

○ BETWIXT AND BETWEEN: LANGUAGE AND IETs REPOSITIONING IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

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The success of Canada's immigration policy is intrinsically tied to employment of an immigrant workforce. Teaching is the fourth largest profession among Canadian immigrants, yet immigrants whose occupations are in education are three times less likely to be employed in their matching profession. Failure to incorporate an immigrant workforce not only affects economic success, but has repercussions for immigrant professional identity. This paper reflects on the development of professional identity for twelve internationally educated immigrant teachers (IETs) seeking to reposition themselves as teachers in the Greater Vancouver area of British Columbia, Canada. Through qualitative interviews and Life Positioning Analysis (Martin, 2013), this research explored the role of significant others in facilitating or impeding IETs' inclusion into the teaching force and subsequent effects on professional identity development. Language and linguistic abilities emerged as a pervasive theme. Participants found acceptance and validation of their language and cultural differences through the perspectives of the students with whom they came into contact. In contrast, the professional teaching community's perspectives in regard to accents and language proficiency caused IETs to question their competence and negatively impacted their professional identities. Implications for practice with respect to supporting IETs repositioning are offered.

KEY WORDS: Professional Identity, Internationally Educated Teachers (IETs), Life Positioning Analysis (LPA)

INTRODUCTION

IETs entering British Columbia (BC) classrooms face new sociocultural contexts that pose challenges for previously held perspectives and professional identity. However, there is little understanding of how IETs negotiate a sense of professional identity, determining who they will be, within the context of BC classrooms. Research has shown that identity is a key aspect for IETs in their professional repositioning efforts (Beynon, Ilieva, & Dichupa, 2001; Deters, 2011; Duchesne & Stitou, 2011). Thus, further understanding of how IETs negotiate differing perspectives in new contexts may serve to facilitate their integration into the teaching workforce. Through the narrative methodological framework of Life Positioning Analysis (Martin, 2013), this article reflects on the experiences of 12 IETs repositioning as teachers in BC classrooms. Accents and language proficiency levels were a pervasive theme in the experiences of IETs in developing professional identities as teachers in the BC school

system. Thus, in line with the focus of this special issue of *ARAL* on teachers' plurilingual identities in transnational contexts, this article focuses specifically on the role of others' perceptions of IETs' linguistic abilities in affecting professional identity development.

Previous research on IETs has considered immigration and recertification experiences in Canada, within the United States, the United Kingdom, and in Australia, but has not specifically focused on professional identity development (i.e., Bascia, 1996a; Beynon, Ilieva, & Dichupa, 2001; Deters, 2011; Galindo, 1996; Mawhinney & Xu, 1997; Phillion, 2003; Quiocho & Rios, 2000; Schmidt, 2010a; Su, 1997; Zhao, 2010). Similarly, previous Canadian research regarding the professional identity of IETs has not incorporated a theoretical perspective and methodology that seek to understand their experiences in negotiating new perspectives through repositioning in new sociocultural contexts.

An appreciation for the challenges confronting teachers as they negotiate their professional identities betwixt and between cultures and languages can serve to offer a common dialogue that can be both instructive and supportive. Furthermore, this research adds to existing literature regarding the barriers and affordances to immigrant professionals, while specifically providing an understanding of IETs' experiences in the Greater Vancouver area of BC.

IMMIGRATION AND TEACHING IN CANADA

The demographic composition of Canada's population has changed dramatically over the past few decades. Similar trends exist throughout developed nations as birth rates decrease, life expectancies increase, and aging workforces require reliance on immigration for labour force growth and viable economic tax bases (Harvey & Houle, 2006; McNamara & Basit, 2004; Zhao, 2010). For British Columbia, the majority of immigrant settlement has been in the Greater Vancouver region (BC Stats, 2011a). In these communities, the term 'minority' has in essence become a misnomer, as visible ethnic minority¹ populations now outnumber a traditionally white majority.

Despite increasing skill levels and educational backgrounds, immigrants have experienced a continued trend of declining earnings and employment (Walton-Roberts, 2005). Teaching represents 'the largest professional group in the labour force in Canada' (Canadian Teacher's Federation, 2006, p. 3), and the 'fourth largest profession among Canadian immigrants' (Ryan, Pollock, & Antonelli, 2009, p. 602). However, immigrants whose occupations are in education are three times less likely to be employed in their matching profession (BC Stats, 2011b; Statistics Canada, 2006a). Ryan, Pollock, and Antonelli (2009) assert that immigrant teachers face a glass ceiling as the competition for employment in the Canadian market is biased. Schmidt (2010a) and Schmidt, Young and Mandzuk (2010) have noted that among professional categories, immigrant teachers are most affected by labour shortages in Canada.

Furthermore, as Phillion (2003) asserts, immigrant teachers face discrimination and racial barriers to employment at systemic, social and general levels. Accents and language proficiency are commonly noted as the basis for the discrimination IETs face (Cruickshank, 2004; Duchesne & Stitou, 2011; Phillion, 2003).

Presently, immigration policies have resulted in an increase in the ethnic diversity of the student population in schools in Canada, without a comparable increase in ethnic diversity in the teaching workforce. This diversity is reflected in the profile of communities with the five largest school districts in the province of BC (Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of Visible Minorities

School District	Percentage of Visible Minorities	
	East Asian	South Asian
Vancouver	57.7	11.1
Surrey	11.2	59.6
Richmond	67.0	12.3
Burnaby	54.6	15.1
Coquitlam	44.6	9.5

Note: Data retrieved from BC Stats (2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2006d, 2006e).

Despite the increase in student ethnic diversity in classrooms, the ‘proportion of “visible minority” teachers in the teaching workforce declined between 2001 and 2006’ with the largest decline in the Vancouver area (Ryan et al., 2009, p. 597). In a National Household Survey completed in 2011, the immigrant population in Vancouver accounted for 40% of Vancouver’s total population. However, the percentage of teachers of similar ethnic backgrounds within these same school districts is not reflective of the student population. Of the total population of teachers in the Greater Vancouver region, according to 2006 Census data, 19.4% were visible minorities; of this 8.8% were Chinese and 4.3% were South Asian (Statistics Canada, 2006b). For IETs, less than 20% secure employment in Canada as teachers as opposed to 62% of teachers trained in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006a). As the ethnicity of the student population in BC increasingly diversifies, an understanding of the journeys of IETs, non-representative of white Anglo-Saxon backgrounds predominant within the teaching profession, is helpful in illuminating the barriers that may currently deter their incorporation within the teaching force.

There is no doubt that employment of ethnically and linguistically diverse teachers has not kept pace with changing demographics in the student population. At the same time, research has shown that minoritised (Chase, Dowd, Pazich, & Bensimon, 2014) teachers are likely to act as role models for minoritised students, reversing the marginalisation that youth of

diverse ethnic backgrounds may feel in educational settings, and to act as agents of social change in an educational system that currently reflects dominant race and class norms (Beynon et al., 2001; Phillion, 2003; Su, 1997; Walsh, Brigham, & the Women, Diversity and Teaching Group, 2007). Further research considering the barriers to incorporating IETs may assist in redressing this imbalance.

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMING

This research is based on neo-Meadian conceptions of identity and identity development (Martin & Gillespie, 2010). Identity, constantly in flux in a globalising world, emerges from previous experiences and history, and embodies future possibilities. Identity, thus, comprises the whole of a person: their personal history, their present positioning, and their future possibility, constantly renegotiated in the fluidity of repositioning. In addition, such theorising seeks an understanding of professional identity development through interactivity with significant and general others (Martin, 2013).

For IETs, identity development reflects a negotiation of the perspectives encountered in their country of origin, the local positions that form personal cumulative histories, with perspectives encountered in new sociocultural contexts. IETs in processes of social interaction interpret the attitudes of others and this integrative process affects professional identity development (Dodds, Lawrence, & Valsiner, 1997).

Life Positioning Analysis (LPA) provides an integrative methodological framework for ‘understanding the lives of persons in context’ (Martin, 2013, p. 6). LPA, as a framework to analyse life narratives, ‘is unique in its emphasis on concrete particulars of interactions with particular others as these are embedded within more general sociophysical, sociocultural, and institutional contexts, positions, practices, and perspectives’ (Martin, 2013, p. 15). Regarding the professional identity development of IETs, LPA considers identity as developed through an individual’s history, yet mutable and negotiated through repositioning in new sociocultural contexts. IETs have identities that have been developed through social interactivity in their country of origin and through their professional positioning as teachers in the context of BC classrooms. LPA allows that identity, arising through historical, sociocultural experiences, is challenged by new perspectives. IETs have developed professional identities that are challenged and altered as a result of interactions with others in the new sociocultural contexts of BC classrooms.

Through LPA the broader study, upon which this article is based, focused on the barriers and affordances to professional identity development for IETs positioning themselves in classrooms in BC. It employed Martin’s (2013, pp. 5-6) five-phase method of narrative analysis which includes the following:

1. An identification of particular, influential others (highly significant others with whom a focal person has interacted and exchanged and coordinated positions and perspectives) and relevant generalised others (broader social, cultural traditions, practices, and perspectives that form a background of assumptions, understandings, and ways of relating and living) within the life experience of the focal person;
2. An analysis of positions and perspectives occupied and exchanged with particular and generalised others within different phases of the person's life;
3. A thematic analysis of positioned experiences and perspectives across the different phases of the person's life;
4. An analysis of the manner and kind of integrations the person has achieved across the different positions and perspectives that have defined her or his life experience, with an emphasis on processes of distanciation, intersubjectivity, and identification; and
5. The construction of a life positioning summary that attempts to depict the person's embeddedness within the positions and perspectives of the overall life experience.

Due to length constraints, data addressing all these phases will not be considered here. As language-related concerns were a pervasive theme in the experiences of IETs, this article demonstrates the affordances and barriers others' perceptions of IETs' language proficiency and accents hold for professional identity development.

STUDY PARTICIPANTS

For this research, 12 participants were selected through teacher professional development programs offered at a medium-sized university. Participants volunteered their time for in-depth qualitative interviews. When given an opportunity to review the life positioning summation of their life stories, all recognised the analyses they received as an appropriate representation of their experiences.

Participants were female, of adult age, and had immigrated to British Columbia with previous educational experience and/or teaching experience in another country. Participants had pursued teaching certification within BC, which included university upgrading of their overseas teacher education training, and are/were either employed, intending to seek, or seeking employment in elementary or secondary schools in one or more of the five largest school districts in British Columbia. To develop a robust exploration of the experiences of IETs in BC, participants were purposefully sampled across a continuum of work experience levels. This continuum of experience levels provided an extended perspective of the challenges faced by IETs as they negotiate their work experiences.

The range of participants' demographic backgrounds can be seen in Table 2. Most of the participants had attended a five-year university program of studies in their country of origin and three of the participants had completed Masters' degrees. All but one had participated in

a specialised teacher-training program in their country of origin. Eight participants were from Eastern European countries, while two were from India, and two from South America.ⁱⁱ Other than some overlap in country of origin, there was a considerable range in ages, backgrounds, as well as time in Canada since immigration.

Table 2. Demographic Background of Participants

Name	Age	Country Of Origin	Ethnicity	First Language	Other Languages	Years in Canada
Serenity	39	Bulgaria	Bulgarian	Bulgarian	French	7.0
Valerie	38	Kazakhstan	Russian	Russian	German, Latin	9.0
Natalya	33	Ukraine	Ukrainian	Ukrainian	Russian	6.0
Diana	42	India	South Asian	Hindi	Punjabi	2.5
Valexy	44	Bulgaria	Bulgarian	Bulgarian	Russian, Spanish, Macedonian	12.0
Katia	46	E. Europe	N/A	N/A	French	13.0
Lisa	55	India	Indian	Malayalam	Hindi, Tagalog	4.0
Lina	40	Ukraine	Ukrainian	Ukrainian	Russian	8.0
Maros	37	Czech Republic	Slovak	Slovakian	N/A	9.5
Lea	33	Guyana	Mixed	Creole English	N/A	4.5
Ines	32	Argentina	Spanish	Spanish	N/A	7.0
Kay	40	Ukraine	Ukrainian	Ukrainian	Russian	20.0

They brought a collective average of 6.67 years of teaching experience from their country of origin; with a range of 22 years. This diversity provided for a rich array of stories and cultural backgrounds from their personal histories. The professional history of participants reveals diverse teaching experiences with students of varying ages through to adults as well as strong background knowledge in various subject area specialisations.

Other than one participant choosing not to pursue teaching, and a second not completing the teacher-training program in BC successfully, all participants who received their recertification are presently employed as teachers, albeit most of them as teachers-on-call rather than in full-time employment while two await recertification. As a group, the 12 participants were proficient in 14 languages besides English. As discussed below, these plurilingual abilities were tapped into occasionally in IETs' communications with students.

However, they were largely unacknowledged by others in the professional teaching community these IETs encountered in BC.

LANGUAGE AND IETs REPOSITIONING IN BC

This analysis considers the impact of others' perspectives on how participants see themselves as teachers. As well, the focus of LPA in the context of this article considers how participants have come to adjust their professional identities as teachers in BC classrooms in light of their experiences negotiating new positions.

Relationships with particular others have been instrumental in how IETs define themselves in BC schools. Mentorship has been a key aspect of IET positioning. Participants relayed comments regarding the importance of mentors in their country of origin and how mentorship was embedded in their teacher training there. Through their repositioning efforts in BC, participants sought out positive mentorship through their colleagues, and when found, mentors served to facilitate their professional competency. For example, earlier in her teaching practicum, one participant noted that students would tell her, 'I don't know what you are saying, I don't understand it,' and this led her to doubt her ability to present material concisely. Her confidence in this area grew through her relationship with her school associate who countered her questioning of her identity stating, 'If they don't understand, it's because they don't listen.' This participant internalised this statement, and added 'I don't think this is going to be a problem anymore.' Further reiterating, almost confirming it for herself, she added, 'I don't feel there is a problem anymore.' The impact this particular individual had on her growing confidence was paramount to how this participant saw herself as an effective teacher.

Relationships with colleagues and students provided opportunities for new perspectives and positions and these, in turn, prompted changes in how IETs began to see themselves as teachers in BC. For participants, working with students from diverse ethnic backgrounds engendered confidence in their own identities as ethnically diverse teachers. Their professional identities were confirmed in the perspectives of the students with whom they worked, and this brought about common positioning as role models for minoritised students. However, in contrast to experiencing embracing or validating perspectives from students, IETs often encountered a sense of 'otherness' in trying to fit in with adults and colleagues. Participants commented that being perceived as 'other' as a result of their accents was unavoidable, and that 'no matter what level you have, you still have accent.' Many acknowledged that they experienced negative perspectives from within the teaching community, generalised community bias, in regard to their accents and language errors.

WORKING WITH STUDENTS

Although sometimes having to address students' cultural insensitivity, for the most part, IETs found affirmation of their identities as teachers in the perspectives of students they

encountered in BC schools. All participants when encountering BC classrooms for the first time, initially felt anxious about working with students who were different from their previous background experiences. Many of the participants commented that they were not equipped to effectively address students' ethnic diversity in the classrooms in which they volunteered or worked. Many of them came from societies in which ethnic diversity was not a reality. However, every participant acknowledged their anxious feelings were short lived. Participants found that they were comfortable with students almost immediately, noting that students in BC were really no different from students in their country of origin, commenting that 'kids are kids everywhere, they are all the same.'

Participants found that students in the five most ethnically diverse school districts in BC were welcoming of ethnic and sometimes linguistic differences and this acceptance reinforced their belief in their capabilities as teachers. Moreover, most participants found that openly acknowledging their language differences and being open to correction from students enabled them to have better relationships with students. One participant shared, 'The very first day I told them, I am from Argentina, I have an accent, so the kids were, so ya, they were okay with it.'

Not only did the participants feel welcomed by the students with whom they worked, they found that students were intrigued by their immigrant backgrounds. Many participants commented that students went out of their way to build relationships with them as a result of ethnic and linguistic differences. Research has shown that IETs can act as role models for students of diverse ethnic backgrounds (Bascia, 1996b; Schmidt & Block, 2010; Walsh & Brigham, 2008). Schmidt and Block (2010) argue for the incorporation of IETs as 'role models and advocates within the system who can speak [students'] first languages and relate to their circumstances' (p. 4); participants in this research echo this claim. Most of the participants articulated pride in their ability to relate to students who had been through experiences with immigration or who came from culturally diverse backgrounds.

For participants, working with students from diverse ethnic backgrounds engendered confidence in their own identities as ethnically and linguistically diverse teachers. One participant commented:

That's when I started to realise I have all this in common with these ESLⁱⁱⁱ students as well, because I'm really ESL, they're ESL, I know what the struggle is, to be in, living in a different country, learning a different language, going through that, you know, I started making those connections and being more confident and comfortable.

Their professional identities were confirmed in the perspectives of the students with whom they worked, and this engendered positive positioning as role models for students of minoritised ethnic and linguistic backgrounds.

I felt that my culture was celebrated as opposed to, you know, being, um, a big red dot, you know, ya,...my students loved it too, and the students were quite mixed, like the, the demographic, it was a mixed demographic, I could relate to a lot of the students, and I have a mixed ethnicity.

Further, being positioned with students with diverse backgrounds offered IETs the opportunity to act as agents for social change. Diverse ethnic student populations offered IETs an ability to connect with students on a global level. Many of the participants commented that they felt a sense of duty to help those students who may be marginalised as a result of any number of issues, as the participants themselves had had similar experiences; one participant noted:

I can help some children, so many uh, so many children from immigrant families, maybe, maybe we can understand them better, I am thinking, and I had a lot of chances in schools to help, you know, some children were here for a week, maybe two maybe three, so they still had that scared feeling at the beginning, and I was really happy when I was able to help them, even sometimes, you know, a few Russian language or Ukrainian, just to help them, and I was really happy.

IETs acknowledge they are uniquely suited to these demands. Indeed, for many of the participants in the current research, being positioned as ‘other’ left them with a deep sense of commitment to social justice and a need to ‘right the wrongs’ facing minority students. Research, however, has pointed to the dangers of minoritised teachers being viewed primarily as ‘professional ethnics’ and not as educators with a range of skills and talents (Hirji & Beynon, 2000).

WORKING WITH COLLEAGUES

In contrast to experiencing embracing or validating perspectives from students, IETs encountered a sense of ‘otherness’ in trying to fit in with adults and colleagues. Many encountered discrimination as a result of their ethnic and linguistic differences. One participant openly commented that she is always questioning herself: ‘You still think what’s wrong, is it me, is it the accent, what is it, because I’m from different country, what is it?’ Those participants who still feel a sense of ‘otherness’ as a result of their ethnic and linguistic differences report less confidence in their identities as successful teachers.

For many participants, repositioning as a teacher in BC schools has challenged their sense of professional identity. Participants felt that they were placed in a position where their professional and educational backgrounds were not valued. A prevalent concern regarding repositioning as a teacher in BC was in the devaluing of previous experience. IETs were often bringing skills and abilities beyond those acquired by teachers presently teaching in BC classrooms. Participants had fluency in other languages and experience teaching in other

languages that were not credited. They often felt that their perspectives and plurilingual abilities, based on experience in other countries and systems, should be valued in the BC education system. One participant with 23 years of teaching experience in her country of origin commented, 'They have not considered my working, and I am at zero'.

These findings are supported by previous research in concluding that IETs find that their previous teaching experience and educational training obtained in their countries of origin are often undervalued or disregarded (Beynon, Ilieva, & Dichupa, 2004; Myles, Cheng, & Wang, 2006; Duchesne & Stitou, 2011; Quiocho & Rios, 2000; Walsh & Brigham, 2008). Schmidt's (2010b) observation that the repositioning efforts of IETs are 'made more complex when the very education systems these teachers are trying to access fail to value the contributions of educators with languages, cultures, and backgrounds different from those of the mainstream teaching force' (p. 1) is echoed in the concerns expressed by the participants in this research.

Phillion (2003) states that IETs face racism and discrimination in their repositioning efforts and these findings are also supported in other research (Schmidt, 2010a; Quiocho & Rios, 2000; Deters, 2011) as well as substantiated here. Participants commented they were treated differently from others who were white^{iv}. Ironically, as several of the participants were white, they perceived themselves as ethnically different, 'other than' Canadian-born white teachers because of their accents and language abilities. Due to her accent and cultural background one white participant felt racist attitudes 'from the adults, students no, kids love me'. Another participant commented that being perceived as 'other' as a result of her accent was unavoidable: 'When you go to the teaching, no matter what level you have, you still have accent...and it, it just gives, puts you in some position, gives some impact, you being from outside.'

Phillion (2003) found that language fluency and a lack of acceptance of accented English posed obstacles for the integration of IETs. Other research has supported the claim that IETs face discrimination based on their accents, difficulties with context specific language, and unfamiliarity with idiomatic expressions (Beynon et al., 2001; Cruickshank, 2004; Duchesne & Stitou, 2011; Myles et al., 2006; Phillion, 2003; Walsh & Brigham, 2008; Xu, 1999). Participants in the current research all noted concerns with their language fluency levels as well as their accents. Many acknowledged that they experienced negative perspectives from within the teaching community and generalised community bias in regard to their accents and language errors. Taking on the perspectives of the generalised community affected how they see themselves as teachers, questioning their professional identities and competency.

One participant's experiences illustrate this very well. Her encounter with the interviewer for the IELTS test she had to take left her infinitely conscious of her accent, and questioning her professional identity. He asked of her, 'If I was a parent of a kindergarten student, as his or her teacher, how would I look at you?' This pointed question posed at a vulnerable stage in her seeking recertification in BC left her questioning her own abilities: 'That made me so

nervous, so um, you know, thinking twice, that this would be a good career for me.’ Now, as a teacher working ‘on call’ in Greater Vancouver, she is still reminded of this interviewer’s question and this makes her uneasy when working with parents, ‘talking to parents, I always feel a little bit of anxiety if I have to speak to born Canadian parents, if they are going to judge me, that English is my second language.’ The damage to her sense of self from this experience has left her questioning her professional identity and has continued to permeate how she sees herself. She states,

Seeing a parent walking in the class always make, makes me freeze and um, think twice how I am going to speak, and I am very aware of it still, of my English and my accent, ya, but I don’t know, if I was to choose this uh, career again, I don’t know if I would do it again, you know, it’s a lot of um, doubting and anxieties, I would say ‘cause still English is not my first language.

IETs take on the perspectives of the generalised attitudes they encounter through their repositioning efforts. As a consequence, these negative perspectives in regard to accented English and language proficiency cause IETs to question their professional identities and competence in the BC school system.

For the most part, IETs in this research felt themselves to be at a disadvantage within the teaching profession in BC as a result of their accents or their perceived lack of English fluency. Several commented that it took a great deal of time for them to practice the lexicon specific to their subject area. One participant listened to audiotapes, practicing her pronunciation while at her part-time job. Others commented that the time needed to develop language proficiency at a level acceptable to the colleagues they encountered in teaching was extensive. Most participants accepted the perspectives of others in positioning them as a less than competent teacher as a result of their language differences. For example, one participant commented that ‘you are going to be a teacher and it just makes sense if you can’t speak you won’t make a good teacher.’ Participants articulated that having an accent made Canadian-born teachers perceive them to be less intelligent and less capable, stating they were made to feel ‘inferior if you have an accent, because you are not from here.’

Time was the one factor that IETs felt alleviated this concern. Many stated that these concerns dissipated with time as they became more ‘Canadianised’ and their accents were less pronounced. Language proficiency was directly related to how confident they felt as teachers in BC and may be directly connected with employment rates. These results are substantiated by BC Statistics’ claims that full-time employment rates for immigrant professionals increase over time (BC Stats, 2011c, p. 3). With extended interactivity with the social perspectives and sociocultural context of BC classrooms, IETs experienced less bias from the teaching community. IETs who had extended periods of employment in BC commented that they felt more competent as teachers over time; although they still

acknowledged their greatest challenge within the teaching community is how their accents and language abilities are perceived. One participant concluded that although surrounded by ethnic diversity in the BC school system, she remains betwixt and between: she no longer identifies with her own language and culture, stating, 'I'm kind of drifting in between, who am I, what am I.'

Another has no desire to return to her previous country and lifestyle, but she does note that her culture and language separate her from other teachers here. She has realised that it takes time for her colleagues to accept her, and her relationships with them have improved over time. However, she is always conscious of her 'otherness' – her language and accent that make her who she is in this new context. She has changed from who she was, but does not feel totally accepted for who she is now. She summarises her experiences in saying the 'hard thing is, how can say that, you know, you grow something new, but you don't have roots, sometimes, you feel you belong here, but not fully, and you don't belong there anymore.'

Participants have commented that through their efforts repositioning themselves as teachers in BC schools, they have developed a new professional identity. Many have noted when visiting their country of origin that they no longer ascribe to their old professional identity but neither do they feel they are perceived as having a Canadian identity which invites the question who counts as "Canadian" in BC schools. Beyond experiences of otherness, however, many see they have been positioned as a blend, an integration of varying perspectives, and some feel they are stronger teachers as a result. As one participant stated, 'I can do more...I can use all those here, and I can blend them, a good mix of the East and the West.'

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

IETs in this research all noted that their language abilities were judged by the colleagues with whom they worked. Although IETs felt accepted by students, and even found their accents opened opportunities for relationship-building with students, they often felt their language abilities a detriment to their relationships with their colleagues. Many participants questioned their own identities as teachers on the basis of their language proficiency. Specifically, participants commented that their accents and language concerns were an issue with colleagues within the teaching profession who resultantly positioned IETs as 'other.' The biases encountered within the 'generalised other' of the teaching community had a significant impact on the professional identity development of IETs as they took the perspectives of others toward themselves and continue to question themselves on the basis of their language and accent.

Presently the experience IETs bring from other countries is undervalued by our school system. Most importantly, provincially established seniority pay scales need to be adjusted to acknowledge previous experience, and hiring practices need to reflect the value of

plurilingual abilities. The teaching profession needs to be aware of the challenges IETs face, and experienced Canadian-born teachers sensitive to ethnic and linguistic diversity should be enlisted as mentors. Mentorship with a culturally-sensitive and experienced teacher could provide a support system for IETs. As a professional body, BC Teachers' Federation needs to be aware of the important role mentorship plays in identity development for IETs. As a teaching profession, we have a great deal to learn from the experiences of internationally educated teachers, and even more to gain through their incorporation into the teaching community.

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ENDNOTES

- i The term “visible ethnic minority” when used in this article reflects its use in government sources like Statistics Canada or in cited literature. We use the term “minoritized” (Chase,

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- Dowd, Pazich, & Bensimon, 2014) groups to note the ongoing experiences of marginalisation and/or discrimination of students and teachers of diverse ethnic backgrounds in BC.
- ii As can be noted, the majority of study participants are white. This is perhaps a reflection of the continued underrepresentation of visible minority groups in teacher education programs in British Columbia (Beynon, Toohey, & Kishor, 1992).
 - iii Current literature employs the term “English as an Additional Language (EAL)” students to avoid the stigma associated with the term “ESL” and to reflect these students’ multilingual abilities.
 - iv We are aware of the inextricable link between race and language (including accents) and other aspects of identity discussed in recent literature (e.g. Amin, 2006); of differences in ways white people and racialised people are being “heard”. This question is only touched upon here as the majority of participants were white, and apart from one of them, did not refer to racial discrimination based on accents and linguistic abilities in their accounts of their experiences of otherness in the BC school system.