The Multilayered Nature of Becoming Nonnative-English-Speaking Teacher

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Abstract

This paper draws on an ethnographic research that examined Taiwanese international students' identity movements before, during, and after their overseas education in Australia. Previous studies on nonnative-English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) studying TESOL in the West focused on the formation of their professional identity before and after the completion of TESOL programs abroad. This study pioneers a model which examines NNESTs' multilayered complexity of identity formation by drawing on the Douglas Fir Group's (2016) multifaceted nature of language learning and teaching and Wenger's (1998) identification and negotiability of identity formation to analyze one Taiwanese student's developing NNEST identity. We found the participant's social life experiences reshaped her professional identity as NNEST. The user experience as a nonnative English speaker prompted her critical reflection on the notion of functional English user and teaching. This notion, shaped by social aspects of learning, was later demonstrated in her teaching practice. The study suggests: 1) that future research includes NNESTs' social aspects of experiences as nonnative English users; 2) that SLA researchers for TESOL programs continue analyzing NNESTs' deficit discourse with transdisciplinary approach.

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INTRODUCTION

The recognition of English as a global phenomenon has motivated efforts to examine how to put global Englishes into ELT curriculum innovatively (Rose & Galloway, 2019) and how to engage ELF (English as Lingua Franca) in language teachers' professional development (Dewey, 2015). It has also made it necessary for TESOL researchers and practitioners to become critically aware of the influences outside the classroom on language teachers' perceptions and practices associated in the paradigm of global Englishes. This generates an opportunity for us to explore the social aspects of language learning and use as nonnative English speakers (NNES), which contributes to the development of their professional identities as TESOL practitioners by fully recognizing the complexity of multilingualism in language education (Ortega, 2019).

To engage with the relevant discussion, we intend our study to make the following, contributions: first, a demonstration of the synthesis of DFG framework (2016) and Wenger's (1998) social theory of learning in NNESTs' identity study; second, the formulation that NNESTs' "professional" identity cannot be treated as a separate set of identity that they develop once they are teachers; third, TESOL programs are identified as an important institutional factor in NNESTs' formation of professional identity. This study concludes by suggesting researchers and TESOL programs incorporate more social aspects of learning in their curriculum design to facilitate NNESTs' professional development. The model demonstrated in this study could be useful in future curriculum design for language teacher education. To achieve this, this study synthesizes the Douglas Fir Group (DFG) framework (DFG, 2016) and Wenger's (1998) identity formation of Communities of Practice (CoP) to focus on how the nonnative English speakers' experiences that NNESTs have mediate their identity formation in becoming English teachers. NNESTs' professional identities built through TESOL programs (Peacock, 2001; Trent, 2011) or the collaboration with NESTs (Ma, 2012; Moussu, 2018) have been the focus. This study expands further by taking both the academic and social aspects of learning into account. Including personal experiences and social context in our analysis with a rearticulated framework synthesized from DFG (2016) and Wenger (1998) teases out the interconnectedness in which NNESTs need to constantly negotiate and work on the interplay of identities at the personal and social levels in the construction of professional identities.

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Multilayered Influences on NNESTs' Professional Identity

It is our claim that the study on NNESTs' professional identity needs to not just include, but also move beyond the sole focus on academic programs. Therefore, this study also considers the social negotiation of language learning and use, including the participant's prior learning experiences (Tarone & Allwright, 2005), awareness of different teaching context (Hobbs, 2013), and her evolution of professional identity formation (Swan, 2015). Our goal is to study the way the NNEST participant's English user experiences in native English-speaking context, together with classroom experience, shape language teacher identity. Drawing attention to NNESTs' experiences outside classroom will help TESOL programs locate NNESTs' needs in their diverse contexts and provide individualized assistance. For example, the findings from both Baecher (2012) and Faez and Valeo (2012) indicate the vital role that practicum experience plays in positive professional identity development. In addition, NNESTs' histories of being NNESs also influence their teaching practices (De Costa & Norton, 2017; Gao, 2019; Kanno & Stuart, 2011).

To study NNESTs' professional identity beyond classroom walls, this study adopts Hall's (2000) idea of identity as a concept of "operating 'under erasure' in the interval between reversal and emergence"(p. 16). This highlights the negotiability of NNEST's professional identity formation. Building on what Park (2012) and Tsui (2007) found, this study agrees that a NNEST's identity is the temporal product of ongoing negotiation and struggle, across past and future selves, under different circumstances, inside and outside her/his teaching profession. How a NNEST defines good teaching and the values of this profession are influenced by personal histories, peers, and other contextual factors.

Theoretically, we argue that there is a need to engage with a framework that could locate the scope of complexity that a NNEST would encounter from finishing TESOL program in the West to teaching in their home context. To interpret the nuances of NNESTs' identity formation, we rearticulate and synthesize Wenger's (1998) social theory of identity formation with the DFG framework. The introduction of DFG's (2016) transdisciplinary framework lends new insights into the complexity of language learning in order to craft contextualized solutions for language learners in the ever-changing multilingual world. We contend that the usefulness of DFG framework also lies in its visualization of complex relations surrounding language learning and teaching, as well as its elasticity in synthesizing with other social theories for data analysis. Such elasticity has been shown in Johnson (2019) and Duff (2019) where they included sociocultural dynamics to

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enhance DFG framework for language teacher education. In other words, in the application of DFG's (2016) transdisciplinary perspectives to the examination of NNESTs' professional identity development, we may identify critical insights to inform the design of TESOL programs that attend the complexity of identity development in a multilingual world.

The multilayered complexity of language learning at the micro, meso, and macro levels in the DFG's (2016) framework represent "the micro level of social action and interaction, the meso level of sociocultural institutions and communities and the macro level of ideological structures" (p. 36). To expand the DFG framework into a conceptual model for examining NNEST's professional identity development, we depict Wenger's notion of identity formation in a model with three concentric circles at the micro, meso, and macro levels. This study also contextualizes this model with NNEST examples to explain the identification and negotiability taken place at each level.

Based on Figure 1, the research question that this study intends to answer is: What are the influences at the engagement, alignment, and imagination levels, and how did the participant deal with them?

The concentric model explains the multilayered nature that a NNEST needs to go through at the micro, meso, and macro levels. Identification and negotiability are the two identity formation processes of CoP. The identity formations taken place and discussed in this study are engagement, alignment, and imagination at the micro, meso, and micro levels, respectively. It is also worth noting that individuals could experience these three layers of identity formation in an order other than that shown in Figure 1. The participant of this study experienced her identity formation in the order of engagement, imagination, and alignment. The experiences of the participant are analyzed at each level to investigate how the on- and off-campus experiences were utilized to negotiate and appropriate meanings in Taiwanese and Australian contexts and over time before and after her graduation.

Identification at the engagement level is to directly engage with others in activities and explore abilities and inabilities. As an example, a Taiwanese international student participating in English-medium in-class activities is a manifestation of her ability to undertake higher education in Australia. However, such participation might also inform her inability to comprehensively understand English-medium education. Either way, the in-class activities initiate *negotiability at the engagement level* which is to both propose meaning and adopt the proposed meaning in structuring her identity. Through engagement, the production and adoption of meaning occur hand in hand in the student's pursuit of becoming someone.

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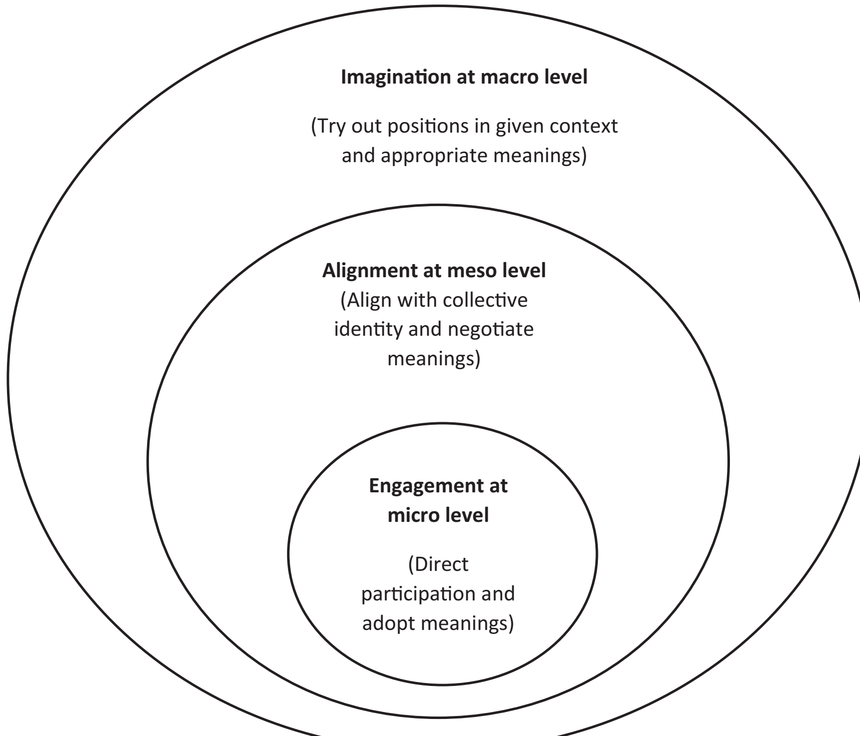

FIGURE 1. A multilayered nature of NNEST's professional identity development.

Identification at the alignment level is a process in which the collective identity and group structure became part of an individual's identity. Through the willingness of aligning herself to the larger group, she could better understand her power and define herself within the group. For example, the same Taiwanese international student could be perceived differently by other international students or Australians. While she identifies herself as an international student in Australia, her identity could also be shaped by the collective identity of students who represent academic excellence in Australian higher education. *Negotiability at the alignment level* is "the ability to affect the negotiation of meaning" (Wenger, 1998, p. 205) in a given context. In this alignment, it is likely that the "economics of meaning," indicating that various meanings are produced in different occasions and some "do achieve special status" (Ibid, p. 199). For example, an international student at a leading Australian university might have achieved a good level of English proficiency in IELTS exam. Her IELTS certificate produces the meaning of being a competent English user. However, this

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might produce another meaning when the student encounters language difficulty inside the classroom, that of being an incompetent English user.

Identification at the imagination level is to locate one's identity by referring to larger categories of identity. This identity referral to broad categories allows people the "playfulness" (Wenger, 1998, p. 194) to try out their positions in different contexts. A Taiwanese international student is not simply one of many Taiwanese studying in English-speaking countries. She could refer her identity to a broader category as one of the returnees with fluent English, international perspectives, and out-of-box thinking after completing her education in Australia and returning home. *Negotiability at the imagination level* could occur when she refers herself as a returnee from the West, which, in a sense, invites the domestically educated students to appropriate meanings (Wenger, 1998, p. 203) that all returnees are fluent in English and creative in thinking.

In the case of this study, the NNEST participant made sense of her teacher identity through NNEST program experiences, NNES experiences as an international student and a working holiday sojourner in Australia, and as a returnee in Taiwan. We also need to take into account the interrelationship between time and space (Duff, 2019; Risager & Dervin, 2015). The situatedness concerned here is more about a NNEST's use of experiences relating to English use and teaching across both Chinese- and English-speaking contexts and timespans. The participant of this study has a diverse linguistic and cultural repertoire of having been an English learner in Taiwan, a multilingual of English, Mandarin, Hakka, and Hokkien, a NNES in Australia, an international student in Australian higher education, a temporary resident and worker in Australia for 2 years, a homecoming TESOL professional, and a novice NNEST in Taiwan's secondary education. Data analysis would be problematic if we presumed the linkage between being NNES international student and being non-adaptive to the West. The participant's diverse repertoire consisting of the linguistic and cultural exposure across Taiwan and Australia delineates how her multilinguality, helped position her NNEST role in Taiwan's English education where most members still show submission to native speakers' norms. For this reason, this framework will serve as an analytical tool to unpack how one NNEST identified and negotiated her professional identity across contexts and over timespans. To study the social aspects of NNESTs' professional identity formation is to study how they negotiate multiple selves in the change of context by addressing their past, present, and projected future selves in a particular CoP (Haneda, 2006).

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METHODS

This study is one part of larger ethnographic research on nine Taiwanese international students' identity formation before, during, and after their Australian postgraduate education. This aspect of the study focuses on one of the participants who came to Australia for master's degree in TESOL to progress her teaching career in Taiwan's secondary education. According to the latest student data released by Department of Education of Australian Government (DOESE, 2018), Education is the fourth most popular discipline for domestic students, but the second least popular discipline for international students. Due to its steady market among domestic students, 30 out of 39 public universities in Australia are now offering master's programs in TESOL. The participant, Hui-Ting (pseudonym, female, in her 20s), has a bachelor's and master's degree both in education with a specialization in TESOL. She completed her undergraduate education in Taiwan and her postgraduate education at a public university in Australia. She is a certified secondary school English teacher in Taiwan with over 2 years of full-time teaching experience in different secondary schools in northern Taiwan. The participant received her master's education in a reputable university in Sydney with most of her classmates being pre-service NESTs and teacher educators being NESTs. Other reasons for choosing a single-participant for this study are: first, this participant is the only person majoring in TESOL while the rest were in non-TESOL disciplines with no interest and intention of being English teachers; second, this participant gave the first author 6-year permission in total to document her life trajectory before, during, and after her TESOL master program in Australia. This access is an unprecedented privilege not provided to previous studies focusing on individual NNEST' s identity developments (Farrell, 2006; Park, 2012; Tsui, 2007); third, the longitudinal data collected gave an opportunity to address the scarceness of studies ethnographically documenting novice L2 teachers' development (Kanno & Stuart, 2011) and case studies with DFG framework integrating with other academic perspectives that can benefit SLA (Duff, 2019).

Data Collection

As instructed by the Human Research Ethics approval issued by the researcher's academic institute, the first round of data collection was from December 2014 to December 2015, focusing on the participant's identity formation before, during, and slightly after her overseas

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education. The second round is from April 2018 to April 2023, focusing on the participant's development three years after graduation. As there is a 3-year gap between first and second round of data collection, the data given by the participant spans 2014–2018, where she shares what she has been doing after completing overseas education. The data of this study consists of both semi-structured interviews and ethnographic observation. The interviews were conducted in Mandarin. The interviews were translated by a qualified translator, and the English transcripts were double checked by the participants to confirm accuracy. At the time of writing, there have been 10 rounds of semi-structured interviews and 13 rounds of social engagement where the first author spent time with the participant in 2014, 2015, and 2018 for different kinds of leisure activities, such as casual lunch and grocery shopping, when she was in Taiwan and Australia. There are eight excerpts (one before, two during, and five after studying abroad) quoted in Findings. Similar studies collected 1-year data with a single participant (Farrell, 2006; Park, 2012; Tsui, 2007) at the beginning and the end of TESOL program in discussing NNESTs' professional identity development. This study has a longer duration of data collection. The similarity shared with previous studies lies in the use of longitudinal, qualitative, and single-participant data. Significantly, our 2-year data collection expands the collection on the identity developments taken place in off-campus, non-TESOL, and cross-border contexts.

Data Analysis

The data collected at different stages of this study used thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The aim of the analysis is to find consistent and prominent themes that emerged from the interview data. Although the analysis will be exploratory, it will not be purely inductive, meaning the data will be interpreted based on Wenger's (1998) notions of identity formation. The analysis procedure will be guided by six-phase analytic tool for thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis of the field notes data started with labeling the data into categories of positive feelings about self, negative feelings about self, interactions between the participant and others (e.g., Australian classmates or Taiwanese colleagues), inside and outside school setting. Labeled data were then organized for review thematically by what occurred, who were involved and the outcomes to identify the associations and patterns in relation to the research question (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2014). Hui-Ting's stories show many sociocultural differences that she had struggled with and worked through to become a NNEST that she believes in. To study her professional

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identity, we should not limit the analysis to the personal level or at TESOL program level. It should be "the process of their mutual constitution" (Wenger, 1998, p. 146). Therefore, the focus of data analysis is on the process in which the context gives meanings to her roles, and how she internalized these meanings and externalized in shaping her idea of being a NNEST.

The Primary Investigator's Positionality

Positionality is the relational marker between the researcher and the researched (Maher & Tetreault, 1993). Denzin (2010) refers the provision of the researcher's subjectivity before and after research to the eighth moment where researchers should engage with critical conversations on examining their positions, such as gender, class, and race in qualitative inquiry. The lead author and primary investigator, who is the principal data collector, provides the description of his positionality with Hui-Ting and acknowledges how it might influence the data analysis. The first round of data collection with Hui-Ting was from 2014 to 2015 and the second round was in 2018. These two periods cover both Hui-Ting's before and after graduating from our higher degrees in Australia in terms of being NNESTs. When the primary investigator met Hui-Ting, he was aware that she might feel intimidated by his academic background in TESOL. Therefore, he began their engagement by sharing his experiences of being a NNES and cultural outsiders in Australia. After hearing his story, Hui-Ting was encouraged to share her experience which the primary investigator would listen to carefully, acknowledging her stance, and documenting her feelings. Once rapport was established, the primary investigator started to ask her some challenging questions, while comparing her statements given before and after a semester. For example, before coming to Australia, Hui-Ting's goal of being an English learner was to speak English like a native speaker. After her master's degree in Australia her goal changed to becoming a functional English speaker rather than native speaker. The primary investigator posed a question asking her what had caused her change of stance. It is because of the primary investigator's intersectional position with her as an educational ethnographer, a TESOL professional, a fellow Taiwanese who studied in Australia and a trustworthy friend, that she has given him the privilege to follow her development since early 2014. This privilege leads to the depth of data that sheds more light on the suggestions for improvement of Australian TESOL programs.

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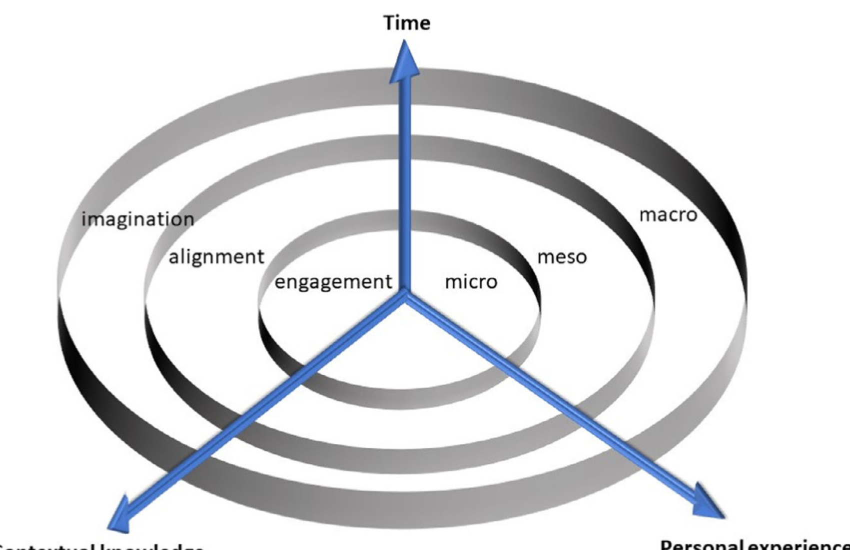

FIGURE 2. A transdisciplinary perspective of NNEST's professional identity. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

FINDINGS

To answer the research question of "what are the influences at engagement, alignment and imagination levels, and how did the participant deal with them?", our findings indicate that time, contextual experience, and personal experience were the major variables that contributed to the participant's positive identity development as NNES and NNEST. Figure 2 shows that Hui-Ting's time spent on her personal experience as NNES helped her gain contextual knowledge regarding why and how to advance Taiwanese English education in a way that is practical for Taiwanese students.

Figure 3 summarizes Hui-Ting's identity formation processes of identification and negotiability that took place in an order of the micro, macro, and meso levels.

The Emerging Identification as a Functional English Speaker through Engagement at the Micro Level

Identification at the engagement level brings the first-hand experience for Hui-Ting to rethink the idea of being a NNEST and develop the idea of being a functional English user. By being a

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Time	Before/During (in Australia)	After (in Australia)	After (in Taiwan)
	Engagement (micro)	**Imagination (macro)**	**Alignment (meso)**
Identification	• English being either native or nonnative (Before) • Expose to various styles of English in communication through everyday interactions and using English outside campus (During)	• The experience of using English as a common language with diverse groups of people in her non-teaching-related work history in Australia	• The realization that native speakerism is still upheld in teaching, teacher's recruitment and educational policies
Negotiability	• Hui-Ting's belief of her English being more native than other Taiwanese based on her academic and professional backgrounds (Before) • The notion of functional English speaker being developed (During)	• The notion of teaching functional English communication rather than native English being developed	• The creation of alliance with other NNESTs in promoting the teaching functional communication with English

FIGURE 3. A summary of Hui-Ting's professional identity formation across contexts and over time. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

NNES in Australia's academic and social contexts, Hui-Ting's boundary of being a NNEST was pushed by "disapprobation and incomprehension" (Wenger, 1998, p. 193) that she had been perceiving inside classrooms. Before her Australian life, she believed she spoke standardized English, the same as native speakers, because of her institutionalized English education background. The fact she internalized was that she was categorized as an English user with credible authority because of her TESOL degrees, educational accreditation, and English teaching role.

Her everyday English-use experience, such as greeting her native English-speaking Australian classmates and her observation of two English native speakers, re-drew the boundary where she perceived herself as NNES and the other side as native speakers.

> The English that I learned in Taiwan is all textbook English. It's like when someone says, 'How are you?' And I can only reply, 'I am fine, thank you. And you?' There is always a model for us (Taiwanese English students) to follow. The reply will never be, 'Good, thank you' or 'Very well, yourself?'
>
> (Excerpt 1, during study)

In the exchange of daily greetings, Hui-Ting found that there were many types of responses to a simple "How are you?". This engagement showed her inability to use various and replaceable English expressions in a simple social setting. In an academic setting, she also found that she was treated differently by her English native-speaking lecturer.

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Like my lecturer: when she is talking to me, I can totally understand what she means. However, sometimes I feel like she slows down or is making her English easier for us (non-native English speakers) to understand. There was a time when a native English-speaking student posted a question to my lecturer in front of everyone. Maybe it was because of that student's accent, I couldn't quite understand what he was asking. However, my lecturer responded to the question right away. And then they started a sort of conversation in class. That was the experience in which I felt that I couldn't actually understand native speakers when they were really being native speakers, speaking in English.

(Excerpt 2, during study)

This language exchange between her NEST and she and between her NEST and another native-English-speaking classmate struck Hui-Ting and "lingered as an indelible part of her (our) identity" (Wenger, 1998, pp. 193, original in brackets). What deserves our attention here is that Hui-Ting's belief that her status could be equalized by acquiring a master's degree in TESOL from a renowned Australia university was challenged. The hierarchical dichotomy between NESTs and NNESTs still exists, and NESTs always prevail at home or abroad.

In Wenger's sense, these experiences created the "production of proposals for meaning" (Wenger, 1998, p. 202) to what it means to be a NNEST for Hui-Ting. The reason for her feeling unable to become a member of NESTs was because of the obvious gap between NESTs' and NNESTs' English proficiency. The proposal for this meaning could not be adopted by her; therefore, a sense of marginality was created. In her TESOL program, she could not find the answer to how to become a NNEST in the teaching environment where NESTs are seemingly more favored. For example, during the internship in a language school that her Australian TESOL program arranged, she confirmed her marginality by witnessing that all the TESOL professionals hired in the school context were White NESTs who were teaching mostly Chinese-speaking international students. As a NNEST, it seems that her mother tongue becomes the main reason for why she would never be as convincing or good as NESTs in terms of teaching English to Chinese-speaking international students.

Hui-Ting's experiences off-campus brought in the negotiation of meaning through which the notion of being valued as a functional English user was emerging. She started to develop the ownership of this meaning and locates her NNEST's teaching philosophy through it. She chose to stay in Australia on a Working Holiday Visa after her TESOL degree as her way to examine further on the adoption of being functional English user. She accumulated much positive experience using English as a nonnative speaker in the Australian context by

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becoming a backpacker travelling across the nation and trying different jobs after she completed her master's degree in TESOL.

> I remember the two European travellers at my hostel when I was travelling in Melbourne. I was convinced that my English was better than theirs. They looked just like typical White people in Taiwanese people's eyes. They couldn't speak much English, but they just used their limited English to communicate with Australians. In contrast, I've learned English for more than 10 years, and I knew my English was better than theirs (the European travellers). However, I was too afraid of showing native speakers my imperfect English. I guess it's because of my culture that always tells me to hold back my imperfection. This experience teaches me perfection is made from showing imperfection, which means to keep using my grammatically incorrect English until I learn how to use the correct one. [. . .] if you want to be a great English user [. . .] (the key) is to keep making mistakes and the knowledge of English is within those mistakes you made.
>
> (Excerpt 3, after study in Australia)

Hui-Ting slowly found the meaning of being a functional English user. She negotiated and accepted this identity through various English-use experiences, such as the encounter with people of European origin from NNES backgrounds. These experiences were internalized and became part of her NNEST identity.

Appropriating Meanings of being NNEST for Imagination at the Macro Level

Hui-Ting's NNEST professional identity was constructed by her past in Taiwan's TESOL field. When she called herself an English teacher in Taiwan, she categorized and referred herself to Taiwan's TESOL profession which represents the internationalization and the capability of bringing Taiwan to the world. Because of Taiwan's marginalized international status, both the governmental and private sectors have been striving for international exposure, making the ability to use standard English an invaluable asset. Under this context, Hui-Ting's profession was not simply a language educator. Her identification of this broad category of TESOL profession projects an imagination of being an expert figure in English among Taiwanese.

> A Chinglish example could be, "*I very like you*". I think it is Chinglish because it is the English with Chinese sentence structure. As far as I am concerned, if the English can be directly translated into Chinese,

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like in a word-by-word sequence, it is highly likely that the English is Chinglish. It's like using Chinese constructing English. Many Taiwanese will use this expression because (English-speaking) westerners will not use this. It should be "I like you very much." The modifier should be placed at the end of the sentence. However, the adverb "fēi cháng" (very) in Chinese is usually placed in the beginning of the sentence.

(Excerpt 4, before study in Taiwan)

From this excerpt, Hui-Ting acted as the expert of English language, differentiating herself from other Taiwanese whose English learning background might not be as academically concentrated as hers. Her opinion on "*I very like you*" being Chinglish and being potentially wrong was based on her cultural capital as credible English user and teacher. This was the manifestation of her playfulness of associating herself to a broad category of Taiwan's highly internationalized group of people who speak native level English and claim themselves to be socioculturally closer to the international community.

Hui-Ting's interaction with non-Chinese speaking counterparts where she used English as a common language strengthened her idea of being a NNEST teaching functional communication with students' limited English. These interactions occurred through her post-study work and life in Australia from 2015 to 2017. She experimented with different occupations, such as being a farmer in northern Queensland and a mineral analyst in Perth. She gained professional relationships and friendships with English-speaking or non-Chinese-speaking colleagues through these work experiences. Hui-Ting mentioned to me that she had felt she was becoming fluent in English, and she no longer felt her English is textbook English. However, it was also through this feeling of "becoming fluent in English," she realized that she would never become "native" in English. The idea of becoming functionally fluent appropriated meaning better than the old idea of becoming native-like in English. This newly negotiated and appropriated meaning means it is acceptable that her English could be grammatically imperfect or even Chinglish as long as it serves its communication function in an international context. This English speaker identity through imagination was more practical for Hui-Ting to achieve; however, it could be exotic or even forbidden in Taiwan's TESOL. However, perhaps little did she know that the deep-rooted idea of NESTs being "real" English teachers that Taiwanese students and parents have internalized for generations is created by the elite group of Taiwanese who completed higher education in the West. The NESTs-dominant ideology has been enforced and permeated at all levels. The elite group members tend to occupy important positions in

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schools and governmental departments. With the designation of teaching materials that disseminate native speakerism and the recruitment of NNESTs who completed higher TESOL degrees in reputable Western universities, the NESTs-dominant ideology could be created and reenforced within Taiwan's English teaching community. As Wenger (1998, p. 178) indicated, "imagination can make us consider our own position with new eyes." Hui-Ting repositioned herself and was considering not going back to Taiwan's TESOL after her 2-year work visa in Australia.

> I might not go back to teaching. I don't want to teach the English that people do not actually use outside the classroom. The English we (Taiwanese education) teach and the way we teach our children are rigid. I might try translation. I feel better about myself if I am translator. Or some other jobs that I can use my English to communicate with foreign clients on behalf of my Taiwanese company.
>
> (Excerpt 5, after study in Australia)

At the end of Hui-Ting's TESOL program in Australia, she chose to not to return Taiwan for her ELT profession. Hui-Ting felt more comfortable with being a translator, a role symbolizing being highly functional in both English and Chinese. Her ceasing to imagine becoming a NEST and her new goal of becoming someone with highly competent English created a new alignment with being NNEST.

Re-Aligning to Teaching and to be a Taiwanese English Teacher at the Meso Level

Hui-Ting's return to teaching was relevant to her experiences of being aligned to the English teacher profession, and how she negotiated this alignment in her identity construction. Her experiences took place in Australia, but the "process of alignment bridges time and space to form broader enterprises so that participants become connected through the coordination of their energies, actions, and practices" (Wenger, 1998, pp. 178-179). Her experiences of working with colleagues from all over the world during her two years in Australia taught her that TESOL in Taiwan should focus on "how to use English with one's limited proficiency" rather than "how to be perfect in English."

With her identity aligned to this functional English speaker group, she returned to Taiwan and her teaching job in 2017. Although she admitted that "going back to teaching is the best financial choice for me given that my educational background is in education," she had a strong sense of obligation that she needed to change English

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education at her school. However, Taiwan's secondary education system categorized her as a novice NNEST, the position where she was left with limited support from other experienced NNESTs.

> I was surprised that nobody at my school was assigned to give me any orientation upon my report for duty. I was left alone in the office, and nobody told me where to start. [. . .] All the so-called orientation activities and handovers took place after the semester had started. But they were disorganised because there was too much to do at the beginning of a new semester. I started to have a general understanding of the students' overall English proficiency and the teaching practice from textbook publishers, not from our teaching staff. They came to the campus and walked me through the textbooks that the teaching staff had been using. More importantly, they told me both students' performance and staff's feedback from previous semesters.
>
> (Excerpt 6, after study in Taiwan)

The orientation meetings for Hui-Ting to choose appropriate materials were conducted by the external textbook publishers who came to campuses with informative analytics on the students' performance and teachers' teaching quality at the school level, city level, and national level. This information is vital for English teachers especially when Taiwan's education is heavily influenced by the washback in a top-down manner (Cheng, 2008), meaning teaching and learning are influenced by what Taiwan's Ministry of Education is testing in senior high school (Year 10 to 12) examination. Hui-Ting admitted that "the secondary English education is still preparing students for exams, not for their future life in international communities." Under the pressure of senior high school exam, Hui-Ting's school initiated the so-called "eighth class," an additional class for consolidating what has been taught. The eighth class means the teaching staff needs to stay late. To show her allegiance and devotion to the teaching community, Hui-Ting volunteered to teach for some experienced English teachers who might need to leave after the seventh class for family commitment. This was her form of aligning to be identified as the member of English teacher team. With the opportunity of being fully in charge of the eighth class, Hui-Ting taught English with more dynamic and cultural elements, such as including real-life photos that she took in Australia to describe the Christmas holidays she has experienced.

This culture-based English teaching significantly improved her students' attention during English learning especially considering that the eighth class is in the last hour of a long day for the students. Mei, one of the experienced teachers found Hui-Ting's good work and began to share with her some important classroom management skills.

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Mei shared many management methods for the class that I was about to teach. For example, what should I do if the students are noisy and restless? Or when some students are having rebellious behaviours against me and trying to challenge me in front of everyone, what should I do? I, in return, also shared my idea with Mei that we need to teach our students with more skills of how to use English as non-native and confident English speakers.

(Excerpt 7, after study in Taiwan)

Hui-Ting's negotiability of alignment was her "ability to affect the negotiation of meaning" (Wenger, 1998, p. 205) in her teaching context. She was progressively introducing the idea of teaching functional English rather than standard and textbook English to students. This new educational ideology might collide with the school's policy and the parents' expectation, but it was sprouting into a new community of teaching for the NNESTs at her school. However, her school's decision makers were standing by the government's policies. The policy of hiring NESTs and their compulsory placement in formal curriculum were still a necessary marketing strategy for promoting that Taiwan's English education at secondary level is teaching native-level English.

I am frustrated that this policy is implicitly sending a message to our students and their parents that the students' English needs to be like its native speakers. Otherwise, they are not successful English speakers. This is just unpractical and unreal. I spoke my experiences of living, studying and working in Australia for three years to my students that it is unpractical to pursue the goal of becoming native-like in English. It is more practical to become a functional English user with other foreign people. I am not saying that students shouldn't learn native English from NESTs. Instead, I am telling my students that they shouldn't feel bad about their grammatical mistakes or limited knowledge of English. I also have another part-time job as a translator, but my heart belongs to teaching. However, when the policy stands by teaching native English and is in favour of NESTs, I feel I am more respected as a translator than as an English teacher. As a translator, I am respected as a highly functional bilingual. However, I am treated as a non-native English teacher in education simply because English is not my first language. I have been denied since the very beginning.

(Excerpt 8, after study in Taiwan)

Hui-Ting's frustration came from the imbalanced power relation between NESTs and NNESTs in Taiwan's education after she had been aligned with other NNESTs. What Hui-Ting wished to promote in teaching was the educational imagination of CoP (Wenger, 1998) that

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focuses more on giving students the English-use experiences so that they can take charge of their own learning.

DISCUSSION

As discussed, Hui-Ting's NNEST professional identity was developed through everyday engagements on- and off-campus, with much deriving from her social experiences as a NNES outside campus. These experiences also promoted her to imagine the notion of being a functional English speaker and eventually aligned her to the ideology of teaching functional English rather than standard English in Taiwan. We now discuss the findings that emerged from the analysis with suggestions for language teacher education research and TESOL program development.

Inclusion of Social Aspects of Language Use and Learning in Data Collection and Analysis

We found that there is a need for the studies of NNESTs to understand the changes that NNESTs have gone through both inside and outside TESOL classrooms and both before and after TESOL programs. Our data show that Hui-Ting encountered and internalized different experiences which were later negotiated to become part of her teacher's identity and teaching practice. She used mostly NNES experiences that she had gained outside the classroom to revisit her ideas of teaching and being a teacher in Taiwan. This finding is in line with Tarone and Allwright's (2005) finding that TESOL program not only fails to take into account pre-service teachers' prior learning experience, they also fail to consider pre-service teachers' social experience as NNESs. NNESTs' professional identity should not be treated as if teacher identity was separate from other forms of identities. Our multilayered model of identity formation explains how a NNEST's professional identity formation is intertwined with personal histories through direct engagement, alignment with communities and imagination projected in the future. Hui-Ting's NNEST identity consists of other identities from her different roles, such as international students, NNES sojourner working in Australia, returnee to Taiwan and NNESTs in Taiwan's secondary education. Her experiences did not significantly enhance her national identity as a Taiwanese as concluded by Phan (2007). Instead, we found hybridity (Canagarajah, 2005) in Hui-Ting's globalized multilingual identity enabled by the spread of English as a global language (e.g., Rose and Galloway, 2015).

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The usefulness of our multilayered model lies in its explanatory potential for manifesting the complexity of identity negotiation across contexts (Gao, 2019). We the authors contend that a longitudinal and ethnographic research design could capture the complexity of NNEST professional identity formation within TESOL programs. A new direction for research identified by this study is a new power relation between western-trained NNESTs and non-western-trained NNESTs in NNES societies. Current research is limited, finding that western-trained NNESTs found progress in professional development. For example, NNESTs feel their status had become “privileged” and their teaching practices are more “innovative” than others. (Inoue & Stracle, 2013; Li & Edwards, 2013). More attention should be paid to the powerful discourse that homecoming western-trained NNESTs create in NNES societies. A possible way to look at this could be through critical discourse analysis.

Analyzing NNESTs’ Deficit Discourse with Transdisciplinary Approach

NNESTs who return to NNES societies will face continuing and perhaps predominant deficit discourse in which NESTs and pedagogies from inner circle are favored. Western TESOL programs can nurture NNESTs’ analytical skills for appropriating NNES experiences to teaching practices in local contexts. Empowering NNESTs to analytically interpret their NNES experiences and reflect these analyses in developing localized pedagogies is a way to bring social justice (Ortega, 2019) and NNESTs’ strengths (Gao, 2019). This study supports the ideas that equipping NNESTs with the analytical skills for unsettling the native-speakerism within them (Ilieva, 2010) and re-positioning themselves in their local TESOL community (Baecher, 2012).

Educators in TESOL programs need to be aware that NNESTs are dealing with both teacher and NNES identities consisting of both negative and positive experiences. These experiences reflect each individual’s particularity (Park, 2012) which would be constructively useful if being interpreted analytically. Therefore, this study suggests SLA researchers for TESOL programs proactively include NNESTs’ NNES experiences in activities involving action research where NNESTs are given opportunities to document and tease out the meanings that have been internalized through participating in western context as NNES and NNEST. This research could inform language teacher educators’ pedagogical decisions that meet NNESTs’ local needs and promote the notions of “multilingual teachers in multilingual world.” In this model, course content is built upon NNEST cohort’s unique needs, providing

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language teacher educators rooms to guide NNESTs through understanding the complexity of language teaching and learning. DFG (2016) reminds us that we need a transdisciplinary approach to capture "the opportunity to make visible the multilayered complexity of additional language learning and, on that basis, begin to craft contextualized solutions for improving opportunities for the teaching and learning of languages" (DFG, 2016, p. 38). Our study demonstrated the elasticity of DFG framework with theories from sociocultural disciplines. To further test the elasticity this transdisciplinary approach, SLA researchers for TESOL programs could consider including some concepts, such as Bourdieuian thinking toolkit of capital, habitus and field (to begin with (Bourdieu, 1977)), in deciphering NNESTs' changing perceptions of self and others across contexts and over time.

CONCLUSION

This paper makes a conceptual contribution by acknowledging and empowering NNESTs' roles and strengths in ELT, pushing SLA move beyond the dichotomy between NESTs and NNESTs. The authors of this study applaud recent SLA efforts in this domain (see, e.g., Galloway & Numajiri, 2020; Rose & Galloway, 2019). Based on our model in which we incorporated Wenger's notion of identity formation with DFG's idea of multilayered complexity in modern multilingual world, this study analyzed one NNEST's identity formation experiences in which she internalized and appropriated the meanings of being a NNEST at the micro, meso, and macro levels. The findings showed that a cross-border NNEST student negotiated her NNES experiences outside TESOL program contributing significantly to her teacher identity and teaching practice. Theoretically, we also demonstrated the elasticity of synthesizing DFG framework with another social theory of learning. Acknowledging that social experiences as NNES is vital, this study recommends NNEST research and TESOL programs to welcome more inclusion and analysis of NNESTs' NNES experiences.

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