



Learning to Become a Second Language Teacher: Identities-in-Practice

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Despite the accumulating body of research on teacher cognition and teacher learning in the field of second language (L2) teacher education over the past 2 decades, few studies have followed novice L2 teachers' development over time, and still fewer have focused specifically on teacher identity development. This study begins to fill this gap by examining how novice English-as-a-second-language (ESL) teachers learn to teach and how this learning-in-practice experience shapes their identities as teachers. For 1 academic year, we followed 2 graduate students in a Master of Arts for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages program at a U.S. university as they taught their own ESL classes for the first time. In analyzing the 2 case studies from a situated learning perspective, we show an intertwined relationship between novice teachers' identity development and their changing classroom practice. Based on our findings, we argue for the need to include a deeper understanding of teacher identity development in the knowledge base of L2 teacher education.

"On the first day one student [said to me], 'You look like a student. You look like one of us.'" (Amy, October 2004)

"I feel more like a teacher. I'm more like a professional." (Amy, June 2005)

THESE TWO COMMENTS WERE MADE AT the beginning and at the end of an academic year during which Amy, a student teacher in a Master of Arts for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (MATESOL) program at a U.S. university, taught her own English-as-a-second-language (ESL) classes for the first time. Amy began her teaching still thinking of herself as a graduate student but came out of 1 year of classroom practice viewing herself as a second language (L2) teacher. Speaking of teacher education programs

in general, Danielewicz (2001) observed that at some point during their teacher training, student teachers must make a transition from being primarily students to being primarily teachers. Amy made that transition. However, how does this identity transformation happen? Kennedy (1990) estimated that compared with the 3,060 days of experience as students that we accumulate by the time we receive our bachelor's degrees, typical teacher preparation programs usually require only 75 days of classroom experience. The stark contrast between the two figures is a good indication of how challenging it can be for student teachers to shed the identity of a student and adopt the identity of a teacher.

In this study, we explore how novice L2 teachers¹ learn to teach and come to identify themselves as professional language teachers. For 1 academic year, we followed two graduate students in an MATESOL program at a U.S. university as they taught their own ESL classes for the first time. Through a lens of *situated learning* (Lave

& Wenger, 1991), our qualitative analysis of the two case studies shows an intertwined relationship between novice teachers' identity formation and their changing classroom practice: For our two participants, Amy and John, classroom practice helped nurture their teacher identities, and their emerging identities in turn shaped their practice. From our findings, we argue that the construction of a teacher identity is integral to novice L2 teachers' learning-to-teach processes. We thus call for a deeper understanding of L2 teacher identity development as a core constituent of the knowledge base of L2 teacher education.

L2 TEACHER DEVELOPMENT AND IDENTITY

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the field of L2 teacher education has generated a growing body of research on teacher learning and teacher cognition (Borg, 2003, 2006; Freeman, 2002; Richards, 2008, for overviews). The overarching purpose of this research has been to illuminate how L2 teachers' mental processes initially form, change, and ultimately develop within the institutional contexts of teacher education programs and classroom practice experiences (Freeman, 2002). Yet, despite this body of research, two gaps in knowledge are particularly noticeable: the paucity of examinations of novice L2 teacher development over time and a lack of inquiry into novice L2 teachers' identity development.

Most of the studies on preservice and first-year L2 teachers are of a short duration, typically with data collected over the course of a one-semester practicum (Bailey et al., 1996; Johnson, 1992, 1994, 1996; Numrich, 1996; Warford & Reeves, 2003). Many of these studies' findings correspond to those typical of the survival stage of teacher development in general education (Fuller & Bown, 1975; Nyquist & Sprague, 1998). Beginning language teachers are shocked by the gap between their idealized visions of teaching and the realities of the classroom (Farrell, 2001; Johnson, 1996). They are often too preoccupied with their own teaching to pay much attention to what their students are learning (Johnson, 1994; Numrich, 1996). Numrich found that only toward the end of the practicum do student teachers become aware of their lack of concern with student needs and learning. Novice L2 teachers also tend to be thrown off by students' unexpected questions and tend to view student initiations as off-task and a threat to their instructional control (Johnson, 1992). Instead of incorporating students' contri-

butions into their instruction, novices tend to ignore them in an effort to regain their control.

Although these short-term studies offer valuable insights into the beginning stages of novice language teachers' learning-to-teach processes, they do not tell us how the novices move beyond such beginning stages and learn to overcome the dilemmas and challenges they encountered at the outset. One way to circumvent this problem is to compare novice teachers with experienced teachers (Mok, 1994; Nunan, 1992; Richards, Li, & Tang, 1998; Tsui, 2003). In comparing ESL teachers in Australia, for instance, Nunan (1992) showed that novice teachers' classroom decisions tended to focus on management issues, whereas more experienced instructors focused on actual language issues. Tsui's (2003) study, which compared one expert teacher, two experienced teachers, and one novice teacher all working in the same Hong Kong secondary school, found that the knowledge of the expert teacher was more integrated than that of the other three teachers and that she was able to better utilize her theoretical knowledge in making curricular decisions. Whereas these studies have certainly yielded important findings about expert teaching practices, they offer only snapshots of changes in L2 teacher development, rather than examinations of actual long-term changes within the same individuals.

To date, six sets of published studies have specifically addressed novice teachers' long-term development (Farrell, 2003, 2006; Liu & Fisher, 2006; Peacock, 2001; Pennington & Richards, 1997; Richards & Pennington, 1998; Tsui, 2007; Watzke, 2007; see Table 1).² Of these studies, two directly focus on changes in novice language teachers' identities. Tsui (2007), employing narrative inquiry, retroactively traced the teacher identity formation of one EFL teacher in China over 6 years.³ The study shows a complex negotiation of teacher identity and professionalization, in which the teacher's relationships with colleagues and mentors, the local educational policy that mandates the use of communicative language teaching (CLT), and his own doubts about CLT combined with a secret belief in the traditional methods created ongoing tension that was never quite resolved. Liu and Fisher (2006) studied three foreign language student teachers' conceptions of self during a 9-month teacher certification program in Britain. Although the three student teachers did not initially identify themselves firmly as teachers, they felt their performance steadily improve over three terms, they learned to establish a good working relationship with their students, and in the end they each felt

TABLE 1
 Studies of Novice Second Language Teachers' Long-Term Development

Source	Focus	Context	Research Methods
Pennington & Richards (1997) Richards & Pennington (1998) Peacock (2001)	Coping with the first year of teaching	3 graduates of a B.A. TESL degree in Hong Kong	Questionnaires; classroom observation; monthly meetings. Duration: 9 months
Farrell (2003) Farrell (2006)	Teachers' beliefs about L2 learning	146 preservice teachers in a B.A. TESL program in Hong Kong	Learner self-report questionnaire; ESL proficiency scores; instruction package; classroom observation. Duration: 3 years
Liu & Fisher (2006)	Transition from a teacher education program to life in a real classroom	1 first-year English language teacher in Singapore	Classroom observation; post-observation conferences; teaching journal; semistructured interviews. Duration: 1 year
Watzke (2007)	Changes in conceptions of self	3 foreign language teachers in a postgraduate certificate program in the UK	Semistructured interviews; open-ended questionnaire; self-reflection report; evaluation logs. Duration: 9 months
Tsui (2007)	Changes in pedagogical content knowledge	9 novice foreign language teachers in the U.S.	Reflective journals; classroom observations; focus group interviews. Duration: 2 years
	Teacher identity formation	1 EFL teacher in China	Interviews; reflective diaries. Duration: 6 months but covers 6 years of development

Note. ESL = English as a second language.

much more like “a real teacher” (p. 355). Liu and Fisher’s findings are reminiscent of the patterns of novice teacher development that have been repeatedly identified in general teacher education (e.g., Bullough, 1989; Danielewicz, 2001; Nyquist & Sprague, 1998), and in this regard, they offer no new information. However, it is noteworthy that within the field of L2 teacher education, theirs is the only study that has documented the long-term development of language teacher identity in real time.

Finally, several researchers have recently made calls for more nuanced and complex approaches to researching teacher identity (Cross, 2010; Cross & Gearon, 2007; Varghese, Morgan, Johnston & Johnson, 2005). Varghese et al. (2005) juxtaposed three different theoretical frameworks to demonstrate how each framework highlights different aspects of language teacher identity. Arguing that no single framework is likely to adequately capture the complexity of teacher identity, Varghese et al. advocated openness to multiple theoretical approaches. In particular, the authors underscored the need to incorporate a focus on what they call “identity-in-discourse”—identity that is dis-

cursively constructed—and a focus on “identity-in-practice” (p. 39)—identity that is enacted in practice. Making a similar claim but speaking more methodologically, Cross (2010) encouraged a shift from research designs that make “a clear separation between thought and behavior (e.g., the reliance on self-report data about what teachers think *or* the use of observation records of what teachers do), to approaches incorporating a focus on both” (p. 436, original emphasis).

However, despite these important developments in L2 teacher identity research, a fundamental problem remains: We still know little about how novices come to identify themselves as professional L2 teachers. To date, only two studies—Tsui (2007) and Liu and Fisher (2006), reviewed earlier—have specifically and directly addressed changes in novice language teachers’ identities over time. Although these two studies constitute important first steps in investigating novice L2 teachers’ identity development, two important gaps remain: (a) Neither study examined the development of novice ESL teachers in North America and (b) neither Tsui nor Liu and Fisher observed their participants’ teaching as part of

their data, and therefore cannot comment directly on the relationship between teacher identity and classroom practice, as advocated by Varghese et al. (2005) and Cross (2010).

Thus, in response to the lack of research dealing specifically with the long-term development of L2 teacher identity in North American contexts, we document and analyze how two novice ESL teachers at a U.S. university learn to teach and come to identify themselves as professional L2 teachers.

LEARNING— AND IDENTITIES—IN—PRACTICE

In a theoretical discussion of teacher identity development in the field of general teacher education, Britzman (1994) made a useful distinction between *role* and *identity*: Role is a public function often assigned externally, whereas identity involves inner commitment. Expanding on this idea, Danielewicz (2001) claimed that “becoming a teacher means that an individual must adopt an identity as such. I take this strong position—insisting on identity—because the process of teaching, at once so complicated and deep, involves the self” (p. 9). In other words, becoming a teacher is nothing short of identity transformation.

We too believe that becoming an L2 teacher requires the commitment of the self, not just playing an assigned role in the classroom. We further believe that the actual experience of teaching is what enables student teachers to make a transition from aspiring to become a language teacher to actually being one. Our experience as a teacher educator and a graduate of an MATESOL program with a strong student teaching component affirms these convictions. However, how does this identity transformation come about? When do student teachers of L2 make a switch from being “graduate students experimenting with teaching” to “language teachers doing their job”? Exactly what aspects of teaching practice help them become teachers? These are the questions we wanted to answer.

Lave and Wenger’s (Lave, 1996; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) theory of situated learning, which conceptualizes learning as “a fundamentally social phenomenon” (Wenger, 1998, p. 3), is a useful framework in exploring novice L2 teachers’ identity transformation in the context of classroom practice. Like other sociocultural theorists (e.g., Vygotsky, 1978), Lave and Wenger claimed that the genesis of learning lies in social interaction between people rather than in individuals’ minds. Two aspects of the situated learning theory

are particularly important to this study: *learning-in-practice* (Lave, 1996, p. 155) and *identities-in-practice* (Lave, 1996, p. 157; Wenger, 1998, p. 215).

To start with the concept of learning-in-practice, according to Lave and Wenger (1991), novices engage in learning not for its own sake, but they learn so that they can participate in the practices of the community to which they wish to belong. Thus, to use one of the examples that Lave (1996) cited, legal apprentices in a 19th-century mosque school in Cairo “learned about the texts, scholarship, the round of daily life of masters, and the practice of law *while engaged in life each day at the mosque*” (p. 153, added emphasis). Likewise, student teachers in this study learned the craft of teaching, the dynamics of teacher–student relationships, and the rhythm of teachers’ academic year while performing their duty as the instructors of ESL courses. Learning-in-practice is different from the simple notion of “learning-by-doing” since in learning-by-doing, learning is still positioned as the ultimate goal to which doing is supposed to contribute. In contrast, in learning-in-practice, the practice is the ultimate mission; novices learn because they need to do their part in the practice.

The second notion we wish to highlight is identities-in-practice (Lave, 1996, p. 157; Wenger, 1998, p. 215). For Lave and Wenger, an identity is not something that one brings, already well formed, into one’s practice; nor is it something that incidentally emerges as a result of acquiring a particular skill set or knowledge. Rather, identity development is learners’ principal project as they engage in practice:

What would happen if we took the collective social nature of our existence so seriously that we put it first; so that crafting identities in practice becomes the fundamental project subjects engage in; crafting identities is a *social* process, and becoming more knowledgeably skilled [i.e., learning] is an aspect of participation in social practice. (Lave, 1996, p. 157, original emphasis)

Thus, to go back to the example of the 19th-century law apprentices in Cairo, the principal project in which they were engaged was the project of “becoming ‘lawyers’ known for their learned practice” (Lave, 1996, p. 156). Similarly, the fundamental project in which student teachers of L2 are engaged is the project of becoming “language teachers” in particular communities of teachers and learners. It is in this sense that we use the term *learning to become*: Becoming a kind of person (e.g., a lawyer, an L2 teacher) is the “telos” of learning (Lave, 1996, p. 156).

The concept of identities-in-practice suggests a mutually constitutive relationship between identity and practice. Identities develop only in situ, as one takes part in the practices of a community and learns the ways of being and doing in the community. In an often-cited passage, Lave and Wenger (1991) argued, "As an aspect of social practice, learning involves the whole person . . . it implies becoming a full participant, a member, a kind of person" (p. 53). At the same time, as learners evolve, their changing identities, as lawyers or teachers, also orient their approaches to their practice. As Lave (1996) observed, "Who you are becoming shapes crucially and fundamentally what you 'know.' 'What you know' may be better thought of as doing rather than having something" (p. 157). Because identity and practice are so intimately intertwined, one cannot change without affecting the other.

It is important to note here that we are using the term identities-in-practice in a related but broader sense than Varghese et al.'s (2005) use of the term. Varghese et al.'s "identity-in-practice" refers to identities that can be observed in a teacher's practice and is a contrasting term to "identity-in-discourse" (i.e., discursively constructed identities). In contrast, we use the term identities-in-practice to reference the mutually constitutive relationship between identity and practice. In that sense, even the discursively constructed identities are part of the identities-in-practice, as discursively constructed identities are verbal expressions of the ongoing mutual relationship between the self and the practice of a teacher. Therefore, to avoid the confusion and still to make use of the useful distinction between the discursively constructed identities and the identities that are enacted in practice, we will refer to the former as *narrated identities* and the latter as *enacted identities*.

Thus, we can frame our research questions in the following terms:

1. How do student teachers of an L2 learn to become professional L2 teachers?
2. What classroom practices contribute to the formation of L2 teacher identities?
3. How do novice L2 teachers' emerging identities manifest themselves in and shape their teaching practice?

METHODS

Setting

This study took place in the context of a 2-year MATESOL program at a large public university in

the United States. At the time of the study, Kanno was a faculty member of the program and Stuart was a graduate of the program. The MATESOL program accepts approximately 15 students each year: A few are international students—mostly from Korea, Taiwan, and Japan—and the rest are American. Together they form a tightly knit cohort as they take required courses in second language acquisition (SLA), testing, teaching methods, pedagogical grammar, and research methods together. For field experience, they take two practica.

While they are in the program, many of the MATESOL students receive 1 or 2 years of teaching assistantships in the university's ESL center. They are called teaching assistants (TAs) and are assigned mentors whom they can consult about any curricular issues. They are also periodically observed by the director of the ESL programs and faculty members of the MATESOL program for supervision and feedback. However, apart from such a support system, the TAs function as independent instructors responsible for all aspects of teaching their own classes. In other words, this is a veritable learning-in-practice experience: TAs need to learn to teach because they are employed as ESL instructors. As this university follows the quarter schedule, being a TA for 1 academic year means teaching one course a quarter for three quarters. Each course consists of one 50-minute class per day, 5 days a week, for 10 weeks. Students at the ESL center are mostly 18- to 25-year-old international students who come to the United States specifically to study English. Class sizes range from 12 to 18 students.

Participants

During the 2004–2005 academic year, there were seven second-year MATESOL students who taught as TAs for the first time. After receiving the university's institutional review board approval, we sent a recruitment email to all seven students. Of the four students who volunteered to participate, we chose two students—John and Amy—primarily for their relative lack of teaching experience. Although they had taught in classroom settings previously, neither of them had taught their own courses. In addition, these two teachers were chosen because their performance during the first-year practicum, which Kanno taught, indicated their potential to become successful teachers. Like Bullough and Baughman (1997), we wanted to know how promising student teachers experience the challenge of teaching their own

TABLE 2
Summary of the Two Teachers' Course Assignments

	First Quarter (Oct.–Dec.)	Second Quarter (Jan.–Mar.)	Third Quarter (Apr.–Jun.)
John	Intermediate Listening and Speaking	Beginning Reading	Intermediate Grammar
Amy	Advanced Academic Listening and Speaking	Advanced Academic Reading and Speaking	American Culture Through Film

classes for the first time and how, through that process, they grow into teachers.

John was a 33-year-old, White, native-English-speaking, American male. He was born and raised in Japan because of his parents' jobs but lived in an American community in Japan where his contact with Japanese was limited. John tried out a few different careers in the United States and Japan before he decided to become an ESL teacher. Prior to joining the MATESOL program, he had taught at a conversation school in Japan where instructors taught different sets of students each day. He also served as an assistant language teacher at a local secondary school in Japan. In addition, he exchanged informal language lessons with his Japanese friends. During the MATESOL program, John taught Intermediate Listening and Speaking in the first quarter, Beginning Reading in the second, and Intermediate Grammar in the third (see Table 2).

Amy was a 28-year-old, White, native-English-speaking, American female. She was born and grew up in the Midwestern United States. She had lived in France for 7 months. Before enrolling in the MATESOL program, Amy had 6 months' experience teaching ESL at a private conversation school in the Midwest in which all instructors followed the same instructional manual and taught different lessons on a rotating basis. During the MATESOL program, she taught Advanced Academic Listening and Speaking in the first quarter, Advanced Academic Reading and Speaking in the second, and American Culture Through Film in the third (see Table 2).

Data Collection

As reviewed earlier, Varghese et al. (2005) and Cross (2010) both advocated a combined focus on narrated identities and enacted identities in the study of L2 teacher identity. Thus, we collected a variety of data that together covered the whole spectrum of the narrated and enacted identities: Interviews, teaching journals, stimulated recalls, classroom observations, videotapings of classes,

and documents. We observed a total of 49 lessons; given that between the two of them, John and Amy taught roughly 300 lessons that year, we observed approximately one sixth of these lessons. We alternately visited the two teachers' classes each week. In their classrooms, we were nonparticipant observers, sitting inconspicuously at the back of the room and taking detailed field notes. Kanno also interviewed the two teachers three times each quarter—at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end—with each interview lasting 60–90 minutes. These interviews aimed to track the teachers' own perceptions of their growth and identity change. In addition, their classes were videotaped twice each quarter for closer analysis, and one of the two tapes for each quarter was used for stimulated recall. In each stimulated recall session, the participant was asked to view the video and provide commentary on his or her lesson (Borg, 2006). Relevant documents such as curricula vitae, course syllabi, and class handouts were also collected throughout the year. Finally, the two participants kept teaching journals as part of the requirements for the second practicum they took in the fall quarter (taught by another faculty member). They shared these journals with us: Amy's journal was 29 single-spaced, typed pages and John's was 15 pages.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted at two different levels: *within-case* analysis and *cross-case* analysis (Merriam, 1998). We first coded the entire data set on each participant separately, extracting recurring themes and identifying the "trajectory" (Lave, 1996, p. 156) of each teacher's identity development. We paid particular attention to the match and mismatch between the narrated identities and the enacted identities as emerged from the different sources of data. After the within-case analysis, we compared the two teachers' developmental processes and grouped individual themes into larger clusters. Drawing on our theoretical framework, we grouped individual themes into

(a) classroom practices that shaped teacher identities and (b) changes in teacher identities that influenced classroom practices. Two drafts of the paper were sent to the two participants for member check (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Their input was incorporated into subsequent revisions.

In what follows, we first present brief narratives of the two teachers, followed by a discussion of how their classroom practice helped nurture their teacher identities and how their emerging identities, in turn, changed their practice.

AMY

Amy started her first quarter of teaching strongly identifying with her students. In the first interview, when asked how her class was going, the first thing she said was, "It's going well. Let's see. I feel like I have a really good rapport with the students. I feel like they like me" (IN 10/07/04).⁴ In the classroom, Amy's alignment with students was visible. Early in the first quarter, when going over the first quiz she had just handed back, Amy went out of her way to reassure everyone that they did very well and that even when they made mistakes, she knew that that was because of their nervousness rather than lack of knowledge. She said, "You all did very well" and "I know you were all nervous taping yourself, and I know you all know this" (OB 10/11/04). However, when she explained why she had marked them down for certain errors, she sounded almost apologetic.

Although Amy identified with her students, she also wanted to be taken seriously. As a novice teacher, Amy had her fair share of blunders in the classroom: failing to define key vocabulary words in the unit; changing her explanation mid-course; and saying, "I'm not sure" (OB 11/12/04) and "It's hard to explain" (OB 11/23/04) more often than she wanted. Amy's particular weakness was grammar. She was especially thrown off when a mini-grammar lesson did not go in the direction she had anticipated. One month into teaching, when giving feedback on a quiz, she wrote one of the students' answers on the board:

**The graph shows that how many Starbucks stores spread in the world. (OB 11/02/04)*

Amy asked them to correct it. What she was targeting was the wrongly placed complementizer *that*. However, the students' attention was elsewhere:

[One] student then pointed out that the verb in the sentence should be passive. Amy sort of discounted this remark and suggested *have spread*. Another student asked whether the verb *spread* was transitive or not. This seemed to throw Amy off, and she admitted

that she wasn't sure. Then a third student who was quick to look up the word in a dictionary declared, "*Spread* is both intransitive and transitive so both *have spread* and *have been spread* are OK." Amy wrote both on the board and said "OK," although looking rather dubious. (OB 11/02/04)

Thus, by giving a grammatically incorrect sentence to students and asking them to correct it, Amy ended up with an even more ungrammatical sentence:

**The graph shows that how many Starbucks stores have been spread in the world. (OB 11/02/04, added emphasis)*

Reflecting on this particular lesson, Amy wrote in her journal: "I started to second-guess myself when they offered the passive voice of the present perfect even though I just felt that this wasn't correct. . . . I felt myself saying I'm not sure a lot, and just felt them losing respect for me as their teacher every moment" (J 11/02/04).

As the quarter wore on, Amy began to realize that her strong identification with students and her casual demeanor in class had a negative repercussion in her classroom management: Absences, tardiness, and late or no submission of assignments became frequent. Amy said, "At the beginning of this quarter, I wasn't very confident and I saw myself as sort of one of the students . . . And it might give the students the idea that I'm kind of a pushover" (IN 12/09/04). To earn their respect, she said, she had to become "a little bit more authoritative" (IN 12/09/04).

In the second quarter, then, Amy's new students found a much firmer teacher standing in front of them. She was still personable and friendly, but she was now less hesitant to exert authority. When we observed her classes at the beginning of the second quarter, both of us noticed that Amy looked more confident and comfortable. For example, Stuart noted, "At 12:50, Amy indicated that they would move on and asked students to get in groups of three. When the students just sat there, Amy immediately said, 'So do it!'" (OB 01/18/05). We also noticed that Amy became less lenient with students who tried to get away with not doing the required work. In the middle of the second quarter, one student tried to excuse herself from doing a major presentation because she was busy preparing for the Graduate Record Exam. In the first quarter, Amy might have accommodated this student's request; this time she refused to give in. In watching this segment of the class on video afterward, Amy commented:

So I said, “Well, there is a presentation this week, you know, so you’ll obviously have to present on the first day, this Friday.” And she didn’t want to do that, I could tell, but I’m just kind of like, there’s no option. (SR 02/16/05)

At this point in the year, however, Amy’s confident demeanor in class did not reflect how she was feeling inside. Although she looked more confident and in command of the situation, she did not identify with the authoritative persona she was mounting in class. Rather, the authoritative self was an act she put on deliberately for the sake of better classroom management. In the midterm interview in the second quarter, Amy specifically pointed out:

You and Christian have noticed I’m more comfortable and confident. I’m not. Like I don’t feel it at all. . . . Like maybe I look more comfortable. I’m getting better at acting or something. But I’m not. Like inside, I’m just like, bleaaargh! Yeah. (IN 02/18/05)

Amy continued to struggle with grammar, but she began to develop strategies to deal with this weakness. An epiphany came when she observed an experienced and highly regarded teacher. Although this teacher was clearly competent, she was not always able to answer her students’ questions on the spot. This observation made Amy realize that “even experienced teachers do not have all the answers” (J 11/09/04). It took some time for this piece of knowledge to translate into concrete action. However, over time, Amy shifted her strategy from trying to produce an instant answer on the spot to admitting her ignorance, promising to take it home, and coming back the following day with a more informed response. With this strategy, she felt that she “earned some respect back” (IN 04/04/05).

It was her course assignment in the third quarter, American Culture Through Film, however, that finally enabled Amy to see herself as a capable teacher. This was a content-based course that introduced students to various aspects of U.S. culture through viewing and discussion of contemporary American films. Amy was overjoyed to receive this course assignment; she reminded us that as a former English major, she felt very comfortable analyzing and interpreting film as one kind of text.

Having two quarters of teaching experience under her belt and feeling confident in her knowledge of the subject matter, this time around Amy was able to genuinely present herself as a real teacher to her students. She said “This quarter, I feel like I’m more their teacher” (IN 04/05/05). Self-assured, Amy shifted her attention from earn-

ing enough respect from her students to facilitating student learning. In the middle of the quarter, for example, the class watched *Torch Song Trilogy*, a film about homosexuality. In this film, one of the main gay characters is killed in a hate crime. Discussing this segment, Amy asked the students whether hate crimes happened in their countries, assuming that they would say yes. However, many of them shook their heads, and one Korean female student in particular remarked, “This is so strange. I hate savage” (OB 05/16/05). Amy was surprised and delighted by this unexpected reaction: It made her stop and reexamine her own biases. Watching this teaching segment on video, Amy later commented, “I have my own ethnocentrism, I guess, because I just assumed that . . . stuff like this happens all over the world” (SR 05/16/05). Confident in her teacher identity, Amy was now able to really listen to what her students had to say and let them challenge her own assumptions.

JOHN

John first became interested in teaching through the informal language exchanges he used to have with his friends in Japan:

I had friends that wanted help with English and I needed help with Japanese, so we had this language exchange. And it was very informal, so there was no pressure. These people were my friends. So that was my introduction to it [teaching]. And I absolutely loved it, you know, it was, like, no problem at all. (IN 10/05/04)

Even as he set out to teach in a more formal classroom setting, his experience with language exchange seemed to guide his teaching. In the classroom, John related to each of his students as if they were his partners in language exchange. He frequently consulted them about how to proceed: Would students like to work in the same groups or change? Would they like to do a particular kind of assignment again? Would they prefer to receive their homework back today or tomorrow? In one class in November:

[John] asked, “Would you like me to pick groups or do you want to pick groups?” Both Christian and I have noticed John’s effort to give choices to his students. This was another one of such instances. When no one really answered (this is another thing we have noticed, too: Even when John offers options, students more often than not do not express their preferences), he decided to pick groups himself. (OB 11/05/04)

Although his intent was to meet individual students’ needs by accommodating their

preferences, his consultation about minor details of instruction made him look as if he lacked teacher authority and needed their approval. The students rarely responded to his questions, leaving John with an awkward silence.

Finding himself solely in charge of 18 students, John struggled with the concept of teacher authority. Going into the first quarter of teaching, John did not see himself as a bona fide teacher, and he was dazzled by the authority the students gave him in the classroom. He found it both wonderful and strange that when he told his students to do X, 18 students actually did X. "It's not like something changed and all of a sudden now I'm capable of this . . . I don't know how I'm any different from 5 or 10 years ago. Why are people listening to me now?" (IN 10/05/04), he wondered. Although he was encouraged by his students' trust in him, he also hesitated to embrace this authority and instead looked at it as something outside of himself: "I wonder if it's just a question of, you know, within yourself—within yourself saying, you have to play the role" (IN 10/05/04).

Because he did not identify with the teacher authority his students gave him so freely, John thought of it as a fragile, temporary trust that could easily be lost if he did not do his part as their teacher. He associated certain student behaviors like tardiness, lack of enthusiasm, and absence as evidence of his inadequate teaching performance. Indeed, as the quarter wore on, John was forced to deal with disruptions more and more frequently. The following example from the last class in the quarter was not a particularly unusual student behavior in his class: "It was a little past 1:30 [the class start time] and a big group of students came in. Three students immediately put their bags on their desks and then walked out of the class again, presumably to the bathroom" (OB 12/06/04). Even when students were obviously being disruptive like this, John rarely confronted them, instead blaming himself for failing to engage them more effectively.

In the second quarter, although he was still amazed that his students gave him "so much authority" (IN 01/20/05), John started to make a concentrated effort to make use of his authority to contribute to student learning. It was around this time that he appeared to shift his gears from approaching teaching like a tutor or a language exchange partner to taking up the challenge of becoming a formal classroom teacher. He became more focused on structure and organization, looking at the "larger picture" and infusing the overall goals of the course into each lesson, and began to critically assess his lessons by these criteria. If his

students so freely gave him authority to lead them, he reasoned, he had the professional responsibility to live up to their expectations by delivering purposeful, stimulating, and well-thought-out lessons.

For example, in the middle of the second quarter, when he was teaching a beginning reading course, John tried a lesson on bumper stickers at the suggestion of his mentor. The idea was to have students take notes on bumper stickers they saw on the street and analyze their meaning together in class. Students brought a variety of bumper sticker examples to class and were eager to decipher their meaning:

The bumper sticker presentations continued until about 3:00. The class seemed to get into the rhythm of a student presenting a bumper sticker followed by the class trying to decipher it with John occasionally focusing on key words for explanation. For "Hit me! I need the money!" some of the students successfully understood this as having to do with insurance money, but John asked the questions, "What kind of car would this be on?" and "Does this person want to be hit?" to stimulate conversation. . . . There were two political bumper stickers: "Bush is not my president," and "My dog is smarter than your president." Students seemed to get these right away. John asked why the bumper sticker read "your" president instead of "my" president, and this stimulated a conversation about how many people in [this city] and especially in the university district did not like Bush. (OB 02/16/05)

In other words, students participated actively, and John guided the discussion effectively. However, John was afterward self-critical about this lesson because he had not thought about the point of the lesson beforehand. He said, "Afterwards I found myself wondering . . . what exactly is it that I am doing here?" (IN 02/18/05). His comment suggests that by this point, he had started to move beyond choosing an activity on the basis of its novelty value to analyzing whether it served the overall pedagogical objectives of the course. It also indicates that John was beginning to accept the authority and responsibility of a teacher who dictates what should happen in his classroom instead of taking a mentor's advice at face value.

Like Amy, grammar was also John's weakness. In the second quarter, he was originally assigned to teach an advanced-level grammar class, but he found it so overwhelming that he had to switch courses. Fortunately, the supportive program director promptly reassigned John to a beginning reading course. After this switch, the fear of grammar lingered as an undercurrent in his teaching. Even on occasions when a mini grammar lesson might have been useful, John tended to avoid the

situation by treating a grammatical issue as a vocabulary issue. When a pair of participial adjectives *bored/boring* appeared in an exercise, he explained that *bored* described one's feeling while *boring* was something that made one bored and left it at that (OB 03/02/05). Where he could have explained the grammatical principle behind the pair of adjectives, he treated it as a vocabulary question.

In the third quarter, however, John finally decided to face his weakness in grammar by electing to teach an intermediate grammar course. Although apprehensive at the beginning, once he started teaching the course, he was pleasantly surprised that it was "really manageable" (IN 05/03/05). He realized that anxiety about grammar more than anything else had been the obstacle in his first two quarters of teaching. When it was time to teach the distinction between *-ing* and *-ed* participial adjectives this time, John addressed the grammatical principle head on rather than treating it as a vocabulary issue:

At 5:13, he moved back to the board and said to the class, "There are two things here (pointing to the picture of the book and the person on the board): We have the source of the feeling, and we have the feeling." He then wrote "*-ing*" next to the book and "*-ed*" next to the person, indicating that the source of the feeling gets *-ing* and the emotion is *-ed*. (OB 05/23/05)

As he discovered that he was in fact quite capable of teaching grammar, John also learned that the concreteness of teaching grammar suited him because student progress was more tangible than in the reading and speaking classes he had taught in the previous two quarters. For a teacher concerned about his accountability in class, seeing an immediate effect of his teaching on student performance was gratifying.

DISCUSSION

As we analyzed John and Amy's stories, what immediately stood out was how difficult it was for novices to adopt the identity of a teacher. These were two people who had made a clear commitment to becoming professional ESL teachers; yet this commitment did not translate into the automatic adoption of a teacher identity. Referring back to Britzman's (1994) distinction between *role* and *identity*, at the beginning of the year both John and Amy were playing the role of a teacher rather than internalizing the identity of a teacher:

I wonder if it's just a question of, you know, within yourself—within yourself saying, you have to play the role. (John IN 10/05/04)

I sort of learned how I need to carry myself even if it doesn't feel natural. I just have to do it. I have to act. (Amy IN 12/09/04)

Interestingly, for both of them, the mention of role-playing and acting continued until the midquarter interview in the second quarter—that is, halfway through the year—after which it disappeared altogether and was replaced by comments about their self-identification as teachers.

This pattern of identity development we have observed over the years is typical of the students in this particular MATESOL program. Unless student teachers arrive with substantial classroom teaching experience, they typically do not take on the identity of a teacher immediately. However, after a year of learning-in-practice experience, most student teachers come to see themselves as teachers. This makes their teaching at the end of the year qualitatively different from at the beginning. As discussed earlier, the concept of identities-in-practice implies that identity and practice are mutually constitutive: Practice shapes identity, whereas identity, in turn, affects practice. What follows then is an analysis of the interaction between the two. We first discuss aspects of the learning-in-practice that were particularly conducive to the development of teacher identity. We then turn our attention to how the two teachers' emerging identities shaped their practice.

Practice Shaping Identity

Several aspects of the sustained learning-in-practice experience helped Amy and John become language teachers. First, the opportunity to teach intensely for a prolonged period of time gave the two novices ample practice to hone their basic instructional skills. This is important for two reasons. First, although this sounds so elementary that it may escape the notice of experienced teachers, having sufficient competence in basic teaching skills so as not to make obvious blunders in front of students is a necessary condition for one's claim as a legitimate teacher. As Wenger (1998) asserted, "Identity . . . is an experience and a *display* of competence" (p. 152, added emphasis). At the beginning, it was not higher order questions such as to what extent they were meeting their students' needs or whether they were delivering purposeful lessons that affected John and Amy's sense of legitimacy as language

teachers. Rather, it was the flagrant displays of lack of competence as language teachers, such as giving unclear directions, not being able to define a word, and failing to answer elementary grammar questions, that made them feel inadequate. Second, once John and Amy became much more competent in these basic components of teaching, and daily practice had made the execution of many of these skills semiautomatic, they were then able to reallocate their attention to the more abstract, substantive questions such as what were the defining aspects of their teaching. Tsui (2003) called this “the reinvestment of mental resources freed up by experience” (p. 269).

In addition to honing their basic instructional skills, being able to experience the whole cycle of a course from beginning to end more than once also contributed to their identity development. Both teachers emphatically noted that going into the second quarter of teaching was much easier than the first time around. The second time going in, they had a benchmark—their first quarter of teaching—against which to measure their performance. Despite all of the fumbling during the first quarter, the confidence that the two novices gained from having successfully completed their first course gave them the much needed assurance that they were essentially on the right track. This inner sense of control was reflected in their enacted identities. We, the observers, both noticed a faster pace and more decisiveness in their second-quarter teaching.

A second factor in teacher identity formation was that sustained learning-in-practice helped the two novices identify what was important in their teaching and also gave them time to improve in those particular areas. In an insightful reflection on human identity, Taylor (1989) wrote, “Our identity is what allows us to define what is important to us and what is not” (p. 30). We believe that this applies to teacher identity as well. Implicitly or explicitly, we define our teacher identities in terms of what is important in our teaching. For novices, then, becoming a teacher is very much a process of learning, through their engagement in teaching practices, what aspects of teaching matters to them, and striving to become more skilled in those areas.

What was important to John in his teaching was different from what was important to Amy in hers. Although John was initially concerned about his interpersonal relationship with his students, once he started teaching, his focus shifted quickly to instructional content. It is true that John’s desire

to become better at delivering purposeful lessons was initially motivated by his not wanting to betray the goodwill of his students, who accepted him as their teacher. However, soon, the mastery over instructional skills and content became a goal in itself. When asked what kind of teacher he was trying to become at the end of the second semester, he chose the word “taskmaster” (IN 03/29/05) to describe that image. What John was referring to was not the usual meaning of “one that imposes a task” (Taskmaster, n.d.) but, rather, more literally a “master of tasks.” Amy, however, continued to define her teacher identities in relation to her students. Because having a relaxed and intimate relationship with her students came naturally to her, it never surfaced as an issue of teacher identity; however, because commanding enough respect from them was indeed a problem, her teacher identity centered on gaining legitimacy in the eyes of her students. A defining moment occurred when she learned to compensate for her inability to answer students’ grammar questions by taking the questions home and coming back with informed answers. However, the adoption of this strategy became a turning point, not because it improved her instruction per se but because it enabled her to regain some respect from students. Part of the reason that the two novices emerged at the end of the year with a much more established teacher identity, then, is that 1 year of teaching allowed them enough time to identify those aspects of the teaching practices that were constitutive of their teacher identities and to strive to improve in those areas.

A third element of classroom practice that shaped teacher identity concerns developing an area of expertise. As we observed the two novices struggle with the content of their teaching, we were reminded of the importance of subject matter knowledge. Shulman (1986) stressed the importance of subject matter knowledge in teaching and lamented the excessive emphasis placed on the procedural skills in teacher training and licensing. He asked, “Where did the subject matter go? What happened to the content?” (p. 5). The results of this study also underscore the importance of subject matter knowledge in the development of L2 teacher identities. Both novices started the year less than confident in their knowledge of their subject matter, ESL. Being native speakers of English, they spoke English competently, but they lacked a sufficient grasp of what Shulman called *pedagogical content knowledge*: “the dimension of subject matter knowledge *for teaching*” (p. 9, original emphasis). They discovered early on that relying on native-speaker intuition and

giving an explanation such as “I can’t really explain it, but this word just sounds more natural in this context than that one” did not help L2 learners.

The two teachers approached their lack of confidence in their subject matter knowledge in different ways: John addressed his weakness directly, whereas Amy taught to her strengths. In the third quarter, John elected to teach an intermediate grammar course, and once he tried it, he learned that he was capable of teaching grammar as long as he controlled his anxiety and did meticulous class preparation. Amy, however, gained more confidence by teaching a course that complemented her strengths. Assigned to teach a content-based course—very different from the more linguistically oriented courses she had taught in the previous two quarters—she discovered that she could teach with confidence and effectiveness when the content of the course was familiar. In both cases, then, in the third quarter they were able to position themselves as, in John’s words, “the authority on English” (IN 05/03/05). Cultivating one area of expertise in L2 pedagogy in which they were able to teach with reasonable competence allowed them to feel more qualified as teachers.

Identity Shaping Practice

Thus, becoming an L2 teacher is not an experience that takes place overnight for novices; rather, it is a prolonged process in which they gradually develop their understanding of what it means to be a language teacher and become increasingly comfortable with that identity. Equally surprising for us, however, was the extent to which the changes in the novices’ teacher identities affected their practice. So much of what Amy and John did or did not do in the classroom derived from their sense of self as a teacher and cannot be explained without reference to their evolving identities. Thus, this section discusses how their changing identities shaped their classroom practice.

First, because the two novices initially did not view themselves fully as teachers, they lacked sufficient teacher authority to manage their classes effectively. They were much more comfortable aligning themselves with their students: “more like their friend and less their teacher” (Amy, IN 04/05/05). In the classroom, they went out of their way to establish themselves as their students’ equals and focused their energy on making learning as comfortable as possible. Thus, during the first quarter, Amy and John seldom in-

dicated that a student’s answer was wrong even when it clearly was; they were far more likely to let errors pass or gently note that there was perhaps a better way of phrasing. They did not feel that they possessed enough teacher authority to categorically tell students that they were wrong.

Interestingly, even though by the end of the first quarter both teachers knew fully that they needed to exert more authority if they were to achieve better classroom management, they were not able to translate that realization to practice until they began teaching a new class in the second quarter. As a member of a classroom community of practice, the teacher is not entirely free to shift gears and change her practice all of a sudden. She needs to negotiate it with her students. It is much easier to introduce changes when one is starting anew with another group of students. This is another reason that the opportunity to teach more than one quarter was important for teacher development in this study: With each new semester, Amy and John presented teacher identities that were more confident and established because they had learned from their experiences in the previous quarter. The benefit of being able to switch teaching contexts after one course is also noted in Liu and Fisher’s (2006) longitudinal study. The three teachers appreciated being placed in a different school after one term because it afforded “a change to ‘start fresh’” (p. 356).

Thus, in the second and third quarters, our two teachers acted more firmly in class and were less afraid to exert authority. For example, during one class in the middle of the third quarter, when John was giving directions and two students chatted audibly, he looked in their direction and said, “Is everybody with us?” (OB 04/19/05). As far as a reprimand goes, it was a mild one: John did not single out the students. However, it was effective. The two students paid attention and John did not have to interrupt the flow of his instruction. Additionally, his use of *us*, as in “Is everybody with *us*?” indicates that by then he was not shy to represent the learning community and identify himself as its leader.

As the two novices became more comfortable with their teacher identity and the authority it implied, they also began to hold students more accountable for their own learning. Amy was more exacting in her feedback on the midterm exam in the second quarter. She wasted little time in massaging students’ egos and instead explicitly spelled out what kind of answer they needed to provide in order to earn points (OB 02/11/05).

Similarly, John explained the following change in his attitude:

I'm more willing to, I don't know, it's not that I'm less sensitive, but . . . [if] a student's answer is not correct, instead of sort of being very indirect, and saying, There's a better way of doing it, I'll just say, No, that's not right. (IN 03/29/05)

Perhaps now that their sense of identity was better established, both teachers were able to view their students' performance more rationally, without always thinking that it is a direct reflection of their worth as teachers. Amy noted that in the first quarter, she did an inordinate amount of dropping hints and reviewing before a quiz (which we also noticed), so that students would perform well because "somehow them doing well would make me reflect or show that I'm a good teacher" (IN 12/09/04). However, as she became more self-assured in her identity as a teacher, Amy began to think of her role and that of her students separately: She had her job to teach, but students also needed to do their part to learn.

So far we have been concentrating on the positive changes in the two novices' teaching. It is important to note, however, that not all of the changes were necessarily positive. When we compare novice teachers with more experienced teachers, we tend to focus on what experienced teachers can do that novices cannot (Berliner, 1994; Tsui, 2003). In Tsui's (2003) study of teaching expertise, for instance, she adopted the pattern of holding the knowledge and practice of Marina, the expert teacher, as the gold standard against which to measure the knowledge and practices of the other three teachers with less expertise. Rarely, if ever, was Marina's practice compared against the practices of the other three teachers.

We do believe that John and Amy were better teachers by the end of the year. However, as we watched their changing practices, we also learned that some of the valuable qualities of beginning teachers may be lost as they accumulate more experience. In Amy and John's cases, it was the unadulterated commitment to students that they expressed at the beginning of the year. In the first quarter, Amy's praises for her students were nothing short of gushing: "My students are all so intelligent—I learn from them every day" (J 10/28/04). John, too, in his own subdued manner, was full of hope: "They gave me that [teacher] authority. And they gave it to me. And, from that, I really think I got a sense like, 'Oh, there's so much that we can do this quarter'" (IN 10/05/04). The two student teachers' "levels of excitement, exu-

berance, and close identification with students" (Freeman, 2007, p. 903) were refreshing to those of us who have been in the profession for a while.⁵ They were genuinely invested in their students.

John and Amy's growing self-identification as teachers over time meant, on the flip side, that they increasingly saw themselves less as one of the students. Their growing identity detachment from their students made them notice more faults with the students: Whereas they criticized themselves for students' absences and poor classroom participation before, they now attributed these problems to students' not doing their part of the learning-teaching enterprise. We see it as no coincidence that it was around the same time as the two teachers began to talk more comfortably of themselves as teachers that they also started to express their frustration with students. One day in February, seeing particularly poor attendance in class, Amy adopted an unusually sarcastic tone:

This class had the midterm last Wednesday, and 2 days later they were still in a post-midterm mood. In fact, only 6 students [out of 15] were present at the beginning of the class. Looking at the number of students, Amy observed, "Nobody wants to come today, eh? No quiz. It's an easy absent day." "So we are missing more than half the class. That's great." (OB 02/11/05)

John also began to comment on the limited impact a teacher can have on his students:

And now, just because of the fact that I'm learning new people's names every quarter and people come and go, um— But I was really attached to my students Fall Quarter. But, um— I mean it's just a weigh station. They're coming in, we're going over material for a quarter and then— They move on to something else. (IN 06/10/05)

Because John was now aware that students come and go, he seemed less willing to invest in individual students the way he was at the beginning of the first quarter. He said, "That just seems like a lot of energy that I don't want to spend" (IN 06/10/05). In both cases, then, their initial simple and unadulterated commitment to students and genuine excitement to watch them learn became replaced by growing disengagement and a more business-like attitude toward their jobs. Both teachers were still invested in their students, but their investment was now more measured and compartmentalized.

Perhaps they simply learned to be more realistic. However, it was disheartening to watch the two novice teachers' initial enthusiasm for their students deflate so quickly. It also suggests that it is far too simplistic to assume that all the changes

that evolving teacher identities bring to novice teachers' classroom practice are positive. As Freeman (2007) pointed out, it is important not to always cast novice teachers in terms of lacking the skills and qualities that more experienced teachers possess; rather, "the ways in which new teachers operate in their classrooms, although clearly different from those of their veteran colleagues, show a form of competent practice as understood by their contexts of situation and of the mind" (p. 903). As novices learn and their identities evolve, their practice certainly changes correspondingly. However, these changes may not always signify improvement.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study examined the processes in which novice teachers come to identify themselves as L2 teachers through intense engagement in classroom teaching. By following two novices for 1 academic year, combining data on narrated identities and on enacted identities, we documented how, over time, novices negotiate their relationship with students, learn to use teacher authority effectively, and eventually become L2 teachers. We observed that moving from the identity of a graduate student to that of a teacher is not a quick and automatic transition, even for individuals who have made a clear commitment to become L2 teachers. For the two novices in this study, it was through the process of prolonged learning-in-practice that they came to view themselves as teachers.

Some aspects of the sustained practice were particularly conducive to their teacher identity development. One year of teaching allowed them to hone their practical teaching skills, and teaching three courses in a row allowed them to take what they had learned from teaching one course and immediately apply it to the next. One year of teaching was also long enough for the two novices to identify what aspects of teaching constituted the core of their teacher identities and to improve in those areas. The development of expertise in one kind of L2 course further enhanced their confidence as teachers, as it allowed them to justify the teacher authority they were supposed to command.

The two novices' emerging identities, in turn, shaped their classroom practice. They initially experienced considerable disruption in class because they lacked the teacher authority to manage their classes. As they came to gradually see themselves as teachers, however, they began to act more confidently in the classroom and their

teaching imparted a greater sense of control. Amy and John also came to demand that students themselves take responsibility for learning and accept the standards by which their performance was judged. At the same time, the two teachers also grew skeptical of how much impact their teaching could have on students. Hence, in exchange for a more established identity as a teacher, they grew more disengaged from their students.

Overall, the findings of this study point to the centrality of the development of teacher identity in novice L2 teachers' learning-to-teach processes. The idea that identity formation is central to L2 teacher development has major implications in terms of what fundamental questions we should ask in L2 teacher education. Inquiries in L2 teaching in the last two decades have been driven by questions about the knowledge base of L2 teacher education (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). Some argue that this knowledge base derives primarily from research in SLA, whereas others counter that the knowledge base goes beyond that derived from SLA and is informed by classroom practices and teachers' beliefs and experiences (Freeman, 2002; Freeman & Johnson, 1998, 2005; Richards, 2008; Tarone & Allwright, 2005; Widdowson, 2002; Yates & Muchisky, 2003). Inspired by research in general teacher education (Clandinin, 1986; Clandinin & Connelly, 1987; Connelly & Clandinin, 1985, 1988; Connelly, Clandinin, & He, 1997) and rejecting the notion that teachers are "empty vessels waiting to be filled with theoretical and pedagogical skills" (Freeman & Johnson, 1998, p. 401), some researchers have recently tried to capture L2 teachers' personal practical knowledge in a way that acknowledges its socially constructed nature and is reflective of teachers' agency, moral values, and experiences (Golombek, 1998; Johnson & Golombek, 2002; Tsang, 2004). Recent years have also seen a growing emphasis on *teacher learning* in addition to *teacher knowledge* as a central component of L2 teacher education (Freeman, 2002, 2007; Richards, 2008).

We welcome these new developments as steps in the right direction but argue for the need to include a deeper understanding of L2 teacher identity development in the knowledge base of L2 teacher education. Our findings compel us to claim that the central project in which novice L2 teachers are involved in their teacher learning is not so much the acquisition of the knowledge of language teaching as it is the development of a teacher identity. Knowledge acquisition is part of this identity development, not the other way

around. Moreover, changes in novice L2 teachers' classroom practice cannot be explained solely in terms of the changes in their knowledge; again, one needs to refer to their evolving teacher identities to fully understand why certain changes occur in their practice.

The inextricable relationship between teacher identity and classroom practice is not limited to beginning teachers. For example, in one of the few studies that have examined "what, why and how teachers change" (Bailey, 1992), an experienced ESL and Spanish teacher comments that she is now capable of using student feedback in her classes without reacting defensively to it. She then explains why this is so: "I made the internal shift from emotional reactions to dispassionate observations because . . . I felt *secure enough in myself and my teaching* to be able to do so" (p. 269, added emphasis). In other words, it is the sense of security in her self-identity as a teacher, not just in her knowledge of teaching, that enabled this experienced teacher to make this switch. Indeed, it would be difficult for novice L2 teachers to make use of student feedback in a similar dispassionate manner because even mildly negative responses would pose a direct threat to their tenuous sense of teacher identity.

We are not claiming that developing the foundational knowledge of teaching is irrelevant in novice L2 teachers' learning-to-teach processes; clearly, it is of central importance. Rather, our claim has to do with what is in the foreground and what is in the background. So far, inquiries into teacher knowledge have been in the foreground of research and debates on L2 teacher education. The identity of the L2 teacher has been part of this discussion but rarely takes center stage. We argue that the development of L2 teacher identity should be at the center of research and debates on L2 teacher education because it is the central project novice teachers engage in. As Lave (1996) noted, "What would happen if we took the collective social nature of our existence so seriously that we put it first; so that crafting identities in practice becomes the fundamental project subjects engage in" (p. 157). What indeed? If we put the development of L2 teacher identity in the foreground and conceptualize the acquisition of teacher knowledge as part of this identity development, rather than the other way around, how would our research agenda change? What would an L2 teacher education program based on this perspective shift look like? If we took the task of helping novices develop their teacher identity seriously, how would it change the way we think about the required courses in MATESOL programs? These are questions worth asking and debating among L2 teacher educators, researchers, and teachers from this point forward.

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We would like to thank Amy and John for allowing us to document their first year of teaching. Having observers in one's class is stressful even for experienced teachers; it was courageous and generous of the two novice teachers to open up their classes and let us witness everything that went on there. We are grateful for the privilege.

NOTES

¹In this study, we are using the term *L2 teacher education* in a broad sense that includes both ESL teacher education and foreign language (FL) teacher education. Similarly, by *L2 teachers*, we mean both ESL and FL teachers.

²There were two other long-term studies that we excluded from our review for different reasons. Freeman's (1991, 1996) very insightful study is longitudinal, but it is about already-practicing FL teachers taking an in-service program. Johnson's study described in Varghese et al. (2005) followed a nonnative-English-speaking pre-service teacher enrolled in a U.S. MATESOL program for 1.5 years. However, the central focus of this study is this teacher's identity conflict as an ESL teacher and as a nonnative speaker. The study does not discuss the changes that the teacher might have experienced during the data collection period.

³Tsui's (2007) data were collected over a 6-month period, and as such, it is not a longitudinal study. However, the scope of her research covers 6 years of a novice teacher's development, and it is for this reason that we are including this study in the category of studies that have looked at novice teachers' long-term development.

⁴Excerpts from interview transcripts are identified by "IN" followed by the date of the interview. Similarly, "OB" refers to observation, "SR" stimulated recall, and "J" the participants' teaching journals. "IN 10/07/04," for instance, means that this excerpt comes from the interview conducted on October 7, 2004. We are including these dates because the central topic of this study is novice teachers' development over time, and when a particular remark was made or a particular observation was noted is important information to share with the readers.

⁵The genuine energy and excitement that student teachers bring to the classroom is part of the reason that experienced teachers are willing to take them as their apprentices during their student teaching despite the extra workload this undertaking entails. Over the years, we have heard a number of master teachers say how rejuvenating it is to witness student teachers' excitement to be in the classroom and to see them pay full attention to each student. It helps the master teachers see their own classroom and teaching in a new light.

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IOPJ Column to be Discontinued

The *Modern Language Journal* would like to announce that the In Other Professional Journals (IOPJ) column has been discontinued. We wish to thank Marcela van Olphen for her long-term service to the journal in surveying over 200 leading journals on a regular basis to compile this comprehensive list of relevant research. Past installments will be made available on the *MLJ* site through the Wiley Online Library.
