs, teacher identity is at the heart of the teaching profession. It serves as a foundational framework that enables educators to shape their own notions of how to be, how to act, and how to comprehend their roles and positions in society (Sachs, 2005). What's particularly significant is that teacher identity is not a rigid or externally imposed construct. Instead, it is a dynamic and evolving entity that is continually shaped through the accumulation of experiences and the personal meaning-making processes applied to those experiences (Sachs, 2005). In essence, this perspective underscores the adaptable and individualized nature of teacher professional identity, which emerges from one's unique encounters and the interpretations derived from those encounters. This view highlights the fluidity and responsiveness of teacher identity to evolving circumstances and personal growth.

Building on the notion of teacher professional identity discussed earlier, the concept of language teacher identity also plays a significant role in teacher training and practice, exerting a profound influence on teachers' pedagogical methods and interactions with their students (Menard-Warwick, 2008). It also impacts how teachers engage with professional development and teacher preparation programs, shapes their beliefs, filters the content they are exposed to, and affects their effectiveness and implementation of instructional strategies (Yazan, 2018). Varghese (2018) has conceptualized language teacher identity through three distinct viewpoints: identities in practice, identities in discourse, and racio-linguistic identities. This framework acknowledges the dynamic, complex, and multi-dimensional nature of language teacher identity.

Barkhuizen (2016) provides a comprehensive composite conceptualization of language teacher identity, drawing upon a synthesis of interpretations from prior research on teacher

professional identity. He underscores the multifaceted nature of language teacher identity, highlighting its cognitive, social, emotional, ideological, and historical dimensions. Barkhuizen emphasizes that language teacher identities exist within the interaction between teachers as individuals and the external context. He posits that these identities are not static possessions but rather ongoing performances, capable of both conflict and harmony, characterized by their multiplicity and dynamism. Furthermore, they evolve over time and interact with non-human elements and ecological spaces, encapsulating the complex nature of teacher professional identity.

Conceptual Frameworks for the Development of Teacher Identity

This section delves into the literature and relevant theories on teacher identity and agency, placing a specific emphasis on language teachers and NNESTs when relevant. It explores various theoretical perspectives like poststructuralism, socio-cultural theory, teacher ecology, and cultural identity as lenses to understand teacher identity.

Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (SCT) offers insights into the transformation of identity among NNESTs and how potential shifts in their professional discourse and self-concept might influence their instructional methods (Johnson, 2006). According to SCT, human cognition, such as memory, planning, and higher-order thinking, is shaped by culturally developed tools (Lantolf, 2000). Within the realm of teacher learning and development, SCT highlights the socially mediated nature of learning. It underscores the dynamic interplay between teachers' thoughts and their sociocultural environments and practices (Lantolf & Johnson, 2007). This perspective doesn't solely consider what teachers know and believe but also focuses on how their perceptions

of themselves and their actions are influenced by their teaching contexts. From this standpoint, teacher learning involves helping educators internalize new insights drawn from theory, reflection, and socially mediated interactions. Subsequently, based on these newfound understandings, teachers commit to making changes in their approach, particularly in their instructional practices (Johnson & Golombek, 2003).

Viewed through an SCT lens, one's identity growth and progression originate and reside within their social networks and the wider sociocultural environment (Van Huizen et al., 2005). This perspective underscores the constantly shifting interplay between an individual and their social milieu, recognizing both the distinctiveness and limitations of this connection (Valsiner, 1998). It involves drawing upon recognizable social archetypes while incorporating personal nuances as they are internalized (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007). Moreover, individuals continuously construct, exhibit, and manage their identities, engaging in an ongoing process of self-becoming (Cross & Gearon, 2007). As active participants in communities of practice, individuals have the potential to redefine their subjectivities through both spoken and enacted narratives (Wertsch et al., 1993). Emotions play a central role in this process of self-narration, forming the core of reshaping one's personal story (DiPardo & Potter, 2003).

In this context, nurturing the development of NNESTs' professional identities revolves around guiding their understanding of their positioning in their professional domain and how external entities (such as students, institutions, and public discourse) acknowledge their credibility within their specific environments. This process demands the creation of conducive spaces (Golombek & Johnson, 2004), fostering critical introspection and collective inquiry. These environments encourage the questioning of disempowering narratives and the affirmation of their professional selves. As these identities are absorbed into more intricate mental processes

(Holland & Lachicotte, 2007), they have the potential to trigger significant shifts in how NNESTs perceive their personal and collective empowerment. Moreover, the evolution of NNESTs' identities demands a commitment to transforming both their verbal expressions and practical involvements, with the aim of fostering empowerment within themselves and their community (Stetsenko & Arieviditch, 2004). It's only through this concerted effort as a cohesive community of practice that NNESTs can break free from external constraints and actively shape innovative cultural realities, endeavoring to realize these transformations (Holland & Lachicotte, 2007).

In the field of TESOL in recent years, SCT has been a guiding framework for examining teachers' reflective practices, self-evaluation, and narratives (Antonek et al., 1997; Cummings, 1996). Exploring teachers' and learners' stories has proven effective in understanding teachers' expertise development (Borg, 1998). Brown (1994) focused on learning communities as places of social apprenticeship, framing language teachers' work as establishing collaborative classroom environments for learners to gain new insights and practices (Hawkins, 2004). This perspective shifts TESOL teacher education from focusing solely on what and how to teach to also considering where to teach and the teacher's role in the act of teaching. Teachers' personal and professional identities play crucial roles in their teaching process, influencing their lives and social worlds. Furthermore, through this lens, researchers can delve into teacher mentoring/coaching models (Li & Chan, 2007) and participation in TESOL programs (Samimy et al., 2011).

Poststructuralist Theory

According to the poststructuralist view, identities are often contradictory and subject to change across different times and locations (Morgan, 2004). Poststructuralist theorists (Alcoff,

1988; Butler, 1990; Foucault, 1988) challenge key assumptions present in both Ericksonian and Vygotskian perspectives on identity formation. They contest the idea that identity formation occurs independently of the political context and reject the notion of a unified identity. Foucault (Foucault, 1988) argues for understanding the self within the historical context where meaning intersects with experience. According to him, self-understanding stems from examining the discourse of experience rather than the experience itself. Identity, subjected to social and historical contexts, is traced through the discursive place from which questions about identity arise (Zembylas, 2003). Shifting discursive practices lead to shifts in identities, creating a space where self-consciousness intersects with the examination of discursive and affective conditions in claiming identity (Zembylas, 2003). In this dynamic space, narratives of subjectivity meet cultural narratives, shaping the formation of identity.

The emergence of poststructuralism in the 1960s marked a shift away from traditional 'transcendental knowledge' in international education and English language teaching (Chowdhury & Ha, 2014). This movement allowed for the growth of 'positive unconscious' discourses, steering away from overly rational and practical assumptions in forming discourses (Foucault, 1982). This shift also led to more fluid connections between governance, power, and knowledge. Consequently, it influenced global English language demand and set new standards for TESOL education and research. McKnight and Turner (1995) observed challenges faced by Asian students trained in TESOL abroad when returning to their home countries, where flexibility in teaching approaches clashed with rigid expectations. Similar pressures on both NESTs and NNESTs were noted by Sarup (1993), highlighting increased demands, dynamic teaching environments, and the need for updated materials. While poststructuralism is typically seen as positively impacting TESOL, Makoni and Pennycook (2006) recognized its

'destabilizing' effect, complicating language acquisition and weakening traditional teaching tools. Overall, the rise of poststructuralism has heightened the need for formal training and regulation within the teaching profession in TESOL.

Poststructuralism redefines power as a circulating force in social relations, shaping both individuals' actions and experiences (Genishi, 1999). In applied linguistics and TESOL, postmodernism, as highlighted by Morgan (2007), challenges the traditional criteria of progress, value, and objectivity in knowledge acquisition. Unlike modernist views aiming to use science for social justice, postmodernists see knowledge as a source of social inequality (Hall, 2002). This perspective rejects the idea of universal teaching strategies in TESOL, emphasizing competitive methodologies that vary within different contexts or 'discourses' (Morgan, 2007). The nature of language, dynamic and multifaceted, coupled with the involvement of various stakeholders like NESTs and NNESTs, makes knowledge in TESOL interpretive rather than objective (Canagarajah, 2002).

Another aspect of postmodernist influence in TESOL through poststructuralism is the recognition of the dynamic nature of English language teaching environments, characterized by what Bhabha (2004) terms as "cultural hybridity" (p. 56). TESOL classrooms often blend diverse cultures, prompting teachers to employ creative strategies like localizing or 'glocalizing' grammatical concepts, incorporating familiar metaphors, introducing new terms, and selecting culturally resonant associations (Poynton, 1993). Effective teaching in this context involves teachers being aware of their own cultural identity and that of their students. Under a postmodernist lens, personal identities become blurred and challenging to assess, hence the use of in-depth semi-structured interviews for a more reflective identity analysis compared to standardized questionnaires. Additionally, adopting a poststructuralist standpoint necessitates

studying the external factors that typically influence actions and intentions of stakeholders in English Language Teaching (ELT) (Barkhuizen, 2016; Morgan, 2007).

Poststructuralism aligns with a teacher's viewpoint in TESOL by acknowledging the subjectivity of knowledge, allowing for personalized, context-based teaching methods. This acceptance of individual agency and robust social interactions in classrooms enables TESOL professionals to employ transformative teaching strategies, a possibility limited under structuralist assumptions (Haneda, 2005). Structuralism has been critiqued for assigning idealized meanings to complex linguistic signs (Gao, 2007). However, certain identities embraced by TESOL students and NNESTs, even within a poststructuralist framework, might constrain social interactions and hinder overall language skill development. Yet, "language negotiation shapes one's sense of self across various contexts" (Norton, 2010, p. 350). Unlike structuralism's universal meanings, poststructuralism examines meanings within specific contexts (Morgan, 2007), acknowledging the fluid nature of identities and their contextual shifts (Tsui, 2007).

Prior studies on postgraduate TESOL education heavily rely on poststructuralism. Golombek and Jordan (2005) examined teachers' conflicting identities using a poststructuralist approach, highlighting concerns about legitimacy in teaching a foreign language. Internal tensions among TESOL professionals were intensified by the NEST/NNEST divide, especially in non-native English-speaking contexts (Selvi, 2014). Addressing the legitimacy issue for NNESTs doesn't find broad support within poststructuralist frameworks (Golombek & Jordan, 2005). Poststructural theory values cultural diversity among TESOL stakeholders, considering it beneficial for language acquisition (Norton & Morgan, 2012). Moreover, poststructuralism advocates for context-sensitive TESOL processes, suggesting that NNESTs, understanding the

challenges faced by non-native English speakers, might effectively teach TESOL students (Kamhi-Stein, 2016). Lastly, a poststructuralist lens allows this study to view participants' identities as a blend of language learners, MEd students, and TESOL teachers, rather than focusing solely on one role.

Ecological Theory

Teacher identity, as viewed dynamically rather than as a fixed trait (Priestley et al., 2012), is notably differentiated by Eteläpelto et al. (2013) within the sociocultural framework. They critique the sociocultural perspective for its narrow focus on moment-to-moment interactions and object-oriented activity systems, overlooking the intricate social and cultural dynamics among different cultures (Uryu et al., 2014). Introducing life-course theory, they advocate for a subject-oriented developmental approach that highlights the significance of situating actions within one's personal life history. This evolutionary perspective progresses into an ecological understanding of teacher identity, emphasizing the spatiotemporal dimension and conceptualizing both entity and agency as accomplishments within specific temporal and situational contexts (Priestley et al., 2015).

Understanding the development of teacher identity and learning involves adopting diverse perspectives, including the concept of belonging and the application of an ecological analogy. Ecology, typically associated with biological study, delves into the intricate connections between organisms and their surroundings. When applied to comprehending social systems and learning mechanisms, this metaphor offers a framework to scrutinize how individuals and groups interact within cultural, social, and historical contexts. Barab and Roth (2006) emphasize that knowledge does not solely reside within individuals or the world; rather, it emerges from the interplay between individuals and their environment, highlighting the importance of 'individual-

environment relations' in shaping meaning and knowledge. This ecological perspective also aligns with the idea that personal identity isn't solely shaped by the environment; rather, environmental elements can influence the accessibility of certain identities (Uryu et al., 2014). It's particularly useful in examining intercultural factors, viewing multiple social identities not as given by one's position in society but as emerging subject positions in the interplay between the social world and specific discursive situations, as proposed by Kramsch and Steffensen (2008, p.26). This line of research, often utilizing case studies, focuses on individuals within an evolving ecosystem.

Tao and Gao (2017) delved into the exploration of language teacher identity and agency, emphasizing the dynamic interaction between individual capacities and contextual influences. Through life-history interviews guided by the lifecourse perspective, the study scrutinized teachers' professional trajectories, specifically examining how their commitment to identity intertwined with their agentic choices within an ecological framework. The research illuminated how teachers' agentic actions were made achievable "by means of their environment rather than simply in their environment" (Biesta & Tedder, 2007). It showcased the individualized pathways of English for General Purposes (EGP) teachers transitioning to English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teaching, emphasizing the significance of agentic choices facilitated by prior industrial experiences and contextual opportunities. This underscored the crucial alignment between teachers' personal expertise and the resources available within their context in shaping teacher agency.

The ecological framework broadens its application to comprehend the formation of teachers' identities. Bowen et al. (2021) conducted a study on the intricacies of identity formation within International higher-education systems, utilizing an ecological perspective to

position teachers. This exploration focused on examining the roles, identities, and investments of six university teachers in Thailand. Findings from in-depth interviews unveiled that these individuals navigate the nuanced and flexible aspects of their positions by giving precedence to holistic learning over specific content or language-related goals. Moreover, despite highlighting their uniqueness, their conversations converged on a collective pursuit of ethical self-improvement fueled by emotional labor.

Variables Impacting the Formation of Teacher Identity

Studying various facets of identity within the scope of language teachers' professional identity reveals their interconnectedness. While not mutually exclusive, exploring how these aspects interact offers valuable insights into their manifestation in language teaching.

Acknowledging the dynamic aspect of a teacher's professional identity, numerous studies delve into pinpointing the elements shaping how teachers build and reshape their professional selves (for instance, Chevrier et al., 2007; Zhang & Zhang, 2014). Beauchamp and Thomas (2009), in their exploration of teacher professional identity, highlight its fluidity and suggest that multiple internal and external factors play pivotal roles in molding this identity, contributing to its transformation over time.

As an external factor, context significantly contributes to the development of teachers' professional identity. Looking through a sociocultural lens, this identity isn't solely crafted from personal teaching experiences; it's also intricately woven through interactions within the political (Czerniawski, 2011), sociocultural (Lee, 2013), and institutional frameworks (Burns & Bell, 2011). In their study, Flores and Day (2006) delve into the early experiences of novice teachers, examining how their identities develop over the first two years of teaching across diverse school settings in Portugal. They underscore the workplace's crucial role in shaping and reshaping

teachers' views on teaching. Likewise, Beauchamp and Thomas (2011) spotlight the transformative path teachers traverse as they join school communities during their initial teaching engagements. They argue that various contexts, be they university or school environments, substantially influence this change in how teachers perceive themselves.

Borg's (2003) exploration of teacher cognition overlooks the aspect of teacher identity, yet the connection between thinking, knowing, believing, and teaching in classrooms is intertwined with identity development. Teachers' knowledge and actions are fundamental in shaping their ongoing identities, evolving through their interactions in the classroom. Borg highlights the importance of context in the studies he reviews, underscoring that a lack of consideration for context when understanding cognition and practice results in incomplete or flawed depictions of teachers and teaching.

Teachers' professional identities aren't solely shaped by personal experiences or pre-service education. External factors like workplace conditions (Flores, 2001), curriculum policies (Cross & Gearon, 2007), bilingual language policies (Varghese, 2006), cultural differences (Johnson, 2003), racism instances (Miller, 2007), school demographics, institutional practices, resources, and more significantly influence their identity formation (Miller, 2007). These challenges test teachers' backgrounds, abilities, and beliefs, playing a pivotal role in their ongoing professional development. This dynamic extends to language teaching, as seen with non-native English-speaking TESOL teachers striving for recognition in a competitive globalized market (Kamhi-Stein, 2016).

Interactions serve as a catalyst for identity transformation. According to Barkhuizen (2017), language teachers' professional identities evolve through engagement with various individuals both within and outside their institutional circles—ranging from language learners

and teacher educators to administrators. These interactions also encompass the material environment, including spaces, locations, and objects within language teachers' workplaces. Martel and Wang's (2014) review on language teacher identity underscores the influence of interactions with significant individuals in shaping the construction of language teachers' professional identities. Marsh (2003) underscores the interconnected nature of teacher identities, suggesting that these identities are shaped through ongoing social interactions within the educational settings where teachers operate. This viewpoint highlights the pivotal role of social exchanges in molding how educators perceive themselves within their professional contexts.

Self-efficacy is another source that represents a significant catalyst for identity evolution among teachers. It encapsulates their self-perception of effectiveness in English teaching—their ability to achieve goals, overcome obstacles, and support students' learning (Bandura, 2018). This perception forecasts various behaviors and influences motivation (Bandura et al., 1999), impacting teachers' effort, perseverance, resilience, student relationships, and enthusiasm for teaching (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Teacher self-efficacy correlates with teaching experience, professional knowledge, and English proficiency (Eslami & Fatahi, 2008). Positive teaching experiences, such as observing student progress and receiving affirming feedback, bolster a teacher's perception of competence, shaping their identity as accomplished educators and reinforcing their commitment to teaching. This, in turn, bolsters their sense of agency in their profession.

Several researchers highlight the crucial role of emotion in shaping teacher professional identity (Greenier et al., 2021; Nazari et al., 2023; Song, 2016). The intertwining of identity and emotions is a continual dialogue that shapes and redefines interpretations of self-awareness. This link, as emphasized by Lewis (1999), underscores the necessity of connecting emotion with the

quest for identity. Zembylas (2003) highlights that our experiences deeply inform how we construct our identities, often containing conflicting or varied meanings. Emotions, expressed through dialogues, form a vital part of this process, notably evident in the daily interactions between teachers and students. These emotional dialogues, entailing various expressions, significantly impact a teacher's professional life and growth, contributing substantially to the formation of their teacher identity through ongoing interactions with students, parents, and colleagues (Zembylas, 2003).

Lewis and Tierney (2013) examined how teachers' identities influence their emotional expression in the classroom. Their findings revealed that emotions, integral to identity construction, contribute significantly to effective communication in diverse classrooms, aiding in the interpretation of educational cues (Lewis & Tierney, 2013). This implication holds particular relevance in TESOL environments, where teachers and language learners often represent various cultures and languages (Moodie & Nam, 2016), potentially eliciting diverse emotional responses. Emotions, therefore, expand the social context of teacher-student interactions, serving as an additional communication channel. However, Norris (2011) suggests that emotional expressions in English language teaching might be more reflective of personal identity than professional identity. Anttila et al., (2017) study sheds light on the diverse emotional journey of TESOL student teachers. Beginning with anxiety stemming from language proficiency concerns, these individuals progress toward enthusiasm and confidence in both learning and teaching. This highlights TESOL education as an inherently emotional experience for all involved (Saariaho et al., 2018). Additional emotional challenges faced by TESOL student teachers include fears related to knowledge gaps, difficulties in collaborative learning due to social anxieties or tutor biases, and misconceptions about cultural or role-based learning expectations (Singh, 2015).

In exploring teachers' emotions and their interplay with teacher identity, the correlation between emotion and teacher identity is closely tied to the concept of teacher agency. Agency denotes the level at which teachers can actively drive and manage changes within their teaching and professional growth. Rather than being passive recipients of decisions and changes imposed by others, teacher agency reflects their capacity to take charge of their learning environment. It involves setting goals, crafting curriculum, instigating change, and making impactful decisions that shape their work and its conditions. According to Priestley et al. (2015), agency arises from prior experiences, faces forward, and operates within current circumstances.

Investigations into teacher agency have largely revolved around their positions as catalysts for change or intermediaries during periods of reform. These inquiries illuminate how teachers implement fresh policies or curricula and adapt to evolving reforms (e.g., Moore, 2008; Stuart et al., 2011). Hsieh (2010, p.6) notes: "Identity construction always involves some sort of agency, either through accepting and embodying an authoritative identity or actively authoring an alternative or hybrid identity." Applying this agency paradigm to TESOL suggests that non-native English-speaking teachers aren't just influenced by their environment but actively operate within it (Ilieva & Ravindran, 2018).

Teacher Agency

As Ahearn (2001) aptly noted, "in most scholarly endeavors, defining terms is half the battle" (p. 110). To grasp the abstract concept of agency, it becomes imperative to address fundamental questions such as "What is agency?" "How does it happen?" "Where does it take place?" and "What is the impact of having agency?"

Agency, as a concept, is multifaceted and finds relevance in various academic disciplines, including psychology, anthropology, gender studies, and more recently, education. It has gained

prominence, particularly in the context of practice-based professional learning over the past two decades (Eteläpelto et al., 2013). Goller and Paloniemi (2017) defined the complex notion of agency as the capacity of individuals to take purposeful action. It underscores the ability of humans to wield influence and effect change by making choices and actively implementing them to exercise control over their lives and the environments in which they operate. This definition holds true whether one is considering individuals in isolation or groups of individuals.

The concept of agency, which pertains to one's capacity to make choices, is a socially constructed, dynamic, transitory, and fragmented phenomenon (Davies, 2000). Priestley et al. (2015) have recognized that agency is deeply rooted in one's past experiences, forward-looking in its orientation, and situated within the contingencies of the present. Historically, research on teacher agency has predominantly concentrated on teachers as active agents of change or as mediators of educational reform, shedding light on how teachers implement new policies, curricula, or respond to educational reforms (e.g., Moore, 2008; Stuart et al., 2011).

However, departing from the conventional view of agency enacted by individual educators within school-based communities, Anderson (2010) explored the potential contributions of support networks to teachers' development, agency, retention, and their involvement in school change initiatives. For instance, Liz, a participant in Anderson's study, leveraged her network and support systems, which included colleagues and family, to hold her fellow educators accountable to the school's mission and secure leadership roles and opportunities for her own professional growth. This, in turn, enhanced her capacity to drive change within her educational environment. In a similar vein, Robinson (2012) delved into the collaborative construction of professional agency among teachers as they grappled with the constraints imposed by educational policies. Despite the mandate to implement new guidelines

for composing individual student reports and adhere to policy directives, the presence of robust collegial relationships provided them with the flexibility to adjust and reshape these requirements to align with specific practices. Moreover, the idea of collective professional agency assumed a prominent role in a longitudinal study carried out by Hökkä et al. (2017). Within this study, Finnish teacher educators, with a specialization in arts and crafts education, underwent a process characterized by enhanced trust and unity, resulting in the strengthening of their collective agency.

According to Robinson (2012), the beliefs and values held by teachers have a substantial influence on the development of their agency. Her research seeks to untangle the intricate interweaving of individual and collective narratives that shape teachers' perspectives, evaluations, and conduct. This research is dedicated to outlining both the theoretical foundations and practical expressions that shed light on how seasoned educators navigate the landscape of curriculum reform. It underscores the pivotal importance of their convictions about children, teaching methodologies, and educational goals throughout this dynamic journey. Vaughn (2013) builds on this, stressing the pivotal significance of teachers' personal visions in molding their agency. Vaughn contends that teachers should be provided with the necessary support to pursue adaptable and creative teaching approaches that harmonize with their distinct visions. Neglecting these elements, as Vaughn argues, might result in teachers opting to exit the profession.

Similarly, exploring the Scottish educational context, Biesta et al. (2015) conducted ethnographic research to examine the role of beliefs in teacher agency. Their findings highlight the significance of beliefs in teachers' work; however, they also reveal that a dissonance between these beliefs and the broader institutional discourse can impede teacher agency. The study showcases teachers' remarkable efficiency and diverse skill sets during their teaching

experiences, enabling successful classroom performance despite various social, cultural, and material limitations. Teachers demonstrate strong commitment to immediate objectives, such as implementing effective pedagogical innovations. Yet, the lack of alignment between teachers' beliefs and a coherent institutional perspective on education leads to ambiguity regarding long-term goals. Consequently, unclear educational policies hinder teachers' agency in curriculum-related decision-making. To foster enhanced teacher agency, the study suggests structured professional development and robust institutional goals as conducive ecological spaces.

The investigation by Toom et al. (2017) centered on how learning environments shape the agency of student teachers. They advocate for teacher education programs to craft environments fostering autonomy, collaboration, and reflection, enabling student teachers to develop professional agency. Their qualitative study of 224 first-year student teachers in Finland highlighted that a supportive environment encouraging critical thinking and teamwork between student teachers and mentors enhances their sense of agency. However, the article suggests further exploration into how this environment impacts classroom practices and facilitates the navigation of teaching complexities. In essence, it emphasizes the crucial need for supportive learning environments to cultivate professional agency among student teachers. According to Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000), second language education extends beyond language forms, involving the development of agency within new ways of mediating oneself and relationships. They highlight that one's agency evolves through interactions within a new community.

Teacher agency, as discussed in current literature, is recognized as dynamic and not static. It involves the interplay between an individual and their context (Miller et al., 2018). This perspective sets the stage for exploring teacher agency through four major theoretical lenses: social cognitive theory, sociocultural theory, the post-structuralist view, and an ecological

perspective. These frameworks offer distinct conceptualizations of teacher agency, portraying it as an intentional act, a socioculturally mediated capacity, a phenomenon/doing, and a discursive practice, respectively.

In social cognitive theory, agency refers to intentional actions shaping self-development within changing circumstances (Bandura, 2001, p.2). This theory, highlighting self-efficacy, prompts research linking agency, self-efficacy, and various factors through surveys and analysis. For instance, Min (2023) studied teacher agency in South Korea's curriculum reform, focusing on school culture, self-efficacy, and outcome expectation. Surveying 605 elementary teachers, the study revealed that positive relationships with principals and colleagues influenced agency, fostering autonomy in implementing new curricula. It confirmed the positive impact of self-efficacy and outcome expectation on teacher agency, aligning with Bandura's theory and enabling quantitative exploration of these correlations (Min, 2023).

Sociocultural theory views agency as a socially influenced ability to act (Ahearn, 2001), highlighting the role of social contexts in shaping beliefs and values before individual development (Wertsch et al., 1993). Language educators exemplify this by utilizing language and cultural tools to assert agency, aiming for social acceptance, connecting with students, and shaping classroom practices for social justice. Ishihara et al. (2018) explored how language teachers in Japan use multilingual practices as mediational tools for agency. This study revealed that teachers leveraged linguistic resources to integrate into the local culture, adapt teaching for students with varying language abilities, and navigate structural limitations, showcasing how these tools empower teacher agency.

The ecological perspective defines agency as a result of multiple dimensions interacting within given contexts. For instance, in Leijen et al.'s (2022) study on student teachers, they

delved into ecological approaches to teacher agency and its link to teaching commitment. This research highlighted professional capacity, environmental factors, and career goals as pivotal for agency. They uncovered that agency correlates positively with teaching commitment, serving as a predictor for future engagement. The study emphasized how teacher agency integrates personal, situational, and projective elements in real classrooms. While acknowledging the influence of other factors like support, the study suggests the need for further exploration, particularly regarding interventions to enhance agency among student teachers and its impact on student learning outcomes.

Post-structuralists view agency as a discursive practice, contending that individuals can make agentic moves only within assigned positions. Rogers and Wetzel (2013) applied this perspective in education, analyzing spoken interactions to explore a pre-service teacher's agency in culturally relevant teaching. They introduced 'discursive contours of teacher agency,' showcasing how individuals construct storylines and use various resources to make agentic moves. The case study exemplified the teacher's use of multiple representational systems, such as verbal, non-verbal, and narrative discourse, to assert agency within the school. This demonstrates how teachers craft multiple storylines and assert agency through diverse modes in discursive processes (Rogers & Wetzel, 2013).

Identity and Agency: A Dynamic Link

The preceding discussions emphasize the significance of comprehending identity and agency while acknowledging the complexities involved in defining and influencing these concepts. An essential aspect to consider is the interconnectedness between agency and identity, which forms a crucial component in comprehending them holistically. Numerous scholarly works in education (Day et al., 2006; Parkison, 2008) and the broader literature on identity and

agency (Holland et al., 1998) emphasize this inherent connection. When teachers recognize and embody their identities while teaching, it often leads to a heightened sense of agency—a feeling of empowerment to innovate, achieve objectives, and potentially transform their environment. This realization underscores the idea that a deep awareness of one's identity can significantly bolster a sense of agency. As Sfard and Prusak (2005) succinctly put it, 'individuals are active agents contributing decisively to the dynamics of social life and shaping personal activities' (p. 15).

In Clarke's research (2009), the necessity of engaging in identity work for exercising professional agency is highlighted (as cited in Varghese et al., 2016, p. 547). Additionally, Motha's work (Varghese et al., 2016) underscores how Language Teacher Identity (LTI) significantly shapes the disciplinary foundation of English language teaching. This is particularly evident when considering the unique positioning of English teachers in relation to marginalized students within the context of English's historical and racial complexities, steeped in debates about ownership and the dominance of native-speaker ideologies. Varghese et al. (2016) asserts the undeniable presence of advocacy and agency within English language teacher identity, highlighting the inextricable connection between LTI and Language Teacher Agency (LTA). Moreover, a study delving into emotions in LTI emphasizes the crucial link between the two, emphasizing the essentiality for teachers to perceive themselves as legitimate professionals (i.e., forming an identity) and feel empowered to enact meaningful change (i.e., establishing agency) in order to excel in their teaching endeavors (Reis, 2014, p.34).

Haneda and Sherman (2016) approach LTI through the lens of job-crafting and delve into teachers' active engagement as agents. Their exploration, rooted in sociocultural and ecological theories of agency, centers on the intricate facets of agency, encompassing both situational and

temporal dimensions crucial for achieving agency (p. 747). Ilieva and Ravindran (2018) further emphasizes the need for interdisciplinary approaches in understanding LTI and LTA.

Additionally, situational dimensions of agency stress the contextual nature of agentive action, while temporal dimensions underscore how teachers' past experiences and future aspirations shape their agency in teaching contexts (Haneda & Sherman, 2016).

Several studies affirm the strong link between language teacher agency and language teacher identity (Kayı-Aydar, 2019). The assertion stands that one's ability to wield agency meaningfully hinges upon the recognition of their identity (Miller, 2010). Researchers have delved into this realm, exemplified by Kayı-Aydar's (2019) narrative case study, which scrutinized how a Hispanic language instructor navigated her agency while shaping professional identities across varied contexts, revealing the impact of past learning experiences, workplace challenges, and insights from graduate studies on her growth. The data suggests a complex interplay between agency, identity, and positioning among pre-service teachers. Similarly, Tao and Gao (2017) recent inquiry explored language teachers' agency and professional identity development amid curriculum reforms through in-depth interviews with eight English teachers in a Southeast China university. Their work, grounded in sociocultural theory, showcased how these educators navigated agency, making strategic choices between teaching and research to craft developmental paths aligned with their individual needs and characteristics.

Building on the exploration of language teacher agency and identity, Kayı-Aydar (2015) further delved into the intricate relationship between positioning and agency in pre-service teachers working with English language learners (ELLs) during ESL endorsement internships. The teachers varied in how they positioned ELLs and self-positioned as teachers, shaping their agency. Two teachers focused on language assistance, exercising agency in language

development tasks. The third teacher positioned herself as a cultural bridge, integrating culture into teaching. Despite differences, all faced conflicting positionings limiting agency. They perceived themselves as caring teachers but also doubted their capacity, especially in schools with high ELL percentages, revealing how agency can be constrained or afforded by different positionings (Kayi-Aydar, 2015).

In a particular area of research examining teacher agency and identity, teachers are seen as influential contributors to the formation of their professional identities (e.g. Eteläpelto et al., 2015; Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016). This concept of identity agency refers to the sense of professional agency intertwined with one's professional identity (Eteläpelto et al., 2015). Specifically, teacher agency is linked to professional identity through teachers' active negotiation of the ideals, interests, and aspirations that comprise their identity. While the social environment can influence a teacher's envisioned professional identity, it's their agentic actions that maintain or reshape this professional identity. To delve further into this topic, Ruohotie-Lyhty and Moate (2016) elaborate on two aspects of teacher agency in relation to identity. The first aspect involves the agency to actively engage with a community, seeking a sense of belonging, and shaping one's professional identity. The second aspect pertains to the capacity to utilize experiences and active participation to mold professional identity. This perspective introduces the notion of 'identity-agency,' which distinguishes itself from the earlier concept, and emphasizes the process of actively comprehending and mobilizing experiences to construct and evolve professional identity. By examining the narratives of eight preservice teachers studying foreign language pedagogy, the researchers identified three types of identity-agency: expansive, reductive, and attentive (Ruohotie-Lyhty & Moate, 2016). These categories represent different levels of identity

development, depending on the extent to which teachers draw from new experiences within their teacher education program to inform their identity formation.

Another area of research delves into the mediating role of identity on agency, characterized by two distinct perspectives. One perspective posits that identity markers significantly influence the emergence and evolution of teacher agency. Through examining multimodal narratives of ESL teachers, Vitanova (2018) elucidates how agency construction within narratives is mediated by racial, gendered, and professional identities. The study reveals how social identity markers, such as race and gender, impact how student teachers are perceived, sometimes overshadowing their professional identity. This positioning based on identity markers undermines the cultivation of teachers' sense of agency, potentially diminishing or overlooking their professional identity. Conversely, other studies suggest that identity serves as a compass for the enactment of agency. Teachers, according to Vähäsantanen et al. (2008), exercise agency aligned with their identities. When confronted with educational reforms, teachers leverage their knowledge and values to interpret and make agentic choices in harmony with their beliefs about their professional identities (Ketelaar et al., 2012). In cases where these reforms clash with their identities or their envisioned teacher roles, teachers might resist these reforms, showcasing agency to uphold their authenticity.

Lastly, it's worth noting the insights from Zhang and Zhang (2014), who conducted an ethnographic study examining NNEST identity in Singapore. Their research explores how agency contributes to both constructing and deconstructing identity. Emphasizing the need for scrutiny, they stress the importance of understanding how NNESTs exert agency within professional and social contexts to shape their identity. Morgan (2015) raises concerns regarding research on agency in LTI, highlighting the predominant focus on the teacher's 'inner world' and

its ongoing impact on pedagogy and syllabus design (p. 235). Morgan cautions about the potential risks of overemphasizing these aspects in the context of neoliberalism and market-driven utility, suggesting it could limit possibilities for substantial change. Ilieva & Ravindran (2018) echo this concern, emphasizing that the work on LTI and LTA extends beyond the internal experiences of teachers and program graduates. Their study specifically examines how a teacher education program influences graduates' agency manifestation, particularly concerning their 'theories of agency' (Miller, 2014). This emphasis underscores the interdependence between LTI and LTA.

Chapter Three: A Critical Review of the Literature on Non-Native English-Speaking Teachers (NNESTs)

The Dichotomy of Native vs. Non-native

Braine (2010) simplifies a native speaker as someone using their first language, while a non-native speaker employs a second or foreign language. Cook (1999) echoes this view, framing a native speaker as one who initially learns a language. However, this distinction isn't neutral—it carries substantial implications. The term native speaker evokes positive attributes such as fluency and cultural connection, whereas 'non-native speaker' often carries the burden of being marginalized and stigmatized as a minority (Braine, 2010). Scholars link this glorification of the NS to Chomsky's early work (Chomsky, 1965), shaping second language acquisition (SLA) research (Braine, 2010; Mahboob, 2005). Selinker's (1972) theories on interlanguage and fossilization also bear the mark of Chomskyan influence. Mahboob (2010) argues that interlanguage and fossilization suggest the ultimate aim for a second language learner is native-like fluency, branding deviations as “fossilization” (p. 4).

However, delineating a Native Speaker (NS) and distinguishing it from a Non-Native Speaker (NNS) poses inherent challenges. Sociolinguists have long critiqued the dichotomous framework that perceives NSs and NNSs as starkly opposing categories. Cook's concept of multicompetence (1999) challenges the native-non-native binary and provides an alternative to the deficit model associated with non-native speakers. According to Cook, individuals proficient in more than one language are considered multicompetent, possessing a unique amalgamation of language skills. This model eliminates the strict division between NSs and NNSs, enabling individuals to define their linguistic identity based on their diverse language learning and usage

experiences. It emphasizes that they are not "failed native speakers" but rather successful multicompetent speakers (Cook, 1999, p. 204).

Another significant challenge to the "native speaker" concept arises from the World Englishes (WE) paradigm, which acknowledges the worth of localized English varieties (Llurda, 2016, p. 54). Rooted in Kachru's (1986) three circles model, WE delineates the differing roles and status of English globally: the Inner Circle where English is the mother tongue (i.e., Australia, Canada, Great Britain, New Zealand, and United State); the Outer Circle where English serves as a second or additional language, primarily in former British or American colonies (e.g., India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Nigeria, Zambia and Kenya); and the Expanding Circle where English functions as a primary foreign language (e.g., China, Brazil, France, Russia, KSA). Traditionally, the standard English from inner-circle nations was deemed native. However, as English has disseminated worldwide, it is become localized in outer and expanding circle countries, with many considering themselves proprietors and thus native speakers of these English varieties. This perspective views English as a diverse phenomenon, rejecting the notion that one variant is inherently superior linguistically (Huang, 2017). Consequently, given the absence of a singular standard for English, scholars addressing WE concerns question the criteria for labeling someone a native or non-native speaker (Higgins, 2003).

Similarly, the concept of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), describing English communication among speakers with different first languages, challenges the clear divide between NSs and NNSs (Llurda, 2016). Proficiency in this paradigm isn't linked to birthplace or the sequence of learning English. Instead, proficiency is gauged by the ability to effectively communicate in English with others, regardless of their native or non-native status. This blurs the rigid distinction between NSs and NNSs, where some native speakers might struggle while

certain non-native speakers excel in communication. Consequently, due to its global role, English is suggested to have no exclusively native speakers (Rajagopalan, 2004).

Challenging the conventional idea of the NS, several scholars have proposed alternative terms to replace this dichotomy. Paikeday (1985), in his book, *The Native Speaker is Dead*, introduced the term proficient user to encompass all successful language users. Rampton (1990) supported Paikeday's concept, advocating for expert speaker to replace native speaker, emphasizing language expertise over inheritance or affiliation. This shift emphasizes that expertise in language is acquired, not inherent, moving the focus from who you are to what you know. McKay (2003) introduced bilingual user of English' for individuals using English as a second language alongside other languages they speak.

Issues of NNESTs Credibility

Teacher education programs for adult second-language instruction are increasingly drawing non-native speakers (Sahib, 2006). However, despite the specialized pedagogy and language training offered in these programs, graduates often encounter an uncertain professional landscape. Existing literature sheds light on the challenges faced by non-native speakers, showcasing disparities between their professional training and the actualities of their chosen career paths. These gaps pose significant obstacles for non-native speakers as they strive to establish themselves in their desired professions.

Identity

Scholars have extensively explored the professional identity of NNESTs and the factors influencing their development. To comprehend the professional identity of a NNEST, it's valuable to consider social identity theory in the context of language. As outlined by Tajfel

(1978), although Taffel does not explicitly address influencing change within the group, social identity is shaped by group affiliations and remains dynamic; individuals might shift their group memberships if they no longer perceive themselves as integral to a particular group.

Giles and Johnson (1987) extended Taffel's social identity theory by proposing a linguistic-based theory of social identity. This theory suggests that individuals assimilate into groups based on their adaptation to the linguistic features of the group. The theory outlines four stages in intergroup relationships: social categorization, awareness of social identity, comparison with others' identities, and the discovery of one's uniqueness. For non-native-speaking teacher trainees, their identity construction as minority teachers, coupled with the challenges of competing with native-speaking trainees, may hinder their active participation in teacher education programs and their perception of themselves as effective future teachers.

Davies, in his revised work, challenges the notion that all aspects of being a native speaker, except for early exposure, are contingent (Davies, 2003). He suggests that while linguists and teachers often use native speakers as a standard, non-native speakers can bridge into this category through confidence and identity. Thus, a non-native English-speaking teacher's professional identity can evolve not only through improving language skills and pedagogy but also by developing confidence and identity as ESL educators (Bailey, 2002).

Discrimination based on ethnicity or language can persist within the classroom even after a NNEST has secured a teaching position. Amin (1997), a Pakistani Canadian, conducted a pilot study and found that individuals from Western Anglo-Saxon English-speaking regions, such as Canada, the United States, and Britain, tend to be held in higher regard compared to those with accents associated with non-Western countries like Singapore, India, and Kenya. Amin shared her teaching experiences in Toronto, revealing that despite no evidence linking race to language

proficiency, her students made her feel disempowered due to her non-Western background, as she was not perceived as an authentic Canadian teacher based on her non-white ethnicity.

Cultural Knowledge

NNESTs in the ESL field face a notable challenge concerning their knowledge of the target culture. However, perceptions of the target culture are fluid, affecting the expectations placed on NNESTs' cultural competencies (Sahib, 2006). In recent years, the significance of incorporating culture into language teaching has gained increasing recognition.

Atkinson (1999) challenges six basic principles of culture, including the assumption that all humans are solely individuals and the difficulty in defining culture itself. He argues for the recognition of individuality within culture and highlights the complex and dynamic nature of social group membership and identity. Atkinson urges a departure from a positivist paradigm in studying cultural knowledge and behavior, asserting that culture is continually evolving and necessitates ongoing redefinition. Using Gandhi's nonviolent resistance as an example, Atkinson illustrates how individuals within a culture can creatively address problems. As he points out, "Except for language, learning, and teaching, there is perhaps no more important concept in the field of TESOL than culture" (p. 625). This recognition is evident from both research and practice perspectives, with many language teachers acknowledging the pivotal role of culture in teaching L2.

Lazaraton (2003) examined how NNESTs handle cultural topics in their English classes. She emphasized the importance of how teachers manage their knowledge gaps in cultural matters rather than solely focusing on possessing cultural information. Lazaraton suggested that these situations can allow students to contribute cultural insights, but NNESTs might worry about appearing ignorant if they admit to not knowing. Additionally, she questioned if adult second-

language education programs offer enough time for NNESTs to acquire cultural understanding in the target culture.

Despite advancements in intercultural and multicultural research, much language teaching continues to view language and culture as distinct entities. Language instruction often focuses on formal structures and universal speech functions, assuming that cultural knowledge will naturally follow. Kramsch (1996) argues that culture is only incorporated to the extent that it reinforces existing boundaries rather than challenging them. She highlights the difficulty of categorizing individuals into specific linguistic, social, and cultural groups in contemporary societies. This is particularly evident in the multicultural setting of Canada, where individuals with different linguistic, ethnic, religious, and social backgrounds interact.

In the context of English as a global language, it's essential for all educators to incorporate diverse cultural perspectives into their teaching. This includes perspectives from the local language, various ethnic backgrounds in the classroom, and even the perspectives of the teacher when relevant. NNESTs, while potentially lacking specific knowledge of local cultures, especially if they are from abroad in a place like Canada, often possess: a) enriched intercultural knowledge; b) an understanding of the diverse contexts where English is expanding; and c) a rapid increase in their local knowledge as they teach and learn in a second language environment (Sahib, 2006).

Accent

Discrimination based on accent is prevalent in employment across developed and developing countries. Research, including studies by Lippi-Green (2011) and Canagarajah (1999), highlighted biases against non-native accents, with teachers facing perceptions of being less qualified and effective compared to native-speaking counterparts. Kachru (1986) identified

countries within the Inner Circle as having preferred pronunciation standards. Lippi-Green classified evaluations based on accent as a form of linguistic discrimination against teachers.

In terms of accent attitudes, Kaur and Raman (2014) investigated non-native speakers' perceptions of English accents, comparing NNS and NS accents. The study found that respondents viewed NS accents more favorably, categorizing them in more positive terms. NS accents were preferred overall, indicating a bias towards perceiving them as more correct and proper than NNS accents. Despite changes in English language usage, the findings suggest a persistent belief among teachers that proper English is primarily associated with inner circle countries. The prevalence of NS-centric textbooks and materials in Malaysia may contribute to the more favorable attitudes towards NS English accents.

In the Canadian context, Munro (2003) highlighted accent discrimination and argued against the assumption that a strong accent automatically implies reduced intelligibility. While accented speech may require some effort from listeners to understand, it is incorrect to assume that it inherently hinders communication. Munro also pointed out that there have been human rights cases where individuals faced discrimination from employers and landlords based on perceived communication deficits.

Self-Image

Reves and Medgyes (1994) conducted an empirical study investigating the NEST-NNEST issue among 216 teachers from various countries. They explored three hypotheses: differences in teaching behaviors between NESTs and NNESTs, potentially linked to divergent language proficiency levels, and the impact of recognizing these proficiency differences on NNESTs' self-perception and teaching attitudes. The study revealed that a majority of participants observed teaching behavior differences between the two groups. NNESTs showed

greater concern for accuracy, hesitancy in appropriate language use, and an inclination to overuse formal registers due to limited familiarity with colloquial English. Their primary difficulties were in vocabulary, especially idioms and appropriateness, followed by speaking skills and fluency, and then pronunciation and grammar. NNESTs found grammar particularly appealing in language teaching for its perceived logical structure. The study concluded that awareness of teaching style differences between NESTs and NNESTs significantly influences their self-image and work attitudes.

Gonzalez (2016) investigate the negative impact of the native speaker fallacy on NNESTs globally. Focusing on Colombia, their study explores how participants' self-perceived non-nativeness shapes their identities as English teachers. The findings reveal a nuanced self-perception among participants. While they don't view non-nativeness as a hindrance due to ongoing education and NNST advantages, they do see themselves at a disadvantage compared to native speaker teachers, particularly in language ability and cultural knowledge. The study highlights the intersection of self-perceptions with the native speaker myth and partially with the native speaker fallacy, influencing participants' views as future educators. The fear of social sanctions for not achieving native-like abilities underscores the complexity of their self-images, emphasizing the challenges NNESTs face in meeting linguistic and cultural expectations in teaching.

Sahib (2006) examined the confidence and self-image of NNESTs in second-language teacher education programs. The study involved twelve NNESTs sharing their feelings and perspectives on pursuing certification as ESL teachers. Findings showed fluctuations in confidence levels, influenced by concerns about language proficiency and cultural knowledge. While the programs didn't fully meet their needs, NNESTs still derived some benefits. Proposed

suggestions included addressing racism, integrating NNESTs' home country experiences as class activities, and introducing relevant professional literature to enhance confidence and perspectives.

There's a notable surge in NNESTs joining TESOL master's programs in the US, possibly extending to Canada (Johnson, 2001). These programs, initially for native speakers, are adapting to include non-native speakers. Scholars contend that while Western TESOL programs may not fully meet NNESTs' needs (Brady & Gulikers, 2004; Brinton, 2004), creating a program catering to the diverse needs of this group remains a challenge. The TESOL organization's NNEST caucus offers a platform for addressing the perspectives of NNESTs. The caucus covers various topics, including concerns of discrimination related to race and identity (e.g., Amin, 2001). The discussions have explored identity themes, such as the influence of NNESTs in ESL classrooms, their professional journeys, self-discovery, and testimonials from NNESTs working in the field.

NNESTs in TESOL Profession

Over the past thirty years, an expanding body of literature has challenged the perceived superiority of NESTs in TESOL field. Medgyes's (1992) seminal work "Native or non-native: who's worth more?" questioned the belief in NEST superiority, highlighting both NESTs' and NNESTs strengths and weaknesses. Phillipson's (1992b) book *Linguistic Imperialism* coined the term 'native speaker fallacy,' challenging the widespread relationship between language proficiency and pedagogical practices and the notion that a native speaker makes an ideal teacher. He argued that effective teaching relies more on language knowledge and insight into the learning process than on innate abilities. Additionally, Holliday's (2013) work shed light on the dominance of 'Native Speakerism' in TESOL, portraying NNESTs as inferior to NESTs.

Race plays a significant role in the discussion surrounding NESTs/NNESTs in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) (Llurda, 2004). According to Pennycook (2017), individuals of color may face challenges in being recognized as native speakers, as there's a tendency to associate native speakers with whiteness and non-native speakers with non-whiteness (p. xiii). Kubota and Lin (2006) note this inclination to equate whiteness with native speaker status and non-whiteness with non-native speaker status. Amin's (1997) study interviewing female teachers from minority backgrounds in Canada revealed that students often assumed that only white teachers could be native English speakers. Similarly, Javier (2016) highlighted how judgments about a teacher's nativeness by students, colleagues, and recruiters often intertwine with issues of race and ethnicity through narratives of 'Visible Ethnic-Minority Native-English-Speaking Teachers' (VEM-NESTs).

Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999) identified "national origin and accent" as the traits socially linked to the concept of the NS (p. 416). Chen and Cheng's (2012) study supported this, emphasizing that for many NNETs, foreign accents and names stood out more than their linguistic skills. Escudero and Sharwood Smith (2001) added that, apart from being raised in a relevant language community, possessing a specific accent is a central characteristic of the stereotyped NEST. Furthermore, the Native Speaker label has even been associated with a teacher's social status, often implying advanced technology, civility, and education (Jenkins, 2000). Lippi-Green (2011) discovered that teachers who had nonnative accents faced perceptions of being less competent and less impactful, often being unfavorably compared to their native-English-speaking counterparts. These studies collectively underline that the distinction between NESTs and NNETs may rely more on ideological traits unrelated to language fluency or proficiency. Thomas (2013) presents various remedies for NNETs encountering credibility

challenges within TESOL. Her perspective advocates a shift away from highlighting NNESTs' accents as limitations, suggesting that the ESL field should instead emphasize their strengths.

Nevertheless, despite criticisms of its appropriateness, the division between NESTs and NNESTs persists within the English language education field, as observed by Huang (2017). Even the NNEST Caucus, advocating for replacing the term 'non-native,' continues to employ this dichotomy in its publications, noted by Holliday (2009). This division is tacitly acknowledged across most studies centered on NESTs and NNESTs, as emphasized by Árvai and Medgyes (2000), underscoring the widespread use of 'native' and 'non-native' terms in professional discourse among educators and researchers (p. 356). Despite its potential drawbacks, employing this dichotomy can serve a purpose in revealing the underlying ideologies, termed by Phillipson (1992b) as “the native speaker fallacy,” and in advocating for the empowerment of non-native teachers, as discussed by Morton and Gray (2018, p. 72). This perspective aligns with concerns raised by Nemtchinova et al. (2010), who advocate for curricular reforms and the integration of language proficiency development in teacher education programs for NNEST students. The subsequent section will delve deeper into empirical studies related to NNESTs in the Canadian context.

NNESTs in the Canadian Context: Research Studies and Findings

In the Canadian context, there has been a surge of interest in recent years regarding research on native and non-native English-speaking teachers.

The pioneering research conducted by Amin (1997) stands as a significant contribution to the field of TESOL in Canada, focusing specifically on non-native teachers. Amin's doctoral study involved comprehensive interviews with five visible minority women, shedding light on their teaching experiences within the Canadian context. The findings revealed a concerning

assumption among language learners, namely the perceived inherent link between race and language proficiency. Consequently, there was a preference for "White teachers over non-White teachers," as students held the belief that only individuals of Caucasian descent could be native English speakers (Amin, 2000, p. 580). In essence, Amin's research participants indicated that their students held the misconception that only Caucasian teachers possessed native English fluency.

In a notable research study, Zhang (2004) examined the experiences of immigrant non-native English-speaking teachers (INNESTs) in the ESL hiring processes within Canada. The study focused on identifying the barriers and challenges that INNESTs encounter when seeking ESL employment, while also highlighting their empowering strategies and distinctive teaching characteristics. Zhang's research shed light on the multifaceted experiences of INNESTs within the Canadian context, providing valuable insights into the dynamics of ESL job opportunities and the unique contributions of non-native English-speaking teachers.

Through a narrative analysis approach, Hodge (2005) provides insight into the responses of non-native teachers towards the discourse of business and colonialism, particularly in relation to their perceived legitimacy as language instructors within a private language school in Vancouver. Hodge's study emphasizes the pivotal role of language as a cultural tool for the success of non-native teachers, underscoring the importance of attaining a comfortable level of English proficiency to effectively navigate the Canadian workplace. Additionally, a significant finding from Hodge's research highlights the assumption prevalent within the discourse of the ESL business that neither non-native speakers nor immigrants possess a profound understanding of Canadian culture. Consequently, non-native teachers find themselves continually grappling

with the challenges imposed by this discourse, as they strive to maintain their professional standing within the field.

Inbar-Lourie and Gagné (2016) conducted a comparative study on non-native teacher candidates in Israel and Canada, examining their identity formations. The research explored perspectives from various stakeholders on the teacher education programs for NNEST candidates. The findings suggest that the Canadian program could enhance its focus on the positive cross-cultural contributions of international English-speaking teacher candidates through awareness-raising, better preparation for host teachers and principals, explicit instruction on school culture, increased faculty diversity, and improved entrance requirements and language proficiency assessments.

In a parallel investigation, Gambhir (2004) examined the experiences of non-native teachers enrolled in a pre-service B.Ed. program at a Canadian university, aligning with the context explored by Inbar-Lourie and Gagné (2016). Gambhir aimed to identify the specific needs of non-native teacher candidates in terms of language skill development and acquiring knowledge about Canadian culture. One significant outcome of her study was the recognition that non-native teacher candidates benefited from accessing support networks, establishing explicit connections to their prior experiences, and developing coping strategies to navigate instances of discrimination (Gambhir, 2004). These findings shed light on the importance of support structures and empowering approaches for non-native teachers, emphasizing the significance of personal networks, self-reflection, and resilience-building measures within their educational journey.

Awan's (2014) comprehensive examination of the implications of the 'non-nativeness' concept for NNESTs reveals significant insights into hiring practices, employability, teacher

identity, and perceptions of proficiency. Conducted in Halifax, Canada, the study involving interviews with immigrant NNESTs uncovers a process of realization marked by the fear of being labeled as non-native, the quest for acceptance, adherence to established standards, and the evaluation of success through standardized performance metrics and teaching methods. Awan challenges the fixed notion of language and advocates for questioning the term non-native, proposing alternatives such as bilingual and multilingual. In a parallel investigation, Jun (2022) explored the workplace learning and support experiences of highly experienced racialized migrant women English instructors in Ontario, Canada. Highlighting the transformative nature of their professional learning experiences, the study suggests that tailored workplace support can serve as an alternative form of teacher education for NNESTs. It also underscores the role of online professional communities in creating learning spaces for instructors by addressing their unmet needs in the workplace. Together, these studies contribute valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by NNESTs in various aspects of their professional lives.

Soheili-Mehr's (2018) dissertation delved into the negotiation of professional identities by INNESTs in the TESOL field within a TESOL certification program. The research focused on three identity aspects: language-related identity, disciplinary identity, and teaching self-knowledge. Two participant groups were involved, one comprising ESL teachers who completed a TESOL program, and the other consisting of individuals enrolled in a full-time TESOL program for ESL certification in Ontario, Canada. Key findings revealed that INNESTs perceive the native speaker construct as multifaceted. Additionally, institutional certification was seen as a symbolic discourse of de-professionalization for INNESTs seeking certification. Despite this, the majority expressed high confidence and presented positive self-images.

Building on the exploration of NNEST experiences, Faez and Karas (2019) conducted a case study investigating the perceptions of NNESTs participating in a one-year study abroad TESOL program in Canada. The focus shifts to sixty-nine novice teachers from China placed in four cohorts, exploring their reported improvement in English proficiency, attributed to English-medium courses and insights into language teaching/learning. While participants acknowledged the positive impact of living abroad, they also highlighted challenges in building relationships and social networks beyond their first language group.

Despite the challenges faced by teachers in implementing the plurilingual shift in language education, Galante's (2020a) study offers a solution by introducing plurilingual instruction in a Canadian university's English language program. The study involved seven co-researcher teachers employing different approaches for two student groups. Results highlighted benefits such as increased student engagement, enhanced agency, and the creation of a secure learning environment. Challenges primarily arose from their familiarity with the English-only teaching tradition. This groundbreaking research contributes practically by potentially steering instructional practices away from the monolingual tradition, aligning with persistent calls in the field of TESOL. Results revealed benefits, including heightened engagement, increased agency, and the establishment of a secure learning environment. These findings contribute practically by potentially guiding instructional practices away from the monolingual tradition, aligning with persistent calls in the field of TESOL. Galante (2020b) further advocates for a critical plurilingual perspective in TESOL instruction, challenging deficit notions prevalent in monolingual ideologies and emphasizing the appreciation of languages and cultures. This approach, recognizing the diversity of languages and cultures through a critical and context-specific plurilingual lens, aligns with the natural plurilingualism inherent in many language

users. Furthermore, it acknowledges students as active agents of their plurilingual identity, departing from the tabula rasa notion.

Transformative Learning Theory

The concept of transformative learning, initially introduced and expanded upon by Mezirow (1997), provides a framework to understand significant shifts in perspective encountered by adult learners. Mezirow's transformative learning theory (1997) revolves around a process wherein adult learners re-examine their past beliefs and experiences, refining them to be more authentic, comprehensive, and defensible for shaping future decisions and actions. Consequently, transformative learning signifies a profound alteration in an individual's self-perception (Dirkx, 2007).

According to Mezirow (1978), adults frequently face difficulties that surpass mere accumulation of knowledge or improved coping strategies. Some adult challenges demand a deeper examination of our fundamental beliefs about ourselves and the world. This introspection allows us to assimilate novel, unsettling experiences by adopting a fresh perspective or frame of reference. Failing to do so relegates these experiences to the periphery of our awareness, where they remain unacknowledged. Mezirow's observations regarding adult learning offer valuable insights into how teachers' learning experiences can either be supported or obstructed. Transformation, as conceptualized by Mezirow (1978), primarily refers to an adult learner's embrace of a fresh perspective, a new way of viewing a perplexing life event. Through reframing such events post-experience, learners can chart a different path, enhancing their life circumstances. In the realm of teacher learning, this transformation might entail educators gaining a deeper, enriched comprehension of their professional identity.

Transformational learning has evolved since its initial conception (Mezirow, 1978), and it can be understood through ten phases. These phases include experiencing a disorienting dilemma, examining feelings of guilt or shame, critically evaluating assumptions about the world, recognizing shared experiences with others, considering new roles, relationships, and actions, developing a plan of action, acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills, testing new roles, building competence and skills, and finally, reintegrating into one's life with new perspectives and understandings (Kitchenham, 2008). In the realm of transformative learning, individuals confront a disorienting dilemma that initiates a series of reorienting actions, leading to a shift in perspective. This pivotal experience might stem from a singular critical event or the accumulation of instances challenging a learner's established beliefs (Mezirow, 1997). Essentially, transformative learning occurs when adults face situations prompting them to scrutinize their existing frames of reference, facilitating reflection upon their learning, understanding, and knowledge (Mezirow, 1997). Overseas teaching experiences are frequently regarded as catalysts for such disorienting dilemmas (Jacobs & Haberman, 2022). A common occurrence reported is the impactful role of immersing oneself in a new educational setting, often recognized as a key trigger for a disorienting dilemma. Baecher and Chung (2020), for instance, propose that exposure to educational customs and environments vastly different from a teacher's accustomed practices can spark profound contemplation regarding pedagogical beliefs and methods.

When faced with a disorienting dilemma, individuals are prompted to undertake critical reflection regarding their own preconceptions about themselves and the world, alongside examining those held by others. This process involves not only critically evaluating one's own assumptions but also engaging in a reflective analysis of the assumptions held by others

(Mezirow, 2000). Klein and Wikan (2019) believe that Critical reflection is key to transformative teacher learning, and teachers need to further engage in critical reflection after a disorienting dilemma to develop critical consciousness. Critical reflection plays a crucial role in shaping a fresh framework that reshapes how individuals interpret their experiences in the world. It's regarded as a fundamental element for facilitating transformative learning (Taylor, 2017).

Additionally, transformative learning encompasses engaging in what Mezirow (2000) refers to as reflective discourse. This involves conversing with others to attain a more comprehensive interpretation of an experience, aiming for a shared understanding. Subsequently, this process validates new interpretations. Reflective discourse encompasses various forms of interaction, whether within a group setting or between individuals (Mezirow, 2000). Taking action to embody the newfound perspective is deemed essential in the process of transformative learning (Baumgartner, 2001). Mezirow (2000) proposes that the process of behavioral change often commences as individuals endeavor to actively embody their evolving perspectives. This active integration into their lives aids in developing competence and self-assurance in these perspectives, a vital aspect of transformative learning.

Taylor (2007) highlighted how the specific location and context can shape the nature of 'disorienting dilemmas' encountered by adult learners. Shor et al. (2017) uncovered that students' discomfort arising from immersion in an unfamiliar setting could enhance their comprehension of the experiences of the community they serve. Similarly, by encouraging prospective teachers to introspect on their discomfort and unease within new educational environments, teacher educators can aid these candidates in processing their experiences, fostering an environment conducive to transformative learning.

The concept of transformative learning has found application as an educational approach across various domains, including higher education, professional training, and community learning Mezirow and Taylor (2009). Particularly in the realm of teacher education, the theory of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1978) has been extensively utilized. Within teacher education, a significant area of focus involves comprehending the development of teachers' intercultural competence through the theoretical framework of transformative learning (e.g., Black & Bernardes, 2014; Jokikokko, 2010).

Within TESOL teacher education, integrating study abroad components, whether to immerse non-native English speakers in English-speaking environments (e.g., Wong, 2016) or support native English speakers in a foreign language learning journey while experiencing the role of language learners and non-dominant minorities (e.g., Regalla, 2013), has gained traction. Research highlights positive impacts on language growth, teaching confidence, adaptability, worldview expansion, and intercultural awareness among pre-service teachers involved in these programs (Pfingsthorn & Czura, 2017). Additionally, language educators engaging in study abroad experiences actively observe teaching methods, adapting them to their own approaches as both language learners and observers of diverse teaching methods (Trent, 2011). Research specifically centered on pre-service teachers in world language and TESOL programs who engaged in study abroad initiatives has highlighted their positive impacts. These impacts range from fostering language growth and enhancing teaching skills to promoting adaptability, expanding worldviews, nurturing intercultural awareness, and fostering a sense of independence (Pfingsthorn & Czura, 2017). Furthermore, language educators in study abroad programs undergo cross-cultural benefits similar to other students. They actively observe and assess their instructors' language teaching methods, integrating these insights into their own teaching styles

(Trent, 2011). This nested experience facilitates second-language teachers' transition into learners, instructors, and astute evaluators of varied language teaching techniques.

Teacher identity from the perspective of Transformative Learning theory in TESOL

The experience of transformative learning facilitates the transformation of people's fundamental identities or worldviews (Mezirow, 1997). Transformative learning, as described by Mezirow (1978, 1997), refers to the cognitive processes through which adults shift their thinking. Adults possess a cohesive reservoir of experiences encompassing associations, concepts, values, emotions, conditions, and responses—these form their life framework. Consequently, adults tend to dismiss ideas incongruent with their preconceptions, labeling them as irrelevant or erroneous (Mezirow, 1997).

Mezirow (1997) proposes that transformative learning occurs when adults recognize their existing frames of reference, often hidden from consciousness, followed by collaborative critical reflection. Such recognition typically stems from dissonant experiences challenging ingrained assumptions, like a teacher witnessing effective teaching methods abroad contradicting previous beliefs. Similarly, Illeris (2018) highlights how learning can reshape a learner's identity. Effective learning entails teachers scrutinizing their and others' frames of reference, exploring diverse viewpoints through discussions, and engaging in peer interactions for comprehensive critical reflection. Collaborative dialogues among peers, like post-observation discussions, offer valuable insights, enriching the teacher's cognitive processes. Thus, transformative learning focuses on identifying personal frames of reference, embracing alternative perspectives, and nurturing enhanced critical thinking skills through peer discourse, prioritizing autonomous cognitive development over mere knowledge acquisition (Baeher & Chung, 2020).

Merriam and Baumgartner (2020) argue that transformative learning entails a profound shift in how individuals perceive themselves and their surroundings. This perspective is echoed by Tennant (2005), who emphasizes the interconnectedness between transformative learning, personal identity, and societal influence. Building upon this notion, transformative learning theory posits that teacher learning is not limited to the acquisition of new content or ideas. Instead, it involves the development of new ways of thinking that can shape and become integrated into a teacher's identity. Identity theory (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) supports this notion by highlighting the importance of self-reflection, meaning-making, and personal growth in the learning process. Considering professional development as a form of identity construction is crucial because it shifts the focus from mere content or methodology training to the broader relationship between educators and new knowledge. It recognizes that teachers' self-perceptions are constantly evolving and influenced by contextual factors (Marlow & McLain, 2011).

Baecher and Chung (2020) suggest that international service learning is a professional development approach that facilitates transformative learning among teachers. It involves experiential learning, encountering dissonance, fostering community, and promoting critical thinking. Through active participation in local households and classrooms during international placements, teachers gain firsthand exposure to new cultures and contexts. This immersive experience prompts them to construct fresh meaning and reshape their identities based on past experiences, aligning with experiential and constructivist learning principles (Baecher & Chung, 2020). By understanding professional development through the lens of identity construction, we can better appreciate how teachers integrate new knowledge into their sense of self, fostering a more comprehensive and transformative learning experience.

Chapter Four: Findings, Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

Navigating Turning Points: Understanding the Impact of Professional Development on Language Teachers' Identity and Agency (Research Question 1)

Regarding identity transformation, Tisdell (2012) highlighted that in the process of transformative learning, individuals undergo a shift in their fundamental core identity or worldview. Mezirow (1991) similarly highlighted the role of transformative learning in facilitating changes in individuals' major identities or worldviews.

Internalizing a transformed worldview is central to Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory, where learners gain a new sense of identity by critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs. Elsheikh's (2016) study of Sudanese EFL pre-service teachers exemplifies this process, revealing turning points during their teaching practice within an EFL teacher education program. Encountering a disorienting dilemma, one participant critiques the program's structure and perceived inadequacy for preparing future EFL teachers, particularly during student teaching, when the application of theories into classroom practice becomes a challenge. These turning points prompt critical reflection on teaching practices and beliefs, aligning with Mezirow's framework for transformative change in identity and worldview.

Amin's (1997) study on immigrant English-as-a-second-language teachers reveals that these teachers face challenges when positioned as inferior to White Canadians who speak so-called real Canadian English by their adult immigrant students. This disempowerment negatively affects their identity formation. According to Mezirow, transformative learning occurs when individuals critically reflect on their assumptions, beliefs, and perspectives. In this case, the teachers' disorienting dilemma prompts them to reflect on cultural biases and stereotypes

impacting their professional identity. Through this reflection, they can undergo transformative learning, challenging and reconstructing their professional identities to overcome the negative impact and negotiate different values and beliefs. This suggests that NNESTs in TESOL programs may encounter similar challenges and turning points, leading them to critically reflect on their experiences, negotiate their values, and reconstruct their professional identities.

The turning points often revolve around the negotiation of linguistic and cultural aspects, highlighting the dynamic nature of their evolving identity as language instructors. Wilson's (2021) examination of NNESTs completing a TESOL master's degree at an Australian university exemplifies this phenomenon. The participants experienced significant culture shock initially, potentially impacting their self-image, aligning with Jack Mezirow's transformative learning theory, where such disorienting dilemmas prompt critical reflection and transformative change. Notably, the TESOL program at University A contributed to an overall growth in self-efficacy among the participants, a transformative outcome indicative of Mezirow's emphasis on fostering a more inclusive and reflective mindset. The reported increase in motivation echoes Mezirow's theory, highlighting the transformative potential of educational experiences. However, Wilson's mention of some participants facing a decline in motivation due to program content highlights the inherent complexities in the transformative learning process, where individuals navigate challenges and fluctuations in motivation. This study resonates with Mezirow's framework, illustrating how the negotiation of linguistic and cultural aspects within a TESOL program can lead to transformative changes in identity and agency.

Encouraging teachers to challenge their existing assumptions, Transformative Learning becomes evident in Soheili-Mehr's (2018) study on immigrant INNESTs undergoing a TESOL certification program in Ontario, Canada, focusing on language-related identity, disciplinary

identity, and teaching self-knowledge. The findings reveal that INNESTs perceive the native speaker construct as intricate, contextual, dialogic, and dynamic—a developmental process rather than a fixed state. Despite this nuanced understanding, INNESTs often encounter conventional realizations of the construct. One participant in the study faced a dilemma regarding his status as a non-native English speaker and his beliefs about what this implies. Soheili's observations during the participant's involvement in TESOL course activities support this claim, as his cautious identification as a non-native speaker negatively influenced his linguistic performance at times. However, it should be noted that this negative influence was not consistently dominant throughout the study. This is consistent with Mezirow's theory as it indicates a turning point and a critical reflection on the impact of the NS–NNS dichotomy on professional identity and language teaching agency. Soheili's study thus offers insights into how INNESTs comprehend turning points and developmental areas in their professional trajectories within a TESOL program, revealing the transformative potential of such experiences.

A discourse of empowerment proves pivotal in shaping teachers' agency and undergoing identity transformation, as revealed by Ilieva's (2010) insightful exploration of teacher education programs. Her study, centered on 20 NNESTs within a Master of Education TESOL program for international students at a Canadian university, underscores the impact of discursive constructions on professional identities and agencies. Ilieva identifies the most prevalent authoritative discourse among NNESTs as one offering the option of becoming agents of change within their professional contexts. This discourse leads to a shift in participants' perspectives through disorienting dilemmas, critical reflection, and the reconceptualization of their roles. Within this empowering discourse, participants cultivate a heightened sense of their own influence within local contexts. The transformative journey of one participant, transitioning from

perceiving limitations in the Chinese educational system to recognizing their potential impact in the Canadian program, highlights the significance of turning points and developmental areas. Viewed through Mezirow's theoretical lens, the study exemplifies how a program like TESOL can facilitate transformative learning by promoting critical reflection on existing constructs, leading to the reconstruction of beliefs, perspectives, and identity.

The study conducted by Wolff and De Costa (2017) sheds light on the role of NNESTs' affective responses to academic identities and experiences. Specifically, the study explored the narrative experience of a Bangladeshi woman, revealing the emotional complexities involved in her transformative journey. The limited availability of pedagogical resources and opportunities for English communication in Bangladesh acted as catalysts for her investment in her studies. Furthermore, changes in teaching expectations created avenues for the exploration of expanding language teaching practices and culturally relevant pedagogy that aligned with the material realities of the Bangladeshi schooling system. Within this context, the study highlights the crucial role of supportive faculty, who validated and acknowledged the existence of multiple identities rather than pressuring her to abandon any of them. The study illustrates how NNESTs' affective responses, in conjunction with external factors and supportive environments, contribute to their comprehension of turning points and developmental areas, leading to significant impacts on their professional identity and sense of agency. The emotional complexities faced by the Bangladeshi woman and her commitment to studies indicate a disorienting dilemma, prompting a profound reflection on her identity and agency as a language instructor. The exploration of expanded teaching practices and culturally relevant pedagogy further demonstrates the transformative nature of her journey.

Transformative Contributions: Exploring the Impact of Developmental Aspects on NNESTs' Professional Identity and Agency (Research Question 2)

The developmental aspects, including turning points and critical experiences, have been identified as influential factors in the transformation of the professional identity and agency of NNESTs (Yuan, 2019). Extensive scholarly research underscores the transformative power inherent in these experiences, shedding light on their profound implications for NNESTs' professional growth. A synthesis of the literature reveals the following recurring themes:

Shift in Linguistic and Cultural Perspectives

Turning points often revolve around the negotiation of linguistic and cultural aspects, leading to a transformation in NNESTs' identity as language instructors. Through critical reflection on their assumptions and beliefs, NNESTs challenge existing constructs and develop a nuanced understanding of language teaching (Dewi, 2007). This shift in perspectives contributes to the development of a nuanced understanding of language teaching, encompassing an inclusive and culturally responsive approach. Consequently, NNESTs' professional identity and agency undergo significant transformation.

Dewi's (2007) study on NNESTs' professional identity explores the impact of language and culture immersion. Focusing on Indonesian EFL educators in the Master of Education program at Monash University, the research investigates their professional identities, changes during their studies, and the possibility of a professional identity shift in Australia. Prior to immersion, their identities were influenced by personal and social factors. The study reveals a favorable atmosphere in Australia compared to Indonesia's teacher-centered environment. Two lecturers experienced a significant identity shift due to their distinct recognition as lecturers, not

teachers, in Indonesia. Immersion in the English language and Western educational environment transitioned them from a conjoint to a disjoint model. The findings align with the notion that turning points in NNESTs' journeys involve negotiating linguistic and cultural aspects, leading to a nuanced understanding of language teaching. Through critical reflection, NNESTs challenge existing constructs, fostering an inclusive and culturally responsive approach. This immersive experience transforms their professional identity and agency.

The study by Li and Tin (2013) evaluates a Masters TESOL program in an English-speaking Pacific Region country through interviews with NNEST Asian students. The program demonstrated strengths by enhancing participants' English reading and writing skills through extensive assignments. The program also cultivated subject knowledge in applied linguistics and promoted research engagement, positively impacting academic and intellectual growth, echoing Mezirow's emphasis on transformative change occurring through thoughtful examination of assumptions and perspectives. However, weaknesses, notably the lack of practice teaching opportunities, were identified. Participants expressed the need for more practical experience, emphasizing the importance of experiential learning in line with Mezirow's emphasis on critical reflection and action. Practical experiences are crucial for NNESTs to enhance teaching skills and shape their professional identity, acknowledging the value of integrating theory with real-world teaching contexts.

Reconstruction of Professional Identity

Developmental aspects prompt NNESTs to critically reflect on their experiences and navigate challenges related to their professional identity (Jurasite-Harbison, 2005). By questioning and reconceptualizing their roles, NNESTs reconstruct their beliefs, perspectives, and understanding of their influence within their professional contexts. This process empowers

them to become agents of change, fostering a sense of agency and transforming their professional identity.

Sahib's (2006) MA thesis sheds light on the confidence and self-image of NNESTs in second-language teacher education programs. The study, involving twelve NNESTs sharing their perspectives on pursuing ESL certification, reveals fluctuations in their confidence levels tied to concerns about oral language proficiency and the need for sufficient Canadian cultural knowledge. While the programs did not entirely meet NNESTs' needs, the research suggests they derived some benefits. Relating this to the reconstruction of professional identity, Sahib's findings align with the idea that NNESTs, through critical reflection, navigate challenges and reshape their understanding, empowering them to transform their roles and professional identity in the teaching domain.

Empowerment through Discourse

The discourse surrounding NNESTs' identities and experiences emerges as a pivotal factor in shaping their agency and effecting transformative change (Aneja, 2016). Teacher education programs that foster supportive and empowering discourses enable NNESTs to recognize and harness their potential impact and influence as language instructors (Aneja, 2016). By actively challenging limiting beliefs and prevailing constructs, NNESTs cultivate an enhanced sense of empowerment within their professional contexts, leading to transformative changes in their identity and agency. Li's (2012) study, focusing on NNESTs in a TESOL program, resonates with this discourse. Investigating the belief development of two non-native English-speaking student teachers over a one-year TESOL program at a UK university, Li's (2012) analysis delved into five dimensions: subject matter, learning, teaching, learners, and the teacher. The study suggests that the observed belief development signifies identity shifts,

showcasing a transformation from a knowledge transmission tradition in Western-based TESOL programs to a more culturally nuanced perspective. This evolution in beliefs mirrors the transformative changes in the identities of the NNESTs under study.

In a study conducted by Ilieva and Waterstone (2013), an examination of curriculum discourses within a TESOL Masters Program for international students at a Canadian university yielded noteworthy findings. It focused on the nuanced issues surrounding the construction of academic and professional identities, as well as language considerations. The data presented in the study reflects international students' active negotiation of the prevailing native-speaker ideology pervasive in the TESOL field. The findings of the study revealed that the participants grappled with the labels and identities associated with being an international TESL student, a non-native English speaker, and coming from a so-called third world country. One participant, for instance, expressed the need to transcend these boundaries after joining an international program in a diverse country. Breaking down these boundaries allowed her to gain insights from different perspectives, cultures, and languages, while also utilizing her own unique perspectives and identities to enhance her understanding of the world. These experiences underscore the profound impact of the previously encountered native-speaker ideology on the envisioned professional identities of the students. Examined through Mezirow's transformative learning theory, this process reflects a critical reevaluation of assumptions and beliefs, as students actively engage with discourses of multicompetence (Cook, 1999) and adopt critical perspectives on native-speaker accents (Lippi-Green, 2011). This engagement contributes to the transformative development of NNESTs' professional identities and agency by fostering a nuanced and critical outlook on native-speaker ideology and its implications.

Affective Responses and Emotional Complexities

NNESTs' affective responses to their academic identities and experiences are closely intertwined with the transformative process (Illeris, 2014). These emotional complexities, such as their investment in studies and the validation of multiple identities, significantly impact how NNESTs perceive turning points and areas of growth. Supportive environments that recognize and acknowledge their multiple identities help NNESTs navigate through challenging situations and engage in critical reflection on their identity and agency as language instructors. These affective responses play a vital role in shaping their professional identity and agency, complementing the findings of Bukor's (2011) research study conducted at a university in Toronto. Bukor's study adopted a holistic perspective, highlighting the integration of personal and professional experiences, and revealed the profound connection between teacher identity and personal biography. The beliefs, perceptions, and interpretations of the four ESL teachers, influenced by their family environment, influenced various aspects of their teaching practices, career choices, and overall teacher identity. The study's results underscore the significance of exploring personal life experiences to gain a comprehensive understanding of the primary influences on the development of teacher identity.

Cheng's (2021) exploration of the impact of teachers' emotions on their professional identity aligns seamlessly with the emotional complexities experienced by NNESTs in navigating their academic identities and transformative journeys. Cheng underscores the significance of factors such as pedagogical beliefs and emotional experiences, mirroring the affective responses of NNESTs to their academic identities. These emotional intricacies, including their commitment to studies and the validation of multiple identities, play a crucial role in shaping how NNESTs perceive turning points and areas of growth within their professional

development. Furthermore, Nazari et al.'s (2023) study delves into the emotional challenges faced by Iranian Language Teacher Educators (LTEs), offering insights into how these challenges influence their professional identity construction. The three identified themes—emotional clashes, ethical challenges, and vulnerabilities—highlight the complexity of emotion labor experienced by LTEs in their institutional settings. In line with Cheng's insights, both studies emphasize the importance of fostering supportive environments that recognize and acknowledge teachers' emotions and identities. This approach is crucial for NNESTs and LTEs alike, underscoring the necessity of creating spaces that facilitate critical reflection on identity and agency, thereby empowering language instructors in their professional and personal growth.

Navigating and Negotiating Professional Identity: The Journey of NNESTs in a TESOL Program (Research Question 3)

In the context of a TESOL program, exploring how NNESTs navigate and negotiate their professional identity becomes a crucial research question. It is imperative to reassess the concept of NNESTs and their roles within professional and social settings, while also recognizing the agency and expertise they bring to the subject matter (Zhang & Zhang, 2014). Understanding the construction and deconstruction of identity becomes intertwined with the patterns of communication employed by NNESTs (Zhang & Zhang, 2014). This line of inquiry takes on added significance within the broader context of globalization and the dynamic nature of the English language (Zhang & Ben Said, 2014). These changes extend beyond linguistic aspects, such as vocabulary, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, and encompass the affiliations NNESTs form with specific user groups who assert ownership over their distinct variations of English (Rubdy et al., 2011).

In the context of a TESOL program, it is crucial to comprehend how NNESTs navigate and negotiate their professional identity. An ethnographic study by Zhang and Zhang (2014) focused on two NNESTs encountering challenges in establishing themselves professionally. Centered around the concept of agency, their analysis explored how agency influences the construction and deconstruction of identity. Despite the Chinese participants' strong motivation to integrate into the workplace by using Singapore English, their efforts to use this language for bonding and professional purposes were not acknowledged by native Singaporean speakers. This interplay of conflicting norms between NNESTs and native speakers of Singapore English presents an intriguing phenomenon. While the NNESTs emphasized the importance of speaking English with excellent prosody, this aspect went unnoticed by native Singapore English speakers. The exercise of power by a native Singapore English speaker reflects their perspective on discourse as a socially accepted framework encompassing language use, cognition, emotions, beliefs, values, and actions, shaping identification with a specific social group (Zhang & Zhang, 2014, p.2). This process of perspective-taking contributes to the intricate nature of identity formation within the TESOL program.

A Canadian study conducted by Ilieva and Ravindran (2018) highlights that the TESOL program significantly influences the professional development of international graduates, fostering opportunities for agentive action. This is achieved through an iterative reinforcement of agency, facilitated by program readings, conceptual knowledge, and activities within a flexible academic environment. Notably, within this environment, authoritative discourses within the academic context gain persuasive power professionally, as outlined by Bakhtin (1981).

Professional identities, especially for NNESTs, are intricately connected to specific contexts and evolve over time through reflective self-awareness of possibilities for agentive

action and the performative expectations within professional settings. The study identifies that graduates actively participate in the development of context-driven counter-discursive enactments of agency as an integral aspect of navigating and negotiating their professional identity within the TESOL program.

In a literature review article, Swearingen (2019) conducted research on the development of LTI among Nonnative-English-speaking teacher candidates (NNES-TCs) in graduate TESOL preparation programs. This systematic review analyzed 17 studies that focused on NNES-TCs' LTI development during graduate-level TESOL programs in the United States, Canada, and Australia. The review aimed to explore the factors influencing NNES-TCs' LTI development and examine how teacher preparation programs facilitate positive LTI development. The review identified four key categories: (1) the influence of (non)native speakering and the native speaker fallacy, (2) the impact of racialized and gendered identities, (3) clashes between academic identity and professional identity, and (4) the emotional aspects of LTI development. NNES-TCs encountered challenges in navigating their personal and professional identities, often struggling to reconcile their own expectations with those imposed by their graduate programs and future teaching contexts within TESOL. Despite encountering persistent native speakering discourses, NNES teacher candidates asserted legitimacy by embracing counter-discourses and connecting them to local teaching practices. The findings highlighted the importance of teacher preparation programs within the TESOL context to actively critique native speakerism, create empowering spaces for NNES-TCs through narrative reflections, explicitly address linguistic goals and needs, prioritize practical experiences, and encourage reflective practices among teacher educators.

Aneja's (2016) article "(Non)native Speakered: Rethinking (Non)nativeness and Teacher Identity in TESOL Teacher Education" redefines native and non-native speakers as negotiated

social subjectivities shaped by (non)native speakerhood. The study analyzes narrative portraits of four language teachers, two fitting traditional (non)native speaker frames and two challenging them. It explores how these teachers navigate, reconstruct, and resist their (non)native speaker identities, highlighting complexity and fluidity. For example, an Indian student faced confusion when a Chinese student labeled her an English learner despite acquiring English naturally. Concerned about perceptions related to her identity, she actively worked to Americanize her accent. This participant's multiple identities may reinforce the marginalization of Indian-accented English. The author recommends creating spaces within classrooms for teacher candidates to explore diverse identity possibilities, influenced by scholars like Canagarajah (2004) and Park (2012), providing opportunities to assess strengths and navigate evolving positionalities as language users and emerging educators. This approach provides opportunities for NNESTs to assess strengths and navigate evolving positionalities as language users and emerging educators within the TESOL context.

In the TESOL program context, comprehending how NNESTs navigate their professional identity is crucial. Research reveals the intricate dynamics of identity construction influenced by agency, conflicting norms, context-driven counter-discourses, and the impact of linguistic, racial, and gendered identities. NNESTs grapple with aligning personal expectations with the program and future teaching demands. To empower NNESTs in their professional identity journey, fostering awareness, critiquing stereotypes, and providing supportive spaces are vital. Recognizing the dynamic nature of identity in TESOL, educators and administrators can contribute to inclusive language teaching environments.

Conclusion

This thesis conducts a comprehensive literature review to explore the factors that contribute to transformative professional learning for the positive growth of NNESTs' identity and agency. Emphasizing the significance of framing NNEST development through the lens of transformative learning, the thesis advocates for facilitation methods that empower teachers to realize their full potential. The thesis incorporates research findings from diverse countries, delving into the challenges of identity and agency faced by NNESTs in international education programs. The study carefully explores how disorienting dilemmas, such as cross-cultural teaching experiences, can prompt teachers to engage in critical reflection, suggesting their integration into the design of identity-oriented TESOL programs. Furthermore, the thesis indicates that implementing new critical insights may not only affirm these insights but also initiate a renewed cycle of critical reflection.

Moreover, the research findings show that in the realm of postgraduate TESOL education, NNESTs embark on a transformative journey as they navigate the Western teaching paradigm for the first time. This initial encounter often triggers culture shock, prompting NNESTs to adapt their LTI and LTA to meet the requirements of the TESOL program. While the distinction between NNESTs and NESTs is contextual, the background factors associated with being a NNEST significantly impact self-image.

Beyond individual adjustments, a broader concern emerges regarding power dynamics within TESOL classrooms. The thesis emphasizes the importance of addressing power dynamics within TESOL classrooms and establishing discursive knowledge/power relations that value student voices and meaningful negotiation. This process of appropriation and selective assimilation empowers NNESTs to bridge theory and practice within their local professional

contexts. Critically examining and questioning teacher education program discourses is crucial to shifting power imbalances and challenging the dominance of native-speakerness in peripheral contexts. As educators, it is our responsibility to create an inclusive environment that values diverse perspectives, enabling NNESTs to shape their professional identities and become empowered language educators.

Implications

This study has important implications for TESOL educators. First, it highlights the need for TESOL teachers to set clear objectives, evaluate student performance, identify individual students' needs and proficiency levels, adapt teaching materials to suit their students, design engaging learning activities, interpret assessment results, and utilize these findings to plan future teaching and research endeavors. These implications suggest that modifying the structure and content of TESOL programs could enhance the development of language teaching knowledge and teaching abilities among NNESTs.

Second, the study suggests that beyond focusing solely on teachers' practices, understanding the influence of context is crucial in shaping the identity development of teacher candidates, especially international NNESTs. Educators should establish inclusive classroom spaces, allowing candidates to explore multiple and fluid identity possibilities. Inspired by scholars like Canagarajah (2004) and Park (2012), this approach enables candidates to recognize strengths and navigate roles as language users and emerging language educators within the Canadian TESOL community. TESOL programs must consider diverse English language teaching contexts, impacting curriculum, pedagogy, and language teacher identities and agencies. For example, candidates can engage in mini-autoethnographies to explore how their language practices and identities change in different contexts. They could also produce a final paper

adopting a translingual style, inspired by the work of Canagarajah (2013), to convey academic or pedagogical ideas. This approach illuminates possibilities for embodying a range of negotiated and context-specific identities, challenging biases against non-native speakers and debunking the uncritical superiority of the mythical native speaker.

Third, this study carries possible implications for L2 teacher education. It calls for the creation of systematic opportunities for TESOL professionals to engage collaboratively in exploring their beliefs, attitudes, and emotions surrounding the native speaker myth and how they position themselves within their teaching contexts. Particularly, fostering social mediation and collaboration becomes crucial for NNESTs to conceive and internalize identity options, leading to enhanced professional agency and empowerment. Recognizing the transformative power of personal histories, as highlighted by Simon-Maeda (2004), becomes an integral aspect of this process. Furthermore, to effectively support NNEST candidates, educators should actively recognize and appreciate their diverse backgrounds and previous educational experiences, ultimately valuing and leveraging the unique perspectives they bring to the classroom. By embracing this understanding, educators serve as effective models for candidates, showcasing how to connect with ESL students during practicum sessions.

Finally, the study suggests that NNESTs should consider and employ resistance strategies to challenge the dominance of native speaker discourse in TESOL teacher education programs and ESL work environments. A significant first step involves teacher educators and associate teachers recognizing that NNEST candidates may face challenges in managing their language proficiency, given their perpetual role as language learners. Tackling this issue within TESOL programs, through direct or indirect methods to enhance NNESTs' English proficiency, can elevate their confidence in linguistic competence and empower their future teaching careers. By

addressing these challenges, NNESTs can shift from linguistic marginality to a central position, using it as a powerful tool to advocate for themselves and achieve genuine and meaningful empowerment.

Recommendations for Future Research

By adopting a more comprehensive perspective on transformative learning and the development of NNESTs, numerous avenues for future research can be explored. Building upon the literature review conducted in this thesis, future studies could focus on operationalizing the findings in practical contexts. For instance, research could delve into various themes for teacher development, examining how different factors such as the political, social, and cultural environments impact and shape the holistic growth of NNESTs. Adopting an ecological view, investigations could analyze the ways in which these environmental conditions either support or hinder the development of NNESTs in specific contexts.

Another valuable area for subsequent investigations is the various ways in which NNESTs' own experiences and reflections display understanding of teachers as agents of change. Exploring how these NNESTs actually approach teaching within their local contexts could provide a more comprehensive understanding of whether the perspectives expressed in their portfolios merely echo program discourses or reflect a genuine sense of agency.

Finally, it would be worthwhile to conduct longitudinal research to explore the experiences of NNESTs with certification and its impact on their employability in the Canadian ESL job market. Such a study would provide valuable insights into the long-term effects of certification on NNESTs' career trajectories and shed light on the factors that contribute to their success and challenges in securing ESL teaching positions. By examining the experiences of NNESTs over time, this research could offer valuable recommendations and inform policy

decisions aimed at enhancing the professional opportunities and recognition for NNESTs in the field of ESL education in Canada.

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