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The 'native speaker' spin:
The construction of the English teacher
at a language department at a university in central Mexico.

By

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Abstract

This is a study of how teachers, students and administrators in a particular university's language department in Guanajuato, Mexico, construct the English teachers' professional image. The experiences of ten teachers, fourteen students, and two administrators at the Language Department of the University of Guanajuato in Mexico are explored through data obtained from conversations, narratives, critical incidents, e-mail correspondence and field-notes.

This thesis began as an investigation of the construction of the 'native/non-native' debate. However, it arrived at a final point which is concerned about the ways in which individual perceptions are constructed and affected through historical or social pressures. From the data collected key areas emerged, such as: identity, labelling and the socio-political relationship between Mexico and the United States and its consequences. The data shows the polarization that exists between 'native speakers' and 'non-native speakers' themselves concerning aspects such as birthplace, ethnicity and nationality. In order to make sense of this data, I decided to employ the concept of spin to explain how images of the English teacher and speaker are constructed and maintained (or rejected) by participants. This is used as a lens to understand the evolution of the creation of the 'native speaker' image and labels. This helps understand how the 'native speaker' image came to play such a critical —and sometimes apparently harmful— role in the construction of the Other and the Self. Specifically, the 'native speaker' spin was not a point of investigation, but emerged as a significant tool for the discussion of the data as the analysis progressed.

Overall this study seems to set a precedent that there is no clear-cut division between 'native' and 'non-native speakers'. Rising awareness of how complex labels operate through discourses, institutions and hiring policies may help to bring about more recognition of commonalities of English teachers as professionals.

Abbreviations

AI	Administrator's Interview
BA	Bachelor of Arts
COTE	Certificate for Overseas Teachers of English
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
EMI	E-mail Informant
ESL	English as a Second Language
ICELT	In-Service Certificate of English Language Teaching
IS	Interest Section
MA	Masters of Arts
MEXTESOL	Mexican Association of Teachers of English
NNC	Non-Native Caucus
NNEST	Non-Native English Speaking Teachers
NEST	Native English Speaking Teachers
NNS	Non-native Speaker
NS	Native Speaker
PD	Personal Diary
RD	Research Diary
SAC	Self-Access Center
SN	Students' Narrative
TD	Tesol Discussion
TN	Teacher's Narrative
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Focusing the Study

This is a study of how teachers, students and administrators in a particular university's language department in Guanajuato, Mexico, construct the English teachers and speakers. The experiences of ten teachers, fourteen students, and two administrators at the Language Department of the University of Guanajuato in Mexico are explored through data obtained from conversations, narratives and field-notes. These participants delineate themselves and their colleagues on the basis of descriptive phrases to refer to physical appearance, ethnicity and the connection with the practice of teaching. At the same time, this study discusses the use of labels given to English speakers and teachers and explores the complexities of personal and professional identity formation. As well, based on the participants' narratives, it investigates the construction of the English teacher. All of these factors are narrated through my voice as a 'non-native' English teacher that has had to work inside and outside of Mexico as a professional. This, I think, gives me the ability to seen the phenomenon that occurs in Mexico from two perspectives; as a member of a group of teachers at the Language Department and as an outsider at the same time.

The research questions that guide this thesis are:

1. How is the image of the English teacher and speaker constructed by students, teachers and administrators of the Language Department of the University of Guanajuato?
2. What are the problems with the term 'non-native speaker' at a local, national and international level?
3. What labels have participants experienced and how these explain participants' construction of their personal and professional identity?

Before going further, I need to explain some of the important factors which motivated my interest in the topic and how this is related to what this thesis explores.

1.1.1 Personal Motivation: On Being a 'Non-Native Speaker' in and Outside Mexico

I had contact with English early on, at the age of four, before my school years. I studied English for many years, but it was not until I was fifteen years old that I started to develop a more focused interest in the language. As I had been in contact with the language for years, but I had not experienced living abroad and using it, I was sent to the United States for approximately two years to study high school. I was thrilled and eager to start a new experience in my life, and I had the idea that I was going to be in

contact with other English speakers. But it did not take me long to learn that although I was approaching my new classmates as others just like me, I was not accepted as being just like them. This was my first experience of being classified as a Mexican because of my skin colour. Moreover, being classified as Mexican was not the problem, but the fact of being Mexican to the eyes of my new community, was something "wrong" and "less" in comparison to the Americans I had contact with. At least this is what they made me feel. Also, it was my first political experience with being labelled, yet accepted. I was accepted because the family that I lived with was a stable member of the community, although they were classified as a Mexican-American family. This idea of being accepted because of my relationship with others was difficult to handle. Especially, for a young woman that looks younger than she is and is barely five feet tall, with dark skin, hair and eyes. It made me feel as if I was already labelled and classified before I even spoke. This may even be one of the reasons why over time I have become less outgoing and less likely to speak in new situations.

Nevertheless, back then, I was in contact with many other cultures and I learned to be tolerant of them and alternative ways of thinking. I was not being accepted for who I was because I experienced what I have learned to call over time 'the Latina appearance effect'. People used to speak in English to my friends, but when they turned to me, without asking where I was from, they tried to speak in Spanish. At first, I thought that it was a figment of my imagination. However, as days and months went by, I realized that it was not an isolated episode in my life. Different incidences kept pushing me from being part of the group of English speakers, to feeling like being Mexican and speaking Spanish was wrong. For example, several teachers did not even bother to give me a test in English and instead sent me to a different group where only Spanish speakers were taking the exam, until the Director became aware of the situation and took action. He helped me in different ways and, what is more, he always spoke to me in English. At the time I was not exactly sure why I was getting these reactions from teachers and some classmates, but I assumed that I was categorized as someone "different" because, first, I "looked" Mexican, and second, because I had a strong accent. Those were the only outwardly obvious signs that I could think of that could distinguish me from the rest of the students. That happened many times, but I can say that it still happens these days. I am still labelled as a Spanish speaker due to my skin colour.

Things are not different in other English speaking countries. As a constant traveller to the United Kingdom, it has happened to me that when people look at me they ask the following question: "Are you from India?" These situations made me reflect on my own personal and professional identity. On one side, I am proud of being Mexican and on the other side, when leaving my country I realized that I can become something else. It does not matter how proficient I am in English, my physical appearance seems to give myself away, in the sense that I am labelled by my appearance. At first it bothered me and made me feel mad, but with time I have gotten used to it and come to terms with it. Being labelled as a 'non-native speaker' of English in my own country, and in others as well, made me realize that it does not matter how proficient I am, there will always be other aspects that people will regard as more important, or maybe as more desirable. This thesis will discuss these ideas.

In my professional experience, though, it has not been different. When having been hired by the University of Guanajuato, I found myself teaching future and current English teachers. My new students were people who had been teaching for years, and they were older than I was. I remember the first time I came to Guanajuato and the first question one of my student asked me was: "Are you from India?". I was surprised because I was used to questions such as: "How old are you?", "Where did you learn your English?" or "How many years did it take you to learn English?". But that first question was somehow different. I said "No, I'm Mexican". My student said with disappointment "Ah, then you speak Spanish". I still think that my student asked me because at that time, I was the second Mexican teacher hired in the Language Department (where most of my colleagues come from North America) and the student wanted to make sure that I knew the language but also if I knew what I was doing. After I answered, the other familiar questions came. I think she felt little disappointed due to the fact that I spoke Spanish. The reason was, as she told me later, that she does not like teachers who speak Spanish in the English classroom, and the fact of me being Mexican made her think I would speak Spanish in class. Then, I can see here that defining the 'native speaker' is not an easy task, and many factors are involved, such as competence, education, and the way you look. At first, my experience led me to be intrigued about the distinction between 'native' and 'non-native speakers', but later on I wanted to explore the issue more in-depth since my experiences and other colleagues' experiences made me move from a simplistic distinction of 'native' and 'non-native' to other issues of ethnicity, labelling, nationality and the historical background between Mexico and the United States. This history between the two neighbouring countries has been strongly influenced by acts of classifying person based on skin colour or racial background.

1.2 My Interest in the Research of 'Non-Native' Teachers

The 'native speaker' or 'non-native speaker' labels are worthy themes of research, particularly in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context, such as the one where this study was conducted because it directly affects hiring policies and professional opportunities. Furthermore, as an EFL learner myself, I found this very useful and revealing, remembering my own frustrations and satisfactions while being a user of English, but not accepted as such when living in Boston. Also, as a teacher, I remembered the moment I was hired by the University of Guanajuato and teachers and students' reactions when I was given the upper levels to teach. My colleagues thought it was a mistake on the part of my supervisors, since I was the only Mexican at the time teaching those levels. For students, it was surprising that a young Mexican teacher would be able to teach them advanced English. Situations like the one described here have marked my personal and professional identity and they are explained in my autobiography, which I have included for interest in Appendix 1. For this study, in order to have a broader theoretical perspective, I first needed to read about studies related to this issue, in order to construct a new approach which would enable me to study from a different angle the construction of the English teacher with the potential of finding a new approach of exploring the

issue. In this work I will always place 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' in inverted commas, following Holliday's (2006) acknowledgement "in recognition of their ideological construction" (p. 385). They are contested terms, belonging to a particular discourse and ideological construction, as will be further discussed. They are products of a particular ideology which tends to place the 'non-native speakers' in an inferior position.

1.2.1 Positioning my Research in Current Studies

Reviewing the relevant literature I found that the issue of 'native' and 'non-native' speakers is more than an issue of linguistic proficiency, but an issue concerning ethnicity and identity. This goes deeper in the private and public lives of those who are part of the teaching profession.

Most of the studies regarding 'native' and 'non-native speakers' focus their attention on the linguistic aspect, pondering the characteristics of what makes a 'native speaker', as well as on how the concept follows a now established concern about political inequalities within English Language Teaching (ELT) (Pennycook 1994; Canagarajah, 1999a; Kubota, 2001). Also, some studies make reference to the attitudes stakeholders and students have towards a 'non-native' speaker, derived from power relationships (Ballard, 1996; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Holliday, 1994; Medgyes, 1994; 1996; Phillipson, 1992a; Rampton, 1990). Also, a movement started in 1998 by George Braine which tried to give 'non-native' speakers a voice in the TESOL international organization is a central part in this review. The reason is that defining what the 'native' speaker is goes beyond the pure linguistic aspect. As the data emerged in this study, participants shared their histories with me and unveiled different aspects which shape the image of the English teacher at a local, national and international level. As a narrative approach is used in this thesis, stories are constantly being revisited in the light of new events, as Webster and Mertova (2007: 2) emphasise in the following: "Narrative allows researchers to present experience holistically in all its complexity and richness. Narrative illustrates the temporal notion of experience, recognising that one's understanding of people and events changes". In order to make sense of these events, two groups of participants are key in this research.

1.3 Core Data and Peripheral Data

It is worth noting that the perceptions affecting the preference for one type of teacher over the other was initially limited to participants directly connected to my immediate context, such as administrators, teachers and students. Furthermore, participants' perceptions were considered as essential, but still I was missing the integration of the several voices which emerged in the research. This is when I decided that a second group of participants was necessary to incorporate into this discussion. This was to create a more complex narrative where it was possible for the data that emerged from the first group (the core group of teacher, students and administrators at the Language Department) could be integrated with a second group of participants which is formed by people who

are also teachers, students and mainly administrators, yet work in different parts of the world. Their experiences are explored through data collected from critical incidents, e-mail correspondence and an on-line discussion. This second group (or peripheral group) adds an important element in the study which further interrogates the data from the first group. Having this second group is important because they are people who write and read about the issue of my study. It is also this second group which introduces the complexities that the first group did not initially mention, such as discrimination at the workplace, the impact of a pejorative terminology concerning personal and professional identity, and the tensions lived as part of an international community. This significant data then led me to interview the first group further and take them to a deeper level of criticality through a more complex narrative approach.

The contributions of these two groups are therefore interconnected in a way that the issues discussed among the second group serve the purpose of questioning the issues discussed in the first group. The purpose is to explore the understandings of the profession and how identity is constructed and co-constructed, not only in the light of the discussions at a global level, but also in the local context of the investigation. The outcome of the study is therefore a detailed description of how a particular community of teachers, students and administrators in Guanajuato work with identity, ethnicity and labelling to deal with the 'native-nonnative' dichotomy. Issues such as image, physical appearance, the political Mexican-American relationship, the pejorative terminology and the constant questioning of the personal and professional identity, emerged from this study as factors determining the participants' identity.

1.4 Evolution of My Research Questions

Refining the research questions was a process in itself. In this section I shall describe how my research questions came about. This study began with traditional questions of: 1) what are the attitudes towards the 'native' and 'non-native' English speaking teachers by students? And, 2) What are students' perceptions of their English teachers? Reviewing the initial research proposal during the research training sessions, I realised that a qualitative approach would enable me to expand my research and go beyond this simplistic approach. Also it would lead me to a broader question: What is the construction of the 'native/ non-native' figure in the light of identity formation? Reviewing the literature concerning this theme, I found that my question still needed some work. Therefore I decided to adopt a more enriching approach to collect my data and discovered that using narrative inquiry would help me make sense of the experiences of my participants. Dyson and Genishi (1994) contend that we all have a basic need to tell our story:

> Stories help to make sense of, evaluate, and integrate the tensions inherent in experience: the past with the present, the fictional with the 'real', the official with the unofficial, personal with the professional, the canonical with the different and unexpected. Stories help us transform the present

and shape the future for our students and ourselves so that it will be richer or better than the past. (pp. 242-243)

It is important to note that it was the data from the peripheral participants that prompted me in the direction of the narrative.

Looking at different perspectives, the following question started to emerge: What are the characteristics of 'native/non-native speakers that participants regard as essential?. As the research progressed it became more evident that participants' preference for one teacher or another was variable, and that what guided these preferences was mainly past experiences. I then decided to go deeper than solely describing the preferences and to look for the possible reasons for these preferences. Also I wanted to know how the participants have shaped these preferences and how they also serve to describe the participants themselves. Therefore, another question emerged: What factors may explain the participants' preference or labelling of 'native/non-native' in terms of identity construction? This question seemed to be more in tune with what I wanted to explore. Therefore, after considering the issues emerging from the data, new questions arose. In short, the main research questions of this doctoral thesis are as follows:

1. How is the image of the English teacher and speaker constructed by students, teachers and administrators of the Language Department of the University of Guanajuato?
2. What are the problems with the term 'non-native' speaker' at a local, national and international level?
3. What labels have participants experienced and how these explain participants' construction of their personal and professional identity?

1.5 Content of the Thesis

I will summarize the contents of the individual chapters that shape this doctoral thesis: Chapter 1 presents myself as the researcher and my lived experiences as a non-native speaker. I also look at the factors that shaped my interest in exploring the concept in the research setting and my research position. Finally, I include my research questions.

Chapter 2 introduces the literature related to the early studies concerning the issue of 'native' and 'non-native' English speaking teachers which is relevant to my study. I examine the role of the 'non-native speaker' in the ELT profession and how new ways of approaching the dichotomy are being discussed.

Chapter 3 focuses on the methodology I employed. I include my own story and I outline key aspects of my identity which explain my position as a researcher and insider. Also, this chapter covers the research techniques used in this study: narratives, e-mail correspondence, and the use of peripheral data. I describe why each technique was chosen and why my research was conducted under a broad

qualitative research approach and more specifically how this research is influenced by postmodernism and social constructivism.

Chapter 4 describes the interconnectedness of the data, the process of analyzing it and the thematic structuring of the data chapters.

Chapter 5 presents the findings that emerged from the data. It explores a discourse of similarity and difference and how the descriptive phrases used in the discourse serve as labels rooted in the professional and personal identity of participants.

Chapter 6 identifies the struggles of being labelled, using particular stories and discussing the status of English as an international language and its ownership to showing how this can be a sensitive issue. This chapter offers an account of how participants, despite apparently contradictory roles, tensions created by labels and confrontations of their past and present experiences, face their dilemmas and how they construct their identities in the light of pressures of the society and their own.

Chapter 7 explores more data and literature related to issues which emerged, such as race, ethnicity, labelling and the Mexican-American socio-political relationship. A native speaker' spin emerges from the data that allows the reader to make sense of the data and explain how images of the English teacher and speaker are constructed and maintained by participants. This complex combination of literature and data blends to create an idea that is political in nature that helps place both the core and peripheral data in content. I have called this the 'native speaker spin'.

Finally, Chapter 8 describes the implications of my research, as well as what this may entail for the future of the field. I include my conclusions with a discussion of how my research sheds light on the ongoing discussions.

In order to provide a background of the main theme of this thesis, the construction of the English teacher, I present a discussion of how issues related to this theme are presented in the current literature in the following chapter.

Chapter 2

The Politics, Policies and Practices of Representing the English Speaker

2.1 Introduction

In order to provide a background to the main theme of the thesis, the construction of the English teacher and speaker, I turn now to a discussion of how issues related to this theme are presented in what I have decided to distinguish as two types of literature: the standard and the non-standard literature. I wish to represent how the studies have defined the speaker in terms of language proficiency and teaching skills. This review will pinpoint how this topic has been approached in research that has been carried out in the area and the emergence of the theme in the 1990s in the world of the Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). I will make special reference to the discussions associated with the TESOL organization, especially with regard to the Non-Native Caucus (NNC). This is in order to set the scene for an understanding of how the distinction between the 'native' and 'non-native speaker' arose mainly in the TESOL profession. Differing views on whether defining the 'native speaker' in terms of language proficiency is positive or negative are then put forward and the changing ownership of the English language is discussed. This discussion provides a context for the academic arguments outlining the implications of making a distinction in who speaks and teaches English in a globalised world. Thus, both the currently predominant and wide-spread distinction between a 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker', and the way teachers and students talk about it are problematized. I do appreciate that this distinction is quite clumsy, but this standard literature serves the purpose of setting the context in which the discussion has taken place in the TESOL domain. Finally, arguments with regard to the continued appropriacy of the dichotomy in the standard literature are outlined. I push harder, though, to get to the non-standard distinction, to show that the understanding of the issue has developed and is not about language proficiency and teaching skills, but about identity, ethnicity and labelization, which will be further discussed in Chapter 7 as a consequence of the data of Chapters 5 and 6.

The TESOL organization has been in existence since 1966. Many people from many countries work as competent professionals in the classroom. Yet, the status of English as an international language has developed in having more English speakers that have English as a second language than as a mother tongue. In the 1990s TESOL, arguable the largest and most influential association in the profession, created a Caucus to try and create integration and give 'non-native speakers' a voice in the TESOL organization (Braine, 2010). This Caucus initiated a new way of approaching the dichotomy and took the discussion into different directions.

To shed light upon the issue of 'native' and 'non-native' speakers, and in order to understand why there is such a controversy about the topic, I shall begin by giving different and even contradictory definitions that I have found about the terms 'native' and 'non-native'.

2.2 Defining the 'Native Speaker'

The term native speaker is difficult to define and the different definitions given are not necessarily clear-cut. One of the first definitions of native speaker was the following: "the first language a human being learns to speak is his native language; he is a native speaker of this language" (Bloomfield, 1933, p. 43). From a position similar to Bloomfield's, Davies (1996) claims that a 'native speaker' is the one who learnt the L1 in childhood, what he calls the "bio-developmental definition". In other words, someone who did not learn a language in childhood cannot be a 'native speaker' of that language. Also, Davies (2003) adds what he calls 'reality definitions'. These are the following definitions:

1. native speaker by birth (that is by early childhood exposure),
2. native speaker (or native speaker-like) by being an exceptional learner,
3. native speaker through education using the target-language medium (the lingua franca case),
4. native speaker by virtue of being a native user (the postcolonial case), and
5. native speaker through long residence in the adopted country. (p. 214)

Moreover, Kubota (2004) isolates five defining issues for a native English speaker, very similar to the ones Davies (2003) proposes:

1. whether the person acquired the language from birth,
2. whether the person is a competent speaker,
3. whether the person acquired the language formally through education or informally through daily use,
4. what variety of the language the person uses, and
5. the race of the person. (p. 3)

These definitions show differences portrayed as complexly linked characteristics that emanate from the individual but they also imply that there should also be further criteria, such as the relevance of a speech community.

2.2.1 Recognition of the Community

Kramsch (1995) says that "it is not enough to have intuitions about grammaticality and linguistic acceptability and to be able to communicate fluently and with full competence: one must also be recognized as a 'native' speaker by the relevant speech community" (p. 363). Coppieters (1987) also agrees that acceptance of the speech community is, then, another important factor when being called 'native speaker', implying that it does not depend exclusively on the individual. In The Native Speaker

is Dead! Paikeday (1985) states that the 'native' speaker "exists only as a figment of the linguistic's imagination" (p. 12), but Crystal (1997) contradicts Paikeday by saying that "[in] an ideal native speaker, there is a chronologically based awareness, a continuum from birth to death where there are no gaps" (p. 18). Paikeday, gives alternatives to the label of "native", and proposes "proficient" or "competent".

However, Medgyes (1992) remarks that even the best 'non-native' speaker of English will never reach "native competence" in spite of all their efforts. He goes on saying that they might come quite close to be 'native' speakers but will always be "halted by a glass wall" (p. 342). This gives us the sense that the 'non-native' speaker will find his/her competence will no longer improve at some point of his/her life.

As a consequence, defining what a 'native' speaker is becomes more complex. The focus then emphasizes the importance of looking not only at issues of self-definition such as language acquired from birth, competence and education, but also how others define what a 'native speaker' is. Acceptance of the speech community is a relevant factor.

2.2.2 Cultural Identity

Liu (1999b), like Kramsch (1995), introduces a new element to the discussion of what a 'native speaker' is. This is 'cultural identity'; which refers to the multidimendional complexity of the definition. He proposes the following elements should be considered:

1. sequence (Is English learned first before other language?)
2. competence (Is English our most competent language as compared to other languages?)
3. culture (What cultures are we most affiliated with?)
4. identity (Who do we prefer to be recognized as under different circumstances?)
5. environment (Did we grow bilingually or trilingually?), and
6. politics (Why should we label non-native speakers and native speakers in a dichotomy instead of viewing it on a continuum?). (pp. 163-164)

Accordingly, as sociocultural theory suggests "human activities take place in cultural contexts, mediated by language and other symbol systems, and can be best understood when investigated their historical development" (Vygotsky, 1986: 124). In this sense, we should look at the position of 'native speakers' in different contexts. Historically, 'native speaker' teachers may have consciously or unconsciously been used as pawns of linguistic and cultural imperialism, where there is a dominant and a dominated (Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994; Canagarajah, 1999a, 1999b, 2002). Usually, the 'native speaker' is seen as the dominant, and the 'owner of the language'. The 'non-native' is seen as the 'intruder'. But given the global role of English as an international language and the increasing number of English speakers who use English as a second or foreign language, it would be beneficial

for both the teachers and learners to have opportunities to consider and discuss what a 'native English speaker' implies (Canagarajah, 2002; Kubota, 2004). This refers to linguistic and cultural factors that shape learning and the impact of these factors have on pedagogical approaches. This can increase awareness of classroom interactions with multiple voices in it and constantly adjust status and power between teacher and students.

2.2.3 Self-Definition

A good way of distinguishing who is and who is not a 'native' speaker of English is through self-definition (Lazaraton 2003), or as Davies (2003) remarks "we cannot distinguish the non-native speaker from the native speaker except by autobiography" (p. 213). And it is this autobiography which brings other issues to the discussion, such as confidence and identity. As Davies (2003) suggests:

> …[I]t is in judgement data that the most intractable differences between native and non-native speakers are to be found […] The fundamental opposition is one of power and that in the event membership is determined by the non-native speaker's assumption of confidence and of identity.
> (p. 215)

In this respect, Liu (1999a), in a discussion of what he calls "politics", implies that often the 'native speaker' is considered to have a certain appearance: a typical white Anglo-American. If 'native speakers' want to be considered as such, they must look like typical white Anglo-Americans. This coincides with Amin's (1997: 97) reflection when explaining her difficulties in being accepted as a "native English speaker" because of the colour of her skin or the variety of English she speaks, showing how this image is embodied in a particular physique.

2.2.4 English as a Global Language

Another element to consider when determining what makes a 'native speaker' is the worldwide changes in the teaching of English as a second or foreign language. Given the status of English nowadays (as a lingua franca, international language and global language, as it has been called) and with more and more varieties of English being recognized, it is imperative to define the term 'native speaker' more broadly. Boyle (1997) points out that "When employing English language teachers, more attention is now being given to expertise rather than simply the country of origin" (p. 164). Kumaravadivelu (2003) recognizes that English has achieved a global status and this is the reason why local varieties have come about. These are "aptly called world Englishes […] Inglish for India, Siringlish in Singapore, etc., or one now hears about Franglais in France, Denglish, in Germany, and so on" (p. 539).

Nevertheless, whatever definition or definitions are adopted or criteria applied, or whether one agrees with the replacement of the term due to the difficulty of establishing its linguistic viability, the

'native speaker' English language teacher "plays a widespread and complex iconic role outside as well as inside the English-speaking West" and the terms 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' "have a very real currency within the popular discourse of ELT" (Holliday 2006: 385).

In an attempt to find a definition, studies have emerged and some of them have made such an impact in the dichotomy 'native/non-native' speakers that it is an important issue in the world of TESOL.

2.3 The 'Native' and 'Non-Native Speaker' in Research: The Paradoxes of the Dichotomy

Having looked at how the term 'native speaker' has been defined, I move now to a discussion of the studies carried out in regard to the topic. I do this in an attempt to investigate whether the definitions previously discussed have had an impact on the research and how they might contribute to a better understanding of the EFL teachers' identities as 'native' and 'non-native speaker'. This takes the discussion of the usual teaching practice to a more complex discussion of Us vs. Them. I start first with some discussions which have been considered in the areas of teaching practice and present differences one teacher has over another and the relevance of power relationships and the role of culture.

2.3.1 Differences in Teaching Practices

There have been different studies regarding the issue of 'native' and 'non-native' English speaking teachers. In early studies, authors such as James, 1977; Haughes & Lascaratou, 1982; and Sheorey, 1986, define the 'native' speaker of English as the person who learns the language in childhood and comes from an English speaking country. These authors suggest that there are differences between teachers and this could be important to the teaching practices where English is taught as second or foreign language. Some of the most remarkable differences of the 'native' and 'non-native speaker' teachers in these studies were the attitudes teachers had towards students' mistakes, showing that particularly 'non-native' English speaking teachers seemed more concerned to assess grammatical accuracy more rigidly. These studies showed that 'native' English speaking teachers generally regard language as a means of achieving a communicative goal and 'non-native' English speaking teachers regard English primarily as a school subject to be learnt and only secondarily as a communicative medium to be used. Tsui (1985), Flattley (1996), and Mora (2004) found that 'native' English speaking teachers seem to read students' compositions more carefully by making comments in the compositions, while 'non-native' English speaking teachers ask for an immediate correction and make more imperative and direct comments.

One of the first studies directly related to the area of teaching was Medgyes' in 1994. He had already published two articles in the ELT Journal: 1) "The schizophrenic teacher" (1983) and 2) "Native or non-native: who's worth more?" (1992). Yet it was his book The Non-native Teacher

(1994) that brought the issues concerning non-native speaker English teachers into the open, and this was clearly the initial effort to show the complex issues of the theme of 'non-native speakers'. He mainly discussed the status of 'non-native speaker' teachers of English in the world. This study consisted of an international survey of 216 native and non-native English speaking teachers from ten different countries. The results led Medgyes (1994) to catalogue these two types of teachers as "two different species" (p. 25) and proposed four hypotheses:

> that the NS [native speaker] and NNS [non-native speaker] teachers differ in terms of (1) language proficiency, and (2) teaching practice (behaviour), that (3) most of the differences in teaching practice can be attributed to the discrepancy in language proficiency, and that (4) both types of teachers can be equally good teachers on their own terms. (p. 26)

As a result of this study, Medgyes pointed out that teachers' self perceptions showed that 'non-native' speakers admitted to having various language difficulties (the most common areas were vocabulary and fluency, followed by pronunciation, and listening comprehension). However, he concluded that 'non-native' speaker teachers can be considered good learner models having gone through the process of learning English as a second (or third or fourth) language. This means that these teachers have gone through the same experiences of having been learners at a particular stage in their lives and it is this that becomes the main characteristic used in their favour. This, however, seems to be not the main justification because there are a number of elements to be considered when describing what a native speaker is and Medgyes' study did not consider all of them.

Probably, 'native speakers' of a language use idiomatic expressions naturally, and speak fluently. But, as Maum suggests (2002) people do not become qualified to teach English merely because English is their mother tongue, or because it is the language they learnt in their childhood. This does not guarantee quality in teaching, and much of the knowledge that 'native speakers' bring intrinsically to the English classroom can be learnt by 'non-native' English speaking teachers through teacher training. Also, there is a common belief that because 'non-native' English speaking teachers have adopted language-learning strategies during their own learning process, they are most likely to be better qualified to teach those strategies and more empathetic to their students' linguistic challenges and needs (Medgyes, 1996; Sammimy and Brutt-Griffler, 1999). Then, an important aspect in this area is teacher professionalism and we should consider whether an individual has received adequate professional training to teach English as a second or foreign language (Liu, 1999). There are many TESOL programs (and other similar teacher preparation programs) whose goals are to prepare future English teachers to face the real world and teach to different type of students. However, it is common to find that when being trained to become English teachers, 'non-native' speakers constantly ask for traditional classes in pronunciation and vocabulary "mostly because of the frustration they later face when teaching students who might believe that 'native' English speaking teachers are automatically better teachers than 'non-natives'" (Mossou, 2002: 18-19). This undoubtedly leads us to the notion of 'expertise' (Rampton, 1990). He says 'expertise is learned, not fixed or innate' (p. 98) and that 'the

notion of expertise shifts the emphasis from 'who you are' to 'what you know' (p. 99). Thus, the construct of 'expertise' diminishes undue prejudices and discriminations against 'non-native' speaker professionals and challenges the notion that the ideal teacher of English is a 'native' speaker (see Phillipson, 1992).

2.3.2 Students' Perceptions

Samimy and Brutt-Griffler (1999) conducted a study aiming to find out perceptions of 'non-native' TESOL graduate students regarding the 'native' versus 'non-native' issues in teaching English. Their research questions were: "How do non-native TESOL graduate students perceive themselves as ELT professionals? Do they think that there are differences between native and non-native speakers of English in their teaching behaviour? If so, what are they?" (p. 133). They noted the differences in the area of linguistic competence in English, teaching methods, and general characteristics. The following table summarizes their findings:

Native English speaking teachers	Non-native English speaking teachers
• Informal, fluent, accurate • Use different techniques, methods and approaches • Flexible • Use conversational English • Know subtleties of the language • Use authentic English, provide positive feedback • Focus on communication rather than on exam preparation	• Rely on textbooks and materials • Apply difference between L1 and L2 • Use L1 as medium • Aware of negative transfer and psychological aspects of learning • Sensitive to the need of students • More efficient • Know students' background • Focus on exam preparation

Table 1. Finding summary of Samimy and Brutt-Griffler (1999)

This particular study indicated that non-native speaker teachers are generally more empathetic towards their learners and become a good role model for their students, as Medgyes (1994) had suggested before. They also have realistic expectations from their learners of English. In table 1, the findings of Samimy and Brutt-Griffler seem to imply that there is a bit of politics in this subject in terms of its "values" and teaching, and it is almost like looking for clear-cut divisions in terms of language skills.

While all these research studies were developing, the creation of the Caucus for 'non-native' English speaking teachers was starting. George Braine organized a colloquium titled "In their own voices: 'non-native' speaker professionals in TESOL" at the 30th annual TESOL convention, held in Chicago in 1996 (see Braine, 1999). He invited well-known 'non-native' speaker scholars in Applied Linguistics as well as novices in the profession to participate. This was the beginning of the sharing

experiences, with 'non-native' speakers in the audience claiming that they finally had a voice within TESOL. Then, the idea for a TESOL Caucus for 'non-native' speakers was first proposed at this colloquium. Braine (2004) makes meaning of the Caucus in the following:

> The overall aim of the caucus is to strengthen effective teaching and learning of English around the world while respecting individuals' language rights. Specifically, the major goals are to create a non-discriminatory professional environment for all TESOL members regardless of native language and place of birth, encourage the formal and informal gatherings of non-native speakers at TESOL and affiliate conferences, encourage research and publications on the role of non-native speaker teachers in ESL and EFL contexts, and promote the role of non-native speaker members in TESOL and affiliate leadership positions. (p. 14)

The creation of the Caucus brought the issue of native and non-native English speaking teachers to a new level. Some researchers started eliciting students' views (Cheung, 2002; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2002; Liang, 2002; Moussu, 2002). Medgyes (1994) points to several advantages and disadvantages of both 'native' and 'non-native' teachers. For 'non-native', one of the advantages is related to grammar teaching. If the 'non-native' is in a non-English speaking country, they have a greater familiarity with the local educational environment. On the other hand, 'non-native' speaker teachers seem to be more prone to use the students' L1 in class, which is often perceived as a disadvantage. However, I assume that the students' perceptions concerning 'native/non-native' speaking teachers vary from country to country and have deeper historical roots, as in the case of Mexico and the United States, as will be later discussed in this thesis.

It is often believed that sharing knowledge of the students' L1 is an important source of confidence for the 'non-native' speaker teacher. Luk (2002) points out:

> To be frank, I am one of the 'victims' of this 'native speaker fallacy' back home. Although most of my students who are prospective English teachers appreciated my English proficiency, my knowledge of the English language systems, and my ability to make reference to their L1 when negative transfer appears in their English usage, when it comes to language skills enhancement, a few students have commented in their end-of-module evaluation that they would like to have a native English speaking lecturer because a native English-speaking teacher would 'force' them to use English in class because they are mostly illiterate in Chinese. (p. 3)

Luk (2002) continues to comment that some students complained that the strong accent of their 'non-native' English speaking teachers hindered them in receiving a better score in their learning subject and limited their ability to gain the maximum amount of knowledge in the classroom. This idea is related to a type of racism, as part of the non-standard literature, and has been discussed in teaching. For example, Amin (2001) and Tang (1997) have also touched on the topic of racial discrimination against teachers who come from the "periphery", or what Kachru (1982) has called the outer circle. These authors claim that when teachers are not white Anglo-Saxon and do not look like 'native'

speakers of English, then they are subjected to racial discrimination when teaching, mainly in English speaking countries (see Parker, Deyhle & Villenas, 1999; Kubota, 2001; Kubota & Lin, 2009). Adding to this type of discrimination, Kamhi-Stein (1999) adds another dimension: "The teacher-student relationship may be negatively affected not only by factors like ethnicity and language status, but also by gender" (p. 50). This lead us to think that even if the world of TESOL tries to avoid any form of discrimination, the situation is extremely complex, with more and more forms of discrimination increasing every day. This political theme is present in the non-standard literature and issues of ethnicity, race and the subsequent discrimination start to emerge.

2.3.3 Development of Perceptions: A Sense of Difference and Empathy

It is important to see the issue of 'native' and 'non-native' from different angles. This may enable us to unravel other views that we have not perceived or seen from other teachers in the world since how one wants to be identified is incomplete without considering how others might perceive this person.

Lasagabaster and Sierra's study (2002) tend to confirm that students of English as a foreign language have a preference for 'native speaker' teachers over 'non-native speakers', but they also show that a combination of 'native speakers' and non-native speakers is even more appropriate. University students seem to be more inclined towards 'native speaker' teachers than younger students. According to Clayton (2000), some students feel strongly stressed because of their extensive efforts to figure out what the 'native speaker' teacher is trying to get across, instead of concentraining on their learning. Authors, such as Chen and Chung (1993), claim that the language proficiency of instructors concerning grammar, fluency, and expression is not a problem. Instead, it is often found that the 'non-native' English speaking teachers cannot fulfil the students' desire to learn idiomatic and colloquial expressions. When students cannot find confidence in the ability of 'non-native' English speaking instructors to communicate effectively, their experience with their instructors can be limited and negatively affected. Eventually this can translate into their negative evaluation of the 'non-native' English speaking teachers' teaching quality (Neves & Sanyal, 1991). But it is important also, to remark that in Lasagabaster and Sierra's study the attitudes of many students towards their 'non-native' English speaking teachers evolved positively as the course advanced and students gradually became used to the teacher. Time seemed to be an important issue to the attitude. This gives us an indication that perceptions are subject to change over time, which is one of the elements the present study will focus attention on.

The first impression from homogenous groups (students who come from the same cultural background, and share the same L1) to instructors unlike themselves, such as 'non-native' English speaking teachers, is often defined as the 'Oh! No Syndrome' (Rao, 1993). This syndrome projects students' resistance and rejection towards the presence of a foreign-born instructor. In other words, students can bring their own pre-conceived ideas to the classroom and feel frightened or threatened when being taught by a foreign teacher. To understand the existence of this phenomenon, one needs to

study the status of such a syndrome. The 'Oh! No Syndrome' does not only involve the non-native English speaking teachers and students, but it also involves the employers and the community as well. This might help to place the dichotomy outside the classroom setting and to bring it to a broader spectrum. This shows that the issue of the 'non-native speakers' implies socio-political aspects that cannot be treated superficially such as in standard literature. This type of literature approaches the difference of the 'native' and 'non-native speaker' in limited terms of accent or nationality. In order to go beyond this simplistic classification, it is important to look at specific cases where participants describe themselves and the others.

I believe that raising awareness of the multiplicity of the construct of 'native speaker' can help both, teachers and learners to see the 'native/non-native' dichotomy in a more complex manner which may help in the understanding of these terms. This discussion goes further than the ideology of nativeness, and the 'us' vs 'them' division (Shuck, 2001; 2006). At the core of this ideological model there are views of the world's speech communities as naturally monolingual and monocultural (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1992; Gal & Irvine, 1995; Wiley & Lukes, 1996). However, language researchers and educators are increasingly embracing the fact that English is spoken by more people as an L2 than as a mother tongue. This makes us think of English as a lingua franca, and not as a language exclusively owned by native-speaking communities. The ownership is shared with 'non-native speakers'. I think this changes the role of the 'native' speaker teachers due to the global need of English language teachers.

2.3.4 Struggle for Equal Treatment in the Profession

After the establishment of the Caucus, authors such as Braine (1999), Kamhi-Stein (2004), and Llurda (2005) gathered works of leading researchers with the goal of contributing with serious discussions and empirical studies concerning the role of 'non-native' teachers in TESOL. Even when the majority of English teachers in the world are not 'native' speakers of English (Matsuda & Matsuda, 2001), the non-native teacher continues to struggle for equal treatment in the profession. Braine (1999b) mentions that while discrimination against non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs) is almost inevitable in English-speaking countries, prejudices against 'non-native' English speaking teachers are also prevalent in the contexts where English is taught as a foreign language. He also points out that "...ironically, the discrimination is spreading to NSs as well. Some [institutions in Asia] insist on having teachers with British accents at the expense of those with American or Australian accents" (p. 26). As mentioned before, there are many varieties of English around the world, but it seems to be believed that the United States and the United Kingdom still control the rules of English. One of the biggest challenges is related to credibility in the workplace. That is, in the English teaching profession, 'native speaker' teachers grapple primarily with establishing their professional identities as qualified English teachers, while 'non-native' speaker teachers often have the added pressure of asserting themselves in the profession as competent English speakers and then have to gain credibility as

teachers. According to Kamhi-Stein (2004), this influences the way in which these teachers conduct their classes and construct their classroom relationships. First, these teachers have to demonstrate proficiency in the language and second, they have to build their professional identity and third, they have to convince their students that they are good teachers.

I remember a recent conversation with a colleague, discussing how he perceived himself as a 'non-native' speaker in the Language School of the University of Guanajuato. He said he feels confident in front of a class, being a 'non-native speaker', but it is mainly because he has a degree in ELT. However, when he feels threatened it is when he has to work with a 'native speaker' who has the same or a similar degree in ELT because that situation automatically places him in an inferior position and all his self-confidence immediately disappears. In tune with this idea, Johnson (2002) suggests that 'non-native' teachers themselves generally lack self-confidence and focus their teaching on what they know they are best at. In a later study, Johnson and Golombek (2003) suggests that 'native' and 'non-native' English speaking teachers can benefit themselves by working together and in this way they could increase their professional development, putting aside their differences and the existing 'us' vs. 'them' division.

There are issues concerning confidence which have implications in how teachers perceive themselves. Lack of confidence can affect teachers' effectiveness in the language classroom radically. However, this lack of confidence might not be due to language competence but also to 'othership'. When compared with 'native' speakers, 'non-native' speakers can experience lack of confidence on the grounds of pronunciation, knowledge of idiomatic expressions, and colloquial language, even when they are 'excellent non-native speaker English teachers' (Boyle, 1997). However, I have put inverted commas because I do not agree with this concept. To define a native speaker is in itself difficult and has many implications. It seems offensive to try to state who is 'excellent'. What does it mean to be 'excellent'?

Boyle (1997) notes the importance of professional training and pedagogical ability when looking at the discussion of 'native' and 'non-native' English speaking teachers. He argues that:

> …the non-native speaker, trained in ESL/EFL and a good pedagogue, is very probably a better teacher of English than a native speaker who is alternatively trained and a poor pedagogue. On the other hand, a native-speaker teacher who is alternatively trained but is a good pedagogue, may well be compensate for the lack of ESL/EFL training by native-speaker language ability and may in fact be a better teacher than a non-native speaker who is trained in ESL/EFL but is a poor pedagogue. (p. 169)

There are many issues interconnected and this makes it difficult to say who is better than the other. This is not the purpose of this study. What is important in this study is to look at how people (and specifically, students, teachers and administrator at the Language Department) perceive their teachers and how these perceptions are constructed.

Also, Boley (1997) implies that "…there is still a natural tendency among lay people (i.e. non-experts in language and linguistic matters) and among people like Heads of Language Schools, for example, to prefer native-speaker teachers" (p.169). Llurda (2007) says that:

> In countries such as Spain, where many people do not speak any other foreign language, and people who have never studied English before, think that they will learn the language with a 'native' English speaking teacher, or if they travel and spend some time in an English speaking country. This is my perception; I have no works documented for this, though'. (personal communication, January 1, 2007)

Although how teachers perceive themselves is probably the most extensively developed area of study in 'non-native' speaking teacher research, it is worth looking at how teachers of English as a foreign language teachers have to ascribe themselves as native or non-native of English and specify whether they think other teachers and students perceive them to be 'native speakers' or 'non-native speakers'. In a study carried out by Cristobal and Llurda (2006), students were asked about their teachers' identities. The results showed that teachers of English as a foreign language find it natural to function in a multi-identity reality that is accepted as a natural part of their professional life. I certainly have experienced this in my years as English teacher when students questioned my identity more than once.

There is no doubt that serious research on the area has advanced theory-building over the past two decades. Although most of the research on the topic has been conducted mainly in North America, in many other places such as European and Asian countries, more research is currently being done. Sadly, there is not enough research in Mexico regarding this issue. It is apparent that this issue has been seen earlier as a topic that concerned only 'non-native' speaking teachers. However, more 'native speakers' have become involved in the study of 'non-native' speaker teachers, an indication of the growth of interest among 'native' speakers in 'non-native' speaker issues. It also demonstrates that research on 'non-native speaker' teachers is increasingly conducted by 'non-native' and 'natives' alike. A further confirmation of this increasing interest in the area of 'non-native' speaking teachers is Bailey and Nunan's (2001) explicit identification of research about 'non-native' teachers as necessary for teacher preparation and development. Bailey suggests that making teachers in training aware of this issue can help them to understand the globalized world in which they will be part of and will contribute to the area. Concepts such as tolerance, collaborative work and cultural understanding become important in this training.

2.4 Moving to New Ways of Looking at the Phenomenon

It was during the 1990s, when an important part of research on educational linguistics turned to the social context in which language teaching took place. Thus, without explicitly addressing 'native' and 'non-native' speakers issues, the works of Rampton (1990), Phillipson (1992a), Holliday (1994; 1996), Ballard (1996), and Cortazzi and Jin (1996), significantly contributed to the understanding of

the complex relationship between 'native' and 'non-native' speaking teachers, and also addressed power relationships in language teaching as well as the differences in teaching cultures. These authors contributed with new ideas, terminology, and hypotheses that brought this discussion to light. Phillipson (1992), for example, puts forwards the 'native speaker fallacy' to denote the tenet, which he feels to be false, that the ideal teacher of English is a 'native' speaker. Since then, there appeared a deluge of discussions and debates over the desirability of relying on 'native' speakers as English language teachers in TESOL contexts and the fact that every time there are more 'non-native' English speaking teachers in the world. Kamhi-Stein (2004) states the following:

> Although non-native speakers may have been English teachers for centuries, this appears to be an area hardly touched by research. In fact, even descriptive accounts of non-native English-speaking teachers appear to be scarce. This may have been due to the fact that the topic was an unusually sensitive one, long silently acknowledged but too risky to be discussed openly. In English-speaking countries, the authority of the native speaker teacher was supreme. In most non-English-speaking countries, there appeared to be power struggles between the imported native speakers and the local nonnative speaker teachers. […] having been openly relegated to a second-class position […], non-native English-speaking teachers may have opted for a reluctant acceptance of their status. (p. 16)

This view of the 'non-native' English speaking teachers, and the question of what status these teachers have in TESOL, seem to place the profession in a debate of the 'us' vs 'them' divide (Holliday 2005:6). This division emphasizes the teachers' differences, linking the relation 'native/ non-native' with linguistic and cultural imperialism with a dominant and a domineer (Phillipson 1992). This perception works against a common identity of second language educators (Holliday 2005), and studies in TESOL have made this dilemma even more visible.

According to Phillipson (1992), "the untrained or unqualified native speaker is in fact potentially a menace because of ignorance of the structure of the mother tongue" (p. 195). My experience as an English teacher in four different universities in Mexico has brought me in contact with colleagues of different nationalities and experiences in the teaching practice of English as a foreign language and I have noticed differences in the way these teachers work with students inside the classroom. Some of them have a wide range of activities that encourage students to participate and improve their language level. Others come to the classroom and teach only what books say. Also, I have heard students say their preferences among teachers for very different reasons: some of them prefer to work with 'native' English speaking teachers and others with 'non-native'. The most common opinions seem to be that teachers have a different way to teach, some are more 'professional' (for example, they come to the class with material, lesson plan, different activities) or 'this teacher is interested in how I learn and he/she helps me'. The manner in which learners perceive these differences can strongly influence their learning and their motivation. I agree, however, with the idea that the qualities that effective teachers should embody do not depend on their race or language

background but on their motivation to become good teachers (Park, 2007). Whilst I find this idea very interesting, it is nevertheless important to note that every context may be different and the conditions of the workplace will influence the way 'native' and 'non-native' English speaking teachers perceive themselves and are perceived by students. I agree with Llurda (2005) when he states that:

> One of the necessary conditions of research on NNS [non-native speaker] issues is that it should take into account the specific characteristics of the local setting where the teaching will take place. The local component determines to what extent and in what way being a NNS [non-native speaker] teacher may affect a language teacher's identity. More work is needed that takes into consideration the relevance of the local context in any analysis of the implications of being a NNS [non-native speaker] language teacher, this moving from global perspectives to locally meaningful settings. With the exception of Medgyes' work, very few authors have seriously dealt with NNS [non-native speaker] teachers in EFL contexts. (p. 3)

Thus, it is important to find out how this phenomenon is experienced in the day-to-day life of the people involves and what the impact is in their own contexts. We cannot generalize because every context may have similarities and differences, just as human beings.

2.4.1 English as an International Language

Most of the studies in the literature come mainly from countries where English is taught as a second language. However, Llurda's (2005) work gives us a twofold view: it helps to disseminate research about 'non-native' speaker teachers, and it fills a gap by bringing in research conducted in settings where English is taught as a foreign language, such as the Basque Country, Brazil, Catalonia, Hungary, Israel, and Sweden. Definitely, these contexts deserve more attention due to the global role of the English language. Criticism is commonly made of the 'aggressive' expansion of English at the cost of other languages. In political terms, this phenomenon has been referred to as the 'killer language' (Pakir, 1991; Mühlhäusler, 1996) and 'tyrannosaurus rex' (Swales, 1997), while in linguistics, English is seen as a lingua franca or a global language (Crystal, 1997).

However, "the worldliness of English" is generally assumed as a benefit and people tend to overlook the political forces that lay behind the teaching of English as an International Language (Matsuda, 2003). To contest inequality, Pennycook (2001) pointed to the need to view language use within a specific context which is tied to culture, identity, history, and politics. Such a perspective is not generally considered in English language teaching because the focus in the field has traditionally been the acquisition of communicative competence (Chacón, 2000; Alvarez & Chacón, 2001). Consequently, it becomes important to view language and the teaching of language in a non-traditional scheme, since the teaching-learning process is shaped by different factors such as culture, identity and society. Therefore, hegemonic practices through English have created the need for people all over the world to learn this language as a medium to gain access to knowledge and to have the opportunity to

participate in globalized competitive job markets. However, as Warshchauer (2000) asserted, the spread of English brings benefits to 'non-native' elites and 'native' speakers while excluding those who do not have the opportunity to learn it.

Research involving socio-political concerns in regard to the expansion of English as an International Language in Latin America is starting to grow. Only a few studies (e.g., Cox & de Assis-Peterson, 1999; Alvarez & Chacón, 2001) have examined issues regarding the role of English as a lingua franca in social relations in Latin American countries. As in other studies previously mentioned, teachers tend to perceive themselves as the providers/givers of knowledge and facilitators of language learning. In Cox and de Assis-Peterson's (1999) study, the participants, 40 Brazilian English teachers, saw themselves as "altruistic agents of good, in that they prepared students to be successful in the international world" (p. 442).

But in recent years, the idea of 'native' and 'non-native' speakers has been linked to the word "globalization", and some teachers think that this distinction that should not longer exist. The distinction is still used for hiring practices, which I think happens in many parts of the world, as Holliday mentions in his book The Struggle to Teach English as an International Language (2005).

Globalization has led us to divisions and fusions of cultures and languages. Given the increasing number of speakers of English whose mother tongue is other than English, it has resulted in an increasing number of English speakers, learners and teachers (Graddol, 1999, 2006; Crystal, 2002; Canagarajah, 2005). English is now considered a lingua franca, an international language. Speaking this language is a symbol of status and education. As Kachru (1986) discusses, English is related with success, social mobility, economic security, status, progressivism, and liberalism. This has impacted on how people perceive the learning of English nowadays. For example, the majority of parents in Mexico are convinced that their children should learn English before any other foreign language and it would be better for them to be taught by a 'native' speaker (Davies, 2007: 15). On the other hand, adults who want to study the language usually seek for exposure to the "real" English culture and language, which can be translated in being taught by a 'native' speaker. Besides, this 'native speaker' should look like a native speaker (Anglo/-Saxon, White, Caucasian). As Mossou (2002) points out, these adults are then "disappointed at first, if not upset, to learn that their teachers are not native speakers of English or do not look like their ideal native speaker of English" (p. 5).

'Non-native' English speaking teachers need to position themselves in their local settings, contest social inequity, and express their "voice" to gain empowerment and promote change in their own contexts. But, as any transformation, this would demand a "conscientization" so that individuals become aware of their contextual realities and the actions that alienate them (Freire, 2002). Chacón and Girardot (2006), over the past years, have rethought their practice as teacher educators. Not only are they concerned about English proficiency of the students but also the construction and reconstruction of their identities as TESOL professionals.

In their study, Chacón and Girardot (2006) draw on Freire's (2002) framework to address the participants' view of their world through "problem-posing" as a way to develop conscious awareness

of their contextual realities. By using inductive questioning, student teachers and in-service teachers were encouraged to reflect on their perceptions of English as an International Language and their role in English language teaching. They were asked to deconstruct, critique, and discuss the status of English as an International language and the taken-for-granted assumption of the neutrality of English as an International Language. Chacón and Girardot (2006) found common understandings of English as an international language and English language teaching. The participants expressed positive views about globalization as a phenomenon that involves the need to learn English to gain access to science, technology, and other types of knowledge. The participants' journals and discussion forums revealed their eagerness to learn English and, mainly the American culture, which they seem to consider a homogeneous culture. In addition, participants associate competence in English with progress, prestige, and power. The common belief that English provides social recognition, prestige and better job opportunities is rooted in the dominance of English dominance worldwide. As Edge (2003) pointed out:

> It has become a common place of commentary on the worldwide hunger for English that this demand arises historically as an inheritance of the British Empire and, in the contemporary world, from the hegemonic status of the United States across many domains of human life, including the occupational, commercial and cultural… The successes of those who learn English, of course, have reinforced the worldwide dominance of English that motivated the need to learn it in the first place. (p. 702)

The above has been clearly observed in Latin American countries where there are more English TV programs on cable television and TV commercials promoting "Inglés sin barreras" (an English course with DVDs produced in the United States for the Latino community). In these commercials an American guarantees that if you learn English, you will be able to succeed in America and doors will be opened to success and to the "American Dream". But there is also a market for children. There is another a course called El Mundo de Inglés de Disney (*Walt Disney's World* of English) that is promoted extensively in Mexico. The slogan says "¿Hasta dónde llegaran tus hijos en el futuro? Decídelo ahora." ("Where will your children be in the future? Decide it now."). All these announcements, plus the influence of the mass media, contribute to the idea that learning English guarantees a successful future (see Grabber, 2009; Luther, Ringer & Clark, 2011).

There are increasingly more 'non-native' speakers who want to become teachers of English. There is a potential public for prospective 'non-native' English speaking teachers and in-service English as foreign language teachers. As stated before, making teachers in-training aware of the issue of 'native' and 'non-native' speaker teachers can help them to understand the globalized world which they are part of and will contribute to the area. In this sense, English should not be seen only about acquiring communicative competence but also about being able to deconstruct the power relations and social inequities involved in English language teaching. It is easy to think of English as a window of success, prestige, and power when our views of English language teaching are rooted in hegemonic

practices supported by the education received and reinforced by the media. Mexicans seem to be influenced by the 'American culture' and most of our students in the Language Department want to emulate the American look and American dream. For one reason or another, English is present in our everyday lives. Television is one of the most powerful influences.

English has become a lingua franca among literate educated people and is the most widely learned foreign language in the world. The fact that "there are now at least four non-native speakers of English for every native speaker" (Kachru, 1996: 241) indicates the importance of the learning of English in second and foreign language contexts. And given this distribution of English acquisition, there inevitably raises the questions: 1) Who is best suited to teach these students: the 'native' or the 'non-native' English-speaking teacher? and 2) What are the concerns non-native English speaking teachers have regarding their profession?

2.4.2 Shaping Identity

This leads us to another type of literature discussing the multidimensionality of the English language teacher professional; the idea of success is linked to the dynamics and demands of a particular sociocultural and linguistic context. This context, thereby allows for sociocultural and individual flexibility and pluralism in the profession. Using this construct, the question of whether 'native' or 'non-native' speakers are better language teachers appears to be rather irrelevant if not counterproductive. The question should be how qualified an individual is as an English teacher. These professionals should, first, continue to improve their expertise (linguistic, pedagogical knowledge, and skills), and second, seek or create opportunities to discuss issues related to professionals from diverse, multilingual contexts to raise their own consciousness and awareness. They can become catalysts to the better understanding of the complex issues related to both 'native' and 'non-native' professional identities.

Tang (1997) explained that one's identity is not innate, but is affected by various social factors, such as being compared to others. In the case of 'non-native' English speaking teachers, the fact that they are compared to 'native' English-speaking teachers challenges their identity and increases their levels of anxiety and discomfort when teaching English. 'Non-native' English speaking teachers usually attribute these feelings to two causes: their status as 'non-native' speakers and their perceived lack of sufficient experience. The label of 'non-native' English speaking teachers has a negative impact on their identity as confident and effective teachers, as demonstrated in Samimy and Brutt-Griffler's study (1999). One of the participants expressed her perception that being a 'non-native' English speaking teacher means "incompetent, unqualified". Llurda (2005) found that 'non-native' English speaking teachers in the classroom, feel comfortable teaching writing, reading and grammar, but none of them feel competent enough to teach speaking, pronunciation, and listening in a context where English is taught as second language. In order to compensate for their language challenges, participants incorporate a number of strategies into their teaching such as over-preparation and the use

of visuals and handouts. English proficiency, the lack of cultural awareness and teaching experience were reported as key issues in defining the identity of 'non-native' English speaking teachers.

Holliday (2005) provides some suggestions for removing the 'native/non-native' speaker division. According to his email informants, who are people involved in the teaching of English from different parts of the world, the removal of this barrier could be aided by changing the professional image of 'non-native' speaker in the eyes of the employers, colleagues, trainers, and students. Holliday (2005) mentions:

> We need to remember how difficult it has been for people, who have found themselves the victims of this process, to struggle for identity while wishing and trying to take part in an educational venture which leads to love and hate at the same time. (p. 176)

Our teaching identity shifts in our relationships with people, with learners, as well as with colleagues. Brison (2002) argues that the self is autonomous and dependent, shaped and "formed in relation to others and sustained in a social context" (p. 41). He also points out that understanding this relational aspect is essential to learning who we are as people and as teachers. Usually, the use of 'non-' means 'deficit' or 'disadvantage' (Holliday, 2005). For some, the idea of 'native/non-native' perpetuates the idea that monolingualism is the norm, when in fact, it is the opposite (Jenkins, 2000). For some others, the distinction exists and it is a central part of our professional discourse and therefore has to be resolved.

Holliday (2005) proposes two positions to look at the issue of 'natives' and 'non-natives'. Position 1 (native-speakerism) is presented as the more traditional way of thinking, whilst position 2 is presented as the new way of seeing TESOL. That is, in position 1, the 'native speaker' teacher is seen as the dominant force with a moral mission to improve the world. The dilemma of the 'native speaker' is very different from the 'non-native speaker' students and colleagues. Position 2, on the other hand, brings a very different conceptualization, proposing that English is international and its ownership is shifted to whoever wishes to use it (p. 13).

Because teachers' beliefs and self-perceptions often influence the way they teach (Richards & Lockhart, 1994), it is important to investigate their self-image as English language teaching professionals. In particular, this refers to the low self image of 'non-native' speaking professionals as a result of their low language proficiency, as indicated in Reves and Medgyes (1994).

For a 'non-native' English speaking teacher it is very common to find his/her confidence and self-identity challenged in contexts where English is taught as second language. Self-image or self-esteem as professionals, then, may be context dependent. Factors such as sociocultural, interpersonal, and linguistic, among others, greatly influence albeit temporarily, the way one perceives himself or herself as a person or as an ELT professional. Also, who is more successful depends on factors concerning the learner (age, motivation, goals, objectives, aptitude), teacher factors (knowledge, skills, training, experience, personality), and contextual factors (either if English is taught as second or

foreign language). Other factors are the amount of available input, degree of contact with 'native' speakers' and availability of authentic materials.

The construct of the 'native' speaker is recognized and is psychologically real in the participants' consciousness; they do not express a sense of inferiority vis-à-vis 'native' speaker professionals. In Samimy and Brutt-Griffler's (1999) study, one of the participants made the following comment, which epitomizes the sentiment of the majority of the participants:

> To me, the NS/ NNS dichotomy debate is a waste of resources. Our profession must be more pragmatic in our approach towards teaching English. The majority of teachers of English in the world, and certainly in Korea, will continue to be non-native speakers. Thus, the question, 'How can non-native speaker teachers become more like native speaker teachers?' misses the point. The question should be stated as 'How can the present and future teachers be helped to become all they can be as Korean people who teach English to other Korean people?. (p. 142)

Discrimination in the workplace is another issue worth noting. Some 'non-native' English speaking teachers feel that they are not "qualified" because they have not had the adequate training or because they have never been exposed to the "real" culture of the target language (Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Liu, 1999a; Kamhi-Stein, Lee & Lee, 1999; Arva & Medgyes, 2000). Moreover, some of these teachers feel they are not respected by their students, colleagues and administrators, especially in the ESL settings (Amin, 1997; Liu, 1999b). All of this leads to discrimination in hiring practices.

2.4.2.1 Self-Discrimination

Moreover, there is an issue of self-discrimination and this leads us to the idea of self perceptions. How does a speaker of English define himself/herself? The self-image that we project can have different faces. As Skeggs (2008) states, "Identity is simultaneously a category, a social position, and an effect" (p. 11). Kidd (2002) defines knowing who one is as having a sense of similarity with some people and a sense of difference from others. In current sociological terminology the 'Other' is used to refer to all people the 'Self' or 'We' think of as slightly or radically different. This immediately brings about the dilemma which is inevitably oppositional as Kidd suggests: 'Them' are not 'Us', and 'We' are not 'Them'. 'We' and 'They' can be understood only together, in their mutual conflict. I see a group as 'Us' only because I distinguish another group as 'Them'. The two opposite groups sediment, as it were, in my map of the world on the two poles of an antagonistic relationship. It is this antagonism which makes the two groups 'real' to me and makes credible that inner unity and coherence I imagine they possess (Kidd, 2002: 203). 'Otherness' usually involves the superiority of one group over another, the subordinate, but this is essentially in relation to ethnicity and language, which appear to be pivotal factors in the creation of the professional identity and therefore the image of the 'native' speaker English language teacher. Thomas (1999) reflects on how he is perceived by colleagues and what he thinks about it: "I do not know how to interpret the non-acknowledgement that I receive from

some colleagues. Are they having a bad day, or are they unfriendly, or do they see me as a non person because of my race and my accent" (p. 10).

2.5 Conclusion

The 'native/non-native' dichotomy has been seen from different perspectives. The early studies emphasized the differences among teachers, in their teaching practices, pointing out their strengths and weaknesses. Two main approaches came to light in the 1990s: self-perceptions of 'non-native' English speaking teachers, and students' perceptions of those teachers (the latter with less research than the first). Not surprisingly, it was necessary to look at the increasing role of English as an international language in the language teaching profession, where English has become a lingua franca among literate educated people. It is the most widely learned foreign language in the world. Also, the fact that most of the teachers of English are 'non-native' speakers points to the importance of the teaching and learning of English as a second or foreign language. Due to this, the concept of 'native speaker' has generated well deserved discussion in the area of TESOL. However, it would be too simplistic to look at it from only one point of view. As the data in the thesis revealed, identity, race and ethnicity are at the core of the discussion and deserve attention to understand the complexities of trying to define what a speaker of a language is.

I have tried to explore the complexities of the definitions of 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' of English. I have also tried to question the usefulness of these definitions. However, abandoning the 'native speaker' label may also find opposition. Given that the field's conceptualisation of a 'native speaker' teacher considerably exceeds the language proficiency of an individual and is also seen to very much include the image of a 'white' practitioner, it has been suggested that without the term 'native speaker' to hide behind, institutions might no longer conceal what is effectively racism in their English language teacher hiring practices (Amin, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 1999; Kubota, 2002a, 2000b; Holliday, 2009). Linguistic considerations play only one part of the field's conceptualisation of the 'native speaker' in ELT and, indeed, it appears that the current conceptualisation extends to the idea of the 'mythic' nature of the 'native speaker' and is a mainstay of the dominant TESOL ideology (Phillipson, 1992: 192; Holliday, 2005: 24; Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Literature related to emergent issues as part of the data will be addressed in Chapter 7.

Chapter 3
Discussion of Methodology: Piecing the Research Theory, Methods and Procedures Together

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the rationale for the qualitative methodology employed in this research, drawing on literature to support my reasons, the research design used for this project, the instruments, the data collection procedures, the data analysis, as well as the profiles of the participants. I first present a general framework for my study in order to show the reader the theoretical considerations that have guided me in my thinking and which have helped give shape to the study. I start by presenting a rationale for the influences of the qualitative inquiry paradigm in this study. Then, I will briefly define what I mean by ethnography, since I used ethnographic techniques and also explain how thick description is present in the study. Finally, I discuss how these fall within the postmodernist paradigm and I will discuss how the narrative inquiry method fits into this study.

The main purposes of this chapter are:

- to position myself in relation to the qualitative inquiry paradigm, which will help shape and understand the philosophical thinking of my research, and
- to explicate the conceptual framework, which includes the description of the research setting, the justification of my preference for postmodernism and narrative inquiry and the description of research methods, data collection and subsequently the data analysis.

3.2 Basic Information about Participants

Before I present the methodological basis of my research, I consider it necessary to state that this thesis does not follow a conventional structure. That is, different data streams informed the study and enriched it. Two groups of participants can be distinguished: a core group and a peripheral group. Ten teachers, fourteen students and two administrators from the Language Department formed the core group while ten academics from different parts of the world formed the peripheral group. Tables which comprise relevant information about participants from the core group can be seen in Appendix 2. In the following section I explain the difference between the core and the peripheral group.

3.2.1 Core group and Peripheral Group

As mentioned before, this study is focused on the construction of the English teacher at the language department of the University of Guanajuato. For this reason, my core group comprised teachers, students and administrators in this department. However, at the same time I was gathering data from

the core group, I was having informal conversations via email with different people from around the world. The purpose was to investigate the phenomenon of 'native' and 'non-native' English speaking teachers and how this was perceived in other parts of the world. This was a way to help me understand and place my study in a bigger picture. I called this a peripheral group, since it helped me see issues that I had not considered before and revealed different points of view about the concept of 'native speaker' and how they were experiencing the phenomenon, as it will be discussed in section 3.5.4.2 and 3.5.4.3 . This peripheral group adds an important element in the study which further interrogates the data from the core group. This significant data led me to interview the first group further and take them to a deeper level of criticality through a more complex narrative approach, as I explain in the following section.

3.2.2 From Interviews to Narratives

At the beginning of the study, I interviewed my participants following a semi-structure interview approach. However, my contact with the peripheral group helped me to see that my interviews participants in the core group lacked depth. This led me to consider that a more autobiographical approach in the interviews might allow more space for my core participants to express the complexities around the 'native speaker' concept. I therefore approached them again, and asked them about the particular episodes in their lives that they had mentioned in the interviews, but this time allowing them more time to respond in a narrative mode. They became more dynamic, showing mutual self-disclosure when participants and researcher had a space in which to share their experiences and discover more about each other. These narratives took an average of 50 to 60 minutes in some cases. The manner in which these narratives were carried out is in section 3.5.4.7 and an example of these can be seen in Appendix 3.

One of the main issues that emerged from the narratives and in the moment of analysing the data was the issue of translation. As it will be discussed in section 4.2.1, part of the data was generated in Spanish, as it was some participants' first language. In this case it was necessary to translate the data and this became a complex process, since I wanted to keep the essence of the narrative as accurate as possible.

After stating some basic information about participants and different kinds of data and contexts of my study, I move now to explain the research paradigm that supports my study, as well as the conceptual framework behind this research.

3.3 Qualitative Inquiry Paradigm

A qualitative approach to research emphasizes a radical departure from the hypothetico-deductive method, and involves a more open-minded and exploratory strategy of inquiry. Several authors have written about qualitative research and have provided vast information on this field (e.g. Banister, et

al., 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 2000; Punch, 1994; Breakwell, Hammond & Fife-Schaw, 1995; Richardson, 1996; Hayes, 1997; Holliday, 2002, 2004, 2007; Huberman & Miles, 2002; Schofield, 2002). When defining qualitative studies, Holliday (2007) suggests that: "…these […] are open-ended and set up research opportunities designed to lead the researcher into unforeseen areas of discovery within the lives of the people she is investigating" (p. 5). This means that the researcher is free to explore the context of research without a pre-set and fixed plan. However, researcher bias can be considered as a problem though, but it can be dealt by being considered not as a limitation to the research but as a resource instead, bringing it to the open and acknowledge it. Research is recognized as involving co-operative inquiry (Reason, 1988, 1994; Heron, 1996), in which data observations are not collected on human subjects, but with human co-researchers. Thus, in qualitative research, the discourses of social life become essential. Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 3) offer the definition of qualitative research as a set of interpretative practices with no theory or paradigm, that is, in isolation. Furthermore, qualitative research is usually equated to interpretative analysis (Tong, 2002). This interpretative paradigm supports the idea that humans are different qualitatively from natural events and therefore reality is socially constructed. It is from this perspective that the present study takes on, and I will use the terms 'qualitative' and 'interpretative' exchangeable.

3.4 The Conceptual Framework

I needed a research methodology that would enable me to capture the complexity attached to idea of 'native/non-native speaker', not only in the close context of participants, but also how it is portrayed in the larger context and its implications. As the study was evolving, I realized that my study had much to do with perceptions, interpretations and constructions of the participants' experiences. I became aware of how these situations can be a complex, dynamic arrangement of many factors. Therefore, my job as a researcher was to allow participants and myself to unravel the complexity in order to see a partial picture.

I therefore locate myself in the interpretative paradigm, incorporating aspects of ethnographic research, postmodernism and narrative inquiry. This paradigm involved methods such as semi-structured interviews, spontaneous conversations and constant e-mail exchange as it will be described in Chapter 3.5.4.

3.4.1 Ethnography and Ethnographic Techniques

The ethnographic approach to qualitative research has its origins in anthropology, and has a long history in both social and cultural anthropology and in sociology (Delamont, Atkinson & Parry, 2000). Even when ethnography is a broad area, the most common ethnographic approach is participant observation, where the ethnographer becomes immerse in the group to be studied and collects extensive field notes. Classic ethnography marginalized narrative, relegating it to footnotes, hints,

prefaces, and small-print case histories (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Originally, ethnography focused on the description of cultures and the researcher played an active role in the culture to be studied. In ethnography, the researcher proceeds in a series of loops because "each step leads the researcher to reflect upon, and even revisit earlier steps" (Delamont, 2007: 211). In the area of TESOL, ethnography has been used in different studies (e.g., Canagarajah 1993; Boswood & Marriot 1994; Atkinson & Ramanothan 1995; Bailey & Nunan 1996; Holliday 1997; Canagarajah 1999b; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999; Matsuda & Matsuda, 2001; Llurda, 2005). Ethnographic research consists of gathering and interpreting information about a particular culture through intensive experiences within the culture itself. Ethnographers seek to balance insider (known as emic) with outsider (etic) perspectives. That is, we want to understand a culture or group as much as possible from an insider's perspective, but at the same time, we also want to be able to analyze it comparatively as an outsider (Delamont, 2007). The ethnographer allows himself/herself to interpret the social setting being observed without imposed preconceptions (Holliday, 1994).

My rationale for basing my project on an interpretative approach lies on the purpose of ethnographic techniques to contribute to a wider picture of a situation, rather than trying to find 'generalisable' facts about human behaviour (Holliday, 1997).

The concept of reflexivity becomes vital in qualitative studies using ethnographic techniques. Therefore constant reflexivity helps inform the researcher of those stages from the foreshadowed problems thorough the data collection to the eventual writing up (Delamont, 2007). Researchers are part of a social world where they are immersed and it is unavoidable not to include their own role in the research (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995) and they are in constant dialogue with the data. In the next section I will explain how thick description fits into my study.

3.4.2 Thick Description

The researcher must interpret signs to gain their meaning within a culture itself. Geertz (1973) suggest that this interpretation must be based on the "thick description" of a sign in order to see all the possible meanings. Therefore, I employed the method of thick description for my data collection, relying not only on teachers and students' voices, but administrators, e-mail informants as well as other participants in the educational and social context. I saw myself as a 'small voice' (MacLure, 2001) among the other 'voices' in the study, placing my own lived experienced as an EFL teacher both at the outset and throughout my research by means of a research diary. Thick description then, as a term used by Geertz (1973), is employed to explain not just human behaviour but a societal context of the behavioural practice and its discourse as well, making this behaviour become meaningful to an outsider. In this particular research, the complexity of people's lives is what allows me in postmodernism to examine my data and try to interpret the events that shape their experiences and subsequently lead to a more detailed picture of the phenomenon under study.

However, as part of thick description, in this particular research I am relying also on critical incidents. Tripp (1994) defines a critical incident by saying that:

> They are not "things" which exist independently of an observer and are waiting discovery... but like all data, critical incidents are created. Incidents happen, but critical incidents are produced by the way we look at a situation: a critical incident is an interpretation of the significance of an event. (p. 8)

In my study, I use critical incidents as unexpected events, something that I did not forseen at the beginning of the investigation which led me to reflect on situations that are close to the issue under study. I link this idea with Schein's (1985) use of the word "surprise" to define a critical incident which, subsequently, leads to reflection. Schein explains that the researcher is engaged in:

> … systematic observation to calibrate the surprising experiences as best he [or she] can and to verify that the "surprising" events are indeed repeatable experiences and thus likely to be a reflection of the culture, not merely random or idiosyncratic events. (p. 114)

When an incident that surprises the researcher occurs, it becomes the stimulus for reflection (Schon, 1995), and this reflection leads to the decision about the incident's criticality. Thus, the criticality of the incidents is based on the justification, and the meaning given to them. In this particular study, I have interpreted this concept and extended it to encompass quite large events that could go on for considerable time – as long as they remain something which stand along side the data and help to shed further light on what is going on. The critical incident in this study was the discussion at the inside of the NNEST Caucus which certainly added an element of criticality and helped me see my study and how it interconnected with other issues around the world. This critical incident then can be incorporated into the thick description because it contributes to the interconnection between different aspects of data.

Holliday (2004) addresses the importance of critical incidents in research by stating that "allowing critical incidents to drive research categories; designing new forms of theses - generally re-assessing the boundaries of subjectivity and representation, and the interplay of identities of researchers and the people in their research projects" (p. 1). In this study, I have made used of critical incidents and noted them down in my research diary as part of my field notes, alongside with the other techniques such as interviews and e-mail exchanges. One of the major critical incidents while collecting the data, as discussed in Chapter 3.5.4.5 gave me the perspective needed to focus the study based upon a narrative inquiry paradigm.

These have played a major role in the methodology of data collection allowing me to reflect on different ways of seeing the central part of the study: the construction of the 'image of the native speaker', not only as part of the first group of study (see Chapter 1.1) but also with participants from

group 2, as discussed in Chapter 3.5.4.6. Thus, the importance of critical incidents, narrative inquiry and the research diary triggers key areas of discussion and allow emerging topics to provide shape to this study, moving it towards a more narrative and autobiographical method in social science (Chamberlayne et al., 2000), as it will be discussed in Chapter 3.4.4.

3.4.3 Postmodernism

Postmodernism originated as a description of a particular architectural style opposed to modernist architecture and eventually was applied to other areas such as visual arts, politics and social life (Schwandt, 2007). This concept offers a powerful force for social change, pondering the acceptance of uncertainty, the acknowledgement of diversity and the refusal to see concepts such as 'justice' or 'society' as fixed, or as unassailable 'truths' (Atkinson, 2002). Postmodernism is characterized by its resistance towards certainty and resolution, the rejection of fixed notions of reality, knowledge, or method, and also it is characterized by the acknowledgement of complexity and subjectivity.

Those characteristics suggest then that the researcher will be challenged not only to deconstruct the certainties around him/her, but also to deconstruct his/her own certainties. Postmodernism critiques the following as impossible: the attempt to discover universal truths about human behavior, facts, and the distinctions between subject and object, (Lyotard, 1984; Burr, 1995; Cosgrove & McHugh, 2002). Postmodernism has been regarded as constructive thinking and a debatable topic in the field of philosophy (Foucault, 1990; Merquir, 1991; McNay, 1994; Moss, 1998; Chambon, Irving & Epstein, 1999) and qualitative research (Kvale, 1996; Packwood & Sikes, 1996, Cheek, 1999; Abma, 2002). Moules (2000) points out that postmodernism is a form of inquiry that encourages fragmentation of reality by means of the tolerance of differences. This creates many possible meaning through the process of deconstruction (Gane & Johnson, 1993; Dumm, 1996; Davidson, 1997). Unlike positivism, postmodernism does not look for absolute 'truths' but rather it involves reflexivity and self-critical dialogue (Rosenau, 1992) and therefore the aim is to problematize and reveal hidden realities.

For this particular research, the purpose was to problematize the concept of 'native speaker', exploring the different voices of the construction of the term and the co-construction of the concept among the different participants. In doing so, postmodernism emphasizes the cooperative and collaborative nature of the ethnographic situation in contrast to the ideology of the transcendental observer (Marcus & Cushman, 1982; Clifford, 1983; Tyler, 1997). It foregrounds dialogue as opposed to monologue and captures the mood of postmodernism, moving back to experience instead of toward abstraction (Tyler, 1986). In the present study, and in choosing a postmodern qualitative research paradigm, I understand that any reality that I can observe would be constructed by the participants and myself, making this a "social construction of a perspectival reality" (Kvale, 1996: 42). In the use of different forms of data collection, I want to be able to interpret the meanings participants give to their experiences. However, as Holliday (2002b) states:

The qualitative belief that the realities of the research setting and the people in it are mysterious and can only be superficially touched by research which tries to make sense is interpretive. It maintains that we can explore, catch glimpses, illuminate then try to interpret bits of reality. Interpretation is as far as we can go. (p. 5)

Furthermore, the use of various techniques while collecting data will enable researchers to better reveal the complex realities of hidden or counter cultures which are difficult to capture by more established means (Holliday, 2004: 226). The issue of authority is then raised in the text. Geertz (1983) claims that:

The postmodern ethnographer seeks to decenter his/her own authority, to render more visible the ways in which the text produces a particular inscription of reality, and to disperse or share the authoritativeness of a textual account by featuring more dialogic and polyvocal textual forms. (p. 130)

Therefore, the use of various texts generated by the data through such tools as interviews, e-mail exchanges, research diary, and field notes (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2001) encourages the emergence of complex realities in so far as they can be approximated (Guba, 1990). This then is my rationale for choosing a postmodern, qualitative paradigm.

I consider it to be possible to study a phenomenon such as the construction of the concept of 'native speaker' from an approach based on social constructivism, showing how participants construct their discourses and identities (Gordon, Holland & Lahelma, 2001). Social constructivism sees reality as intersubjective and social (Barkin, 2003: 327). That is, what participants do, the interest they hold, and the structures within which they operate are defined by social norms and ideas rather than by objectives or material conditions. There is a constant construction of ideas and shaping of identities influenced by social conditions, discourses and interpretations. Therefore, this research is influenced by postmodernism and social constructivism.

In the following section, I look at narrative inquiry and explain why I decided to incorporate this approach as a base for my research and how it guided me with the data analysis.

3.4.4 Narrative Inquiry Method

My main interest comes from how people talk about their experiences concerning the issue of 'native speaker', asking them to tell me their stories and learning the meanings they associated with those experiences. I came to realize that narrative inquiry provides the opportunity to understand the meanings that participants associate with their own lives and experiences (McClimens, 2002). Therefore this seemed to be the most appropriate method to follow in my research since I wanted to

know more about how participants constructed their stories, but in this case, co-constructed those stories along with the researcher.

Narrative inquiry can be defined as a conscious and ongoing construction of a narrative of oneself or someone else (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Bell, 2002). This is certainly a dynamic approach where participants uncover and understand their own live experiences and those from others. "Narrative inquiry is about building public expression of personal understanding of the events, experiences, and people in our professional lives [...]" (Nakamura, 2002: 117). In the area of education narratives are used so that teachers may talk about their professional lives (Goodson, 1997; Clandinin & Connelly 2000). In order to be able to understand and explain the statements of an interviewee/biographer concerning particular topics and experiences in his/her past, it is necessary to interpret them as part of the overall context of his/her current life and his/her resulting present and future perspective (Rosenthal, 2007). And this is what I intended to do in this research. At first it was difficult to know what to do and how to find a suitable way in which I could write about the data. Suddenly, I realized that lived experience cannot be studied directly because language, speech, and systems of discourse mediate and define the very experience one attempts to describe. We study the representations of experience not experience itself (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005: 645). Eakin (2008) suggests that in a certain sense we are always talking about ourselves to ourselves if to no one else, making plans about what we are going to do, and reviewing what we have done, thought and felt. This talking in our heads is the stream of consciousness. Thus, when making this self-narration in our head and in our lives "it might be said that each of us constructs and lives a 'narrative', and that this narrative **is** us, our identities" (Eakin, 2008: 1, emphasis in original).

There are substantial claims made about the value of narrative inquiry for teachers in both the theoretical and empirical literature on language teacher education. Barkhuizen (2008) summarizes them as follows:

- Narrative inquiry is reflective inquiry. [...] Constructing and thinking about stories in this way involves both introspection and interrogation.
- And the consequence of this is meaning making; in other words, making sense or gaining an understanding of one's teaching knowledge and practice.
- The result of this deeper understanding is change; change within self and one's practice.
- As opposed to focusing on only one or two isolated variables in a particular context, stories include many factors linked together, and the process of making sense of the stories means unravelling this complexity.
- Narrative inquiry is contextualized inquiry. (pp. 232-233)

According to McClimens (2002), the story-teller constructs a story but here the mutual construction becomes relevant. These constructions are untangled and co-ordinated by the researcher. At a very initial stage, I used semi-structured interviews, but soon I discovered that they were taking on a different shape. They looked more like live casual conversations. Suddenly, what I was hearing

became a story. Thus, indexicality was placed at the heart of the process of re-telling and recontextualizations of the story. Indexicality refers to "processes of more or less strategically invoking and reworking histories of associative meanings, previous interactional contexts and shared resources, including previously told stories in the course of narrative telling" (Georgakopoulou, 2007: 9). I will explain in Chapter 4.3 and 4.5 how these stories took shape.

It is important thus to acknowledge that these narratives are re-shaped co-constructions between the researcher and participants. From the conversations and e-mail exchanges, together with the stories which stemmed from them and the construction of these, contributed to the data of the inquiry. In the following lines I will explain how thick description was presented in my study.

To summarize my rationale for using postmodern and narrative inquiry approaches as research methods for this study is as follows:

1) I base my research on an interpretative postmodern approach.
2) Postmodern approaches allow reflexivity, as both participants' voices and my voice need to be taken into account.
3) These voices show how participants construct their discourses and identities.
4) It emphasizes dialogue instead of monologue.

3.4.5 Interrogating the Data from the First Group

As it has been indicated in Chapter 1.1, it was my intention to unravel the complexities around the concept of 'native speaker' among a group of teachers, students, and administrators, and people outside the teaching field who might be able to provide an external opinion. However, as the study was evolving, I realized that everybody had something to say. They had their own experiences and wanted to express their own stories. But not only teachers and students from the local/immediate context were part of this research. Sociologists in Mexico contributed with their points of view around the socio-political context and international participants. As it is explained in Chapters 3.5.4.5 and 4.3, they provided a wider overview as peripheral respondents. Holliday (2007) refers to peripheral data as:

> Focusing on a core bounded setting does not however preclude the importance of data which is peripheral to the setting. […] Such peripheral data serves to connect the core setting with the important contexts of a wider society, community or history, in respect to which it is of course not peripheral, thus enabling the critical 'sociological imagination' […]. (p. 38)

Data collected by Honarbin-Holliday (2006) from taxi drivers on her way to her core setting of art departments in Teheran universities, for example, show how such a peripheral setting can represent a key link between wider society and the focus of a study.

In investigating peripheral groups, and not only English teachers, I believe I could provide a different and richer perspective, which allowed more rigorous analysis and a subsequent

understanding of the findings. The peripherial data became the catalyst and helped connect the core group setting with a wider group, a wider community. I have referred to peripheral data in my studies in Chapters 3.4.5 and 3.5.4.5.

3.4.6 Particularity

One of the central ideas in this study is to emphasize the 'particularity' of the stories, but at the same time to bring them to a broader context in order to give them value. For this purpose, I found Kumaravadivelu's (2006) concept of 'particularity' very useful. Although he is using this term when talking about postmethodology, I will use it to portray the specification of stories and their interconnectedness within a larger context.

> Particularity seeks to facilitate the advancement of a context-sensitive, location-specific pedagogy that is based on a true understanding of local linguistic, social, cultural, and political particularities. (p. 69)

The purpose of such a particular, context-sensitive approach is for people to make sense of their own experiences. I am suggesting then that in order to untangle and achieve understanding of the phenomenon under study it is necessary to undertake narrative inquiry in the form of constructing, interpreting, and reflecting on participants and personal's stories. These are then my reasons to use narrative inquiry in the analysis of my data.

In the writing of this study I try to put forward a thesis based on mutual dialogue, trying to unravel the complexities around the 'native speaker' through the exploration of each story identifying crucial aspects. These aspects are situated also in the wider socio-political context in which these stories seem to be interconnected. These dialogues shift from the abstract to the concrete, from the past to the present time of the participants and present consequences. In addition, the researcher's past time as a learner and present time as a teacher and researcher are included. All of this is situated in a constant dialogue of mutual self-disclosure.

3.5 Research Process: An Overview

In the following section I describe the research design used for this project: the process, the instruments, characteristics of the participants as well as the data collection procedures and the data analysis procedures.

3.5.1 Focusing the Study

My research process was drawn from Hammersley and Atkinson (1995), Denzin and Lincoln (2000), Atkinson (2002), Holliday (2007), Jaatinen, (2007), and Rapley (2007). Drawing from

postmodernism, and being aware that I am not looking for absolute truths; I am conscious that the research is to evolve with the data, allowing different topics to emerge (Holliday, 2007). The research design is then emergent, because it will develop as the research continues forwards. This emergent design is illustrated in Figure 1.

The research started out with an initial interest of mine to explore how students constructed their perceptions towards 'native' and 'non-native' English speaking teachers. I selected the location of the study, which was the Language Department at the University of Guanajuato. My entrance to the location was not difficult, since I am part of the community, but I needed to explain the project to students and teachers and make contact with them. My first contact was with students at the SAC (Self-Access Center) of the Language Department. SAC students are those who make decisions concerning when they go to the SAC, in order to practice specific skills. I was in charge of one of the conversation groups there and this helped me to explore the topic in an informal manner. This was a way to gather initial data and eventually helped me decide how to approach students from the formal English classes and to know about their experiences when learning English and to know their perceptions towards 'native' and 'non-native' English speaking teachers. However, while this provided rich data on how students perceived their teachers, it revealed very little about their own experiences in the past, and also, I felt that I was lacking the teachers' perspective. I therefore decided to contact teachers and students from the formal English classes at the Language School, which are students who regularly attend English in a class environment.
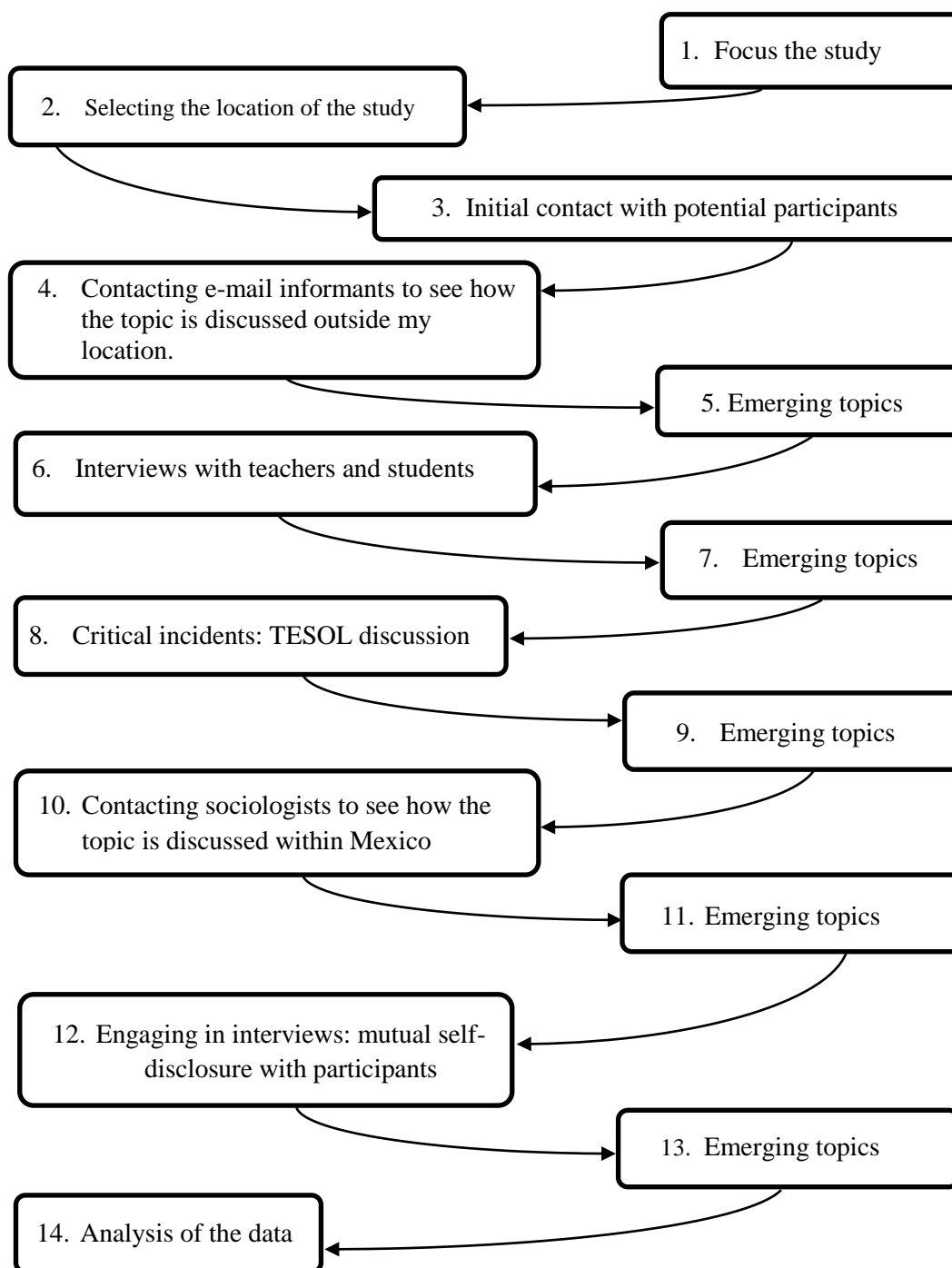
Figure 1. Research process

At the same time I was making contact with students and teachers from the Language Department, I was carrying out e-mail correspondence with people from different parts of the world, mainly teachers, scholar and administrators, to exchange opinions about the issue. This gave me another perspective and I realized that the issue of 'native' and 'non-native' English speaking teachers is discussed at different levels and everybody has something to say about it. I still did not answer certain questions about how students constructed their perceptions towards those teachers; instead, I had more

questions and issues about professionalization, construction of identities, and context-specific situations. Autobiographical data also started to emerge.

It was at the time when I was carrying out interviews, when a discussion came about in the TESOL Non-native Caucus. All of this started when the leaders of the Caucus were interested in changing the status of the Caucus and becoming an Interest Section (IS). What was thought to be another e-mail, became an intense discussion around the potential name of the IS, revealing tensions among the members and a very controversial discussion about whether to keep the name as Non-native Interest Section or to find alternatives. This situation made me reflect on my own research and issues in which I had not thought about before. If people in a group, supposedly sharing the same interests, had different perceptions and opinions about the name of the Caucus, this made me think that people would or might have different experiences and histories.

After placing the discussion in a more worldwide perspective, I decided that I needed to contact people from outside TESOL. I decided to contact people in the area of sociology in Mexico to see how they perceived these phenomena within the country and combine the findings together for a final deeper analysis. We got engaged in discussions about how Mexicans perceive English teachers, in general, and then about the influence of mass media which often places the 'native' speaker as the only one who can teach the language. Of course, this new piece of data brought about new topics I realized that I had to contact my participants one more time yet from a different perspective. This had a more biographical stance in which I was also included. In doing so, I was immersed in mutual self-disclosure with participants (Rapley, 2007), as I will explain later.

The data coming from the sources previously discussed, provided a thick description (Geertz, 1973). The fieldwork and the emerging data enriched the research by exploring different sources and areas which enabled me to combine the findings for a deeper analysis. This analysis includes a number of areas such as TESOL, applied linguistics, sociology, and postmodern literature and was carried out in a dialogic process along with myself as a researcher and as part of the data.

The intention of this section was to give an overview of the research procedures. The remaining part of the chapter will provide descriptions of these procedures in more detail.

3.5.2 My Motivation

As mentioned before, in Chapter 1, my initial idea was to investigate how students constructed their perceptions about 'native' and 'non-native' English speaking teachers. Based on my experience as an English language learner and then my role as a teacher, I wanted to explore: 1) attitudes Mexican students have when taught by 'native' and 'non-native' English speaking teachers and 2) possible changes in student attitudes over time. Thus, the initial interest came from personal experience but also as part of my education in the area of English language teaching and applied linguistics. For me there were many potential topics to emerge, and that is the reason I started focusing the study on a

certain location which was the Language School (now called Language Department) at the University of Guanajuato. In essence I took advantage of my current position as a teacher there.

3.5.3 Selecting the Location of the Study

My entrance to the research setting was relatively easy because, as mentioned before, I am part of the staff. This research took place at the Language School, University of Guanajuato in central Mexico. This institution offers different language courses: Latin, Greek, Italian, French, German, Japanese, Spanish for foreigners, and English. It also has a SAC and a library. The Language School operated as a "language institute" for 24 years, until the BA in TESOL was offered. With this new program, the name changed from "Language Center" to "Language School" and recently "Language Department". Courses such as Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and Certificate for Overseas Teachers of English (COTE), now named In-Service Certificate of English Language Teaching (ICELT), are offered as well. In the English area, the English program consists of eight semesters divided into levels beginning, intermediate and advanced for adolescents and adults. There is a strong emphasis on the communicative approach which emphasizes the ability of students to actively use English in all its forms. The English program encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning. As stated in the official web page of the Language School:

> The English program is formed by a group of highly qualified teachers that are constantly improving their teaching abilities in order to offer a friendly and productive study atmosphere besides offering high quality teaching. English is a language that opens the door to the world. Study English and you will open up the route to success.

Concerning the teaching staff, there were some differences in the number of years they had been working here. There were full time teachers who have spent at least more than 15 years teaching at this school. But in recent years, part-time teachers have been hired, and they are usually former BA students from the BA in TESOL that is offered in this University. At the moment of the research, there were fifteen teachers whose first language was English and eight whose first language was Spanish.

3.5.4 Data Collection

I now move to a factual account of the data collection. This begins with a rationale for the research settings selected and continues with a description and rationale for the choice of participant respondents and how and why the original research setting was extended. I then describe my rationale for the research methods adopted and the ethical issues considered in this study. Furthermore, the time, location, and process of collecting the data, as well as the problems and critical incidents encountered during the data collection are next delineated.

3.5.4.1 Participants

As stated before, there were two main groups of participants which I have referred to as a core group and a peripheral group. The core group was formed by teachers, students and administrators of the Language Department. Since I wanted to explore the issue of how the image of the English teacher is constructed in the Language Department, I called this my core group to mean that it would be my main group of informants. As this was a qualitative study, I was not looking for an exact number of participants to demonstrate a fact, but I was interested in exploring an issue. I wanted to understand a particular phenomenon in a particular context. Therefore, my first contact with my potential participants was to have an open invitation to the teachers of the English Department and let them decide if they would be willing to participate in my study. At the time of the research there were twenty three English teachers in the Language Department and ten teachers accepted to be part of my study, as it will be discussed in the following section.

3.5.4.2 Initial Contact with Respondents from the Core Group

At the beginning I thought my familiarity in the English Department amongst the teaching staff, as a fellow colleague, would help my entrance to the research setting, and my presence would be considered as non-threatening, because I was an insider. I could foresee advantages and disadvantages. As Delamont (2007) states, being an insider makes it easier to observe, analyze and understand the situation but at the same time it makes it difficult because, from an emic perspective, events become familiar. On the other hand, being an outsider gives you the opportunity to analyze events with 'fresh eyes', from an etic perspective. This twofold role, places you between familiarity and strangeness (Harmmersley & Atkinson, 1995). I wanted to take advantage of this role and I engaged myself in a continuous reflexive process in order to be able to look at the events from both sides by means of a research diary. The journal allowed me to reflect and distance myself from my insider position. I noted down critical incidents that I observed and that will be included along the study as part of my own voice.

As mentioned before, I first decided to make contact with the students who attended my workshop in the SAC. These students attended the workshop almost daily, thus we had a close relationship and they did not have problems in sharing their opinions. During the workshop we had informal talks about what they thought about having 'native' and 'non-native' English speaking teachers at the Language Department and they all had different points of view. However, as Delamont (2007) points out, in ethnography:

One of the biggest problems is that informants often want to help researcher, by showing and telling what they think investigators want to see and hear. Equally, informants may systematically hide things, and tell lies, to protect themselves, their secrets or their privacy. (p. 212)

I perceived that some of these students wanted to help me and, as they were familiar with my different roles within the school (teacher, researcher, and leader of various projects) they had an impression I was evaluating them as part of another project I was carrying out at the time. This project was the implementation of a new English program. Also, they saw me as 'one of them'. I was someone who shared characteristics with them: almost the same age, Mexican, 'native' speaker of Spanish and once a student of English as well. I was aware that my research focus could change at the initial stage of my research and I was open to let the data drive me to areas that I had not foreseen before. Therefore, I decided to refocus the investigation and start contacting students and teachers from the regular English classes, but at the same time, I was carrying out e-mail correspondence with people from different parts of the world to exchange opinions about the issue.

3.5.4.3 Contacting E-mail Informants Outside my Location: Peripheral Group

One of the biggest issues that emerged from the previous initial contact with participant SAC students was that everybody had different experiences. Even when this was interesting, it was leading me to see the issue of 'native speakers' at a very local level and I considered that I had to collect data from different sources, so I could build a picture, with different sources. As Holliday (2007) states:

Ethnographers advise that the researcher should begin by taking a broad focus by surveying the setting before deciding where to focus more closely. This is a time when she can begin to see where the connections lie and plan strategies for following such connections. (p. 73)

Based upon this idea, I started to contact people from different parts of the world. These were teachers who had been involved in the profession. Each of these informants had had experiences, good and bad, that have shaped their perspectives concerning the issue.

I established contact with ten from different nationalities and living in different parts of the world, such as: the United States, Spain, Hong Kong, Mexico, Kuwait, and Hungary. This electronic interviewing is part of the new trends in research and ethnography. As Fontana and Fey (2005) suggest, "the reliance on the interview as a means of information gathering most recently has expanded to electronic outlets, with questionnaires being administered by fax, electronic mail, and websites" (p. 721). Instead of having face-to-face communication, internet has the advantage of being low cost and speedy to return. "The future may see considerable ethnography by means of computer-mediated communication, where virtual space —rather than a living room or workplace— is the setting of the interview" (ibid: 721). In my case, I took advantage of the new technologies and distances were shortened by means of rapid, efficient and constant exchange of communication with e-

mail informants. There are different forms of organizing online interviewing: synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous means the researcher gets in touch with the participants in a chat room and exchanges questions and answers while being online. Asynchronous means that the researcher sends questions to the participants and they send their answers back after time, but they both do not need to be online at the same time. This is called e-mail exchanges (Flick, 2006). The form I used in this study was asynchronous since participants were allowed to take some time to answer back and we did not meet to be online at the same time.

At this point of the study, I realized that people had their own representations of reality, based on their lived experiences and the meaning they made from it. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) emphasize "We examine the stories people tell one another about experiences they have had. These stories may be personal experience narratives or self-stories, interpretations made up as the person goes along" (p. 645). These informants revealed politics and ideologies attached to the concept of 'native speaker'. The initial questions I asked were: how do you perceive the dichotomy of native and non-native speakers in your context? What have been some of your experiences? In fact, these were the only questions I planned because respondents starting posing new issues I had not considered before. Therefore, I followed our electronic communication with questions related to what each of them had said in the previous e-mail so that they could tell me more. The majority of the discussions were around a number of topics such as: the 'us' and 'them' division; construction of identities; racism; discrimination; self-perception and politics. These emerging topics, that I had not foreseen, helped me understand the complexities around this issue, engaging me in an ongoing reflective process. These e-mail correspondences continued for about a year (2006-2007), on a regular basis, and I made sure that they all gave me their consent to use the information for the purposes of this study. When I first communicated with them I explained to them what my intention was (to know more about their experiences and the meaning they gave to term itself). They were told that their information would remain confidential and some of them asked to be called by a different name and some others asked to keep their name when reporting the data.

When I engaged in these constant discussions with the e-mail informants, I decided that I wanted to contact teachers and students from the regular English courses. As I had gathered data from students at the SAC, I wanted to know how people in the Language Department perceived the phenomenon of the 'native' and 'non-native speakers'.

3.5.4.4 Interviews with Teachers, Students and Administrators

In order to select participants, I asked the Academic Secretary of the Language Department for a complete list of teachers and their schedules. Once I got the list, I went to talk to the teachers and explained the purpose of my project. Ten teachers agreed to participate in the study and, as happened with the e-mail informants, they all were told that the information they provided would remain confidential and they signed a letter of informed consent, to give me permission for using their

information for the purposes of this study. Seven teachers were considered as 'native speakers' of English, since five of them were born in the United States and two in the United Kingdom. The other three teachers were Mexican and they all considered themselves 'non-native' English speaking teachers.

Interviews were chosen as a research tool because they can generate useful information about lived experience and its meaning. I agree with Denzin and Lincoln (2005) when they say that the interview is a conversation: "the art of asking questions and listening" (p. 643). However, interviews are influenced by the personal characteristics of the interviewer, including race, class, ethnicity and gender (ibid). The objective of the teacher interviews was to know their perception about the issue of 'native' and 'non-native' teachers, and to know if they perceived students preference for either one or the other. The initial intention was to have teachers together and have group interviews. My reason was that I wanted to have teachers talking about their experiences in the classroom and contrast their perception.

However, because of issues of time, interviews had to be held individually. I consider this was a better route to follow because, using group interviews would have left me to endless discussions among teachers and the main purpose of the interview could have been lost. Individual interviews provide a richer conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee (Gaskell, 2000; Rapley, 2007) and, in this manner, can provide more meaningful data. Interviews were conceived as unstructured. Fontana and Frey (2005) consider that "unstructured interviewing can provide greater breadth than do the other types given its qualitative nature (p.705). My main reason to use this type of interviews was to set the topic and let the teachers give me their opinions. This type was also open to emerging topics, without the constraints structured interviews have. I wanted to avoid the pre-established questions with a limited set of responses, and little or no room for variation. It was important to let the teachers establish the interview location and time (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). I was flexible in that respect because I knew that teachers had little time between classes and others even taught at different institutions in a day. Interviews were recorded and teachers were aware of the presence of a small mp3 recorder. This did not influence their behaviour during the interview given that after the common greetings, teachers started talking without even looking at the mp3 recorder. It was during the semesters of January-June and August-December 2007, and in some cases a further interview in January-June 2008 that these interviews took place and each teacher was interviewed at least two times.

Concerning the interviews with students, I followed a similar process as with the teachers. Once I had explained the study to the teachers and what the nature of my research would be, they introduced me to their groups. They allowed me to introduce myself and to take some minutes of their classes to explain the study to their students. I openly explained the study to the whole group and asked for volunteers. I gave them a questionnaire (see below questions) and said that the information would be confidential. They signed the cover letter of the questionnaire if they accepted to be part of the study.

All the questions were in Spanish because I wanted them to answer freely, without feeling anxious by trying to answer in English. The questions I asked were:

1. Why are you studying English here?
2. Do you prefer being taught by a foreigner or by a local (Mexican) teacher? Explain your reasons.
3. What has been your experience in these few weeks of classes? What do you like about your class?

The reasons why I asked those questions were:

1. Question number one seemed to be important because not all our students come from different Departments; there are also students from high school and the general public. I wanted to know why they needed (or wanted) to study English and why they decided to study here (having the option to study in any other Institution).
2. Question number two was more related to the project. However, it was not easy to start with the concept of 'native/non-native' English speaking teachers. I was not sure if students were going to understand those concepts and I decided to name them "foreigner" and "local" or "Mexican" teachers.
3. Question number three would give me some other data related to what the students liked in class (for example, teaching style, activities, material designed by the teacher) and this would help me go deeper in the subsequent interview.

As an initial stage, I wanted to start with something very general and then go deeper by interviewing students and asking them to clarify their responses in the questionnaires and letting them talk about previous experiences. This was with the aim of knowing if they had had any particular experience that had made them perceive their teachers differently or if they really made the distinction between 'native' and 'non-native' English speaking teachers. While students from the four different groups responded to the initial questionnaire, I made a selection based on their responses —those who explained more in detailed why they preferred one or the other teacher. I decided to work with only fourteen students of the regular English courses. I therefore shall mention that two of the main intentions of these interviews were to find out: 1) attitudes of Mexican students when taught by 'native' and 'non-native' English speaking teachers; and 2) possible changes in student attitudes over time. For this reason, each of the fourteen students were interviewed at least two times during the semester to see if their perceptions had changed and, if so, what factors contributed to these changes. The students' main characteristics and the semester they were studying at the moment of the first interviews can be seen in Appendix 2.

As in the interviews with teachers (see Appendix 4), I gave students a letter of informed consent to be signed (see Appendix 5). I explained very carefully how I was going to use the information they provided and that their names were going to be changed, in order to keep their anonymity. I consider it important to note that at the same time I was gathering the data, I was keeping a research journal and, as part of the interview, I made notes and included a description of behaviour, trying to keep as many details as possible. These details included non-verbal communication, such as face expressions and descriptions of the environment, or what Holliday (2007) refers to as 'the human factor' (p. 65). Interviews were also unstructured and the participants could shape the direction of the interview, thus if a topic emerged during the interview, I did not force students to follow a rigid conversation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). Each interview lasted between 20-30 minutes. After each interview, the intention was to transcribe them into a written text to make the further analysis easier. At an initial stage, the interviews were transcribed in a very simple manner, with no annotations of emotions or any other conversational features. However, as mentioned before, I kept a research journal and I had my own notes about the interviews so that I could add that information once the interview was transcribed. Information about what was happening beyond the conversation (interruptions, laughs, noises) was put into brackets.

Regarding the interviews with administrators, I interviewed the English coordinator and the director. I followed the same procedures as with teachers and students. I first explained to the coordinator the purpose of my research. Being an American citizen, the coordinator has been working at this place for about six years. She has been in charge of the coordination for the last four. She agreed to be interviewed and she signed the letter of informed consent as well. At this point, she was interviewed twice, and the interview took place in her office. Once again, I followed an unstructured interview approach and let her talk. She is an outspoken person and knows the English teachers of the English Department very well. When interviewing the director, I followed the same approach. The interviews took place in his office and the main intention was to know more about the history of the Language Department in terms of hiring 'native' and 'non-native' English speaking teachers and his own perception of the issue inside the Language Department. Both interviews were held in the spring term of 2007. The table which describes the administrators' main characteristics can be seen in Appendix 2.

So far, the initial and later interviews, along with observations and e-mail correspondence, had provided some rich data. I had a better idea of the phenomenon inside the Department, but also a broader perspective and how this topic was perceived in other parts of the world. Different topics were emerging, such as stereotypes, construction of identities and the influence of previous experiences in current teaching and learning practices. However, I had not explored the issue of 'native' and 'non-native speakers' at a much deeper level; this is, at the national level and how this social phenomenon is perceived among people who are not directly related to English teaching. Therefore, I decided to contact two sociologists in Mexico to ask about their opinion. But before explaining this, I would like

to comment a critical incident that helped shape the methodological aspect of this study in a substantial manner.

3.5.4.5 Critical Incident: TESOL Discussion

As mentioned before (see Chapter 3.4.2), there was an event which can be categorised as a critical incident and informed this study. I considered this a critical incident since it was an unexpected event, I did not forsee this at the beginning of the investigation and it helped me to reflect about the issue under study. At the beginning of January 2008 and throughout February, the NNEST Caucus sent an invitation to all its members to consider the possibility of changing the status of the Caucus and becoming an Interest Section (IS). An IS, as define in the TESOL webpage, "represents an important area of research and pedagogy". Caucuses were facing extinction in TESOL and leaders from the NNEST Caucus initiated this idea of becoming an IS. A constant exchange of e-mails took place, and the discussion centered around what name to give to the IS, either to keep the Non-native Interest Section name or find alternatives. The discussion became really intense and there were people from all over the world expressing different opinions and emotions concerning the topic. The main discussion focused on the term "non-native speaker" as pejorative or no longer pejorative. People from different parts of the world pointed out that this term is, in some places, still pejorative, and even the NNEST nomenclature suggests speakers marked positions of domination/subordination. The majority agreed that this is no longer an issue of language, but ethnicity, demonstrating how complex this topic can be.

These e-mail exchanges, as Flick (2006) suggests, seemed to follow the 'snowballing technique', where one issue is proposed by the researcher or one of the participants, and the rest comment on it. Although this discussion was not part of the initial plan, I took this as a critical incident. With these discussions going on, new topics emerged and I could see how even a group of people, with common interests, as they claim to be in the Caucus, had different perceptions and opinions, bringing their own experiences and histories with them. I considered that I needed to go deeper inside into how this group of people worked. Even when I was a member of the Caucus, I became more involved, as part of the discussion. I had the opportunity to attend the TESOL International Convention in New York City in April and, most importantly, attend the meeting the Caucus organized. I met some of my e-mail informants and we exchanged opinions in a face-to-face situation. At this moment, I realized that in order to build a deeper picture, I had to look at my participants' personal experiences to understand the complexities of those representations.

Personal experience reflects the flow of thoughts and meanings people have in their immediate contexts. These experiences can be routine or problematic. They occur within the life of the person. When they are talked about, they assume the shape of a story or a narrative. Lived experience cannot

be studied directly because language, speech, and the systems of discourse mediate and define the very experience one attempts to describe. We study the representations of experience, not experience itself (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005: 645).

Taking this into account, I continue with my research plan, and as stated before, I contacted two sociologists in Mexico to place the discussion at the national level.

3.5.4.6 Peripheral Data: An Image of the Teacher

Giddens (2006) defines sociology as: "the scientific study of human social life, groups, and societies […] sociology demonstrates the need to take a much broader view of why we are as we are, and why we act as we do" (p. 4). With this idea in mind, I started to look for sociologists because I wanted to go beyond the TESOL idiosyncrasy and look for different perspectives, and in this manner, I tried to build a complex picture of the phenomenon. The search was not easy because I did not know any sociologists at the University of Guanajuato. I contacted my local mentor and she put me in contact with one sociologist in Puebla. In the same way, this sociologist invited another sociologist to be part of the discussions. Both hold PhDs in Sociology. We met in different occasions via e-mail, in a synchronous form via messenger. The first encounters helped me explain what the study was about and to inform them what I was doing at that moment, in terms of reading and data collection. Once they knew more about the study, they gave me their opinions about the different themes which were related to the focus of the research. Similar topics to those that teachers and students had mentioned came about: the role of the English language in Mexico, hiring processes, influence of the media in a national perception and personal experiences. We got engaged in interesting discussions for about three months on a regular basis. We discussed mainly how Mexicans perceive English in general and then how mass media influences how 'native speaker' teachers are viewed as the only ones who can teach the language. This new piece of data, and following what Flick (2006) describes as qualitative online research, made me realize that I had to contact my participants one more time, because each individual constructs different descriptions based on experiences and critical incidents that had an impact and helped them shape their perceptions and attitudes in a given time in their lives. From this I was able to reach the individuals in a more biographical stance and I included myself.

3.5.4.7 Engaging in Interviews: Mutual Self-Disclosure with Participants

I was particularly intrigued to look more carefully not only at the surrounding discourses, but also at the discourses of the participants themselves and their autobiographical narratives through which they made sense of their lives. I contacted my participants again and, this time, I concentrated on a different interview approach, working with narratives and autobiographies. Jaatinen (2007) defines autobiographies in the following:

The concept of "auto/biography" i.e. self (auto) is writing (graphia) about his or her life (bios) is from Liz Stanley. In her article On auto/biography in sociology (1993, 41-52) she questions such conventional division considered almost self-evident in life writing as "biography/autobiography", "self/other", "public/private" and "immediacy/memory", and argues that the researcher-self constructs and creates rather than discovers sociological reality and social knowledge. (p. 28)

According to Stanley (1993), reality is not a single one. People will construct the same event in different manners, through different descriptions. I thus opted for the unveiling of experiences, their situated differences, drawing upon co-construction of identities through narrative interviews. As the work progressed, it relatively quickly became clear that I had little chance of understanding their perception and interpretation of the situations and concepts unless I was familiar with their histories and experiences. It is within the postmodern paradigm that I found useful to explore these for my research and where participants' autobiographical narratives could be deployed.

In postmodern interviews, the role played by the interviewer as human is an important element in the interviewing approaches of postmodern anthropologists and sociologists (Fontana & Frey, 2005). These authors claim that the researcher influences the study in two areas mainly: methods of data collection and techniques of reporting findings. In an attempt to minimize the interviewer's influence, Fontana and Frey suggest the use of polyphonic interviewing which "… through polyphonic interviewing […] the voices of the respondents are recorded with minimal influence from the researcher and are not collapsed together and reported as one through the interpretation of the researcher" (ibid: 709). In this venue, the multiple perspectives of the participants are reported, and emerging topics and problems encountered are discussed rather than disregarded. Adding to this idea, the interpretive interactionism introduces a new element: 'epiphanies'. Denzin (1989) describes this as "those interactional moments that leave marks on people's lives [and] have the potential for creating transformational experiences for the person (p. 15).

At this point, I decided to adopt a life-story approach, this is, I drew upon a analysis concept, where I distinguished not only between the perspective of the biographer in the past but the perspective of the biographer in the present as well (Jaatinen, 2007). In order to be able to understand and explain the statements of an interviewee/biographer about particular topics and experiences in his/her past, it is necessary to interpret them as part of the overall context of his/her current life and his/her resulting present and future perspective (Rosenthal, 2007).

I relied on a style of interviewing that encouraged interviewees to produce elaborated and detailed answers. In order to do this, I had to offer 'my story' as well, and disclosed myself as a person who has ideas on the topic, engaging in a mutual self-disclosure (Rapley, 2007), as shown in Figure 2.

I contacted participants, mainly teachers and students again, because I had followed a rather superficial approach before. We engaged in longer talks and more detailed conversations, where both (interviewer and interviewee) shared experiences and even contrasted similar critical incidents we had had during our lives. This gave me a complete different perspective and we both talked in a language of our emotions, feelings, and experiences (ibid: 2007). By doing this, it seemed a common place

where selves were constructed in stories (even 'by' stories), but I wanted to know why and how that should be. I found it very helpful at that stage to theorize the storied construction of self using Winnicott's idea of 'potential' space (see Day Sclater, 1998). That is, these creative spaces allowed the self to take shape again and again, based on dialogue sharing experiences.
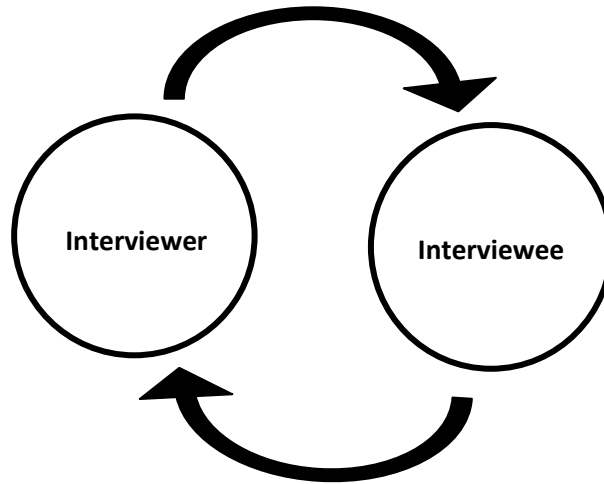
Figure 2. Mutual self-disclosure

3.5.4.8 Ethical Considerations

There are ethical issues surrounding social research, especially for the ethnographic researcher, who is interested in exploring people's lives. This researcher needs to keep ethical considerations in mind during the whole research. Such ethical considerations start from designing a plan for the research to the gaining of access to the research setting. This refers to gaining permission from participants in order to present the data, the writing of the study, and so on (Punch, 1994; Murphy & Dingwall, 2001; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). In this section I briefly explain the main aspects of ethical issues considered in this study. These are: informed consent, harm, overt and covert, and anonymity.

Ethical issues are essentially concerned with informed consent. That is, making explicit to the research participants that they are being researched, telling them what the research is about and what the researcher is up to, and obtaining their voluntary consent (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). When I started this study, I asked participants for permission to use their data in the study. I designed a letter of informed consent (See Appendices 4 and 5). Also, being ethical in research means making participants aware of the nature of study (overt/covert) and, avoiding any harm. This refers to causing harm to the participants, physically or psychologically in the process of the research or even by the research outcome (Glaser & Strauss, 1968; Punch, 1994; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). I was aware of these aspects within my research and avoided any harm of these types as much as I could. However, as Finch (1984) points out, we cannot foresee the consequences of publishing the work. At this stage of my research, I cannot think of any harm caused by my research study.

Dealing with anonymity is another issue in ethics. In this particular study, I made myself sure that the informed consent letter included a section dedicated to this respect. Participants were assured of privacy because of the naming policy I adopted. When classifying and coding the data, as stated in Chapter 4.6 I assigned a fictitious name to the respondents in order to allow the reader a more personalized construction of the narratives.

3.6 Conclusion of this Chapter

From the research process I have described above, it can be seen that my research focus shifted. As data started to emerge, make sense and take shape, my reflection on my study allowed me to reach certain decisions in reference to methodology. This helped me build a conceptual framework which will next be discussed for data analysis. Emergent themes can change the focus of research (Measor & Woods, 1991: 60-64; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995: 29-31; Holliday, 1996: 236). In this venue, I realized that the development of my research questions followed a process of 'progressive focusing' (Spradley, 1980: 33-34; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995: 207). At the beginning my questions were:

- What are the initial attitudes of Mexican students towards their English teachers?
- What are the factors that influence and shape student's attitudes towards 'native' and 'non-native' English speaking teachers?
- How do teachers' self-perceptions corroborate or differ from the students' attitudes? And how do these influence the teaching-learning process?

However, as the research evolved, my focus shifted and my research questions as well. The research questions now are:

1. How is the image of the English teacher and speaker constructed by students, teachers and administrators of the Language Department of the University of Guanajuato?
2. What are the problems with the term 'non-native speaker' at a local level and how are these connected at a national and international level?
3. What labels have participants experienced and how do these explain participants' construction of their personal and professional identity?

In the following chapter, I shall discuss the data analysis procedures as a result of the conceptual framework and my data collection.

Chapter 4
The Interconnectedness of Data: Piecing the Narratives Together

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the pertinent methodological issues considered while defining the data analysis followed by a description of the data collected in the research. First, I start by describing the process of transcribing and analysing the data, followed by a discussion about the interconnectedness of data. Also, I address how the conceptual framework is brought into the data analysis. Finally, I explain the classification and coding of the data.

4.2 The Process of Transcribing and Analyzing

In order to categorize themes, I employed a system of 'content analysis' (Krippendorf, 1980). I chose one of the participants whose story seemed to be the most revealing. I first transcribed the interviews and re-read the transcripts. After reflecting on them, I re-read my notes in my research and personal diaries regarding this particular interview and any data that could help me build a partial picture of this particular participant. When I read all of the above, I reflected on them and wrote down the most notable ideas in the margins of the same paper. I had prepared my data in a way that allowed me to make notes/comments in the margins. It included a wide margin to the right side of the page, where I could add notes next to a relevant part. At that stage, some of my data was already translated, but other was missing. I approached this first stage therefore in English and Spanish. Then, I chose another participant and started the same process. In this way I gradually built up general themes and sub-themes which later will be employed as sub-headings in the data discussion chapter.

4.2.1 Translating the Data

Converting the data originally in Spanish into English was a challenge in itself. Translation involves converting ideas expressed in one language to another, but this process entails a cultural and social decoding (Torop, 2002), and it is a boundary crossing between two languages and cultures. One of the dilemmas was if I pandered too much to the target language, I would lose credibility with the source language. To achieve a balance and find the closest equivalences in the target language was a challenge in itself. I found that some expressions in Spanish would not have an exact translation in English, and I felt uneasy when trying to translate words into English and sometimes did not find the right words to convey the meaning of the expressions. Therefore, I resorted to transliteration. I use transliteration as Halai (2007: 352) defines it: "Replacing the words of one language with the words of another because an exact translation is not possible". That is, I wrote the Spanish word or expression

used in italics in the text giving its closest meaning either in brackets in the text or as a footnote, providing not only the closest meaning, but some explanation as well.

Another issue was the general translation of pieces of data. However, this allowed me to have another level of interpretation of the data, since "Each choice carries not only practical but also ideological implications of language primacy" (Nikander, 2008: 227). That is, dealing with a first approximation to the data in terms of a pure linguistic level of having knowledge of grammar, nuances, idiomatic expressions, and a second level which required interpretation and analysis on the level of culture itself (in both languages) to complement each other. This was treated as a co-construction of the text, in which linguistic and cultural issues that were key elements in the interpretation of the data were translated from Spanish to English. I also had my translations revised by two colleagues. Even when I trusted my translations I wanted to add more rigour to them since I did not want to lose the complexities and richness of the data in the process of translation. These two colleagues are certified translators in the State of Guanajuato and helped me make decisions about when to keep a word in Spanish (eg. Pocho) and when to opt for a translated word (eg. Little Mexican). There were moments in which I had to re-read both texts, in Spanish and English, and compare them time and time again. At some point, there were extracts of which I was not sure and I showed the translated version to my participants and asked them if that was what they wanted to say. This helped me keep the the essence of the narrative as accurate as possible.

Another issue that made the process of translation critical was the manner of presenting the data in the thesis. There was a moment in which I actually thought of keeping the text in Spanish immediately after presenting the text in English. My main reason was to keep the voice of the participants as natural as possible and, as part of it was generated in Spanish, I wanted to include it in the original language. This caused a problem of space and flow of the text. Therefore, I decided to keep the whole text in English, trying to keep a balance and find the closest equivalences in the target language.

4.3 The Interconnectedness of Data

When I gathered the data, it seemed to be bewilderingly varied. The data appeared to be multi-layered, with different points of departure. The representation of the multilayers and the construction of the English teacher are represented in the below Figure. One can see the different sources of data.
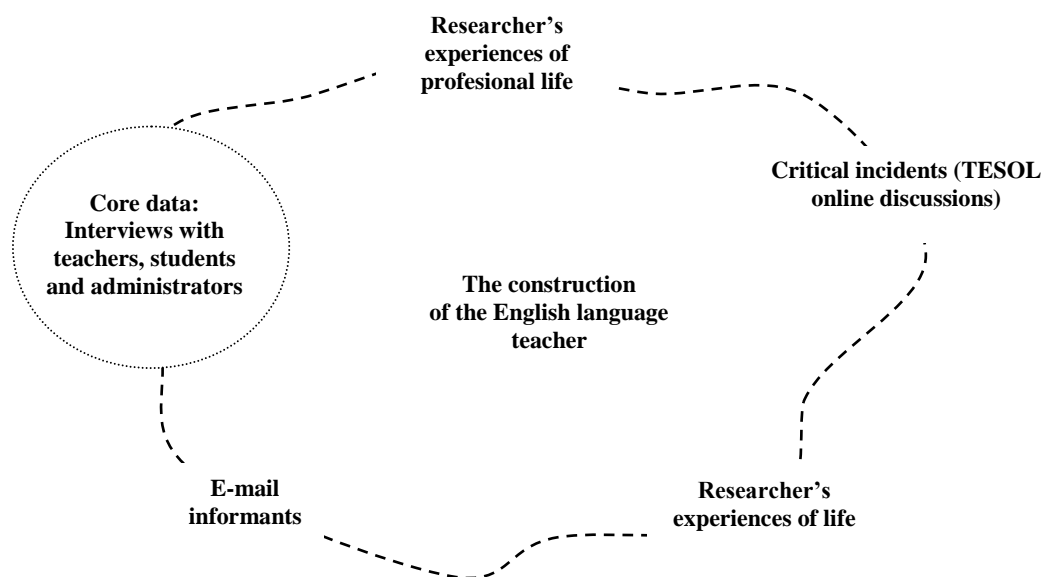
Figure 3. The interconnectedness of data

In order to understand the complexities of the participants' ideas I had to look at their individual personal experiences because the selves are constructed in stories. The once semi-structured interviews later became narratives themselves with me sharing experiences with the participants. This enhanced dialogue instead of monologue. I immersed myself into a careful and meticulous reading of the data, involving my interpretation that, I thought, would produce meaning out of the data collected. I was aware that the complete analysis could not take place as a nice logical sequence with each stage being completed before moving on to the next. Therefore, my analysis was iterative, with stages being constantly revisited.

The data showed to be interconnected in the following manner:

i) The different sources of data collection allowed many themes to emerge. The themes emerged from the teachers' interviews undertook me to explore other teachers' narratives.

ii) The interconnectedness shown in the process of information coming from the discussion in the TESOL Caucus provided me with a new type of data (which I have referred to as 'critical incident') that I had not considered at the beginning of my study and that it led me to look for sociologists in Mexico to broaden my research. The interconnectedness is presented in the sense of one leading to the emergence of other.

iii) From the narratives of some participants emerged meaningful references to particular participants. These included moments and even places mentioned in other participants' narratives; therefore this was a sense of interconnectedness.

4.3.1 Bringing the Conceptual Framework into the Data Analysis

As mentioned before, the data suggested being multi-layered, and I had a difficult time trying to make sense the data together. However, as I was analyzing the data, I realized that those interviews took the form of narratives and that they followed the structure of a narrative but the stories were interconnected at different levels. Cobley (2001) states that "…narrative undoubtedly re-presents features of the world, leaving some out in favour of others. It re-presents time, space, and sequence; it facilitates the remembrance and exploration of identity" (p. 228). Thus, I wanted to emphasize the possible value for participants to construct their narratives. To better understand the complex construction of the concept of 'native speaker' and how this touches the particular lives of teachers and people involved, I am suggesting that one way to achieve understanding is to undertake narrative inquiry in the form of constructing, interpreting, and reflecting on one's personal story. Furthermore, these different stories seem to be interconnected with other stories, with a larger context, showing to reflect context at different levels.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) identify three elements which set a context for a particular story. They call this a three dimensional narrative space. The three dimensions are as follows:

1) the participants in the story —their own experiences and their interactions with others;
2) the time during which the story takes place, including its temporal connections to history and the future; and
3) the physical settings or places in which the story is located.

Thus, any story is positioned within the matrix or space that these three interrelated dimensions create, and it is within this context that the story is understood, by both the teller of the story and the narrative researcher (Barkhuizen, 2008: 232). As Phillipson and Connelly (2004) mention, "context is crucial to meaning making" (p. 460).

When analyzing the narratives, I noticed that these stories seemed to be interconnected at different levels yet they presented their own 'particularities' (Chapter 3). As Barkhuizen (2008: 234) suggests, "interconnected" is the key word: the stories mutually construct each other. I then realized that these stories should be read at different levels. It became clear to me that a simple linear recount of the stories would not capture the complexities around the main topic. In doing so, I found Barkhuizen's study very useful and I had a better understanding of the stories and the different themes that had emerged.

The following Figure 4 shows the levels of narratives. The first level is represented by participants' particular stories. It explores their thoughts, ideas, beliefs, emotions and it is constructed in their immediate context. The second level portrays the images and stereotypes typically made by others in the work/social environment. The participants have less control here, because it is led by the

beliefs of others and the professional community. Finally, the third level refers to the broader sociopolitical context in which teaching and learning takes place. Here it is important to consider not only aspects of the educational context, but how the sociopolitical events and a broader sociopolitical context influence to give shape to the previous levels. I represent these levels in Figure 4:

Level 1

Participants' particular stories

Level 2

Images and stereotypes made by others

Level 3

Broader sociopolitical context
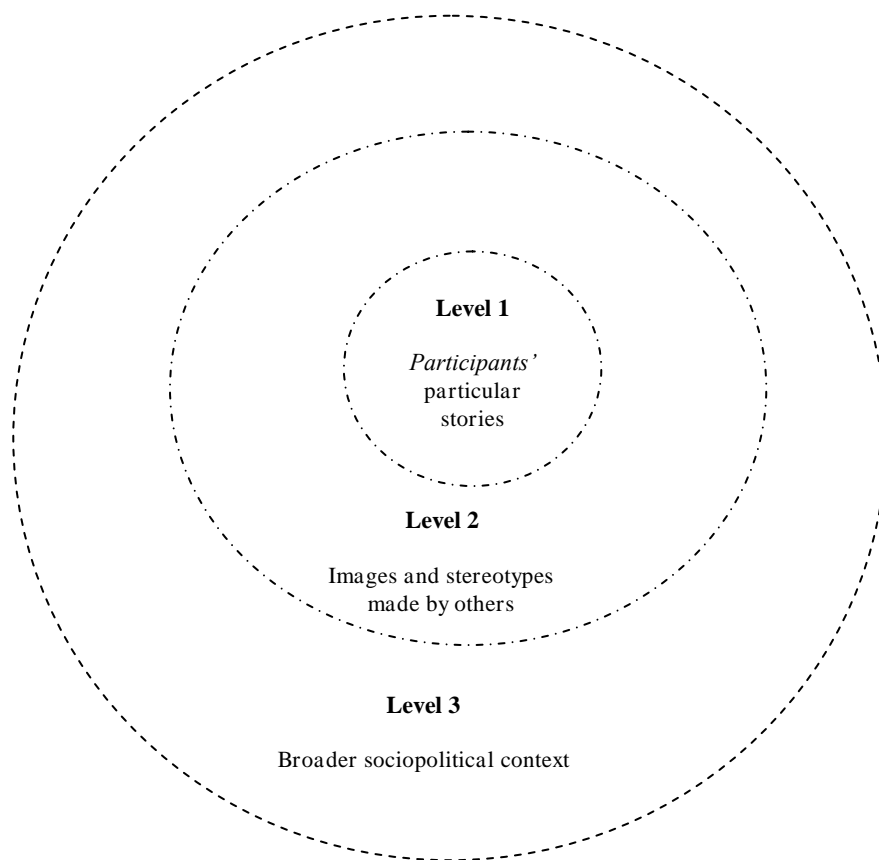
Figure 4. Levels of narratives

I began this study out of my curiosity about how teachers and students define the 'native speaker' but while doing so, I could see that particularity is a key factor in defining the aforementioned term, because everybody has his/her own experiences and perceptions concerning the issue. Suddenly, the interviews took the form of stories and those stories seemed to be interconnected at different levels. Probably narratives are simply about building situations of trust in order to allow stories to be expressed. It is through the construction of these stories that new understandings of how the English teacher is constructed emerged.

4.4 The Role of the Researcher

At this stage, I brought again into mind the concepts of attachment and detachment. In ethnography, the researcher needs to keep a balance between attachment and detachment (Quirighetti, 1999: 54-55). Detachment is a term that comes from Anthropology and it refers to the importance of researchers maintaining an 'insider's perspective' while at the same time remain detached from the culture of

study. When the researcher becomes very close to the community under scrutiny, it is said that he/she has 'going native' (Pollard, 1985; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

In order to avoid the dangers of two extreme poles, Sharpe (1993) suggests that "the ethnographer should adopt a position of 'detached involvement', aiding the validity of the final ethnographic account" (p. 1). Cohen (1984) proposes that in order to achieve such a position, "we have to maintain some intellectual detachment" (p. 227). In this study, even when the context is familiar to me, I have not taught English as a foreign language for the last five years. Instead, I have focused on teaching in the BA in TESOL that we offer at the Language Department. This intellectual detachment enhances the idea of 'making the familiar strange'. While doing the interviews, for example, it was mandatory to be able to create a space that allowed participants to feel safe enough to share experiences. In this regard, I relied on Winnicott's idea of 'potential' space (Day Sclater, 1998). That is, these creative spaces allowed the self to take shape again and again, based on dialogue sharing experiences. Even when the context was familiar to me, I was not part of the core group in a sense, therefore defining my position in this research as a 'marginally native' (Alder & Alder, 1987: 19, citing Freilich).

Thornborrow (1999: 136) suggests that identity is multi-faceted because people play different roles at different times in different situations and "each of those contexts may require a shift into different, sometimes conflicting, identities for the people involved". But when people experience issues concerning 'native/non-native' speakers, and when we look at particular contexts, particular experiences, their identities are unchained. As well, their voices and personal identities can be revealed.

It is my intention to see how a social reality is constructed and, following a postmodern paradigm, consider the researcher myself as part of the overall research setting. Furthermore, I have also attempted to incorporate different sources of data collection, as described in Chapter 3. Figure 3 summarizes the different types of data collected in order to create thick description and to be able to unravel the complexity of the social phenomenon under study.

4.4.1 Positioning Myself in the Research

This research initially aimed to identify the elements involved in classifying teachers as 'native' and 'non-native' speakers, but it gradually evolved into a journey about labelling, historical and socio-political issues between Mexico and the United States and identity formation.

I am not only concerned about my own identity but most importantly, the identities of my participants, teachers and students in Guanajuato, Mexico, and the world, whom I refer to in this thesis. I am greatly in debt to them for sharing with me their journeys of identity formation. I am aware of who they are. I am an insider. I see part of myself in their stories and I empathize with them. Their identities embrace part of my identity. So, when I analyze their stories (narratives) I am actually defining myself and trying to understand part of my identity. Likewise, my analyses and

interpretations of their experiences definitely reflect my subjective viewpoints as an insider, who has been labelled in several ways in numerous occasions (e.g., non-native, Latina, Hindi, among others), but at the same time I needed to bring the idea of attachment and detachment, as it is explained in this chapter.

Being educated in Mexico, the United States, and now in the United Kingdom, has broadened and enriched my views of teaching. Researching this topic requires self-engagement at the highest level and has helped me define my views clearly. However, the more I explore, the more I fall in my own trap. Most of the literature devoted to this topic, subconsciously admits that there is an 'Us' and 'Them', that there is a 'powerful' and a 'subordinate', a 'superior' and an 'inferior'. As Le Ha (2008) states, "we seem to create the decolonization-patronisation paradigm" (p. 26).

Being an English teacher, a constant traveller between the United States and the United Kingdom, a user of the language at a personal and professional level, has, of course, shaped my identity. This influences my views of teaching. I am an English teacher who trains teachers yet this identity of an English teacher permeates the global teacher in me. As well I am the local teacher sharing my perceptions of teaching with other teachers at a global level while developing my cultural teaching values. This integration is a fluid process which is in constant evolution, as it is shown in the following Figure 5:
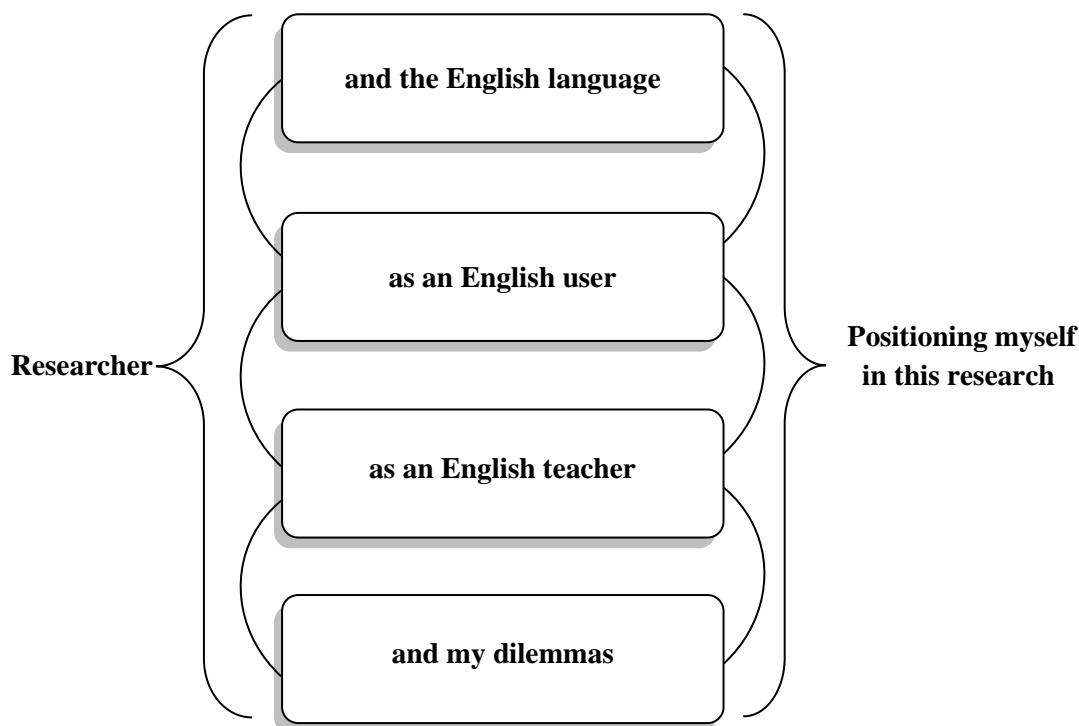
Figure 5. Positioning myself in the research

The nature of myself as an insider researcher also makes me aware of where I should be 'seen' in the process of data collection and data analysis procedures (Chapter 3). I am the insider but I am not allowed to speak for myself wherever I wish to. I have to wait until my voice is considered legitimate and valid by definitions of research. I cannot cross these boundaries on my own.

4.5 The Thematic Structuring of the Data Chapters

Having outlined the issues encountered in the gathering of data, the critical incidents and the reading, and described the data analysis procedures, I move now to the thematic structuring of the data.

When analyzing the data, I was in constant dialogue between my research question (s) and the data itself. I started the process of self-reflection, which involved me reviewing all the data gathered continuously mediating upon it, trying to find categories. At the beginning, the superficial reading of the data took me into the obvious themes derived from mainly my participants of level 1 (see Figure 4). However, as I became more immersed in the data, and relied on the narrative inquiry approach, I realized that I wanted to capture 'the essence of the story' and looked more into the critical incident of my data. As Webster and Mertova (2007) suggest, "narrative is not an objective reconstruction of life, it is a rendition of how life is perceived" (p. 3) and, as such, it is based on the respondents life experiences, therefore entails parts of his/her life. So, narrative should not be looked upon as separate from real life, but as a manner of building meaningful connections to that life, as Dyson and Genish (1994) explain:

> Stories help to make sense of, evaluate, and integrate the tensions inherent in experience: the past with the present, the fictional with the 'real', the official with the unofficial, personal with the professional, the canonical with the different and unexpected. Stories help us transform the present and shape the future for our students and ourselves so that it will be richer or better than the past. (pp. 242-243)

I realized that critical incident was very important and it led me to observe the interconnectedness of the stories at different levels. Three different discourses can be observed:

i) The teachers, students and myself as part of the local (core) group at the Language Department, talking about the image of the English speaker.
ii) The e-mail informants, myself and the global community of the TESOL Caucus, showing the struggles of a professional community, revealing tensions and perceptions towards a globally used nomenclature.
iii) The discourse constructed by administrators and the influenced of the local and national hiring processes.

These different (and yet so close) discourses are in constant opposition but at the same time co-existing in a complex relationship of acceptance and rejection. Looking at the discourses, it is inevitable to attempt to isolate factors in order to try to define how identity is constructed in the 'native/non-native' dichotomy. However, I cannot present clear-cut divisions between one discourse and another. It is the elements of these discourses that contribute to the rich constructions of identities

and through the data chapters they may appear in more than one section. The themes for the work emerged as:

1. The image of the English teacher which comprises physical appearance linked with particular phrases and labels and how these are connected with the teaching practice. The labels are constructed on the basis of the speakers' place of birth, nationality, ethnicity, educational background and language ability.
2. Beliefs and expectations of the teaching-learning process and how these discourses are connected when creating an image of the English teacher.
3. Institutional discourse and practices related to the hiring processes in the past and present at the inside of the Language Department and how these differ from the literature presented in Chapter 2 and therefore presents exceptional circumstances.
4. Historical issues between Mexico and the United States and their relationship with the labels given to English speakers, showing discourses of empathy but mainly of difference and even rejection of the "American" foreigner.
5. Problematizing labels given to English speakers in the world and in the Language Department, as well as the use of the NNEST acronym.
6. The change in roles (from English student to English teacher) and evolution of perceptions, confronting past and present experiences of participants.
7. Challenges in the teaching practice and how this impacts on professional identity, leading to a process of fastening and unfastening identities.
8. Finding a balance, coming to terms with labels.

The first four themes are discussed in Chapter 5. This chapter looks at the discourses of similarity and difference and the factors which seem to contribute to the construction of the English teacher, such as the physical appearance and the historical tensions between Mexico and the United States. Chapter 6 explores the last four themes, and it looks at how teachers confront labels and challenges and their contributions to the teachers' personal and professional identities. The themes and their interconnectedness with the research questions can be seen in Appendix 6. It is important to mention that the sub-themes overlap and there is no neat manner in which can be presented. As mentioned before, there are no clear-cut divisions between the various elements that contribute to the construction of the English teacher. Thus, throughout the data chapters elements may appear in more than one section.

4.6 The Classification and Coding of the Data

The data collection for this thesis is divided into six categories:

1. Teachers' narratives
2. Students' narratives
3. Administrators' interviews
4. E-mail respondents
5. TESOL discussions
6. Research diary and Personal diary

These categories correspond to the six main forms of data collection. Each category has been given a code so that when an extract of data is cited or referred to in the data chapters the reader will be able to tell where it came from and establish connections to its source in the appendix. The following is an exemplification of exactly how I created the coding to facilitate the cross-referencing and interrelation of emergent information across data sets in the finding chapters.

Data Category	Example of coding data	Location in Appendix
Teachers' narratives (TN)	TN1.1, Daniel/A5 TN2.1, Raquel/A5	A5
Students' narratives (SN)	SN1.1, Carmen/A6 SN2.1, Miguel/A6	A6
Administrators' interviews (AI)	AI1.1, Seth/A7 AI2.1, Andrea/A7	A7
Email informants (EMI)	EMI1.1, Sarah/A8 EMI2.1, Sarahi/A8	A8
TESOL discussions (TD)	TD 1.1, Khadar/A9	A9
Research diary (RD) Personal diary (PD)	RD1/A10 PD1/A10	A10

Table 2. Coding of the data

4.6.1 Teacher Narratives (TN)

I first transcribed each narrative verbatim. Each was labelled with a number (i.e., TN1) and a number of the interview with that teacher (i.e., TN1.1), and pseudonym assigned to the participant. This is followed by a numeric code that shows the appendices it appears in (i.e., /A5). Each potentially interesting phrase, sentence, or section was highlighted or underlined in the transcription.

Thus, a reference to opinions expressed by informants could be labelled as follows:

I have noticed that…, at first they like or are expecting someone white, an American, or a foreigner, or a "güero. (TN1.1, Daniel/A5)

The code can be read in the following manner:

(TN1.1, Daniel/A5) Teacher 1, number of narrative 1, name of participant Daniel, located in Appendix 5.

Then, the analysis under categories of each extract that seemed to be relevant can be read as follows:

Data	Category
I have noticed that…, at first they like or are expecting someone white, an American, or a foreigner, or a "güero". (TN1.1, Daniel/A5)	The image of English teachers Sub category: the image of the other

4.6.2 Student Narratives (SN)

A similar technique was employed for organizing the data collected during the student narratives. Each narrative was given a number per participant (i.e., SN2) and a number of the interview with that participant (SN2.1), and an invented name assigned to the participant. As in the teacher narrative, this is followed by a numeric code that shows the appendices it appears in (i.e., /A6).

Thus, a reference to opinions expressed by informants could be labelled as follows:

My ideal English teacher?... I would love to have a Mexican teacher… but he should know the language 100%. I don't know if I told you before but I hate whatever has to do with gringos, they feel they can control the world… that's why I would prefer a Mexican teacher, because I think I feel more confident when asking some questions, and I would feel like he is my co-national, but he has to know the language 100%. (SN7.2, Maria/A6)

This can be read as follows:

(SN7.2, Maria/A6) Student 7, number of narrative 2, name of participant, Andrea, located in Appendix 6.

Then, the analysis under categories of each extract that seemed to be relevant can be read as follows:

Data	Category
My ideal English teacher? ...I would love to have a Mexican teacher…but he should know the	Category: The image of the English teacher and speaker

Data	Category
language 100%. I don't know if I told you before but I hate whatever has to do with gringos, they feel they can control the world… that's why I would prefer a Mexican teacher, because I think I feel more confident when asking some questions, and I would feel like he is my co-national, but he has to know the language 100%. (SN7.2, Maria/A6)	Sub category: Stereotyping the English teacher

4.6.3 Administrators Interviews (AI)

A similar technique was employed for organizing data collected during the interviews with administrative people (Former Director and Coordinator). Each interview was given a number per participant (i.e., AI2) and a number of the interview with that participant (AI2.1), and pseudonym assigned to the participant. As previously explained, this is followed by a numeric code that shows the appendices it appears in (i.e., /A7).

> *Most of the people I'd say are serious about their teaching, they're in programs about education, and about teaching English of a foreign language in the BA they're in the ICELT course. They're in the TESOL programs; they're currently in* their ELT masters programs (AI 1.1, Sue/A7)

This can be read as follows:
(AI2.1, Sue/A3) Administrator interview 1, first interview with Sue, located in Appendix 7.

Then, the analysis under categories of each extract that seemed to be relevant can be read as follows:

Data	Category
Most of the people I'd say are serious about their teaching, they're in programs about education, and about teaching English of a foreign language in the BA they're in the ICELT course. They're in the TESOL programs; they're currently in their ELT masters programs. (AI, 1.1, Sue/A7)	Educational background Sub-category: the community of the Language Department.

4.6.4 E-mail Informants (EMI)

A similar technique was followed for organizing data collected from e-mail informants and peripheral respondents. Each e-mail informant was given a number per participant (i.e. EM2) and a number of the e-mail exchange with that participant (EM2.1), and a pseudonym assigned to the participant in

some cases. Some other informants wanted to be referred to with their actual name. As previously explained, this is followed by a numeric code that shows the appendices it appears in (i.e., /A8).

> I disagree with the terms non-*native/native. The connotations of the word 'non-native' are* negative —it is like calling me a non-*man! The hyphenated word 'non-native' implies a 'deviant',* a non-standard. I do think these terms apply no longer. With globalization, the world has shrunk *plenty to make English a global language and if English is now an 'international' language then* who are non-native speakers? (EMI 2.1, Sarahi, A8)

This can be read as follows:
(EMI 2.1, Sarahi/4) E-mail informant 2, e-mail correspondence number 1, name of participant, Sarah, located in Appendix 8.

The analysis under categories of each extract that seemed to be relevant can be read as follows:

Data	Category
I disagree with the terms non-native/native. The connotations of the word 'non-native' are negative —it is like calling me a non-man! The hyphenated word 'non-native' implies a 'deviant', a non-standard. I do think these terms apply no longer. With globalization, the world has shrunk plenty to make English a global language and if English is now an 'international' language then who are non-native speakers? (EMI 2.1, Sarahi, A8)	The struggles of a community Sub category(ies): The paradoxes with the nomenclature; Pejorative terminology

4.6.5 TESOL Discussions

Another source of data came from the online TESOL discussion. In order to organized this data, each participant was given a number (i.e., TDI2) and a number of the e-mail exchange with that participant (TD12.1), and pseudonym assigned to the participant. As previously explained, this is followed by a numeric code that shows the appendices it appears in (i.e., /A9).

> My reasons are both personal and professional. I am a non-native speaker of English, and I am currently training non-native students to become teachers of English. In this global context, the ownership of English language and the native-nonnative dichotomy is being used at times as a sort of gate keeping tools. The context is one that clearly privileges the native speakers and this dominant position is secured at all costs. My students are constantly reminded that they are not

native speakers —hence triggering marked positions of domination/subordination. (TD3.1, Khadar/A9)

This can be read as follows:
(TD3.1, Khadar/A9). TESOL Discussion 3, e-mail exchange number 1, name of participant, Khadar, located in Appendix 9.

The analysis under categories of each extract that seemed to be relevant can be read as follows:

Data	Category
My reasons are both personal and professional. I am a non-native speaker of English, and I am currently training non-native students to become teachers of English. In this global context, the ownership of English language and the native-nonnative dichotomy is being used at times as a sort of gate keeping tools. The context is one that clearly privileges the native speakers and this dominant position is secured at all costs. My students are constantly reminded that they are not native speakers —hence triggering marked positions of domination/subordination. (TD3.1, Khadar/A9)	The image of the English teacher Sub category (ies): Hiring practices

4.6.6 Research and Personal Diaries

Two diaries were used, my research and personal diaries. A similar technique was followed for organizing data collected from them. Each entry was given a number (i.e., RD20 or PD15) and followed by a numeric code that shows the appendix it appears in (i.e., /A10). The following is an example:

How on earth I would give a percentage to my level of English if I don't even think I could do it in Spanish. This idea of conferring percentages to our proficiency is absurd and it is surprisingly very rooted in our minds that it is even stipulated in official job application forms. How can we fight against these beliefs if society has enhanced them? (PD8/A10)

The code can be read in the following manner:
(PD8/A10) Personal diary entry 8, located in Appendix 10.

The analysis under categories of each extract that seemed to be relevant can be seen in the following:

Data	Category
How on earth I would give a percentage to my level of English if I don't even think I could do it in Spanish. This idea of conferring percentages to our proficiency is absurd and it is surprisingly very rooted in our minds that it is even stipulated in official job application forms. How can we fight against these beliefs if society has enhanced them? (PD8/A10)	Beliefs and expectations Sub category: Pressure from the community

4.7 Conclusion of this Chapter

In this chapter I have explained how the narrative approach seems to suit my data analysis and how the data has been classified and coded to facilitate its reading in the subsequent chapters. I move now to the discussion of the data. As mentioned before, there are no clear-cut divisions between the various elements that emerged from the data and that seem to contribute to the construction of the English teacher. Thus, throughout the data chapters elements may appear in more than one section.

Chapter 5
A Discourse of Similarity and Difference

5.1 Introduction

This chapter is the first of two which presents the research findings. It represents the first of two major themes, as described in Chapter 4. This chapter begins by presenting how participants speak about physical appearance and its impact on various aspects of their practice of teaching. It then, presents data which appears to suggest that teachers and students have their own expectations, which are a facet of their teaching-learning process and therefore also a part of their construction of a discourse of similarity and difference. Next, the findings about the institutional discourse and practices about hiring at the inside of the Language Department and how these processes have changed over time due to national policies, imposed by the Federal Government, and how this has shaped the image of the English teacher of the Department. The chapter concludes with the findings about how participants reveal a sense of similarity and difference around the historical socio-political relationship between Mexico and the United States. Then, expanding on how this contributes to identity shaping on ethnicity, language proficiency and sense of belonging.

Concepts of image, beliefs and expectations, labels, hiring practices, ethnicity and language seem paramount in this study. Therefore, in order to establish some form of contrasting perspective to the discourses generated by this core group of participants in the Language Department, it seems useful to also provide some insight into the views of the peripheral group of participants (e-mail informants such as teachers, researchers, as well as members of the NNEST Caucus). This will serve the purpose to see how they conceptualise the image of the English teacher and the subsequent identities. While acknowledging the brevity of the ideas gathered from this peripheral group it is worthwhile noting that they are groups rooted in different educational cultures in different parts of the world and useful in providing some perspective on the core data (teachers, students and administrators at the Language Department). For this reason, different voices from different groups of participants will emerge to tell us their stories and see how they interconnect at different levels.

5.2 Physical Appearance and the Practice of Teaching

Within this sub-theme, five out of the ten teachers, four out of the fourteen students, two administrators and three out of the ten email respondents in my study generally indicate that they have formed an image of the English teacher which comprises physical appearance. A significant number of them also link this with particular descriptive phrases, which is derived from their experience of the profession. A first important contribution is related to the belief of having a set of characteristics that distinguish participants from one another. Examples of this are presented and they show how

participants react while having a sense of similarity with some people and a sense of difference from others.

For example, Julio, a Mexican teacher with more than eight years of experience and who is currently teaching at the Language Department, narrates a moment when he felt threatened by the image of the 'Other' in a previous workplace:

> I remember when a new *teacher was hired. At that time I was the most… 'qualified' teacher in the* Department, because I had a Diploma, a BA in English teaching and some years of experience. When this new teacher arrived, I immediately felt threatened because he was tall, had blue eyes, *blond hair… had the perfect image of the English speaker! Honestly I thought he was going to* take over, because students were going to ask to have more classes with him instead of me and this was going to have an impact on my salary too. (TN2.2, Julio/A5)

Despite his training and his qualifications, Julio felt threatened by what he called "the perfect image of the English speaker". Although this is another example of how physical appearance has an impact on how the self becomes conscious of itself, this is taken a step further. It appears that the physical appearance was the most outstanding characteristic of this person and Julio started making assumptions. It develops into a sense of inferiority for Julio right after perceiving this 'powerful presence' in his territory. He also started thinking of his future in terms of money. However, there was another development in his narrative, when he saw more than the physical appearance and focused his attention on the teacher's qualifications:

> The coordinator asked this teacher to observe my classes and asked me to be like his tutor in the *training process. But… surprise! He didn't have the teaching skills, he was having troubles while* *explaining grammar and he tended to focus on irrelevant things… I saw h*im very insecure in front of *the group… Then, everything changed, I was in control again. And I felt better when students asked* *me to clarify some points they didn't understand while having class with this other teacher, it made* me feel my students trusted me more. (TN2.2, Julio/A1)

Even with his teaching experience, he compared himself with this new teacher, who was a 'native speaker', and he initially placed himself in a subordinate position. It appeared that Julio constructed his own image in relation to difference, specifically in opposition to a 'native speaker'. It is important to stress that when Julio eventually perceived this other teacher as weaker than he was in some areas of teaching; he was then able to perceive himself in an unexpected power position. From this, I can think of how an isolated incident such as this helped Julio make up his mind and recovered his self-confidence, not only in terms of his personal self-esteem but also in terms of being professional as well.

What has been learned under the heading of physical appearance and the practice of teaching leads me to look at the image of the English teacher and speaker from a different angle. This

encompasses particular descriptive phrases not only participants describing themselves but also as a more complicated issue than I had thought at the beginning of the study.

Another example of this is found in the following extract. Ayan, part of the peripheral group of e-mail informants, is a Bangladeshi teacher who has spoken English all her life. She considers English as her native language and recalls a moment when she was living in the United States and how the circumstances made her reflect on her skin colour.

> When I taught ESOL in the States (grades 6-12 in Binghamton, NY) most of my students were refugees from Kurdistan, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Iraq. When the students and parents met me, the response I received from them was one that I never thought of before. They were in a way relieved to see someone with my skin color, and background (having lived in Kuwait and being Muslim) come in and teach their children. The cultural background I came with, in addition to my English skills, was a huge bonus for them. I wonder how the students would have perceived me with the same background, but not being fluent in English? (EMI5.1, Ayan/A8)

Her statement was one of a number which, in making reference to physical appearance, skin colour gave her a clear indication that her own educational background and English skills would be questioned. Even when she was accepted by the children and parents, and her background was highly valued, she was still questioning these in terms of her skin colour.

This coincides with another participant. In the TESOL convention held in Boston in the year 2010, a teacher who comes from Peru, but has lived in the United States for more than 20 years, makes this emphasis as well, and she stated the following:

> I have lived in the States the last 20 years of my life and since the moment that I arrived here, I have always brought up the issue [of native and non-native speakers] in my classes. I think it is important to talk about the non-native issues in our classrooms and educate people about what implications these labels bring, but also to advocate for the profession so we can educate our administrators. Because of the way I look, they [administrators] never give me advanced levels, *they always put me in beginners because they are afraid that I don't have the competence to* teach higher levels, but also, they are afraid that students can complain because they were given a non-*native teacher... it's illogical.* (RD20/A10)

For this teacher, the hiring process in different universities is still carried out based on the notion of the ideal 'native speaker', but with an exact image in mind. Administrators seem to value ethnicity, nationality and 'native speaker look' more than qualifications and competence in the language. However, it is not restrictive to administrators. She also makes reference to students complaining because they are not placed in a classroom where a 'native speaker' is the teacher. This coincides with Arturo, a 21-year-old student at the Language Department, who is in first semester and is very clear about his own preference for a 'native speaker' teacher:

I prefer a native speaker, English native speaker because the Mexican is like if he was another *student… and to know that he is Mexican and* **he looks like me***, well, you know… also, to know that if you tell him something and that he can respond in Spanish… well, also the foreigner might* answer back in Spanish, but in his Spanish. (SN3.2, Arturo/A6, his emphasis)

This statement seems to reinforce the idea that a 'native speaker' is much more highly valued. What is emerging here is that both teachers, 'native' and 'non-native', and students, evaluate their teachers' respective performance in terms of a desirable look, mostly imposed and reinforced by the society and as well reinforced by themselves. What becomes apparent is that skin colour can serve as a quality to evaluate the teaching skills. I should note that their affirmations have certainly echoed in other participants who refer to the same issue. Different skin colours are presented in all fields, but the fact we are still viewed (and viewing) as exceptions shows that we have a long way to go. And it is not only teachers evaluating their teaching performance, students also bring into the discussion that an 'ideal image' suits better their expectations of learning English. As in the case of Arturo, "to know that he (my teacher) is Mexican and he looks like me", seems to show the lack of interest in deepening his knowledge about how the practice of teaching implies more than "having the right look". All these comments seem to reinforce the feelings of 'superiority' in terms of the 'desirable image'. This refers to 'looking native' to remain misinformed and to continue to see the 'non-native' or in this case, the Mexican as 'inferior'.

This idea of "having the right look" can be further explored in the following comment by Sue, a teacher originally from the United States and who has been in an administrative position for almost five years:

You know they [student*s] don't like when you say I don't know…* But there are other cases when I say... For example when I was teaching sixth semester which was upper intermediate level and… There was a lot for me to teach in that course because there is a lot of grammar to teach, and I *don't like to teach a lot of grammar to them and they were asking me quest*ions and I would say *"oh gosh! I'm not sure, you guys, just a second" and then I'd get out the teachers' book and look up for the questions… or I'd give them examples of the grammar on the board from the book to deduce and from that some other complications would come up or I say "I'm not sure, you guys, we can talk about this tomorrow" and then we would talk about it later. I mean no all the n*ative teachers like to do that but **I have the feeling that my blue eyes and my native accent are sort of a way that helps me have success in these situations.** And the reason I say that is because of the *teachers who come here and they…* give up more nervousness, worriness when they ask you. (AI1.1, Sue/A7, my emphasis)

This particular excerpt seems to show how the "right look" can be seen as an advantage in certain situations in which a teacher does not know how to answer questions that come up in the classroom. Here, the practice of teaching is linked to the 'desirable image' and Sue seems to believe that gives her an advantage and it seems to justify her actions in the classroom.

I found this situation intriguing and I could contrast it with Yun's, an e-mail informant. She is an English teacher whose parents come from Korea but she is originally from the States. She makes a concrete reference to how she has been classified as a less competent speaker of the language because of the way she looks:

> *I was born in Wisconsin, I speak English as first language, I don't even speak Korean… but* because of the way I look and my name, I have always been classified as a non-native. I am *always given less classes than other teachers… this is really upsetting, I can't change my looks!* (EMI7.1, Yun/A8)

Yun expresses her discomfort concerning the way she looks has had an impact on her practice of teaching. She is a teacher with more than ten years of experience but this is not enough in the eyes of her superiors. In this subtheme, what is beginning to emerge is a relationship between particularity and interconnectedness, or what is particular to individual respondents, and interconnectedness, or what is shared between them. While it may not seem particularly significant to consider an isolated case of reference to skin colour and physical appearance, this takes on a different level of importance when related across the accounts of my respondents (from the peripheral group and the core group).

People from different places (Mexico, the United States and Kuwait) in this study, make reference to the same issue of physical appearance as one of the recurrent conflicts they face in the teaching profession. However, a factor which seems to contribute to the teachers' self-perception and further construction of identity (as it will be discussed in Chapter 6) is to be marginalized. Some participants seemed to be convinced that they should change their looks in order to fit into the desirable image of the native speaker. Others seem to take this "native look" to their advantage. This certainly has an impact on teachers' confidence and self-esteem. Furthermore, this perfect image of the native speaker is usually reinforced in the literature (see Chapter 2) and in the mind of students as well. This takes us to the issue of labelling, as it will be discussed in the following section.

5.2.1 Giving Labels

The above theme draws attention to particular characteristics used by participants to refer to teachers and qualify them in terms of their physical appearance. I shall refer to them as labels in this section. A very particular discourse is discussed in order to see how participants refer to themselves and others.

5.2.1.1 'Güero' (Fair-Skinned)

A first contribution to the way teachers perceived themselves and others was the use of descriptive phrases when defining the English speakers. For example, Daniel, a Mexican teacher who has worked in the Language Department for more than twenty years, next evidences his uses of a particular word to classify all of his foreign colleagues.

> A güero is any foreigner for me... tall, blond, blue eyes, typical foreigner... I use this word without thinking *of a particular nationality... However, I'm very careful while using it. I use it even with the güeros if I see they don't feel offended.* (TN1.2, Daniel/A5).

Here it is important to note that the word güero means 'fair-skinned' or 'white'. A güero is a word that indicates a high status, not only in terms of defining a foreigner, but in any social situation in which interactions are taking place among people from different skin colours. As in many other countries, Mexico is a place with people of different skin colour. The majority are dark skinned. However, being fair-skinned is perceived as belonging to an upper class. Daniel even mentioned in one part of his narrative that he has had bad experiences with some teachers when he has used the term 'güero'. He recalls this in the following excerpt:

> *One day I saw a teacher going upstairs and the first thing that came to my mind was saying "Hey güera!", but to my surprise the teacher turned around and replied "Hey perro! [dog]"... I didn't* see that coming, and *I took it as if she felt offended because I called her "güera". Since then, I'm very careful when I call someone by "güero".* (TN1.2, Daniel/A5)

Daniel's reference to skin colour suggests he gives foreigners a high status, but at the same time it is an implicit way of strengthening these feelings of distinction between the 'us' and 'them', or 'local' and 'foreign' colleagues. When he remarks being careful while using this word, it seems to me that he is aware of making this distinction but at the same time he does not want his colleagues to feel differentiated or alienated. Daniel assures that his use of the word is not for making division or even trying to differentiate the teachers from Mexicans, but a colloquial form to call his colleagues.

5.2.1.2 'Pocho' and Foreigner

The use of particular descriptive phrases leads me to look at the image of the English teacher and speaker from a different angle. It encompasses labels used by participants describing themselves. It also presents this as a more complicated issue, one that I had not thought of at the beginning of the study.

This became evident when Pam, a student who has had the experience of being taught by different teachers at the Language Department, seems to make a clear distinction when categorizing and describing her teachers in three areas. This allows for a new label to emerge, as she explains: "Well, I have been taught by teachers.... Mexicans, foreigners and *pochos*" (SN2.3, Pam/A6). When I asked her how she defined a pocho[1], she said:

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[1] The word derives from the Spanish word pocho, used to describe a fruit that has become rotten or discoloured (Dávila, 2008). It is used to describe native-born Mexicans who received little or no formal education in Mexico and move to the States, pick up the language through daily interactions and start showing lack of fluency in Spanish.

Those are the ones who were born in Mexico but went to the US and then came back. They are not *'gringos', they are still Mexicans, but they kind of have the experience of living in a foreign* country, but their English and Spanish **are a little broken**. (SN2.3, Pam/A6, her emphasis)

Being intrigued in the way that she seemed to classify her English teachers, I wanted to know more about her definitions of each label. When I asked her how she defined a foreigner, she went further and put emphasis not only on the physical appearance, but also on the skin colour and family background:

A foreigner is someone whose parents are foreigners, he was born in an English speaking country and has lived all his life there, he has blue eyes, is tall, blonde... that is a foreigner. (SN2.3, Pam/A6)

As it seems to be revealed in the data, there is an established imaged in the mind of the participant in which she has already stereotyped the image of an individual with certain given characteristics. It seems from this observation of Pam that she believes that a teacher of English can be classified into specific categories. Her observational 'evidences' have even made her create an image in her head. This may suggest that she has chosen to pay rather closer attention to the physical and cultural image she has created of the teachers than to focus on their nationality. It might reflect nothing more than her own 'imaginative conception' of speakers of a given language. This may indicate her preconception even before being actually taught. Her 'evidence' is that physical appearance and the idea of "broken languages" are the elements that show her 'evidence' of who can be a native speaker, a pocho or a foreigner. This may further strengthen her preconception in the classification of teachers. However, this classification goes beyond physical appearance and involves ethnicity. This assumption seems to position the 'non-native speaker' in an interesting schema, differing from all those categorizations both culturally and/or physically.

However, the data revealed that in the eyes of participants, an English teacher can become someone else because of unexpected events, showing how subjective the classification can be. Adriana, a student who has been studying English for several years at the Language Department, recounts the teachers she has had in the past. It is intriguing to see how she can classify her teachers with a particular image in mind:

I think I have only had one foreigner… well, the "pochos", no? […] The teacher in third semester was Mexican. My teacher in fourth semester was "pocho". My teacher in fifth [semester] *was indeed foreigner. The one in sixth was "pocho" as well, and my current teacher is Mexican.* (SN9.4, Adriana/A6)

When asking her to define pocho, she stated:

*Oh, well, that they have lived there… that they have lived there for a long time. I*n fact, all their life, well, those teachers have lived there all their lives and just came back [to Mexico]. Their parents are from here [Mexico], but they have lived there... They [the pochos] cannot be called Mexicans because they bring a complete diffe*rent culture, I mean…they cannot be foreigners* either. (SN9.4, Adriana/A6)

When asking her to define a "foreigner" she stated:

I mean that he was born there [in the States] and that his parents were also foreigners, I don't know, all his ancestors were from outside the country [Mexico], foreigners. (SN9.4, Adriana/A6)

This classification goes beyond physical appearance or nationality. For Adriana, being a 'pocho' is not being a fully foreigner, it is like being almost "there" but not "quite". However, there was an evolution in her narrative when describing a particular moment when a teacher's condition of being "foreigner" was about to change:

Well, when… as I go to church, I saw the banns of marriage and [I saw] that he was going to marry a Mexican, s*o, I said "ah, ok, he is going to be a Mexican too! He is going to be one of us", but… but he is naturally a foreigner.* (SN9.4, Adriana/A6)

For Adriana the fact that the teacher was going to marry a Mexican, in a certain degree, might give the idea that he would become a Mexican as she is, but he would still have the label of being a "foreigner". This exemplifies how identity is not static and that there are different reasons why we can change our way of thinking about someone and ourselves. This particular event of "marrying a Mexican" could give the teacher the Mexican status by default, or at least at first instance it might be believed that it is an immediate reaction, but not quite, as if Adriana distances the teacher from the Mexicans and proliferates his condition of "foreigner", as in Pam's narrative. She seems to adopt him as a guest because of this marriage.

An e-mail informant from Mexico, David, makes also reference to pochos and comments on a situation he is facing in a new language department where he is working in a nearby city. He makes a distinction between natives, non-natives and pochos:

*In my department there are pochos teaching English… For me pochos are those who ar*e not fully Americans, but they have lived there [in the United States] and they think they speak English and are superior, but they still have something Mexican in them. I notice that students are more motivated to speak with them than with the natives. The natives are only for the pronunciation but students are sometimes afraid of them, the Mexicans are for explaining grammar mainly. (EMI10.2, David/A8)

My impression of David's comment is that he repeatedly reflected on the image of the other, and has conferred a sense of superiority of pochos over Mexicans, yet placing the native speaker above the image of pochos. I found it interesting how each type of classification is linked with a teaching skill in particular. Pochos seem to have an influence on the motivation of students; 'natives' are better for teaching or for serving as models of pronunciation, but Mexicans are better for explaining grammar. He even stresses the influence of the 'native speaker' image and how this makes students feel afraid of them, but it also gives a sense of identification with the pochos. I consider David has found it difficult to escape from the shadow of the 'perfect image' of the 'native speaker' which has been cast by his own description of "them" versus "me".

Another example of the classification of teachers comes from Darren, a young British teacher who has been teaching for almost four years in the Language Department He makes an interesting reflection about the first time he looked for a job in Mexico:

> *I met an Irish guy who has a language department. He invited me to teach at his place. I didn't need any qualifications. I went to talk to him and he said "we have somebody leaving. Would you like to come here and help us?" and that's how I started. It was* this kind of places that you are a *native speaker and it's all that matters... We were all native speakers and pochos working there.*
> (TN3.2, Darren, A5)

The distinction in this case is mainly between 'native speaker' and *'pochos'*, suggesting that they are almost at the same level or status, but not really. The dilemma here seems to be presented as follows: although difference is relational, it is inevitably oppositional. 'Them' are not 'us', 'us' are not 'them, but 'we' and 'they' seem to be understood only together, in their mutual conflict, which in this case is presented by giving the value of difference. Also, what stands out in his comment is the idea that the employer does not see teaching as a profession, but mostly as something that anybody can do, when saying "would you like to come here and **help** us?" (my emphasis). This resonates with what was discussed in Chapter 2 in the early studies regarding the "native and non-native" dichotomy.

Based upon these comments, there seems to be the belief that teachers can be classified not only according to their image but also according to what this image can represent in terms of professional credibility. One descriptive phrase serves the purpose to assume that a teacher is better to perform in certain areas of her practice of teaching, as it has been discussed here. This coincides with what Wong (2006:11) calls 'hierarchies' in the professional life. When you enter a new culture, it is easier to see these hierarchies and they can shape your view of teaching and the profession in profound ways. In this case, two students, one teacher, and one e-mail informant have commented about the distinction or what makes a person a pocho, linking this label with particular teaching skills, to the point of heightened awareness of inequalities in the teaching profession.

Participants in this study seem to articulate a range of stratification around the construction of the English speaker. This is illustrated in Figure 6:

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┌─────────────────────┐
│                     │
│    Native speaker   │
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           │
           ▼
┌─────────────────────┐
│                     │
│     Foreigner       │
│                     │
└─────────────────────┘
           │
           ▼
┌─────────────────────┐
│                     │
│      Pocho          │
│                     │
└─────────────────────┘
           │
           ▼
┌─────────────────────┐
│  Non-native speaker/│
│      Mexican        │
└─────────────────────┘
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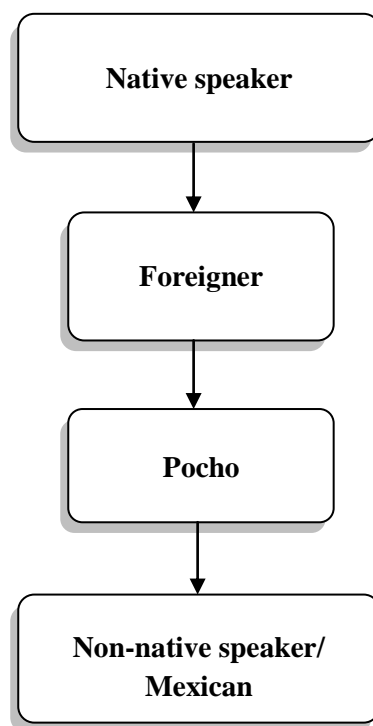
Figure 6. Stratification around the construction of the English teacher.

What is starting to emerge here is the Mexican-American socio-political relationship as a constant point of departure to classify teachers. This becomes visible in the teachers and students' discourses and is also emphasised by employers in different parts of Mexico. At the beginning of the study I did not think of the historical past between the two countries as one of the factors which could contribute to the construction of the English teacher. Moreover, in the re-reading of the data, I became aware that the use of labels has been a constant in Mexican history. First, it started with the Spaniards and the conquest of Mexico and then with the constant migration from Mexico to the United States throughout the years. This labelling has shown to be more complex than initially though. Physical appearance and its connection with teaching skills is only a starting point which encourages the use of labels. In the following section, the use of labels in regards to power of an image in the eyes of participants will be discussed.

5.2.2 The Power of an Image

Teachers' self-perceptions, in addition, are determined by many different factors: language learning experiences, educational background, teaching experience and institutions where they have worked, to have a few. In narrating teachers' experiences in the language classroom, these teachers in the study commented about their own confidence and how they feel threatened at times, at the beginning of the semester. This is the case of Bree, a young British teacher who came to Mexico in an exchange program promoted by the Mexican Ministry of Education and was placed in Guanajuato to teach English in the Language Department. This was her first teaching experience. Her physical appearance

contrasted with that of the images discussed before about a 'native speaker', since she is dark-skinned and not very tall. She remembers the first days of her practice of teaching in Guanajuato:

> I was horrified of being questioned by my students, since I looked young and inexperienced. Being a young British teacher but who looked almost Mexican gave me some confidence though. Of course, by the end of the semester I even joked with my students and felt completely adapted to the situation. (TN4.2, Bree/A5)

In her case, the physical appearance was in her favour, since she "looked" similar to Mexicans to the eyes of the students and to hers, giving her the opportunity to create a bond with them. Probably she never looked exactly like a Mexican, but her skin color created a bond with students.

Moreover, the physical appearance of some teachers seems to have an impact on how students perceive their teachers even before they are taking classes with them. Some students mentioned that if they see that their teacher looks like a typical American (white, blue eyed), they feel intimidated at the beginning but they need time to know their teacher and "lose the fear and anxiety", as in the case of Naty:

> Teacher John is very... *tall, has blue eyes, fair skin, and his voice! I was scared when I wasn't* his student. I was actually taking class with teacher Brenda, but he was teaching next door... I *could hear his voice and I could only think "I don't want class with that teacher! I don't want class with that teacher!". Now that I'm taking class with him, I can see that he is a very* demanding teacher, but he is also a nice person and a good teacher, it is just his appearance that is overpowering... (SN4.2, Naty/A6)

Without knowing the teacher but with the only sound of his voice and what she thought was his "overpowering" physical appearance, Naty created an image of John that made her feel scared and anxious before even taking classes with him. Her perceptions changed once she took classes with John. She was presented with a dilemma. The teacher appears to match her created image of a 'native speaker' yet his voice causes her anxiety. She has finally coped with this mismatch, acknowledging that he is a "good teacher" and a "good person". However, Naty has a history with English and the learning process. She started studying the language at a very young age (14 years old) but due to different circumstances she stopped taking classes. When she started her Masters in Administration at 30 years old she decided that it was a good moment to start again. Her first experience turned out to be disappointing as she narrates a particular situation that made her make drastic decisions:

> *The teacher that taught me in fourth level... She was Mexican and I didn't understand it [English] at all, because I was used to being talked to slower... it was a quick change so I bec*ame totally *discouraged and I said: "I don't know anything, if in fourth they are going to speak to me totally in English, well... then... they are going to tell me you are now in fifth and you should know", and*

that's why I dropped out, and I didn't continue until now that I felt I had to finish what I started fifteen years ago. (SN4.4, Naty/A2)

For Naty, her self-esteem was perhaps severely damaged and her insecurity made her drop out the course. She also commented that, for years, she thought that her "Mexican condition" would interfere with her performance in English, mainly in pronunciation. She did not want to come back to the Language Department because she generalized that all Mexican teachers would treat her in the same way. Her idea has changed now that she is back in classes.

Based upon these comments, there appears to be the belief that the first impression is significant in how participants relate it to the practice of teaching and the learning process, as in the case of Bree and Naty. I wondered if this power given to an image created by the physical appearance could be a problem for participants, since they seem not able to see beyond this image and consider other possibilities. I thus believe that having created this image in their minds is an important aspect in the construction of the English teacher identity. Moreover, the physical appearance seems to be a point of departure to classify the teachers, but once certain labels have been attributed to teachers, then other issues start to emerge, as it will be discussed in the following section.

5.2.2.1 Beyond the Physical Appearance: The Issue of Nationalities and Dress

An example of how a combination of physical appearance, nationality and a sense of pride seem to promote upon participants a position of distinctiveness. This is demonstrated in the following extract from Daniel, a Mexican teacher who lived in the Mexican-American border most of his childhood and adolescence:

> ...I can tell you that once, when I went to the States, I *met two girls and they asked "A*re you *Navaho?" and I said "No, but I'm Mexican,* **very Mexican***"* [his emphasis]... *and they said they couldn't believe I was Mexican, just because of my physical appearance. So, I still think, after* these twenty years of teaching here at the Language Department, students come here because they want to be taught by a güero [a white person] but then they get surprised. When I first started *teaching, I thought my students weren't gonna like me, because they saw this mexicanito* [little Mexican], dark skin, but later, when they heard me speaking in English, then they felt comfortable in my class. (TN1.3,Daniel/A5, his emphasis)

Here it is important to note two words, Navaho and mexicanito. There is an interesting association between the skin colour he, like many Mexicans, relates to mexicanito (little Mexican), and Navaho which refers to a commonly attributed 'low status' of Native Americans[2]. This is contrasted with güero (or fair-skinned person), which, in opposition to the other terms indicates high status, as was

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[2] Throughout this thesis, 'American' is used to refer to citizens of the United States of America —as is common amongst the Mexican population.

previously discussed. As this teacher suggests, he did not fit the learners' image of an English language teacher when he first started teaching.

As well as using the word güero to differentiate English language teachers in the Language Department, the word gringo[3] came up in a the conversation with Daniel:

> *Years ago, when the administration started hiring English teachers, it wasn't difficult to get a job* here. Any gringo could come on vacation, for a few months, and get a job as a teacher here. And there you saw gringos hippies who could barely teach the language, but they looked just right for the job. (TN1.2, Daniel/A5)

From this particular excerpt, it appears that gringo has a negative connotation when relating the word gringo with hippie and implying a lack of teaching skills. Even when it is not explicitly said, the word gringo seems to be more related to a stereotypical image of a badly dressed person, far from the high-valued image of güero discussed above.

Those teachers who have been working in the Language Department for more than 15 years made the same reference to the word gringo and hippie and even joked when recalling those times when they first came to Mexico and admitted having dressed like a hippie (e.g., folkloric dress, casual sandals, worn out jeans), before they got immersed in the profession. One teacher, originally from the United States, exemplified this by saying:

> I still remember that students would *say "there he comes the gringo hippie!" to refer to me when* coming to class... Now that I think of it, I just want to er*ase that picture from my mind, "H*ow on earth I dressed like that*?"* Now I am more careful with my clothes. (TN10.1, Chris/A5)

This seems to be relevant in the data when two teachers, Daniel (Mexican) and Chris (American) make reference to the same idea of gringo hippies and giving it a negative value. Chris even goes further and seems to recall an image of him in the past that has nothing to do with his image nowadays or at least as he considers it. In the next excerpt, Kenny, a teacher who has been working in Mexico for almost 29 years and who has spent all those years in Guanajuato, seems to have a different opinion in the way he perceives his co-nationals, evidencing his prejudices:

> My closest colleagues here in the University either are very tall or have the classic blonde and blue eyes. I guess I have to say it. They dress like Americans, very casual, looking kind of messy or dirty all the time. In general they have an appearance which shows a lack of interest in themselves, the *clothes don't quite match, kind* of wrinkled, hair not well combed. It is hard to verbalise, but you can see them a mile away. (AI2.2, Kenny/A7)

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[3] Gringo is a person from an English-speaking country; it is used as a derogatory term by Latin Americans.

From this comment, physical appearance goes a step beyond, and is related to the way of dressing, which can denote where the person is from and say more about who they are. As the data emerged, according to teachers' own perception and self image, it appeared that those 'non-native' teachers tried to justify their non-typical image of a stereotypical English language teacher by emphasizing that they can hold characteristics of both worlds, as the following teacher describes:

> *However, you know me, you are here with me and you can see that I don't look like an American, I'm nota güero with blue eyes. And that is exactly what happens with students when they see me. However, I can tell you that part of me is American, the way I dress, the way I speak English, but for the rest, I'm Mexican, very Mexican, my way of thinking, of interacting with people [...].* (TN1.3, Daniel/A5)

From this, I can think of the duality of two worlds of a person in which they want to come together but will always hold on to their respective characteristics. Even with all his experience in teaching English, Daniel constantly compares himself with an American. It seems from the data that the participants clearly construct their identity in relation to difference, specifically in opposition to 'native speakers'. Yet at the same time they defend their ethnic background and denote pride in it, or in some cases, a way of distancing themselves from earlier images of themselves.

With reference to the particularity-interconnectedness dimension, Daniel's reference to skin-colour may seem isolated and insignificant. However, when interconnected with what other participants say (Kenny and Sue, administrators; Chris, a teacher; and Ayan, an e-mail informant) this takes on a different light. The association between skin colour and practice of teaching is present in the way that nationality, and what it brings within it, represents to those who want to learn the language. The English Coordinator at the Language Department explains how this can be an issue at the beginning of the semester, when students reveal their concerns for being placed in a classroom with a Mexican teacher:

> ...and another thing that happens is that they go to their classroom the first day of classes and say *"oh! I know who my teacher is!" They look at the teacher and they say "oh!* My teacher is *Mexican; he's Mexican because of her Mexican accent"... Mexican accent! yeah! Mexican* accent, and they come here, well not everybody, but some come here. They come to the *coordination and they say "I wanna change groups". And I say "W*hy do you wanna change *groups?" and they say "W*ell, I, I don't think this teacher is right for me". And then here we go! *"Why isn't this teacher right for you?" "I'm kind of hoping to have a native speaker [they say]... someone foreigner".* I have students come from any level. And I'd say that it's not a lot of people. *It's about two to four every semester, at the beginning of the semester, or before classes* start, and they come here. And I give them the same *speech of qualified teachers, "You're going to enjoy your classes, you're going to learn, and there's no reason to change"* and sorry, and you have to give them an excuse. (AI1.1, Sue/A7)

It appears that the learners reject the teacher or teachers in question because they are not 'native speakers', although the issue of physical appearance is not mentioned in the conversation, it seems like it may be implied, when explaining why the learners have rejected the teacher, as when they say "a foreigner". This situation seems to be normal for the coordinator, who tries to "defend" the right and legitimacy of the Mexican teachers to be English teachers. Sue continues explaining how she deals with these situations:

> The non-native, they care about what people say about them. And the native do accept them [non-native speakers] *… actually they protect them. But what I do see is that this affects the no*n-native teachers and when students come to my office, I do give them a little lecture and as an English coordinator I see the obligation to **protect them**. *And then I say "*Wait a second, this person has studies for this profession, they were hired here, they go the same process as a native speaker. They have the same if not more experience. So just shut up and stop complaining and go to your *classroom, and gave the teacher a chance", I say. I see the effect on no*n-native speakers and *throughout the semester".* (AI1.1, Sue/A7, my emphasis)

Even when some students have strong ideas about what they consider best for their learning process, and certainly a predisposition of disqualifying a teacher for the only reason of being Mexican and of having an accent, the coordinator has taken a position of defending her teachers, or as she mentions "to give them [students] an excuse". Moreover, she also acknowledges that the other 'native speakers' also defend their counterparts. This situation seems to suggest that 'non-native speakers' start at a disadvantage in the eyes of their colleagues and this is reinforced by the beliefs and expectations that students bring to their classrooms, making judgments a priori and reinforced also by the initial reaction of "protection" on the part of the English coordinator. This situation seems to show that physical appearance, labels and how people use them, contribute to a more complex construction than initially thought of the English speaker in the Language Department. In the following section, new factors such as beliefs and expectations, emerged from the data are explored.

5.3 Beliefs and Expectations

In this section it is important to point out how the different participants hold particular views, beliefs and expectations of the teaching-learning process and how their discourses are interconnected when creating an image of the English teacher. Two teachers out of ten, seven students out of fourteen, one e-mail informant out of ten and one administrator discuss the complexities of their expectations when confronted with the "realities" they face. For example, William, a teacher originally from the United States and who started teaching when he came to Mexico, explains:

Teaching English is extraordinarily difficult. That came as a bit of a shock to me. Before I actually did it, I laboured under the common misapprehension that all one needed to teach English is the ability to speak English. (TN9.1, William/A5)

With this in mind, it is common to think that those who fell into the job because of different reasons, believe that teaching English is an inherit ability because of place of birth and having learned the languages as mother tongue. However, it is not only one teacher making reference to this; it is also students showing their expectations when studying in the Language Department.

When first asking the language learners who participated in this study about their experiences with the English language and teachers, they made reference to a 'native teacher' as "a person who was born in the United States". This is the immediate referent; this is what they have experienced. Guanajuato is a small city with tourism and a state university with a number of foreigners living in it. Most of them come from the United States and have made of this place their home. For these language learners, a 'native speaker' is related to "whiteness", as this student points out:

I entered this Department because I thought that my teachers would be gringos. (SN9.1, Adriana/A6)

Some students mentioned that if they see that their teacher looks like a typical American, then they feel more secure of their learning process, almost assuring that they will learn "good English".

By developing a close personal relationship with students who shared their same language, 'non-native' English speaking teachers still felt they were far from getting credibility in teaching idiomatic expressions, due to their ethnic background. To illustrate this point I provide an extract from Daniel's narrative. It clearly highlights the issue of ethnicity and the importance of colour, played by the learners' conceptualisations of the English teacher:

They know me, then, some [students] will have a good opinion and others will have a bad one, but *they know what they're coming to, more or less, then there is not a shock when they see me [...] Back then… at the beginning [of my teaching practice], I remember when I started giving classes,* in the first place I was younger; I remember I could have been confused with the students, for being Mexican, but I felt like they [students] were expecting a white person! (TN1.2, Daniel/A5)

As mentioned in the previous section, most of the participants had particular points of view about the perfect image of the English teacher. However, when confronting these perceptions with the real experiences, they are questioning the image of such teacher. Daniel, who has been working in the Language Department for more than twenty years, goes further and comments on how he feels when he does not know some idiomatic expressions but how other elements can compensate for this:

I did feel uncomfortable in a way… because they expected the best, and in practical terms, it could be assumed that a native of the language *should be a better teacher, in the beginning…just like* that, without thinking of anything else, right? Later there are other factors, because in the first place, like I said, as a student if you see that the teacher is white and is dominate of the subject, *well you have a bit more confidence, right? But, then those factors come in, like…especially from* my point of view **very, very** *personal, the personality of each teacher… whether it is a woman or a* ma*n, white or not… native or not…* (TN1.2, Daniel/A5, his emphasis)

This teacher even when feeling threatened at times, recognizes that there are other elements that became more evident than the nativeness itself, which, of course, takes time to develop, since the first image is quite strong in the minds of learners. This coincides with Ayan's comments, an email informant, who reflects on the 'evidence' that gives the learners the orientation to attribute characteristics of their teachers:

The confidence that students have in teachers is mainly based on the teachers' proficiency in English. The *weaker teachers are in English, the harder it is for students to 'buy into' learning the language. I've* mentioned accent a few times because as st*udents, this is the one piece of 'evidence' that they actually* ha*ve in terms of English proficiency.* (EMI5.1, Ayan, A8)

Putting people in boxes is a common practice among the participants, at least as they described them to me by giving labels. There seems to exist a contradiction between the realities some of them live. The trajectories of the being and the becoming are fuzzy. The reliance on their representational systems of their identity markers (Mexican vs foreigner, native vs. non-native, dark-skinned vs. white) suggests greater awareness of the relationship between descriptive phrases and practice of teaching. These have thereby seemingly been laid down a first approximation to the teachers' current conceptualization of their professional identity and how they portray it and therefore how it is received by students. But there is also an unspoken discourse within the school that comes from society, from the general public who can also take classes in the language Department. Indeed, the English coordinator acknowledges it:

Students come and say "if I have the class from 7:00 to 9:00, *who is the teacher?" and many* times I *don't tell them, and they say "W*hy c*an't you tell me?" and I say, "W*ell what is the matter? All my teachers are well qualified *to teach English" and they say "well I wanted… it's so* expensive [the course] and I wanted a native speaker!*" Some say that. And I say "*Why do you t*hink they would be more qualified?" "W*ell" —*they say "*You know they were born English speakers*"… and I say "you* were born Spanish speaker. D*o you think you could teach Spanish?"* *And they say "*N*o, I'm studying accounting or engineering and no", "*Oh! There you go! Ok. *You'd be surprise that most of my non-*native speakers have more education and experience in *teaching the language than my native speaking teachers". And well they don't argue about, you* know. (AI1.1, Sue/A7)

This extract shows the strength of the birthright mentality in the field of English language teaching. Even when the coordinator explains that Mexican teachers can be very competent, well-prepared and more experienced teachers than native speakers on staff, students relate that the more expensive the course, the more right they have to demand a 'native speaker' as a teacher.

One student, for example, mentioned her expectations when she first entered the Language Department:

> I must admit that when I first entered this department, I thought all my teachers would be Americans or gringos, tall, with blue eyes and fair skin, ... but then I realized that there are *Mexican teachers too...* My mother studied here years ago and she had told me that, but I guess I arrived here when the gringos were gone haha. (SN14.3, Tessa/A6)

The value placed upon English teachers by this student relies on physical appearance and, with some disappointment, acknowledged the existence of Mexican teachers in the institution, which are far from the image of "tall, with blue eyes and fair skin" people. From this, I can think that there is a tacit idea that the white 'native' speaker is the desirable model of English language teaching. The influence for this desire for having a 'native speaker' as teacher in this particular excerpt comes from her mother. Her mother passes down this belief to her daughter. The 'native speaker' teachers, were, it seemed, the only 'real', 'proper' and 'valued' English language teachers back in the days when the Language Center started, but these days, her mother has placed her expectations on her daughter, who is now verbalizing those expectations as hers. The English coordinator keeps explaining the moment when she has witnessed how some students demand classes with a 'native speaker':

> I have *seen it a lot. I can tell you. You're welcome to see me at my office at the beginning of every* semester, when classes start and you can see this phenomenon. Students come and downstairs in the administration office they post the English schedule which is available there... and I would say very confidently, but I have nothing to prove it, that students look for two things for their classes: one is the schedule to see what their convenience time is for classes and they also want to see who their teacher is! And thinking about their teachers for two weeks, they want a native speaker I would say! (AI1.1, Sue/A7)

Thus, when compared to the teaching expertise of 'non-native' speaker teachers of English, place of birth and physical appearance seem to be more significant and important. This seems to further contribute to the belief in the wider community that the professional identity of a successful and highly valued English language teacher is intrinsically tied to a sense of birthplace and appearance. These are key factors contributing to identity constructs. What is more, the same teachers who are teaching in the Language Department have fallen into the same trap, as in the case of William, originally from the United States and who has been teaching in the Language Department for almost

ten years. He reflects on a hypothetical situation where he would have the opportunity to study Spanish as second language:

> Many students prefer a native speaker because they feel that only native speakers know the language *"authentically."* There is certainly a bias in that direction —a bias I suppose I share. I would rather learn Spanish from a Mexican than from another gringo. In Asia this tendency is particularly pronounced: very few students would be satisfied taking classes from a non-native. And institutions certainly feel the same way. I would guess that most schools prefer to hire native speakers over non-native speakers. Why wouldn't I choose the teacher who has a perfect, in-born mastery of the language? If I know for a fact that both teachers are equally fluent in Spanish, there is still another important issue to consider. Why am I learning to speak Spanish in the first place? So I can speak to other gringos? Of course not. Quite obviously, I'm learning Spanish because I want to speak with Mexicans! The whole point of learning another language is so that I can communicate with native speakers. The language is a means into the culture, a doorway. And so it's simply commonsensical that I would want my teacher to be Mexican. And this second point is hugely important. Even if I knew that the Mexican teacher didn't know as much about the formal aspects of the language or didn't have as much experience teaching as the gringo, I would still choose the Mexican. Because I want to know what the Mexican thinks about things. Anything from what the best bar in town is to who the greatest Spanish authors are. Language is inextricably bound up with culture. So, again, why wouldn't I want the teacher who can provide me with insight into both? (TN9.1, William/A5)

Because of his experience in teaching in Asia and the United States, prior to start teaching in Mexico, and his view of Asian students preferring a 'native speaker', William seems to have higher value of a Mexican who, in his context, would be the 'native speaker of Spanish' over a gringo, who might know the language but still remains ignorant of other cultural issues related to the language he is teaching. Exposure to "natural Spanish" from a 'native speaker' would be, of course, of great value to William. This might seem to be an isolated case but these different discourses are in constant battle but at the same time co-existing in a complex relationship of acceptance and rejection, not only from teachers themselves, but administrators and students. The same frustrations and expectations that William mentioned before in his hypothetical situation can be connected to those of Rocio, an English language learner in the Language Department, narrates in the following:

> I was disappointed be*cause when you ask the teacher… she sometimes says "I don't know"… I mean… it is good that she is hone*st*, but I think that…* there should be teachers who know the language 100%. There are idioms, for example, that a Mexican teacher wouldn't know, but a foreigner would and this is what we want to learn, real English from real teachers. (SN8.2, Rocío/A6)

This seems to be an example of how a participant has a preconceived idea of what exact amount of language a teacher should know. The student seems to have formed the image of her teacher as not knowing the complete knowledge based on some situations when the teacher did not provide her with the answer she was expecting. She goes further and portrays the Mexican teachers as less capable of teaching specific aspects of the language and seems to suggest that she will only be able to learn "real English" from a 'native speaker'. From one experience she has generalized and seems to have bought into the labelling of the 'native speaker' as the only reliable source.

Like many other students, there is a common belief that a foreign teacher can teach his or her native language just because it is considered that he can speak a language "100%". I particularly find this expression annoying. It is impossible to measure or give a percentage to the proficiency one has over a language, not even in our mother tongue. This made me reflect on my own experience when helping a student fill out a job application form. One of the questions said: "Circle the percentage of your English proficiency". I remember my student asking me "What do I put here? How do I know this?". I wrote in my personal diary:

> *'How on earth* would I *give a percentage to my level of English if I don't even think I could do it* in Spanish. This idea of conferring percentages to our proficiency is absurd and it is surprisingly very rooted in our minds that it is even stipulated in official job application forms. How can we fight against these beliefs if society h*as enhanced them?'* (PD8/A10)

Within this subtheme of beliefs and expectations, teachers, students and administrators have narrated their teaching and learning experiences. The image that has emerged so far seems to suggest that physical appearance connected with labels and an analysis of the practice of teaching, can help describe the construction of the English teacher. However, there is one more aspect that deserves attention. The constructed image is taken further and it is idealized by participants.

5.3.1 Idealization of an Image

The value placed upon the 'native speaker' seems to be rooted in beliefs, expectations and pressures from the society, which have acknowledged the 'native speaker' as the successful English language teacher, as it has been discussed so far. However, there is an unspoken idealization of the image of the 'native speaker' which influences how the physical appearance translates into the practice of teaching and then into the learning process. The English coordinator makes a useful metaphor when trying to explain students that there is no distinction between one and another teacher:

> And their big... *I don't know how to say it, their big comeback is "*Well I need to learn great *pronunciation", and that's I guess where they say their concern is. And I say "well, that's me* thinki*ng of learning the language in your native language and I don't speak the language with a native accent, why do you care so much about pronunciation? You'll never speak like me*

basically. And I will never speak Spanish like you. So just give up about the accent". (AI1.1, Sue/A7)

The fact of simply being a 'native speaker' of English, is unconditionally prized by students, who believe that having the "right" source of language, will infallibly provide them with the "great pronunciation" as if it was an inherit value for taking classes with a 'native speaker'. The fact that the coordinator points out that qualifications rather than place of birth and more importantly, that they will always have their Mexican accent, makes students' idealization of an image crashed with the realities brought up by the coordinator.

The extent to which students' expectations affect their constructed and idealized image of the English teacher is most evident in the following extract from Carmen. She is an English learner who started from the beginning level in the Language Department. In the following extract, she seems to unveil how she has idealized the 'native speaker':

> In my regular classes I have always been taught by Mexicans, but in the Self-Access Center I have had th*e opportunity to be taught by natives, well… only one. For example, with Catherine I have been lucky and she has helped me in many ways… I think I have learned a lot from native speakers. They are prepared, they don't doubt, they are very confident and wha*t they have taught me, they *have taught me well… and I think the non-na*ti*ves don't know the language in*-depth. (SN1.13, Carmen/A6)

Based on her experience, Carmen seems to give the 'native speaker' a powerful status, portraying this person as the best English teacher. It seems that Carmen considers the 'native speaker' as a legitimate source, minimizing the image of the 'non-native speaker'. My experience with Carmen can be traced back to the time when I entered the Language Department in 2004, when I taught her English in a conversation workshop (RD3.1, A7). She was the most motivated learner. She told me in her narrative that she started from zero in the Language Department. She knew nothing about English but she wanted to establish conversations with the many foreigners who come to Guanajuato. This was her motivation. I met her when she was in her third semester, and since then, for almost three years that I was in charge of that workshop, she did not miss a single session. I wrote in my research diary:

> Carmen is a good example of a highly motivated student. She is making progress and she always asks me how, when and why I studied English. I think she wants to become an English teacher. (RD5/A10)

So far, the physical appearance, the labels given to English speakers and their connection with the practice of teaching seem to favour the 'native speaker'. However, there were students and teachers who seem to appreciate the Mexican teacher over the foreign teacher, as it is discussed in the next section.

5.3.2 La Raza es la Raza (The Race is the Race)

Other students revealed their sense of comfort while being placed in a group with a Mexican teacher. Rosa was a student from a different department in the University. She is a nutrition student and she always wanted to learn English so she could go abroad and study a postgraduate degree. To her eyes, the best teacher was a Mexican teacher, because she felt that they could understand her learning process:

> I would like my teacher to be Mexican, you know, I would feel like he would be my co-national, *plus, the race is the race"* (SN11.1, Rosa/A6)

With this phrase making reference to "conational" and "the race is the race" she denoted pride in being Mexican but also in having Mexican teachers who could actually teach her the language and having a sense of camaraderie with them.

These perceptions are also framed in terms of the Mexican-American political relationship which once more emerges from the data. Maria narrates when thinking about her ideal English teacher:

> My ideal English teacher? *...I would love to have a Mexican teacher...* but he should know the *language 100%. I don't know if I told you before but I hate whatever has to do with* gringos, they *feel they can control the world... that's why I would prefer a Mexican teacher, because I think I* feel more confident when asking some questions, and I would feel like he is my co-national, but he has to know the language 100%. (SN7.2, Maria/A6)

Even when Maria recognizes that she "hates whatever has to do with gringos", at the same time she conditions the possibility of having a Mexican teacher, who, in Maria's eyes, has to speak the language "100%". Contrary to Rocío who has portrayed Mexican teachers as less knowledgeable because they do not know the language they are teaching at a 100%, Maria has created a sense of identification with them, calling them "co-nationals", but still determining an exact amount of language that should be known. There seems to be a contradiction in her words, since she expresses her feelings towards "gringos" but at the same time her feelings towards Mexicans. This coincides with what Daniel narrates in his own experience, as he has been teaching for more than twenty years in the Language Department:

> There are students who think that they might feel more comfortable with Mexican teachers, but you have to be careful with this because they have to be Mexican teachers who, first, are proficient in the language, to some extent, because not all Mexicans are bilinguals, but students notice when there are mistakes, right? Especially in the knowledge about the language, the use, *the usage. That's why they feel more comfortable with a Mexican, generally. However, I have*

noticed that in first place they are expec*ting a güero, an American... a foreigner*. (TN1.1, Daniel/A5)

But there were also comments about the sense of protecting the 'co-nationals' and giving them opportunities, that, in other cases, Americans seemed to be taking:

Well, I think we should employ only Mexican teachers because they are co-nationals and they deserve to be employed here, it is like... giving them a job and be thankful that we have Mexicans who want to work. (SN5.1, Miguel/A6)

The constant use of the phrase "co-nationals" gives a sense of pride of being Mexicans, and sharing this "characteristic" with the teacher might be considered a bonus. However, this "sharing" seems to be conditioned to knowing the language "100%". Otherwise, those expectations and beliefs regarding the "co-national" are put into question.

These different phrases concerning the particular images of English teachers seem to contribute to the complex construction of the English teacher in the Language Department. It seems that this stereotypical teacher, who looks "right" for the job, can meet the students' expectations. Moreover, in accepting the image of a 'white' and blue-eyed' teacher, by teachers and students, seems to be conforming to a certain 'ethnic' idea of an English language teacher, and the society seems to buy into this idea, contributing to providing such an image in the first place. On one side, this group of 'native speaker' teachers are placed in a superior position based on ethnicity, birthplace and language ability, which at the same time seems to be reflected by other people involved in the world of ELT, such as students and administrators. On the other hand, the images of the professional identity of the English teacher seem multilayered as 'non-native speaker' teachers seem to rate the 'native speakers' highly. The English language learners place physical appearance, birthplace and ethnicity above teaching skills, and refer to them as the only 'real' teachers of English. And finally, administrators seem to deal with these constant discourses on a regular basis and try to "protect" the 'non-natives', automatically placing them in a subordinate position. However, in order to understand this "protection" it is important to look at the hiring practices inside of the Language Department, and see how they have evolved and adapted due to outsider pressure more than insider pressure.

5.4 Institutional Discourse and Practices

As it has been discussed in Chapter 2, hiring practices all over the world still seem to privilege the 'native speakers'. They tend to be regarded as ideal models of English for the students and also to give prestige to the institutions. This sense of a superior professional identity for the 'native speaker' teacher is further illustrated by the following data which comes from the peripheral group and serves the purposes to contextualize the data emerged from the core group. When having a discussion with

my email informants, one of them pointed out the problems attached to the dichotomy, but not only in the mind of the "clients" but in the mind of administrators:

> In my experience, students evaluate teachers on the basis of what they learn with the teacher. The concept of native/non-native speakers is not as much in the minds of the students as it is in the minds of other stakeholders in education. I thin*k it is the previous generation's* (administrators, *employers, and perhaps our students' parents) reminiscence of colonialism, and their belief that a 'native' teacher is the best teacher.* (EMI1.1, Sarah/A8)

This piece of data seems to confirm what has been discussed in the previous section. I makes reference not only to the students themselves, but to the pressure of the students' parents and their own expectations, but also, how employers can have a pivotal influence in how an institution can be seen at the outside, implying that 'native speakers' can bring 'prestige' to them. Another informant goes further and explains his personal and professional reasons trying to give a voice to those who seem to be vanished when it comes to the hiring practices:

> I am a non-native speaker of English, and I am currently training non-native students to become teachers of English. In this global context, the ownership of English language and the native-nonnative dichotomy is being used at times as a sort of gate keeping tools. The context is one that clearly privileges the native speakers and this dominant position is secured at all costs. My students are constantly reminded that they are not native speakers –hence triggering marked positions of domination/subordination. [...] This power struggle between native and non-native speakers is a real one, and at times harsh. We must therefore, continue to speak out through our collective voices, and create a sort of dynamism from the margins where the non-native speakers are often relegated to. (TD3.1, Khadar/A9)

Khadar acknowledges the power struggle between 'native' and 'non-native speakers'. His experiences are mediated by the social world in which he and his students interact, with a constant reminder of being 'non-native speakers'. This extract provides insight into how a person examines and forms a personal and professional identity around a group and how he can associate himself with. This unravels many layers of identity issues, represented by some of Khadar's feelings ("I'm a non-native speaker of English' in a larger context that clearly privileges the native speakers and its dominant position is secure at all costs") and how his ideas are closely associated with his interactions on a daily basis ("My students are constantly reminded that they are not native speakers").

In this venue, it is understandable that teachers from different parts of the world have a sense of belonging with the acronym NNEST but at the same time, teachers continue to hold views of their own professional identity, and bring up issues of discrimination when acknowledging pejorative terminology, as Sarahi shows in the following extract:

Thus, it appears that being called a 'non-native speaker' continues to be enhanced and re-enhanced not only through the teachers' perceptions of themselves but also through the perceptions and actions of administrators, learners and the professional group that they belong to. This contextualization of the hiring practices in different parts of the world, serves the purpose to contextualize the hiring practices at the inside of the Language Department in the University of Guanajuato, where apparently, they went from being focused on hiring 'native speakers' because they were the only available people, to privilege educational background and teaching experience, as it is discussed in the following section.

5.4.1 Hiring Processes: A Look at the Inside of the Language Department

The Language Department started as a Language Center back in 1976, and it was until the year 2000 when it finally opened its BA program in English Language Teaching that it changed its name to Language School. Back in the early years, the hiring practice was more than a flexible policy, as the Director, Kenny, narrates in the following extract:

> When I got here in 1983 the rule was if the individual speaks English then they get hired. I was first hired because of being an English speaker...it was more if you speak English you have a job, but if wanted a permanent position, other factors were involved, like nationality or a sense of belonging. (AI2.1, Kenny/A7)

Kenny was one of the first teachers to be hired with a permanent position and, as he continues in his narrative, he got a promotion right after two years of being working at the Language Center, not because he was qualified, but because he had a friend in an administrative position who finally promoted him:

> I was promoted to Assistant Director after two years. This was just because the Director was a friend. While I was the assistant, our hiring policies was to head down to the local bar and look for gringos that were not too dirty, seemed decent, and were willing to work. This was the hiring *policy with an occasional "here is a friend from the United States of someone important in the University". The ones that arrived with a recommendation were instant h*ires. This went on until the National Immigration Institute informed the university that they would only extend work permits to foreigners that had a college degree that made them qualified to teach. This was a huge change for the Language Center. Now we could only hire people with degrees in Humanities that were the limit of the flexibility of the Federal Government. I wish I could say this happened

because we were trying to improve, but it was a positive imposition by the government. (AI2.1, Kenny/A7)

The administrators back then seemed to accept ideas that hiring foreigners was best, and took them at face value and without investigation if the person was trained or not, or if the person wanted to stay in the city and his/her reasons, apparently that was an easy tool in order to conduct the hiring. However, the above extract seems to show important changes in the hiring policy. From looking for a "decent" "not too dirty gringo", they went to a more strict hiring process, not because they realized that and it was necessary, but it was imposed by the Federal Government, and because of immigration issues. At that time, there seemed to be a sizeable gap between what was being done in the administration and the exigencies of the Federal Government. Unqualified and probably inexperienced, those 'native speakers' English language teachers appear to be seen as right for the job and possible language experts, but soon the criteria would change in order to look for a more professionalized English teacher and because the pressure from the Federal Government was increasing, as it is discussed in the following section.

5.4.2 Towards the Professionalization of the English Teacher

With changes in the Federal Government and the necessity to hire more teachers to cover the needs of the increasing number of students, the Language Center started to create a new hiring policy at around the year 1995:

> Basically myself and another colleague were both long term foreigners that were married living in Guanajuato and since we were seeing how much was being spent on training foreigners that were leaving, we basically started the idea that we would only hire Mexicans and train them in our own programs and then let the government send them out to study graduate degrees. We began to put all foreigners through a very strict process and the bottom line was this: hire first Mexican, second highly trained foreigner that is married to a Mexican or has a relationship with one, next hire a non-trained Mexican for training and the last resort was a non-trained native speaker. Looking back on this I think what happened was we were tired of being considered *inferior to the rest of the University teaching staff and the "native speaker" was what at least* here in the University of Guanajuato was giving us all a bad reputation. We intensely tried avoid hiring them starting around 1995. (AI2.1, Kenny/A7)

This extract shows how the Language Center was living a turning point due to three main reasons: 1) the pressure placed upon them by the Federal Government, 2) the constant changing in the staff and, 3) the image that the Language Center was projecting to the rest of the University. As well, teachers started to feel the pressure to be considered qualified to teach English at this Center and, the possible candidates, started facing a new hiring strategy that seemed to be completely different from other

language schools in Guanajuato. William, one of the teachers who went through this new hiring policy, recalls:

> I was impressed with the thoroughness of the hiring process. There was an initial interview, followed by a micro-teaching demonstration, followed by two further feedback sessions with the coordinators. I was very impressed by the hi*ring process ... and then subsequently disappointed* when I discovered that I was the first and last person to ever go through anything similar. I guess I applied just at the moment there was some half-assed effort to reform the hiring process. For whatever reason, these reform efforts quickly fizzled out and the school went back to much more capricious vetting procedures. (TN 9.1, William/A5)

This extract seems to show that even when many strategies were implemented in order to hire more qualified staff, the tendency did not apply to everybody, or at least it did not last long enough to apply to other prospect teachers. As in the case in William, the hiring process seemed to be more demanding than years before, however, due to different reasons. This thoroughness faded away. Moreover, inside the Language Center, efforts were being made in order to train their current teachers and to finally get rif of the "bad image" that the Language Center had back then, to have a more "decent staff", as Kenny comments:

> Our Center ended up with its own COTE course, so we took advantage of it and when we found a person with a degree in whatever, we would force them to enrol in the COTE so we could get them a work permit. So we started to have a decent teaching staff. As you c*an notice it's all about work* permits, so it is easy to deduce that most of our staff was foreign. It was, but it was because from 1983 to 1994 no Mexican would teach English. Teaching English was and in some ways is still the lowest status job available in teaching. In fact from the period mentioned all language teachers were paid 20% less than all other University teachers because they were not teachers, they just tourists taking a break or Mexican with no degree and **there was no reason to take them seriously within the institution**. As it was low status and pay we did not always have the best people in the Center. (AI2.1, Kenny/A7, my emphasis)

The fact of considering English less than a profession, echoing this in the salary to teachers, and the "back packers" trying to become teachers while travelling in Mexico, was not helping the Language Center. However, it can be seen that while passing through inside the Language Center different measures were taken in order to change the view that other parts of the University had about language teachers and it slowly started to change. Kenny saying that between 1983 and 1994 "it is easy to deduce that most of our staff was foreign". This might seem to be an isolated and insignificant comment, but interconnected to what Tessa (in Chapter 5.2) mentioned about her expectations, it takes on a different light. For more than ten years the teaching staff was basically foreign. This seemed to have created an image in local society about the Language Center, as Tessa mentions:

I must admit that when I first entered this school, I thought all my teachers would be Americans or gringos, tall, with blue eyes and fair skin, ...but then I realized that there are Mexican teachers too...*My mother studied here years ago and she had told me that, but I guess I arrived here when* the gringos were gone haha. (SN14.1, Tessa/A6)

What Kenny and Tessa make reference to is the well-known fame created but the Language Center back then that most of the staff were 'native speakers' or "gringos" in Tessa's words, and as it was discussed before, the value place upon English teachers indeed has a history. In this case in the Language Department, the former students now send their kids to study here, with the expectation to be taught by foreigners, as it used to be before, but they do not know that the hiring process has changed, yet it has not changed the imaged formed by society about the Language Department. Therefore, expectations are placed upon teachers with the reminiscence of a previous experience of having only 'native speakers' on the staff of the Language Center. This seems to show how different discourses work together and sometimes against each other. The fact that former students do not know the inside policies for hiring an English teacher, makes it more difficult to escape from the pressure of the society to be taught by 'native speakers', when apparently, the Institution has gone through changes and has pondered the professionalization of the teacher over nationality, place of birth or ethnicity.

As part of the history of the Language Department, it became evident that having permanent staff was becoming an issue, not only because of the low pay that teachers had to face, but also the sense of "permanent" residence, since some of the teacher had few attachments to Guanajuato, in a professional or personal level, which suddenly became part of the hiring process:

The Federal Government began a long term plan that was going to require all University staff in the country to get a MA and then a PhD; this coincided with us as a Center deciding to create our own BA so we could train our own staff. This was because we were spending too much money paying for the COTE for foreigners that would leave after finishing the COTE because they found a better job elsewhere. Also, our hiring policy was becoming a joke. Our concern was getting people who would stay as a result the hiring questions were things like *"Do you have a girlfriend* here? *Do you want to stay in Mexico long term?"* As a school Director I often hoped that people would get married and stay here, because it was our best option. Sadly this plan did not work very often. The focus went to creating our own program and added to this the fact that the Federal Government was going to now require a MA and then later a PhD, we slowly created an unusual hiring policy. (AI2.1, Kenny/A7)

My impression of these comments from the former director is that things seemed to be more complicated for foreigners because of their immigration status. Even when the director recognizes that this policy of considering their personal lives as part of the hiring process did not work, at the moment it seemed to be the best option. But at the same time the external pressure was increasing and now in

order to hire a teacher with a permanent contract, they should demonstrate that they hold a postgraduate degree.

This might seem that in Mexico there was a new policy going on about hiring English teachers across schools. However, it did not apply (and still does not) to small schools or private institutions, where they actually buy into the prestige rather than the professionalization of the English teacher. This was the case of the current coordinator who, before starting working at the Language Department, was working in a small school in Guanajuato and she explains how she was promoted, in very similar but also contrasting circumstances as those described above by Kenny:

> I was promoted because they had a huge turn over right there, and probably because I was the *only teacher who had a certificate. There were other teachers that they say "*Aah! You speak English, you speak English, you are from the States, ok. *You can teach" and obviously it was not* really true and so I think they saw the students... I got really good evaluations from the students and they maybe thought because I had the background TEFL certificate which helped me to be promoted. (AI1.1, Sue/A7)

The fact that she spoke English seemed to give her an advantage over the other teachers, who could have got the promotion. However, at that point, she also held a TEFL certificate, what she considered a bonus in her promotion. However, in this new position at the small school, she now had to make decisions about hiring and problems started to emerge:

> I didn´t like my job anymore there as a coordinator because... I did see that people would be hired just because they speak *English and then I would say "N*o, no, no but they are horrible teachers, *they didn't know what they were doing about teaching", and* because of my job was as a teacher I thought I could be an English teacher trainer... and that was what I really wanted to do and the payment is horrible and everything else, so I applied for a job here (at the Language Department), and a week later after a lot of insistence I came back with my resumé... and I was given a twenty *hour teaching professionally in the evening. That's how the people are hired for* now and I wanted to make my coordination here, and coordination here is very different. (AI1.1, Sue/A7)

Working in a place where speaking the language was enough to be hired did not represent what Sue wanted. She eventually started teaching at the Language Department and soon she was promoted as coordinator. Hiring had already changed and she recognizes that the professional environment here is different from those schools where the desirable English teacher is a 'native speaker'. She reflects on her job at the Language Department and this seems to evidence the long process that the Language Department has gone through, from those years that Kenny mentioned, where teachers would be "decent", "not too dirty" and "gringos" up to now, and where education and degrees are more important at the moment of hiring:

The difference here is that I work with people who actually are dedicated to English teaching. *They're here because they want to be English teachers. They're not here teaching English because it's just something to do in the meantime while they're on vacat*ion here in Mexico. Most of the *people I'd say are serious about their teaching; they're in programs about education, and about teaching English of a foreign language in the BA. They're in the ICELT* [formerly COTE] course. *They're in the TE*FL programs; the*y're currently in their ELT masters programs.* (AI 1.1, Sue/A7)

This last extract can summarize the evolution from being a Language Center to becoming a Language Department, with a more solid staff, educated, in constant training. This situation seems to contrast with that of the literature (in Chapter 2) and with what participants from the peripheral groups refer to. In the Language Department, apparently, there is the policy of hiring qualified teachers, regardless of their nationality, ethnicity and place of birth. It is worth noting that this has been a process of more than 30 years, and Mexico as a country has changed its perceptions of English teachers at the university level. With the pressure of the Federal Government, being able to get a permanent position at the University level is more and more difficult, as the current hiring practices are more than tied to the Mexican Ministry of Education and to a recent reform inside the University of Guanajuato, which has implied a new challenge in the hiring process.

5.4.3 Current Hiring Practices

By the year 2009, the University of Guanajuato went through a more in-depth reform that implied changes at different levels. Schools became Departments under the supervision of a Division, which was at the same time under the supervision of each Campus. Therefore the Language School became the Language Department under the supervision of the Division of Social Sciences and Humanities which is part of Campus Guanajuato. This new structure has brought changes, and one of them has been in the hiring process, as the coordinator explains:

The hiring process has changed somewhat from years ago. It used to be a joint decision between English coordination and the school director with the director having ultimate approval. Now it seems as though the decision is left entirely up to coordination and when a candidate has our recommendation no one asks any question, like the candidates level of study, experience, etc. We *simple take them down to the accountant's office and she gives them a list of paperwork* requirements for their contract. I'm not sure if there is a formal hiring profile written down somewhere in this Division, but I do think it is important to look at qualifications before even interviewing someone as obviously this can affect teaching performance and thus the reputation of our program and Language Department. All of the people that we have hired have first turned in a resume/CV and then after reviewing resumes we contact potential candidates by e-mail and make an interview appointment with them. (AI1.3, Sue/A7)

The new structure has given more power to the coordination in the sense of making the decisions, but also has given the feeling that they are left with all the responsibility and nobody else, in the upper levels of administration, questions the teacher's level of study, academic background or proficiency. This apparent freedom that the coordinators have for hiring can be positive, but also there seems to be a risk if the coordination changes. If there is no written teachers' profile, at an institutional level, is it because authorities do not want to impose a profile? Or is it because there is still a belief that anybody can teach the language? Fortunately, the current coordination privileges training over nationality, as Sue describes:

> We look for candidates with a desirable profile that we have, NOT their nationality or whether or not they are native or non-native speakers. The only time we consider nationality is when we are hiring for a position that is less than 20 hours. Non-Mexican citizens cannot get a work permit from immigration for fewer than 20 hours, therefore for fewer than 20 we must hire a Mexican citizen. (AI1.3, Sue/A7)

Again, the discourse imposed by the Federal Government is present. This is different from what Kenny mentioned before about getting a permanent position. This is about teachers who work under a contract, but in order to have a permit from immigration, they need to accredit that they are working at least 20 hours, otherwise, a Mexican is given such contract. In general, the current hiring process at the Language Department, after 30 years, has come to the following:

> This is what we look for:
> 1. People who have a master's degree in TEFL/TESL or Education or Teaching or similiar and prior teaching experience.
> 2. If that is too difficult to find we then look for people with a BA degree in the above and prior teaching experience.
> 3. If that is too difficult, then we try for people with a BA in whatever, but who also have a TEFL/TESL certificate and prior teaching experience or possibly students in our BA program here who are about to finish their degrees and have recommendations from their BA teachers here and prior teaching experience.
> 4. If that is too difficult, well then we are really in a tight spot! We then look for people with a BA in whatever and prior teaching experience and tell them that if hired they must complete a TEFL/TESL certification (we recommend the ICELT course offered here in the Department.) if they want to continue past their first semester. (AI1.3, Sue/A7)

The Language Department in the University of Guanajuato, went from being focused on hiring 'native speakers' out of necessity to hiring teachers with specific educational background and teaching experience, as discussed in this section. Moreover, the Mexican Federal Government helped shape the hiring process in this particular Department, and the result has been a very particular situation which might contrast from those in other parts of the world, where 'native speakers' seem to be privileged

over 'non-native speakers'. However, among teachers there is still an issue to be dealt with: who teaches which level? Even when the coordination has made efforts to promote that everybody should be able to teach any level, there is still a certain scepticism and prejudice on the part of the teachers, and certainly reinforced by students with their constant expectations as discussed in Chapter 5.2. This was a process that first was determined by the administration and later on. Teachers decided about the levels they felt more comfortable to teach. This process has also changed over time, and seems to show that teachers' perceptions about 'native speakers' have changed, but others have been enhanced, as it will be described in the following section.

5.4.4 Who Teaches What?

Alongside the hiring practices and the further assigning of groups, there seemed to be a preconceived idea in the early years of the Language Center where beliefs on writing and later on accent, seemed to dictate who taught a particular level, as Kenny explains:

> For many years we quietly put only native speakers in the advanced levels and the underlying reason was the belief that the non-*native speakers couldn't write in English well enough. What* is interesting is that the two people responsible for this [the director and the coordinator] at that point in time did not know how to write in Spanish either. There never was a written rule about this, but I think what made us kind of lend credit to the idea that... since a large number of the staff was Mexican, when we asked them they never wanted to teach the last two semesters of the program and the issue of writing was always one. (AI2.2, Kenny/A7)

This extract seems to show that administrators, at the beginning of the Language Center, had preconceived ideas about language proficiency connected to nationality or place of birth, giving the Mexican teachers little room to gain credibility in their language skills. However, these ideas seemed to be reinforced by the same Mexican teachers who refused to teach higher levels, due to insecurities in their writing level. However, as Kenny points out, there was a misconception of who would be able to teach the higher levels, not only because of the writing component, but also the accent:

> Once people were hired, there was kind of an unspoken rule that we could only use native speakers for the advanced levels because of issues of writing and accent. I remember clear two Mexican teachers on staff that said they could not teach advanced levels because they felt uncomfortable with the writing components of the class and were critized for their accent, but in all honesty myself and the only other director we ever had believed in the past that only native speakers could write in English. This bothers me because it is true. We really did this and I am ashamed of it since where I am at now in my life I now know through academic research that the vast majority of native English speakers in the US are barely literate. (AI2.2, Kenny/A7)

This extract seems to show how perceptions evolved in time, and what seemed to be an "unspoken" rule at the time, Kenny has reflected upon it and acknowledges that language proficiency and skills are not inherited by place of birth. There has been a considerable change in the manner that the assigning of levels is done in the Language Department. The current coordinator recalls a moment when she was told by her boss to place a Mexican teacher, who was not highly qualified, in the beginning levels, so that students could not complain about his performance:

> ...and I say "No! and *I don't even wanna hire him if he is not qualified". Everybody in staff should* be able to teach from Level 100 to Level 800, regardless, I think everybody who teaches here should be capable to teach any level. And even if he [the teacher] thinks that his English is a little bit shaky, *it is worthy not to give them lower levels, because that's basic but I really don't base the* schedule that I give to the Academic Secretary on the English level they speak. What I have in my *computer is the teachers' preferen*ce [...] What I have here is all the teachers in alphabetical order *and I ask them their preference hours, their preference level, if they're interested* in a Saturday course, or if they are interested in designing exams. And I give them this survey, and I *say "We*ll, *this is only a preference survey, it doesn't mean this is what you're going to get, obviously".* (AI1.2, Sue/A7)

Even when there is still a remanent of the old practices, the coordinator has established higher criteria to place teachers in different levels, differing from those misconceptions of "the less he knows, the lower level he can be placed in". This seems to show how different discourses can be involved in deciding who teaches what. On one side, her superior seems to think that if there is a teacher with low proficiency, he/she can take the beginning levels, and on the other side, the coordinator fights to have a good quality staff where everybody should be able to teach any level. She acknowledges, though, that there are teachers who are very "picky" in the sense that they have particular preferences over one level or another:

> Some people are very specific about the level they want to teach... and some teachers have *changed their opinion, for example this teacher used to say "any level" all the time, but now he* specified 700, *I don't know why" or other teachers have a preference for teaching beginning levels, as in her case "I don't like to teach upper levels.* (AI, 1.1, Sue/A3)

But also, she reflects on how teachers might think about upper levels:

> *I think it's more challenging with upper levels because they don't see their students'* progress too much, their progress is much slower. (AI1.1, Sue/A7)

However, within these two discourses, the Coordinator's and the Academic Secretary's, a third one is added, by teachers, who have their own preconceived ideas and convictions about what students need. Daniel, a teacher, once again refers to the native speakers as models of language:

I think that in the higher levels, well, from intermediate to advanced, they should have native speakers, or people who handle the language very well because... they need... for example, in my particular case, I speak English and Spanish very slowly, right? And that favours them to have a better understanding, but in a long run this is not good, it is preferable that a native speaker comes and he speaks in a natural way. Me, for not being native, I use phrases almost like a native, *but when I want to express other things, sometimes, I can't, just like* in Spanish, but in English happens more often, so, I think it is convenient for them to have a native speaker, with the fluency of a native speaker. (TN1.3, Daniel/A5)

Not only teachers but students make reference to their expectations of a 'native speaker' teaching in the upper levels:

well, first I would like to have a Mexican teacher, I would feel more comfortable, but in upper levels I would prefer a native speaker because I need to learn a good accent and pronunciation to get a good job. (SN12.3, Andrea/A6)

Even when the hiring processes and the assigning of levels has changed over the last 30 years in the Language Department, there seems to be a contradiction in the different discourses. From the coordination's point of view, all the teachers should be able to teach any levels, but teachers and students, and occasionally, the Academic Secretary, seem to emphasise the importance of having a 'native speaker' as teacher in the upper levels, evidencing that there is still the stigma that 'native speakers' are the "models" of language. The images of the professional identity of the 'native speaker' teacher seem perpetrated by 'non-native speaker' teacher who rate their counterparts highly, and this is reinforced by English language students who ponder "accent" and "pronunciation" as their infallible evidence of qualifying a "real" English teacher.

The current hiring practices in the Language Department may differ from those discussed in the literature in Chapter 2, and open up a new visualization of the English teacher, pondering the qualified and educated English teacher over the 'native speaker' by right of place of birth. However, society and teachers, still have a specific image in their head about who would be a better teacher. This denotes a conflict in the two main discourses: the administration and the users of the "service" (students). Even when the majority of the staff has gone through a high qualified education, some Mexican teachers and students still place themselves in an inferior position. The participants' narratives, though, seem to show that this continuous self-segregation, has its roots in the historical relationship between Mexico and the United States, as will be discussed in the following section.

5.5 'Us' vs. 'Them'

The development of Self within any society is accompanied by the continuous comparison of others. In this discussion of self-image a picture is developing and it has emerged from the use of descriptive

phrases to define the others and themselves. This binary situation ('Us' vs. 'Them', 'Self' vs. 'Other') started developing in the discourse of six teachers, four students and one administrator, and showed a point of conflict which did not start inside the Department, but has been going on for centuries, as it is explored in the following section.

5.5.1 Historical Issues: Mexico and the United States

It is not just Mexicans looking at foreigners; it is also foreigners looking at Mexicans and themselves. As what emerged in the previous sections, physical appearance and its interconnectedness with the teaching practice, beliefs and expectations, descriptive phrases, and the early hiring practices seem to play an important role when teachers define themselves and the Other. As the narratives were evolving, the emergence of what might be a "description of the Other" is being shaped by an exisiting culture mixture, which is recognized and even valued by participants, not always in a positive manner though. The constant division of 'Us' vs. 'Them' is often construed as one being better than the other but participants take this further and depict a long lasting division which can bring issues of identity and shared pride to a different level. This can be seen in the following extract, where Darren, a young British teacher who has been teaching for almost four years in the Language Department, makes an interesting reflection about his position as a foreigner, but not any foreigner:

> *Most people think I am American because of the way I look... I never mention that I'm British, not* at the beginning but you know students, some because they talk to other students, some pick on the *accent, but there's a big difference with me being a native speaker and not a Mexican but also me being British and not American. I think it is easier for me teaching English because there's not this historical issue as there's with the America*ns, *and this relationship with the States, and I think* that some students find it *difficult, consciously or unconsciously, having an American teacher... and we (British) are not so involved, Mexico and England they don't have this part* of history... (TN3.1, Darren, A5)

For Darren, his condition of being fair, with blue eyes and a foreigner, puts him in a different position in relation not only to Mexican teachers, but Americans as well. Le Ha (2008) calls this "double standard practice". That is, using his image to disrupt its associated colonial and imperial norms, as it is in the case between Mexico and the United States. For Darren, his nationality British brings a 'fresh' image of the English speaker, without all the baggage that being American means historically between Mexico and the United States. But also, Darren, who once recognized that he did not represent a 'threat' in terms of the baggage between Mexico and the United States due to his British nationality, makes a reflection and talks about certain divisions he has perceived among his Mexican colleagues, due to insecurities and fear because of being judged by others:

I think I have a good relationship with most of the teachers… but sometimes I can see a division between the Mexican teachers and th*e foreigners… there is something… I don't know if it is because of the language… and this is just possible, this is my possible hypothesis… sometimes* even when they have a great command of the language and they know how good they are, I think *there's still* this little insecurity, that they are kind of insecure that their level might not be good *enough… not good enough in terms of teaching because they are brilliant and use a lot of material* etc, but I think it is this issue of the language and they do not want to share their material because they think they are gonna be judged. (TN3.1, Darren/A5)

Once again, insecurities shown by the Mexican teachers are evidenced in this extract. Even when Darren acknowledges that they are qualified, there is still this latent insecurity which makes it difficult to establish a professional atmosphere without looking at the "language level", which is not brought up by the British teacher, but by the Mexicans. This is the case of Laura, a student who became a teacher after having studied in the Language Department. She narrates her sentiment about having a "Mexican accent":

My accent is going to be my accent and for all the English that we speak and that we want to be understood and all we are going to keep having an accent. And even the politicians, those that are well educated and all speak English very well but their accent is very strong according to their country and that is not going to change to say this person is not good at his/er job. (SN13.2, Laura/A6)

This comment might appear to be isolated but connected with Darren's comment it seems to show that although teachers are educated and trained, there are still traces of insecurities when comparing themselves with the 'native speaker'. Moreover, other issues were emerging from the data that went beyond the linguistic aspect of English speakers and, once again, brought up the socio-political relationship between Mexico and the United States, as it is explained in the following section.

5.5.2 Crossing Borders

In order to understand the love-hate relationship between Mexico and the United States and its implications when constructing the English speaker, it is necessary to explore how participants carry out their identities in terms of the close relationship between the two countries and how this influences the way they perceive themselves and the Other. In this section, the name "crossing borders" means not only the geographical implications, but the mental and affective, involving issues of attachment to a new culture but also detachment from their own and the new.

In the case of some teachers, growing up in the United States and being aware of the historical background between the two countries, prompted them to want to explore more about the other

country across the border. Some of these reasons were personal, but also the family seemed to be a pivotal element, as William narrates:

> *I've been in love wi*th Mexico almost my whole life. My first awareness of Mexico came when I was a child *—my dad would take us to "the other side of the tracks" and into the* barrio to eat *Mexican food; I've always admired my dad for that, because this was during an era when (and in* a place where) Mexicans and g*ringos didn't mi*x much, if at all. I first started coming to Mexico in high school when my friends and I would cross the border so we could drink and carouse. Those border trips turned into longer trips, down to San Felipe on the Sea of Cortez and then further and further down the Baja peninsula. Those trips, in turn, resulted in forays into the interior. Before I actually moved to Mexico, I probably travelled to Oaxaca ten *times, and I've* visited many many other places. *I've be*en living in Mexico now about ten years. (TN9.1, William/A5)

The sentiment that William has for Mexico can be traced back when he first started coming to the country when he was a child. His father played an important role in contributing to this love that William feels for Mexico, even when he acknowledges that times were difficult because "gringos and Mexicans didn't mix much, if at all". This extract seems to show how the dynamics of Americans and Mexicans have been perceived by the participants of this study since years ago. This is interconnected with what Kenny describes in the following extract and seems to show that a new picture between "gringos" and "Mexicans" is developed:

> When I first came here I considered myself to be an American and most people referred to me as such. Where I was most clearly a gringo was when it came to the work permit, the permit to buy a house, the permit for property. I felt like I was a part of the community, but the Federal Government didn´t agree. Then came the issue of studying and travelling for work and the rule was Mexicans first. Based on this plus ten years of living here I decided to start the nationality change. Once that happened it was almost like instant acceptance [in the Mexican society]. (AI2.2, Kenny/A7)

In both cases, Kenny and William make reference to their condition of being "Americans" or "gringos". But in the case of Kenny it implied also being considered an outsider by the host community, even when he felt part of the "Mexican society" that did not consider him as such. In his case, there was a turning point when he changed his nationality and became Mexican. This event seems to have opened the door for him to have almost an immediate acceptance in the Mexican community.

But there is also the change and adaptation to a new culture, when the distinction of being an insider and an outsider becomes blurred, to the eyes of the participant. This is the case of a teacher called Mary. As mentioned before, teachers are aware of the different identities they can portray at different moments not only of their teaching, but of their daily lives, and how this comfort of being part of the community, influences the way life in Mexico is regarded. This is the case of Mary, who

was born in the United States and has lived in Mexico for more than two years. She is a Spanish language learner in the United States but was offered a job as an English teacher in the Language Department because she had had some previous teaching experience. She mentions how being an outsider is now mixing with being an insider:

> Of course, I am proud of being American and I know I can use that in my favour while teaching English. It is easier for me to teach pronunciation and idiomatic expressions. However, sometimes I forget I am originally American. I feel identified with Mexico and I am not sure if I could teach English the same way I do it here. There is something special about Mexic*o, its people… the place".* (TN6.1, Lucy/A5)

There is a sense of national identity, denoting being proud of her country of origin but also it can be perceived as an idea of 'crossing borders' and bicultural paradigm. She feels proud of being American and even recognizes advantages because of her nationality, but she also seems to show a sense of attachment to Mexico, her host country. She seems to blend into her adopted country and identifies herself with this country. This makes her even question her potential role as an English teacher back in her country. In the same venue of 'crossing borders', it has happened to me with my students and how they see me. My students know that I travel to England quite often and now they constantly ask me how English people speak, how they dress, if they are as formal as they seem to be, what they think of the United States, as if I were a representative of the British culture. I tended to be asked to talk about 'American culture' because I was immersed in the country once in my life, and students used to ask me questions about the country. But now, my situation has changed and students see me as a representative of 'British culture', like someone who can open their eyes to a new culture, the one that might give them access to the British accent they like so much (RD, 12.1/A7). Also, teachers perceive themselves as an important element to help their students to cross the borders, as in the case of Daniel. He reflects on how teachers can get students interested in the English culture so that they motivate them to expand their views and aspirations. He even thinks that they have added a new identity to their initial Mexican identity.

> *You need to open students' eyes and give them the opportuni*ty to know about places that will probably never visit. (TN1.3, Daniel/A5)

There is no doubt that teachers see themselves as the motivators to engage students in a new culture, expanding their horizons and have agency with another culture. But even when teachers might not be aware of the various identities they have at their disposal, they constantly change from one to another, as William explains:

> I certainly never fe*el entirely at home in Mexico …but that's one of* the reasons I like it: I know *I'm living abroad, and that* excites me and makes me happy. I like both the challenges and simple

pleasures of living abroad. *Even if I were to someday leave Mexico, it's very unlikely that I'd ever move back to the U.S. —I'd almost cer*tainly head to another country. (TN9.1, William/A5)

Even when William has been living in Mexico for almost ten years, his narratives seems to reveal his sentiment about being a foreigner in the country but also how he has detached himself from his country of origin. In his case, he has "crossed the border" and, apparently, the fact of being an "outsider" is one of his reasons why he likes living in Mexico. However, for other teachers, being in the country of origin and teaching a foreign language can also mean a challenge. We are a group which shares interests, but we are also people who have experiences, good and bad, and it is hard to separate the identity from labels that have been given to us that seem to serve a dangerous duality: identification /discrimination. The idea of 'crossing borders' can be seen in Raquel's narrative. Raquel is a former BA student of the Language Department and is now a teacher in the Language Department who has been able to teach in both areas, Spanish and English. She first started teaching Spanish to foreigners and then English to Mexicans. She reflects on how hard it was for her to go from teaching her first language to teach English as a foreign language, and how she faced discrimination when trying to cross the borders of two language at different levels:

> I felt..., *with my Spanish as a tool, I felt good, until I was offered to teach English… it became a nightmare. First, I was a former students of the BA in TESOL and I was always shy… my* classmates had experimented living in the States but my English was more academic, from a d*epartment, very carefully studied. I was offered a few hours in English and well… my foreign students' attitudes, Japanese, Koreans, Turkish, Hindi,* are and have always been of respect, *admiration, and they say " I like your classes", "I want to take classes with you", always positive comments, with amazing satisfaction for me. My English students' attitudes, in their eyes, in their* attitudes, maybe my prejudices, but I think the teacher was not what they were expecting. In the *moment I started classes… they are not the students I was used to, those who congratulate me,* those who trust in the information I provide, in my knowledge. I could perceive that, especially with one group. All the context was set. One of them dedicated his time to try me. My self-esteem went down. I combined this class with Spanish, that is, in the morning [when teaching Spanish] I was the happiest woman in the world, but it came the time of my English class and I became nervous. I had my class prepared all the time, but I had to prepare more. It was a horrible *experience. I was valuable from 8:00 to 11:00, with my foreign students, there… I was me. But* here, it was the dark side, the one tha*t I didn't like, it wasn't me. It was an experience of* rejection. (TN7.1, Raquel/A5)

She first started the teaching profession with Spanish to foreigners and she felt recognized and valued in these matters. However, the transition from teaching Spanish to English was not easy and she lived such as the swing of the pendulum, from being admired, valued and secure, to feeling questioned, rejected and insecure. The perceptions of students are shaped by different experiences, but also, teacher's perceptions were shaped in a rather short time, and even in one day she experienced

contrasting feelings, from a using Spanish as "her tool" to her lack of confidence in the same profession but in her second language. She is a proficient user of English, however, she has already drawn a borderline between Spanish and English, and taken this further, between the teaching of those languages. This situation, bitterly, makes Raquel realize, and comprehend until now, that the teaching profession was more difficult than what she expected. Further in her narrative, Raquel reflects about this situation and how this helped her shape her beliefs and reconstruct her self-esteem:

> Later on my attitude changed and I liked teaching the first semesters because I saw that my students liked me and appreciated my effort. I saw that they gave me good evaluations. It gave me back my confidence. You already had the experience with the language, and for me it was more *like "I'm going to speak the language, I'm going to understand" but… for me it* was different, I *didn't think I would become an English teacher too".* (TN7.1, Raquel/A5)

Her confidence was affected and as in the case of Khadar (Chapter 5.4) when he mentioned "my students are constantly reminded that they are not native speakers", Raquel was going through the same, but at a teacher level, with a constant reminder of her being an outsider. She makes also reference to my experience and compares hers with mine, letting me know that she acknowledges the potential similarities we may share but most of all, the differences we have in our own narratives and how these reflect the issue of becoming English teachers. One (myself) felt identified as an English teacher and the other (Raquel) felt discriminated as an English teacher. This discrimination came, indeed from colleagues and students, who seem to reveal attitudes not only towards the language but also towards the speakers, as it is further explored in the following section.

5.5.3 Attitudes Towards the Language and its Speakers

Having looked at the how participants acknowledge that there is a difficult past (and present) between Mexico and the United States, there was another issue that emerged from this particular historical issue: the "obligation" to learn the foreign language. Miguel, a student in the Language Department, for example, points out the necessity to learn English, but also reveals his feelings about and the dependency of Mexico on the United States:

> I know I ha*ve to learn the language because if I do not, I won't be awarded my degree, but I* hate what the United States has done to the world for years and this idea of them being the ones who *will fix the world […] Mexico should not be so dependent o*n the United States, but here we are, learning their language and some of us we will end up studying postgraduate degrees there, even *if we don't like how Americans look at u*s, Mexicans. (SN5.3, Miguel/A6)

He was not the only student referring to the Mexican-American relationship. Some others commented on the same theme and how they are facing this duality of "hate" and "obligation". On one hand they

"hate everything that has to do with the United States" and on the other hand, they recognize that they need to study the language if they want to, first, obtain their degree, and second, to study a postgraduate degree. This socio-political relationship has evolved in different aspects of students and teachers' lives, and they are very open about their feelings and attitudes towards the country and the language. This is sometimes stigmatized as the "language of the United States" and they tend to label not only the speakers of the language, but the country and the actions that the close neighbour has taken in different political affairs. Regarding their reasons for studying the language, five out of twelve university students mentioned the pressure they feel to learn the language because it is a requirement in their departments, as seen in the following:

> If I am learning the language, it is not because I like it, but because I have to. I hate whatever has to do with Americans and the United States, but I know that I need to speak their language in order to get a good job in the future. (SN6.4, Rafael/A6)

The "hope" of obtaining a better job in the future is what Rafael expects from learning English, However, his sentiments towards the country and citizens seems to coincide with what Miguel previously mentioned. The duality of "hate" and "obligation" seems to be present and the idea of English being an "imposed" language does not help to change their opinion. The rejection of "American" English has gone further and seems to benefit the "British" variation. For some students at the Language Department in Guanajuato, it is important to have a native speaker as a teacher because he/she will teach them "original English". They commented on the English accent and what 'English' they would like to learn:

> I would like to learn British English because is more elegant and it is the original English. (SN12.3, Andrea/A6)

The interviews revealed some students showed some preference for a variety of English and the accent certainly appears to be a marker of status. However, in the Language Department there are not many teachers who come from England. The majority of the teachers come from the United States. In the particular study, there were two teachers with British nationality. What becomes interesting in the previous excerpt is the idea of "original English", giving the British variety a higher status over the others. Moreover, this can pass the language issue and also seems to apply to British people, or "behaving British", as David, an e-mail informant, explains:

> Let me tell you this: in my department we had a British teacher, bu*t very British, and she didn't* really interact or *didn't understand* the type of language students used and they immediately *classified her as 'snob'. I saw the students we*re racist with her, but in this case it would be backwards, not because they felt sup*erior, but because she didn't speak Spanish and they claimed they didn't understand her English, just because of that they ignored her, just like the gringos, who*

think that everybody must speak their language. Students felt that her obligation was to speak Spanish. (EMI10.2, David/A8)

When asking David what he meant by 'very British', he said:

You know, her accent, her way of dressing, besides, she was very punctual. (EMI10.2, David/A8)

His discourse quickly evolves through nationality-stereotypes ("very British", "her way of dressing", "very punctual") in his reply. Relying on an image created in his mind, David's vision of the teacher is highly stereotypical and he might not be aware of what he is saying is probably what the students he makes reference to, have also said. What he considers racist, is what he is doing as well. Also, the fact that the teacher did not speak Spanish, made it harder for her inclusion in the host community and the reason why she might not fit in.

David says "very British" in the same way that Carmen and Daniel say "very Mexican" in previous excerpts. This use of particular discourse forms to strengthen their images, confronted with the 'ideal' 'native speaker'. However, here, David narrates how a teacher suffered certain discrimination at the workplace, but not by administrators, but by students. But for one student in the Language Department in particular there were other feelings of experiencing different identities while learning English.

It is funny when I hear myself pronouncing in English, it is like if another person was *speaking… I feel like… 'gringo' for a moment, even when I don't like anything to do with the U.S, but I have to learn the language and I'm doing my best.* (SN3.2, Miguel/A6)

This particular student is experiencing double identity when commenting on his reasons to learn the language and how he feels when speaking another language that he does not feel attracted to, but, due to university requirements, he has to study.

So, an important element in this study is how this political relationship has an impact on students' perceptions towards the language and the learning of it. Because of this complex relationship between the two countries and the implicit baggage, the students and teachers develop strong attitudes than can be to their own advantage, as in the case of Darren when he mentions:

I think it is easier for me teaching English because there's not this historical issue as there's with the Americans, and this relationship with the United States, and I think that some students find it *difficult, consciously or unconsciously having an American teacher… and we (British) are not so* involved, Mexico and England they *don't have this part of history…* (TN3.2, Darren, A5)

This seems to show that the cultural relationship between Mexico and the United States is deeply rooted. For Darren, his 'advantageous' position of an outsider of the 'conflict zone' of two countries, helps in his professional development.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter my intention has been to show that how participants define themselves and how they are defined by others is a dynamic process. Physical appearance and its relationship with the practice of teaching emerged as one of the main themes in the data, which seems to suggest that the image of the English teacher in the Language Department has been forged through a discourse of similarities and differences. The use of specific descriptive phrases seems to be a more complex issue than merely putting on labels to classify English teachers. There is a stratification of the figure of the English teacher. Far from being a homogenous group of teachers, they are complexly stratified and they are defined by a variety of historically constituted social boundaries, not only inside the Language Department but from the outside as well. Also, factors associated by birthplace, ethnicity, language proficiency and self-perceptions, seem to play a pivotal role on how the construction of the English speaker is carried out at the Language Department. The fact that the Language Department has gone through numerous changes in the hiring practices and has pondered the educated English teachers rather than the solely 'native speaker' appears of little consequence or relation with the international discussion concerning discrimination at the workplace. However, these practices have not demonstrated that they have been understood by teachers and students, who still have an idealized image of the "best English teacher" and have found it difficult to escape from it. Finally, by creating a discourse of difference concerning "us versus them", issues related to a long history between Mexico and the United States were revealed and seem to influence the use of labels such as mexicanito, pocho, güero, gringo and foreigner, revealing conflicts and attitudes towards the language and its speakers. This has taken the discussion to a deeper level and seems to show discrepancies between the day-to-day practice of English teaching and the developing understanding of students, teachers and administrators concerning the impact those labels have not only in the professional but in the personal identity of teachers and students. The next chapter will explore further the issues that emerged regarding the process of labelization and its relationship with the construction of identity.

Chapter 6
Constructing Identities

6.1 Introduction

I believe the previous chapter has revealed several factors that seem to contribute to the understanding of how complex the issue of constructing who the English speaker is. These factors have allowed teachers to form a current self-image and image of the other by means of particular phrases and labels which tend to emphasise a discourse of difference, showing a deeply rooted history between Mexico and the United States that seems to favour these labels. The 'native speaker' image in this study appears to have been constructed from a well-defined physique (tall, blond, blue-eyed, white), enhanced by descriptive phrases and particular discourses. In the previous chapter I presented how teachers, students and administrators manifested specific discourses when positioning themselves and others, not only in relation to the image of the English speaker, but also in relation to the attitudes towards the language and its speakers.

In this chapter, I present a number of other factors which contribute to the construction of the English speakers and their identities, emphasising the complexities of labelling and its impact in the day-today scenario. This chapter begins by presenting a short discussion about how the acronym NNEST seems to create more division than cohesion in a group. It then presents data which appears to suggest that identity is not static and factors that appear to threaten a comfort zone that participants had already established. Next, I present the findings about the challenges that participants encounter in their daily interactions, not only in the Language Department, but also outside it. This seems to suggest how the issue of labelling has passed the borders of the professional and is present in their personal identities.

Problematizing these aspects has been helpful in attempting to reach a partial understanding of how different elements construct the English speaker. In terms of more fully comprehending the construction of the English teacher, two further aspects emerged from the data and are explored in this chapter. The first is the dilemmas that participants face with the labels and the relation these have with the role of English as a global language. The second aspect explored in this chapter is the issue of the being and the becoming, that is, the participants' reliance on their experiences in establishing a professional identity and, paradoxically, their frustrations in doing this are forefronted. It explores the transition from being students to becoming teachers and how the previous dilemmas can work for or against the construction of their professional identity. In this particular exploration, the evolution of their perceptions towards a 'native speaker' and the confrontation with their own image becomes important, as well as their different identities displayed at different moments. Finally, the chapter concludes with the findings about how participants seem to have reached a balance between their personal and professional identities.

6.2 Problematizing Labels

Adding to the labels that emerged in the previous chapter, the evolving construction of the English speaker concerning these labels became an issue of discussion among some participants. I consider it important to bring part of this discussion to this chapter so it can be contrasted with what e-mail informants and the participants in the Language Department say about the labels they have been given for many years.

This first one is the case of Kenny who, in his role of director of the Language Department in different moments of his life, has been called in different ways and has been considered an "almost Mexican" but for some matters, he still remains "foreigner", as he explains in the following extract:

> There is one odd thing that happens on rare occasions. When I get deeply involved in work debates I have discovered that when I am right about a particular issue I get th*e comment of "You are Mexican, but a foreigner one", which I interpret as "You are a foreigner, you don't know what you are talking about". Based on the circumstances of when this happens, I have come to* believe the only otherizing or stigmatizing a person as different occurs when we as people have no argument to defend ourselves, or when we are afraid, or finally when we feel inferior, this is when we pull out the negative labels. I say negative because the reason we label is to separate and classify others as different from us. The way it is done it is most often with the intent of minimizing something about the other person. (AI2.2, Kenny/A7)

What Kenny seems to incorporate to the discussion is the issue of giving labels in order to place the other in a subordinate position. This has happened to him in different occasions and goes against the general discussion about placing the 'native speaker' in a superior position. In his case, it is the opposite. This seems to suggest that placing the other in a subordinate position is due to self-perception of the one who is labelling the other. An example of this is when Kenny says "When we as people have no argument to defend ourselves, or when we are afraid, or finally when we feel inferior". This seems to show that viewing oneself through the words of others may have a range of behavioural consequences. This is in tune with what William says about the word "gringo" that has been used to define him in several occasions:

> I know that it can be used pejoratively. And the word has been used as an insult on occasion. I remember walking through a park a while ago, and someone felt it necessary to yell at me "Pinche Gringo!" (Fucking gringo). But, you know, who cares? It's like lots of words —its intended meaning depends on context. And the contexts in which I use and hear the word are almost always positive ones. When I lived in China, all of us Westerners referred to ourselves as "Gwailo," which is unquestionably pejorative; literally, it means "Ghost person" and is racially deprecatory. We used it ironically, and by doing so, robbed the word of its potency. So perhaps there's some of that at work, as well. By co-opting these words, you take the sting out of them. (TN 9.2, William/A5)

This particular excerpt seems to show how perception is a finely-tuned process. What might be considered offensive by some, it is just another word for others. For William, labels are context specific and he even goes further and seems to suggest that how someone is described can influence how the word can be co-constructed and even its potency can be taken away. The use of labels in the description of others, leads to greater perceived strength or weaken of the label, depending on the context and how personal the individual takes the impact of the given label.

The issue of how people view characteristics and then assign particular labels to others might show how language may affect perceptions of the world, of other individuals and of particular groups. This is the case of the 'non' part of the acronym NNEST, showing how the issue can be very sensitive. Sarahi, an e-mail informant, emphasizes her rejection to the 'non' term and how pejorative and derogative this sounds:

> Personally, I disagree with the terms non-*native/native. The connotations of the word 'non-native'* are negative —it is like calling me a non-*man! The hyphenated word 'non-native' implies a 'deviant', a non*-standard. I do not think these terms apply any longer. With globalisation, the world has shrunk plenty to make English a global language and if English is now an *'international' language then who are non*-native speakers? I categorise English speakers into three groups:
>
> 1. Those who speak English as their first and only language.
> 2. Those who speak English as a second language and may speak one or two more languages with equal ease.
> 3. Those who speak other languages fluently and speak English only to fulfill a purpose; to be able to converse for business/education/work etc., and their fluency in English may be basic.
> *People would usually call the first type 'native speakers' and the other two types 'non*-native *speakers', with which I do not agree.* (EMI 2.1, Sarahi, A8)

What Sarahi explains here is the various facets of the 'native speaker' construct, which has been problematized in TESOL from the linguistic perspective, in terms of level of proficiency of speakers. However, it might reveal a hidden racism which has not been openly admitted so far. Sarahi addresses the racialized aspect of 'native and non-native speakers', as part of a continuous debate concerning the most 'appropriate' and 'accurate' English speaking model, which makes the critical hegemony of the 'native speaker'. The hyphenated word 'non-native', as Sarahi points out, seems to imply a 'deviant' or a 'non-standard', and make recurrent ideological assumptions about what is in the best interest of 'native speakers'.

What has emerged so far in this study is that the physical appearance seems to be an important "level" in the categorization of, in this case, English speakers, and the role of birthplace and ethnicity are important in corroborating the given labels. In the same venue, another e-mail informant provides an analogy to explain this issue. Sarahi makes an analogy which can provide a picture of how complex

a label can become. In this case this refers to how the 'non' part of the acronym NNEST can be applied to other aspects of our lives, but this does not find resonance because it can sound illogical:

English spread with the British colonisation. With all that the English gave their colonies (like the game of cricket; introduction to railway, postal services, and telegram etc) came the English language. Today cricket is played with more enthusiasm in the South East Asia than in the UK, *although it is not a national game in any of the countries in S.E Asia. Why is it not called a 'non-native' game then?!* (EMI2.1, Sarahi, A8)

With this analogy, Sarahi makes her point to indicate how discriminatory the 'non' issue can be. She seems convinced that if English has spread to many other aspects of our lives, then we should treat them as 'non-entities' as well, not only confer this label to speakers. The emphasis on 'English spread with the British colonisation' caused me to realize, yet again, how rooted the idea of imperialism is. In reference to the status of English as a global language and how the United States represents a new 'empire' in terms of imperialism, militarism and capital, the same can be applied to the status of English in the world, but in particular reference to the relation between Mexico and the United States. As the data emerged, participants revealed their position towards the labels they have been given. This is exactly what Kenny shows in the following extract, when reflecting upon the levels of labels:

For me the labels seem to go in levels. Level one is mostly about what you look like. I guess the visual level. Next level has to do with nationality, what color is the passport. Then the third level and the one that is impossible to change: where were you born. The problem is that people mix and match these levels depending upon what is convenient for them and depending on what they want to exclude. (AI2.2, Kenny/A7)

Kenny seems to reveal that people describe or judge their preferences using labels, which imply that preference is central to one's identity, but more as a mechanism of defence, either for integrating or excluding an individual from a certain group. However, another participant from the NNEST Caucus, comments on his sense of belonging to the group as can be seen next:

What I have realized... is that it doesn't matter what term we use. What matters is that how people *that the name/term represents are viewed and treated, and unless we can change everyone's view* about all this, I fear we might not be able to come up with a name that will not be derogatory. As for us being inclusive of everyone, I have several native English speaking friends who joined our caucus not because they consider themselves nonnative speakers of English (or of any language for that matter), but rather because they were interested in the issues related to this caucus. Will changing the name of our organization help them feel more included and be more interested in our *issues? Since I haven't asked any of them, I would not know.* (TD2.1, Kyung-Hee/A9)

From this excerpt, Kyung-Hee emphasizes that many of the members feel identified with the group not because of the label but because of the content and discussions carried out inside the group. He seems to even question that the name would influence people to change their interests. This particular excerpt seems to carry different meaning. First, there is the necessity of teachers to belong to an organization which brings them together to claim their rights as well as promote their professional growth. Secondly, there is the expansion of this type of organizations and what means to people now. Braine (2010) describes this as organizations which can establish a sense of comradeship with fellow English teachers and help them, somehow, to overcome any sense of isolations and disillusionment with the profession, which eventually will lead to their empowerment.

This made me remember the days when I was studying my BA and we were encouraged to attend the Mexican Association of Teachers of English (MEXTESOL) conferences held in different parts of Mexico (RD3/A10). We were told that we needed to look for as many opportunities as we could to find organizations that could give us a voice. At that point in my life it was difficult to see the usefulness of such organization, being a student teacher I did not find a sense of belonging. However, as my status changed from being a student teacher to a full time teacher, I agree with the members of the Caucus in the sense that, at the beginning of my practice of teaching I considered that a group with certain characteristics such as the non-native speakers would give me a voice in a major organization. I decided I would find a way to take an active role in professional associations, instead of being a spectator.

I wrote in my diary 'Does a name define who I am and what I am interested in? (RD5/A10). I firmly believe that we define ourselves in every action we make, when we speak or write, and language is our medium in which our identities are enacted and constructed (RD6/A10). From these excerpts so far, I can conclude that the relationship between identity and discourse is rooted in negotiating between people and through social interaction. The discussion which was going on here, more than denoting a sense (or lack of) belonging, made me reflect on the implications that the label of NNEST create inside a group which for years has created a movement in order to be seen and heard. It is not easy to change what has been part of their identities for many years. The concept of 'non-native speaker', in particular, the acronym NNEST, was being discussed at the inside of the NNEST Caucus of the TESOL organization and provided insights to the issue of labels and how they can represent more distance within the same group of teachers.

The discussion about the use of the acronym NNEST went further and some members of the Caucus started questioning the 'non' part of the nomenclature. The terminology suggests it being pejorative which the majority of the participants emphasized that in these times, it is a form of racism. Various opinions came to light and made evident the discomfort of some members, but the pride of others. An example of this can be seen in this comment by Nalini, an English teacher from South Africa, who says:

Why on earth would anyone want to be a 'non' anything? In my opinion, 'non' anything is diminishing. It focuses on what one is not, rather than what one is. 'Multilingual' or any other term that ascribes empowerment rather than debilitation would be preferred. Case in point: I am a South African (born, not immigrant) and have been called a 'nonwhite' for almost all of my life. The term was intended to paralyse me in my own country. I am not 'nonwhite' I am not even 'nonblack'; I am South African. While the term 'native' is intended to focus on 'mothertongue' it *shifts the view from the issue of language to an issue of ethnicity.... On the other hand, while* English is not my 'mothertongue', it is my 'home *language' but I'm not a 'native' speaker.* 'Multilingual' therefore does not aptly describe me as well but it is certainly not a 'NONentity. (TD6.3, Nalini Reddy, A9)

Nalini expresses her disagreement on the 'non' part of the term, but at the same time the identity conflicts arouse and let us perceive some tensions at different levels: tension with the acronym and tension with being called 'nonwhite', 'nonblack' and 'nonnative'. It is my belief that the many 'nons' in Nalini's life, have had an impact on how she perceives herself and how she perceives the world in terms of speakerism. The 'NONentity' as she calls it, denotes the great discomfort and tension that these several labels have brought to her life. This made me look back and re-visit the data and look at the labels that participants were referring to in different moments of their narratives. At least in the context of the interviews, the labels such as gringo, güero, pocho, mexicanito and foreigner, seem to have contributed to help construct the image of the English teacher at different levels. That is, students use them to describe their teachers (Pam, Adriana, Naty, Tessa, Rocío, María, Miguel), teachers use them to describe their colleagues (Daniel, Darren, Julio, Bree, William) but they use them also to describe themselves (Daniel, Julio, William, Chris, Barry, Sue, Kenny). Finally, administrators use them to refer to the employees (Sue and Kenny).

So far, it seems that teachers and students construct their personal identity throughout points in their professional lives. This becomes evident when participants judge each other based on how they "fasten" and "unfasten" their identities at a given moment. For example, Clea, a Canadian professor who has been involved in the research of the 'native speaker' terminology, acknowledges the problems that such term can imply. She mentions how she feels about, but also how she thinks that she contributes to the profession and advocates for professional development:

I think the term "native speaker" is a highly problematic one that has increasingly limited relevance in an era of globalization where notions of language "ownership" are outdated and contentious. That being said, I recognize that the term continues to be widely used and has a variety of associations attached to it. I would define it as a construct with social, political, personal, and geographic implications denoting a perceived advanced level of language expertise that confers on the speaker certain status and privileges. I first became interested in this issue when I worked as an ESL teacher overseas in South Korea and observed Korean-born colleagues with more qualifications than I possessed paid less than me. When I became a teacher educator working with English teachers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, I started to advocate for

professional development approaches that would both address their particular needs as well as challenge inequities in the profession and wider society. (EMI6.1, Clea/A8)

This proactive act can be considered as constructive, since Clea sees herself as an educator but also as an advocator. In the case of the Language Department, different labels have emerged and participants reflect about them.

Looking at the different labels given to English speakers and the events where they have been used, has helped me to explore the complexities of the 'native' and 'non-native speakers' issue in the Language Department. If these labels are ideas based on physical appearance, geographical locations or ethnicity, they therefore represent qualities attached to the person and qualities of life that can reveal emotions, events, and attitudes at different times which therefore lead to the construction of identities. What makes this discussion important is that these labels are meaningful to the people who have faced these different levels, either for using them or being used them upon them.

6.3 The Being and the Becoming

During the time that this study was conducted, some of the participants changed their status. That is, some of the former students became English teachers, in a rather short period of time (two years) and some of them were offered a job as English teachers at the Language Department. This had an impact on this study since, as it was an unexpected turn in events, I had the opportunity to confront their previous perceptions on their former English teachers to their current perceptions of themselves as English teachers. In this section, I discuss the findings regarding this change in status and also how time seems to be one of many factors which help shape perceptions towards the English teachers in the Language Department.

6.3.1 From Being a Student to Becoming a Teacher

For some participants, the trajectories they have followed have shaped and reshaped their identities in different manners. For this particular section, I will focus on one case, since it is the one who represented this in a more complex manner. This is by no means a characteristic of the group of participants as a whole, but it allowed me to learn from instances that I had not foreseen before and I consider it important in this complex construction of the English speaker. Carmen, one of the students at the Language Department, told me at the beginning of the study her reasons for studying English (basically she liked the language and she wanted to be able to speak with English speakers). However, she also revealed she was looking ahead and she could see herself teaching the language one day:

I see myself, in a future teaching, English, I dream with the day that I can be teaching. And I have taken a little from this teacher, a little from this other, and I would like to get all this together in

order to be me, to create my teaching style and be able to teach and eventually to teach how to teach. (SN1.3, Carmen/A6)

Actually, her determination and discipline were rewarded when she was invited to teach one group in a primary school. In her final year of study in the Language Department, she approached me and told me she had been offered a position in a local institute to teach an English class to young kids. I encouraged her to do it since I thought she had a good command of the language and some experience tutoring beginners in the Self-Access Center of the Language Department. Here, Carmen, the same student who once mentioned she wanted to be taught by 'native speakers' and had idealized this image, narrates her dilemmas now that her status has changed, from being student to becoming an English teacher. Things changed for her in the moment that she decided to become an English teacher, as the following extract illustrates:

> When I was studying I wanted my teachers to be native speakers, because I felt I could learn more *and improve my pronunciation, which was my main concern. However, now that I'm becoming an English teacher… I get frustrated when my students look at me, I look very Mex*ican, and they ask *me where I learned my English… it just makes me feel that I'm not good at what I'm doing, and* that they question my level of English. (SN1.4, Carmen/A6)

When I asked her what she meant by "I look very Mexican" she made emphasis to her dark skin colour and short height. She also emphasized that she regretted when she remembered the many times she asked me the same questions that she was being asked now by her students. Carmen has changed her role in the teaching-learning process. She had once constructed an image of the native speaker as the ideal teacher. In her new role, when she presents herself before her students, she feels stigmatized by her appearance and feels questioned as a professional. She seems to locate herself far from the image she has created in her mind for the ideal English teacher and her own label is now causing self-labelling. Her auto-marginal position has closed off the opportunity of exploring her dilemmas ("I look very Mexican") with more professional issues, such as her ability for teaching. This is one example of how beliefs, expectations and identities are subject to change, as it is expanded in the following section.

6.3.2 Evolution of Perceptions

Regarding idiomatic expressions, students such as Rocío and Maria agree that they have felt bad in the past when asking about certain common expressions in English and their Mexican teachers do not know them or have never heard them. However, some students accept they want a teacher with training in English teaching, regardless of their nativeness condition. Students showed their preference of having a 'non-native' English speaking teacher in the first level of their learning process because they would feel "secure" in the classroom, but they wanted a native speaker in the upper levels in

order to improve pronunciation and the use of idiomatic expressions. They seem to categorize teachers based on their previous experiences.

There was also a sense of identification with their teachers (as previously discussed, calling them co-nationals), but this identification evolves during the same semester. Initially, students develop a strong affective relationship with their teacher because they consider that the teacher has gone through the same stages they are now and, it can be said that this teacher is seen as a model to follow, expressing their admiration. Rocio expresses such idea in the following:

*In general…I would prefer a native…but I wouldn't have anything against a Mexican th*at has had experience living in a foreign country, just as my teacher. She speaks the language very well (at the beginning of the semester). (SN8.1, Rocio/A6)

*I was disappointed because when you ask the teacher….she sometimes says "I don't know"…I mean…it is good that she is honest, but I think that…there should be teachers who know the language 100%. There are idioms, for example, that a Mexican teacher wouldn'*t know, but a foreigner would (at the end of the semester). (SN8.2, Rocio/A6)

Through these reflections, Rocio shows how her perceptions and expectations change in the course of the semester. After having developed a feeling of admiration, Rocio reflects on what this teacher lacked, and how this admiration turns to disappointment.

A similar situation can be seen in the following narrative by Lydia, a 22-year-old student at the Language Department. She expresses her turn of perceptions but in relation to a 'native speaker' and how these changed:

I was happy that I had a native speaker as teacher because I assume that I was going to learn the *pronunciation... but then I saw that she didn't know how to explain some things... That's when I saw that if she knew Spanish it would've been easier, but she didn't. I got more confused and now* I think that I would prefer to have a Mexican teacher next semester, or I will keep getting confused *and I'm not going to learn. At least if I h*ave a doubt I know I can ask in Spanish and he will understand me. (SN10.2, Lydia/A6)

Even when Lydia had created in her mind that a 'native speaker' would be an infallible source for learning pronunciation, her perceptions changed when she discovered that there were other factors inside the classroom that she would appreciate more than learning "pronunciation". The fact of feeling identified with the 'non-native speaker' and having the confidence to ask in her native language, have influenced Lydia's decision to look "with other eyes" to her Mexican teachers. These are teachers who, probably, at the beginning, she automatically disqualified due to "pronunciation" issues. Rocio and Lydia have shown how perceptions are not static and how the construction of the English teacher, in this case, has changed in the course of one semester.

These extracts can be interconnected with that of Naty's, whose first experience in the Language Department turned out to be disappointing. She narrates a particular situation that made her make drastic decisions:

The teacher that taught me in fourth level… She was Mexican and I didn't understand at all, because I was used to being talked to slower… it was a quick change so I became totally discouraged and I said: "I don't know anything, if in fourth they are going to speak to me totally in English, well… then… they are going to tell me you are now in fifth and you should know", and that's why I dropped out, and I didn't continue until now that I felt I had to finish what I started fifteen years ago. (SN4.2, Naty/A6)

In this case, her disappointment was not based on the teacher's language skills, but the pressure that she felt with the teacher speaking in English the entire class. It seems as if she was expecting a sense of empathy from the Mexican teacher with her Mexican students. This evolution in students' perceptions can be contrasted with what teachers face on a daily basis, showing their insecurities and struggles in an attempt to be considered good professionals.

6.4 Challenges: Everyday Struggles

In dissecting the data, teachers and administrators revealed different challenges faced on day-to-day bases which contribute to shape their professional and personal identity, from issues with the language to more specific situations with immigration. One of the most salient challenges was to be able to deal with insecurities, regardless of their native condition. It seems acceptable for native teachers to make some occasional mistakes while teaching, or not to know all the details about the English language (Amin, 2004) but when non-native teachers make the same mistakes or do not know everything about the English language, their teaching abilities and competencies are often immediately questioned (Canagarajah, 1999a, 2002). However, in this study, one of the main challenges was the relation between English and Spanish. Knowing both languages emerged as one of the struggles teachers faced not only at the inside of the classroom, but also outside. That is, for those whose English is their mother tongue, knowing Spanish becomes a struggle for different reasons. For example, Lucy admitted having felt insecure in her classroom:

For example, in my level 5 group, I was getting a lot of blank looks… so, today, I was explaining something for grammar and then it just seemed like after having given out the explanation in English and there were lots of visuals on the board I felt like if I could try to explain that in Spanish it might help them feel more secure, might make them f*eel more sure what they heard… the thing I feel less confident about is teaching the grammar, I'm, you know, it's easy to have a* conversation activity, I feel li*ke I have an advantage in that…* BUT there are very often exceptions to grammatical rules and the grammar is where I really feel just lack of confidence because I

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*know how to use the grammar, but I don't know how to explain it! And I'm sure my students noti*ce that. (TN6.2, Lucy/A5)

In this particular excerpt, Lucy seems to see herself as the source of language in terms of conversation activities, but she is aware of her potential problems regarding grammar. However, the lack of Spanish makes her feel less confident, and acknowledges that if she knew more Spanish, her classes would present a different rhythm. What is more, this view of her as "less confident" also appeared to be supported by students, who, in her eyes, notice that the teacher could do a better job if she knew Spanish better. The immediate assumption is that Lucy is almost trying to apologize for not being able to explain things in Spanish, but she emphasizes that "it's easy to have a conversation activity", as a way of compensating her insecurities while teaching grammar.

These eventualities in the everyday classroom are also discussed by the English coordinator, who emphasises her desire to protect the 'non-native speaker' as it was discussed in Chapter 5.2.2.1.

*They come here and they say "H*ow do you say this word in English? What's the meaning of this *term? Can you clarify this grammar point for me?" And to be honest, I am not all that much up* [to do this]. Sometimes, especially if he is a lower English teacher that comes to me and asks, ok. But if it is an advanced complicated English grammar then I wait; I go to my English grammar book to *just refresh these points. So, I don't know, but I feel a lot of times they (non-*native speakers) come to my office while classes go on. They know that I am here and they can ask. Or when I have *been teaching on my regular classes on Saturday when I'm teaching and next to my classroom there's a non-native teacher they run over and ask me "How do yo*u do this?, or how do you say *that?" In* reading classes they ask about vocabulary. (AI1.2, Sue/A7)

Again, the coordinator places herself in a position of a source of the language, which is at the disposal of her teachers. This seems to show that her command of the language can also be interpreted by the 'non-native speakers' as an infallible source, but in Sue's words, there are times where she has to admit that she has trouble answering grammar related issues. While the command of the language is acknowledged by others, for some other teachers, the issue of not knowing enough Spanish brings implications in other areas of their lives, as in the case of William:

Language continues to be a challenge for me —after all these years, my Spanish still really sucks. *That's probably the single biggest fr*ustration. *If there's anything positive about my lack of language ability it's that it gives me some insight into how tough language acquisition can be, and* that fuels my interest in the subject that I teach and study (and gives me plenty of empathy for English learners). Mostly, though, *it's just an enormous negative:* my lack of Spanish embarrasses me and holds me back. (TN 9.2, William/A5)

In this particular case, William is aware of the empathy that he can feel with students who are in the same process of learning a foreign language. But his reflection goes further and shows that his lack of

Spanish has surpassed to other aspects of his life. An example of this is when he has to ask for help to solve his immigration status:

> There was no help with my immigration issues, which were complicated to begin with and made more so because of my lack of Spanish. (TN 9.2, William/A5)

Being a foreigner, and being constantly reminded of this, makes it more difficult for some teachers to adapt to the Mexican system. It is even worse when there are different factors that seem to hinder their jobs, as William explains what he sees as problems:

> The Mexican and institutional bureaucracy; the low pay, made even worse by the lack of paid prep time; the lack of supplies; the lack of guidance or programmatic structure; the lack of leadership; the lack of esprit de corps; the lack of any recognition whatsoever that I was doing a hard job in difficult circumstances, let alone that I might be doing it well. (TN 9.2, William/A5)

Thus, the daily discourse in the Language Department seems to be confronted with other issues, such as: 1) leaving the teachers with no recognition about their work, 2) the immigration issues that foreigner have to face, makes very difficult to feel identified with a culture when situations become complicated and 3) there seems to be little discrimination when hiring.

6.4.1 Challenges in the Practice of Teaching

The insecurities discussed so far are not specifically from Mexican teachers. Lucy, originally born in the States, who was hired after she came to Guanajuato to learn Spanish at the Language Department, shows in the following extract a conscious analysis of herself and is aware of her positive aspects in teaching, yet she recognizes her weaknesses:

> I have a lot of confidence in my own abilities as a speaker. I mean I feel that I have a good understanding of grammar in my own v*iew. I'm a good writer. I'm a good speaker. I'm good at* modifying my language use depending on my audience. I can modify well for people who can understand different levels of English and I can modify my pronunciation. However, I feel like sometimes I can create confusion for students because my experience is more as a speaker than as a teacher. So for example when I go and talk to Samuel [a teacher in the Language Department], who is Mexican, bilingual and who knows how to teach, he can do a much better job explaining the rules in English than I can because he is more experienced as a teacher and a good learner of English. He learned the rules, and also he has a better understanding of what forms in English correspond better to forms in Spanish. So for me to say to the students ver*y simply 'O*h this is how you would use it in Spanish, t*hese are equivalents', that part for me is not easy, to come up with the* equivalent but also because they are speakers of Spanish but not learners of Spanish. (TN6.1, Lucy/A5)

The duality of speaker/teacher of the language is represented very differently in the language classroom. Lucy makes a conscious analysis of her teaching and is aware of her advantages while being a 'native speaker', but recognizes her weaknesses. Connecting these comments with Carmen's, there seems to be a marked contrast in the two viewpoints. While Carmen has created a different image of her teacher, as an infallible source of correctness and the proper language, Lucy believes she can be a source of confusion and immediately makes reference to a Mexican teacher who, in her eyes, represents the perfect image of the teacher because he was once a learner of the language.

However, Laura, a former student and a current English teacher who has had experience teaching in other schools, makes a reflection about a particular experience that seemed to have had an impact on her current practice of teaching:

> What happens is that I had an experience when I was learning English, very frustrating, with one of the teachers. S*he was native and when I said a word that was "jewellery" I still remember, she* said, *"W*hat?*"* And I pronounced agai*n and she said something like… "W*hy are you at this level if *you don't have the correct pronunciation?" She said it to me there… yes, it* was like a shock and I feel like my pronunciation is not so bad, I am aware of... when I make mistakes even grammatically I am aware of my mistakes and everything. I am aware, but sometimes when I am in front of someone, even when I know how it is pronoun*ced I get mixed up. I feel like I'm being* observed, then when I talk to my coordinator, sometimes I feel like she is observing me in those areas. (SN13.2, Laura/A5)

Having been questioned once by one of her colleagues, it made Laura adjust her behaviour now in front of her coordinator. Now she feels observed and questioned about her pronunciation. This incident would seem to be isolated, but it had consequences in Laura's teaching performance, to the point that she now avoids reading instructions in front of the class and has made her change this part of her teaching. She explains this in the following:

> When we have to do one of those activities [reading], instead of me reading the instructions, I ask them to read them, to give the instructions, to tell me what they have to do and that way I think that the rest are listening more to them and they can learn more in pronunciation, or I use the *CD's.* I mean, I avoid it by all means reading a text, doing a reading, I play the CD or I ask them *to read, I have one read one part and another, another part and that's how I have them.* (SN13.2, Laura/A5)

One episode in Laura's teaching life has had a great impact on her current practice of teaching. This piece of data seems to reveal a more complex scenario than simply a split between the teacher's self-esteem and her practice of teaching. This seems to show that one action can have consequences, and being categorized as "inadequate to teach" only because of one mispronounced word. It revealed a contradictory picture in terms of how teachers deal with the pressure of being signal as 'non-native speakers' on a daily basis and the consequences it has on their professional identity.

6.4.2 Dealing with Labels on a Daily Basis: Fastening and Unfastening Identities

At the beginning of the data collection, although I had expected the teachers and students to have viewpoints about one teacher or the other, they did not. However, they admitted that there were situations in which they felt that the distinction was present in their daily lives, not only in the Department, but outside as well. One of the issues that started to emerge was the contradictions between the status of English as an international language and the existence of labels to classify the speakers of the language. For example, email informants brought this issue to the light and started questioning the restrictive the labels could have. Laila explains this in the following extract:

> *It is ironical that on one hand English is labeled 'international language' and on the other hand* its activity and use is restricted by marginalizing some people who may in fact be using English in their daily lives just as much as any other *person who is a 'native speaker'.* If English is an international language, then the ownership of English cannot be restricted to a small group of *people who call themselves 'native speakers.'* (EMI3.1, Laila/A8)

By expressing the contradictions of labelling a language as 'international' and yet be restricted to a small group of people, Laila seems to place an important value upon speakers of the language, regardless of the mother tongue or the second language, simply because they use the language on a daily basis. Perhaps she implies that despite its international status, English in different forms of uses is still employed to exclude many of its users and to construct an inferior Other.

However, there was an interesting and important further development in terms of the teachers and administrators beginning to align themselves to particular labels and discuss how it is to live with them in different aspects of their lives. From these findings, it seems that after the first interviews, there arose a need to reconstruct what they perceive as a closer problematic of what they face daily and a need to talk about this, emphasizing the implications in their personal and professional identity. Nevertheless, it is important to stress that these further developments surfaced after participants had had a chance to think over the first interviews and, in some cases, they experienced an incident that made them reflect on what they had said in the first interviews. One example of this is Kenny, who has officially adopted the Mexican nationality, and makes a reflection about himself and his colleagues and the duality they present while living in a foreign country but being "partially integrated" to the Mexican society due to personal reasons:

> I have several colleagues here in Guanajuato that have lived for 15 years or more, there are or have been married to Mexicans. They have children, their lives are here and I guess they will probably be buried someday here in Mexico, but they are still considered foreigners. I find it strange that my [Mexican] colleagues here talk to me about the gringos or the foreigners and at some point *I hear a phrase quite often, "But not you, you are one of us". I used to think that it* was because of the nationality issue, but that would only explain what happens at work. When I

travel around Mexico I am very rarely considered to be a foreigner. About the only place I can go and be tagged as not Mexican is if I got to the big tourist beaches. There I am almost always included in with the gringos. Since I have a Mexican friend that has blonde hair, she always said that the same thing happens to her if she is at the beach. So I think what it really is, is just a visual issue. The whole blonde hair and blues eyes crap is actually believed by people. Since I have *brown hair, brown eyes and I am kind of short and a little chubby, I don't visually come off as* American. (AI2.2, Kenny/A7)

The issue of the physical image emerged again, but this time as an aspect that might contradict what was discussed in Chapter 5. That is, for Kenny, having a non-compelling "ideal image" of a foreigner, has placed him in a particular situation, adding to this his Mexican nationality can be tricky for those who first meet him. Moreover, in his narrative, Kenny stresses the importance of having a sense of empathy with the host community:

I have lived here [in Guanajuato] so long that everyone I know knows that I have Mexican citizenship. In Mexico sometimes people are a little surprised when they ask for my passport and I *hand them my voter's registration card. This usually prompts a "Aahh you are Mexican" along* with a smile. (AI2.2, Kenny/A7)

However, his decision has been questioned by his co-nationals and other people, even regarded as something negative for having wanted to "lose" or "change" his nationality, as if being Mexican implied being "less":

The people that act strange or give me odd reactions are Anglos. I have had immigration officials *in both the US and the UK ask "Why did you do that?", when they see my Mexican passport. Both* Americans and Brits have told me directly that what I did was a mistake because the American passport is far superior to a Mexican passport. (AI2.2, Kenny/A7)

The different trajectories of identity can be analyzed in Kenny's narrative. The dualities are presented in the way that in Mexico he is not considered fully Mexican, and in the United States, he is not fully American anymore, as he describes in the following extract:

Mexicans proudly say to me "You are one of us" and most Anglos I talk to openly say "Well, you just did that to make life *easier in Mexico, but you are still an American".* (AI2.2, Kenny/A7)

Mexicans have embraced his change of nationality, but to a certain extent. However, Americans still feel that he is part of them, to a certain extent as well. In societal terms, therefore, what needs to be acknowledged is not only this change of nationality but the implications that this decision has brought to his life. This decision seems to challenge issues of identity, both individually and socially, and foregrounding how identity is constructed and re-constructed.

Another participant, William, an American teacher who has been living in Mexico for the last ten years, makes a reflection about the cultural problems he has faced while living in Mexico and the contradictions that he finds in his co-nationals:

> The only real cultural problems I confront have to do with the other gringos who live in Guanajuato. Exactly because I am so attuned to my own culture, I probably notice their peculiarities and defects more than a Mexican might. And those defects bother me even more than they might bother Mexicans because I consider all of us gringos in Mexico to be representatives of my country; we should be good-will ambassadors. One of the things that bothers me most is when gringo ex-pats who have spent a long time in Mexico adopt the worst features of Mexican culture rather than either retaining the best of American values or trading them in for the best of Mexican values. (TN 9.1, William/A5)

During the data collection process, the participants revealed a deeper unveiling of their contexts and their mixed feelings about being considered as foreigners, gringos or Mexicans to reveal some deeper analysis. There seems to be nostalgia in looking at themselves at who they were and who they are now in a foreign country, but also, when they look at their compatriots and the way that they behave in the host country. Moreover, and I believe importantly for this study, there has been an evolution in the narratives where they seem to show how simplistic attributes attached to people or actions are deeper and more complex than initially throught. While identity is a fluid concept, with current constructions derived from past experiences and present dilemmas, it provides significance and complexity of identity shaping with the potential to create a much more complicated maze of emergent and conflicting identities. It is therefore not just the construction of the English teacher, but all those factors around this construction of identities and dilemmas which lead us to analyze how the participants have found a way to deal with the labels in their personal and professional lives.

6.5 Coming to Terms: 'A Black Dot on a White Paper'

As teachers appeared to go deeper in their narratives, it became apparent that there was a sense of coming to terms. What they had expressed before about being called different ways, seemed to be part of what they have experienced in the many years they have been teaching. Moreover, I noticed in my reading and re-reading of the transcripts and e-mails that some statements denote conciliation with the different images that have been created around them, but also a development in the construction of their identities. This section explores these constructions, coming from the different struggles that participants have gone through and showing how identity is not fixed and the different factors that influence this shaping are beyond the labelling of an English speaker.

6.5.1 Finding a Balance

As well as the discourse of similarity and difference discussed in the previous chapter, there seems to exist a further yet related dilemma as the teachers have struggled with the validation of their teaching skills at different points in their lives. But it has been these experiences that have helped them shape who they are now and how they visualize their future as well as the upcoming challenges in the personal and professional levels. The ones who are living in Mexico, having left their lives in the country of origin, have developed a positive feeling towards the country regardless of the discrepancies of one culture and another. And for those who are Mexicans and have faced discrimination at one point in their practice of teaching or have been stigmatized, they have developed a way of dealing with these stigmas and labels. Finding a balance in a professional world when there is a constant reminder of who is 'native' or 'non-native', seems far from reality, but participants have managed to do it. An example of this is Laura, a current BA student, who studied English in the Language Department for many years and who now is teaching English in a private school. She has been teaching for almost four years. She narrates an event when she was put on the spot by her coordinator regarding her pronunciation:

> Then, about two weeks ago, I was talking to the coordinator and I was asked what my plans to continue to work were or if I wanted to stay there. She thought I could be in high school instead of middle school b*ecause of the group control I had, but she said "*There is a point to check, the *pronunciation and fluency, because the students and the parents notice that". Then I thought "I don't know how the parents notice it", but any way... Then I said "Yes", that I wa*s aware that I *had to practice, that I didn't have a native accent, that even though at school I received input* from native teachers. E*ven among them I had noticed certain differences and I couldn't have a* model because suddenly I hear one way and I hear ano*ther and like... it changes. T*hen that confuses me sometimes and I commented there is not a model, even if they are from over there they have different pronunciation, and that I had to work on that. She recommended I sing; listen to music and things like that so that my pronunciation was better. And I suddenly felt like I said... *well first she told me something nice and then..., maybe it was the balance but I took the positive.* I*t's true.* My pronunciation is not native. It will never be like a native and I am aware of that. I am *aware that I am going to try to better it, but it doesn't bother me that they say my pronun*ciation is not that of a native. I*t doesn't affect me anymore.* (SN13.2, Laura/A6)

Years ago this same comment might have had a different impact in Laura's self-esteem, but now this has changed and she has embraced her differences with the group she is being compared to ('native speakers'). Even with the pressure from parents, her coordinator and students, she has come to terms with her pronunciation, her status of 'non-native' and her practice of teaching. She makes a further reflection:

How much can this situation cloud or ruin with all of the work that I have been doing all of this time so that they say my *pronunciation is not good?. I did comment it with my husband: "They mentioned this to me…"* and I commented everything to him and it helped me as if it were some *kind of therapy and to say* "Well my work, I mean my work has validity and that is not the only *thing". But it does worry me because if my students have made that comment, even though they* say that as a teacher I do this and very nice, that they make a comment like this, it is that they are seeing something, sometimes one thinks... Well, at one point someone told me you can have a white piece of paper and put a black dot there and you are only going to notice the black dot. Sso if in a way what we have learned here, the reflection and all has helped me to detect the impact that the comment could have had. Years ago the same comment would have made me quit. (SN13.2, Laura/A6)

Laura has come to terms with the negative comments. Her studies are from the BA in TESOL in the Language Department and the way that she is reflecting now about her teaching makes her see beyond the negative comments and ponder what is positive and negative about the coordinator's comment. This was one of the most insightful pieces of data compared to her metaphor of the "white paper and the black dot". It seems to show the process that a so-called 'non-native speaker' goes through in order to deal with the labels and criticism of administrators.

According to their own perception and self image, it appeared that those 'non-native' teachers tried to justify their non-typical image of a stereotypical English language teacher by emphasizing that they can hold aspectsof both worlds. The following teacher describes this:

However, you know me, you are here with me and you can see that I don't look like an American. I'm not güero with blue eyes. And that is exactly what happens with students when they see me. However, I can tell you that part of me is American, the way I dress, the way I speak English, but *for the rest, I'm Mexican, very Mexican, my way of thinking, of interacting with peo*ple [...]. (TN1.2, Daniel/A5)

From this, I can think of the duality of two worlds which want to come together but will always hold on to their respective characteristics. Even with all his experience in teaching English, Daniel constantly compares himself with an American. It seems from the data that the participants clearly construct their identity in relation to difference, specifically in opposition to native speakers, but at the same time defend their ethnic background and are proud of it. Moreover, it is not only 'non-native speakers' reflecting about this duality, it is also 'native speakers' commenting about the labels and how they have gone from one sentiment to another, from a more negative to a more positive one. William explains his feelings towards the word gringo:

I love the word gringo. (And I love all the various "origin stories" of where it comes from.) It's a wonderful word. It's a necessary word. The word gringo is more precise than the usual fallback word "American" because, of course, the Mexicans and Canadians are Americans, too (as well, I

suppose, as is everyone living in Central and South America). Calling someone a "citizen of the United States" would be a bit cumbersome! There really is no other word that covers the intended meaning so well. So it's a very useful word. But, also, I like it emotionally; I like its connotations. When I hear or use the word, it reminds me that I'm an ex-pat, that I'm living outside my "natural habitat". I like that. I have positive associations with the word: my Mexican friends call me a gringo; my students call me a gringo; my gringo friends and I call ourselves gringos. (TN 9.2, William/A5)

William narrates how complex and at the same time how positive a label can be turned into. In his narrative, he seems to show his "pride" of being considered an "outsider" but at the same time part of a specific group, in this case gringos. This is different than when he was called "Fucking gringo!" by someone in the street and he did not know how to react. Now that he has come to terms with the label, he seems to have created a positive image around the word that once worked as an offensive word to describe him. What is more, he calls himself gringo and his immediate social network as well.

For some other participants, negative connotations can still be attached to the word gringo, but they seem to show that time and exposure to the continuous use of the word has changed and seems to denote more an issue of practicality than anything else, as Chris discusses:

I used to hate the word 'gringo' but over time I have come to understand that not everybody is using it aggressively. I still don't like it much but I am less upset when people use it. I think that there are better words to use but most people opt for the easy-to-remember one. (TN10.2, Chris/A5)

Almost the same as William, Chris has come to terms with the word, but it still bothers him and seems to imply that there is something aggressive in the use of the word. While there appears to be some kind of acknowledgement of the label gringo, it is still difficult for Chris to understand why people opt for the easy route, without looking at other attributes beyond the condition of being a gringo. When describing his process of becoming a teacher in the Language Department, and reflecting on the difficulties of being an "ex-pat", Williams offers the following piece of data, revealing his pride in being in a place that can be called "home":

I planned to travel the *entire span of Latin America* ...but for one reason and another, I never ended up making it past Guanajuato. Serendipity, actually. I got a job teaching English at the U of G. And, more or less as a matter of sheer luck, I got my foot in the door of the LEI program. I *don't know if there is such a thing as a "true calling," but if there is, teacher trainin*g would be it for me. I love what I do and am grateful that after almost two decades of searching, I finally found a little corner of the world —speaking both geographically and professionally— that I can call home. (TN 9.1, William/A5)

His journey has not been easy and, after trying different areas such as administration, travelling and teaching, William has come to terms not only with the professional but also his personal identity. He has learned to love what he does and to accept the differences between his country of origin and his adopted country, Mexico.

> *I've learned an enormous amount about teaching English, about the subjects I teach in the LEI,* and about teaching qua teaching. I certainly never thought when I came to Guanajuato that *someday I would be studying for a doctorate in SLA, so that's quite a shift in identity right there.* (TN 9.1, William/A5)

It has not been the same for others, regardless of the positive feeling they have towards Mexico, there are still some issues that have not been fully comprehended, as in the case of John. In his practice of teaching, he has learned how to deal with a rather "imprecise" concept such as time in Mexican culture:

> The beginning of the semester has always been difficult for me and my students as we adjust to each other. The atmosphere is a bit intimidating as they try to understand what my expectations are of them, and vice versa. One of the most common comments my stu*dents make is that I'm* strict... *For example, I ask them to be punctual (knowing that in this country I'm asking too much)* simply due to the fact that the time we have is already too short. (TN8.1, John/A5)

These differences between the concept of time (in Mexico being on time can mean being late for ten to twenty minutes and still being on time) clash with what John wants to implement in his classroom, but he has learned to accept that there are challenges and situations in which he would need to adapt in the host country. This has implied a change in his personal and professional identity:

> I love living in Mexico. I think I have adapted to Mexican culture in most ways minus perceptions on time. My professional identity is changing constantly, which I think is necessary for all teachers in a field where things are so unstable. *I don't think my personal identity has changed that much,* apart from the fact that I have grown more patient and more accepting of things that would have bothered me previous to moving to Mexico. (TN8.1, John/A5)

John, William and Chris seem to have adapted to Mexican culture, as much as they have been allowed (as in the case of Kenny). But there have also been cases in which Mexicans have come to terms with the different labels they have been given for years.

Ana María, an e-mail informant, a teacher and administrator who has been involved in the main decisions related to English language teaching in Mexico, via the British Council in Mexico, explains how she feels after more than twenty years in the area:

I think that I have reached a point in life where I know where I can place myself within this native/ non-native distinction. I am a non-native teacher; this means that I can be good teacher, but that I have to live within certain limitations:

a) my lack of intuitivity for the language, why do say X instead of Y, is something that you can only say if you are a native... that is life

b) my not being able to tell students "I do not know X" because it will be perceived as being a "bad teacher". I have developed techniques to avoid saying I do not know.

c) you really have to work hard for students to believe you and trust you. (EMI4.2, Ana Maria/A8)

Ana María's acknowledgement of 'limitations' draws attention to what might happen in the mind of other teachers (lack of intuitivity for the language, acceptance of lack of knowledge in certain areas). But what is important to highlight here is how Ana seems to have come to terms with the profession and her personal dilemmas of being a 'non-native'. She recognizes that she can be a good teacher, regardless of nativeness. Her narrative can serve to move beyond individual reflection of professional practice to group awareness of moving beyond a label, entailing a particular image of the 'native speaker' and to look more at the professional side. This would mean a broader, shared reflexivity about the work of teaching English in an era of English as a global language, where professionals allow critical and uncertain issues to emerge from their very particular narratives.

6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter my intention has been to show the complexities of constructing identities and how participants deal with the different labels they have been given throughout the years. Problematizing the labels in a global scenario has served the purpose to contextualize the issues discussed in the Language Department. These have to do with the changing of status from being students to becoming teachers and in some cases, also with the challenges that teachers are faced in and outside the Department. To some extent, there seems to be a non-existing separation between their private and professional identities and when confronted with the challenges in the practice of teaching. An array of factors seems to challenge their identity formation. The 'partial' integration to the host community and the border crossing, not only geographical, but ideological and mentally, seem to create a new scenario to discuss the 'native speaker' in which their dominant and superior identity is reduced and altered. Being questioned in their practice of teaching and/or in their language skills, has been one of the fundamental ways in which the so-called 'non-native speakers' have established their identities. This has shaped their views of who they are and who they are becoming. From the data has emerged an indication that the construction of the English teacher at the Language Department has moved beyond the issue of nationalities and engaged with other perspectives (labels, physical appearance, the historical relationship between Mexico and the United States). These seem to forge a complex

personal and professional identity, which seems more in tune with the status of English as a global language, and not restricted to 'native speakers'.

Chapter 7

Issues on Identity and Labelling: Going Beyond the Words

7.1 Introduction

As Norton (2000:5, citing Hellen 1987) suggests, it is through language that a person negotiates a sense of self within and across different sites at different points in time. It is through language that a person gains access to —or is denied access to— powerful social networks that give learners the opportunity to speak. Under this schema, it is easy to understand why the site of language learning and teaching becomes such an important moment where identities converge and are shaped and reshaped on a daily basis, as addressed by Clemente and Higgins (2008) in their book *Performing English with a Postcolonial Accent: Ethnographic Narratives from Mexico*. In their work, they write about Mexican students and their political identity, focusing on how students learn, appropriate, modify and redefine their use of English. In this thesis the data has revealed that labels emerged in the construction of the English teacher. These have a direct impact on the identity of participants and the clear-cut dichotomies such as the 'native' and 'non-native speaker' fail to acknowledge the fluid process of identity formation.

In this chapter, I will discuss key areas that emerged from the data presented in Chapters 5 and 6 and that were not foreseen at the beginning of the study. I will discuss how they are linked to literature and the construction of the English teacher and speaker and how it has been addressed during the study. These key areas are: identity, labelling and the socio-political relationship between Mexico and the United States and its consequences. In order to explore this, in the following section, I explain the use of a spin in order to make sense of the data.

7.2 The 'Native Speaker' Image Spin

I borrow the term "spin" from Stuart Ewen, who defines it as the "customized manufacture of public discourse" (1996: 407). This term comes from public relations, marketing and social media. It refers to those representations created around something in particular, and what those representations may reveal about the place and role people have in a particular context (Dávila, 2008). In this study, I question how the pressure of the community to 'look right' to be considered as 'native speaker' has shaped participants' opinions of others and themselves. The descriptive phrases of participants defining others and themselves become evident in Chapter 5, but they also operate and affect personal and professional identity. Decisions of how participants fasten and unfasten the different identities they have at their disposal and that they have shaped and reshaped over time are discussed in Chapter 6. Each chapter then examines types of representations of 'native' and 'non-native speaker'. Through the literature and data chapters this becomes evident.

Therefore, in my study, I use the term spin to make sense of the data and in order to find a common framework that would allow me to express what I found in the data. This is used as a lens to understand the evolution of the creation of the 'native speaker' image and labels. I see it as an organic and dynamic concept which shows the constant movement and evolution of what people think, feel and say about the Other and themselves. The agent of this spin is a major discourse coming from history, society and politics. It is in this major discourse in which people have been taken in and they use it at their convenience, responding and using it, moving in different directions when the occasion allows it. It is in this major discourse where issues concerning discrimination, labelling and complexities defining the Self and the Other emerge and show blurred images of who is what and why. This spin seems to serve as a way to get at what people are not saying out loud, but exists in their discourses. This shows a long lasting and conflicting dynamic of rejection and acceptance that is highly related to the historical background between Mexico and the United States, as it will be further discussed.

While analysing the data I realized that something was missing. Therefore, I continued to look at particular phrases that were emerging. Some of the phrases were, for example:

1) "a güero is any foreigner for me" (TN1.2, Daniel/A5);
2) when defining pochos, participants said: "*Oh, well, that they have lived there... that they have lived there for a long time. In fact, all their life, well, those teachers have lived there all their lives and just came back [to Mexico]. Their parents are from here [Mexico], but they have lived there. They [the pochos] cannot be called Mexicans because they bring a complete different culture, I mean... they cannot be foreigners either*" (SN9.4, Adriana/A6);
3) they also described the place where they were hired at the beginning of their practice of teaching: "*It was this kind of places that you are a native speaker and it's all that matters... We were all native speakers and pochos working there*". (TN3.2, Darren, A5)

These phrases and themes were occurring for similar reasons yet at the same time they were different. I began to try to look for a new way to approach the data where it was possible to find a single social framework. In consequence, this would allow me to explain and at the same time connect the data to an everyday professional work life. To do this, I began a process where I decided to re-approach the data and analyzed the themes that emerged. It was important to acknowledge the complexities around the construction of the English teacher at the Language Department. Different issues emerged such as the particular physique in which the 'native speaker' is embodied. These issues are the labels given to participants and how this has been shaped along history and finally, the challenges that participants face on a daily basis as a consequence of being labelled. First, participants mentioned particular features that make a 'native speaker', such as tall, blue-eyed and white. Second, the emergence of particular phrases or labels to refer to the English teachers, such as pocho, güero, gringo, Mexican, very Mexican. Third, the daily challenges that participants face and the historical

tensions between Mexico and the United States. These issues had not been foreseen at the beginning of the study. In order to make sense of the data, I decided to employ a spin to explain how images of the English teacher and speaker are constructed and maintained (or rejected) by participants. This is used as a lens to understand the evolution of the creation of the 'native speaker' image and labels. Also, this lens helps to understand how the 'native speaker' image came to play such a critical —and sometimes harmful— role in the construction of the Other and the Self. I am setting up the concept of the 'ideal native speaker' which, as it emerged from the data in conversations with colleagues, is embodied in a particular physique, which is mostly tall, blond, and blue-eyed. This enables me to look at something that has been present in our daily lives, but also gives me the basis to look at the findings of my study which have to do with the physical appearance, identity and the construction of the English teacher. This might be considered as an image, coined by students, teachers and administrators. Therefore, in order to help make sense of reality, the 'native speaker' image spin is used.

With this spin it is now possible for me to go back and re-address Chapters 5 and 6, and now employ the spin as a tool to help make sense of the data. Also, it allows me to return to Chapter 2 and locate the relatively simple and superficial discussions around the construct of 'native speaker' into a more complex social dilemma. This implies discrimination, labelling, and a rather complex socio-political relationship between Mexico and the United States. Constructs such as 'native' and 'non-native speaker' have been used for decades. However, as the data suggested in this study, I believe that something new is at play within those representations. For example, 'native speakers' are being characterized in a more particular physique which I believe is suggestive of the shifting place in the politics of representation. I am referring here to representations by students, administrators and teachers themselves from the core and peripheral data. They seem to show the direct relation between this physique and teaching qualities of the 'native speakers' and portray these as the most "qualified" teachers at different points in their narratives. On the other hand, the most common portrayal of the 'non-native speaker' seems to suggest that they are "less qualified", "more demanding", and "subjective to judgement". Moreover, to add elements to these complex representations, data has suggested that 'non-native speakers' can be part of another ethnic group that is equally well-equipped to display the 'native speaker' values of success as undoubtedly English teachers. These more 'customized' representations evidence a growing complexity among these labels and the recipients of these labels.

By calling attention to some of the uses of these labels, these representations may reveal information about the place and role that English teachers play in the current discussions of 'native' and 'non-native speakers'. Another development I examine here is the effect of these labels on furthering whiteness by helping to consolidate polarities between 'native' and 'non-native speakers', but also along the lines of citizenship, birthplace and ethnicity.

The spin, therefore, will be used in the following subthemes to make further sense of the data. Labels that emerged in the data will be discussed. Also, the physique mentioned before will be

discussed through this spin to try to understand how particular discourses can turn positive, showing the long lasting and opposite dynamic of discrimination and acceptance, which seems to be deeply rooted in a historical background between Mexico and the United States. In the next section, I start by discussing issues of identity and how this is not static but rather multi-faceted. I will link this with the data and see how the 'native speaker' image spin is useful when explaining these different identities deployed by participants.

7.3 Identity as a Fluid Concept

Researchers have had a complex time while trying to conceptualize the construct 'native speaker'/'non-native speaker', as previously discussed in Chapter 2. As this has been a difficult task, and following the post-structuralist framework, researchers started studying second language learners in their own social surroundings (Siegal, 1995, 1996; Norton, 1997, 2000) and have given an important place to the learning context. These studies were mainly influenced by Bordieu's (1991) view of linguistic practices, referring to them as the site of identity construction, emphasizing learners' agency and pointing out how such human agency is revised and revitalized by particular sociocultural environments (Pavlenko, 2003).

Thornborrow (1999) suggests that identity is multi-faceted because people play different roles at different times in different situations and "each of those contexts may require a shift into different, sometimes conflicting, identities for the people involved" (p. 136). Therefore, language indicates different information: where you are from, your educational background, variation of language, dialects at your disposal, and so on. In the same vein, linguistic identity is closely related to how we communicate and establish interactions with others through our talk. This leads us to the idea of power in language learning. Norton (2000) aptly points out that "most of the researchers noted that identity construction must be understood with reference to relations of power between learners and target language speakers" (p. 6). Identity and language learning are connected in such a way that participants display one identity or another unconsciously.

The identity of the 'stranger' discussed here, is touched upon in the past, with a history of him/her, but also as someone who exists today and will exist tomorrow. He is, in Simmel's (1950) words, 'the potential wanderer' who:

> …although he has not moved on, he has not quite overcome the freedom of coming and going. He is fixed within a particular spatial group, or within a group whose boundaries are similar to spatial boundaries. But his position in this group is determined, essentially, by the fact that he has not belonged to it from the beginning, that he imports qualities into it, which do not and cannot stem from the group itself. (p. 402)

So, identities are constructed in interactional situations therefore, they are the result of the negotiations between participants as to what roles, actions, attitudes and behaviours are most pertinent in the given context, time and the resultant positioning of the self and each other (Fairclough, 1996; Lillis, 2001).

In this study, for example, participants have been given different labels but, also these labels have been given in particular situations and contexts, as Daniel mentioned in Chapter 5.2.2.1 concerning "any gringo hippie" being able to get a job in Mexico, merely because of the "right look":

> *Years ago, when the administration started hiring English teachers, it wasn't difficult to get a job* here. Any gringo could come on vacation, for a few months, and get a job as a teacher here. And there you saw gringos hippies who could barely teach the language, but they looked just right for the job. (TN1.2, Daniel/A5)

Here, the 'native speaker' spin is used to describe someone who looked qualified to teach the language in the mind of the employer but he was not very presentable in the eyes of the colleague, who goes further and classify those who look "right" as "gringos hippies". This can be contrasted with what Kenny (see Chapter 5.4.1), from his employer position, said about the initial hiring practices back in 1985:

> While I was the assistant, our hiring policies was head down to the local bar and look for gringos that were not too dirty, seemed decent, and were willing to work. (AI2.1, Kenny/A7)

This seems to show how those two excerpts, from two different sources (one a teacher and the other one an employer) make reference to 'native speaker' with a particular discourse. This can be considered as a conduit of spin rather than an isolated event, which eventually seemed to foster acquiescence of an image, by creating the spin and the perception of community involvement. A student (see Chpater 5.3) makes mention of this in the following:

> I must admit that when I first entered this Department, I thought all my teachers would be Americans or **gringos**, **tall, with blue eyes and fair skin**, ...but then I realized that there are *Mexican teachers too...* My mother studied here years ago and she had told me that, but I guess I arrived here when the **gringos** were gone haha. (SN14.1, Tessa/A6, my emphasis)

This particular image started to be created at the inside and outside of the Language Department. Then, identity construction needs to be looked closer. The conceptualization of identity construction as "negotiation", points, then, to a central role for discourse practices in the process of identity construction (Fairclough 1989: De Fina et al., 2006; Georgakopoulou, 2007). Social constructionism, as stated in Chapter 3 contributes to an understanding of how identity is constructed and the role these constructions play in provoking particular kinds of social action.

In the following discussion I will expand on this social constructionism by exploring the ways individuals might engage in the construction of their own and others' identity, based on Bordieu's

interpretation of the manner in which we construct our understandings of social life around the concept of 'habitus'. For Bordieu (1990), habitus entails a set of values, attitudes and beliefs that predispose us to particular ways of social behaviour and that are acquired and shaped through our cultural history. Further, these social rules, values and dispositions stay with us across contexts and regulate all aspects of our social behaviour. According to Bordieu (1990) this notion of habitus assumes that:

> Sociocultural knowledge (the way we understand the world, our beliefs and values) is constructed through habitus and not a product of passive or independent recording, which makes it a dynamic process. This disposition towards certain attitudes, beliefs, values and consequent behaviour is a product of our cultural and historical background and therefore arbitrary. These dispositions stay with us across contexts and operate at a level that is at least partly unconscious. (pp. 52-3)

Therefore, habitus is constituted in moments of practice in everyday life and is triggered when a set of circumstances meets a particular situation. For example, this can be seen in Chapter 6.4 in the narratives of Lucy, Sue and William. William (see Chapter 6.4) describes his frustrations due to his "lack of Spanish":

> Language continues to be a challenge for me —after all these years, my Spanish still really sucks. *That's probably* the single biggest frustration. *If there's anything positive about my lack of language ability it's that it gives me some insight into how tough language acquisi*tion can be, and that fuels my interest in the subject that I teach and study (and gives me plenty of empathy for English learners). *Mostly, though, it's just an enormous negati*ve: my lack of Spanish embarrasses me and holds me back. (TN 9.2, William/A5)

Even when William matches the aforementioned "right look" in his role of English teacher, his attitudes and beliefs about his lack of Spanish have predisposed him to a particular social behaviour. This has had an impact in his performance mainly outside the language classroom. The arguments discussed in Chapter 5 about the idealization of an image and how the "right look" equals "right performance" are mostly products of public spin. However, when looking closer to the realities of participants, complexities emerge as that one narrated by William, who reveals the contradictory place that 'native speakers' are given by students. On one side, they are looked as "infallible sources of language". On the other hand, they have their own internal battles adjusting to a new culture and, mainly, to a new language.

Bordieu explains that there is a dynamic dialogue between past and present, where there are strong connections between a person's cultural trajectories, attitudes, values, and agendas they have, and their activities and behaviour in a given moment and situation. This leads to a display of different identities as it is discussed in the following section.

7.3.1 Different Types of Identity

Identity is conceptualized as "an inherently social product that is jointly created by interactants, rather than as a pre-determined, psychological construct that is lodged within each individual's mind" (Park, 2007: 341). In an attempt to define the term, researchers have studied different types of identities. For 'non-native' identity, they have been treated as part of, or subordinate to, cultural or ethnic identity (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1992), cultural identity (e.g., Mori, 2003), national identity (Hester & Housley, 2002), or ethnic identity (e.g., Day, 1994, 1998; Miller, 2000; Duff, 2002). However, social interaction defines identity as social, dialogic, negotiable entity (Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998; Ochs, 1993). It is important to note how engaged in a talk, people can invoke an identity, inviting others to orient to that identity and reveal (or hide) how this identity has been interpreted. For example, in the case of Sue in Chapter 5.2, who in her narrative makes reference to her "blue eyes and native accent" as part of the "right look" which helps her in order to have an advantage over other teachers.

> *[...] I have the feeling that* **my blue eyes and my native accent are sort of a way that helps me have success in these [teaching] situations.** And the reason I say that is because of the teachers *who come here and they…give up more nervousness, worriness when they ask you.* (AI, 1.1, Sue/A3, my emphasis)

The spin is here used to try to understand the advantages that Sue thinks to have about the "right look" of a 'native speaker' and how this helps her to overcome some teaching situations and gain credibility in the eyes of her students. Another example of these social interactions that help define an entity can be found in Chapter 5.2.2.1, when Sue makes reference to what students say about their hope to have "a native speaker" as teacher. Here, the students are making reference to particular characteristics of their 'non-native English speaking teachers' about "having a Mexican accent" to justify their decision to change teacher (and, by consequence, consider the 'native speaker' as best and superior). However, the spin here is used to try to understand why Sue tries to "give them [students] an excuse", trying to convince them that they will enjoy classes with their "Mexican teachers" and that they should "give the teacher a chance".

Here I explore the impact of this aforementioned representation of 'native speaker' with a particular physique, which is not always mentioned but apparent and always present reference. I consider what may be at stake when only "positive" spin dominates the discourse, including the same spaces conceived to confront and challenge discrimination by students.

Identity is viewed as a situated, emergent construct that arises from the contingencies of local interaction. Identity ascription is thus highly context-specific (Antaki, 1998). This allows participants to construct and reconstruct identity with respect to the specifics of a social context (Silverman, 1998). In this particular study, I discuss how 'native/non-native' identities are constructed, how these identities are strengthen and renegotiated and this process is dynamic and negotiable. There is a

moment-by-moment shifting process of Self and Other, or in other words, 'Expert' vs. 'Novice' user of the language.

Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978) suggests that people have a basic need for a specifically social identity as a key to self-esteem. This is, individuals tend to define themselves in terms of group identity (from solidary groups). Therefore, "people can posses multiple identities. Social context is important for the salience of any particular identity" (Sears, et al. 2003:420-421). However, the location of these identities is "in constant negotiation, both by ethnic group members themselves as well as by outside observers" (Nagel, 1994: 153). The same author refers to ethnic construction processes as "the ways in which individuals and groups create and recreate their personal and collective histories, the membership boundaries of their group, and the content and meaning of their ethnicity" (ibid: 154). Ethnic identity then, involves internal and external opinions and processes, —i. e. what you think your ethnicity is versus what they think your ethnicity is. An individual plays with different levels of identity, as if the person had a portfolio of ethnic identities, and can choose from it at a given moment, time and place. Social identity can be seen as the various ways in which people understand themselves in relation to others (Peirce, 1995). This can be seen in different participants' narratives, such as Daniel (Chapter 6.5.1) when he mentions:

However, you know me, you are here with me and you *can see that I don't look like an American, I'm not güero blue eyes. And that is exactly what happens with students when they see me.* However, I can tell you that part of me is American, the way I dress, the way I speak English, but *for the rest, I'm Mexi*can, **very Mexican,** my way of thinking, of interacting with people [...]. (TN1.2, Daniel/A5, his emphasis)

Other participants such as William and Chris (Chapter 6.5.1) make reference to the word gringo and how they have come to terms with the label. Here, the spin is used to try to understand how a label which can carry negative connotations has been re-interpreted by participants to come up with a positive connotation. Chris points out: *"I think* there are better words to use but most people opt for the easy-to-*remember one"* (TN10.2, Chris/A5); and William says: *"*I love the word **gringo**. (And I love all the various "origin stories" of where it comes from.) It's a wonderful word. It's a necessary word (TN 9.2, William/A5, my emphasis).

Identity is not singular but there are many and they are activated in different contexts. These transformations are complex and continual, redefining all aspects of self along the lines of race, ethnicity, professional identity, and so on. Although these issues of social identity are not addressed overtly in the classroom, they are present and have an impact on how participant portrayed themselves and in identity formation.

Symbolic identity, on the other hand, is characterized by "nostalgic allegiance to the culture of the immigrant generation, or that of the old country; a love for and pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behavior" (Gans, 1979: 205). This can be seen in William, Kenny and John's narratives (see Chapter 6.4.2), when making reference to their country of

origin and the challenges they have faced for being part of a new culture, but feeling still stigmatized for coming from a different one. These challenges include specific issues such as adapting to *"...Mexican culture in most ways minus perceptions on time"* (TN8.1, John/A5), to issues such as adapting to co-nationals living in a new culture, *"The only real cultural problems I confront have to do with other gringos who live in Guanajuato"* (TN 9.1, William/A5). The 'native speaker' spin here is used to try to make sense of how participants who have spent certain amount of time in Guanajuato have become detached from their culture that now they are using labels to refer to their own co-nationals. This development in the data began to reveal some deeper analysis on the part of participants to their situation and mixed feelings towards being considered foreigners, gringos or "Mexicans". There seems to be nostalgia in looking at themselves at who they were and who they are now in a foreign country, but also, when they look at their compatriots and the way that they behave in the host country. The spin over 'native speaker' values is hence less indicative of native speakers' views than it is an expanded projection of all those generalized ideas, mentioned by students, of country and history onto a population that is still seen to represent a threat to the Mexican pride. This threat was neatly captured in the following two extracts by students (see Chapter 5.5.3):

> *I know I have to learn the language because if I do not, I won't be awarded my degree, but I hate* what the United States have made to the world for years and this idea of them being the ones who *will fix the world [...] Mexico should not be so dependent of t*he United States, but here we are, learning their language and some of us we will end up studying postgraduate degrees there, even *if we don't like how Americans look at us, Mexicans.* (SN5.3, Miguel/A6)

> If I am learning the language, it is not because I like it, but because I have to. I hate whatever has to do with Americans and the U. S. but I know that I need to speak their language in order to get a good job in the future. (SN6.4, Rafael/A6)

On one hand, students acknowledge the importance of learning the language yet on the other hand they reveal their negative sentiment towards the "Americans" or the country.

In regards to native/non-native speakers' dichotomy, it is imperative to make reference to the "ownership of English". Norton (1997, in Higgins, 2003: 620) argues that the categorization of speakers into native and non-native speakers sets up a dichotomy that prevents learners from owning English because they are prevented from becoming legitimate speakers of it. Norton (1995) emphasizes how the learners' investment in the target language is the product of the learner's social identity in relation to the social world. Of course, this involves a sense of legitimacy as a "new" speaker of English. "Speakers' investment in English yields legitimacy for them because it allows them to participate more fully in their societies, equipped with all the necessary resources" (Higgins, 2003: 621). English has become an official language in many countries, and even has acquired a status of second or foreign language, as Kachru categorized as the outer circle and expanded circle (Kachru, 1976, 1981). He also makes emphasis on the idea that speakers of English in such countries cannot be

dismissed as non-native speakers of English just because they do not speak a centre variety of the language. The ownership of English then is under constant discussion due to prejudices and labels. Participants reflect on this issue and, through revealing their personal experiences, they make a point and try to question the ownership of English in the light of a blurred nomenclature. This coincided with the discussion of having "varieties of ownership", as Higgins (2003) suggests "the concept of 'ownership' can provide an alternative to the NS-NNS dichotomy, as speakers have varying degrees of ownership because social factor, such as class, race, and access to education, act as gate keeping devices" (p. 641). This can be seen in the attitudes that students have towards the language and its speakers (see Chapter 5.5.3), as in the case of Andrea:

> I would like to learn British English because is more elegant and it is the original English. (SN12.3, Andrea/A6)

But also, teachers make reference to what they perceive from their students:

> *I think it is easier for me teaching English because there's not this historical issue as there's with* the Americans, and this relationship with the United States, and I think that some students find *difficult, consciously or unconsciously having an American teacher... and we (British) are not so* involved, Mexico and England they *don't have this part of history...* (TN3.2, Darren, A5)

The emphasis on 'English spread with the British colonisation' caused me to realize, yet again, how rooted the idea of imperialism is. In reference to the status of English as a global language and how the United States represents a new "empire" in terms of imperialism, militarism and capital, Motha (2006) points out that:

> Racialization is inevitably salient in English language teaching. Because the spread of the English language across the globe was historically connected to the international political power of White people, English and Whiteness are thornily intertwined. (p. 496)

Classifying several speakers of a language as "different" or "the others" it is a case of discrimination, which is disguised in the form of 'nativespeakerism', which Holliday (2005) describes as specific variant of the social phenomenon of 'culturism'. For example, when revealing their attitudes towards the language and its speakers, Miguel (see Chapter 5.5.3) seems to alienate himself from Americans but at the same time he shows a point of similarity:

> It is funny when I hear myself pronouncing in English, it is like if other person was *speaking... I feel like... gringo for a moment, even when I don't like anything to do with the U.S, but I have to learn the language and I'm doing my best.* (SN3.2, Miguel/A6)

This double spin where "I feel like a *gringo*" refers ambiguously yet directly to a 'native speaker' attachment to both the United States and the skills related to 'native speakers' would not represent that Miguel has escaped from the negative sentiment he has placed upon the country.

Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) point out "through storytelling, teachers engage in narrative 'theorizing' and based on that, teachers may further discover and shape their professional identity resulting in new or different stories" (p. 121). Constructing professional identity is a process and is multifaceted and includes pointing out the importance of professional context, a part of the broader sociocultural and political context and in shaping teacher identity. Also, the social structures (policies and institutions) might marginalize their positionings (Tsui, 2007). This can be seen in the narratives of Daniel, Laura, William and Ana María, teachers who have confronted their professional identities in more than one occasion, due to their 'native' or 'non-native' status. Laura (Chapter 6.5.1) was judged by her coordinator because of her pronunciation and accent, due to the fact that parents and students had complained about her "Mexican accent". In this, the 'native speaker' spin is used to try to interpret the coordinators' words who, instead of questioning Laura's teaching skills, she decided to go for the "Mexican accent" as the problem to address in their conversation. She [the coordinator] was comparing Laura to a 'native speaker', diminishing Laura's self-esteem and also her identity.

Therefore, when dealing with identities we can move from being receptors, to being interpreters, to being judges, but also, to being judged. This brings us back to the issue of emerging voices and representation in qualitative research. As Holliday (2007) explains "no matter how open and sensitive the language used by the researcher, it will still have an irrevocable power, which critical, postmodern and feminist researchers continue to struggle to reduce" (p. 165). This study presents an analysis of how a group of people —students and teachers at a Mexican University and I, (working as an English teacher) experienced together more than one identity while conducting this study. The researcher and participants' voices and the framework in which they are organized convey their increased understanding of qualitative research as a process of self-discovery. It is through this self-discovery that the issue of labelling becomes important in this study, as it will be discussed in the following section.

7.4 Labelling

Students prejudices and labelling may well be the main cause of their unwillingness to engage positively with language learning and the reason why good results are so hard for teachers to achieve. Adolescent learners particularly, obliged by compulsory curriculum to study a language, may well be disinclined to connect positively with another culture at a time when their own identities are in the process of formation. Hostility to cultural difference may have the intended or unintended effect of being personally painful to teachers who are perceived as professional representatives of a foreign culture or indeed its very proximate personification (Starkey, 2007: 66). It is also necessary that a

group should be seen to be distinctive —itself— by others. In at least two senses there can be no such thing as unilateral ethnicity. First, ethnicity involves ethnic relations: connections and contacts between people who are seen to be different, as well as between those who are seen to be the same. A sense of ethnicity can only arise in the context of relationships and interaction with others. Without difference, there is no similarity. Defining us implies —if nothing stronger— an image of them. (Jenkins, 2002: 120-121). Bauman (1997) explains the role of stranger in the following:

'(…) the arrival of a Stranger has the impact of an earthquake… The Stranger shatters the rock on which the security of daily life rests. He comes from afar; he does not share the local assumptions and so becomes essentially the man who has to place in question nearly everything that seems to be unquestionable to the members of the approached group'. (p. 18)

This quote puts into words the impact of all these strangers on the map: they are usually perceived as anomalies or deviants. They question what seems to be normal and presenting those they encounter with difference. Yet, strangeness is not a homogeneous phenomenon, it is articulated and utilized differently, according to whom the stranger is and those whom he encounters. 'Otherness' usually involves the superiority of one group over another, especially in relation to ethnicity and language, which appear as two key factors in the creation of the professional identity of the 'native' speaker English language teacher. In the work of Taylor (1985), Geertz (1986), Bohman (1991) and Hoy (1991), it is possible to engage in normative criticism of different ways of life or social practices, despite the fact that we always see the world through our own self-understandings. But it is also important to acknowledge that we understand ourselves differently as a result of interacting with others who have a different self-understanding themselves. This takes us back to idea of Kidd (2002) which was put in context in Chapter 6 with Daniel's narrative, knowing who one is as having a sense of similarity with some people and a sense of difference from others. The concept of stranger is used in this study to define the struggles faced by participants in relation to dilemmas of who they are and how they see themselves and others in relation to their colleagues, or in the case of students, how they perceive their teachers in relation to themselves. These dilemmas go further and look beyond the physical appearance, as discussed in Chapter 5, and add issues of ethnicity, nationality and culture. The stranger comprises all the different aspects that participants can attribute to someone who is considered an outsider or who is not fully integrated to their group.

Dervin (2007) proposes an alternative framework to capture lived experiences within the idea of "strangeness" (or resistance) which I find useful in my discussion:

Solid strangers are people who have moved to a different country and plan to stay there. They usually manage to get a job and get involved with 'locals', learn the local language(s), etc. In other words, they become 'attached' to the host country and fit in (but of course, they are free to 'leave' any time). This type of stranger is believed to have assimilated the local culture, speaks the local language and has become a stranger to her/himself. (p. 119)

In this study, the solid strangers can be seen in the narratives of Kenny, William and John, who, in their words, have adapted and adopted their new culture, or even taken further as in Kenny's case, adopting the Mexican nationality legally (Chapter 5.4.2).

> When I first came here I considered myself to be an American and most people referred to me as such. Where I was most clearly a gringo was when it came to the work permit, the permit to buy a house, the permit for property. I felt like I was a part of the community, but the Federal government didn´t agree. Then came the issue of studying and travel for work and the rule was Mexicans first. Based on this plus ten years of living here I decided to start the nationality change. Once that happened it was almost like instant acceptance [in the Mexican society]. (AI2.2, Kenny/A7)

In his case, there was a turning point when he changed his nationality and became Mexican. This event seems to have, in his eyes, opened the door for him to have almost an immediate acceptance in the Mexican community. Dervin (2007) gives another classification of strangers in the following:

> **Liquid strangers** are just passing and they usually have a scheduled return home. Their presence as strangers in the host country is therefore just temporary (though some liquid strangers might stay in the host country for a longer time). These are not 'fully' assimilated in the local culture, and find a hard time finding membership with the locals. They tend to be invisible and 'not-truly-belonging-to-the-place', they are 'in' but not 'of'. (p. 119)

The idea of liquid strangers can be seen not in the narratives of teachers to refer to themselves, but to others (Darren, Daniel, David and Kenny, Chapter 5.2.1). As well they are found but in the student's narratives when making reference to their teachers and giving them a particular status, as in the case of Pam, Adriana, Naty, Tessa and Rocío, Chapter 5). This can be seen in Adriana's narrative that seems to show how she changes her teacher's status from foreigner to quasi Mexican and then again classify him as foreigner:

> *Well, when… as I go to church, I saw the bann*s of marriage and [I saw] that he was going to *marry a Mexican, so, I said "ah, ok, he is going to be a Mexican too! He is going to be one of us", but… but he is naturally a foreigner.* (SN9.4, Adriana/A6)

Even when this teacher in his narrative does not make reference to himself as a "liquid stranger", for Adriana his presence is still considered as a stranger in the host country, with the potential to become a Mexican, but apparently he is considered as a foreigner his whole life. This can also be seen in Kenny's narrative (Chapter 6.2):

> There is one odd thing that happens on rare occasions. When I get deeply involved in work debates I have discovered that when I am right about a particular issue I get the *comment of "You are Mexican, but a foreigner one", which I interpret as "You are a foreigner, you don't know what you are talking about".* (AI2.2, Kenny/A7)

As Kenny soon learned, his nationality change turned out to be more a spin than a reality. Here the spin is used to try to understand how the discourse can show both points of view about one individual who can see himself in one way (as "solid stranger") but in the eyes of someone else is considered a "liguid stranger". Finally Dervin (2007) proposes another classification in the following:

> **Fizzy strangers** may be just passing and/or staying. This figure could be illustrated, in higher education, by international students who take an entire degree at a foreign university. They may wish to stay in the host country after their studies or not, but at least their stay is longterm. They may learn the local language and be highly involved with locals (or not). (p. 119)

Fizzy strangers was the case of Lucy (Chapter 5.4.2), who came to Mexico as a Spanish student and was offered a job to teach English at the Language Department. She makes reference to her dilemmas while enjoying her stay in Mexico but also how easy is to "forget that I am originally American" due to her involvement with the local community.

Even when participants do not refer to these concepts coined by Dervin, they do make reference to characteristics mentioned in these 'strangers'. Ferguson (2009) explains how the self can find understanding in reference to Other:

> In surprisingly and historically important ways the development of self within modern society has been accompanied by and to a large extent constituted through, the continuous and simultaneous production of an extraordinary variety of others. For self to become fully conscious of itself, to become authentically self-identical, it required a negative image against to test itself. (p. 26)

Labelling the Other, therefore, constitutes almost a common practice. The 'labeling theory' "attempted to explain deviance by the responses others made to it" (Becker, 1963: 179). This is more a theory of looking at a general area of human activity. It is precisely this human activity the one that has come up with the dichotomy of 'native' and 'non-native speakers' in this study and has made evident the distinctive descriptive phrases to make reference to an 'ideal' speaker of the language.

These features attributed to the 'ideal speaker' of the language can be found in the participants' narratives (Ayan, Andrea, Kenny and Daniel, Chapter 5.3.4) when referring to particular images created in their minds. The images of the professional identity of the 'native speaker' teacher seem perpetrated by 'non-native speaker' teacher who rate their counterparts highly. This is reinforced by English language students who ponder "accent" and "pronunciation" as their infallible evidences of qualifying a "real" English teacher. Therefore, the spin is used to explain these constructed images that

different labels have created, constructed and re-constructed by participants at different points in their lives, as their narratives show. I am talking about a specific physical image that facilitates understanding of what is tried to be passed off as a linguistic or professional ability. Of course, the creation of these labels has an origin, and in this particular study, one of the most deeply rooted reasons has been the historical background between Mexico and the United States.

7.5 Socio-Political Relation Between Mexico and the United States

This socio-political relationship has evolved in different aspects of students and teachers' lives, and they are very open about their feelings and attitudes towards the country and the language, which is sometimes stigmatized as the "language of the United States" or "the language of the gringos". They tend to label not only the speakers of the language, but the country and the actions that the closest neighbour has taken. Even the media makes fun of how Americans (and also Mexicans) refer to Mexico in relation to the United States as the "backyard". This feeling has brought more and more division and attitudes of subordination but also of resentment, which is reflected in participants' narratives (see Chapters 5.5 and 6.4). At most major crossing points nowadays, the U.S. —Mexican border has literally become a wall— one that reproduces the cultural distance and historical alienation created by imperial arrogance and territorial wars between nation-states, which can be traced back in 1848. Gómez (1992) points this out in the following:

> Almost 150 years ago, the governments of Mexico and the United States signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, ending a four-year war and creating the Mexican-American people. The treaty gave the 75,000 Mexicans living in what would later become the states of California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado (which amounted to about half of Mexico's territory at the time) the option of moving south to Mexico or staying put and automatically becoming American citizens. (p. 47)

This has created a fuzzy identity within the population of people who did not know what to call themselves anymore:

> During this period, the first Mexican-Americans probably did not have an "ethnic" identity as such. [...] they were "Mexican by birth, language and culture [but] United States citizens by the might of arms" [...] During this period, these American citizens by conquest began to understand that they were foreigners in their own land. At the same time, the original Mexican-Americans were rapidly becoming the minority of the Mexican-origin population in the United States. Mexican migration northward increased dramatically in the first half of the 20th century. [...] During this period migrants from Mexico greatly outnumbered American-born Mexicans, and therefore it is unlikely that there would have been much in-group distinction on this basis. Similarly, to the larger society, they were all "Mexicans". (Gómez, 1992: 47, citing Alvarez, 1973)

All this has brought a constant tension in ethnic labels, which can be better understood in context. For Miller (1976) ethnic labels tend to be rooted in historical periods, in terms of the predominant definitions and images ethnic members have of themselves and their place in the social structure, and second, in terms of those definitions conferred by the broader society (p. 235). Different labels have been used to describe immigrants in both sides of the border. While Mexicans living in the United States are called Chicanos, those same Mexicans when returning to their place of origin in Mexico are called pochos. Gómez (1992) states that the word Chicano has its criticisms:

> Although the Chicano label is still used in some segments of the Mexican-American community, it has disappeared almost completely from the main- stream media and from mixed in-group and out-group setting. (p. 48)

However, a new label has emerged: Hispanic, and most recently the term of Heritage speaker. In Mexico, the word pocho is still used among people to refer to someone who has come back after a long stay in the United States and his/her way of dressing, they way of speaking and behaviour are not 'fully' Mexican, but neither 'fully' American. This can be seen in Pam, Andrea, and Darren's narratives in Chapter 5.2.1.2:

> Those are the ones who were born in Mexico but went to the United States and then came back. *They are not 'gringos', they are still Mexicans, but they kind of have the experience of living in a* foreign country, but their English **and** Spanish **are a little broken**. (SN2.3, Pam/A6, her emphasis)

> *I think I have only had one foreigner... well, the pochos, no? [...] The teacher in third semester* was Mexican. My teacher in fourth semester was pocho. My teacher in fifth [semester] was indeed foreigner. The one in sixth was pocho as well, and my current teacher is Mexican. (SN9.4, Adriana/A6)

> *It was this kind of places that you are a native speaker and it's all that matters... We were all* native speakers and pochos working there. (TN3.2, Darren, A5)

But in order to understand the labels that emerged in this study, and how the spin can help make sense of them, I consider it necessary to look at the historical process of giving labels to Mexicans and, eventually, to foreigners. In his article called "Unravelling America's Hispanic past: Internal stratification and class boundaries", Guitiérrez (1987) makes a historical account of how labels have been used since 1592:

> The Hispanic ethnic past in the United States is a long one. [...] The colonization of the Kingdom of New Mexico (then encompassing roughly the current states of New Mexico and Arizona) was launched in 1592 Texas's first Spanish settlements date from 1691; and the settlement of Alta California began with the founding of San Diego in 1769. The Kingdom of New Mexico, Texas

and Alta California were all situated at the northern edge of Spain's empire, isolated from each other, surrounded on all sides by hostile Indians, and too distant from the major centers of Spanish culture in central Mexico for frequent communication. What developed in each of these provinces over the centuries were distinct regional subcultures that were Iberian in form, but thoroughly syncretic in content due to prolonged contact with local indigenous cultures. National consciousness, and by this I mean identity as a citizen of a nation-state, was weakly developed among the colonists Spain initially dispatched to settle the Southwest. What common identity they did share was religious; they were Christians first and foremost. (p. 80)

By the nineteenth century population was experiencing labels they used for themselves, depending on the geographical area they were settled in. The following gives a few examples:

The literary evidence indicates that by the beginning of the nineteenth century residents of the Kingdom of New Mexico were calling themselves nuevo mexicanos, those in California were referring to themselves as califomios, and those in Texas called themselves tejanos. (Gutierrez, 1987: 82)

However, in order to be "visible" in the new region, whenever one wanted to be considered a legal tribunal, the issue of social status became evident and necessary to define a person. Gutierrez (1987) explains this in the following:

The Spanish conquest of America brought together men from different regions and by so doing helped to shape a common experience and cultural identity. Men who had never before really identified as Spaniards now came to think of themselves as such in cultural terms, particularly when confronting indigenous cultures as overlords. By calling themselves Spaniards or españoles the colonists in the Southwest acknowledged that their culture and social institutions were of Iberian origin and thus quite different from those of the Indians. The españoles who colonized the Southwest were extremely status conscious and viewed society as hierarchically ordered by a number of ascriptive status categories based on race, legitimacy of birth, occupation, citizenship and religion. [...] A person's racial status was derived through the biological criteria outlined in the Régimen de castas or Society of Castes, that artifact of Spanish purity of blood statutes which attempted to measure one's genealogical proximity to socially tainted peoples by scrutinizing qualities of blood. [...] To describe the various racial groups created through miscegenation in America, an elaborate legal racial vocabulary was devised. A mix between a Spaniard and an Indian produced a mestizo; a Spaniard and a mestizo produced a castizo; a Spaniard and a Black begat a mulato, and so on. (pp. 82-83)

The first labels start to emerge in history and seem to reveal how they defined a person's social status, but also how they were related to their race, ancestry and position in the social division. Gutierrez (1987) provides us with an anecdote that can be linked to Daniel's narrative in relation to call a foreigner güero:

On June 3, 1765, for example, we hear about the fight in Albuquerque between Eusebio Chávez and his father-in-law, Andrés Martin. Chávez beat Martin with a large stick and dragged him by his hair, leaving Martin's arm badly bruised, his chest covered with black and blue welts, his scalp swollen out of shape, and his hair completely tangled and caked in blood. The reason: Martin had called Chávez a "perro mulato hijo de puta" (mixed-blood dog son-of-a-bitch). One insult, perhaps, would have been enough; but by calling Chávez a dog, Martin implied that he was less than human. (Gutierrez, 1987: 84)

In this particular anecdote the word dog is used and, as he says, calling someone a dog implied that the person was less than human. I associated this with an anecdote that Daniel narrates in Chapter 5.2.1.1, when he says:

One day I saw a teacher going upstairs and the first thing that came to my mind was saying "Hey güera!" [white], but to my *surprise the teacher turned around and replied "Hey perro! [dog]"... I didn't see that coming, and I took it as if she felt offended because I called her güera. Since then, I'm very careful when I call someone by güero.* (TN1.2, Daniel/A5)

This anecdote might be seem isolated, but interconnected to what Gutierrez mentions in his historical account, I can only think of how calling someone a dog can be diminishing, not only in terms of an insult, but it seems to have a historical and political background.

With the Mexican independence in 1821, other status categories came into use. Residents of the Southwest did at times employ the peninsular and criollo categories to differentiate españoles (i.e., a person born in Spain) from españoles mexicanos (i.e., a person of Spanish origin born in Mexico). Gutierrez (1987) explains:

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the only persons in the Southwest who could genuinely claim peninsular Spanish origin were the priests, and it is among them that one sees the peninsular/criollos categories applied most rigorously. For the rest of the population of New Mexico, Texas and California little seems to have changed as a result of Mexico's independence from Spain. One does not find a rapid increase of people calling themselves mexicanos. The category does appear in the 1830s but is used by a very small number of people. In New Mexico, for example, only about 5 percent of all individuals who married legally during 1830-1839 claimed they were mexicanos. The rest still preferred to call themselves españoles. (p. 86)

By 1836 Texas won its independence from Mexico with the revolution. A decade later the rest of the Southwest was ceded to the United States as a result of the U.S.-Mexican War of 1846-1848. This new political order allowed constant border crossing and a new conception of society emerged. This is when labels related to the physical appearance start to emerge, as Gutierrez (1987) explains:

From the moment americanos entered the Southwest, the Mexican population residing there concocted a variety of ethnic terms for the invaders. There were names for the americanos that focused on the peculiarities of their skin, eye, and hair color, and the size of their feet. Thus we find in the folklore: canoso (gray-haired), colorado (red-faced), cara de pan crudo (bread dough face), ojos de gato (cat eyes), patón (big foot). Other Spanish ethnic labels for the Americans were the result of difficulties with and misunderstandings of the English language. The word gringo comes from the corruption of the first two words in a song the Mexican soldiers heard the Texas rebels singing at the Alamo. The first two lyrics to the prairie song, "Green grows the grass," were heard by Mexicans as "grin gros," and finally gringos. Because the americanos loved cabbage in their diet they were called repolleros. And because of their penchant for chewing tobacco they were called masca tabacos. (p. 89, emphasis in original)

Here it is important to look at the origin of the word gringo, brought up in different moments in the narratives by William, Chris, Andrea, Pam, Rocio and Miguel (see Chapters 5.4.2 and 6.5.1):

There really is no other word that covers the intended meaning so well. So it's a very useful word. But, also, I like it emotionally; I like its connotations. When I hear or use the word, it reminds me that I'm an ex-pat, that I'm living outside my "natural habitat." I like that. I have positive associations with the word: my Mexican friends call me a gringo; my students call me a gringo; my gringo friends and I call ourselves gringos. (TN 9.1, William/A5)

I used to hate the word 'gringo' but over time I have come to understand that not everybody is using it aggressively. I still don't like it much but I am less upset when people use it. I think that there are better words to use but most people opt for the easy-to-remember one. (TN10.2, Chris/A5)

Now that they have come to terms with the label, they seem to have created a positive image around the word that once worked as an offensive word to describe them. What is more, they call themselves "gringos" and their immediate social network as well.

It is significant to look at how a word that initially rendered phonetically in Spanish gringos, soon became a pejorative Spanish-language term for "foreigners", particularly Americans. However, this distinction was not clear-cut, with all the history going on between the two countries, the labels became more difficult to attribute to individuals:

The United States had won the territory from Mexico through war; thus the most appropriate term for the population in the Southwest seemed to be Mexican. Through American eyes the residents of the area all looked alike, dressed alike, spoke Spanish and were fanatic Catholics, therefore they were all Mexicans. And the deep-seated racial prejudice among americanos against Blacks was easily transferred to persons of Spanish origin due to their swarthy skin color. To counter the tendency among Americans to refer to all residents of the Southwest as Mexicans, the longstanding population of the area employed old ethnic categories in new ways. By so doing the

Hispanic population that had resided in the Southwest since before 1848 wanted to clearly differentiate itself from the constant flow of lower class Mexican immigrants. In addition, they wanted to clearly establish that they were Spaniards of white European ancestry and not of a mixed Indian, and therefore inferior, background. (Gutierrez, 1987: 89)

Assimilation theorists who have studied the immigrant experience in the United States have generally assumed that Mexicans, like other ethnic groups before them, would eventually forsake their initial cultural conservatism in the United States and gradually blending into that big cauldron of stew —"the melting pot"— called America. According to Gutierrez (1987) these groups were named using hyphens such as Mexican-Americans, Italian-Americans, Polish-Americans and Afro-Americans, and eventually they would become full participants in American middle-class culture. The problem with people living on the borders, as Zentella (2002) calls "transnationals" (because they go back and forth, from one country to the other in a rather systematic manner), is that their ethnic identity starts to be questioned, because they are considered "ni de aquí ni de allá" (not from here, nor from there). This can be seen in the participants' narratives that make reference to the blurred distinction between their teachers (see Chapter 5.2.1.2). This can be traced at different levels, one of them at a linguistic level, in which the so-called 'gringos', 'pochos', or 'mexico-americanos' can face the linguistic pressure of losing their mother tongue and adapting the new language of the host country. This can be seen in the following fragment of Asthon's work (2007) related to bilingual belonging and the standards of English, narrating a particular case of Richard Rodriguez, a Mexican-American journalist:

Having grown up in a middle-class neighborhood of Sacramento, California, [Richard Rodriguez] looks mexicano but sounds like a gringo. He recounts the painful occasions in his life when his identity as a mexicano has been questioned not only by relatives and family friends from Mexico but by Chicanos in the United States. In his personal narrative, Hunger of Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez, he recounts his linguistic odyssey (starting out monolingual in Spanish and becoming monolingual in English with experiences of being called a pocho —a Mexican who has, presumably, lost his roots— and of being challenged for not being Mexican enough (p. 751).

These tensions have transcendented politics in the United States and have given origin to extreme laws that prohibit Spanish in the educational context, and even in the social aspects, as in the case of Arizona. All these actions taken by the American government have resonance in Mexico, and influence the way Mexican perceive the United States and its politics towards immigrants. Therefore, when Americans come to visit the country, there is a long historical baggage that will influence the attitudes towards the language and the speakers of that language, as mentioned in Chapters 5 and 6. Here it is important to note the word güero (fair-skinned) or the idea of "looking gringo". As mentioned before, a güero is a word that indicates high status, not only in terms of defining a foreigner, but in any social situation in which interactions are taking place among people from different skin colour. As in many other countries, Mexico is a place with people of different skin colour, the majority being dark skin.

However, being fair-skinned is perceived as belonging to an upper class (Dávila, 2008). Dávila mentions that:

> Latinos' self-identification as white or in non-racial terms, stands as the primary reason behind arguments that it is simply a matter of time before Latinos become white [...]. Assimilation is a matter of "thinking like white. (p. 14)

One of the participants, Daniel, assures that his use of the word is not for making division or even trying to differentiate the teachers from Mexicans.

However, there are contradictions as well. While some participants in this study narrated how much they hate "everything that has to do with the United States", they do not mean "everything". Those same participants recognized that they watch American television (MTV, VH1, Warner Bros. channels), they have access to Ipods and they listen to English music. This hate they make reference to might be linked to the created 'powerful' image of a "blond, blue-eyed, tall" foreigner that, enhanced by the media and the tense political relation between Mexico and the United States, make them spin particular images of who is the 'ideal' English teacher and speaker strong and the consequent attitudes towards them. In the words of Geerts (1986):

> Ideology is patterned reaction to dislocation, displacement, disrupted class relations or decay of traditional political authority… for it provides a 'symbolic outlet' for emotional disturbances generated by social disequilibrium. (p. 204)

Therefore, the descriptive phrases used to define the Other, involve ideas to convey the meaning and the cultural context in which the images are constructed and understood by those who have elaborated them. The translation of this affect and experience into a social position that relies on a turbulent history, power and mixed feelings, places debates about identity.

In this theme, what has emerged is a relationship between what Barkhuizen (2008, p. 232) refers to as particularity, or what is particular to individual respondents, and interconnectedness, or what is shared between them. While it may not seem particularly significant for an isolated case of reference to skin colour and physical appearance, this takes on a different of level of importance when related across the accounts of my respondents. As Davila (2008) suggests, the concept of ethnorace can be useful when thinking about Latinos:

> This concept allows us to be attentive to processes of racialization and racism that may be obviated when we focus simply on "race", which in the United States is so easily subsumed to the dominant black and white binary. For more often than not, this binary effectively veils Latinos' and other groups' experiences of racialization, while blinding us to forms of racialization that take place alongside or beyond "race". Such is especially the case when nativism becomes a primary axis of racialization, positing white Americans as the only true "natives! With blacks and citizens

with the "longest citizenship pedigree" following suit; and all of them together, as the victims of the ongoing "conquest" by undocumented (colored) folk. (p. 17)

Now, I turn to the discussion of the Mexican-American socio-political relationship within the context of English learning and teaching.

7.5.1 The Socio-Political Relationship and its Impact in the English Learning and Teaching

In Mexico, the teaching of English has changed over the last 30 years, as Davies (2007) points out: "Any foreigner could be travelling across Mexico and get hired to teach English, without hesitation and without considering qualifications or educational background" (p. 18). This can be seen in Daniel's narrative when remembering those times when the administration of the now Language Department hired only "gringos hippies" (see Chapter 5.2.2.1).

For Darren, another teacher at the Language Department, his condition of being fair, with blue eyes and a foreigner, puts him in a different position in relation not only to Mexican teachers, but to Americans as well. Le Ha (2008) calls this "double standard practice". That is, using Darren's image to disrupt its associated colonial and imperial norms, as it is in the case between Mexico and the United States. For Darren, his nationality (British) brings a fresh image of the English speaker, without all the baggage that being American means historically between Mexico and the United States.

As Kidd (2002) mentions, knowing who one is can be done through having a similarity with some people and a sense of difference from others. This became evident when Pam, a student who has had the experience to be taught by teachers from different countries, seems to make a clear distinction when categorizing and describing her teachers in three areas: *"Well, I have been taught by teachers....* Mexicans, foreigners and **pochos***"* (SN/3, Pam, A2, my emphasis). This assumption seems to position the 'non-native speaker' in an interesting schema, differing from all those categorizations both culturally and/or physically. This coincides with what Smedley (1998) suggests: "some groups define themselves in terms that appear rigid and unyielding and in opposition always to "the others"' (p. 690).

Based upon these comments there seems to be the belief that teachers can be classified not only according to their image but also according to what this image can represent in terms of professional credibility and one descriptive phrase serves the purpose as it was shown here. This coincides with what Wong (2006) call 'hierarchies' in the professional life. When you enter a new culture, it is easier to see these hierarchies and they can shape your view of teaching and the profession in profound ways, to the point of heightened awareness of inequalitites in education.

There is no doubt that we have a complex relationship between Mexico and the United States. While the United States is seen as a powerful country, Mexico is seen as subordinated (Condon, 1997). English used to be seen as a symbol of status, but nowadays learning English in Mexico has

become a necessity and therefore mandatory subject at high school and higher education, in public schools. The Mexican Government has started to take measures to ensure that students at all levels can have access to this language so that in the future they can get better employment opportunities. Particularly, the state of Guanajuato has started a plan for incorporating English as a subject in primary levels (Davies, 2007; Lengeling, 2010: 112). In addition, English plays an important role in Universities. It is common for Mexican universities to require students to take a certain number of English courses before they are awarded a degree. Although many students take these classes, they come with diverse histories, experiences, interests, and needs that influence their specific goals for studying the language. In this particular university, courses are open to university students, to high school students, and to other members of the local community. University students are asked to complete six levels in the Language Department (or four levels, depending on their department requirements) before they can be awarded a bachelor's degree. High school students usually attend English classes due to encouragement from their parents or because they are interested in studying abroad in the future. Members of the general public typically study the language in hopes of securing a better job or for travelling abroad. Moreover, the influence of both mass media (with different commercials stating the benefits of learning English), and the society demanding for quality lessons and teachers, have made the learning of English part of our daily lives. All these factors make potential English learners seek for opportunities where to study the language but also develop attitudes towards the language as well, as it will be discussed in this chapter.

Participants referred to the Mexican-American relationship and some commented the same and how they are facing this duality of "hate" and "obligation". On one hand they "hate everything that has to do with the United States", and on the other hand, they recognize that they need to study the language if they want to, first, obtain their degree, and second, to study a postgraduate degree and get better job opportunities.

This socio-political relationship has evolved in different aspects of students and teachers' lives, and they are very open about their feelings and attitudes towards the country and the language. This is sometimes stigmatized as the "language of the United States" and they tend to label not only the speakers of the language, but the country and the actions that the closest neighbour has taken in different affairs. The shared tense history between Mexico and the United States can be traced back since 1845, with the Mexican-American War, in which Mexico lost half of its territory to what today is the South-western United States (Velasco, 2004). Since then, concepts such as territory, border and space have suffered different changes. Also, the constant migration from Mexico to the United States, and people aiming for the American Dream, has brought nothing but tensions and a socio-political level. The media makes fun of how Americans (and also Mexicans) refer to Mexico in relation to the United States as the "backyard". This feeling has brought more and more division and attitudes of subordination but also of resentment. This is seen in the narratives of Rafael and Miguel. However, this division between "us" and "them" can even be taken a step further and make generalizations that the "British is better", as in the case of Andrea (see Chapter 5.5.3). She puts the British English in a

superior position, following the idea of "original English". This is a clear example, in Bordieu's terms (1991) of cultural capital, where a language (or in this case, a mythical variety —who knows which elements make up "British English"?) is treated as a comodity that confers acceptance and power, while the other variety, "American English" is perceived as having a lower status. In his study, Smith (2006) refers to this belief that Mexicans have about English, conferring a higher status to the "British English" than to the "American English", just as "Spanish from Spain" has a higher status to "Spanish from Mexico" (p. 431). Here, the spin is used to try to make sense of these linguistic ideologies which seem to help students construct their reasons to learn the language, but they are also subject to change over time.

There is a sense of national identity, denoting being proud of one's country of origin but also it can be perceived a bicultural paradigm. As Starkey (2007) mentions: "language teachers may be recipients of an ascribed identity as ambassador or representative of a culture […] in some cases this was a source of pride" (p. 64). Teachers have also experienced insecurities, regardless of their native condition. It seems acceptable for native teachers to make some occasional mistakes while teaching, or not to know all the details about the English language (Amin, 2004) but when non-native teachers make the same mistakes or do not know everything about the English language, their teaching abilities and competencies are often immediately questioned (Canagarajah, 1999b, 2002). However, in this study, native speakers admitted having felt insecure in their classroom (Lucy, Sue, Bree). Also, for students experiencing learning a new language which has been imposed by the institution, they have unveiled their feelings towards the language and its speakers (see Chapter 5.5.3). These new identities are not always welcome, as Starkey aptly prompts: "…Because language teachers tend to perceive themselves as bicultural or multicultural, such imposed identities may be felt to be particularly unwelcome" (Starkey, 2007: 64). In this case, it is both, teachers and students fighting with impositions, history and necessity to learn the language. This is the case of Miguel and Rafael (see Chapter 5.5.3) who seem to be experiencing double identity when commenting on their reasons to learn the language and how they feel when speaking another language that they do not feel attracted to, but, due to university requirements, they have to study the language. Guilherme (2007) makes mention of this in the following: "The English language definitely cuts across national boundaries more than any other language and is an icon of the contemporary age" (p. 74).

7.6 Conclusion

At the beginning of the study I did not foresee the elements that have been discussed in this chapter. Participants have revealed how complex the issue of classifying someone due to his/her nationality goes beyond accent and nationality. It seems from the data that the participants clearly construct their identity in relation to difference, specifically in opposition to 'native speakers' but, at the same time, defend their ethnic background and show a sense of proudness for their ethnic background. When discussing assimilation, for example, Yancey (2003) argues that Latinos and other non-black racial

minorities will soon join the force of whiteness. At the core of his argument is the meaning of assimilation, which he defines as the experience of thinning one's racial identity and of approaching racial issues from a dominant perspective (p. 14). The data and historical roots of the labels suggest that the aforementioned "right look" or "look native" is only the tip of the iceberg. Yet, more 'non-native speakers' are being hired in the Language Department. More 'non-native speakers' have shown throughout this study, as a group, that they face challenges at different levels. 'Non-native speakers' continue to occupy a marginal position in society, even when they are joining the workforce of the Department. However, these discussions also frame and inform the ongoing debates over 'native speakers' and the different labels they have been given. They express their challenges as well, and how the spin has created images that go further the physical appearance. Implicitly and explicitly, the discourse situates 'native speakers' and 'non-native speakers' against each other in a contest to win approval of a dominant society. Part of the problem is that in a nation such as Mexico whose history has been constructed through heated ethnic terms of the invaders, this has long served as reference to describe immigrant upward mobility, mainly to differentiate themselves. If seems to be that if people cannot be considered 'native-speakers' then they could at least claim to be pochos, gringos, or Mexicans.

In the next chapter I will answer my research questions, showing how the 'native speaker'/'non-native speaker' dilemma implies more than a discussion of how to define the term, but to look into particularities of narratives and how people experience the labels on a daily basis.

Chapter 8

Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

This thesis began as an investigation of the construction of the 'native/non-native' debate. It has arrived at a final point which is concerned about the ways in which individual perceptions are constructed and affected through historical or social pressures. What this investigation has generated is a perspective of a complex and complicated set of discursive practices which have significant disciplinary and regulative professional effects. In this chapter, I will bring together the main arguments proposed in this thesis, summarising what the thesis has found and the evidence for this. I will also consider the implications of these findings. It is also important at this point to consider how these findings may point to other directions for further research; no project can provide exhaustive coverage and the process by its very nature answers some questions, but raises many more. I will summarise the findings of this thesis under the following subheadings: 1) The developmental nature of the study; 2) Constructing an identity for teachers; 3) Implications; 4) Limitations and, 5) Directions for future research. In this chapter the above themes will be pieced together with the findings and implications.

8.2 The Developmental Nature of the Study

I would like to emphasise here that the process of this research was developmental. The way this project started did not predict the final study, and the methodological and substantive aspects of the study were refined in reaction to circumstances in the field. Specifically, the 'native speaker' spin was not a point of investigation, but emerged as a significant tool for the discussion of the data as the analysis progressed. The process of writing is in itself important here, as it was mainly in this way that these themes gained their prominence. I tried several structures for the presentation of my data analysis and the one presented here was only reached after abandoning other formats which did not seem to present the findings in a plausible way which was loyal to the data and the participants. Furthermore, it was difficult to transmit the emotional undertone present in the participants' expressions of frustration when dealing with the native/non-native dichotomy. This implied a change in me as well. As I explained in Chapter 1, I was first a language learner and now I am a teacher of in-service and pre-service English teachers. At the beginning of this study I was convinced of the simplistic dichotomy of the 'native/non-native speakers', since this is what I had experienced before. However, as the data started to unveil, I became more observant of the different labels that are given to English teachers and how they are lived by them. This had an impact on me because they allowed me to know myself better and to know my colleagues and their dilemmas as well. I realized that we are not so different and that we have many experiences to share. My interest in discussing the linkage

of labels to historical reasons and a distinctive physique is present in Chapter 5. Also, how these labels contribute to the challenges that teachers face on a daily basis are discussed in Chapter 6.

This thesis further develops the understandings of existing literature because it is able to give a detailed and in-depth portrait of the construct of the 'native speaker' English language teacher from students, teachers and administrators' perspectives. This particular study extends, I believe, those previously published worked discussed in Chapter 2 and expands in other areas such as identity formation, labelling and challenges faced by both groups of teachers, 'native' and 'non-native speakers'. In addition, I contend that this study develops new understanding of the little documented issue of English language teaching with regard to formation of labels and its historical roots, as well as its former impact in the construction of the personal and professional identity. That is, looking at the labels that participants were referring to in different moments of their narratives made me realize how complex the construction of the English teacher is. At least in the context of the interviews, the labels such as gringo, güero, pocho, mexicanito and foreigner, seem to have contributed to help construct the image of the English teacher at different levels. Students use them to describe their teachers. Tteachers use them to describe their colleagues, but also to describe themselves. Administrators use them to refer to the employees. I also believe that this study reveals the 'native speaker/non-native speaker' complex relationship not only at the inside of a language department, but also from outside, in the wider society. I thus consider that the findings are important in clarifying how the English teacher has been constructed over the years at the Language Department. Issues such as place of birth, ethnicity, language skills, educational background and physical appearance appear to contribute to this construction. Also, the findings reflect the impact that the Federal Government discourses have had in the attempt to look at the professionalization of the English teacher in Mexico. This can be contrasted with the discourses at an international level in terms of hiring. However, it also has implications at the national level, where there is still much to do concerning the hiring practices and the views of the wider society. The status of English as a global language has brought new uncertainties for English teachers and, in consequence, for students. These uncertainties can be translated into the different identities that, in this case, participants display or are given at different moments. The consequences are seen in the moment of giving labels, such as in this study in which there were no clear-cut divisions where a label ended and another started. Sociologists (Mercer, 1990; Giddens, 1991; Woodward, 1997; Beck, 2000) suggest that such uncertainties and doubts are characteristic of contemporary or late modern societies and much is due to globalisation. Furthermore, this view of globalisation might harbour consequences for the self-imposition and establishment of many identities, both professional and personal. With these different identities in mind, I now move on to discuss the general and specific findings of my study, providing answers to my research questions.

8.3 Constructing an Identity for Teachers

I would now draw conclusions from the substantive aspects of the study. In this section I will bring together what the thesis has found about how the participants I interviewed construct and reproduce a set of practices and labels to describe and categorize language teachers. At this point, I would like to revisit the research questions from Chapter 1 in order to remind the reader of the basis of the research inquiry.

1. How is the image of the English teacher and speaker constructed by students, teachers and administrators of the Language Department of the University of Guanajuato?
2. What are the problems with the term 'non-native speaker' at a local, national and international level?
3. What labels have participants experienced and how these explain participants' construction of their personal and professional identity?

In order to offer answers to each of these questions, I shall present the findings based upon what the data revealed in Chapters 5 and 6 under each question.

1. How is the image of the English teacher and speaker constructed by students, teachers and administrators of the Language Department of the University of Guanajuato?

The data revealed the complexities around the construction of the English teachers' images. A first important contribution is related to the belief of having a set of characteristics that distinguish participants from one another. This is expressed in a discourse of similarity and difference (see Chapter 5.2) and the importance of physical appearance emerged from the data. Examples of this are presented and they show how participants react while having a sense of similarity with some people and a sense of difference with others. On the side of teachers, making reference to physical appearance and skin colour gave an indication that their own educational background and English skills would be questioned by students and parents. This idea of "having the right look" was further explored in the administrators' narratives and how they have changed the hiring policies due to pressures by the Federal Government (see Chapter 5.4.1). Therefore, in the Language Department there apparently is the policy of hiring qualified teachers, regardless their nationality, ethnicity and place of birth. This situation seems to contrast with that of the literature (in Chapter 2) and with what participants from the peripheral groups refer to. Moreover, students revealed how they considered important the physical appearance in order to define their "ideal English teacher" and the subsequent expectations they form (see Chapter 5.3). Through these discourses one is able to understand the manner in which factors associated by birthplace, ethnicity, language proficiency and self-perceptions, seem to play a pivotal role on how the English speaker is constructed inside the Language Department. However, having

looked closer at the participants' narratives, their discourses have not demonstrated that they have been yet understood by teachers and students. They still have an idealized image of the "best English teacher" and have found it difficult to escape from it.

2. *What are the problems with the term 'non-native speaker' at a local, national and* international level?

The use of peripheral data served the purposes to frame the data emerging from the core group. This was of particular use when exploring the factors which contribute to the construction of the English speakers and their identities, emphasising the complexities of labelling and its impact in the day-to-day scenario. From an international perspective, the data suggested that the complexities around the NNEST acronym seem to create more division than cohesion in a professional group. It presented data which appeared to suggest that identity is not static and factors that appear to threaten a comfort zone that participants had already established (see Chapter 6.2). As problematic as it seems, the dichotomy of 'native/non-native speakers' is often deployed against a particular physique, it brings divisiveness between these two groups. At a national level, the term 'non-native speaker' appeared to be linked to the physical image (see Chapter 5.2.2) and to students' expectations (see Chapter 5.3). At a local level, the data suggested that the coordination acknowledges that the 'native speakers' also defend their counterparts. This situation seems to suggest that 'non-native speakers' begin at disadvantage in the eyes of their colleagues and this is reinforced by the beliefs and expectations that students bring to their classrooms, making judgments a priori and reinforced also by the initial reaction of "protection" on the part of the coordinator (see Chapter 5.2.2.1). This situation seems to show that physical appearance, labels and how people use them, contribute to a more complex construction than what was initially thought of by the English speaker in the Language Department.

3. *What labels have participants experienced and how these explain participants' construction* of their personal and professional identity?

Participants seemed to qualify teachers in terms of their physical appearance. Different labels emerged (see Chapter 5.2.1) and allowed other issues to emerge as well. The labels are: güero, pocho, mexicanito, gringo, foreigner, Mexican, very Mexican and co-nationals. Issues that had not been foreseen at the beginning of the study started to emerge. By creating a discourse of difference of "us" versus "them", issues related to a long lasting history between Mexico and the United States were revealed and seem to influence the use of labels such as mexicanito, pocho, güero, gringo and foreigner. These revealed conflicts and attitudes towards the language and its speakers (see Chapter 5.5.3). Being questioned in their practice of teaching and/or in their language skills, has been one of the fundamental ways in which the so-called 'non-native speakers' have established their identities. This has shaped their views of who they are and who they are becoming. In the case of the 'native

speakers', the 'partial' integration to the host community and the border crossing, not only geographical, but ideological and mentally, seems to create a new scenario to discuss the 'native speakers' in which their dominant and superior identity is reduced and marred (see Chapter 6).

8.4 Implications

Having summarised the main points made by the thesis in this section, I would now like to consider some of the implications of these findings. The findings seem to raise similar issues to those cited in Chapter 2 in terms of uncertainty over identity and the blurring of boundaries in the construct of 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker' and the English language teacher.

The use of acronyms such as NS or NNS showed to have served a purpose at least inside the Caucus and in some of the literature discussed in Chapter 2. However, those terms do not fully capture the identities of the people involved in the teaching of English. As it was discussed in this study, there are different elements to consider when defining identity and the English teacher. A major implication is related to the applicability of this study in other contexts. Even when this study started as an investigation looking at the construction of the 'native/non-native' debate in a particular university in Mexico, it arrived at a point in which other areas emerged (physical appearance, historical background and labeling). These areas led me to see how perceptions are constructed and affected through historical and social pressures. I think it would be possible for others to look at this study as a starting point in their own contexts. This would allow them to learn about the different factors that affect their practice of teaching. For example, teachers from China might find this study useful by trying to find equivalent factors in their own context. Looking at aspects that have been explored here, they might be able to explore their own particularities, their own social and political historical backgrounds which would let them explore the complexities of the construction of the English teacher in their particular contexts. This can be seen with those participants in the peripheral group. They are from different parts of the world and yet we share some of the same issues. The interconnectedness between these different contexts are at different levels (administrative, social and political) and even when we are from different countries, we talk about the same issue, from different viewpoints and experiences. A simplistic dichotomy of 'native/non-native' does not fully capture the diverse elements involved in identity construction. It is required to look at other issues such as ethnicity, nationality and the history of the country and its relation with the past and current socio-political issues with the language and its speakers.

Features such as physical appearance and nationality may be considered to 'belong' to some groups ('native' or 'non-native') more than others, and they may serve as a source of status. Whiteness continues to be enhanced by ideologies, labels and discourses by institutions and the professional community, and 'non-natives' are judged against this. As Chapter 2 discussed, most of the debates around the 'native/non-native speakers' are centred in looking at "who's worth more" or the differences in the practice of teaching (James, 1977; Haughes & Lascaratou, 1982; Sheorey, 1986;

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Medgyes, 1994, 1996; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999; Cheung, 2002; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2002; Liang, 2002; Moussu, 2002). In this study, the spin seems to show that there are implications beyond the teaching performance and the linguistic aspects. In other words, the problem is neither one of "who's worth more" nor the linguistic differences. Instead, it is the narrowing of the meaning of 'native speaker' in society, alongside the pressures exerted on 'non-native speakers' by students and administrators which deserve more scrutiny. Additionally, these labels discussed in this study have the unfortunate effect of perpetuating the division 'us' versus 'them', but have added insights about these representations from a more in-depth perspective.

An area emerging from the findings is related to historical background in the imposition of labels. The implications to the Mexican context can be seen in the importance to look at the historical background between Mexico and the United States. This appeared to have a great impact in the way that labels are formed and this has not been discussed in depth when approaching the construction of the English teacher in the Mexican context. I acknowledge, however, that there are similarities in the way other discussions at an international level place the 'non-native speaker' in an inferior position. The fact that the Language Department has gone through a deep more inclusive change in the hiring practices and has pondered the educated English teachers rather than the solely 'native speaker' appears of little consequence or no relation at all with the international discussions around discrimination at the workplace. However, this cannot be generalized to all institutions in Mexico. Each institution has its own hiring practices and there is still much to do in that regard. The pressure from the society to have a 'native speaker' as the 'best English teacher' has contributed to perpetuate the supremacy of the 'native speaker' over the 'non-native'. Moreover, it becomes important to look at the discrepancies between the day-to-day practices of English teaching. This will help understand the impact those labels have not only in the professional but in the personal identity of teachers and students. This will allow seeing the complexities involved in the construction of the English teacher in Mexico. It becomes important to look at the discourses behind the 'spin' in order to expose particular experiences and unveil participants' narratives and views. Only then will debates over the 'native/non-native speakers' not be reduced to a simplistic list of differences but instead begin to account for the factors that underlie the complex construction of English teachers.

Another area that comes from the data appears to reveal the conflicts that English teachers are confronted by labels that affect their professional and personal identity. Indeed, teachers' experiences have helped them shape who they are now and how they visualize their future and the upcoming challenges in the personal and professional levels. The ones who are living in Mexico, having left their lives in the country of origin, have developed a positive feeling towards the country regardless of the discrepancies of one culture and another. And for those who are Mexicans and have faced discrimination at one point in their practice of teaching or have been stigmatized, they have developed a way of dealing with these stigmas and labels. Finding a balance in a professional world when there is a constant reminder of who is a 'native' or a 'non-native' seems far from reality, but participants have managed to do so.

In my view, the above findings appear to indicate that there are several factors in many interconnected areas that help construct the English teacher identity that go beyond a simplistic list of linguistic skills. This urges a re-evaluation of the concept of 'native speaker' and 'non-native speaker', far from a superficial look at the concepts. It seems to be necessary to look more in-depth to the particularities and specificities of the given context and the participants involved. This would help see, as in this study, that the socio-political relationship and historical background have an impact in the creation of labels and the use of them.

Having discussed the general implications, I now move to the particular implications of the findings. I start first with a discussion related to the implications they have for teaching. I make suggestions derived from the collected data which appear to indicate a need for rising awareness regarding the figure of the English teacher.

8.4.1 Implications for Teaching

As the findings indicated, English teachers, regardless of their nationality, birthplace or ethnicity, face different challenges in the classroom. One of the most salient challenges was to be able to deal with insecurities, regardless their native status. It seems acceptable for native teachers to make some occasional mistakes while teaching, or not know all the details about the English language (Amin, 2004), but when non-native teachers make the same mistakes or do not know everything about the English language, their teaching abilities and competencies are often immediately questioned (Canagarajah, 1999a, 2002). However, in this study, both teachers made reference to their insecurities in their practice of teaching. Some of them could cope with these difficulties and even felt in advantage for being "blue-eyed and white" to gain credibility in the eyes of the students (see Chapter 5.2.2). In the case of Mexican teacher, it seemed that if they demonstrated their abilities while teaching and confidence while doing it, they would overcome the initial students' rejection for having a Mexican accent or simply for being Mexican (see Chapter 5.3). These findings suggest that both teachers have the same chance to feel insecure due to different reasons and it is necessary to bring these issues up so that they can be discussed by teachers and students. This would help to demystify the idea that "native speaker image equals knowing how to teach". The generalizations made over the perfect image and the practices of teaching go beyond looking "right" for the job. This is further explained in the following section where I discuss the implications of the study in hiring processes and in wider society.

8.4.2 Implications in Hiring Process and in Wider Society

I move now from the specific implications of the findings to the relevance of this study of the construction of the English teachers' identities in wider society. For the purposes of discussing the section, and linking it to the hiring processes, I found Seidlhofer's (2002): statement useful: "The

question is whether ways of thinking about English have kept pace with the rapid development in the functions of the language, whether concepts in people's heads have changed as the role of English in the world has changed" (p.12). This study started as an attempt to look at the distinction between 'native speakers' and 'non-native speakers'. However, as it was explained in Chapter 8.2, it ended in a journey to explore the construction of the English teacher and the impact that labels have on their professional and personal identities. I believe the study has gone some way towards providing a look at the hiring practices inside the Language Department which contradict those discussed in Chapter 2. In Chapter 5.4.1, it was discussed how the Language Department experienced a change in their hiring policies due to pressures from the Federal Government.

Also, it was discussed that one of the main problems was the image that the Language Department was projecting to the rest of the University and the wider society, with the belief that only 'native speakers' would teach English. This represented a problem in itself, showing how different discourses work together and sometimes against each other. The fact that former students do not know the inside policies for hiring an English teacher, makes it more difficult to escape from the pressure of the society to be taught by 'native speakers', when apparently, the Institution has gone through changes and has pondered the professionalization of the teacher over nationality, place of birth or ethnicity. These contradictions make it harder to escape from the general belief in wider society that 'native speakers' are better teachers than 'non-native'. These findings make it necessary to reach the wider society in order to educate and advocate for the profession and match the discourses of the Institution, teachers, students and the wider society in terms of pondering the professionalization of the English teacher rather than "the right look". This can also be expanded to different contexts in which hiring practices still favour the 'native speaker' over the 'non-native speaker'.

8.5 Limitations of the Study

In order to look at the research process, I consider it beneficial to address the limitations of this research. The limitations consist of: my multiple roles at the inside of the Language Department, limited time and mortality of participants.

As explained before, I was a new teacher at the Language Department at the moment this research started. I had been working for almost two years there and colleagues still considered me "the new one". Suddenly I became a researcher in this setting and I was afraid my colleagues and students would look at me differently. On one side, I had a hard time dealing with the closeness to the research site and tried to avoid this into turning into a negative aspect. However, it turned out to be a positive aspect. This closeness made me delve into who I was in order to understand who my participants of the core group were. The mutual self-disclosure (see Chapter 3) helped me feel more comfortable while conducting the interviews and sharing narratives. Also, because of my young age, one of the limitations was to get close to students. Also, at some point, I was even considered a student of the

Language Department and students did not see me as their teacher at first. Moreover, I did not want them to 'please me' in their narratives because of my position of power in the classroom. I found this hard but as the study evolved, I realized that participants had more to share and that our similarities and differences were a positive aspect.

Regarding the limited time, I remember it was hard for some teachers to find the time to have a moment to talk with me because of their busy schedule. Some of them even told me that they had limited time so I could go with them and have breakfast in the school patio. Yet they had time to talk with me. Students were no different. We made space in our agendas to meet early in the morning or late afternoon, since I adjusted to their time. Also, another issue was the limited time in reference to exploring all the issues that emerged in this study. I was working full time at the time of the study and had to perform my usual activities in the Department: teacher, tutor, member of different committees and responsible of the new English Language Program.

Finally, mortality in the research was observed in the dropping-out of some participants in the time of the study. Some students stopped attending their English classes, some others move to a different city and I lost contact with them. This put me in a difficult situation since I wanted to know more about the issues that were emerging in their narratives. There were only three students that I lost contact with, but I appreciate the time they dedicated to have the interviews and informal talks with me.

8.6 Directions for Future Research

Having explored the implications for this research, I shall now turn to the suggestions for future research and issues that I have not looked at in this study and how they are linked to this research.

One important aspect is to share my research in the academic community and let it be built on. This research connects with different recent works that colleagues from Mexico have developed as part of their doctoral studies and that they contribute to the profession in Mexico. Therefore, there can be a wide range of topics, from the more practical as the use of film in the English classroom (Goodwin, 2011), to more social aspects of the profession, such as students' perspectives about English in Mexican state schools (Basurto, 2009), students' expectations of teachers (Narvaez, 2009), identity formation of EFL teachers (Lengeling 2010), and students' struggles to gain mastery of English writing in a Mexican community (Crawford, 2010). All these studies combine together a method of understanding of what is going on in the EFL profession, and therefore, this is an understanding what is going on around me and this research. One of the issues that seems to deserve more attention is the historical implications of labelling. A suggested area of research could be what the history of the country has to do with the current labels used to categorize English teachers. Understanding this phenomenon would be of interest for Mexico and other countries with the same problem of labelling teachers.

Another area that deserves attention is related to the hiring processes. As it was seen in this study, the Language Department has gone through significant changes in its hiring policies. However, this has not applied to other institutions in Mexico. Some hiring practices still favour the 'native speaker' over the 'non-native speaker', without looking at the professionalization of the English teacher. This leads to another area which is related to the definition of the EFL profession in Mexico which, sometimes, seems to be diminished by employers. At this, a wider political problematic can be addressed and it is related to the current imposition of English at public elementary school level. English has acquired another role in Mexico, it has become a necessity, but the blurry politics around it have made it difficult to define the profession. The Federal Government has started in 2011 the implementation of English classes in state elementary schools without observing who is qualified to teach. This will bring other problems in a near future and a suggested area of research could be what the future holds for the implementation of such programs in Mexico.

Also, I suggest that exploring the particular experiences that are lived at the inside of the English profession would provide possible insights as to what roles English teachers have, their challenges, and their issues with labels. This would lead to more research about teachers' identity formation at different stages of their career, but also about students' identities and their relationship with the language, particularly with their attitudes towards the country and its speakers. Understanding and taking into consideration identity formation will serve as snapshots of the realities of the EFL profession. This in turn is valuable when researching about the construction of English teachers in different contexts. This would enable us to see how teachers and students think, feel and what they identify with. Having offered suggestions for future research, I now move to the general conclusions of this research.

8.7 Conclusion

The 'native speaker' image spin, discussed in Chapter 7, cuts through the discourses about 'native speakers' and their supposed supremacy and, by consequence, a long-lasting idealization of a better English teacher. I discuss here that there is a growing discourse being voiced by teachers, students and administrators to show that 'non-native speakers' are moving up but they have to face different challenges in their daily practices. With particular attention to what these labels (or representations) reveal about the importance of history and its current effects, I try to highlight the realities English teachers face. Also, I try to show the polarization they have between 'native speakers' and 'non-native speakers' themselves concerning aspects such as birthplace, ethnicity and nationality.

I hope this work serves to set a precedent that there are no clear-cut division between 'native' and 'non-native speakers'. Rising awareness of how complex labels operate through discourses, institutions and hiring policies may help to bring about more recognition of commonalities of English teachers. If we recognize the challenges that English teachers face in regard to the labels that seem to describe who they are and what they represent, we could perhaps take a deeper look and be more

likely to establish meaningful alliances across English teachers regardless nationality or ethnicity. This would mean that we can anchor our understanding of our past, present and future in the ever-changing but pervasive politics of the representation of the 'native speaker'.

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