THE SPREAD OF ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE IN THE EXPANDING CIRCLE:
ITS IMPACT ON SELF-PERCEPTION AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY
OF VIETNAMESE TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

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• The interconnection among the spread of English in the Expanding Circle, native-speakerism (Hollidays, 2005), the ownership of English and identity formation through language creates impact on how non-native English speaker teachers (NNESTs) construct their professional identity.
• This identity construction, in turn, shapes their teaching beliefs in the language classroom.
Using data collected in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, this paper argues that:

• Although the native-norm-based discourse is still dominant, NNESTs are negotiating their professional identity towards a more equal position compared to NESTs (native English speaker teachers) with their self-perception as a speaker of EIL (McKay, 2002, 2003).

• These NNESTs do so by adapting towards a more appropriate teacher model for the global development of EIL. (Rednandya, 2012)
The global spread of English has drawn individuals to participate in formal language classes around the world (McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008). The EIL & ELF models are seen as more appropriate for the spread of English in the EC (Jenkins, 2006, 2009; McKay, 2002, 2003). However, the EFL model and NS norms are still dominant.

* Inferiority and insecurity of NNESTs to deliver a variety and cultural conventions they do not control.

→ Inequality in job markets
→ The popularity of CLT and the promotion of NS norms
→ language standardized tests orienting towards NS norms decide teaching content
• After the implementation of the economic reformation campaign in 1986, the increasing influx of traders from capitalist societies initiated the emergence of English as the main foreign language (Denham, 1992; Do, 2000; Le, 2005; Lo Bianco 2001; Wright, 2002).

• There has been an emphasis on CLT and English as a compulsory subject for secondary level (Nunan, 2003).

• The result of the English programs launched by the MOET has not been promising. As Le (2006) remarks, after 6 years of learning English in secondary level, students ‘get nowhere in communicative English even at the survival level’, and university students are not ‘competent enough in English for their academic purposes’ (p.175).
• In 2008, MOET released Project ‘Teaching and learning foreign languages in the national education system for the period 2008-2020’ (MOET, 2008), known as Project 2020, to overcome these problems.
• The project indicates a preference towards NS norms with its emphasis on the international language standardized tests to measure both teachers’ and students’ language competence against the CEF (MOET, 2013).

→ Vietnamese teachers of English are left to face the pressure between two conflicting forces.
  * Teaching role in the native-norm-based discourse
  * The development of EIL and a more powerful repositioning of NNESTs in the language classroom
Postructuralist theories view identity as on-going, fragmented, continuously constructed and reconstructed within multiple discourses (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Clark, 2008; Hall, 1996; Norton, 2000).

With regards to teachers, Beijiaard, Meijer & Verloop (2004) attempt to characterize elements that constitute the professional identity of a teacher.

- Professional identity is an ongoing process of interpretation and re-interpretation of experience.
- Professional identity implies both person and context.
- A teacher’s professional identity consists of sub-identities that more or less harmonize.

Agency is important for active involvement in professional development.
With regards to EIL, Rednanya (2012) discusses some aspects that reflect the role of the language teachers of EIL:

- Intercultural competence: active role to promote intercultural learning
- Awareness of other varieties of English: a provider of varieties of World Englishes
- Multilingualism in the classroom: bilingualism or multilingualism in the classroom to foster the use of both English and the mother tongue(s)
- Instructional materials that are both culturally appropriate for students and meet the need of the compulsory curricula by schools.
The study is conducted in HCMC with 9 participants with varying educational backgrounds and experiences. They all received training in TESOL or education-related majors.

- 6 acquired a master’s degree and 3 a bachelor’s degree.
- 5 teach at tertiary level with 2 as teacher-trainers. 4 teach at private language centers in HCMC.

**THE PURPOSE:**
- Explore teacher’s current position within the native-norm-based discourse
- Explore their awareness about EIL
- Explore how they employ such awareness as well as their teaching experience to negotiate their professional identity as competent NNESTs.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Years of teaching</th>
<th>Received training in</th>
<th>Degree acquired</th>
<th>Major</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nguyen</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Hoang</td>
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<td>Australia</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>TESOL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vu</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>TEFL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>BA, currently undertaking a master’s course in TESOL in Vietnam</td>
<td>TEFL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cao</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Vietnam, in joint program with an Australian university.</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>TESOL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tri</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Vietnam, in joint program with an Australian university.</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>TESOL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phuong</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Vietnam, in joint program with an Australian university.</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>TESOL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim</td>
<td>&gt; 7</td>
<td>Vietnam, in joint program with an Australian university.</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>TESOL</td>
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<td>Ngoc</td>
<td>&gt; 7</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Education Leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE STUDY

Teacher’s position within the native-norm-based discourse

English varieties in the classroom

• The most popular varieties these NNESTs have to deliver in class are American & British English, which are driven by the types of tests that they teach in class.

• Exclusive focus on these tests eventually creates a linguistic market (Bourdieu, 1991) which determines the source of linguistic capital that students have to acquire (Jenkins, 2007). Teachers need to deliver these varieties to meet the needs of students.
Teacher’s position within the native-norm-based discourse

English varieties in the classroom

• ‘global English’ = different NS varieties → linked with the tests that he teaches
• take for granted the validity of IELTS & TOEFL as representative of world English → the market demands determine what teachers deliver.

Example 1
‘There is a tendency of global English, like world English. [...] There is no clear distinction between American and British English. [...] Like such international exams like the IELTS or the TOEFL, in the listening or in the speaking test. In the listening test there is a variety of accents like American, British, sometimes we have Canadian English as well.’ (Tri)
Teacher’s position within the native-norm-based discourse

NS norms as reference for teaching

- Insecurity to deliver the role of a NL model. → turn to authoritative sources of NS norms
- NS norms and NS language uses serve as the teaching content.

Example 2

‘We teachers ourselves sometimes cannot perceive a completely true pronunciation of British people or American people. [...] We use Advanced Oxford Learner Dictionary, and I think that is the base for standardized English. And, you know, sometimes if we have discussion, we also base on that kind of dictionary. I think that we just base on some kind of standard, officially published by educational services.’ (Thai)
THE STUDY

Teacher’s position within the native-norm-based discourse

Teaching the target culture

• TOEFL imposes an unquestionable need for learning about the American culture.
• This may not suit the actual communication needs of all students.

Example 3

‘I think it is very important. So if you are learning English, then you have to make sure that you understand the culture of the people speaking that language. So here, for example, when I'm teaching TOEFL test preparation courses there are a lot of lectures and there are a lot of conversations about campus life in America. So I have to explain to them a lot about, ok, why do they have this kind of conversation and in what situation will they have this kind of conversation because they are totally different from what [the students] experience in this country.’ (Hoang)
The study

Teacher’s position within the native-norm-based discourse

Classroom authority – the conflicting space

• NNEST’s classroom authority is challenged by the comparison made by students between NESTs vs. NNESTs.
• From a NNEST’s perspective, this would eventually lead to their linguistic insecurity and inferiority compared to their NEST counterpart.

Example 4
‘It’s a fact that in Vietnam, [students] prefer to have a native speaker. [...] Usually when a [NNEST] teaches in the same class with the native speaker, there’s some comparison among students. I think this comparison is negative. Because they think that the other is an American teacher and I am a Vietnamese teacher so they say the American teacher is always right.’ (Cao)
A recognition to EIL/ELF and communication needs

Example 5

‘Singaporean English or Malaysian English, they are English. Maybe some of their pronunciation is hard to hear, hard to understand but when they talk, if we don’t understand, we can ask them to clarify. So, no there is no such valid or invalid varieties. It depends on the communication of the two people as long as they understand each other.’ (Cao)

Example 6

‘From my point of view, as long as you can make yourself understood, that is ok. There is no need to set a standard norm of English. In real life you cannot just speak to the native people. That means you have to work with a lot of people from different countries.’ (Nguyen)

• Jenkin’s view on accommodation strategies for EIL/ELF speakers (2009).

• Recognizing that communication in English not only occurs with NSs → negotiation of meaning
Negotiating a new professional identity

A recognition to EIL/ELF and communication needs

- diverging away from the dominant ELT discourse that promotes NS varieties of English
- Yearning for a distinctive English variety for Vietnamese students that meets the communication needs of the community

Example 7

‘Actually I hope that in the future we have a kind of English variety for Vietnamese. I think that Singaporean students they have Singlish. I think that Singlish is good in that its pronunciation is very easy to understand among the community. And in the future, when we follow the tendency of international development of English, in Vietnam, I hope that the Vietnamese students can speak a kind of English that everyone in the community can understand.’ (Thai)
Disregarding the native accent as outcome for students’ acquisition

- Opening up to choices of different accents
- Encouraging a kind of English that marks students’ identity as Vietnamese
- Aiming towards an intelligible pronunciation as outcome for students

They may have to deliver NS norms as determined by the teaching content but they do not enforce such norms as outcome for students.

Example 8

‘I expect my students to learn different kinds of Englishes. For example, they can learn British English or American English if they like. Or *they can speak Vietnamese English if they like*. In my opinion, it is just, when you say something, *it's understandable* so it's ok, no need for you to acquire a native-like pronunciation. If you acquire Vietnamese English, it may *show the identity of the Vietnamese people*, so it's no problem.’ (Nguyen)
Negotiating a new professional identity

Challenging the traditional CLT belief: Vietnamese as a good teaching resource

- Taking on ‘cultural ambassador role’ through the students’ L1
- Fostering both intercultural competence & bilingual learning environment

Example 9

‘It’s a very good benefit because you can use both languages in the classroom and you can consider which can make the classroom more interesting. In some cases when you are teaching a new word and something related with the culture, for example, about 'Thanksgiving' day. If you explain and tell the story in English and how they celebrate and where it came from, [...] they don't have enough information and competence to understand. In Vietnamese you can tell the story very clearly and you can make them understand a cultural point in other countries. In that case I use Vietnamese. It's better than using English.’ (Vu)
THE STUDY

Negotiating a new professional identity

Professionalism: taking it on a par with NESTs

Example 10
‘When teaching at [my institute], I had to pass the screening test, which means that I need to score 100 and above in TOEFL and this test is also the same for native teachers. So I believe that in terms of English competence, there would not be any difference between me and my co-teachers.’ (Ngoc)

Example 11
‘I cannot speak as fluently as a native speaker but people can easily understand what I want to say. As a teacher, I have more knowledge in general about grammar and vocabulary and [I] can help students better. Because some native teachers[…] don’t have the right method so students cannot understand them.’ (Vu)

• Negotiating for a more equal position in the traditional ELT discourse by reshaping their professional identity through their linguistic competence and understanding of the actual learning needs of Vietnamese students.
THE STUDY

Negotiating a new professional identity

Professionalism: taking it on a par with NESTs

Example 12
‘As Vietnamese teachers, we have lots of advantages. We know about the Vietnamese learning style. So we can satisfy the learners because we know what the learners expect. And the learners are used to our methods. One main point is that foreigners, although they graduated from good universities, they have difficulty working with Vietnamese learners because they are in class and they keep on talking and students may feel tired because they cannot understand. Vietnamese learners expect to understand and hear all of the words the teacher say.’ (Kim)
**DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION**

### Beijiaard et al’s framework for professional identity (2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional identity as on-going</th>
<th>NNESTs interpret and negotiate their professional identity though their own teaching experience &amp; understanding of students’ learning needs and styles.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional identity implies person &amp; context</td>
<td>NNESTs perceive their teaching roles through their own interpretation of their classroom context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional identity consists of sub-identities</td>
<td>Their professional identity is consolidated through their identity as a legitimate speaker of EIL.</td>
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<td>Agency is important.</td>
<td>NNESTs make active choices of language use in the classroom to maximize learning opportunities for students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Rednanya’s description of teachers of EIL (2012)

| Intercultural competence | ✓ |
| Awareness of other varieties of English | ✓ |
| Multilingualism in the classroom | ✓ |
| Culturally appropriate instructional materials | Still determined by institutions and standardized tests. |


Cook, V. (1999). Going Beyond the Native Speaker in Language Teaching. TESOL Quarterly, 2(33), 185-209.


