

'I'M STILL NOT SOUNDS LIKE NATIVE SPEAKER':
THE NATIVE SPEAKER NORM, LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY, AND THE EMPOWERMENT
OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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Chapter 1: Introduction - International students in the US and the NS norm

According to the Institute of International Education (2010), approximately 691,000 international students were studying in the United States for the 2009-2010 academic year, and by most estimates this number will continue to increase for the foreseeable future. For a large majority of these students English is a second language, but to many students in the US and elsewhere, English is viewed as the key to economic advancement whether it be in the United States or within their own home countries (cf. e.g. Friedrich, 2003; Park and Abelman, 2004). Furthermore, a general perception exists that higher education in the United States offers a superior product to its students. This is evident, for example, by the domination of United States higher educational institutions in the Academic Ranking of World Universities conducted by Shanghai Jiaotong University (cf. ShanghaiRanking Consultancy). Eight of the top ten (80.0%) and thirty-five of the top fifty (75.0%) world universities on the ranking are located in the United States. Moreover, in a study conducted by the Institute of International Education (2011) surveying prospective international students from all over the world, 75% identified the United States as their first choice of destination. 76% of prospective international students reported perceiving the United States as having a high quality of education, and the same

number perceived the United States as having diverse educational opportunities to meet the needs of students with a variety of different interests and career goals.

Therefore, the perception of the quality of US higher education is high, and international perception suggests that command of English can provide a variety of instrumental benefits. As a result, the demand abroad for US higher education and other English-medium higher education is also high, yielding a large pool of prospective international students. Given the financial instability that many institutions of higher education in the US find themselves in, international students represent an attractive untapped market (cf e.g. Keller, 2008, November 26).

Despite what seems like an ideal symbiotic relationship, there are underlying challenges for US universities that enroll large numbers of international students. Certainly US institutions of higher education frequently appeal to the value of ethnic, cultural, and racial diversity (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, and Gurin, 2002), and by extension various individuals in the field of higher education loudly proclaim the value of the differing perspectives and cultural diversity that international students bring with them. For example according to Allan Goodman, CEO and President of the Institute of International Education

International students in U.S. classrooms widen the perspectives of their U.S. classmates, contribute to vital research activities, strengthen the local economies in which they live, and build lasting ties between their home countries and the United States (Institute of International Education, 2004 quoted in Terano, 2007).

Despite cherishing the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity that international students naturally provide, US universities seem less comfortable with the linguistic

diversity that they also provide. Probably the most oft-cited issue with international students pertains to the 'language barrier' (cf. e.g. Mori, 2000; Yeh and Inose, 2003). University communities seem particularly ill-prepared to deal with this issue. Educational literature abounds with references to the challenges that language creates for international students for a variety of purposes: academically (Wan, Chapman, and Biggs, 1992), socially (e.g. Guidry Lacina, 2003), and for using various university support services such as counseling (e.g. Mori, 2000; Yeh and Inose, 2003) or library resources (e.g. Curry and Copeman, 2005). Among the biggest issues is the fact that universities represent a stronghold of so-called 'standard' language, and many international students despite their years of studying and their intense commitment fail to satisfy the 'standard'. As a result, they meet with disapproval from faculty or fellow students (Lee and Rice, 2007).

Educational institutions in the United States have tended to hold quite firmly to an ideology that holds that one prestige standard is the 'correct' form of speech (Wiley and Lukes, 1996). Notable exceptions dealing in particular with African American English in K-12 settings, such as the Ann Arbor decision (cf. Farr Whiteman, 1980; Yellin, 1980; Freeman, 1982; Labov, 1982) and the Oakland 'Ebonics' controversy (cf. Wolfram, 1998; Rickford, 1999; Baugh, 2004), have generally met with broad public outrage. Although both decisions had merely sought to provide accommodations to non-standard English speakers learning to use the prestigious 'standard' dialect in education settings, the US public clinging to

a rigid language ideology was outraged by the idea that educators would attempt to assign any form of legitimacy to the use of African American English.

Another group that educators in the United States, especially university educators, have struggled to deal with on a linguistic level are so-called 'generation 1.5' students. The term 'generation 1.5' is often applied to individuals with a variety of personal histories such as immigrants who arrived during adolescence or US-born children living in linguistic enclaves, where English is rarely spoken. However, when the term is used in the field of applied linguistics it typically denotes a particular type of linguistic and educational situation, in which the student's needs particularly in English fall somewhere between those of bilingual children of immigrants and those of adult immigrants. Generation 1.5 has featured prominently in the applied linguistics and education literatures specifically due to the types of issues they face such as a poor command of 'standard' English (cf. e.g. Harklau, Losey, Siegal, 1999; Forrest, 2006).

Like speakers of non-standard dialects and generation 1.5 students, international students face a variety of issues that stem from their differences in language and culture. Although these challenges are not unfamiliar to educators of US students, international students appear to have challenges that exceed that of their domestic counterparts in areas such as: stress and anxiety (Andrade, 2006), loneliness and homesickness (Rajapaksa and Dundes, 2002), low confidence especially in their communication skills (Lee, 1997), difficulties making friends (Jacob and Greggo, 2001), and discrimination (Lee and Rice, 2007).

Unlike non-standard dialect speakers and to a lesser extent generation 1.5, international students are nearly always positioned as 'learners' rather than 'users' of English. Linguists have argued quite convincingly for the legitimacy of African American English and other 'native' varieties (e.g. Wolfram, 1969). While this has not necessarily changed the prevailing 'standard' language ideology, it has given individuals who speak these varieties more powerful advocates and the opportunity for empowerment and a view of themselves and their language as legitimate though different from the 'standard'. International students find themselves in a similar situation to generation 1.5, although the former may have even more obstacles to their own legitimacy. Pertaining to generation 1.5, Benesch (2008) argues that generation 1.5 students are seemingly permanently positioned as 'learners' of English and

the possibility that they may be speakers of nonstandard, or emergent, varieties of English, especially if they live in immigrant neighborhoods in U.S. cities, is sometimes mentioned but not explored as a legitimate linguistic phenomenon (p. 300).

This situation is especially grave for generation 1.5 students who face the very real possibility of being characterized as being denied the status of legitimate speaker in any language. Furthermore, as permanent US residents it may have life-long implications for them.

The situation for international students is similar but distinctly different. Their most obvious advocates, second language researchers, applied linguists, and TESOL professionals, have generally taken the position that as 'learners' international students' English is 'deficient' vis-à-vis the language of 'native

speakers' [NSs]¹ (cf. May, In Press). The situation is less serious than that of generation 1.5 in some ways due to the fact that international students are often not planning to remain in the United States permanently. However, this situation also means that they frequently have had and will have far less exposure to NS speech and will probably therefore find it more difficult to satisfy a NS norm. Furthermore, the fact that they plan to leave the United States and continue to use English as a common language in international settings suggests for them that the utility of matching a NS norm is probably greatly reduced.

In recognition of these and other concerns, 'standard' language ideology has recently come under attack from some applied linguists and TESOL professionals. These researchers have begun to strongly question the need for, the utility of, and the fairness of comparing non-native speakers [NNSs] to NSs and expecting NNSs to perform linguistically identically to NSs (cf. Cook, 1999; Jenkins, 2000; Canagarajah, 2006). Researchers have begun to acknowledge the need for an alternative model, such as Cook's (1995) notion of multi-competence.

In this work, I concern myself precisely with the debate over whether NS norms are appropriate for US international students, whose L1 is not English.

¹ I have placed 'native speaker', 'nativeness', and 'native' (and other related forms, e.g. 'non-native') in scare quotes throughout the text to distance myself from these categorizations and the connotations that they have come to be associated with. I discuss this issue in more detail in the section "Questioning the category of 'native speaker'" in Chapter 2. Nevertheless, I find these categories and terms to be necessary to a discussion of ideologies and perceptions of 'native' language, and have therefore chosen not to use any of the alternatives proposed by other researchers. The shortened "NS" has not been placed in scare quotes for efficiency's sake, but the reader should interpret all instances of NS and NNS as conforming to the same distancing.

Specifically, I have taken up the issue of 'learner' (or L2 user) perceptions of themselves as legitimate or illegitimate users of English and how these perceptions are informed and affected by ideologies of 'nativeness'. In Chapter 2, I will look at the issues most relevant to the debate such as the need for mutual intelligibility, constraints on adult second language acquisition, and others. In Chapter 3, I will outline the approach I have taken to study the experiences of international students and their beliefs about the NS norm. Then in Chapters 4-7, I will present the experiences and beliefs of the eight international students who participated in my study. In Chapter 4, I will focus on the participants' perceptions of their own English and how their ideologies concerning NS language and their roles and responsibilities in intercultural communication shape their perceptions of their own abilities to communicate. In Chapter 5, I will focus specifically on the preferences the participants display regarding the NS norm and other issues that complicate these preferences. In Chapter 6, I will turn my attention to the perceptions the participants have of others' English in particular those people whom they would prefer to speak like. In addition, I examine their beliefs regarding the feasibility of acquiring the linguistic abilities displayed by those they admire. In Chapter 7, I will discuss the cases of two participants both of whom earn excellent scores on tests of language 'proficiency'. I will examine how their differing aspirations and ideologies leads one to a sense of empowerment and the other to a state of continued dissatisfaction. Finally, in Chapter 8 I will explore the implications of my findings for contexts seeking to incorporate international students.

The purpose for this study is two-fold. First, I have noticed in the literature on the topic of the NS norm that it is fairly common for supporters of a NS norm to argue that they both know and seek to defend the desires of 'learners' (e.g. Carter, 1998; Kubota, 2006; Kuo, 2006; Prodromou, 2006; Scheuer, 2005; Sobkowiak, 2005). For example, Carter (1998) calls NS language, "real English" and argues that "learners seem to want to know what real English is, and are generally fascinated by the culturally-embedded use of language of native speakers" (p. 50). However, it is my intention to show that the situation is much more complex, and that learners do not simply seek to conform to 'real English' out of some pursuit of abstract linguistic authenticity. Rather they are motivated by other factors such as the need to satisfy the expectations of important others, the desire to avoid stigma, and other issues taken up in the following chapters. Furthermore, they are certainly more conflicted in their desire to satisfy a NS norm than Carter and others suggest.

Second, whether or not the uninformed 'learner' *wants* to continue to pursue a NS norm is, in my opinion, not entirely relevant given that students are not always aware of what their pedagogical needs and limitations are. Therefore, it is also my intention to show how L2 users' ideas about NS language do not always reflect reality and also to suggest that they would be better suited pursuing more realistic and empowering visions of themselves and their fellow NNSs.

Chapter 2: Relevant research - Norms for language learning, teaching, and use

The question of which (or whose) norm should be used in language learning has in the past decade become a highly contentious topic receiving quite a bit of attention in the literature (cf. exchanges in the publication *TESOL Quarterly*: Jenkins, 2006; Kubota, 2006; Suzuki and Jenkins, 2006; Prodromou, 2007; Jenkins, 2007a). Traditionally, language pedagogy has been satisfied to adopt a norm based upon language varieties used by 'native speakers' or a "NS norm." However, the use of a NS norm has been challenged in recent decades by a number of proposals for alternative standards (e.g. Cook, 1999; Jenkins, 2000, 2002; Canagarajah, 2006). This chapter focuses on issues of relevance to the decision of which norm the L2 user should aspire toward and against which his/her abilities and progress should be measured. These complex issues serve as a backdrop to the experiences of the participants in the present study both at a theoretical level and also at a very real personal level, because, as I will demonstrate in later chapters, the participants themselves reference and grapple with some of these notions in their accounts of their experiences.

First, research on intelligibility of NNS language is covered. This area of research is relevant, because it offers insight into what is necessary for speakers to

be able to do in order to communicate with one another, which is the ultimate goal of most language learning. Second, age-based constraints on second language acquisition are examined, because they offer insight into what is actually feasible for the context of adult language learning, which is how the language learning process of the participants in this study would be best described. Third, sociopolitical issues related to imposing a prestigious 'standard' variety of English as the norm over other varieties of the language are discussed. These issues are particularly relevant to this study due to the nature of how international students often plan to use English upon their return to their home countries. Fourth, the potential for prejudice and bias against non-native speaker [NNS] varieties is discussed, which is an area of research often used as motivation for using NS norms in language teaching and learning. Finally, past literature on the views of individual language learners and instructors is considered.

NS norms are unnecessary: The issue of intelligibility

Defining "intelligibility"

The first area of controversy related to the use of a NS norm is the issue of intelligibility. The controversy begins with determining what exactly is meant by intelligibility, because as Isaacs (2008) notes "there is neither a universally accepted definition of intelligibility nor a field-wide consensus on how to best measure it" (p. 556; also cf. Munro and Derwing, 1995a). This controversy is exemplified by categories created by Smith and Nelson (1985, pp. 334-336; quoted in Gallego, 1990, p. 221):

- a) *Intelligibility*: word/utterance recognition; a word/utterance is considered to be unintelligible when the listener is unable to make it out and, thus, to repeat it.
- b) *Comprehensibility*: word/utterance meaning (locutionary force); word/utterance is said to be incomprehensible when the listener can repeat it (i.e. recognizes it) but is unable to understand its meaning in the context in which it appears
- c) *Interpretability*: meaning behind word/utterance (illocutionary force); a word/utterance is said to be uninterpretable when the listener recognizes it, but is unable to understand the speaker's intentions behind it (i.e., what the speaker is trying to say)

(Smith and Nelson, 1985, pp. 334-336)

Smith and Nelson's categories here demonstrate that there is a fair amount of ambiguity in what could be meant by *intelligibility*. A comparison of Smith and Nelson's conception of *intelligibility* with *comprehensibility* demonstrates that it is conceivable that a learner might be intelligible but not comprehensible, resulting in the interlocutor being able to repeat back the utterance but not understanding the meaning. It seems theoretically feasible as well that a learner might be *comprehensible* and *interpretable* but not *intelligible*, if the interlocutor can infer the meaning without having recognized every portion of the utterance. In this case the interlocutor would need to rely on paraphrasing to demonstrate message reception.

Moreover, Munro and Derwing (1995a) point out that there is some inconsistency in the way that researchers have measured and conceived of this standard. They cite studies employing instruments counting numbers of correctly transcribed words (Lane, 1963), numbers of correctly transcribed *content* words (Barefoot, Bochner, Johnson, and vom Eigen, 1993), and accurately paraphrased utterances (Brodkey, 1972) as well as direct ratings of comprehensibility from more

proficient speakers (Fayer and Krasinski, 1987). Each of these methods would predictably result in different perceptions of some learners' relative success.

Despite the ambiguity of terms such as *comprehensible* and *intelligible*, they nonetheless distinguish themselves quite freely from standards such as *accurate* or *error-free*, which typically focus on deviations from the likely linguistic choices of a monolingual NS. Because I am mainly interested in intelligibility as it contrasts with a NS norm as a standard for language learning, in the remainder of the present work I will not necessarily use the term in a manner faithful to Smith and Nelson's conception quoted above. Instead I will be using the term more loosely to refer to the idea of the language user's ability to make him-/herself understood without the terminological precision used by some researchers (e.g. Smith and Nelson). Instead, I have adopted Bremer's (1996) position that "a contribution [...] to a conversation is only complete when the hearer has accepted it" (p. 39, quoted in Hülmbauer, 2006, p. 10). In other words, 'satisfaction' (cf. Seidlhofer, 2001, p. 148; Taylor and Cameron, 1987, p. 153 cited in Hülmbauer, 2006) on the part of the speaker and the interlocutor(s) is the primary criterion for assessment of communicative success. This satisfaction does not necessarily imply an ability to repeat each individual element of the utterance. In taking this perspective and reviewing the literature relevant to a comparison of the NS norm and intelligibility as language learning standards three points become quite apparent:

- (1) Although generally utterances conforming strictly to a NS norm are intelligible to the NS (with several obvious caveats including that NSs may differ in their speech variety, rate or volume of speech, or in some relevant

- other manner and thus be relatively unintelligible to each other), not all intelligible utterances or intelligible speakers conform to a strict NS norm.
- (2) Depending on the interlocutor, utterances conforming to a strict NS norm may in fact impede intelligibility. Intelligibility may be increased in certain settings through the adherence to some core set of linguistic features that may or may not reflect NS usage.
 - (3) Intelligibility is not a static characteristic of the individual (i.e. something that can be measured like 'proficiency' or 'competence') but rather is a dynamic process that is constructed between two or more individuals during communicative acts.

In the remainder of this section I will provide justification for these three points by exploring intelligibility in nonnative speaker-native speaker (NNS-NS) interaction as well as nonnative speaker-nonnative speaker interaction (NNS-NNS) at various linguistic levels.

Intelligibility of NNS speech in NNS-NS interaction

I will discuss issues of intelligibility in NNS-NS interaction first. The research in this area has supported the intuitively obvious position that conformity to a strict NS norm is unnecessary for intelligibility (no matter how one defines it), although the factors that determine intelligibility for NSs receiving NNS language remain largely unresolved (Field, 2005; Isaacs, 2008). Studies in this area have primarily focused on phonological features of nonnative speech that might constrain intelligibility to the NS. This tendency appears to be justified by findings such as those in Gallego's (1990) study, which found that of all possible causes of communication breakdowns reported by the US undergraduate participants, pronunciation-related issues accounted for approximately 65% of the breakdowns across the three different international teaching assistants used in the study. Gallego's methodological design involved tape recording presentations on

discipline-specific topics from three potential international teaching assistants: NSs of Hindi, Italian, and Korean. The presentations were recorded and viewed by undergraduate students (NSs of English), who were asked to pause the tape when they could not understand something. This resulted in numerous communication breakdowns, the majority of which (65%) were attributable to the NNSs' pronunciation.

Gallego's study, however, is not truly interactive, because it utilized a recording of the NNS. This setup prevented the NNS from being able to perceive cues of message reception from the interlocutors; it also prevented the interlocutors from communicating their failure to understand. As a result, the jointly constructed process of message comprehension was limited. A case study by Cameron and Williams (1997) better captures the capacity of a NNS to communicate with NS interlocutors. They observed a female Thai NNS of English, who was training as a nurse in a US hospital. They described her language capacities as containing "many of the features typical of first-language Thai speakers, such as final syllable stress of polysyllabic words, reduction or deletion of final consonants and consonant clusters" among others (Cameron and Williams, 1997, p. 422). Despite the participants' "limited" English proficiency, Cameron and Williams found that she is able to perform in her professional capacity, which to a large extent involves communication with NSs. She does so through a variety of communication strategies that allow her to compensate for the differences between her English and

those of her patients. Their results point strongly to the idea that intelligibility can be achieved in the absence of strict conformity to a NS norm.

One further issue related to NNS phonology and its intelligibility to NSs has to do with the vague but salient notion of foreign ‘accent’¹. The issue of ‘accent’ obscuring the intelligibility of the NNS is one frequently reported by NSs in folk linguistic studies (Niedzielski and Preston, 2003; Lindemann, 2005). Despite these reports, research by Munro and Derwing has consistently found that the NNSs’ degree of ‘accentedness’ as reported by the NS judges is not related to their intelligibility also as reported by the NS judges (Munro and Derwing, 1995a; Munro and Derwing, 1995b; Derwing and Munro, 1997).

Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that insofar as intelligibility in NNS-NS interaction is concerned, conformity of pronunciation based on NS standards may be helpful with some researchers suggesting a focus on suprasegmental features is especially critical (cf. Anderson-Hsieh, Johnson, and Koehler, 1992; Anderson-Hsieh and Koehler, 1988), although other researchers

¹ I have chosen to place the word ‘accent’ in scare quotes throughout the text, because I view it as a folk linguistic perception. While of course the phonology of NNS speech is demonstrably different from that of NS speech largely as a result of phonological transfer from the L1 and other interlanguage processes, I (and many of the researchers cited here) believe that the notion of ‘foreign accent’ conflates various elements of speech, language, and non-linguistic factors and can only be adequately identified as a folk perception arising both from NSs’ as well as NNSs’ meta-commentary on L2 users. I do not wish to suggest, however, that these perceptions are entirely unfounded. Even nonlinguist NSs are quite adept at rapidly detecting qualitative differences that mark the speaker as NNS (Bond, Markus, and Stockmal, 2003; Cunningham-Andersson and Engstrand, 1989; Flege, 1984; Magen, 1998; Major, 1987; Munro, 1995; Munro and Derwing, 2001 all cited in Callahan, 2009). Although NSs have also been shown to be quite biased in their assessment of ‘accent’ (Kang and Rubin, 2009).

challenge this idea (cf. Jenkins, 2000). Nonetheless, adherence to a strict NS standard does not seem to be necessary, and the presence of some degree of ‘foreign accent’ (how much exactly remains unclear) does not appear to impede communication processes. Indeed, in studies of authentic communicative events (e.g. Cameron and Williams, 1997) we find the potential for communicative satisfaction despite “limited proficiency” from the NNS as a result of the presence of both cooperation among the participants as well as the use of a wide range of communication strategies that overcome difficulty in expression. These findings coupled with those on age of acquisition covered in the next section likely explain the dominance of intelligibility as a standard over the more traditional use of NS norms in the pronunciation learning and teaching literature in recent years (cf. Levis, 2005; Isaacs, 2008).

Research on intelligibility of other levels of linguistic analysis (other than phonological) is far less clear. Returning to Gallego’s study, the major source of communication breakdown in this study was pronunciation (approximately 65% across the three ITAs). However, three other frequent sources were identified: “flow of speech (hesitation and pausing)” (11.7%), “vocabulary” (11.6%), and “grammar” (4.4%). Of these, Gallego identifies grammar as having only a negligible effect, which is most likely due to the NNS participants’ “high grammatical accuracy” (p. 230). Vocabulary is singled out as the only other major source of communication breakdown. She refers to an example from the Italian participant who uses a field-specific term (“adjacent”) inaccurately as well as including its Italian translation in

the presentation. These instances caused the most consistent communication breakdown with the highest number of raters indicating a problem in their ability to understand. Interestingly, Gallego concludes that even these three sources of communication breakdown are mainly potent when combined with pronunciation problems. As a result, at least for her three participants with advanced levels of English proficiency, other linguistic factors do not appear to greatly affect intelligibility of the NNS.

Various means of eliminating the compounding factor of pronunciation have been attempted by researchers. Among these is the methodology from Tyler (1992). Her study was very similar to Gallego's and examined a presentation by a Chinese ITA. However, in order to gather data on the intelligibility of the presentation while removing pronunciation as a factor (as well as NNS status), one group of NS raters was exposed to the presentation's transcription being read by a NS. Interestingly, even those who heard the presentation read by the NS were unable to answer all five of the comprehension questions. Tyler emphasizes the role that the speaker's inaccurate use of lexical discourse markers and discourse structuring had in causing his message to be difficult to follow for the NS listeners.

Another method for eliminating the compounding factor of communication problems caused by pronunciation is through the use of NNS writing. Tomiyana (1980) argues that strict adherence to NS norms in syntax is unnecessary for intelligibility. However, she finds that certain types of errors in L2 writing may cause more intelligibility issues. She argues that "global" errors, which in her study

are represented by inaccurate use of connectors (e.g. *however, and, or, etc.*), are more likely to cause issues in communication, than are “local” errors, represented by inaccurate article usage in her study. This finding seems to echo the conclusions of Tyler about the use of lexical discourse markers in oral presentation. In addition, a similar study on the intelligibility of L2 writing by Khalil (1985) found that inaccurate semantic usage had a greater effect on intelligibility than did inaccurate syntax. Khalil concludes that these findings provide support for the (at the time) recent arguments by those in favor of communicative language teaching for “a more tolerant attitude toward learners’ linguistic deviations” (p. 346).

Both Tomiyana and Khalil then find that some deviance from a NS norm does not seem to constrain intelligibility, although certain deviations may be quite severe particularly so-called “global” errors as well as errors in lexical choice. However, the fact that these studies relied on written products means that the NNSs were unable to make use of compensatory or communicative strategies for overcoming communication breakdown. Returning to the case study of the Thai speaker by Cameron and Williams, we find instances when the authors attribute potential for misunderstanding to the NNS’s syntactic or semantic deviations from a NS norm. However, these are negotiated through additional turns, and the NS interlocutors are able to successfully receive the NNS’s intended message allowing her to perform her duties as nurse-in-training.

Studies of NNS-NS interaction indicate that strict adherence to a NS norm is on the whole unnecessary for intelligibility. Serious threats to intelligibility are

present, however, especially in the form of certain (“global”) phonologic or semantic deviations (cf. e.g. Tyler, 1992). In conversational situations, however, it seems that even these can probably be overcome through the use of communicative strategies and active comprehension checking from both parties involved in the interaction (cf. Cameron and Williams, 1997). In the case of conversational English, adherence to a NS norm does not seem to determine *whether* a message will be comprehended by the NS interlocutor, although it may greatly influence the *ease* with which it is comprehended. Most NNSs, however, probably seek proficiency in other modes of communication, especially writing, that eliminate the ability for the use of the strategies that Cameron and Williams emphasize. In these situations, however, the major cause of communication breakdowns, pronunciation or phonology, is circumvented and therefore strict adherence to a NS norm in these cases also appears to be unnecessary.

Intelligibility in NNS-NNS interaction (English as a lingua franca)

In recognition of the fact that English is now used widely as a common language among those who speak other languages natively (cf. Jenkins, 2000, p. 1), a great deal of research has been devoted to intelligibility as it pertains to instances of NNS-NNS interaction. Despite disparate language backgrounds and proficiency levels among speakers, most studies have found minimal issues of intelligibility. For example, Hülmbauer (2006) argues that communication in these contexts “contains a great deal of ‘different’ language. At the same time however, there are recurring claims that miscommunication is rare in ELF [English as a lingua franca] contexts

(cf. Meierkord, 1996, p. 225; House, 1999, pp. 74-75)" (p.5). The phenomenon of successful English communication among NNSs has led some researchers in this area to conceive of the use of English in these settings and situations as a variety of English separate from those spoken by NSs (e.g. Jenkins, 2000; Seidlhofer, 2001, 2005, 2007). Both the names English as an international language [EIL] and English as a lingua franca [ELF] have been used with ELF recently gaining ground as Jenkins' second book (2007b) on the topic switched from labeling the concept EIL to ELF in its title (a change Jenkins predicted even in the first book, cf. Jenkins, 2000).

As with research on NNS-NS interaction, phonology in NNS-NNS interaction has received the most attention from researchers, perhaps because as Jenkins (2000) claims pronunciation may be "the greatest single barrier to successful communication" (p. 83). In particular, work by Jenkins (2000; 2002) has been especially influential as well as controversial. Jenkins has studied interactions among NNSs examining the incidences of communication breakdown due to phonological differences. Drawing on the findings of this research, she recommends a series of segmental and suprasegmental features for NNSs of English called the "lingua franca core" (cf. Jenkins, 2002), which according to her findings are critical to intelligibility in NNS-NNS interaction. Some of the features conform to a NS norm, such as the need to use consonant clusters in word-initial settings. However, many other features that are normally found in NS speech are not necessary according to her syllabus, such as the interdental fricatives. Figure 2.1 contains the summary of features that make up the lingua franca core presented in Jenkins (2002). Jenkins

The Lingua Franca Core (quoted from Jenkins, 2002, pp. 96-97)

1. *The consonant inventory with the following provisios*
 - some substitutions of /θ/ and /ð/ are acceptable (because they are intelligible in EIL);
 - rhotic 'r' rather than non-rhotic varieties of 'r';
 - British English /t/ between vowel in words such as 'latter' rather than American English flapped /ɾ/;
 - allophonic variation within phonemes permissible as long as the pronunciation does not overlap onto another phoneme, for example Spanish pronunciation of /v/ as [β] leads in word-initial position to its being heard as /b/ (so 'vowels' is heard as 'bowels' etc.).
2. *Additional phonetic requirements*
 - aspiration following word-initial voiceless stops /p/ /t/ and /k/ e.g. in [p^hɪn] ('pin) as compared with /spɪn/ ('spin'), otherwise these stops sound like their voiced counterparts /b/ /d/ and /g/;
 - shortening of vowel sounds before fortis (voiceless) consonants and maintenance of length before lenis (voiced) consonants, for example the shorter /æ/ in 'sat' as contrasted with the longer /æ/ in 'sad', or the /i:/ in 'seat' as contrasted with that in 'seed'.
3. *Consonant clusters*
 - no omission of sounds in word-initial clusters, e.g. in promise, string;
 - omission in middle and final clusters only permissible according to L1 English rules of syllable structure, e.g. factsheet can be pronounced as 'facsheet' but not 'fatsheet' or 'facteet';
 - /nt/ between vowels as in British English 'winter' pronounced /wɪntər/ rather than American English where, by deletion of /t/ it becomes /wɪnər/;
 - addition is acceptable, for example, 'product' pronounced [pɹɔ'ɒdʌktɔ] was intelligible to NNS interlocutors, whereas omission was not, for example, 'product' pronounced /'pɹɒdʌk/.
4. *Vowel sounds*
 - maintenance of contrast between long and short vowels for example between 'live' and 'leave'
 - L2 regional qualities acceptable if they are consistent, except substitutions for the sound /ɜ:/ as in 'bird', which regularly cause problems
5. *Production and placement of tonic (nuclear) stress*
 - appropriate use of contrastive stress to signal meaning. For example the difference in meaning in the utterances 'I came by TAXI' and I CAME by taxi' in which nuclear stress is shown in upper case. The former is a neutral statement of fact, whereas the latter includes an additional meaning such as 'but I'm going home by bus'.

Figure 2.1 – Features of the Lingua Franca Core (Jenkins, 2002)

claims that absent features are in essence not required for intelligibility in ELF and therefore can be regarded as intelligible regional variation. Jenkins intends these norms specifically for learners, who plan to partake primarily in NNS-NNS interaction as the research upon which the suggestions are based was performed on this type of interaction without NSs.

The lack of a strict NS norm in Jenkins' lingua franca core not only does not hinder interaction between nonnative speakers, but also, she insists, it can potentially facilitate it. One example of a feature common in NSs' English is the use of 'weak forms' (or the reduction of unstressed vowels to /ə/). Jenkins argues that this is problematic for NNSs both from a receptive and productive perspective. Other studies have also provided evidence that would suggest that nonnative varieties of English ease communication between NNSs, whereas even the 'standard' NS varieties are more difficult for the NNS to understand (e.g. Smith and Rafiqzad, 1979; Deterding and Kirkpatrick, 2006; Kirkpatrick, Deterding, and Wong, 2008). However, research on the intelligibility of NNS language by NNS interlocutors has not been entirely consistent as other studies have found issues in intelligibility for NNS listeners of various L2 varieties (Date, 2005; Kirkpatrick and Saunders, 2005; van Wijngaarden, Steeneken, and Houtgast, 2002). Pickering (2006) suggests that the discrepancy may be "at least partially related to the very different measures that are used across these studies in assessing intelligibility and comprehensibility" (p. 225). However, further research is necessary to determine to what extent the phonological features of L2 speakers are intelligible to NNS interlocutors.

Familiarity with the characteristics of L2 speech has been posited as an explanation for why learners might find speakers from their own or similar linguistic backgrounds easier to understand. Empirical research has provided mixed support for an effect of increased intelligibility as a result of shared L1 background (Major, Fitzmaurice, Bunta, Balasubramanian, 2002; Munro, Derwing, and Morton, 2006). Munro et al. argue that “only weak evidence was found that speaking with or being familiar with a particular accent led to better understanding of or different ratings of that accent” (p. 125). They argue instead that features of the speakers’ language can be inherently more or less successful in contributing to an intelligible message across interlocutors from different language backgrounds whether NSs or NNSs, which is the intended direction of Jenkins’ lingua franca core. In contrast to Munro et al., however, throughout her work Jenkins finds that dyads of speakers from the same L1 group are more intelligible to each other than speakers of different L1s (cf. Jenkins, 2000).

Researchers in this area have also attempted to describe other types of linguistic features that appear to be features of ELF with most of these studies being performed in multilingual locations in Europe. A variety of studies have found evidence of certain syntactic features that characterize ELF communication but that differ from standard norms of NS English. Björkman (2008) summarizes some of the common observations of the lexicogrammar of ELF found in previous studies. She lists the following features:

- (1) Words with new meanings
- (2) ‘Overuse’ of common verbs

- (3) Uncountable nouns used countably
 - (4) *who/which* interchangeable
 - (5) Problematic article usage
 - (6) Question tags invariable
 - (7) Left dislocation
 - (8) Prepositions
 - (9) Tense and aspect issues
- (quoted from Björkman, 2008, p. 38)

She adds to the list of commonly reported features others that occurred frequently in her own corpus and deviated from a NS norm: (10) negation, (11) morphological marking of plurals, (12) question formulation, and (13) comparative and superlative forms (p. 38). Björkman finds that most of these deviations “do not cause overt disturbance in communication” (p. 38). The major exception to this is question formation, which did somewhat frequently cause breakdowns in communication resulting from the interlocutor not recognizing the form as a question. Overall, however, communication proceeded quite smoothly in Björkman’s data despite deviations from a NS norm as has been reported in other studies of the lexicogrammar of ELF (Hülmbauer, 2006; Meierkord, 2004).

Overall, the results of the studies on intelligibility in NNS-NNS interaction suggest few breakdowns in communication despite the lack of a NS norm. One thing to consider when interpreting these results, however, is the degree to which the NNSs attempt to approach (and are relatively successful at approaching) a NS norm. Scheuer (2005) raises this issue when she argues that researchers arguing for the use of ELF as a standard fail to note the degree to which the interactions in ELF actually are attempting to approximate NS varieties. For example, in Meierkord’s (2004) study the more competent English users produced utterances that she

judged as conforming to a NS norm for lexicogrammar approximately 95% of the time. Therefore, although the 5% of utterances that do not conform to the NS norm appear to cause little or no confusion, there is still quite a bit of conformity to NS norms at least for lexicogrammar. However, Jenkins (2000) suggests quite a bit more variability in terms of phonology. The evidence here supports the position that NNS-NNS interaction can proceed without strict adherence to a NS norm, although some adherence is clearly necessary for a common baseline. In addition, NNS varieties may be more intelligible than NS varieties to some NNS interlocutors, although the extent to which this is true is still unclear.

All interlocutors are not created equal: The role of the listener in 'intelligibility'

There is one final and critical point to add regarding intelligibility of NNSs. For many years research focused on aspects of the NNS as the producer of the language to be understood or comprehended by the interlocutor (usually a NS). However, recent research has challenged the assumptions that (a) the interlocutor is merely a passive recipient of the information who contributes little to the variability in communicative success across interactions and that (b) communication breakdowns are always the fault of the speaker (or producer). These assumptions have been challenged by researchers such as Lippi-Green (1997), who claims that many individuals who label NNSs as "difficult to understand" are rejecting their share of the "communicative burden" (cf. Perkins and Milroy, 1997) or neglecting to put forth their share of the collaborative effort that necessarily characterizes all successful communication (Schegloff, 1982).

This position has found support in empirical research as well. Bremer, Broeder, Roberts, Simonot, and Vasseur (1993) examined various situations of NNSs learning and using various L2s in different European contexts. They noted that communication could progress fairly unimpeded when both participants were actively engaged in negotiating meaning. However, often, they argue, the learner is expected to understand the NS and make him-/herself understood to the NS, resulting in miscommunications.

In another study examining the role of the NS interlocutor on NNS intelligibility, Lindemann (2002) paired U.S. undergraduate students with Korean partners to complete an information-gap map-drawing task. Most pairs were successful in communicating the necessary information and producing an accurate map. However, some were less successful and this she argued was primarily caused by the NS participants' reliance on avoidance strategies. These NS participants avoided asking questions or seeking confirmation of meaning from their Korean partners who provided the oral directions and, as a result, were less successful in drawing an accurate map. Although the NS participants were assigned to a "listener" role, they failed to provide necessary cues of comprehension failure and in doing so contributed to the failure of the communication.

Perhaps most startling are Rubin's (1992) findings. He played an audio clip to undergraduate students of a woman lecturing. Participants were assigned to one of two conditions. Either they heard the lecture accompanied by a picture of a Caucasian American, or they heard it accompanied by a picture of an Asian woman.

In both cases the lecture was identical. Shockingly, the students rated the Asian woman as far less comprehensible and attributed a stronger 'accent' to her speech. A replication by Kang and Rubin (2009) found a similar effect, which they termed "reverse linguistic stereotyping" or biases toward an individual's speech based upon knowledge of that person's group membership.

The results here suggest that intelligibility is not entirely an issue of features related to the lexicogrammar or phonology of the NNS. Rather, intelligibility is also socially constructed. As Kang and Rubin note:

NS judgments of NNS speech are notoriously biased. NS listeners often hear what they expect to hear rather than accurately perceive NNS speech. And what they expect to hear is often quite unsatisfactory (p. 451).

It seems reasonable to assume that the same bias or lack of cooperation commonly found in NSs dealing with NNSs could also be found among NNSs with higher proficiency in English who seek to construe another NNS as "unintelligible," although very little research has been done on this (cf., however, Scheuer, 2005). Intelligibility then is not entirely a matter of the linguistic features of the speaker but rather also a series of judgments and behaviors from perceivers or interlocutors that may or may not be purely influenced by the speaker's potential for communicating a message.

NS norms are unrealistic: Age of onset and L2 acquisition

Another area of research that is useful to review in regards to the NS norm is the effect that the age at which the learner begins to acquire the target language may have on a learner's ability to attain 'native-like' proficiency in that language. The

often-cited critical period hypothesis maintains that the younger a learner begins learning a language the greater potential he or she has for achieving 'native-like' proficiency in the language, and that after a certain critical period (usually post-puberty) 'native speaker' proficiency is impossible. The critical period hypothesis has long enjoyed great support from many in the second language research community and has a great body of evidence supporting it (cf. Long, 1990). The implications of this view are that adult second language learners are at a disadvantage to child second language learners in terms of their long-term linguistic outcomes. Of course, the debate over the issue continues even to this day (for two sides of the issue, cf. Long, 2005 and Rothman, 2008). Given the differences in research findings for either side, it is useful to once again consider this issue separately in terms of acquisition of phonology and acquisition of syntax or lexicogrammar and other linguistic features.

In terms of phonology, the classic finding of research in this area is that the age of onset correlates positively with the degree to which the NNS's speech sounds 'accented' to the NS (Flege et al., 2006, Flege, Munro, and MacKay, 1995; Flege, Yeni-Komshian, and Liu, 1999; Munro, 1996; Munro and Mann, 2005). In other words, typically, the older the NNS was when he or she first began acquiring the language, the more salient the foreign accent of the NNS will be. It is unclear whether this phenomenon has some maturational basis such as the passing of a critical period or whether it has more to do with social phenomena such as adults tending to be more resistant to assimilating into the target culture and thereby encountering less

linguistic input or adults simply tending to use the second language less than children as Flege, Frieda, and Nozawa (1997) conclude. Whether the causes are social, biological, or a combination of the two, one thing is clear: something does prevent many adult learners from obtaining a 'native-like accent'. Despite this grim finding, it is worth noting that some studies have reported incidences of NNSs, who began learning past puberty who were nonetheless misidentified as 'native speakers' by groups of NS judges (Birdsong, 2007; Birdsong and Molis, 2001). Furthermore, not all speakers who are immersed in a second language before puberty obtain 'native-like' status in their L2. Thompson (1991) reports on two Russian speakers of English, who immigrated to the United States at four years old but nonetheless were rated by NS judges as having "slight accents." However, the debate continues and the above findings (especially studies by Birdsong) have been called into question on methodological and terminological grounds (cf. Abrahamsson and Hyltenstam, 2009) which argue that qualitative differences do in fact exist between NSs and even these 'native-like' NNSs reported on in the literature. In the end, whether it is theoretically possible or not for a NNS to achieve a 'native-like accent' does not seem to be the most relevant point. Instead, the most relevant point to take away from the literature is that the individuals most likely to acquire a NS 'accent' are those who grow up as monolingual speakers of the language in question; L2 speakers appear at least statistically to be at a monumental disadvantage in terms of acquiring such an 'accent'.

Like the studies that have demonstrated a correlation between foreign accentedness and age of onset, the research has also suggested a negative correlation between age of onset and lexicogrammatical or syntactic accuracy (Flege, Yeni-Komshian, and Liu, 1999). Researchers in this area, however, seem much more optimistic about the prospects of a language learner achieving 'native-like' syntactic accuracy. Reflecting this, reports of NNSs whose language is 'native-like' in terms of syntactic accuracy abound in the literature (e.g. Birdsong, 1992; Montrul and Slabakova, 2003; van Boxtel, Bongaerts, and Coppens, 2005; White and Genesee, 1996). Some studies have suggested that adults may have a greater capacity for the learning of abstract rules (e.g. Morris and Gerstman, 1986), which would potentially give them an advantage in learning some elements of grammar and also as other studies have suggested at learning them more quickly than children at least in the initial stages of language acquisition (e.g. Snow and Hoefnagel-Höhle, 1978). However, as with research on phonological acquisition, other researchers remain skeptical about the actual 'native-like' status of any NNS's syntactic accuracy and attribute the findings of these studies to methodological or terminological leniency (see Abrahamsson and Hyltenstam, 2009).

Whatever the case, it is apparent from the negative correlations found between age of onset of acquisition and ultimate attainment (whatever their cause or nature) that age is a major factor in language acquisition and that older learners are at a clear disadvantage. Even those studies that report on NNSs who are perceived as NSs by NS judges clearly indicate that the individuals were chosen for

their studies due to their exceptional language abilities (e.g. Birdsong, 2007). It is also apparent that despite many years of learning and successful use of the second language, most NNSs, who begin the acquisition process after childhood, will probably never achieve language abilities that satisfy the NS norm. Therefore, a NS norm appears to be an unrealistic standard for second language learners, particularly those who begin learning later in life as well as those who do not learn the language in a context where it is widely used outside of classrooms.

NS norms are arbitrary: Issues related to variation in English use

Discussions of the NS norm in the literature have not only focused on the individual level at which intelligibility and age are highly relevant, but researchers have also examined the sociopolitical origins and ramifications of NS norms. An examination of this literature reveals that there are several key sociolinguistic points to keep in mind regarding the selection of a NS norm as a standard for English language learning:

- (1) The usual norms for English language instruction are taken solely from the speech varieties of what Kachru (1985) refers to as the “Inner Circle” in particular the United States and the United Kingdom. Such selection ignores the legitimacy of other varieties particularly those used by “Outer Circle” nations or even stigmatized “Inner Circle” varieties.
- (2) Prestige varieties of English selected for use as norms in English language learning materials are often idealized, (virtually) extinct, or fabricated.
- (3) NNSs of English represent a significant population of English speakers even in comparison to NSs, and English is used extremely frequently in communications between NNSs with no NSs present.
- (4) The very notion of ‘native speaker’ appears itself to be a judgment not solely of linguistic competence but more likely of in-group membership.

Prestige norms and the marginalization of other varieties of English

The first issue related to the selection of NS norms and their sociolinguistic realities concerns the marginalization of other varieties of English. There is a general tendency in English language learning to conceive of NSs as monolingual speakers of English from what Kachru (1985) describes as “the Inner Circle” (Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, etc.). However, many researchers have suggested that this notion is not only inaccurate but also ethnocentric (Rampton, 1990; Kachru, 1985; Kramersch, 1993), because English is spoken proficiently around the world in ways that are highly intelligible to those using it, but perhaps not intelligible to the monolingual speakers of English from places like the United Kingdom and the United States. The suggestion that the English used in what Kachru (1985) refers to as “the Outer Circle” or even “the Expanding Circle” is any less valid than that used in the Inner Circle is baseless and to some seems to take on a sense of imperialism or ethnocentrism (e.g. Phillipson, 1992). Furthermore, not only international varieties of English spoken in the Outer and Expanding Circles are given less status in this system, but also those varieties of English spoken widely in the Inner Circle that are not viewed as ‘standard’ are also potentially devalued under the system of the NS norm.

The myth of ‘standard’ language

In addition, English language learning materials allegedly containing language conforming to some variety of Inner Circle NS usage has been frequently criticized for presenting language that is idealized or too simplistic (e.g. Boxer and Pickering, 1995; Carter, 1998; Holmes, 1988). Even when these issues are

acknowledged and a regional variety of English is referenced as a norm, the variety selected is often an idealized, antiquated, or rarely-encountered one. The cases of two of the most commonly referenced norms, British Received Pronunciation [RP] and General American [GA], illustrate this situation well. Several decades ago, Macaulay (1988) reported that RP was used only by an elite minority and was not widely enough spoken to be used as a norm for English language learning. Crystal (1995) estimates the number of RP users at less than 3% of the British population. A similar situation exists for so-called 'General American'. Preston (2005) argues that GA is simply an idealized norm that obscures quite a bit of regional and ethnic variation in the English of various groups in the United States. He suggests that an idealized standard like GA derives from prescriptive attitudes and prejudices against other varieties of English not assumed to be 'normal' rather than from a linguistic reality.

The selection of English varieties for language learning have been marked by a desire to speak prestigious or unstigmatized dialects rather than those most practical in the sense that they represent the broadest range of potential interlocutors. As a result, the selection of these norms is clearly arbitrary in the sense that they serve very little purpose in making the L2 user more intelligible to a larger number of NSs or exposing the L2 user to the most widely-used varieties of English.

The undeniable presence of NNSs of English

Jenkins opens her influential book *The phonology of English as an international language* by grounding her scholarly pursuits in a monumental shift in language use worldwide: “For the first time in the history of the English language, second language speakers outnumber those for whom it is the mother tongue, and interaction in English increasingly involves no first language speakers whatsoever” (Jenkins, 2000, p. 1). She cites a variety of sources from the last two decades of the twentieth century in support of these claims (e.g. Crystal, 1988; Crystal, 1997; Phillipson, 1992; Rampton, 1990; Sridhar, 1996; Widdowson, 1994). Most recently, Crystal (2006) estimates 400 million “first language” users, 400 million “second language” users, and 600-700 million “foreign language” users (p. 424), which clearly places NSs (i.e. first language users) in the minority of English users. Additionally, Carter (1998) estimates that approximately 80% of interaction in English worldwide takes place between NNSs with no NS present.

Figures of NNSs of course range depending on the definition of “speaker” that one permits, but perhaps this is exactly the point expressed by those calling for a re-framing of the standards of English language use. It seems that if English is being used world-wide for successful communication among individuals, whom conservative estimates refuse to count as “speakers,” then a reconceptualization of our view of what it means to be a speaker of English is clearly necessary; otherwise, we risk overlooking a hugely important phenomenon in transnational communication that will only continue to grow in the twenty-first century and that according to Crystal (2006) is unprecedented in the history of the world. As has

been suggested by Jenkins and others, if the goal of learning English is to communicate globally, then working toward the learner becoming intelligible to NNSs and insuring that he or she can understand NNSs may have more communicative utility than focusing on NS language given the growing number of NNSs of English in the world.

Questioning the category of 'native speaker'

One final sociopolitical issue related to the use of NS norms as a standard for language learning relates to whether the basis of the category 'native speaker' really is solely linguistic competence. Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (2001) conclude that "nativeness constitutes a non-elective socially constructed identity rather than a linguistic category" (p. 100) on the basis of several case studies of individuals who appear to fall into the theoretical cracks of the folk concept. These unique cases are largely motivated by modern transnational migration and suggest that the category of 'native speaker' is beginning to erode under the pressure of contemporary individuals who have extensively transcultural histories. One example the authors cite is of a participant 'Paul' who was born in Korea and lived there for the first nine years of his life. However, after that time he and his family moved to the United States. There he began to be educated in English, which eventually overtook Korean as his primary means of communication. However, as an adult he has once again begun to speak Korean equally as much or more than he now speaks English. Despite this, he identifies himself as a 'native speaker' of English with hesitation, although he has had professional success in obtaining employment that was

restricted to “native speakers of English only.” Paul’s history has problematizing implications for the notion of ‘native speaker,’ and it seems that category-blurring individuals like Paul will continue to become more and more common as individuals move across national and linguistic borders for extended periods of their lives.

An interesting study by Callahan (2009) also seems to suggest that nativeness is a construct that is not solely related to linguistic competence. She and several other Latino and non-Latino fieldworkers approached Spanish-speaking service providers in the United States and initiated conversations with staff in Spanish. The rate at which Latino service personnel accommodated the ‘customer’s’ language of choice was greatly affected by the ethnicity of the ‘customer’. Latinos were more likely to be responded to in Spanish; whereas, non-Latinos were more likely to be responded to in English regardless of language proficiency. When Callahan, a Caucasian NNS of Spanish, used the telephone to eliminate visual input of her ethnicity to the personnel, she found that her language choice was accommodated nearly 100% of the time. The findings of Callahan’s study indicate that the behavior of the personnel in assessing the Spanish proficiency of the fieldworker and in constructing him or her as legitimate or illegitimate speaker of Spanish were based at least to some extent on ethnicity. The Latino fieldworkers were assumed then to be in possession of some degree of ‘nativeness’ or authenticity, whereas the Caucasians were not and were thus excluded from being allowed to use the language.

NNSs are stigmatized: Prejudices associated with NNS speech and status

In the section on intelligibility I mentioned several studies that uncovered prejudicial attitudes toward NNS speech (i.e. Kang and Rubin, 2009; Lindemann, 2002; Rubin, 1992). In each of these, preconceived notions about the NNS's ability to communicate tainted judgments and reactions to NNS speech (or in the case of Rubin's study and its replication, to what was allegedly NNS speech). NNSs, then, face clear bias in terms of assessment of their speech. NNS speech has been further shown to be stigmatized by studies, which have consistently shown NSs to find 'foreign sounding' speech to be irritable (e.g. Fayer and Krasinski, 1987). This irritation is not exclusive to NSs, however, as Scheuer (2005) has demonstrated. She played samples of NNSs speaking English to other NNSs who also identified speech deviating from a NS norm as irritating, despite being NNSs themselves. Scheuer presents her study as counter-evidence to the claim by Jenkins that NNSs tend to be "less judgmental over each other's pronunciation of English [...] than do L1 speakers" (Jenkins, 2000, p. 160 quoted in Scheuer, 2005, p. 120).

Similarly to the notion of irritability, a number of studies have taken up a social psychological approach to perceptions of 'foreign accent'. Generally these studies have found that when presented with a guise that is somehow identified as 'non-native', either through overt identification or through inference from the presence of accent, NS participants generally rated the NNSs lower than NSs in various attributes such as socio-intellectual status (Cargile, Maeda, Rodriguez, and Rich, 2010; Lindemann, 2003; Mulac, Hanley, and Prigge, 1974) or attractiveness (Cargile, 1997). Similar findings have been found for the perceptions of NNS speech

by NNS listeners (Dalton-Puffer, Kaltenboeck, and Smit, 1997). It appears then that the ability to “pass” (cf. Piller, 2002) as a NS would gain NNSs more favorable social perceptions of themselves on the basis of speech.

Not only does NNS speech have the potential to irritate interlocutors, both NSs and NNSs, but the presence of “foreign accent” may also trigger prejudicial attitudes with even more dire consequences for the NNS. For example, Segrest Purkiss, Perrewé, Gillespe, Mayes, and Ferris (2006) studied judgments about applicants for employment with ‘foreign accents’ or ‘ethnic’ names. They found that judges tended to view the applicant with a ‘foreign accent’ and an ‘ethnic’ name less positively than others despite similar qualifications. In addition, Frumkin (2007) found that participants’ judgments about eyewitnesses giving testimony were negatively affected by the presence of particular ‘foreign accents’. He used a matched guise technique in which three speakers recorded the same testimony using either a foreign accent or an English NS accent. The participants who viewed the videos in which the speakers spoke with a ‘foreign accent’ rated the witnesses less credible, prestigious, and accurate and more deceptive than those participants who viewed the videos in which the speakers spoke with a NS ‘accent’.

The economic, political, and social impacts of stigmatization of NNS language are clearly quite serious, but so too are the potential psychological ones. For example, Gluszek and Dovidio (2010) found a relationship between emotions related to a sense of “not belonging” and the degree to which their participants

perceived their speech to be 'foreign accented'. As a result, it appears that NNSs are vulnerable to a wide variety of negative effects based upon their language use.

To make matters worse, although NNS speech is clearly stigmatized, several researchers argue that NSs are resistant to or mistrustful of NNSs speaking in a manner that too closely approximates NS speech. This claim is perhaps not surprising in light of suggestions from other researchers that 'nativeness' is not a measure of linguistic competence but rather a social category (e.g. Brutt-Griffler and Samimy, 2001). Giles and Smith's (1979) influential accommodation theory states that people generally appreciate a certain amount of convergence toward their speech norms, but exact or nearly exact replication is considered to be offensive. Preston (1981) expands upon this theory arguing that NNSs whose language too closely resembles NS usage may encounter negative reactions from NSs who view their appropriation of NS speech as "sociolinguistic thievery" (p. 111). In particular, idiomatic, vernacular, or slang usage may in the minds of NSs simply be off limits to the NNS. In this way it appears that NSs guard NS language rather vigilantly and refuse entry to anyone without the necessary 'native' pre-requisites.

This situation may gain some clarity from the fact that some NNS speech is not necessarily stigmatized or at least is less stigmatized. Lindemann (2005) found that U.S. undergraduates tended to view the English of students from certain countries more favorably than others. In particular, those from Western Europe were viewed as highly accurate and some even as pleasant sounding (e.g. Italy). Other researchers have noted different reactions to different 'foreign accents',

largely confirming Lindemann's claim that Western European accents are not as stigmatized (Cargile et al. 2010; Frumkin, 2006). It may be then that NSs expect a certain degree of 'foreign accent' from NNSs as this is an expected part of the non-elective category 'non-native speaker', but certain national groups are seen as the standard bearers for 'good' NNSs, while others are much more harshly stigmatized.

Learners and teachers (allegedly) want NS norms: Stakeholder voices

Despite many good reasons for abandoning NS norms, stakeholders in language learning from various parts of the world (with the possible exception of "Outer Circle" nations) appear to continue to favor the use of the NS norm as a model for language learning (Timmis, 2002). Perhaps this seemingly odd situation can be explained through learners' and instructors' awareness of the stigma toward NNSs from others or even their own participation in imparting that stigma on NNSs of English or their own L1. NNSs who teach English perhaps are particularly keenly aware of the stigma that can result from their status due to the disadvantages they may have suffered professionally due to manifestations of the "native speaker fallacy" (cf. Braine, 1999; Phillipson, 1992; Thomas, 1999), which might explain the strong resistance from NNS teachers of English to models such as Jenkins' English as a lingua franca that has been reported by some researchers (Jenkins, 2005; Llorca, 2004). This resistance has manifested in various autobiographical rebuttals to Jenkins' work from NNSs (e.g. Kubota, 2006) contesting what they see as a patronizing reduced standard that she has put forth. However, this is certainly not the only reason that NNSs have put forth. Kubota argues anecdotally that many

NNSs are simply attempting to reach a 'high standard' of language use, which they perceive as being necessarily tied to NS norms.

Cross-sectional research such as Timmis and Subtirelu (2010) suggests that the vast majority of learners and instructors are in favor of the use of a NS norm as a standard for language learning. However, later in this work (Chapter 5) I problematize these findings in a number of different ways. I believe that the questionnaire approach employed by Timmis and adapted by Subtirelu does not present the full picture of the participants' ideas about the NS norm, and I dedicate much of Chapter 4 to explaining and defending this position.

Conclusion

In discussing these issues at length in this chapter, I hope to have succeeded in capturing the complexities and contradictions inherent in any decision as to what standard should be applied to language learning. The research does not highlight any obvious solution, but instead seems to suggest fairly solid justifications for coming down on either side of the issue. The review of literature contained in this chapter has identified the following themes:

- (1) An NS norm is unnecessary for the success of intercultural communication and indeed may in some instances actually impede that success.
- (2) An NS norm is unrealistic as a goal for second language learning particularly for learners who begin later in life and learn in a context in which the L2 is used infrequently outside of the classroom.
- (3) The selection of a NS norm is generally done based upon idealized and ideological notions of a prestige variety ignoring such issues as:
 - (a) the marginalization of other legitimate varieties of the language (either in the 'Inner' or 'Outer Circles'),
 - (b) the degree to which the prestige variety is widely-spoken (if at all),

(c) and the wide-spread use of English among L2 users for effective lingua franca communication.

(4) NNSs, even when intelligible to most NS interlocutors, are subjected to a great deal of stigma and prejudice economically, socially, and politically.

(5) NNSs appear for various reasons to widely favor the selection of a NS norm as a standard for language learning even judging other NNSs' language from this standard (cf. Scheuer, 2005), although this finding should be viewed in light of the important caveats that I will discuss in Chapter 4

Together (1) and (2) represent powerful practical reasons to abandon NS norms as standards for language learning. If the learner has little communicative need for approximating NS language and to do so represents an unlikely or even impossible outcome, then clearly expectations should be adjusted. (3) represents a more political stance on the issue calling for recognition of different varieties of English as valuable, legitimate, and potentially useful. However, we cannot overlook the importance of (4), which contrasts strongly with (3) in that although linguists are generally perfectly willing to proclaim the equal status of different languages and language varieties, nonlinguists are generally not so accepting of language that deviates from a prestige norm. Preparing students for an idealized world like that suggested in (3) ignores the realities of the 'real world' speech communities that they wish to enter, which also happens to be largely characterized by precisely those prejudices alluded to in (4). Finally, we should not discount the desires of learners and NNSs themselves to learn and use whichever variety of their L2 that they might choose. (5) suggests that for the time being NS norms are the standard of choice. However, we should look beyond the selected standard to critically examine the reasoning for that selection because such choices may be less straightforward or well-informed than assumed.

Looking beyond the selected standard is precisely what I intend to do in the remaining chapters of this work. Having been informed by the literature as outlined in this chapter, I will undertake a critical examination of my participants' folk understanding of these issues. In particular I look at their perceptions of their own intelligibility (chapter 5), their selected standards for language learning (chapter 5), their beliefs about the feasibility of acquiring language that mirrors various other individuals' language (chapter 6), and the differences in perceptions of themselves as legitimate or illegitimate users of the language (chapter 7).

Chapter 3: The study – methods, context, and participants

In the previous chapter I reviewed literature relevant to a discussion of the NS norm. In this chapter I will describe the contribution I have attempted to make to this ongoing discussion. In the first section, I will discuss the theoretical framework that has informed my research. In the next section, I will explain and justify the methods I used to collect my data. Next, I will describe the context in which the data was collected and with which the participants in the study interacted. Finally, I will describe each of the participants in detail. First, I turn my attention to the study's framework.

The framework

In this section I will attempt to outline the major influences on my thinking that have led me to make the methodological, analytical, and theoretical 'judgment calls' that have shaped this study. I have identified three distinct yet related categories of influence that shape this work. First, as I attempted to communicate in my review of the literature in Chapter 2, it is my impression that the debate over whether the NS norm is an appropriate model for language learning has reached an impasse, and as a result we need to explore new avenues of argumentation to

determine what is an appropriate standard for English language teaching¹. Second, I have been dissatisfied with previous attempts to study these issues, particularly those related to the voices of L2 users, due to what I perceive as methodological inadequacies. Finally, I have been influenced by non-traditional approaches to the study of second language acquisition [SLA] that reconceptualize both the way in which we attempt to learn about SLA and the way in which we conceive of it altogether.

The ideological impasse

In Chapter 2, I argued that there are several major strands of research that are relevant to the debate over whether the NS norm is an appropriate standard.

These are (repeated from the previous chapter):

- (1) An NS norm is unnecessary for the success of intercultural communication and indeed may in some instances actually impede that success.
- (2) An NS norm is unrealistic as a goal for second language learning particularly for learners who begin later in life and learn in a context in which the L2 is used infrequently outside of the classroom.
- (3) The selection of a NS norm is generally done based upon idealized and ideological notions of a prestige variety ignoring such issues as:
 - (a) the marginalization of other legitimate varieties of the language (either in the 'Inner' or 'Outer Circles'),
 - (b) the degree to which the prestige variety is widely-spoken (if at all),
 - (c) and the wide-spread use of English among L2 users for effective lingua franca communication.
- (4) NNSs, even when intelligible to most NS interlocutors, are subjected to a great deal of stigma and prejudice economically, socially, and politically.

¹ Assuming, of course, that such an appropriate universal standard does in fact exist. Certainly, however, I acknowledge that many have argued for a plurality of contextualized, local standards (e.g. Canagarajah, 2006). I do not intend to discount this idea here, and I am not attempting to argue that a universal standard is necessary.

(5) NNSs appear for various reasons to widely favor the selection of a NS norm as a standard for language learning even judging other NNSs' language from this standard (cf. Scheuer, 2005), although this finding should be viewed in light of the important caveats that I will highlight in chapter 4

Researchers on both sides of the debate are well informed about these issues and have of course interpreted them differently according to whatever their preference concerning the use of a NS norm might be. For example, researchers in support of the continued use of the NS norm in English language teaching, such as Quirk (1990) have argued that (4) is a convincing reason why the NS norm should continue to be taught. Quirk states that "Students 'liberally' permitted to think their 'new variety' of English was acceptable would be defenceless before the hasher but more realistic judgment of those with authority to employ or promote them" (p. 9-10, quoted in Jenkins, 2007b, p. 9). Researchers opposed to the use of a NS norm such as Lippi-Green (1997) have argued that the existence of these types of judgments about L2 users' linguistic differences signal not a need for learners to be taught 'the standard' but rather for education and advocacy concerning linguistic prejudice. Therefore, the same evidence has been interpreted to favor either side suggesting that no resolution to this debate can be found from the existing strands of research and scholarship.

Due to the ideological nature of the debate, I feel it is important to more closely examine the language ideology surrounding these issues and (a) how it affects learners and their perceptions of themselves as legitimate participants within a community as well as (b) the extent to which it is compatible with the values and visions of the broader society that supports this ideology. Therefore, in

this study I have set out to explore how the participants in this study perceive the NS norm and how it affects their perceptions of their English.

Previous research

The methodology selected for this research project is largely a reaction to the unsatisfying results found in my previous attempts to study this topic (Subtirelu, 2010) as well as to those reviewed in the literature in Chapter 2 (e.g. Timmis, 2002). The design of Subtirelu (2010) was as follows. It utilized a purely quantitative, cross-sectional approach with a series of questionnaires, made up entirely of closed questions mainly measured on Likert scales. Participants filled out the Attitude/Motivation test battery [A/MTB] (Gardner, 2004), the Strategy inventory for language learning [SILL] (Oxford, 1996), and three other questionnaires created specifically for the study: a simple biodata questionnaire, the Goals and standards inventory survey [GSIS], and the Self-efficacy measurement survey [SEMS]. The only one relevant for the present study is the GSIS (cf. Appendix A), which was modeled after the questionnaire used by Timmis (2002), who asked students to select the end goal that they had for their language learning in two areas: pronunciation and grammar. Participants in Timmis' study selected whether they modeled their end goals for their English pronunciation after the NS norm or after a model of "accented intelligibility". They also selected the standards they have for their English grammar, either a native speaker norm, a prescriptivist standard, or a "stable and consistent interlanguage" (Willis, 1999, cited in Timmis, 2002). My own instrument, the GSIS, which will be described in more detail later in the chapter and

appears in Appendix A, was an expanded version of this questionnaire utilizing the same format in which participants selected “a student” they themselves most wanted to emulate. Additions to the instrument included special questions for asking about what important others wanted (e.g. parents, English teachers, US students, etc.) and how long the participants felt it would take to satisfy their chosen standard. In terms of data analysis, I computed correlations between (a) the degree to which the NS norm was reported as the student’s own chosen standard as well as the expected standard of their important others and (b) the other constructs measured on the A/MTB, SILL, SEMS, and the biodata questionnaire.

I had hypothesized that students who felt that they were under pressure to conform to a NS norm by others or who themselves aspired to satisfy a NS norm would be affected negatively by it. In other words, I felt that it would be a source of anxiety and demotivation. However, rather than finding the NS norm associated with decreased motivation, willingness to communicate, or self-efficacy, I found that it was actually correlated (albeit weakly) in my sample with certain factors thought to be helpful in language learning: (1) interest in learning a foreign language, (2) encouragement from the social support system, (3) evaluation of English teachers, (4) attitudes toward learning English, (5) integrative orientation, (6) desire to learn English, (7) evaluation of English courses, and (8) length of time studying English. In addition, weak, negative correlations were found between the NS norm and factors considered to be undesirable for language learning: (1) anxiety experienced in the English classroom and (2) anxiety while using English.

I was fairly bewildered by these results as they did not seem to hold with what I had intuitively reasoned would be the case. In particular, I had based my hypothesis on the idea that if a learner had little desire to acquire NS language and even felt very little pressure to conform to a NS norm, then it seemed reasonable that he/she would feel more comfortable using his/her English without the expectation that he/she use English in a way that conforms to the NS norm, resulting in for example lower anxiety scores. Having found the opposite, I had to consider the notion that in fact the NS norm may actually lower anxiety or increase motivation. However, given that I could devise no satisfactory theoretical justification for a simple causative view of these results, I did not interpret the associations between the NS norm and decreased anxiety and other increased variables such as desire to learn English to mean that one had caused the other. Instead, I searched for confounding variables, and in the process I arrived at a critique of my previous research approach.

First, given the purely quantitative nature of the study, the underlying thought process that led the participants to choose a particular standard is unrecoverable. Therefore, if for example a participant chose the NS norm, but believes that it is merely ideal and that he/she is still satisfied with his/her English even though it does not (yet) conform to the NS norm, then my instrument was unable to uncover this.

A further issue with the study is the extent to which it conceptualizes certain elements as static characteristics. In particular, the choice of a standard for

language learning and beliefs about the NS norm appear to be anything but static (cf. Adolphs, 2005 and Chapter 4 of the current study). Therefore, variables such as the amount of “sociolinguistic awareness” (cf. Timmis, 2002) that a participant has regarding issues of L2 English use may be an important factor in determining choice of a standard. Beliefs concerning the NS norm, therefore, may actually be better understood as a process, which the cross-sectional design was ill-suited to explore.

Finally, in designing my study I underestimated the prevalence of NS language ideology, and how even participants who selected an alternative norm may not have rejected the notion that NS language is inherently ‘superior’. Instead, they may have simply settled for a ‘lesser’ standard but may nonetheless still feel self-conscious when speaking or may feel incapable of learning ‘real’ English. For these reasons and others I explore in Chapter 4, it seems that the ability for the questionnaire approach to answer the most relevant questions in this study is limited at best. Therefore, in order to study this issue, I felt I needed a new approach, and in my attempts to develop such an approach I was influenced by a variety of other researchers.

Influence of other researchers

In this section I turn my attention to the influence other researchers’ ideas have had on my methodological choices. I hope in doing so both to elucidate the assumptions that I make about the language learning process as well as to justify the choices I have made in my own study of this process both in terms of how I have chosen to collect my data what I have chosen to highlight.

The first major influence on my chosen methodology comes from Larsen-Freeman's (1997) reconceptualization of SLA as a complex system. In her 1997 article, Larsen-Freeman cites Waldrop (1992) stating that each individual agent in a complex system

finds itself in an environment produced by its interactions with the other agents in the system. It is constantly acting and reacting to what the other agents are doing. And because of that, essentially nothing in its environment is fixed (Waldrop, 1992, p. 145 quoted in Larsen-Freeman, 1997, p. 143).

She goes on to explain that second language is itself a complex system

There are many interacting factors at play which determine the trajectory of the developing [interlanguage]: the source language, the target language, the markedness of the L1, the markedness of the L2, the amount and type of input, the amount and type of interaction, the amount and type of feedback received, whether it is acquired in untutored or tutored contexts, etc. Then, too, there is a multitude of interacting factors that have been proposed to determine the degree to which the SLA process will be successful: age, aptitude, sociopsychological factors such as motivation and attitude, personality factors, cognitive style, hemisphericity, learning strategies, sex, birth order, interests, etc. (Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991). Perhaps no one of these by itself is a determining factor, the interaction of them, however, has a very profound effect (Larsen-Freeman, 1997, p. 151).

In other words, the number of variables involved in SLA and their constant interactions makes prediction of the outcome, direction, and magnitude of the acquisition process impossible. I interpret Larsen-Freeman's article and her subsequent work to be a call for reform in the way that we approach SLA research. In particular, rather than being reductionist in our thinking and attempting to isolate individual variables in order to predict the outcomes of the system, it is more effective for researchers to examine in the system more holistically observing how a much larger variety of factors affect language learning as well as to heed the ever-

changing nature of what is undoubtedly a process rather than a state. Therefore, my research design for the present study has been built on a much more ethnographic and qualitative approach that is sensitive to the specific language learning context, the influence of myself and other agents, as well as a variety of characteristics stemming from the participants personally. Furthermore, I have attempted as much as possible to examine the participants' situations longitudinally in order to observe how these things not only function but continue to change over time.

In envisioning and justifying such a study, the work of Norton (cf. Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000; 2001), whose seminal (2000) work *Identity and language learning* I identify as a major influence, has had a major impact on my approach. Her study, essentially critiquing traditional understanding of SLA research, has led me to turn several of the most basic concepts in SLA on their head. In particular, in this work, I am not necessarily concerned with the acquisition of abstract 'competence' (in the Chomskyan sense) or 'proficiency', the prototypical dependent variables of SLA research. In other words, traditionally, SLA researchers have focused on learners' ability to control phonological, morphological, syntactic, lexical, and discursive features of the target language in a way thought to satisfy some abstract norm. It has been assumed then that the control of linguistic features of language would satisfy the learner's communicative needs – that once they have memorized a sufficient amount of vocabulary, learned to produce the sound system of the target language in an intelligible and acceptable manner, and mastered the syntax of the language, then they will have the tools to express themselves.

However, Norton's (2000) findings call this into question. She argues that traditional SLA has failed to take into consideration issues of power, identity, and ideology. For the participants in Norton's study, legitimate speakerhood is to a large extent a matter of learning to or developing the confidence to assert one's right to command a listener, a notion that echoes not traditional SLA but rather Bourdieu and his critique of the Chomskyan notion of 'competence' in linguistics.

As a result, Bourdieu's (1977) critique of 'competence' has greatly colored the lens through which I approach this study and my interactions with the participants. Bourdieu situates 'competence' in a socioeconomic model, arguing that:

competence is... the capacity to command a listener... A person speaks not only to be understood but also to be believed, obeyed, respected, distinguished. Hence the full definition of competence as the right to speech, i.e. to the legitimate language, the authorized language which is also the language of authority. Competence implies the power to impose reception (p. 648).

He goes on to identify four features of legitimate discourse. In order to be considered legitimate discourse, a specific utterance must be:

- (1) uttered by a legitimate speaker
- (2) uttered in a legitimate situation
- (3) addressed to legitimate receivers
- (4) formulated in the legitimate phonological and syntactic forms (what linguists call grammaticalness), except when transgressing these norms is part of the legitimate definition of the legitimate producer

(quoted from Bourdieu, 1977, p. 650)

Most relevant to my study and to the specific situation of second language learners are (1) and (4).

Therefore, rather than working from the assumption that acquisition of phonological, morphological, and syntactic features of English leads to ‘proficiency’ or ‘competence’ which in turn lead to communicative capacity and the ability to be accepted by a community, I have taken as my object of research the participants’ beliefs about their own legitimacy as English speakers and the legitimacy of others in their context. These perceptions I believe have just as much to offer us regarding the nature of what it means to learn a second language as does for example the study of cognitive functions and their impact on the learning of some feature of language. The value of these beliefs and their corresponding ideologies has to do with the fact that, as Norton’s participants gradually become aware of, language is a major aspect of social practice that can “increase their value in the social world” (Norton, 2001, p. 166). However, traditional SLA has assumed that there is a seemingly perfect correlation between increased ‘competence’ and its resultant “value in the social world.” As Norton points out, it has all but ignored issues of power and ideology that often work against the language learner attempting to increase his/her social value. Traditional SLA, for example, seems to assume that the end goal of language learning should be the development of NS-like competence, although paradoxically one of the major principles of SLA is that adult second language learning is categorically distinct from the way NSs acquire their first language. As a result, in the present study I examine not the development of ‘competence’ but perceptions and ideologies about the legitimacy of languages,

linguistic forms and varieties, and speakers and the impact these have on the participants.

The methods

In the previous section I outlined the various influences on my conceptualization of SLA and the way in which it should be studied. In doing so I have also touched on the scope of this research and hopefully laid the groundwork for a justification of the methods that I lay out in this section.

The study reported in this work was a longitudinal one beginning in the Fall of 2010 and ending in Summer 2011, spanning approximately 8 months with participants meeting with me every two months starting very soon after the participants' arrival in the United States and continuing as long as they were willing to participate in the study or until April 2011. Below is a rough timeline of the study:

Data collection point #1:	September/October 2010	0-2 mos. after arrival
Data collection point #2:	November/December 2010	2-4 mos. after arrival
Data collection point #3:	January/February 2011	4-6 mos. after arrival
Data collection point #4:	March/April 2011	6-8 mos. after arrival

Although most of the participants began the study at point #1, two (Mo and K3) began at point #3. However, in reporting their data later in this work I refer to point #1 and point #2, because these represent the time from which the participants arrived in the United States. At each data collection point I used roughly the same procedures and instruments, although in the case of the interview, the interview questions were adapted at collection point #3 to better elucidate some of the issues that were beginning to emerge from the participants' interviews.

Semi-structured interview

The interview is the major source of data used in this study. During each interview, the participants discussed among other things their: (1) purposes or motivations for learning English, (2) comfort level using English, (3) specific goals for language learning, (4) strategies employed toward learning English, (5) perceptions of linguistic proficiency, (6) standards and end goals for language learning, and (7) their perceptions of US culture. The specific interview questions can be found in Appendix B and their later modifications in Appendix C. Interview times varied with some lasting only slightly more than 20 minutes and others exceeding an hour. Interview times tended to increase as the participant became more comfortable with me (after the first or second session), and as I became more comfortable requesting information from the participant. Furthermore, some participants were simply more open and talkative, tending to elaborate more on their experiences and offering up more information than had been explicitly asked for.

During the interview, my presence as the researcher was of course an undeniable influence on the participants and their responses (i.e. Labov's 'the observer's paradox'). In particular, various aspects of my identity were salient: my status as NS, my national origin (United States), and my occupation as English instructor. I took steps to avoid my influence over the participants as much as possible. These included: (a) excluding from participation any present or former student of mine, (b) the avoidance of language that would align me with actors that

we discussed (i.e. *my* or *our culture/language* when discussing English or US culture), and (c) an attempt to appear neutral towards the perspectives that the participants offered. However, due to the conversational nature of our interviews, the participants frequently asked me questions to seek feedback from me on what they had said indicating that they clearly perceived me in my external roles as ‘native speaker’ of English, US citizen, and English instructor. Excerpt 3.1 illustrates this.

Excerpt 3.1 [Abu, Data collection point #1]

1 **Researcher:** ok umm alright good so let’s move on and let’s talk about US culture
 2 ok so in general what do you think about US culture what are your thoughts about
 3 it?

4
 5 **Abu:** before I came or right now?

6
 7 **Researcher:** right now

8
 9 **Abu:** yeah some thing I like yeah some thing I like about it and some thing I don’t
 10 like about it

11
 12 **Researcher:** ok can you give me some things you like and some things you don’t
 13 like

14
 15 **[...2 turns skipped...]**

16
 17 **Abu:** I like people when they meet you say hi to you and even though they don’t
 18 know you but uh and I saw people here try to help international students I think it’s
 19 from the american culture to help international students or different student uhh
 20 but I don’t like this is my opinion I’m not sure when uh but I heard about that I am
 21 not sure about it when the boy or girl becomes eighteen years old they have they
 22 have to leave the house yeah I think it’s totally different from my country and I think
 23 in the teenager age they need to make control about them they need to take care
 24 about them if I if I have boy and he is eighteen years old and I said to him ok it’s time
 25 to leave my house and go depend on yourself maybe he will go in a bad way yeah to
 26 do something bad like drugs or something I think it’s an age for dangerous thing
 27 teenagers need to make control need to take care about them not to make control
 28 but take care about them but I am not sure if is it right I heard that about from some
 29 people

30

31 **Researcher:** is it true that

32

33 **Abu:** yeah when the anyone becomes

34

35 **Researcher:** I think that many I don't think it's completely true like it's not true for
36 everybody and also it's not necessarily the case I mean they do leave the house right
37 they live on camp when they go to college they live on campus but to a large extent
38 they still have their parents at home and they still go home to their parents like at
39 Christmas time

40

41 **Abu:** to get the break

42

43 **Researcher:** well for a long time I mean they'll live there during the summer so I
44 think that a lot of them would still say even though they live on campus they might
45 say this weekend I'm going home right so they still think about their house with
46 their family as their home even though they live here half of the year or more right
47 so I mean I think yes and no

In Excerpt 3.1, Abu discusses some of the positive and negative aspects of US culture that he has perceived in his first two months. Weighing heavily on his mind, however, is clearly the fact that he is being asked to comment on US culture to someone from the United States. He handles this fairly delicately aware that he might be inaccurate in his description of the United States. In lines 20-29, Abu begins with a great deal of hedging to describe an aspect of US culture that he is uncomfortable with namely the idea that children are expected to leave the homes of their parents and set off on their own at the age of eighteen. He is uneasy with the accuracy of his statements stating that he is *not sure about it* (line 21). I interpret his tone and hedges to indicate that he is seeking confirmation of this idea from me, and, as a result, I ask him whether this is the case (line 31). After confirming that he would like me to break my role as neutral observer, I tell him precisely how I view his generalization (lines 35-47), although I still make attempts to continue to use

language that does not necessarily identify me with US culture (i.e. I say *they* instead of *we* throughout) or establish me as the authority on it (i.e. I use the hedge *I think*, cf. lines 35 and 47). Excerpt 3.1, then, provides an illustration of the nation-less, status-less, occupation-less identity I attempted to form in the interviews so as to create a space where the participant could speak as authority on all topics that we discussed. However, these aspects of my identity were known to the participants (some of them commented that their main impetus for participating in the study was to get the opportunity to practice speaking extensively with a NS) and clearly colored the way they responded.

Each interview was recorded and later transcribed for analysis. In the various analysis chapters that follow I describe my analysis procedures that varied depending on the particular aspect I focused on.

Goals and standards inventory survey [GSIS]

In a previous section, I mentioned the GSIS as having been a feature of my past research (Subtirelu, 2010) based on the work of Timmis (2002) that I carried over to this study. It is a questionnaire containing 14 items. Six of the items asked participants to select from four different students describing their English and modeling four different possible standards for pronunciation: a NS norm, accented intelligibility, a standard based on the goals of Jenkins' (2000, 2002) lingua franca core (English for NNS-NNS interaction only), and a standard that emphasized only written English and thereby deemphasized the need for pronunciation. Participants selected the standard that they themselves desired to conform to as well as the

standard they felt others (i.e. English teachers, US professors, US students, their family, and their friends from their home country) wanted them to conform to. They did the same for four standards of lexicogrammar. In addition, they also indicated how long they felt it would take them to reach their own personal standard with responses ranging from 'I already am' to 'it's impossible' and including choices such as 'one semester', 'one year,' and '6-10 years'. The GSIS is available in full as Appendix A.

ACT ESL Compass placement scores

The IEP that the participants were studying in required that they take the ACT ESL Compass as a means of determining their level of study in the program. The participants were required to take the test once upon entry into the program and then were given the option to re-take it at the end of every semester. I encouraged participants to retake the test as frequently as possible so that I could have a means of assessing their linguistic development from a traditional perspective.

The context

The participants in the study were studying in the intensive English program [IEP] of a mid-sized university in the Mid-West United States. Upon enrollment in the study they had been studying in the program for 2 months or less. At the time of their enrollment, the program housed approximately 35 faculty (both full-time faculty and part-time graduate assistants including myself) as well as an administrative specialist, an associate director, and a director. The program served

approximately 250 international students whose native language is not English. These students originated from many different cultures and nations, but there were particularly large populations of students from Saudi Arabia, China, South Korea, and Turkey with Saudi and Chinese students representing the vast majority of students. Almost all of the students in the program were there to satisfy English language requirements that were pre-requisites to beginning some academic program at the university whether it be a graduate or undergraduate program. Successful completion of the IEP could be used as an alternative to a satisfactory TOEFL score, which most of the students had been unable to secure prior to their admission to the university. The majority of students, including all of the participants in this study, were enrolled in the program full time, which consisted of 6 courses totaling 24 contact hours weekly. As a result, the students, faculty, and administrators in this program constituted the majority of their interactions in English.

However, the broader university community also played an important role in developing their context. Prior to the beginning of this study the IEP that the participants were studying in had experienced a great deal of growth in its student population due to an initiative begun by the university as a whole known as the five year *Strategic plan* (Ball State University, 2007). The university's *Strategic plan* articulated a vision of the university as an institution dedicated to diversity of cultures and national origins. The plan clearly articulates the university's view of itself as set within an international context that it wishes to fully engage in. In the

“values and culture statements” section the institution states that “We recognize that we live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society, and we seek to serve, engage with, and learn from members of our community, the state, nation, and world” (p. 3) continuing that “We seek healthy and productive living, social justice, and environmental sustainability for [the state], the nation, and the global community” (p. 3). The plan supports these broad goals with specific objectives including of particular relevance to this study the desire to “By 2012, achieve [...] 5 percent of total enrollment from international origins.” According to the university’s measures of its own progress, by 2010 it was well on its way to meeting this goal with 4.8% of the incoming student body originating from outside of the United States (Ball State University, 2010). Clearly then the university has both articulated a vision of itself as valuing cultural diversity and even expended vast resources in attracting individuals from outside the United States.

Despite having lofty goals and expending a sizable amount of efforts and resources toward achieving them (and meeting impressive success), one element appears to have been vastly overlooked in the strategic plan: language, specifically how the university plans to accommodate a sizable population that will be NNSs of English. In fact, neither the words *language* nor *English* appears in the document at all. It appears that although cultural diversity and an international community are the goal, linguistic diversity is either forgotten or not viewed as something toward which the university is striving. The university’s approach to the situation is largely in-line with what Jenkins (2011) describes as the typical approach of English-

medium universities to linguistic diversity. She is skeptical of most universities claims to being 'international' particularly at a linguistic level: "while many universities claim to be deeply international they are in essence deeply national at the linguistic level" (p. 927). Furthermore she describes the situation of universities attempting to deal with the issue of linguistic diversity in the following manner:

While one might expect academia as a whole, and universities, with their substantial international communities, in particular, to be revisiting their English language policies, this seems not to be happening outside a relatively small group of researchers into academic ELF. Instead, it is largely 'business as usual', with the focus remaining on helping students in dedicated pre- and in-session classes to improve their English in line with the norms of standard British or American academic English, both spoken and written (Jenkins, 2011, p. 927).

Indeed the university that serves as the context of this study has dedicated most of its attention to strengthening its IEP in response to this issue.

In order to provide some view into the attitudes toward the language of L2 users of English held by members of the university community, I have used the website *Rate My Professors* (www.ratemyprofessors.com) [RMP], which allows students at universities to comment anonymously on various aspects of their professors and rate their helpfulness and clarity as well as the ease of their course. The responses that are on the website should probably not be taken as representative of the entire university community. In particular, only students are asked to participate, and furthermore only an extremely small subset of students actually do. These are often the students most frustrated by a particular instructor, meaning that a large number of the comments are incredibly negative, personal, and hurtful. However, I have used the website to gain understanding of how the small

number of international faculty at the university are perceived by some of the students that take their courses, because I believe the responses on this website represent candid display of deeply-held beliefs that might not otherwise be communicated due to the pressures of remaining 'politically correct' and respectful of diversity. Although I examined a much larger number of the faculty's pages, I decided to focus on two faculty from the same academic department (I excluded foreign language departments) who are speakers of the languages that are the native languages of the participants in this study: Mandarin Chinese and Arabic. In selecting individuals I looked for instructors who had received a large number of comments (more than 10) in the past four years (since June 2007), which corresponds to the prototypical length of time required for a bachelor's degree meaning that students commenting in 2007 could still conceivably be part of the university community, although this is impossible to confirm given that all comments are anonymous. I excluded earlier comments because these individuals are most likely no longer at the university.

The analysis I present here focuses on two professors from a single academic department with a large percentage of international faculty (relative to the others). In order to preserve their anonymity I have chosen not to state their real names (they have been assigned pseudonyms instead), their department, or the classes they teach and have removed this information from their data. Figure 3.1 displays the data for Professor Alshammari, the Arabic speaker, and Figure 3.2 displays the data for Professor Chen, the Chinese speaker.

Date	Comment
12/2/10	He is very good at teaching and provides a lot of examples. He can get really boring sometimes because he repeats himself, but it makes it easy to remember the material for tests. The tests are usually pretty easy if you study.
4/8/10	Dr Alshammari is a gifted teacher. His board work is well organized and his lectured are carefully prepared. He starts each class with a brief summary of the previous lesson. His tests could be difficult but gives practice problems. Attendance is mandatory.
4/7/10	His lectures come directly from the book but he puts it in ways so students can follow. The grading is really harsh so make sure your homework is right. He is a very good teacher and truly understands the material, which is good. As long as you work really hard and make sure to do practice problems before tests, you will do fine in the class.
4/7/10	i love this guy. He is the best math teacher i ever had. Very clear lectures and he is considerate too. Homework is difficult and tests are a little easier.
11/23/09	He expect alot out of you, homework every week that takes up quite a bit of time. He gives out a exam practice but doesnt really follow it too well, tough grader (all homework problems are graded for completions and accuracy and for proper steps) Test are challenging if not prepared well enough. Hard to stay awake and all his notes are in book.:(
5/17/09	Very precise and clear in all his lectures. Very helpful outside class. Expects you to work hard and show up for class on time.
5/3/09	This prof is the best I have had for [removed]. Knows how to explain and gives clear notes.
4/14/09	Incredibly hard to stay awake through.
3/26/09	He is a good teacher. <u>His accent is a little hard to understand</u> , and he like to use "it's obvious" as a reason. Truly seems to care about the subject and the students. Class is mandatory, but it counts for points, so if you go it will help your grades.
11/1/08	great teacher, gives clear lectures.
7/24/08	<u>First day i thought Id never understand him, however after 3 days I could understand every word.</u> The class is hard, and the prof has little to do with the difficulty. He's a good prof, but lots of homework. If you need a C you only need a 65%.
7/16/08	He's a nice guy, but <u>he's hard to understand because of his accent.</u> [removed] was extremely boring, but I don't really think that's a subject you can spice up too much. You MUST attend class or your grade will suffer dramatically.

Figure 3.1 - Comments left on Professor Alshammari's Rate My Professor page by date: I have put all comments related to language in **bold and underlined them**.

Table 3.1 displays frequencies for particular themes in the comments as well as the overall ratings assigned by commenters on both Professor Alshammari's and Professor Chen's RMP pages. The table indicates fairly well that while Professor

Date	Comment
5/12/11	Seriously, her class is easy to follow because it's very clear. She uses special textbook, and it is well-organized. If you study, you will notice that she is good professor. <u>(She has a strong accent, though.)</u>
4/5/11	She is the worst teacher I have ever had. <u>You will not be able to understand a word she says.</u> When you ask her a question she acts like you are dumb and the question never gets answered. She is completely unfriendly. I highly recommend NOT taking her class!
12/24/10	<u>She has a very heavy accent, but it's pretty easy to get used to.</u> If you volunteer in her class, it goes by much faster, and she'll usually let you out early. She is very clear in her lessons. I liked her.
12/21/10	Worst teacher I have ever had, found out I had to take her for [removed] and was lucky enough my advisor understood and waived me out of the class. <u>Can't understand anything she says.</u> DO NOT TAKE THIS PROF
12/14/10	Do not take her under any circumstance! She is not helpful, not understanding, and humiliates you if you raise your hand and ask a " <u>so simple</u> " question to her. <u>Her accent as well is hard to get through.</u> She also had the nerve to give me a 0 on a quiz day when I had to leave school for an unexpected family death. She needs to be fired.
10/25/10	class is easy.. she goes off this supplement booklet she made herself... goes word for word quizzes and homework very easy. tests are moderate. its a very boring class to listen to. <u>she is hard to understand.</u> i recommend that this class with a friend.
12/6/09	<u>Cant understand a word she says</u> she is horrible teacher you cant explain anything to her she always says it the [removed] Dept. that makes her due stuff. This class was soooo bad i withdraw after 3 weeks
12/6/09	This Professor is terrible. <u>She hardly speaks english and everything she says is followed by the word "cases."</u> Unless you are from the same country as her you will have trouble in this class.
11/29/09	<u>hard to understand</u> but the class is pretty easy.
6/19/09	<u>I would just stare at her completely unaware to what she was trying to communicate. Even if there were sub titles, it would still show up as garbled text on the bottom of your screen.</u> Stay far, far away from her, wherever she may be.
6/16/09	I failed my first class in the history of my schooling. <u>I was really disappointed in just how absolutely incomprehensible she was.</u> If you're in the class, drop it. If you're researching don't take anything with her.
4/6/09	i failed my first class ever
4/3/09	Reallly awful professor. Equally awful class. I agree her office hours are really challenging.
5/2/08	<u>A little hard to understand her speaking,</u> teaching is ok class is basically powerpoints and if you have common sense its pretty easy to understand. Quiz's are easy just study the notes off the power point and the required notebook, they are mostly multiple choice and so are the exams which are also relitvly easy.
1/5/08	<u>I couldnt understand her.</u> but she was a very nice lady. I DID NOT like that if we had a quiz, the day of u cannot ask her any questions...study on ur own time or

	meet with her on her crappy office hours. homework GRADED FOR ACCURACY!!!! do not just do it to get it done, problems have to be right! homework always due on quiz or exam day!!!
12/17/07	<u>Cant understand her</u> , she doesnt answer questions in class and she will only meet with you during office hours.Heaven forbid if you miss class....she will mark you off for attendance and if you have to leave early. GET OUT WHILE YOU STILL CAN!

Figure 3.2 - Comments left on Professor Chen’s Rate My Professor page by date: I have put all comments related to language in **bold and underlined them**.

Alshammari is very popular with the RMP commenters, Professor Chen is very unpopular given the opposite distribution of their ratings. Furthermore, Alshammari’s English was commented on far less frequently than was Chen’s. Although more systematic research would need to be performed in order to determine definitively whether such an association is present throughout the population, it seems intuitively plausible that some type of relationship would exist between these two factors with two possible directions of cause: (1) difficulties in understanding an instructor can lead to limited learning outcomes for the students or (2) students who do not respect or do not like a NNS instructor will not put forth much effort to understand them and may simply blame the NNS instructor’s status for communication problems.

Most of the comments dealing with the instructors’ intelligibility clearly view the communicative burden to be on the NNS. They statically assess the instructors’ English in terms of their varying degrees of intelligibility. For most of the commenters it is a static feature of these instructors, particularly Chen, that their English is simply unintelligible or difficult to understand. The fact that they as NSs might struggle to understand the language of a NNS instructor is simply unacceptable. These beliefs are apparent in some of the more vitriolic comments on

	Prof. Alshammari	Prof. Chen
Overall assessments	12 (100.0%)	16 (100.0%)
--'Good quality'	9 (75.0%)	2 (12.5%)
--'Average quality'	2 (12.7%)	2 (12.5%)
--'Poor quality'	1 (8.3%)	12 (75.0%)
Comments referencing language	3 (100.0%)	14 (100.0%)
--labeled unintelligible	0 (0.0%)	8 (57.1%)
--some difficulties in understanding	2 (66.7%)	3 (21.4%)
--temporary difficulties only	1 (33.3%)	1 (7.1%)
--'accent' mentioned	2 (66.7%)	3 (21.4%)
--globally negative assessments of English	0 (0.0%)	1 (7.1%)

Table 3.1- Comparison of comments on Professor Alshammari's and Professor Chen's *Rate my professor* pages: The table displays frequencies for various themes found in the comments. The "overall assessments" are taken from the site's separate rating system, which is based upon the factors 'clarity', 'helpfulness', and 'easiness'. 'Good quality' indicates that the instructor received generally higher scores on these marks; whereas 'poor quality' indicates low scores on them. The second half of the table displays the number of comments referencing certain aspects of the two instructors' language. Numbers in the subscales add up to more than 100% because some of the comments contain more than one of these themes.

Chen's page such as those from 12/6/09 and 6/19/09 (cf. Figure 3.2). A smaller number of the commenters, however, are much more understanding. One commenter on both Alshammari and Chen specifically labeled the communication difficulties temporary, implying that they can be alleviated through familiarity with the instructors' accents on the part of the students (cf. Alshammari's comment from 7/24/08, Figure 3.1 and Chen's comment from 12/24/10, Figure 3.2).

Overall, however, what this analysis of the RMP data reveals is that the university community that serves as the context for this study is not characterized by overwhelming acceptance of the need for accommodation in intercultural communication. Instead there is clearly a group of students that amount at the very least to a vocal minority (but it is my perception that these beliefs are shared to some extent by a much larger group of students as well) who view communication

in English solely through the lens of NS-NS interaction. They describe some (although certainly not all) NNS instructors as being incomprehensible despite several facts that would indicate otherwise: namely that in most cases these instructors were educated in English in the United States, that they maintain professional careers in English, and that they were hired at an English-medium university where they were undoubtedly interviewed by and presented to what are now their English-speaking colleagues in English. It appears that this is not a blanket dismissal of all NNS instructors, considering the variation in the comments and ratings of Chen and Alshammari. Other variables clearly complicate the situation making some NNS instructors' English acceptable to most and others unacceptable. In the end, whether these attitudes are openly communicated or not to the participants, they are clearly present and probably prevalent among the US students with whom the participants might interact.

These attitudes shape the interactions the participants have with them, and I know first hand that such attitudes shape the views of the participants' English instructors who are intensely aware of the stigma their students face. The reaction of the IEP has generally been that in light of potentially negative attitudes faced outside of the IEP students need to be prepared to mirror NS norms as closely as possible.

Overall, the context in which the participants find themselves immersed is on the surface extremely supportive of them as international students. The university administration has made an enormous effort to attract them citing the diversity of

perspective that they offer as the motivation (cf. Ball State University, 2007).

Despite this, the attitudes at least of the US students attending the university reveal that some are quite committed to a NS ideology, in which the fault for communication breakdown in intercultural communication cannot possibly fall to the NS as he/she represents the model of English use. Furthermore, the absence of linguistic diversity in the university's proposed goals seems to suggest that it does not conceive of differences in language to be a valuable aspect of the international community that it wishes both to create for itself as well as to participate in.

The participants

Having described the context that the participants find themselves in, I now turn my attention to describing each of them in more specific detail in this section.

The participants were recruited from an IEP at a mid-sized university in the Mid-West United States. The following criteria were used to select them:

- All participants were in their first semester at the university
- All participants were at least at the intermediate level of the IEP
- All participants were male
- All participants were either from Saudi Arabia or China

First, I chose to use only participants in their first semester, because I wished to capture as many of the changes that take place in the individuals' thinking as they enter a new context and attempt to use and learn the target language. Second, the participants were asked to discuss fairly abstract ideas about themselves in their second language. Therefore, a minimal proficiency level of intermediate level was necessary. Each of the participants seemed capable of communicating their ideas, although some were able to do this with considerably more ease than others.

Finally, the last two criteria were used to attempt to control for the variables of gender and culture. The role of both gender and culture in language learning and use is widely acknowledged by researchers in SLA. As a result, I have attempted to avoid the confounding influence of these variables by controlling for them. Given the case study approach that was undertaken, it was felt that comparisons between the genders or between large numbers of cultures would only be spurious given the small number of participants included in the study. Furthermore, I wished to work with the two largest cultural groups in the IEP: the Saudis and the Chinese, and the nature of the study involved private conversations between myself and the participants. Many of the Saudi female students and their male counterparts would have found the study's protocol to be culturally unacceptable: a Saudi female alone in a closed room with a male who is not a member of her family for long periods of time. Therefore, I predicted that it would be difficult to recruit participants from the female population of this cultural group, and this contributed to the decision to exclude females altogether rather than have them represented in only one of the two cultural groups. As a result, participants were limited to one gender and two cultures. This, of course, places strong limits on the applicability of these results to females and learners from other cultures. The processes may be similar across genders and cultures, but this cannot be confirmed without further research. In describing and discussing the results it may appear that I am attempting to generalize to all learners, but it should be noted that these limitations on the generalizability of the results exist and although it would be cumbersome to remind

the reader of them at every point, they are nonetheless important caveats to each of the claims presented in this research.

The advantage of the case study approach that I have selected is that an abundance of data is available on the individual participants. A further advantage is that a great deal more space can be dedicated to the presentation of this information so that the participants' situations can be better understood. Table 3.2 below provides basic demographic information for each of the study's participants, and in the sections that follow I describe each participant in more detail. They are listed in the table with their pseudonyms, which they each personally selected.

The data in Table 3.2 here clearly show two distinctive groups that are separated not only by their differing cultural and linguistic backgrounds but also by their ages and past educational history. The four Chinese participants are all nearly ten years younger than the Saudi participants, and all but Mo are undergraduate students. In contrast, most of the Saudi participants are in their thirties with the exception of K3. Chevy, Abu, and Fahad have previously completed their bachelor's degrees (and in Abu's case other higher education) in their home country. This situation while not ideal for cross-cultural comparison reflects the demographics of students choosing to study at this particular university. It is very common at this university for Chinese students to participate in "1-2-1" study abroad programs, in which they study for their first and last years at a Chinese university and the second and third years at an American university ultimately earning a joint Bachelor's degree. Saudi students at this particular university are often older, arriving with the

	Country of origin	Native language	Student status	Level in IEP	Field of study	Age
DK	China	Mandarin	Bachelor's	3	Computer Science	20
Harry	China	Mandarin	Bachelor's	3	Business Administration	19
Sam	China	Mandarin	Bachelor's	3	Computer Science	20
Mo	China	Mandarin	Bachelor's	5	Accounting	24
Chevy	Saudi Arabia	Arabic	Master's	5	Marketing	38
Fahad	Saudi Arabia	Arabic	Master's	3	Public Relations	32
Abu	Saudi Arabia	Arabic	Doctoral	3	Special Education	34
K3	Saudi Arabia	Arabic	Bachelor's	4	Finance	18

Table 3.2 – Demographic information for the study's participants: The information presented here is from the onset of data collection. Some information such as age and especially level in IEP changed throughout the course of the data collection. The level in IEP lists the level the student was currently in when he began participating in the study. The IEP that all of the participants were studying in involved 7 levels: 0-6. Most of the participants were at the third level (corresponding to intermediate proficiency) upon beginning the study.

Saudi Cultural Mission's scholarships and staying for the entire course of a graduate (or in some cases, such as K3, undergraduate) degree.

In the sections that follow I provide a more detailed look at each of the participants including their future goals, the social networks they participate in, and my impressions of their personalities.

DK

DK is the first of four Chinese participants in the study. He completed all four of the data collection points. He is a young, serious student who seems shy and self-conscious. His self-consciousness is particularly prevalent in his discussions of himself as afraid of speaking with students not from his cultural group, particularly

US students. As a result, DK reports that he interacts with very few non-Chinese interlocutors outside of the IEP. Furthermore, DK shares a dormitory with several other Chinese students. Therefore, he spends much of his free time using Chinese and avoiding the use of English.

He has come to the university in order to pursue a degree in Computer Science, and he reports that he plans also to study Computer Science at the Master's level at a US institution after completing his undergraduate degree in China. As of the final interview in the study, DK has completed all of his IEP coursework and was ready to begin his academic program at the university. In his interviews he mentioned various career goals including working at Google. However, he appears to find the idea of staying in the United States after the completion of his studies to be unlikely especially given the difficulties he has had finding and making friends with other cultural groups.

Harry

Harry is the second of four Chinese participants in the study. He completed all four of the data collection points. He is younger than the other Chinese participants, although only by one year in the case of DK and Sam. Like DK, Harry is a very serious and focused student. He is, however, much more outgoing than DK. This characteristic has enabled Harry to reach out to a few individuals from other cultures, particularly US students. He maintains several friendships with US students including a commuter student who he meets with every Tuesday to discuss various topics such as business and politics. However, like DK, Harry also has a

tight-knit group of Chinese friends, which includes DK, who he spends much of his time with speaking Chinese, and with whom he lives in the dormitories.

Harry has come to the university in the same 1-2-1 program that DK is participating in. He plans to study business administration at the university after the completion of his IEP courses, which he successfully finished shortly after the final interview. Like DK, he plans to pursue a Master's degree in the United States after finishing his undergraduate degree in China. In his interviews Harry described his career goals and stated that they involved working at a company in China that cooperates with US or British companies allowing him to make use of his English.

Sam

Sam is the third of four Chinese participants in the study. He completed only two of the four data collection points. He is approximately the same age as DK and Harry and appears to maintain friendships with these two although he is apparently less close with them than they are with each other. Like DK and Harry, Sam is a very serious student. He was also very reluctant to speak much more so than either DK or Harry. His responses to my questions were consistently kept to the minimum response necessary to answer the question. Sam lives in a dormitory room with a US student and as such has a 'built-in' conversation partner, although Sam reports speaking with him somewhat infrequently.

Similarly to DK, Sam has come to the United States to study Computer Science at the university. Like both DK and Harry, Sam also plans to study in the United States again to earn a Master's degree. Sam was not very specific about his

career goals, but like both DK and Harry, he did suggest that he plans to work for a company in China where he might be able to use his English in communications with business partners from abroad.

Mo

Mo is the fourth of four Chinese participants in the study. He completed two of the four data collection points, because he began the study later than the others having arrived in the United States four months after the others. Mo is very different from the other three Chinese participants. He is older, more confident, and more comfortable speaking than the others. He has also had significantly more experience both with English and in the US educational system than the others having studied previously at another US institution on the east coast for a short time. Furthermore, his English upon arrival in the United States was much stronger than the others' had been upon their arrival. He was placed in level five, but only due to a need to allow him to have sufficient coursework for a full semester of full time study in the program. His initial placement test showed he had only limited need for the IEP. The other four Chinese participants placed into level three and spent a much longer time studying in the IEP. In terms of social interaction, Mo reported speaking with some of his Saudi classmates outside of the classroom, but this appeared to be infrequent. Mo reported very little interaction with others in English, discussing mainly transactional situations in which he used English.

Like the other three Chinese participants, Mo described his career goals as probably involving working for a Chinese company that would have some type of

association with US or British business partners. He also frequently discussed a desire to find a romantic partner and seemed open to the idea of living outside of China depending upon where his partner would want to reside.

Chevy

Chevy is the first of four Saudi participants. He unfortunately participated in only one of the four data collection points. He is the study's oldest participant and also by far the most confident in his use of English. He has had significant experience using English in his career and feels very comfortable in his abilities as an English speaker. Like Mo, Chevy's placement test showed that his English abilities were advanced enough that he had only limited need for the IEP. However, he too was enrolled in the program in level five to insure that he had sufficient course work for full time study. Unlike Mo and all of the other participants, Chevy expressed quite a bit of dissatisfaction with the IEP indicating that he felt it was not flexible enough to allow him to work on skills that he felt would have been more beneficial for him such as academic reading and writing. Chevy is the only participant who seeks regular interaction with individuals who are both not from his culture and not affiliated with the university. He frequents coffee shops in the city and meets other regulars at these establishments. In this way he reports largely avoiding his fellow Saudi students.

Chevy has come to the United States to earn a Master's degree, but he was unsure of exactly what he would like to study. At the time of his first interview, he was considering Marketing. Having worked in a multinational company previously

in Saudi Arabia Chevy planned to return there to continue doing the same type of work.

Fahad

Fahad is the second of four Saudi participants. He completed all four of the data collection points. Fahad is a very friendly, talkative man. Despite having tested into only level 2 in the IEP, he spoke effortlessly with me and was very open about his ideas and experiences. Fahad's interviews lasted much longer than most of the other participants. While the reticent Sam might succeed in answering all of my questions in around twenty minutes, Fahad's interviews were always nearly (and sometimes more than) an hour long. Fahad is living in the United States with his wife and his children to pursue a Master's in public relations. The fact that he lives with his family makes finding social networks in which he can use English difficult for Fahad. However, despite this, Fahad takes many opportunities to speak with people from other cultures and is one of the only participants who reports having more extensive communication with other people. In particular, Fahad mentions the manager of his apartment complex as being an individual who he occasionally spends hours speaking with. However, due to his gregariousness Fahad also frequently recounted chance encounters with individuals he had met and spent a long time talking to such as a mechanic in Georgia who helped fix his car after it broke down during a vacation to Orlando.

Before coming to the United States Fahad worked in the ministry of *hajj* (pilgrimage) in Saudi Arabia and reported making limited use of English in his work.

However, he felt that there was a great deal more opportunity to use English in this position than he was able to do due to his lack of proficiency. Fahad then plans to use his education in English in order to further his career in the ministry. Speaking English better, he hopes, will allow him to take advantage of opportunities to interpret and translate for visitors to his home city of Mecca, as well as to represent his ministry at international conferences.

Abu

Abu is the third of four Saudi participants. He is the most well-educated of all eight participants, already holding a Master's degree and seeking a doctoral degree in special education. He is a very serious and reflective person, often labeling himself "a teacher" and making comparisons between the situation of special education in his country and in the United States. Abu is living in the United States with his child and wife who joined him just before data collection point #3. He reports having somewhat few opportunities to use English outside of the IEP, but he has made certain efforts to practice English such as speaking exclusively in English with a fellow Saudi student who has already completed his IEP training.

Abu plans to return to Saudi Arabia to teach at the university level. He hopes to advocate for policies that he has observed in the United States that benefit students with disabilities. English, he argues, will allow him to participate in an international community of researchers whose common language is English. He hopes to be able to read research written in English, to discuss his research in

English, and to attend international conferences in which the participants use English as a common language.

K3

K3 is the fourth of the four Saudi participants. He is the youngest of the four Saudi participants, and is more similar in age to DK, Harry, and Sam. K3 is very confident in his English, which derives chiefly from the length of time he has studied English (since he was a child) and the fact that he has participated in summer English programs in the UK several times. Unlike the other Saudi participants, K3 lives in a dormitory and because of this has made many friends from other cultures: the United States, Afghanistan, and South Korea. He mentions participating in many activities and spending a considerable amount of time daily with these friends.

K3 plans to return to Saudi Arabia after completing his undergraduate degree in Finance. He feels that English is an important skill in his future industry and that he will be able to increase his chances of having a good job in Saudi Arabia if he speaks English well. Furthermore, he reports an interest in travel and feels that English will enable him to travel nearly any where in the world.

Summary

In this chapter I have explained the framework, methods, context, and participants of the study. I view the study as having been informed by a theoretical framework that is influenced by several major ideas. First, the discussion of whether a NS norm is appropriate in language learning I believe has reached an ideological impasse, and therefore I have attempted to study the topic from a

different angle reexamining ideas that have seemingly been taken for granted both in theoretical discussions of the issue as well as the empirical research done by myself and other researchers. Next, other researchers who have taken non-traditional perspectives toward SLA such as Norton have influenced my work and caused me to take a different more social view of critical constructs in SLA such as a view of intelligibility that stresses contextuality as opposed to static ability.

In addition I described the methods of the study, which primarily relies on data collected from a semi-structured interview. I also provided a description of the context in which the participants are studying focusing on the attitudes of the university and the people associated with it. In particular, I found that the university has made great efforts to attract international students and create a community that values diversity of culture. However, they appear to have given less value to diversity of language, and having examined the attitudes of some of the students it appears that there exists an ideology that NS language norms are the only legitimate ones. Finally, I described each of the participants in detail. Having done so, I now turn my attention to analyzing the participants' perceptions of their own and others' intelligibility in English.

Chapter 4: Perceptions of 'intelligibility'

In this chapter I concern myself with the participants' perceptions of their own and others' intelligibility. It is important to note here that I am discussing their perceptions and not any attempt at 'objectively' measuring their intelligibility. It is my contention that although there was variability in the degree to which accommodations from me were necessary, in the context of our research interviews each of them was by all reasonable accounts 'intelligible' and repeatedly demonstrated the capacity to produce narratives, construct identities, and elaborate on abstract ideas. In other words, while the most experienced English-speaker, Chevy, required little or no accommodation other than a definition or two to communicate successfully with me in the context of his interview, those with less experience and less linguistic competence, such as DK, required quite a bit more in the way of accommodations such as re-phrasing and repetition of my questions or clarification or circumlocution requests on his answers.

Despite this, the digital recorder I used to record the interviews and the transcriptions I made from them have captured hours and pages of evidence of each of the participants achieving 'intelligibility'. With this perspective in mind, I turn my

focus to the way in which the participants construct their own and their interlocutors' 'intelligibility.'

My analysis has been framed by two key points:

- (1) 'Intelligibility' can be co-constructed and negotiated through various strategies even when one or both of the participants is considered to have limited proficiency in the language (cf. e.g. Cameron and Williams, 1997; Jenkins, 2000).
- (2) Although obviously lack of linguistic proficiency on the part of the NNS may be a cause of communication difficulty, difficulties in communication can often be caused or exacerbated by NSs (and other more competent users) rejecting their share of the 'communicative burden' in NNS-NS communication and expecting the NNS to both understand and make him- or herself understood while putting forth little if any cooperative effort (cf. e.g. Bremer et al., 1993; Kang and Rubin, 2009; Lippi-Green, 1997).

Therefore, I approach the data through this lens and begin my analysis with what participants themselves report the difficulties of communication in their second language to be.

Framing the 'success' or 'failure' of communication

I begin my examination of the participants' of their own and others' intelligibility by looking at instances of the word *understand* in the transcriptions. From here, I hope to elucidate a sense of how the participants frame interactions with various interlocutors in terms of communicative 'success' or 'failure' and from there to extrapolate a sense of how intelligible the participants feel their own English and the English of others really is and how these perceptions differ over time, if at all.

Data analysis

The data coding process for this analysis was divided into two parts. First I began by looking at the occurrence of the word *understand* (and its related forms *understood*, *understanding*, *understands*, and *understandable*) in the interview data. I noted each occurrence in which the word was used by the participants to discuss communication between themselves and another party or language artifact. I excluded from the analysis any instance of *understand* having to do with any of the following:

- (1) Meta-commentary on the interview process (e.g. *Do you understand my question?* or *I don't understand what you're asking me*)
- (2) The related sense of the word meaning following the logic or reasoning for something (e.g. *I don't understand why he behaves that way*).
- (3) Discussions of future or hypothetical situations (e.g. *I'll be happy when everyone understands what I say* or *I would be happy if everyone could understand me*)
- (4) Comments about communication taking place in a language other than English (e.g. *I don't understand everything people say even in Arabic*)
- (5) Statements about third parties communicating without the presence of the participant (e.g. *Americans understand other Americans*)

Understand was chosen as a particularly useful word for this type of analysis for several reasons. First, it is fairly ubiquitous in the speech of those learning English as it is generally more commonly learned than its semantically-related counterparts (e.g. the more technical or formal *comprehend* and the more informal or colloquial *get*). Second, it could provide a general overview of the participants' perceptions regarding their and others' intelligibility and their and others' roles and responsibilities in communication, because it has the capacity to be used in assessment of the relative success of communication. For example, both *I*

understood him and *She didn't understand me* might serve as comments on the communicative ability (receptive or productive) of any of the parties mentioned.

After identifying each relevant instance of *understand* I categorized the utterances according to the rhetorical force behind the statement, specifically whether the participant intended to present the situations positively or negatively. In other words, I determined whether they were discussing the communicative acts that they were participating in (real or imagined) as successful or unsuccessful. In some cases this was a very clear distinction such as Excerpt 4.1 from K3:

Excerpt 4.1 [K3, Data collection point #2]

- 1 **Researcher:** uh do you feel comfortable using English with those people
 2
 3 **K3:** yeah yeah
 4
 5 **Researcher:** why do you think that is?
 6
 7 **K3:** like I said before I I I I think my English is I I everyone can understand my
 8 English it's not that bad really umm I've and I also feel comfortable so umm I don't
 9 think my English is bad that no one can understand it I mean think it's
 10 understandable I mean

K3 makes a clear statement that he thinks *everyone can understand* his English (lines 7-8). This is clearly positively framed in the sense that he feels his communications with others are generally successful.

Other instances were more convoluted such as the ones in Excerpts 4.2 and 4.3 from Abu:

Excerpt 4.2 [Abu, Data collection point #2]

- 1 **Researcher:** yeah that's conversation sure uh ok umm are you comfortable
 2 speaking English with students from other countries?
 3
 4 **Abu:** yeah especially with the china people
 5

- 6 **Researcher:** ok so why is that?
 7
 8 **Abu:** because they will understand me sometimes they know what if you talk with
 9 people who were who would like to learn English they will have more patient to
 10 understand you and you will have more patient also to understand they will give
 11 you opportunity to speak and the important thing's do mistake they will not hurt
 12 you

Excerpt 4.3 [Abu, Data collection point #2]

- 1 **Researcher:** ok umm are you comfortable speaking English with your English
 2 teachers?
 3
 4 **Abu:** yeah yeah I like to to speak sometimes I uh how can I say start any
 5 conversation to just to speak with them yeah they will speak slowly they will correct
 6 me they will able to understand what I mean if I sometimes did or used the
 7 mistake word they will know because they have experience about international
 8 student or non-native speaker

In Excerpt 4.2, Abu claims that he is comfortable speaking with Chinese classmates (line 4). His explanation as to why in lines 8-12 does not describe an ideal communicative situation. First, he uses the hedge *sometimes*, implying that the Chinese students do not always understand him (line 8). Furthermore he implies that his interlocutors sometimes need patience to understand him (lines 9-10), and that he might make *mistakes* (line 11). He does, however, seem to feel that this patience and tolerance pays off, because he states that he is comfortable speaking with them, and he attributes this comfort to the fact that *they will understand me sometimes* (line 8) even if the process is laborious. The same seems to be true in Excerpt 4.3, in which Abu describes communicating with English teachers, who also seem to have quite a bit of patience as well as skills and experience at accommodating him and other NNSs (lines 5-8). He frames these interactions with

his teachers also as successful despite the need for accommodation as evidenced by the fact that he claims to be comfortable having them.

Excerpts 4.4 and 4.5 below from Sam and Mo illustrate similarly convoluted examples for negatively-framed statements about their abilities to understand and make themselves understood:

Excerpt 4.4 [Sam, Data collection point #1]

1 **Researcher:** ok any other problems communicating with people?

2

3 **Sam:** yeah umm maybe I don't know how to go somewhere I ask the and the people
4 will tell me but I can't understand it the first time

Excerpt 4.5 [Mo, Data collection point #2]

1 **Researcher:** yeah have you had any problems communicating with people in
2 English?

3

4 **Mo:** yeah umm it it happened once once or twice when I just call the customer
5 service of the yeah

6

7 **Researcher:** ok can you describe it?

8

9 **Mo:** uh I just umm cannot completely understand what umm what what what uh
10 what the people work for the customer service uh uh what what what is he saying

11

12 **Researcher:** mhmm why did you call customer service?

13

14 **Mo:** uh because uh I need to uh figure something with my telephone and umm umm
15 just umm debit card those things

16

17 **Researcher:** ok umm and what what happened what did you when you found when
18 you realized you couldn't understand him what did you do?

19

20 **Mo:** I just uh ask him to say it again and slowly

21

22 **Researcher:** k did he?

23

24 **Mo:** yes

25

26 **Researcher:** did it ok so everything was ok then?

27

28 **Mo:** yeah

In Excerpt 4.4, Sam responding to a question about whether he has had communication problems mentions getting directions from someone. The problem he identifies is that he cannot *understand it the first time* (line 4). His choice of the words *first time* implies that the message is received successfully after further negotiation between the other individual and him. However, Sam clearly chooses to frame this as a lack of understanding or unsuccessful communication a *problem communicating* as the question asks (line 1). Similarly, in Excerpt 4.5, Mo answers the same question about communication problems by describing a situation, in which he struggled to understand someone on the telephone. In the end, the exchange seems to have been successful as indicated in lines 26-28. However, Mo chooses to categorize this experience as a communication problem and focus not on the successful accommodations or negotiations of meaning that took place, but on the fact that he was unable to understand the first time. If one contrasts these situations with Excerpts 4.2 and 4.3 from Abu, it may be that in reality the graveness of the communication difficulties that the individuals are referring to here are similar, the difference simply being the way they choose to frame them is clearly different. Therefore, Excerpts 4.2 and 4.3 were categorized as "positively-framed" instances of communication, whereas Excerpts 4 and 5 were categorized as "negatively-framed".

Findings

The results of the first part of the data analysis are presented in Table 4.1. Table 4.1 indicates the frequencies with which each participant used the word *understand* to frame their communicative abilities positively or negatively. The 'Average' column displays the average frequency of positively- and negatively-framed utterances per interview for each participant. According to the findings, DK, Harry, and Sam tended to describe their communicative abilities negatively, whereas Chevy and K3 tended to describe theirs positively. Mo, Fahad, and Abu were more divided, and in the case of Mo the analysis may have resulted in too few instances to adequately capture his perceptions of his abilities. Abu and Fahad were more positive at some points and equally divided at others.

Interestingly, looking at the trends longitudinally, there seems to be little justification for discussing improvement in the participants' perceptions of their communicative abilities as an effect of length of residence in the United States. Those that viewed their communicative abilities as generally unsuccessful, such as DK, Harry, and Sam, appear to have done so from the beginning and continued until the very end of the study if such data is available for them. There were no changes in the tendency for either negatively-framed or positively-framed portrayals of their communicative abilities to dominate their discourse. Of particular interest is the fact that no participant changed from describing his communicative abilities negatively to then describing them positively later as a result of the development of linguistic proficiency that would no doubt be taking place for them as a result of their intense study and residency in the United States.

		#1	#2	#3	#4	Total	Average
DK	positive	2	3	4	3	12	2
	negative	3	8	5	7	23	5.75
Harry	positive	-- *	1	4	1	6	2
	negative	-- *	4	5	2	11	3.67
Sam	positive	0	1	--	--	1	.5
	negative	2	3	--	--	5	2.5
Mo	positive	1	1	--	--	2	1
	negative	1	1	--	--	2	1
Chevy	positive	4	--	--	--	4	4
	negative	2	--	--	--	2	2
Fahad	positive	3	8	2	5	18	4.5
	negative	2	3	2	5	12	3
Abu	positive	2	4	2	8	16	4
	negative	2	2	2	4	10	2.5
K3	positive	2	3	--	--	5	2.5
	negative	0	1	--	--	1	.5

Table 4.1 - Instances of *understand* (and its related forms) as a representation of the participants' perceptions of their own and others' intelligibility across time: The table lists the number of occurrences of *understand* as related to the participants' participation in communicative acts. Each occurrence was categorized as 'positive' or 'negative' according to the way the participant framed the communication or 'understanding': as either generally successful ('positively') or generally unsuccessful ('negatively'). The middle four columns break the frequencies down to individual interviews at specific data collection points (e.g. '#1' corresponds to that participant's first interview). '--' represents missing data. *Harry was interviewed in the first data collection point but no transcription could be made of the audio data due to it being inaudible.

Furthermore, one can also not help but notice that there is a clear cultural divide, in which those participants from Saudi Arabia consistently mostly describe their abilities positively, while those from China tend to describe theirs negatively (with the exception of Mo). Zielinski (2010) noted a similar difference in Australian immigrants' perceptions of their pronunciation. She reported that those from "Arab" nations tended to view their English pronunciation quite favorably during interviews even in spite of difficulties communicating with the interviewer, whereas

immigrants from "Asian" nations tended to view theirs quite unfavorably even when communication with the interviewer proceeded without great difficulty.

I do not believe that the differences between these groups that I have found here (or those that Zielinski reported, which, assuming a cultural basis to this distinction exists, are probably related) represent substantive differences between the English communicative capacities of the two groups. It was clear in looking at some of the examples that the participants were not necessarily experiencing more frequent or more intense difficulty in communication. The difference in the way that they presented their English seemed to lie in the underlying expectations that they hold for themselves and what they view as their responsibility in terms of contributing to successful communication. I have already previously developed this point in discussing how I categorized the data above. I noted, for example, that in Excerpt 4.3 Abu suggested that he could successfully communicate with his English teachers because of their patience, whereas in Excerpt 4.4 Sam framed his communicative abilities negatively when requesting information from individuals in the street. He noted that he could not understand them *the first time*, belying an underlying expectation that a successful or 'intelligible' communicator would be able to do so. However, I will present two additional examples in order to further delineate what I feel are two opposing conceptions of the responsibility that the participants feel they have in communication with others. In both instances, the participants make remarks about the way I as the interviewer speak to them. However, they frame my accommodated language entirely differently.

Excerpt 4.6 [DK – Data collection point #3]

- 1 **Researcher:** why do you think your listening is poor?
 2
 3 **DK:** because if you speak in normal spend in normal spend spend English I can't
 4 understand it
 5
 6 **Researcher:** in normal what English?
 7
 8 **DK:** normal spend
 9
 10 **Researcher:** normal speed?
 11
 12 **DK:** speed right right
 13
 14 **Researcher:** ok the rate at which I speak if I talked really fast you would
 15
 16 **DK:** you yeah now you speak to me I know you slow down if you speak uh in a
 17 normal speed I can't understand it

Just prior to Excerpt 4.6 DK has indicated that his English listening abilities are *poor*, and in line 1 I ask him to explain. He specifically points to the way I communicate with him namely the *speed* of my speech (lines 10-12). Even though he is able to understand me, he interprets this accommodation as an indication of his shortcomings. He describes my speech by saying *you slow down* (line 16) and labels the type of language I might use with a fellow NS as *normal speed* (line 17). DK's reaction to my accommodated speech patterns reveal an expectation that he be able to participate in communication more characteristic of NS-NS interaction. This expectation contrasts sharply with Fahad's views in Excerpt 4.7.

Excerpt 4.7 [Fahad – Data collection point #2]

- 1 **Fahad:** [...] I am not familiar with the talking very quick the all the teacher here talk
 2 so slowly like you now now you are talking with me with a clear and slow and
 3 professors even in academic classes he speak clear English uh they don't talk very
 4 well actually the two student that I told you they came that day uh they start
 5 speaking very quick so the teacher told them can you just slow because they are
 6 level three

Similar to DK in Excerpt 4.6, in Excerpt 4.7 Fahad notes that I am accommodating him in the way I speak by stating that *now you are talking with me with a clear and slow* (line 2). He characterizes my speech as well as that of *professors in academic classes as clear English* (line 3). He goes on to give an example of individuals he recently encountered, who did not use such *clear English*. He assesses their language negatively by stating that *they don't talk very well* (lines 3-4). His expectation seems to be entirely different from DK's. While DK seems to feel that it is a failure on his part that he is unable to understand the fast rate of speech used by NSs around him, Fahad appears to believe that these individuals should speak what he calls *clear English* at least when attempting to communicate with him. In other words, in DK's perspective, it is the responsibility of the NNS to fully accommodate the NS both in language choice as well as ability to understand without the need for modification to the NS's language. In Fahad's perspective, the NS has a certain level of responsibility to produce language that is intelligible to the NNS.

Perceptions of the causes of communication difficulty

After the first part of the analysis revealed two starkly different perspectives on who shared in the responsibility for successful communication, I felt it would be illuminating to more closely examine exactly what the learners felt contributed to difficulties in communication. Therefore, I examined the communication difficulties the participants reported having in order to determine whether any insight into their ideas on what the cause of these problems might be.

Data analysis

I performed the second part of the analysis by locating each instance in the data, in which the participant reports difficulty in communication with a real or imagined interlocutor. On the one hand, reports of communication difficulties with real interlocutors tended to be narratives of communication breakdown such as the one in Excerpt 4.8 from DK. On the other hand, imagined interlocutors tended to appear in generalizations about the participants' abilities or experiences such as that in Excerpt 4.9 from Fahad. Many of the instances that I identified were also used in the first part of the analysis above, although many other instances of communication difficulties that did not contain the word *understand* (or any of its related forms) were also identified.

Excerpt 4.8 [DK, Data collection point #3]

1 **Researcher:** ok ok umm have you had any communication problems in the past
2 month?
3

4 **DK:** mm mm mm mm let me see here umm on Sunday I go to library I can't book uh
5 I can't borrow books and I ask library and and he told me I needed uh that building
6 and to check my accounting and I can't understand it I I just talk with her about ten
7 minutes maybe she is very kind so at last he write write in the paper told me what's
8 the meaning and I understand it

Excerpt 4.9 [Fahad, Data collection point #2]

1 **Researcher:** so do you think you're just as comfortable speaking in English as you
2 are speaking in Arabic?
3

4 **Fahad:** maybe in Arabic I will speak without without thinking maybe thinking a lot
5 but in English I most people can understand me most not all because there is people
6 that don't understand just the the accent that they they know even if it is another
7 accent they they will tell me I don't know I don't know what you are saying but most
8 people people will will understand me and that make me comfortable but I'm trying
9 to make it faster and make my pronounce more clear and fix the grammar uh some
10 grammar uh issues in my talking and writing

	Party acting as the primary cause of communication difficulty			
	Self/Participant	Interlocutor	Jointly-caused	Unspecified
Specific linguistic or behavioral cause of the difficulty	Accent Automaticity Culture Gen Proficiency Non-linguistic	Accommodation No effort No familiarity Accent Gen Proficiency	<i>No further breakdown</i>	<i>No further breakdown</i>

Figure 4.1 – Description of coding system used in data analysis: Categories identify the party that the participant reported as the primary cause of the difficulty as well as the aspect of party's language or behavior that brought on the difficulty.

After identifying all reports of difficulties in communication, I attempted to categorize them according to the explicitly reported cause of the difficulty. I began from the general question of which party the participant identified as the cause of the difficulty: himself or the interlocutor or in some cases both or neither. I then broke down the first two of these categories further into aspects of language, communication, behavior, and culture that were specifically referenced by the participants as causes for the difficulties arriving at the coding system presented in Figure 5.1.

I will now briefly explain each category and provide relevant examples where they are warranted starting with the "self" or "participant" party column. Here we find "accent", to which all issues related to the participants' own pronunciation or speech patterns were attributed reflecting the broad folk use of the term. A corresponding category with the same criteria is also found in the "interlocutor" column. Excerpt 4.10 provides an example of a reported communication difficulty from DK that was coded under "self" and "accent". In lines 2-3, DK indicates that his classmates cannot understand his speeches in class. After

several beats of laughter, he pinpoints pronunciation as the specific cause of this breakdown.

Excerpt 4.10 [DK, Data collection point #2]

1 **DK:** [...] and the third problem is my pronunciation because in level four need need
 2 student to give a speech to others but when I give a speech to others sometimes they
 3 can't understand me [laughs] my pronunciation is needed to improve because I also
 4 don't know how to solve it because in a class there about fifteen fifteen students in a
 5 class it's more than level three teacher the teachers can't point out one by one so it's
 6 a bigger problem I think it's can be prove that umm the classes can be more I mean
 7 there are less students in the class maybe ten is enough I think

Next, "automaticity" refers to issues of fluency, speed, and reflexive or automatic behaviors (i.e. those not requiring a great deal of planning, translation, etc.). This category is in some respects related to the "accommodation" category from the "interlocutor" column, because it was often related to the participant's inability to process the language at the speed expected by interlocutors. The basic difference between the two can be seen in the way the participant attributes this difficulty either to himself lacking the necessary automatic language processes or to the interlocutor for being unwilling to slow down his or her rate of speech.

Compare, for example, Excerpt 4.11 from Harry with the later example of Excerpt 4.13. In line 9 of Excerpt 4.11, Harry claims that the professors in the lectures he is viewing speak *too fast*. However, he mentions this in the context of his own listening needing to improve, which suggests that he believes the problem lies with him not with the rate of speech of the interlocutor. I will return to the important relationship between these two below.

Excerpt 4.11 [Harry, Data collection point #3]

1 **Researcher:** maybe it's ok ok umm what about your listening how good is your
 2 listening?

3

4 **Harry:** umm listening it should be improved

5

6 **Researcher:** mhmm why do you think that?

7

8 **Harry:** it's like I think I said when I listened to some lectures umm the professor
9 speaks too fast so this it's difficult to to understand yeah

"Culture" under the "self" column was a broad, but infrequently occurring category, in which participants attributed the communication difficulties they experienced to their different modes of thinking or behaving or to some aspect of culturally-specific knowledge such as U.S. history.

"General lack of proficiency" under the "self" column included mainly vague statements about the participants' 'poor' or 'bad' English. Similar statements about the 'poor' or 'bad' English of interlocutors were coded under the same category in the "interlocutor" column. Excerpt 4.12 from K3 provides an example of a participant attributing difficulty in communication to "general lack of proficiency" of the "interlocutor". Note especially lines 11-13, in which K3 argues that his English abilities are stronger than his Chinese classmates and that their general lack of ability causes communication between them and him to be problematic.

Excerpt 4.12 [K3, Data collection point #2]

1 **Researcher:** ok umm do you know any people who speak English in a way that you
2 don't want to speak English like?

3

4 **K3:** yeah chinese

5

6 **Researcher:** ok the Chinese why is that?

7

8 **K3:** I I I really don't understand their way to learn but even in level four I guess I
9 thought that my classmates even Saudis sometimes I thought their English will be
10 much better than me but later I figured that I I don't mean to say that I'm the I was
11 the best but I mean my English was better than the other classmates like the Chinese

- 12 I always find it difficult to I mean I talk with them normal and they always have
 13 problems with they ask me what did I say what did I say so I guess there are some
 14 sometimes difficulties when I'm talking with them

The final category in the "self" column was the "non-linguistic" or "other" category, which occurred only once in the data. This instance involved Mo attributing his difficulties in understanding others to a deficit in his attention span.

The next category in the "interlocutor" column is "accommodation". It involves all instances, in which the participants attribute communication breakdowns to the interlocutor's failure to modify his or her speech in order to accommodate their limited English abilities. This frequently involved mention of the interlocutor speaking too quickly or using vocabulary that was unfamiliar to the participant. Excerpt 4.6 from Sam provides an example of this. Compare line 5 of Excerpt 4.13 with line 9 from Excerpt 4.11. The distinction between the two is that Excerpt 4.13 lacks any evidence to suggest that Sam finds this to be a difficulty caused by his lack of English abilities (although of course this belief may still be implicit in his statement without being explicitly stated).

Excerpt 4.13 [Sam, Data collection point #1]

- 1 **Researcher:** ok in the past month have you had any problems communicating with
 2 people in English?
 3
 4 **Sam:** yeah for example when I bought buy something in mall or wal-mart uh maybe
 5 the [inaudible] speak is speak too fast yeah and I I have to ask him to speak slowly

The next category in the "interlocutor" column is "no effort" and refers to instances in which the participant attributes communication difficulties to the lack of effort put forth by the interlocutor in attempting to understand the participants' utterances. Therefore, "no effort" can be viewed as the receptive counterpart to the

category "accommodation". Excerpt 4.14 from Fahad provides an example of a participant reporting a lack of effort on the part of an interlocutor in communicating with him. In line 12, Fahad contrasts the relatively comfortable conditions of speaking English in the English classroom with the issues that speaking *outside* present. He attributes difficulties here to others not having time *to just hear you and ask you* (line 14).

Excerpt 4.14 [Fahad, Data collection point #2]

- 1 **Researcher:** sure ok umm let's go through these other questions so are you
 2 comfortable speaking English in your English classes?
 3
 4 **Fahad:** yes in English classes especially so comfortable comfortable sometimes
 5 when I am in uh like uh a shop or something like that I'm not comfortable like I'm in
 6 class
 7
 8 **Researcher:** ok umm why is that?
 9
 10 **Fahad:** because I know that most the student will be my same same level and
 11 teacher know my know that I am here to learn and he's teaching me and umm so I
 12 know I mean everybody know that situation that we are in now outside nobody
 13 know that maybe they know but they are not umm they I don't know they don't
 14 have time to just hear you and ask you and something like that

The final category in the "interlocutor" category is "no familiarity" and refers to the idea that the interlocutor lacks familiarity with the participant's variety of English or with NNS speech in general. The only occurrence of this in the data comes from Fahad's claim that some of the people he communicates with are familiar with international students and therefore are able to understand him, whereas others struggle because they are unaccustomed to international students.

The final two columns are not broken down any further, because their occurrences do not readily warrant further categorization. The "jointly-caused"

column involves instances, in which the participant explicitly attributes the difficulty in communication to behaviors or abilities of both parties involved.

Excerpt 4.15 from DK is a clear example, in which DK explicitly attributes problems communicating with his NNS classmates to both parties' deficiencies in English (although the excerpt actually contains two instances and was coded as such). In lines 14-15, he claims that his pronunciation can cause difficulties for NNSs (but surprisingly not for NSs), and then in lines 16-17 he argues that the problems are augmented by the interlocutors' difficulties with listening comprehension in English.

Excerpt 4.15 [DK, Data collection point #4]

- 1 **Researcher:** ok umm how good do you think your English is now?
 2
 3 **DK:** mmm actually if you uh I mean if a native speaker they slow down uh on
 4 purpose and I can understand them but if they speak in a normal speaker uh a
 5 normal speed and maybe I will uh maybe I just can understand ten percent of what
 6 they talk about and now I think what I talk about mmm I I can express myself now I
 7 think and but mmm let me think but some words I can't uh remember it and or I
 8 don't know how to pronunciation it so
 9
 10 **Researcher:** do you what about with non-native speakers you said with native
 11 speakers
 12
 13 **DK:** can't understand they maybe can cannot understand wha what I said uh what I
 14 talk about because uh there's two two way the first way is because my my problem
 15 because some pronunciation is uh is bad but uh native speaker can uh can get it
 16 because they can change it and uh the second way is the nons-native speaker they
 17 they are also some problem in their listening so it's two two things make

Finally, the last column "unspecified" involves all reports of communication difficulties that the participants do not attribute an explicit cause or contributing factor to. For example, Excerpt 4.5 above involves Mo describing an instance of communication difficulty during a customer service telephone call. He describes in

some detail the interaction, but does not indicate what he feels caused his difficulty in understanding the interlocutor. The difficulties might have been caused by the interlocutor's rate of speech, interference on the telephone, or any other number of causes. Although Mo does seem to feel that the communication was generally characterized by difficulty, he is silent on precisely what he feels caused this difficulty.

In addition, I also analyzed the 'native' or 'non-native speaker' status of the interlocutors that the participants report having difficulty communicating with. These fit into three categories: "native speaker", "non-native speaker", or "unspecified". In the "native speaker" category I included four types of occurrences. First, I included any instance in which the participant specifically classified his interlocutor as "native speaker" such as Excerpt 4.15, line 3, in which DK discusses NSs in general. Second, I inferred that most of the individuals that the participants were encountering outside of the language classroom in transactional or academic situations were also either truly NSs or were at least perceived by the participants as NSs. In Excerpt 4.8, for example, DK discusses having difficulties at the library. Nearly all of the individuals that would be working in this setting are NSs of English. The same is definitely true for Excerpt 4.13, line 4, in which Sam reports difficulties in the mall or at Wal-Mart, as well as Excerpt 4.14, line 5 in which Fahad mentions difficulties *in a shop*. Given the trend of call center outsourcing in the United States, Excerpt 4.5 may actually have involved Mo speaking with a NNS, but I classified this as "native speaker" assuming that even if the individual on the line were a NNS that

Mo would not necessarily have been able to identify him/her as such. Third, I also categorized all instances of participants identifying their interlocutors as "American", or "from the United States/US" as "native speaker". Although it is very possible that such an individual may in fact not have been a NS, given the participants' context it is far more likely that these individuals are NSs. Even if they are not, the participants may be unaware of their NNS status, simply assuming that all individuals from the United States are native English speakers. Finally, I categorized instances where the participants discussed difficulties with media such as the news, movies, or their English learning materials as "native speaker" interlocutors for the same reasons as above.

The second category was "non-native speaker" interlocutors. I placed three types of occurrences in this category. First, when the participant explicitly labels the interlocutors "non-native speakers" as in Excerpt 4.15, lines 10 and 16, in which I ask DK a question regarding non-native speakers (line 10) and he responds discussing difficulties in communication with them (lines 13-17). Second, I labeled interlocutors "non-native speakers" when they were identified by the participants as belonging to a nationality not traditionally considered English-speaking. For example, K3 mentions *Chinese* interlocutors in line 4 of Excerpt 4.13 and later goes on to discuss problems communicating with them. Finally, any instances of communication problems regarding the participants' fellow students and classroom communication in their intensive English program were considered to have "non-native speaker" interlocutors (unless the instructor was specifically identified as the

interlocutor, in which case if the identity of the instructor was not given then it was classified as "unspecified" due to the fact that the participants were taught by a diverse group of individuals). For example, in lines 1-3 of Excerpt 10, DK discusses his difficulties giving presentations to his classmates in *level four*, which is a clear reference to an intensive English program course, which would only have NNS students in it.

The third category contained "unspecified" interlocutors. I placed all instances of communication problems that did not have an interlocutor with an explicitly mentioned or reasonably inferable status in this category. In Excerpt 4.9, lines 5-6, Fahad claims that some *people* are unable to understand him due to his *accent*. He does not further identify these individuals. As a result, this instance was categorized as an 'unspecified' interlocutor.

Findings

The quantitative results of the data analysis can be found in Tables 4.2 and 4.3. Table 4.2 outlines the number of instances in which the participants discussed difficulties in communication during the interview and the communication difficulties as they relate to their causes. "Self-caused" difficulties (and their corresponding sub-classifications) can be readily compared to "interlocutor-caused" difficulties. Table 4.2 reveals quite a bit of variability in the amount of difficulty in communication that each participant reports. Of course, it's important to note that each participated in a different number of sessions, which has a major impact on the quantity of reported difficulties in communication. Of particular interest are the

	DK	Harry	Sam	Mo	Chevy	Fahad	Abu	K3
Self-caused	14 60.9%	7 50.0%	3 37.5%	2 40.0%	0 0.0%	10 40.0%	10 62.5%	1 33.3%
--'accent'	4	1	0	0	0	3	2	0
--lack of automaticity	2	1	0	1	0	2	0	0
--culture	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	0
--general lack of proficiency	7	4	3	0	0	4	8	1
--non-linguistic	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Interlocutor-caused	2 8.7%	4 28.6%	3 37.5%	1 20.0%	2 66.7%	8 32.0%	2 12.5%	1 33.3%
--failure to accommodate speech	1	2	3	0	0	3	2	0
--failure to put forth effort to understand	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	0
--not familiar with NNS's English	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
--unintelligible accent	1	1	0	1	2	1	0	0
--general lack of proficiency	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Jointly-caused	2 8.7%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	5 20.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Unspecified cause	5 21.7%	3 21.4%	2 25.0%	2 40.0%	1 33.3%	2 8.0%	4 25%	1 33.3%
TOTAL	23	14	8	5	3	25	16	3

Table 4.2 - Frequency of the causes of communication difficulties reported by participants:

Totals represent number of times in all interviews that the participant attributed a particular cause to communication difficulty. Under the frequency of each of the four main categories (i.e. "self-caused", "interlocutor-caused", "jointly-caused", and "unspecified cause") are percentages indicating the relative frequency of each of the causes of communication difficulty for each of the participants.

ratios between the self and the interlocutor as the causes of difficulty. The same individuals who in the first analysis tended to frame their communicative capacity negatively are also the same individuals who seem to more frequently attribute communication difficulties explicitly to themselves. This is especially true of DK and Harry. The opposite is also true. Those participants who in the first analysis tended to frame their communicative capacity positively (e.g. Chevy) also tended to

	Interlocutor Status		
	NS	NNS	Unspecified
Self-caused difficulty	30 (46.9%)	3 (21.4%)	15 (75.0%)
--'accent'	2	2	6
--lack of automaticity	4	0	2
--culture	4	0	0
--general lack of proficiency	20	1	6
--other (non-linguistic)	0	0	1
Interlocutor-caused difficulty	17 (26.6%)	6 (42.9%)	0 (0.0%)
--failure to accommodate speech	11	0	0
--failure to put forth effort to understand	4	0	0
--not familiar with NNS's English	1	0	0
--unintelligible accent	1	5	0
--general lack of proficiency	0	1	0
Jointly-caused difficulty	5 (7.8%)	1 (7.1%)	1 (5.0%)
Unspecified cause	12 (18.8%)	4 (28.6%)	4 (20.0%)
TOTAL	64	14	20

Table 4.3- Breakdown of communication difficulties by interlocutor status: The table breaks down each of the instances of the participant reporting himself or the interlocutor being the cause of the difficulty into categories for native speaker non-native speaker, and unspecified interlocutors.

attribute difficulties in communication to their interlocutors or to a combination of themselves and their interlocutors ('jointly-caused').

Table 4.3 displays the occurrences of communication difficulties reported by all participants broken down by the interlocutor's status. A few interesting trends emerge from this table. First, when the interlocutor is a NS, the participants attributed the difficulty in communication to themselves 46.9%. They attributed the difficulty to their NS interlocutor only 26.6% and to a joint cause only 7.8% (34.4% total). In contrast, when the interlocutor was a NNS, the participants attributed the difficulty in communication to the interlocutor 42.9% of the time (and to a jointly-

caused difficulty 7.1%). Interestingly then, the participants' perceptions appear to be that their NS interlocutors are more intelligible than their NNS interlocutors.

Examining the interlocutor-caused difficulties more closely reveals an interesting trend. It appears that when the interlocutor is a NS, the cause is almost always attributed either to a failure to accommodate or to a lack of effort on the part of the NS. Only once does a participant attribute the communication difficulty to the NS's language itself ('accent' or proficiency). This one exception occurs in Chevy's interview (Excerpt 4.18), and I discuss it in more detail below. However, when the interlocutor is a NNS, the cause is always attributed to some deficiency in his or her language never to a failure to accommodate or a lack of effort from the participant or the interlocutor. Note also that the participants never attribute difficulties to themselves failing to put forth effort or accommodate their interlocutors. There appears to be an assumption that the participants and other NNSs despite potential deficiencies in language ability are always cooperative in the sense that they accommodate their interlocutors sufficiently, whereas NSs although potentially uncooperative in terms of accommodation invariably speak intelligibly.

These findings are not terribly surprising given that the participants' context is an intensive English program, in which they and most of the NNSs in their immediate vicinity are institutionally positioned as 'learners of English' as opposed to 'users (or speakers) of English'. Therefore, we might expect that they would view the NSs around them as the 'real' users with 'perfect' language and themselves as putting forth every possible effort to replicate their language. I believe, however,

that this has implications that ultimately lead to individuals conflating intelligibility with either speaking English 'well,' having some type of higher level of static proficiency, or being or imitating a NS. This hierarchy of sorts rests on two assumptions that (1) 'superior' speakers are infallible and permanently intelligible and (2) 'inferior' speakers are the cause of communication difficulty. Evidence of these assumptions for NNS-NS interaction can be seen in Excerpt 6, for example, where DK expresses the belief that it is not my responsibility as NS to help him communicate through accommodations, but rather that it is his responsibility to be prepared to communicate with me in a 'normal' way. Here 'normal' apparently refers to the norms of NS-NS interaction.

Perhaps more frightening are the implications this hierarchy may have for NNS-NNS interaction in this context. Jenkins (2000) and other ELF researchers present NNS-NNS interaction as a neutral, 'safe space' where 'mistakes' are tolerated, and everyone is concerned with successful cross-cultural communication (cf. also Björkman, 2008; Hülmbauer, 2006; Kalocsai, 2009; Meierkord, 2004). Some of the participants, however, seem not to view English communication amongst NNSs as such an egalitarian affair. Rather some seem to extend the hierarchy to differentiate those NNSs with 'good English' from those with 'bad English'. This would seem to explain why other NNS interlocutors are more likely to be the causes of communication difficulty due to their 'inferior' language. Excerpts 4.12 (above) and 4.16 (below) from K3 highlight the existence of these underlying assumptions in his views of intelligibility.

Excerpt 16 [K3, Data collection point #2]

- 1 **Researcher:** ok umm do you have any other friends or other groups of friends?
 2
 3 **K3:** yeah I do I have a in my where I stay I have some afghani friends and Saudi
 4 friends back there yeah I do yeah
 5
 6 **Researcher:** do you you speak English with them?
 7
 8 **K3:** yeah yeah
 9
 10 **Researcher:** uh how often do you talk to them?
 11
 12 **K3:** daily
 13
 14 **Researcher:** daily? What do you talk about with them?
 15
 16 **K3:** sports everything everything that pops out in my our mind we talk about we eat
 17 dinner together we umm I have also American friends who are every like two every
 18 two days we go to play soccer together so yeah
 19
 20 **Researcher:** mhmm ok so well we'll go to the American friends next but the Saudi
 21 friends and the afghani friends uh do you feel comfortable using English with them?
 22
 23 **K3:** my set of friends yeah but afghani friends uh uh uh is their English is is better I
 24 guess their English is better than me so sometimes I try to make sure that I
 25 everything while I'm talking is good so that won't say oh you said you that was a
 26 mistake so they always correct my mistakes and that's the way I like it but that's
 27 why I'm trying to say everything correctly while I'm talking with them

In Excerpt 4.12, K3 discusses problems he has communicating in English with his Chinese classmates. It is interesting to note the similarities between K3's discussion of his communication with the Chinese and DK's discussion of his own English vis-à-vis me as a NS (Excerpt 4.6). In lines 10-11, K3 attempts to avoid being boastful but ultimately claims that his English is *better than the other classmates like the Chinese*. He justifies this opinion on the basis of their inability to understand him when he speaks *with them normal* (line 4.12). DK justified his own assessment of his English as 'inferior' by appealing to the idea that I as a NS could not speak with

him in a *normal* way (Excerpt 4.6, line 16-17). Interestingly, K3 does not position himself at the very top of the speaker hierarchy. In Excerpt 4.16, he discusses his Afghani friends whose English is *better* than his (line 24). This is an interesting claim, because K3 repeatedly indicates that his English is intelligible (e.g. Excerpt 4.1). However, although it may be intelligible, K3 accepts his position as 'inferior' to his Afghani friends, who are by virtue of their superior English abilities, allowed, seemingly even invited, to *correct* his *mistakes* (line 26).

A further example of comments belying these underlying assumptions about who is intelligible and who is responsible for communication difficulties comes from DK's discussion of his difficulties understanding his Saudi classmates.

Excerpt 4.17 [DK, Data collection point #2]

- 1 **Researcher:** what about people from other countries not china?
- 2
- 3 **DK:** yeah it's also ok but their pronunciation is very strange I think like because our
- 4 our classmate ten Arabic I think persons and they speak English I I know their
- 5 English is better than me but I I sometimes I can't understand them

In Excerpt 4.17, DK characterizes the Saudi's *pronunciation* as *very strange* (line 3).

However, interestingly, he does not simply blame his inability to understand them on their 'inferior' or *strange* accents. Instead, he states that he knows *their English is better than* his English (lines 4-5). The comment seems potentially irrelevant unless we assume that DK operates with the basic assumptions that I discussed previously. In this case, this comment about his English as 'inferior' seems to acknowledge that he has a lower status on the hierarchy and thus would normally be assigned the blame for difficulties in communication, but in this case he seems to believe that the *very strange* pronunciation should override his general 'inferiority' and that he

should be permitted to discuss this specific aspect of their English despite his globally lower status. In this way, DK's general point about his Saudi classmates having accents that are difficult to understand, although contra the prevailing assumptions, seem to be an exception that nonetheless acknowledges the presence of the hierarchy. In other words, we see here not so much a blatant rejection of the hierarchy, but rather an appeal for an exception to it.

Rejections of the hierarchy, however, are not entirely absent from the data. Both Fahad and Chevy take consistent stances that are clearly critical of these underlying assumptions. In Excerpt 4.7 above, I demonstrated how Fahad assumes that it is the NS's responsibility to accommodate him in communication. When such accommodations are not provided, for example with the students he mentions in Excerpt 4.7 (line 5), he negatively evaluates the interlocutor's communication skills. In this case, he claims that these students *don't talk very well* (lines 3-4). If he were working under the hierarchy's assumptions, he would have assumed responsibility himself.

Chevy is another participant, who is critical of the speaker hierarchy. When discussing the results of the analysis of communication difficulties by status of the interlocutor in Table 5.3, I mentioned that there was only one instance of a participant attributing communication difficulties directly to a NS's language (as opposed to their lack of accommodation or effort). Excerpt 18 contains Chevy's discussion of NSs, whose language he positions as causing communication difficulties.

Excerpt 4.18 [Data collection point #1, Chevy]

- 1 **Researcher:** ok umm so we've already kinda talked about this you mentioned it
 2 before but I'm going to ask again are you comfortable speaking English with other
 3 people in the community in the area of Muncie?
 4
- 5 **Chevy:** yeah uh it's a a good it's a little bit harder to speak with the people who are
 6 uh not educated at all umm I noticed that umm umm few times uh when I speak
 7 with them they understand me but I don't understand what they say because of the
 8 accent especially some of guys I met a few days ago their accent was a bit deep

Excerpt 4.18 is a particularly striking example for two reasons. First, Chevy displays a greater awareness of the sociolinguistic variation that exists in NS speech than most of the other participants, who seem to largely view NS language as uniform and generally assign them all to the top of a speaker intelligibility hierarchy. Here he comments on socioeconomic status as a factor in determining language variety (lines 5-8) stating that his interlocutor, who is *not educated*, has an *accent* that is *a bit deep*. Second, the excerpt shows Chevy, a NNS, framing his English as completely intelligible and his NS interlocutors' English as unintelligible (line 7), which contradicts the basic assumptions underlying some of the other participants' perceptions of their own and others' intelligibility that I have previously discussed.

Conclusions

Despite being generally intelligible in the context of a research interview discussing varied experiences, emotions, and abstract ideas, the participants were not overwhelmingly positive about their communicative capacity. In fact, it seems that the participants are generally divided along cultural lines with the Chinese participants framing their communicative capacities as inadequate and the Arab

participants framing theirs much more positively (cf. Table 5.1). Although culture may be a relevant factor, surprisingly length of residence does not appear to have been a critical factor. We might assume that the participants' English would improve as a result of their living and studying in the United States leading most likely to increased success in communication. However, their perceptions of their intelligibility in English do not appear to change. By the end of eight months in the United States (or their termination of participant in the study) none of the participants moved from framing his English as generally unintelligible to generally intelligible (although of course some began the study with this perspective, e.g. Chevy).

Given the varied proficiency levels and experiences using English represented in both groups, objective differences in their language abilities do not seem to be able to account for these differences in perception adequately. Rather, it appears that differences in the participants' underlying expectations for themselves and others are a key factor. In particular, some of the participants (e.g. DK) seem to believe that they, as L2 users, are solely responsible for the success or failure of communication and that 'normal' communication in English should proceed according to the norms of NS-NS interaction. In contrast, other participants (e.g. Fahad) believe that the NS is responsible for accommodating them with language that is intelligible to them regardless of the norms of NS-NS interaction. The consequences of these differing perspectives appears to be that those subscribing to

the views exemplified by DK's comments view their English much more negatively than those subscribing to the views exemplified by Fahad's.

Although perspectives are quite divided in terms of who and what contributes to intelligibility, whether or not intelligibility is a sufficient condition for satisfactory English in the minds of the participants is not yet clear. In the next chapter I will discuss the participants' reported models for language learning. In particular, I will examine their beliefs concerning a standard based on a NS norm and one based on some level intelligibility.

Chapter 5: What (do) learners want (?)

A major issue in the debate over which norm should be applied to language learning is the views of learners themselves. Questions such as ‘What goals have they set for themselves?’ ‘How do they want to be perceived by others?’ ‘What do they feel is acceptable second language use?’ are all quite important in determining what an appropriate pedagogical norm is. Very little research has been done to investigate the preferred norms of language learners. However, that which has been done shows strong support for the NS norm in both pronunciation and grammar (Subtirelu, 2010; Timmis, 2002) with the exception of students from so-called ‘Outer-Circle’ countries (cf. Kachru, 1985).

Timmis’ (2002) study employed a simple questionnaire and involved a sample of 400 participants from 14 different countries as well as 15 interviews with participants studying in Leeds. Timmis asked participants to select a model of language learning that they aspire to in both pronunciation and grammar. His questionnaire was used as the basis for the GSIS in Subtirelu (2010), which is included in this work as Appendix A. For the pronunciation standard, participants were asked to identify with a fictitious student who either exemplified a NS norm or one who exemplified accented intelligibility. For the grammar standard, they were

	Pronunciation		Grammar		
	NS norm	Accented intelligibility	NS norm	Prescriptive norm	Stable interlanguage
All students	67%	32%	68%	14%	14%
Students currently using English primarily with NNSs	68%	32%	67%	17%	14%
Students who predict using English primarily with NNSs	60%	37%	72%	9%	16%
Students from the 'outer circle'	34%	64%	40%	32%	15%

Table 5.1 - Results of Timmis (2002): The table displays the results of Timmis' questionnaire study ($n = 400$). Timmis reports only an overall sample size and does not indicate the size of the groups in the other three categories (second, third, and fourth rows). The first two columns list the participants' chosen standards for pronunciation; the other three columns list their standards for grammar.

asked to choose between students who exemplified three different models: a NS norm, a prescriptivist norm, and one based on the notion of "a stable and consistent interlanguage" (cf. Willis, 1999, cited in Timmis, 2002, p. 244). His results are reproduced in Table 5.1 .

Table 5.1 demonstrates that the learners in Timmis' study had a clear preference for NS norms. The obvious exception here are those students from 'outer circle' countries, in this case South Africa, Pakistan, and India. However, in all other categories the NS norms were preferred by 60% or more of the participants.

Subtirelu (2010) was to some extent a replication of Timmis making use of the GSIS, which was based on Timmis' questionnaire. In that study, however, I added two more standards to the pronunciation category: one based on Jenkins' (2000, 2005) proposals and another that de-emphasized oral communication ('written English only'). I also added a grammar standard that de-emphasized the

	Written English Only	Accented Intelligibility	NS Norm	EIL (cf. Jenkins, 2000)
Eng. teachers	0 (0.00%)	21 (33.9%)	32 (51.6%)	9 (14.5%)
Family	0 (0.00%)	7 (11.3%)	43 (69.4%)	12 (19.4%)
Friends from home country	1 (1.61%)	11 (17.7%)	41 (66.1%)	9 (14.5%)
US students	0 (0.00%)	18 (29.0%)	34 (54.8%)	8 (12.9%)
US professors	1 (1.61%)	22 (35.4%)	31 (50.0%)	7 (11.3%)
Self	0 (0.00%)	5 (8.06%)	46 (74.2%)	11 (17.7%)

Table 5.2 – GSIS results for pronunciation from Subtirelu (2010): The table displays the standards participants ($n = 62$) reported perceiving being held to by various others and by themselves in regards to their pronunciation and/or accents when speaking English.

	NS norm	Prescriptive standard	Stable interlanguage	Low focus on grammar
Eng Teachers	33 (53.2%)	23 (37.1%)	4 (6.45%)	2 (3.23%)
Family	36 (58.1%)	14 (22.6%)	9 (14.5%)	3 (4.84%)
Friends from home country	28 (45.2%)	18 (29.0%)	13 (21.0%)	3 (4.84%)
U.S. students	33 (53.2%)	14 (22.6%)	10 (16.1%)	4 (6.45%)
U.S. professors	37 (59.7%)	19 (30.6%)	4 (6.45%)	2 (3.23%)
Self	41 (66.1%)	10 (16.1%)	8 (12.9%)	3 (4.84%)

Table 5.3 – GSIS results for grammar from Subtirelu (2010): The table displays the standards participants ($n = 62$) reported perceiving being held to by various others and by themselves in regards to their grammar when using English.

importance of grammar. In addition, the questionnaire asked students not only for their own personal preference but also what they perceived others (English teachers, parents, professors, peers, etc.) to expect of them. Results are reproduced in Tables 5.2 and 5.3.

My sample differed greatly from Timmis' in that it was both smaller ($n = 62$) and more restricted. All participants in my study were at the time studying in the United States at a university intensive English program. As with Timmis' study the participants showed overwhelming support for the NS norm. 74.2% chose the NS norm as the norm they personally aspired toward for pronunciation, and a similar but slightly lower quantity was found for grammar (66.1%).

These two studies taken together seem to suggest that proponents of the NS norm can count student perspectives as a piece of evidence in their corner.

However, it is my intention in this chapter to challenge this idea and demonstrate that the data collected by these studies are misleading in two ways:

- (1) They focus on participants who have had little or no direct experience with NS language and therefore lack real awareness of NS language and the issues implicit in the debate.
- (2) They present the choice of a pedagogical standard for language learning as a static, confident decision when it is in fact conflicted, ambivalent, and ever-changing.

The implicit biases of previous cross-sectional research on this topic

The first inadequacy of previous research on this topic has been its cross-sectional approach or the fact that it has failed to track its participants over time. This, I believe, has resulted in a portrait of learners as individuals who have their minds made up about what they want out of language learning and who do not change their minds over time. It is my contention, however, that this is absolutely not the case. Before supporting my own claim, I will examine precisely how previous research has failed to take time into account as a factor.

Both Timmis' and my own previous research employed cross-sectional research designs, which would have theoretically captured a cross-section of learners thereby representing various views as a result of time. However, Timmis, who gives very little information about his sample, appears to have sampled to a

	< 3 mos.	3-6 mos.	7-11 mos.	1-2 years	2+ years	TOTAL
China	30 (44.8%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (6.0%)	1 (1.5%)	35 (52.2%)
S. Korea	17 (25.4%)	1 (1.5%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.5%)	0 (0.0%)	19 (28.4%)
Saudi Arabia	1 (1.5%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.5%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.5%)	3 (4.5%)
Japan	2 (3.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (3.0%)
Thailand	2 (3.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (3.0%)
Other	3 (4.5%)	1 (1.5%)	2 (3.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (9.0%)
TOTAL	55 (82.1%)	2 (3.0%)	3 (4.5%)	5 (7.5%)	2 (3.0%)	<i>n</i> = 67

Table 5.4 - Length of time participants spent in the US by country of origin for Subtirelu (2010):

The table displays the length of time the participants ($n = 67$) had spent in the US at the point of data collection. It is important to note here that the n value is higher for this bio-data than for the data reported earlier, because participants in this study completed questionnaires in multiple parts. The discrepancy in numbers is the result of some participants failing to complete the study.

large extent from countries where access to NSs of English is limited if not entirely absent. While some of the learners in his sample were studying in the United Kingdom, it is unclear how many and for how long each had been studying there. My own research sampled only participants studying in the United States, and I also collected information about their length of residency. However, the data in Table 5.4 shows a clear bias toward learners who had only just arrived in the United States. 82.1% of all the participants had been in the United States less than three months.

Of course, I do not intend to criticize Timmis for overlooking length of residence in an English-speaking country as a factor in his research. He intended to capture a portrait of the views on pedagogical standards held by learners from a variety of learning contexts. In the discussion of his data he states that

what the survey could not show is how far respondents' attitudes are related to their awareness of the sociolinguistic issues involved in the debate about native-speaker norms and international English (p. 248).

It is precisely this critical *awareness* that I think is given insufficient focus in both Timmis' and my own previous research due to the methodological and sampling limitations of both. The only research that I am aware of that has been able to capture the effects of this growing awareness in participants as a result of their first-hand exposure to these issues is Adolphs (2005). She argued that

there is also a strong sense in the interview data that as the students progress in their acculturation process they become more aware of the concept of the 'native speaker' and at the same time they become more critical of the value of conforming to native speaker norms (Adolphs, 2005, p. 129).

If Adolphs' analysis is correct then it may be that Timmis' and my own previous research represent little more than a baseline for what learners seem to believe without significant first-hand exposure to the sociolinguistic issues alluded to by Timmis or without pedagogical intervention.

Insights from longitudinal data

Data from the current study support Adolphs' findings and conclusions. One of the ways in which the current study has gone beyond my own previous research is to collect data using the GSIS at multiple points in time after the participants' arrival in the United States. Table 5.5 displays the standards that the participants selected as their own personal preference for their English pronunciation and grammar.

A cursory glance at this table reveals that while the NS norm is overwhelmingly popular both in grammar (6 of 8 participants) and pronunciation (7 of 8 participants) at the initial data collection point (as found by both Timmis and

		Point 1 (0-2 mos.)	Point 2 (2-4 mos.)	Point 3 (4-6 mos.)	Point 4 (6-8 mos.)
Abu	Pronunciation	NS norm	Acntd. intellig.	Written English	NS norm
	Grammar	Low focus	Prescriptive	NS norm	NS norm
DK	Pronunciation	NS norm	EIL	Acntd. intellig.	Acntd. intellig.
	Grammar	NS norm	NS norm	Low focus	Stb. interlang.
Harry	Pronunciation	NS norm	EIL	NS norm	EIL
	Grammar	NS norm	NS norm	NS norm	Low focus
Fahad	Pronunciation	NS norm	EIL	Acntd. intellig.	EIL
	Grammar	Low focus	Prescriptive	Low focus	Stb. interlang.
Sam	Pronunciation	NS norm	Written English	--	--
	Grammar	NS norm	NS norm	--	--
K3	Pronunciation	NS norm	NS norm	--	--
	Grammar	NS norm	NS norm	--	--
Mo	Pronunciation	NS norm	NS norm	--	--
	Grammar	NS norm	NS norm	--	--
Chevy	Pronunciation	Acntd. intellig	--	--	--
	Grammar	NS norm	--	--	--

Table 5.5 – Participants’ personal standards at each data collection point: The table displays the standards the participants selected as their own personal standard for language learning across time (i.e. the “self” category, items 7 and 14 on the GSIS, see Appendix A). “Acntd. intellig.” = accented intelligibility; “low focus” = low focus on grammar; “stb. Interlang” = stable interlanguage; “Written English” = written English only; “EIL” = English as an international language (cf. Jenkins, 2000)

myself in previous research), some of the participants began to abandon it by the second data collection point (2-4 months after arrival). This is especially true for pronunciation. While every participant except Chevy chose the NS norm for pronunciation at their first data collection point, only K3 and Mo maintained this choice past their first data collection point. In fact, looking at the four participants for whom data is available for all four collection points (Harry, DK, Abu, and Fahad) reveals not a portrait of a consistent and static characteristic but rather a state of flux that seems to persist across the entire span of data collection. There is little evidence to suggest that any of these four participants’ choices have stabilized by data collection point #4.

Therefore, it is clear from the longitudinal GSIS data that for some of the participants in this study, discussing the standards they hold for language learning at any give point as a static characteristic is inappropriate. Rather it is important to consider how the selection of a model for language learning changes most likely as an effect of their time in the United States becoming exposed first-hand to the sociolinguistic issues that Timmis alludes to. One of these issues, intelligibility, was discussed in the previous chapter, and I will take up others in Chapters 6 and 7. However, now I turn my attention to a further shortcoming of cross-sectional questionnaire data used to study this topic, its inability to capture the contradiction and complexity inherent in the participants' choices.

Insights from discourse data

In addition to collecting longitudinal data, the current study goes beyond Timmis' and my own previous research in its extensive use of interview data. Although Timmis did collect several interviews of participants, he does not report interview responses that appear to conflict the participants' questionnaire responses. My findings, however, suggest that the standard selected by participants on the GSIS is much less straightforward than even what might be suggested by the longitudinal data in Table 5.5. To demonstrate this I will examine the interview data of one of the participants who participated in four data collection points: DK. After demonstrating that the participant's GSIS data and interview data are often seemingly in conflict, I will examine several themes that emerge in the data that might serve as explanations for some of the conflicting responses.

Collection point	Pronunciation	Grammar
#1	NS norm	NS norm
#2	Eng. as an international lang.	NS norm
#3	Accented intelligibility	Low focus on grammar
#4	Accented intelligibility	Stable interlanguage

Table 5.6 - DK's GSIS responses for 'self' standard: This table displays the standards DK chose for the model he personally aspires toward at each data collection point

The case of DK

Before examining DK's interview data, I will quickly review his GSIS responses across time. Table 5.6 shows that DK's responses for pronunciation are consistent with the general pattern I have identified of participants tending to select the NS norm shortly after arrival and gradually (or in some cases, quite rapidly) re-evaluating this standard. I turn my attention now to DK's interview data.

Even though DK's GSIS data for the first data collection point suggest that he is striving for conformity to a NS norm in both grammar and pronunciation, these responses are perhaps not entirely representative of his goals. Excerpt 5.1 demonstrates this well.

Excerpt 5.1 [DK, Data collection point #1]

- 1 **Researcher:** yeah ok you said you said it will take you about five years to get to the
- 2 place you want to be right?
- 3
- 4 **DK:** yeah
- 5
- 6 **Researcher:** in five years describe your English to me so if you think in five years
- 7 you will be happy with it can you describe it?
- 8
- 9 **DK:** after five years?
- 10
- 11 **Researcher:** yeah
- 12
- 13 **DK:** my English I can speak in very uh really really flu flu
- 14

15 **Researcher:** fluently

16

17 **DK:** fluently and uh native very native and uh know many words and uh read the
18 read the read the news read the English like read the Chinese and I can I can umm
19 uh now I I speak English you I say a word I will translate it Chinese and know the
20 meaning and but I think after five years I will say the word and I know will the
21 meaning directly don't translate to Chinese

22

23 *[...4 turns skipped...]*

24

25 **Researcher:** ok what will your pronunciation be like?

26

27 **DK:** native

28

29 **Researcher:** you'll sound like a native speaker?

30

31 **DK:** yeah [laughs]

32

33 *[...4 turns skipped...]*

34

35 **Researcher:** yup how different will your English be from the English of a native
36 speaker then? In five years how different will your English be from a native
37 speaker's English?

38

39 **DK:** pronounce

40

41 **Researcher:** what?

42

43 **DK:** pro pronounce

44

45 **Researcher:** oh it will be

46

47 **DK:** accent accent

48

49 **Researcher:** you'll still have an accent you think?

50

51 **DK:** still have a little different

52

53 **Researcher:** ok will there be any other differences?

54

55 **DK:** uhh writing

56

57 **Researcher:** your writing?

58

59 **DK:** writing because uh I maybe I will write like something in Chinese it's a little
60 different I think

Prior to Excerpt 5.1, DK and I have been discussing his future goals for his English and when he believes he will be satisfied with his English. He claims that he expects this will take five years, and I begin to question him regarding what he expects his English will be like at that time (lines 1-2 and 6-7). One of the first characteristics he mentions is *very native* (line 17). He also draws comparisons between his L1, Chinese, and his future English, claiming that he will *read the news read the English like read the Chinese* (line 18). I later ask him specifically about what he expects his pronunciation to be like at this time (line 25), which he also describes as *native* (line 27).

However, I then ask him whether there will be differences between his English and a NS's English (lines 35-37).¹ One might expect him to indicate no differences here if he is truly expecting to conform to a NS norm in five years. However, he mentions that he expects both a difference in *accent* (line 47) as well as presumably a difference in his lexicogrammar that will be apparent in his writing (lines 59-60)².

At the second data collection point, DK's standard for grammar remains the NS norm, but he adjusts his pronunciation standard to one based on Jenkins'

60

¹ Admittedly the first formation of the question that I ask him is fairly leading: *How different will your English be from the English of a native speaker's?* However, he volunteers differences, which I take to represent authentic beliefs because of their consistency with his own later responses as well as other participants'.

² DK also demonstrates awareness of differences in rhetorical strategies that exist between US English and Chinese. Therefore, this reference to 'writing' may also allude to such differences as opposed to lexicogrammar.

proposals for English as an international language with a preference for communication with other NNSs. He mentions this preference in Excerpt 5.2.

Excerpt 5.2 [DK, Data collection point #2]

- 1 **Researcher:** umm what about how comfortable are you comfortable speaking
 2 English in with students from the united states?
 3
 4 **DK:** from uh
 5
 6 **Researcher:** from here the united states
 7
 8 **DK:** uh I will I will try to speak to them but the pronunciation is very different
 9 sometimes they can't understand me and sometimes they speak too fast so I I don't
 10 know I think it's maybe ok but I I I would rather speak with to non-speak non-native
 11 speaker

In Excerpt 5.2, DK appeals to a preference for speaking with NNSs (lines 10-11), a preference that is apparently new as it is not mentioned in the first interview. His rationale for this preference is that he feels that NSs cannot understand his *pronunciation which is very different* (line 8) and that NSs speak too quickly (line 9). He does, however, indicate at another point in the interview that communication between himself and his NNS classmates is constrained by both his pronunciation and his fellow NNSs. In Excerpt 5.3 he elaborates on a model of English speaking that he would be satisfied with and expects to reach in approximately a year.

Excerpt 5.3 [DK, Data collection point #2]

- 1 **Researcher:** [...] when do you think you'll be satisfied with your English?
 2
 3 **DK:** hmm I don't know it's hard to say I think it's ok
 4
 5 **Researcher:** you think it's ok now?
 6
 7 **DK:** you mean
 8

- 9 **Researcher:** when will you be happy with your English?
10
11 **DK:** oh sorry I think maybe one years later
12
13 **Researcher:** one year later ok
14
15 **DK:** one year later
16
17 **Researcher:** umm can you describe what your English English will be like when
18 you're happy in a year?
19
20 **DK:** I can understand most of what the American said and I can use the basic
21 grammar and uh I can mm speak very very fast but uh little different from native
22 American my write my writing maybe can write two thousand words very easily
23 [laughs] and uh my reading I can read any books very fast and I can understand it
24 like I can read an English novel like read a Chinese novel
25
26 **Researcher:** ok so how good will your grammar be?
27
28 **DK:** basic like uh mmm just like this like now
29
30 **Researcher:** basic?
31
32 **DK:** basic like uh I know maybe I will use he is not he are I mean it's very basic
33 grammar
34
35 **Researcher:** so you ok so you won't make mistakes like like you won't say he are
36
37 **DK:** no I mean I know this I know he is he are but maybe I can't use uh I will have
38 done like this very advanced grammar knowledge I can use basic grammar
39 knowledge
40
41 **Researcher:** ok ok what will your pronunciation be like?
42
43 **DK:** like a little different from American and not like this have a very strong accent
44 not like this maybe a little little accent

The description of DK's model for language learning in Excerpt 5.3 is surprisingly not greatly different from the one he outlines in Excerpt 5.1 despite the fact that he has identified a different standard for pronunciation on the GSIS at this data collection point. Lines 20-24 contain a series of characteristics of what DK feels

his English will be like at this future point when he is satisfied with it; these include (1) the ability to understand *most of what the American said* (line 20), (2) the ability to use *the basic grammar* (lines 20-21), (3) the ability to *speak very very fast but uh little different from native American* (lines 21-22), (4) the ability to *write two thousand words very easily* (line 22), and (5) the ability to *read an English novel like read a Chinese novel* (line 24). With its appeal to his L1 linguistic abilities, (5) seems to suggest DK is seeking a NS norm. However, the others do not necessarily.

Interestingly, the first item suggests he is working toward communication with NSs (although the word *most* suggests he is not seeking a NS norm), although earlier he indicates a preference for NNS-NNS interaction. The third item clearly suggests that DK is not seeking a NS norm in pronunciation, although the description is nearly identical to his description in the first interview (Excerpt 5.1, lines 47 and 51).

Of particular interest is what seems to be a contradiction between his indication that he is seeking a NS norm in grammar on the GSIS and his description of the grammar standard he would be satisfied with in Excerpt 3. In lines 32-33, DK indicates that he is seeking mastery of *basic grammar* and is apparently concerned with his accuracy on these basic grammar points; he specifically references subject-verb agreement (lines 32 and 37). However, presumably whatever he does not consider *basic grammar* but would likely be part of any model based on NSs is of little concern to him; for example, he specifically mentions the future perfect: *maybe I can't use uh I will have done* (lines 37-38), which he considers *very advanced grammar knowledge* (line 38) and of less importance. Therefore, there appears to

be a contradiction between what is implied by his response on the GSIS and the ideas he espouses in the interview.

Data collection point #3 finds DK indicating yet another set of standards on the GSIS, accented intelligibility for pronunciation and a low focus on grammar. At this data collection point, then it appears he has abandoned the NS norm altogether. However, Excerpt 5.4 indicates the NS norm has not altogether disappeared from DK's conception of language learning.

Excerpt 5.4 [DK, Data collection point #3]

- 1 **Researcher:** ok umm uh do you know any people who speak English in a way that
2 you want to be able to speak English like?
3
- 4 **DK:** oh it's maybe just like a native American that's that's ok if we use it specific
5 people mmm I I'm not sure I don't know
6
- 7 **Researcher:** ok ok uh do you know any people who speak English in a way that you
8 are afraid that you will speak English like like them? So do you know anybody
9 whose English you think oh no I hope I don't speak like that person
10
- 11 **DK:** like like not native American like a Chinese we Chinese Japanese and some
12 Arabic they they speak English we we speak English because we are not a native
13 American so they speak English a little bit strange and I I heard from my friends that
14 Englishman they speak English very very formal so I don't wanna speak English very
15 formal I I think it's too too fake yeah because we speak English just let others know
16 we don't need to uh focus on grammar like this if others know that's ok
17
- 18 **Researcher:** mhmm and who do you think it is that speaks English too formal too
19 formally?
20
- 21 **DK:** I just heard from my friends they say englishman
22
- 23 **Researcher:** oh ok so people from the united kingdom?
24
- 25 **DK:** yeah
26
- 27 **Researcher:** umm uh do you ever think about yourself in the future as an English
28 speaker?

29

30 **DK:** umm you mean to be uh just speak English very fluently

31

32 **Researcher:** well do you just think about yourself do you just kind of day dream
33 about what you will be like in the future?

34

35 **DK:** I think I'm very good at English but my spoken English with a little accent

36

37 **[...4 turns skipped...]**

38

39 **Researcher:** you're not sure? Umm will there be anything that you probably can't
40 do?

41

42 **DK:** speak like a native american

43

44 **Researcher:** how what do you mean by that speak like them?

45

46 **DK:** without accent

47

48 **[...4 turns skipped...]**

49

50 **Researcher:** k umm uh hmm what will people think or say about your English in the
51 future?

52

53 **DK:** in the future I think it's just as I describe uh very good at English but a little
54 accent

55

56 **Researcher:** that's what people will say?

57

58 **DK:** yeah

59

60 **Researcher:** who will say that?

61

62 **DK:** maybe my friends and uh of course include some American friends and maybe
63 my teacher my friend my parents don't know English so they they just think my
64 English is very good and my Chinese people if if they don't know English very well
65 they just think I'm very good at English they may can't find uh figure out I I have a
66 little accent umm and uh that's all

67

68 **[...2 turns skipped...]**

69

70 **Researcher:** very boring? Ok umm what are you afraid that people will think or say
71 about your English?

72

73 **DK:** hmm I don't care if someone say I have accent because it's actually exist and but
 74 I really care if someone say I can't understand what I what the others say I mean if I
 75 talk with you you say something I can understand it but someone say I can't
 76 understand it it's what I care about

Excerpt 5.4 contains a highly salient instance of apparent contradiction. In lines 1-2, I ask DK whether there is an individual who he aspires to speak like. His response appeals to the category of *native American*³ (line 4). He contrasts this with a category of people he does not want to speak like, namely *not native American* which include *Chinese, Japanese, and some Arabic* (lines 11-12). This seems to represent an apparent contradiction between DK's GSIS responses and what he expresses as his desires here. However, several lines further down DK does seem to appeal to his standard characterized by a low focus on grammar. He claims that he does not wish to speak like an *Englishman* (line 14), because they speak in an allegedly *very formal* manner (lines 14-15). It is his contention that such a focus on grammar is unnecessary because English is merely a communication tool or *because we speak English just let others know* (line 15). Echoing a US stereotype of British English speakers, DK apparently believes that US English speakers do not speak as formally or with a focus on grammatical accuracy.

Despite indicating at the beginning of Excerpt 5.4 that he wishes to speak like a NS of US English, DK responds slightly differently to my next set of questions. In lines 27-28 and 32-33, I ask him what he believes his English will be like in the

76

³ DK, like many international students studying in the US and also many of the other participants, is unaware of the connotation that *native American* has in the United States. He is not referring to the politically-correct blanket term of ethnicity used to refer to various groups of indigenous Americans. Rather he simply means people 'from the United States' and who speak English as their native language.

future. He seems positive about his English abilities but specifically mentions having *a little accent* (line 35, also lines 53-54). When asked if there is anything he will be unable to do, he responds *speak like a native american* (line 42).

It is also important to note that in Excerpt 4 DK seems to portray his future English as satisfactory but still deficient. He states that in the future people will think that he is *very good at English but a little accent* (lines 53-54). The word *but* in this statement is crucial as it implies that the accent is an element that contradicts his otherwise *very good* English. He notes several groups who will either be aware or unaware of this aspect of his English (lines 62-66). In the end, he seems to suggest that the presence of an ‘accent’ is of little consequence to him personally, but that he is very concerned with people recognizing his ability to understand them (lines 73-76). As a result, there seems to be a contradiction between DK’s reported preference of accented intelligibility on the GSIS and his apparent sense that his foreign ‘accent’ will be somehow deficient.

In the final data collection point, DK has maintained his selection of accented intelligibility as his standard for his pronunciation on the GSIS but has changed his selection for grammar now indicating a preference for a ‘stable and consistent interlanguage’. The interview data for collection point #4 reveals an apparent contradiction that is very similar to the one identified in Excerpt 5.4.

Excerpt 5.5 [DK, Data collection point #4]

- 1 **Researcher:** ok umm do you know any people who speak English in a way that you
- 2 want to speak English like?
- 3
- 4 **DK:** hmm I think most native American

5

6 **[...2 turns skipped...]**

7

8 **Researcher:** k why do you want that?

9

10 **DK:** uh because now I live here if I can speak like a native American it's more more
11 easier to uh connect with them I mean sometimes you can sometimes I mean
12 Americans they play Americans they play some jokes to on each other but we can't
13 understand the jokes because of the different culture but if I can speak like
14 American uh American and I know the culture and I can understand the joke and I
15 can uh go into the I mean uh like like [inaudible]

16

17 **[...34 turns skipped...]**

18

19 **Researcher:** [...] and what about in English though like what do you want your
20 English to be?

21

22 **DK:** oh you mean English ok uh uh like actually my goal is just can understand most
23 of people talk about and I can all the important thing is I don't need to think my
24 Chinese first and then translate it into English uh this if I can I mean what you talk
25 English to me I can think in that English way and don't need Chinese way to English
26 way I mean so I can that's that's the best but I think maybe very difficult it's maybe
27 cost me maybe five years or six years

28

29 **Researcher:** mhmm mmk umm what will people think about your English what
30 what do you want people to think about your English in the future?

31

32 **DK:** mm it's ok

33

34 **Researcher:** it's ok you just want them to think

35

36 **DK:** it's ok yeah

37

38 **Researcher:** ok umm do you mean anything specific by that it's ok what do you
39 mean?

40

41 **DK:** just they they can understand me and that's all

Excerpt 5.5 begins with the same question that Excerpt 5.4 begins with, and DK's response is nearly identical. Despite not indicating any desire to conform to a NS on the GSIS, when asked if there is a person whose English he admires and that

he would like to speak like (lines 1-2) he responds *most native American* (line 4). As with Excerpt 5.4, later in Excerpt 5.5 I ask him what he would like his English to be like (lines 19-20). His response to this line of questioning refers only to mutual intelligibility and does not seem to suggest a NS norm. He states that his *goal is just can understand most of people talk about* (lines 22-23) and that he would also like to develop his automatic language processing so that he would not need to rely on translation to his L1 to understand (lines 23-27). Further indicating mutual intelligibility he indicates that people will think his English is *ok* (lines 32 and 36) based on the fact that *they can understand him and that's all* (line 41).

It is clear in the data from all four of the interviews that some degree of contradiction or ambivalence exists regarding the NS norm. In the early interviews, where DK indicates a preference toward the NS norm in his GSIS responses, there seems to be some indication that he does not actually intend such a norm. However, in the later interviews when he has moved away from the NS norm in his GSIS responses, he seems to revert back to it consistently. It is this self-contradiction that I will attempt to elaborate on in the next section.

Explaining the contradiction

It is not my intention to suggest that all of the apparent contradiction that we see between the GSIS responses and the interview data in fact represents self-contradiction. I do maintain that some of what appears to be self-contradiction is in fact just that -- contradiction caused by the cognitive dissonance the participants are experiencing due to their developing awareness of complex and conflicting issues

related to NS language and its relation to them as NNSs. As a result of this developing awareness, they have not yet formulated consistent belief sets and therefore do in fact contradict themselves at various points. However, a significant portion of this apparent contradiction I believe is actually explicable and consistent if we admit more complexity into the analysis. Even if the participants are not fully aware or cognizant of these issues, I believe their interview data reveals these issues to be of relevance to them. I now turn my attention to discussing some of these issues as they relate to the data from DK that I have already presented and partially analyzed.

Ideal vs. acceptable models

Perhaps the most obvious issue with DK's responses have to do with exactly what level of standard he is referring to at any given moment and what level he interprets the GSIS to be attempting to elicit. Specifically, it appears that he and other participants may make a distinction between ideal outcomes and outcomes that he (or they) would be willing to accept. This distinction is evident in Excerpts 5.4 and 5.5 and likely explains the contradiction between DK's desire to speak English like *most native American* (Excerpt 5.5, line 4) and his very different *goal* that he describes as simply being able to *understand most of people talk about* (Excerpt 5.5, lines 22-23).

The difference between the acceptable model that DK labels as his *goal* and the ideal NS norm that DK still seems to hold on to on some level is probably mediated by his recognition of the difficulty that conforming to the NS norm would

entail (cf. Chapter 6 for a more detailed analysis of feasibility beliefs). He references this, for example, in the first interview when he says in response to a question about whether he is satisfied with his pronunciation, *it's problem uh it's a bigger problem it's harder to how do you say to fix it*. Excerpt 5.6 from another participant, Fahad, illustrates this distinction more clearly than any statement from DK.

Excerpt 5.6 [Fahad, Data collection point #3]

- 1 **Researcher:** yeah well sometimes I like to sit back and just think about the future
 2 and what what I'm going to be like do you do that?
 3
 4 **Fahad:** yeah sometimes I think uh what I will be umm a good speaker I I really don't
 5 want to be a perfect uh speaker umm of course I want to be but I don't plan to be a
 6 perfect speaker but I want to speak English in in in a way that most people native
 7 speakers and not non non-native speakers will understand me very well this uh my
 8 goal for now

Fahad's response here seems to explicitly draw attention to the dichotomy of ideal vs. acceptable models. He distinguishes quite eloquently between what he wants and what he believes will probably happen which he would be satisfied with by drawing a distinction between *wanting* to be a *perfect speaker* and *planning* to be one (lines 5-6). I will return to these ideas when I address the participants' beliefs about the feasibility of the NS norm in Chapter 6.

What I want vs. What others want from/for me

When designing my previous research study, I anticipated that what the participant wants and what others want might conflict. In recognition of this, I expanded upon Timmis' questionnaire when creating the GSIS to allow participants to indicate the standards that they felt they were held to by other individuals. Table

		Point 1 (0-2 mos.)	Point 2 (2-4 mos.)	Point 3 (4-6 mos.)	Point 4 (6-8 mos.)
Eng. teachers	Pronunciation	NS norm	EIL	NS norm	EIL
	Grammar	Prescriptive	NS norm	NS norm	Prescriptive
Family	Pronunciation	NS norm	NS norm	NS norm	NS norm
	Grammar	NS norm	NS norm	NS norm	NS norm
Friends	Pronunciation	NS norm	NS norm	NS norm	NS norm
	Grammar	Low focus	Prescriptive	NS norm	NS norm
US students	Pronunciation	NS norm	NS norm	NS norm	NS norm
	Grammar	NS norm	NS norm	NS norm	NS norm
US profs	Pronunciation	NS norm	EIL	NS norm	NS norm
	Grammar	NS norm	NS norm	NS norm	NS norm
Self	Pronunciation	NS norm	EIL	Acntd. intellig.--	Acntd. intellig.
	Grammar	NS norm	NS norm	Low focus	Stb. interlang.

Table 5.7 - DK's expanded GSIS responses: This table displays all of DK's GSIS responses. The "self" category has been previously presented in Tables 5.5 and 5.6. The five other categories relate to the standards DK felt he was held to by these others. 'Friends' specifically refers to friends from his home country. "Acntd. intellig." = accented intelligibility; "low focus" = low focus on grammar; "stb. Interlang" = stable interlanguage; "Written English" = written English only; "EIL" = English as an international language (cf. Jenkins, 2000)

5.7 presents the full GSIS data for DK including the responses he gave for the five 'others' that were included at each data collection point.

What is most striking about DK's expanded GSIS data is the discrepancy between what he perceives others as expecting of him and what he himself seems to want at data collection points #3 and #4. Note that at collection point #3 DK indicated that he perceived that all of the 'other' groups wanted him to conform to a NS norm. However, he himself rejected the NS norm at this point. He reported a very similar situation at collection point #4.

The difference between what DK personally wants and what important others want for or from him is evident in his interview data. In Excerpt 5.4, DK reveals that he is aware that others, real and hypothetical, such as teachers and *American friends* will consider non-conformity to a NS 'accent' to be a deficiency in

his English (lines 62-66). He, however, expresses little personal concern with having a noticeable foreign 'accent' (lines 73-76, see also his GSIS 'self' response).

At data collection point #4, DK shows clear awareness of the fact that 'accent' may play a role in his ability to enter social networks and that in order to enter these networks he may need to conform to what he perceives as the expectations of the NS gatekeepers. In Excerpt 5.5, he states *if I can speak like a native American it's more more easier to uh connect with them* (lines 10-11). However, the goal that he expresses for himself in lines 22-27 refers to developing more automatic processing and listening comprehension not to acquiring a NS 'accent'. Furthermore, he specifically rejects the NS norm as his preferred target on his GSIS from collection point #4. The data then suggest a discrepancy between what DK wants and what others want for him or from him.

Furthermore, because of the simple fact that pleasing these others is something the participants usually want, it may at times be difficult for them to separate the standard that they actually desire from what these important others want. In other words, if the participants want to please their professors and they sense that their professors expect norm x , then the determination of the learner's own norm may be heavily influenced if not outright determined by the influential other.

Accuracy of 'the basics' vs. full-scale conformity

It seems to be an intrinsic aspect of the NS norm that anything deviating from it would be considered an error and therefore in need of eradicating from the

learner's interlanguage. While instructors might prioritize certain features as being simpler, more learnable, more critical for intelligibility, or more frequent, the satisfaction of the NS norm in its strongest form appears to involve the development of competence and 'native'-like control of all aspects regardless of these priorities.⁴

However, the extent to which DK interprets the NS norm as implying that he must have full command of all of the structures and aspects of English that the model NS would have is highly questionable. In particular, evidence from data collection point #2 casts serious doubt on this. At this point, DK has indicated that he is working toward the NS norm in grammar on his GSIS. However, in Excerpt 5.3 a very revealing exchange occurs in which he makes a distinction between *basic* (lines 20, 28, and 38) and *advanced grammar knowledge* (line 38). He distinguishes between subject-verb agreement as *basic* grammar and future perfect aspect as *advanced* grammar, arguing that he is working toward a model of language learning in which he is able to control that which is *basic* but not necessarily that which is *advanced*. DK's comments in the interview appear to conflict with a strict definition of the NS norm which he identified as his personal standard on the GSIS. However, he appears to be reconceptualizing English grammar as a medium that contains extraneous aspects that he can selectively ignore while still being fully competent and satisfying the NS norm. It seems that this is probably not an altogether naïve

⁴ It may be that proponents of using the NS norm in language teaching may not feel that this is an appropriate description of their position -- that they do not necessarily intend or expect a learner to be indistinguishable from a NS in every aspect. It is, however, my experience that regardless of these intentions learners are still assessed against NS competence, and, therefore, I feel this is the de facto status of the NS norm regardless of the intentions of its proponents.

position as in many circumstances he will certainly be in situations where he can 'pass' as NS (cf. Piller, 2002) or even merely as legitimate L2 speaker without needing allegedly more *advanced* structures such as the future perfect. It does, however, call into question whether his response on the GSIS truly represents support for the NS norm. Furthermore, it may also stem from a conflation of the formal prescriptive notion of 'grammar' with the more descriptive notion of grammar typical of ESL grammar courses⁵. This conflation is evident in Excerpt 5.4, lines 13-16 when he compares British English speakers to US English speakers stating that the former devote too much attention to grammar.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to demonstrate that while cross-sectional research on learner's choices of language learning models or standards shows strong support in favor of adherence to a NS norm, that these results should be questioned on a number of grounds. The present study has gone beyond the questionnaire-based cross-sectional research of my own past work as well as that of Timmis to reveal several areas of interest. First, the learner's choice of a standard is extremely inconsistent across time points as a result of developing awareness and exposure to NS language. In particular, I observed a pattern of most of my

⁵ I do not mean to imply that ESL instructors are never prescriptivists or that their materials do not reveal prescriptive attitudes. I simply wish to state that the vast majority of the structures covered in such grammar courses are descriptive of general NS norms rather than prescriptive of some hyper-elite norm that most prescriptivists would be appealing to when attempting to modify the grammar of NSs during the prescriptive grammar instruction that US students receive during their primary and secondary education.

participants preferring the NS norm at first, but later becoming critical of it and as a result abandoning it in favor of other models such as accented intelligibility⁶.

Furthermore, these choices are frequently marked by contradiction between what the participants selected on the GSIS and what they stated in the interview. Some of this contradiction it seems can only be explained through an appeal to the fact that the learner is developing critical awareness of complex issues and thus has not yet developed a stable position. However, other aspects of the alleged 'contradiction' may in fact not be contradiction at all. Instead, these aspects can be better understood as other confounding factors that need to be considered when considering the participants' positions. These are (1) the possible conflation of the learners' desires and others' expectations, (2) the possible confusion of 'ideal' and 'acceptable' models, and (3) the possibility that learners may not adopt or prioritize all aspects of a given model⁷.

I believe the implications of these findings for research on the topic are quite clear. If aspects such as participants' awareness of sociolinguistic issues as well as the conflation of both ideal and acceptable models as well as learners' own desires and others' expectations are not taken into consideration, then it is quite premature

⁶ Although in some cases the move away from the NS norm was itself temporary as in the case of Abu, who eventually returned to supporting the NS norm after abandoning it (see Table 5.5). It remains to be seen whether Abu holds to this selection or changes his mind once again.

⁷ It is quite probable that even these three factors are not truly distinct in all situations. The interaction between them is quite conceivable. For example, it may be that a learner only desires the NS norm as an ideal model for satisfying perceived expectations of NS peers, but would be willing to accept a different model if these perceptions modified or the importance of interacting with NS peers were reduced.

to conclude as many do (e.g. Carter, 1998; Kubota, 2006; Kuo, 2006; Prodromou, 2006; Scheuer, 2005; Sobkowiak, 2005) that alternatives to the NS norm patronize learners who have loudly and clearly voiced their preference for the NS norm. In reality the situation is much less clear than is suggested by studies such as Timmis (2002) and Subtirelu (2010), and researchers and practitioners should take due caution in suggesting that learners 'want' any standard unequivocally. In particular, it should be noted that even when learners appear to support NS norms they may lack awareness of what exactly is entailed in a NS norm or may have conflicting attitudes toward it.

Chapter 6: Balancing feasibility and desire

As I pointed out in Chapter 5, all of the participants at various time points have expressed some desire to satisfy a NS norm on some linguistic dimension, although there is certainly variation in terms of the degree to which they consistently expressed this desire. I used DK as an example of a participant whose desire to satisfy the NS norm wavered across the different collection points of the study and even seemed to be in conflict during a single interview. In fact, all four of the participants who completed four data collection points showed quite a bit of variability in the standard they reported preferring for themselves on the GSIS.

Another question related to their perceptions of the NS norm is how feasible they feel it is to satisfy such a standard. This question has relevance especially from the perspective of those interested in goal theory, because according to Moskowitz and Grant (2009) the determination of which goals are taken up by the individual and the degree to which effort is exerted toward them is determined by weighing (a) the extent to which the goal seems contextually feasible and (b) the value the individual places on the desired outcome. Furthermore, according to Jostmann and Koole (2009) it is important that individuals be able to disengage themselves from goals that are unrealistic or unattainable. Therefore, the participants' perceptions of

the feasibility of what they are working toward in their English language pursuits is very important for determining both whether they remain motivated toward English language learning and use and whether they maintain some degree of self-esteem and psychological well-being.

Furthermore, Dörnyei (2009) notes the need to examine motivation and goals together in tandem when he introduces his theory of L2 selves based upon the psychological notion of future selves (Cross and Markus, 1994). He argues that “future self-guides motivate action by triggering the execution of self-regulatory mechanisms” (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 18). However, he adds the caveat that certain conditions are necessary to optimize the motivational benefit of a future self. These include the following (among others) that are highly relevant to the present study: (1) “availability of an elaborate and vivid future self image” and (2) “perceived plausibility” (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 18).

In order to examine whether the participants in this study meet the conditions that Dörnyei describes I have also drawn on influence from Lave and Wenger (1991) who argue that

...acceptance by and interaction with acknowledged adept practitioners make learning legitimate and of value from the point of view of the apprentice. More generally, learning in practice, apprentice learners know that there is a field for the mature practice of what they are learning to do [...] The community [...] and their productive relations with the world provide apprentices with these continuity-based “futures” (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 110).

The use of the word “futures” here is reminiscent of the notion of future selves. It is my contention that Lave and Wenger’s notion of “adept practitioners” serving as

guides or models to “apprentices” is related to the concept of L2 selves especially in regards to the two conditions from Dörnyei. First, we would expect an individual who is able to observe and interact with an individual who exemplifies or approximates their desired future self to have “an elaborate and vivid future self image” owing to the fact that the “adept practitioner” can serve as a de facto model of the desired characteristics. Furthermore, we would also expect the apprentice to perceive their desired future self as a plausible or feasible future state, if he or she can draw the connection between the adept practitioner’s current abilities and his or her origins as apprentice, and he or she does not ascribe greater capacity for learning or performance to the adept practitioner.

To this end, I have analyzed the participants’ interview data for the presence of descriptions of adept practitioners and beliefs related to the feasibility of acquiring English in the manner that the adept practitioner has. In particular, I have focused on responses to the interview question: “Do you know any people who speak English in a way that you want to be able to speak English?” This interview question was added to the interview protocol after the revision of the interview questions that occurred halfway through the completion of the study. As a result, most of the data analyzed in this chapter pertains to data collection point #3 and #4 for DK, Harry, Abu, and Fahad. However, owing to the fact that the interview was loosely structured, participants commented on the English of other individuals at earlier data collection points as well as in other sections of the interview. I have included these instances in my analysis as well.

The following sections detail the relevant responses of the participants who completed four interviews with me: DK, Harry, Fahad, and Abu. The others are not included due to the lower quantity of data available for them. In particular, Chevy and Sam's participation in the study occurred before the addition of the relevant interview question. As a result, neither participant discussed having aspirations to acquire the language abilities of a specific adept practitioner. I now turn my attention to the data for DK.

DK: Successful but lonely

In Chapter 4, I discussed at length the fact that DK held conflicting views about the NS norm. There appeared to be some uncertainty about whether he preferred a standard based on intelligibility or one based on conformity to an NS norm. Despite this, the only adept practitioners that DK mentions are NSs, and he is never specific enough in his descriptions to reach the individual level. Excerpts 6.1 and 6.2 below contain the relevant responses from data collection points #3 and #4 respectively.

Excerpt 6.1 [DK, Data collection point #3]

1 **Researcher:** ok umm uh do you know any people who speak English in a way that
2 you want to be able to speak English like?

3

4 **DK:** oh it's maybe just like a native American that's that's ok if we use it specific
5 people mmm I I'm not sure I don't know

Excerpt 6.2 [DK, Data collection point #4]

1 **Researcher:** ok umm do you know any people who speak English in a way that you
2 want to speak English like?

3

4 **DK:** hmm I think most native American

5

6 **Researcher:** ok any anything more specific?

- 7
 8 **DK:** uh I haven't find it
 9
 10 **Researcher:** k why do you want that?
 11
 12 **DK:** uh because now I live here if I can speak like a native American it's more more
 13 easier to uh connect with them I mean sometimes you can sometimes I mean
 14 Americans they play Americans they play some jokes to on each other but we can't
 15 understand the jokes because of the different culture but if I can speak like
 16 American uh American and I know the culture and I can understand the joke and I
 17 can uh go into the I mean uh like like [inaudible]

In both Excerpts 6.1 and 6.2, DK expresses an aspiration to sound like a NS or *native American* (Excerpt 6.1, line 4; Excerpt 6.2, line 4). However, in both cases he is unable to be more specific than this (Excerpt 6.1, lines 4-5; Excerpt 6.2, line 8).

When pressed about why he looks to NSs as a model, he mentions that he feels it is easier to *connect with* people from the United States (Excerpt 6.2, line 13) if one is able to perform linguistically and culturally similarly to them. In particular he mentions *jokes* (Excerpt 6.2, lines 14-17), which is a frequently mentioned source of trouble for DK. In other interviews he also expresses a desire to understand the jokes that US students exchange. The barrier for understanding the jokes according to DK is *the different culture* (Excerpt 6.2, line 15).

Although DK expresses an aspiration to acquire the abilities of a *native American*, the perceptions he expresses at other points about the feasibility of acquiring their linguistic features and cultural knowledge do not suggest that he feels this is a likely outcome. Excerpt 6.3 illustrates this well.

Excerpt 6.3 [DK, Data collection point #3]

- 1 **Researcher:** ok ok umm so do you think that those things will probably happen?
 2
 3 **DK:** maybe I'm not sure

- 4
 5 **Researcher:** you're not sure? Umm will there be anything that you probably can't
 6 do?
 7
 8 **DK:** speak like a native american
 9
 10 **Researcher:** how what do you mean by that speak like them?
 11
 12 **DK:** without accent
 13
 14 **Researcher:** without an accent?
 15
 16 **DK:** and the the the way thinking about things and some cultural cultural things like
 17 umm umm it's hard to say but I think it's probably exist because anyone from a
 18 culture to another culture they must feel at first he must feel uncomfortable and
 19 after a time he will feel it's ok but actually he can't go into that that situation because
 20 there's a wall separate it's hard to say
 21
 22 **Researcher:** no keep going you you're saying there's a wall between
 23
 24 **DK:** yeah between just you and me there's a wall between us because I I get an
 25 education uh in my uh when I was a child uh in china but you get an education in
 26 America so it's very very different so it's a wall the the way thinking about
 27 something like for example uh you you may think something very directly but we
 28 think something very think say something will say something first and say that's it
 29 you will say that's it directly

Prior to Excerpt 6.3, DK has described what he would like his English to be, contrasting his current situation of inability to understand and therefore to participate in various forms of media with what he hopes he will be able to do in the future. I ask him what he believes the feasibility of this outcome is (line 1), and he expresses some uncertainty (line 3). In particular he mentions two elements as problematic from a feasibility perspective, which are also the same two aspects he mentioned as highly salient and highly important aspects of the NS's abilities as adept practitioners in Excerpt 6.2: cultural knowledge and 'accent' or spoken English. He first mentions that he thinks it is unlikely that he will be able to speak

like a NS (line 8), which he defines as *without accent* (line 12). He is even more specific about the difficulties underlying the acquisition of the cultural knowledge that might stand in the way of him participating in the *jokes* told by the NSs. He describes a *wall* (lines 20 and 24) separating individuals from different cultures that results partially from *education* (lines 25-26). DK's metaphor of a *wall* does not suggest that he believes himself capable of performing like the adept practitioners he mentions in response to my question about whose English he admires.

There is one other practitioner that DK mentions. He presents this individual's situation as a more plausible outcome for his own language learning trajectory. Excerpt 6.4 illustrates this position.

Excerpt 6.4 [DK, Data collection point #4]

- 1 **Researcher:** ok do you want to eventually live in the united states or another
 2 English speaking country
 3
 4 **DK:** umm it's up to my how good my job is I mean because I find when you uh when
 5 you live in America you will feel feel lonely I don't know why maybe maybe I talked
 6 too too little to others but I think I feel the lonely more than umm in china so if my
 7 job is good enough I mean maybe mmm twenty thousand umm no I mean two
 8 hundred thousand per year yeah that's good and I may consent live in america
 9
 10 **Researcher:** ok ok you said that you're more lonely here than in china why is that?
 11
 12 **DK:** uh because individualism and everyone is do their own job and they think uh
 13 they didn't really care about us even they ask how it going like this just like hello so
 14 they just uh care about themself maybe they have some best friends but they have
 15 them uh I don't know how can they make a best friend but they don't want to make
 16 a best friend with Chinese or a non-native speaker
 17
 18 **Researcher:** why not?
 19
 20 **DK:** because there are culture difference
 21
 22 **Researcher:** mhmm like what?
 23

24 **DK:** let me see it's hard to say

25

26 **Researcher:** mhmm are you talking about in the future or are you talking about
27 right now? Are you more lonely now than you were in china or do you mean

28

29 **DK:** both

30

31 **Researcher:** both?

32

33 **DK:** because I when I go to new york I have a very uh how to say that uncle uh or
34 uncle in the new york and if his life is ok and he have a very good car and the the car
35 in china maybe uh maybe needed to a mill a million yuan and it's it's very good car
36 in in uh in America it's just fifty thousand and uh he live in a big room uh big house
37 and and uh have a very nice family but the only thing I think the only not good thing
38 is I think he is very lonely he talk to me uh uh at night if he want to play in china you
39 can find many friends you can drink or play cards uh card game and talk to each
40 other and many things to do he said uh in America the only thing you can do is go to
41 the bar

In Excerpt 6.4, DK admits to being *lonely* in the United States (lines 5-6). He claims that he has been unable to make NS friends, partially because NSs *don't want to make a best friend with Chinese or a non-native speaker* (lines 15-16). He attributes this issue to *cultural differences* (line 20), presenting these differences as insurmountable. Finally, he portrays what he feels is a more plausible figure to represent the outcome of his language learning if he were to remain in the United States: his uncle (lines 33-41). He portrays his uncle as successful (lines 34-37), which he seems to believe he also could be as he suggests that he believes there to be a possibility that he could be offered a two hundred thousand dollar a year position in the United States (lines 7-8). However, his uncle is also *very lonely* he believes (line 38), presumably because he is unable to become accustomed to what he believes are US social customs that apparently revolve around bars and alcohol and which DK expresses a dislike for (lines 40-41). There is quite a strong

difference between this somewhat dreary description of DK's uncle and his description of his future self satisfying a NS norm and joining social networks with NSs (Excerpt 6.2, lines 12-17). It is clear that he believes the uncle would be a more plausible representation of his future self if he were to remain in the United States, but it is also clear that he is extremely dissatisfied with that outcome. This perception of his uncle and his own future outcomes is probably a contributing factor to his hesitance to remain in the United States.

DK in some sense clings to a NS norm and places a great deal of value on interaction with NSs. Despite this he finds it difficult to interact with them and even more difficult to befriend them. He finds a future in which he is able to speak like them, make friends with them, and participate in the *jokes* that they tell to be quite implausible. Rather he presents his uncle's case as a more plausible representation of what his life would be like if he were to remain in the United States: successful but lonely. An unfortunate, notable absence of the practitioners in DK's interviews is an individual living in China who uses English competently in his or her profession, which is what DK suggests he would like to do in the future. Next I turn my attention to Harry's case.

Harry: The 'inherent value' of NS language

Like DK, the adept practitioners that Harry points to are NSs. However, Harry differs slightly from DK in his views on the plausibility of NSs as a representation of his future language learning outcomes. In addition, while DK focuses on the social benefits of NS language, Harry appears to base his admiration

for NS language on what he sees as its inherent aesthetic value reminiscent of the inherent value hypothesis (cf. Trudgill and Giles, 1978). Excerpts 6.5 and 6.6 illustrate Harry's position in regards to NSs as a representation of his own future possibilities.

Excerpt 6.5 [Harry, Data collection point #3]

- 1 **Researcher:** k cool umm mmm mmm do you know any people who speak English in
 2 a way that you want to be able to speak English?
 3
 4 **Harry:** umm yeah maybe native speakers I think they just relax you know and they
 5 intuition in like high down
 6
 7 **Researcher:** high down?
 8
 9 **Harry:** yeah like the I don't know the word but umm uh like the accident accident
 10
 11 **[...8 turns skipped...]**
 12
 13 **Researcher:** native speakers have a have a have an accent you mean?
 14
 15 **Harry:** no no no not native speakers have accent I mean international students have
 16 accents it's difficult to change yes so yes
 17
 18 **Researcher:** ok so you think umm so you say you want to speak like a native
 19 speaker
 20
 21 **Harry:** yeah
 22
 23 **Researcher:** because they don't have accents?
 24
 25 **Harry:** right
 26
 27 **Researcher:** umm is there any other reason?
 28
 29 **Harry:** mmm umm sounds good
 30
 31 **Researcher:** it sounds good?
 32
 33 **Harry:** yeah
 34
 35 **Researcher:** ok your first thing that you said was something about high and low

- 36
 37 **Harry:** yeah this umm we we just learn it in our open topic class pronunciation in
 38
 39 **Researcher:** oh intonation?
 40
 41 **[...2 turns skipped...]**
 42
 43 **Harry:** it's it's it's difficult to to to to change that yes mhmm

Excerpt 6.6 [Harry, Data collection point #4]

- 1 **Researcher:** ok umm do you uh do you know any people who speak English in a
 2 way that you want to be able to speak English?
 3
 4 **Harry:** native speakers mhmm
 5
 6 **Researcher:** ok why's that?
 7
 8 **Harry:** they speak umm fluency and more fast sounds good yeah
 9
 10 **Researcher:** ok umm umm how far away are you from that?
 11
 12 **Harry:** hmm maybe close
 13
 14 **[...2 turns skipped...]**
 15
 16 **Researcher:** maybe how close?
 17
 18 **Harry:** umm I think several months later maybe five or six
 19
 20 **Researcher:** from now?
 21
 22 **Harry:** yeah
 23
 24 **Researcher:** you will sound like a native speaker?
 25
 26 **Harry:** close

Harry mentions the category of NSs as the adept practitioners whose English abilities he aspires to match (Excerpt 6.5, line 4; Excerpt 6.6, line 4). In Excerpt 6.5, he describes in detail the features of NS language that he finds appealing. First, he mentions what he perceives as their relaxed nature when speaking English (line 4).

In addition, he mentions NSs' intonation patterns as aesthetically pleasing (lines 4-5 and 39). Similarly he claims that NSs have no 'accents' (line 15). Finally, he characterizes their language as simply sounding good (line 29). In Excerpt 6.6, he repeats the characterization of NS language as sounding good (line 6). He adds to these characteristics the fact that they speak more quickly than he does (line 6).

Harry's position on NSs as a plausible representation of his future language learning outcomes is somewhat conflicted. In Excerpt 6.5, Harry repeatedly mentions that he feels it is *difficult to change* aspects of his own language in order to be more like NSs (lines 16 and 43). At the next data collection point (Excerpt 6.6), however, he is much more positive indicating that he is *close* to reaching the level of NS language that he desires (line 12), and that he may be *close* (line 26) to the language abilities of these adept practitioners in *several months* (line 18). Like DK, Harry mentions no NNSs as adept practitioners that he finds satisfactory. However, he does discuss the situation of one NNS in the third interview illustrated in Excerpt 6.7.

Excerpt 7 [Harry, Data collection point #3]

- 1 **Harry:** umm first umm at first when I came to America I want to be a umm I I want
- 2 to to speak English as a native speaker but now I change my my idea because you
- 3 know the accent
- 4
- 5 **Researcher:** the accent
- 6
- 7 **Harry:** yeah yeah the accent is is is difficult to change so I just think I can speak it
- 8 clearly and clear and all almost like native speakers that's ok
- 9
- 10 **[...2 turns skipped...]**
- 11
- 12 **Researcher:** how how does that make you feel?
- 13

14 **Harry:** umm not so good maybe

15

16 **Researcher:** not good why not?

17

18 **Harry:** because umm you know native speakers they they speak in English sound
19 sounds so good yeah umm make you feel good when you hear when you listen to
20 them but for us umm maybe when when you hear my speaking maybe you can
21 guess I'm not American uh I'm I must be the international people yeah so

22

23 **Researcher:** mhmm and you you don't you don't want to be seen as an international
24 student?

25

26 **Harry:** I want umm sorry

27

28 **Researcher:** do you you don't like it that people hear you and know that you're an
29 international student?

30

31 **Harry:** umm sometimes

32

33 **Researcher:** mhmm you would rather them think you were an American?

34

35 **Harry:** umm that's not other reason that's just because I I can't speak English well
36 so I just think about that

37

38 **Researcher:** so you think you think that they hear you and think that you can't
39 speak English well?

40

41 **Harry:** mhmm

42

43 **Researcher:** yeah? Umm does it feel like you umm this change that you said that
44 you've undergone that you no longer want to sound like a native speaker does it feel
45 like you have given up on a goal?

46

47 **Harry:** no I'm not giving up

48

49 **Researcher:** you're not giving up?

50

51 **Harry:** yes for example my my teacher told us umm her husband is from china and
52 her husband has been in America for about ten more years but he also has the
53 accent so I think maybe it's it's really different uh really difficult to to change the
54 accent so maybe you should just practice to the native speakers mmm and then you
55 will be better

56

57 **Researcher:** mhmm but do you think it's possible to sound like a native speaker?

58

59 **Harry:** yeah yeah it's possible

60

61 **Researcher:** yeah? Ok do you think you'll be able to do that?

62

63 **Harry:** yes I hope

It is interesting that Excerpt 6.7 begins with Harry claiming that he has gone through a change away from a preference toward the NS norm (lines 1-8). He begins the excerpt by claiming that unlike when he first arrived in the United States (lines 1-2), he no longer aspires toward this (which also seems to contradict his responses to the questions in Excerpts 6.5 and 6.6) and has adjusted his goal to be about language that is *clear and all almost like native speakers* citing the fact that he believes it is *difficult to change* his accent (Excerpt 7, lines 7-8). Of particular interest in Excerpt 6.7, is Harry's discussion of his English instructor's husband, a Chinese man who has been living in the United States for *about ten years* who despite this continues to speak English with *the accent* (lines 51-55). However, Harry does not frame this man as an illustration of an adept practitioner that he aspires to be like. Instead he mentions this individual as evidence of the fact that it is *difficult to change the accent* (lines 53-54). He asserts, however, that it is possible for a NNS to have a 'native-like accent' (line 59) and that he hopes to achieve this still (line 61).

Harry claims that his reason for choosing NSs as the adept practitioners he aspires to be like has to do with the inherent, aesthetic value of their language. Despite his strong beliefs about NS language and its alleged inherent value, Harry at times expresses doubt about the feasibility of satisfying a NS norm. However, he

still chooses to aspire toward NSs as his adept practitioners of English rejecting the English used by his instructor's husband (the only specific NNS whose English he discusses in his interviews) due to its 'accent'.

Fahad: No subtitles needed

Unlike DK and Harry, the adept practitioners that Fahad points to are frequently fellow NNSs, especially fellow Arabic speakers. Although he views some NNSs as excellent models for language learning, he does not necessarily view L2 English use as a legitimate variety in and of itself. In particular his evaluations of NNS adept practitioners are sometimes made in terms of the extent to which he feels they can 'pass' as NSs. Excerpt 6.8 illustrates this position well.

Excerpt 6.8 [Fahad, Data collection point #3]

- 1 **Researcher:** ok umm do you know any people who speak English in a way that you
 2 want to be able to speak English?
 3
 4 **Fahad:** uh yeah some some umm tv tv hosts hosts maybe umm I mean American tv
 5 hosts actually I know I don't know he he he's from Saudi Arabia and I don't know I
 6 think he's the the head of the Islamic center in the the united states in in Washington
 7 dc he's from Saudi Arabia and he speak perfect English and I don't know I really
 8 don't know how the accent's so umm so perfect umm maybe that I will I will I will I
 9 wish to be like him because I know that he he is not a native speaker umm mostly uh
 10 umm non-native speaker that uh speaker speakers that speak English in a very good
 11 uh way I like to to be like them
 12
 13 **Researcher:** umm the the host where did you or the I'm sorry the Saudi the head of
 14 the Saudi is the head of the Saudi embassy?
 15
 16 **Fahad:** uh head of the the Islam Islamic
 17
 18 **Researcher:** Islamic center?
 19
 20 **Fahad:** Islamic center in the united states
 21
 22 **Researcher:** ok umm where did you see him or where did you hear him speak?
 23

24 **Fahad:** it's yeah yeah yeah I've seen seen him once in tv and umm the thing that
 25 make make make me uh feel that he is speaking perfectly the first time the the
 26 picture wasn't at at him just his voice and I didn't thought that he's a that this man I I
 27 I just I know his picture I know his name but when the his picture uh I I see the
 28 picture I was so surprised that he he is the the one who was speaking for maybe
 29 thirty seconds

Although Fahad's adept practitioner, the head of the Islamic Center in Washington D.C., in Excerpt 6.8 is a NNS, he evaluates him in terms of his ability to satisfy a NS norm. Having seen him on television, Fahad claims he speaks *perfect English* (line 7) and has a *perfect 'accent'* (line 8). It is clear that *perfect* is synonymous with 'native-like', because Fahad describes in a later anecdote how he did not realize that the man speaking but not yet pictured on the television was this man, a NNS, due to the fact that the man was *speaking perfectly* (lines 24-29). It is intriguing, however, that unlike Harry and DK, Fahad creates an entirely different category of speakers: *non-native speakers that speak English in a good way* (lines 10-11). Excerpt 6.9 illustrates a further way in which Fahad differs from Harry and DK in his perspective on NS language.

Excerpt 6.9 [Fahad, Data collection point #4]

1 **Researcher:** mhmm ok ok umm do you know any people who speak English in a
 2 way that you want to be able to speak English?
 3
 4 **Fahad:** mm you mean umm the umm they are native speakers or uh any any
 5
 6 **Researcher:** whoever
 7
 8 **Fahad:** yeah uh the actually the umm student that we met with with him in our
 9 assignments he he was a native native speaker he is American and he speaks very
 10 well very very well even uh my even the the teacher said that he speak he speaks
 11 very good English I asked him about his name and what his major uh he speaks very
 12 very very good and he is well organized even though he uh we made made a
 13 problem when we uh uh when we are uh taping him and just we pressing a button
 14 so it goes so try to do it again and he do it in the same way and he used he was even

15 in my in I I am I wish to talk in in in my native language like like him not in English
 16 only so he's well organized and very good

17

18 **Researcher:** so he's well organized was there anything else about his speaking that
 19 was that you liked

20

21 **Fahad:** yeah because umm umm you know I feel that he's so confident and umm uh
 22 he he choose the nice words so so high umm and umm if we want to make any joke
 23 or something like that he he do it in like like you feel that he is very uh umm uh used
 24 to it he do it a lot even though you see he's he is he is a student you see him he's but
 25 I think maybe he had he had this this talent or or he used to do it a lot I don't know
 26 but he he was he was very well very very good and even our umm our project
 27 wasn't uh wasn't the best one in our in in the in the class there's another student
 28 that do better but I think our umm I think our teacher liked our our project because
 29 because of him

In his next interview, Fahad points to a NS as his adept practitioner. In contrast to DK and Harry who are attracted to the aspects of NS language that is common to all (or most) NSs of a given English variety such as their 'accent', Fahad is interested in the unique characteristics and communicative abilities of this particular NS. First, Fahad's response implies that there are varying degrees of communicative ability even among NSs, who in DK and Harry's responses appear to be a monolithic group. Fahad claims the young man that he interviewed for a class assignment speaks *very well* (line 10), which for Harry and DK would have been understood from the fact that he was already labeled an *American* and *native speaker* in line 9. Among the characteristics Fahad assigns to this student are the fact that he is *well organized* (line 12) even despite technical problems from Fahad and his fellow group members who were interviewing him. Fahad also calls him *confident* (line 21) and comments on what appears to be the high status of his vocabulary (line 22) and his relaxed delivery of jokes (lines 22-23). Finally, Fahad

labels this individual's communicative abilities a *talent* (line 25). This is a talent Fahad claims to want to have even his own native language, Arabic (line 15). As a result, the adept practitioner that Fahad references is adept due to his talents and not due to his status as NS. This perception differs greatly from that of Harry and DK. Fahad also greatly differs particularly from Harry in his outright rejection of the plausibility of satisfying the NS norm, particularly as an adult. This is illustrated in Excerpt 6.10.

Excerpt 6.10 [Fahad, Data collection point #2]

- 1 **Researcher:** ok sure umm what will your future you's pronunciation be like?
 2
 3 **Fahad:** just I think uh my accent I I can't drop it I can't
 4
 5 **Researcher:** can't?
 6
 7 **Fahad:** I can't drop it because this thing the thing that I'm born born with it and my
 8 my uh six years old daughter now pronounce English better than me even she is
 9 now in four for four months in the school four or five months but because she's
 10 young and she is now developing his her English but for me I'm I start studying
 11 seriously I'm thirty-two now so I think it is difficult to drop it but I want to make it
 12 just clear as clear as it is possible especially for native speakers for my umm friends
 13 or my Saudi arab people doesn't doesn't make a difference how I pronounce because
 14 she they they will understand it for native speakers I want to make it as clear as it is
 15 possible
 16
 17 **[...16 turns skipped...]**
 18
 19 **Researcher:** ok umm so your future you will your future's English be different from
 20 the English of a native speaker
 21
 22 **Fahad:** yeah I think
 23
 24 **Researcher:** how so?
 25
 26 **Fahad:** I think it must be
 27
 28 **Researcher:** in what ways will it be different?
 29

30 **Fahad:** umm first of all he will be so comfortable when he talk cuz this is thing that
 31 he get it like skin and his eyes like when I talk in my native language but umm for
 32 me it it will be it will still my second language and this is a big difference

33

34 **Researcher:** how so?

35

36 **Fahad:** umm when I told umm I ok I know one of my relatives he he was in the uk
 37 when he was nineteen now he is maybe thirty thirty-five but still Arabic is his own
 38 language when he want to talk comfortable he will talk in Arabic though because he
 39 was seventeen years or eighteen or twenty years in Arabic even though twenty's a
 40 very good age to go to take another language and he will and his accent's very good
 41 you can't figure that he's not uh he's not from uh from uk uh but he's still the first
 42 language is Arabic

In Excerpt 6.10, Fahad strongly rejects the idea that satisfying the NS norm is feasible (line 26) particularly in terms of 'accent' (line 3). He uses metaphorical language to link the NS's language to his or her physical being and genetic inheritance stating that his accent is something that he was *born with* (line 7) and *he get it like skin and his eyes* (line 31). This notion is most likely metaphorical or figurative given that he links this idea specifically to age. His young daughter he claims *now pronounce English better* than he does even though he has studied English much longer than she has (line 8) a situation he attributes to the fact that *she's young* (lines 9-10). Fahad also mentions a relative who has been in the UK since he was nineteen. Fahad claims that this individual's *accent's very good you can't figure that he's not uh he's not from uh from uk* (line 40-41). However, according to Fahad, due to the age at which he acquired English, Arabic will always be *his own language* (lines 37-38) and the language he uses when he wishes to be comfortable (line 38). Therefore, from Fahad's perspective age is a critical factor that prevents individuals from acquiring a language in the same manner that NSs

speak. However, Fahad does assert that it is still possible for a NNS to speak a language well for example the head of the Islamic Center in Washington DC (Excerpt 6.9) and his relative living in the UK even to the extent that they might pass for a NS of the language. One further example comes in Excerpt 6.11, in which Fahad claims that many of the ministers or officials from Saudi Arabia speak English *but not in a clear way* (lines 7-8) or with *a bad accent* (line 11). As a result, according to Fahad, when they are interviewed on television US audiences require subtitles to understand them (line 7). However, there are some who speak well and who do not need to have subtitles when giving an interview (lines 8-9). These are the NNS adept practitioners that Fahad aspires to be like.

Excerpt 6.11 [Fahad, Data collection point #4]

1 **Researcher:** ok ok so you said there's a difference between what you think will
2 happen and what you wish would happen what's what's the difference then?

3
4 **Fahad:** yeah I wish to to be a talk very clear English like uh sometimes in most of
5 when when they make interview with somebody from my home country like a
6 minister or any official umm most of them studied here in united state but still they
7 speaking in English but they put subtitle because the they're talking English but not
8 in a clear way but there's one or two that I know that they don't they don't write for
9 them uh this uh subtitle so I I I I wish to be like those two or three that I I know
10 umm one of them is dead now and one of them is here in the united states still but
11 uh most of them they have a bad accent and but not bad but not good I mean not
12 good pronunciation

Abu: 'Old' but still trying

Abu's position is very similar to that of Fahad's in that he also mentions NNSs as adept practitioners that he aspires to be like. Furthermore, he also rejects the feasibility of satisfying a NS norm. He discusses age as a particularly important factor in preventing NNSs from having native-like control of the language. However,

like Fahad he does not necessarily outright reject the NS norm. In particular, he continues to evaluate the adept practitioners whom he references against a NS norm. Excerpts 6.12 and 6.13 illustrate these positions.

Excerpt 6.12 [Abu, Data collection point #3]

- 1 **Researcher:** ok ok uh do you know any people who speak English in a way that you
 2 want to be able to speak?
 3
 4 **Abu:** like them?
 5
 6 **Researcher:** mhmm
 7
 8 **Abu:** I have friend right now my classmate he came just this this session from Saudi
 9 Arabia his English uh what I believe is very well so I would like to speak like him
 10 yeah because we cannot speak like native speaker so I just want I hope one day I can
 11 speak with I can but because he is young I think and he started to learn English
 12 years ago I think it's easier for him but for my situation I just started when I became
 13 old so
 14
 15 **Researcher:** ok what is there anything specific about the way he talks that you like?
 16
 17 **Abu:** yeah his pronunciation and he knows a lot of vocabulary yeah like because he
 18 said cuz like American people
 19
 20 **Researcher:** oh he says cuz instead of because
 21
 22 **Abu:** cuz yeah yeah so I and one day I hope I can do like what he does
 23
 24 **Researcher:** umm so you wanna you wanna say things like cuz and wanna
 25
 26 **Abu:** yeah yeah wanna gonna

Excerpt 6.13 [Abu, Data collection point #4]

- 1 **Researcher:** mhmm mhmm ok umm do you know any people who speak English in
 2 a way that you want to be able to speak English?
 3
 4 **Abu:** all the teacher I have a dream to to become like them for example uh mrs.
 5 Hassan even though she is from Egypt but her English is good not good excellent
 6
 7 **Researcher:** mhmm ok umm are there other teachers that
 8
 9 **Abu:** uh all of them are American so they are native speaker yeah

- 10
 11 **Researcher:** all of all of your teachers are native speakers ok who are your
 12 teachers?
 13
 14 **Abu:** uh dr. patricia smith uh mr. john thompson
 15
 16 **Researcher:** mr. who?
 17
 18 **Abu:** john thompson thompson
 19
 20 **Researcher:** oh ok
 21
 22 **Abu:** and dr. uh merican she yeah she is from malaysia but her English is good also
 23 yeah
 24
 25 **Researcher:** ok ok ok umm do you know uh any people who speak English in a way
 26 that you don't want to speak like?
 27
 28 **Abu:** mmm no if I if I said about international student yeah some some student from
 29 my country I don't like uh them English and I I am one of them I don't like my
 30 English but I I can't say I don't like to speak like this man or this woman from from
 31 the united state because they will speak in perfect way

Excerpts 6.12 and 6.13 contain one specific individual and a group of individuals whose English Abu appears to admire. In Excerpt 6.12 he discusses a Saudi friend who has just recently come to the United States.¹ Abu describes his English as *very well* (line 9) and mentions that the student *knows a lot of vocabulary* (line 17), has desirable pronunciation (line 17), and uses features of reduced speech characteristic of *American people* such as the reduction of *because* to *cuz* (line 18).

The next category of individuals that Abu discusses are mentioned in Excerpt 6.13. They are two of his instructors: Mrs. Hassan from Egypt and Dr. Merican from

31

¹ Abu was being discrete and protecting the student's identity as was generally our practice in discussing other IEP students and often even instructors during the interviews. However, given the characteristics and time frame that Abu provides, it appears that this description is probably of K3.

Malaysia.² Abu claims that he has *a dream to become like* his English instructors (line 4), which include NSs (e.g. line 14: Mr. John Thompson and Dr. Patricia Smith). The individual who he mentions first without further prompting from me is Mrs. Hassan. According to Abu, her English is *excellent* (line 5), and Dr. Merican's English is also *good* (line 22). The NSs are listed without evaluation or description of their English, but their status is mentioned which from Abu's perspective provides sufficient description of the quality of their language abilities.

One final point to make regarding Excerpt 6.12 is that Abu here makes it very explicit that he finds satisfying a NS norm to be infeasible. He states that *we cannot speak like native speaker* (line 10). The young Saudi student who Abu mentions as an adept practitioner whose English he admires is put forth as a satisfactory alternative to the NS norm in light of the fact that Abu does not believe he can satisfy that standard. Interestingly, Abu believes that speaking like the Saudi student that he mentions in Excerpt 6.12 is also implausible due to the differences in age. The other student Abu reports *is young* (line 11) and *started to learn English years ago* (lines 11-12). In contrast Abu *started when he became old* (lines 12-13). As a result, it appears none of these individuals offer plausible models for Abu. He outright rejects the plausibility of speaking like NSs, questions whether he can speak like the student in Excerpt 6.12, and labels his admiration of his NNS instructors in Excerpt 6.13 *a dream* (line 4), which may or may not signal a lack of feasibility. Abu's beliefs

² As with all other names used in the interview data, these are pseudonyms.

about the feasibility of reaching the ability level of adept practitioners is further complicated in Excerpt 6.14.

Excerpt 14 [Abu, Data collection point #4]

- 1 **Abu:** I have a dream to be perfect in English but not perfect a good one who can
 2 speaks English umm as a native speaker but this is dream still on my mind maybe I
 3 need more time to to to achieve like this dream
 4
 5 **Researcher:** ok you said it's a dream do you think it's a a realistic dream?
 6
 7 **Abu:** what do you mean by realistic?
 8
 9 **Researcher:** realistic means that it's a dream that you can possibly get
 10
 11 **Abu:** yeah I hope I hope yeah because I I have a friend from Saudi Arabia they they
 12 speak English in in a good way so what is the different between me and them maybe
 13 when they will be like like them or something like that
 14
 15 **Researcher:** I'm sorry
 16
 17 **Abu:** maybe one day I will speak English in the way that they they speak in it right
 18 now I mean equal with them
 19
 20 **Researcher:** ok ok umm and how would you describe their English?
 21
 22 **Abu:** i just when they spoke in the telephone or read something wor in some
 23 internet website or something like that they they understood everything and when I
 24 came here they before I came here they helped me to to fill all applications to call
 25 the university office here or something like that

Excerpt 6.14 makes it particularly clear that Abu has not rejected the NS norm. He states that he has *a dream* to speak *as a native speaker* (lines 1-2). However, in line 2 he draws further attention to the fact that he feels this is *a dream*. He goes on to suggest that it might be possible with time (lines 2-3). When questioned whether the NS norm is *a realistic dream* (line 5). He states that he is

hopeful about his chances and brings up some of his friends³ in Saudi Arabia who *speak English in a good way* (lines 11-12) and apparently serve as an example of the potential of NNSs to reach the level he is specifying. Unlike his previous example of the young Saudi student in Excerpt 6.12, he is more positive about the feasibility of achieving these friends' level. He asks the rhetorical question: *what is the different between me and them* (line 12). When asked to describe their English, rather than appealing to descriptions of their 'accents' or grammar, Abu evaluates it in terms of its functionality. He mentions their ability to understand spoken and written English in a variety of contexts (lines 22-23) as well as the various ways in which these friends were able to help him prior to coming to the United States such as calling *the university office* for him (lines 23-25).

Conclusion

The analysis of the adept practitioners that DK, Harry, Fahad, and Abu mention as individuals who speak English in a way they would like to has brought forth a number of points relevant to a discussion of the NS norm. First, it is clear that none of the participants reject the notion that NS language is 'superior', although in most cases they selected different personal standards in their GSIS responses and in some cases chose NNSs as adept practitioners that they aspired to be like. Although Fahad and Abu seem to feel that NNSs can legitimately be viewed as adept practitioners, they nonetheless tended to evaluate these people in terms of

³ Given the fact that Abu first mentions *a friend* and then switches to consistently using *they* and *them* it is unclear to me whether he intends to discuss one or multiple people.

their proximity to NSs (cf. e.g. Excerpt 6.10, lines 36-42 for Fahad and Excerpt 6.12, lines 8-18 for Abu). Furthermore, Abu clearly saw proficient NNSs as an acceptable alternative to the more preferable NS norm (cf. Excerpt 6.12, line 10), which he labels as *perfect* (cf. e.g. Excerpt 6.14, line 1). Clearly then this analysis did not uncover participants who are arguing in favor of the legitimacy of NNS language. Instead, they simply view such speakers as the 'next best thing' to NS language.

The tendency to view proficient NNSs as an acceptable but not ideal alternative to the NS norm stems from the participants' beliefs about the feasibility of satisfying the NS norm. In particular, phonological features were identified as problematic. Some of the participants utilized strong figurative language to emphasize the idea that a NS norm was unattainable (e.g. Fahad stating that NSs are born with their 'accents' in Excerpt 6.10 or DK discussing a *wall* between cultures in Excerpt 6.3). Both Fahad and Abu strongly stated that the NS norm was impossible to satisfy citing the constraints that age of acquisition have over adult language learners (cf. e.g. Excerpt 6.10, lines 7-15 for Fahad and Excerpt 6.12, lines 8-13 for Abu). DK also alluded to the idea that the NS norm was implausible citing various reasons such as a *wall* that exists between people of different cultures (Excerpt 6.3, line 24-29). Harry seemed to waver in his opinion about whether or not it is feasible for a NNS to satisfy the NS norm. At some points he emphasized the fact that it is *difficult to change* ones 'accent' (cf. Excerpt 6.5, lines 15-16). At the end of Excerpt 6.7 he states seemingly unequivocally that he believes the NS norm to be attainable (line 59). However, the remainder of Excerpt 6.7 seems to suggest

otherwise as Harry seems to contradict himself from one moment to the next in this interview.

As a result, then although all of the participants feel that NS language is 'superior', most if not all also believe that it is impossible to acquire NS language. They differ in the way that they have handled these conflicting ideas; three different strategies can be identified. For DK, it is a conflict that appears to push him away from the types of communities that he desires to join. For example, in Excerpt 6.4, he discusses being unable to make friends in the US due to what he perceives as the shortcomings of his English abilities and the expectations that people his age in the US have for NNSs. He believes that US university students will be resistant to becoming friends with NNSs, and therefore he retreats from the idea of joining this community citing his uncle as an individual who has also had to do the same.

Fahad and Abu are faced with the same conflict as DK. However, rather than retreating from it, they have adopted an alternative model. Each of them describes NS language as *perfect* (cf. Excerpt 6.7, lines 7-8 for Fahad and Excerpt 6.13, line 31), but they are willing to accept a 'lesser' model due to their above described constraints that prevent them from acquiring NS language. In this way they make use of NNSs, whose language they feel is still *excellent* (cf. Excerpt 6.13, lines 4-5), to serve as feasible adept practitioners. Abu in particular seems to maintain uncertainty about this alternative model, stating that he still has *a dream* to sound like a NS or speak in a *perfect* manner (Excerpt 6.14, lines 1-3). However, both repeatedly suggest that they have no expectation that they will satisfy a NS norm

and feel that there are NNSs who use English in a way that they would be willing to accept.

Harry differs greatly from the others in his method for coping with this conflict in beliefs in that he appears not yet to have fully dealt with the issue. Excerpt 6.7 illustrates the lack of resolution of the conflict for Harry. At the beginning of the excerpt Harry states that he has changed his mind about desiring to speak like a NS citing the difficulty of changing one's 'accent' (lines 7-8) and seeming to accept a model based on intelligibility as *ok*. In this way he appears to follow the path of Fahad and Abu. However, he goes on to state that he believes it is in fact possible to acquire a NS-like accent and that he hopes to be able to do so (lines 57-63). In later interviews he is more steadfast in his resolve that he is seeking to satisfy the NS norm (cf. Excerpts 6.5 and 6.6). He continues to state that aspects of this goal are difficult, but in Excerpt 6.6, he states that he is only *several months* away from satisfying it (line 18). In all likelihood, despite the fact that Harry did make impressive improvement and probably will continue to, his claim that he will have 'native-like' control over English in *several months* will probably not come to fruition, and Harry will once again be faced with the conflict between the feasibility of his goal and the value he and others have placed on it.

This conflict between feasibility and desire is one that appears to be part of the basic fabric of being a language learner in a context in which NS ideology is strong. On the one hand, the participants seem to value NS language to a strong degree calling it *perfect* and describing it in other positive ways, while for the most

part denigrating NNS language (with some notable exceptions). On the other hand, the participants are aware both from their own experiences as learners as well as other sources that the acquisition of NS language by adult language learners is excruciatingly difficult and/or impossible. The participants display two different strategies for dealing with this conflict: (1) retreating from the use of English particularly in contexts in which expectations based on NS ideology are perceived to be high and (2) accepting a 'lesser' but more feasible standard. Neither of these strategies appears completely satisfactory, and perhaps even less satisfactory is the contradiction inherent in Harry's coping mechanisms. In the next chapter, I turn my attention to an alternative strategy used by one of the participants that appears to resolve the conflict that the other participants are coping with.

Chapter 7: Imagined communities and legitimate speakerhood

In Chapter 4, I posited that an ideology of nativeness colored the participants' views of their own and others' intelligibility in English. I identified two important perspectives on the responsibilities of individuals in contributing to the success of intercultural communication. I have reproduced the relevant discourse illustrating these two positions here:

Excerpt 7.1 [DK - Data collection point #3]

- 1 **Researcher:** why do you think your listening is poor?
2
3 **DK:** because if you speak in normal spend in normal spend spend English I can't
4 understand it
5
6 **Researcher:** in normal what English?
7
8 **DK:** normal spend
9
10 **Researcher:** normal speed?
11
12 **DK:** speed right right
13
14 **Researcher:** ok the rate at which I speak if I talked really fast you would
15
16 **DK:** you yeah now you speak to me I know you slow down if you speak uh in a
17 normal speed I can't understand it

Excerpt 7.2 [Fahad - Data collection point #2]

- 1 **Fahad:** [...] I am not familiar with the talking very quick the all the teacher here talk
2 so slowly like you now now you are talking with me with a clear and slow and
3 professors even in academic classes he speak clear English uh they don't talk very
4 well actually the two student that I told you they came that day uh they start

5 speaking very quick so the teacher told them can you just slow because they are
6 level three

Excerpt 7.1 from DK illustrates a position that I believe is a natural progression from the ideology of nativeness. Essentially he believes that it is his responsibility to fully accommodate the NS and that any failure to comprehend a NS must be his fault as the NNS. In contrast, Excerpt 7.2 from Fahad shows that he believes that NSs have an obligation to accommodate him in order to insure successful communication. Both individuals discuss three potential actors: (1) the non-accommodating NS (other imagined or real interlocutors), (2) the accommodating NS (in both cases, me, the researcher), and (3) the NNS (here specifically the participant). In DK's perspective, (1) and (2) are good communicators with (2) being kind individuals usually language teachers; whereas, (3) represents generally deficient communicators who must seek to be understood by (1) in order to earn legitimacy. In Fahad's perspective (2) is a good communicator, and (3) can also be; (1), however, represents poor communicators at least in intercultural communication due to their inability to take into consideration the needs of (3).

It is my contention that the ideology that affects how the participants view their responsibilities in intercultural communication also affects their own perceptions of their overall English abilities. In the previous chapter I stated that I felt that the different ways in which the participants portrayed the issues they faced with intelligibility in intercultural communication had less to do with a static characteristic, 'proficiency', and more to do with the beliefs they held concerning their contributions as NNSs to difficulties in communication. In this chapter I will

attempt to expand on this idea by examining the perceptions of two participants, Mo and Chevy, of the legitimacy of their English. I will first examine an attempt at measuring their 'proficiency' as a static, objective characteristic, which ultimately suggests that the two are essentially linguistic equals. I will then proceed to analyze how they assert or do not assert their legitimacy as English speakers.

The cases of Chevy and Mo: Measures of their 'proficiency'

The intensive English program [IEP] that both Chevy and Mo were studying in at the beginning of their participation in this program requires all students to take the computerized ACT ESL Compass test. This test includes multiple-choice tests for listening, reading, and grammar. It also requires them to produce a writing sample on one of a few prompts, which for the purposes of placement in the program is scored by instructors in the program, but which is also analyzed for syntax and other linguistic features by a computer program. For my purposes, I have chosen to use the computer program's scores as they are standardized and consistent, whereas the instructor judgments might strike some readers as an unreliable measure of proficiency. Students in Chevy and Mo's IEP are required to take the test once before entering the program. They are also afforded the opportunity to take it additional times once per semester as a means of "skipping" a level that they feel they have progressed past. As a result, for Chevy two sets of results are available, and for Mo one set is available. Table 7.1 displays these results for both of these participants.

Test #	Mo	Chevy	
	1	1	2
Reading	99	96	99
Listening	91	90	99
Grammar	87	**	82
Writing	9	8	8
--Development	9	2	7
--Focus	10	2	8
--Organization	8	2	6
--Language use	9	2	10
--Mechanics	9	2	9

Table 7.1 - ACT ESL Compass Proficiency scores for Mo and Chevy: This table lists the ACT ESL Compass proficiency scores for Mo and Chevy. Chevy's column is divided into two columns to represent the initial placement score and an optional re-test taken a semester later. During his first test, Chevy did not complete the Grammar portion and therefore this cell contains no score. On the ACT ESL Compass, three skills are tested using a computerized multiple-choice test, which is scored out of 100 ("Reading", "Listening", and "Grammar"). Students also produce a written essay on standard topics ("Writing") which is scored by the computer out of a possible 12. The overall writing score is divided into five sub-scales: "Development", "Focus", "Organization", "Language use", and "Mechanics". The sub-scales are also scored from a possible 12.

Table 7.1 demonstrates that, at least in terms of their listening, reading, grammar, and writing, standardized assessments rate Mo and Chevy as very similar in terms of their English proficiency. Mo may have had slightly higher proficiency in these areas at the time of his entry into the program compared to Chevy's entry scores. However, given the small difference and the challenges in reliability and validity that such tests are prone to, I do not interpret this difference as particularly meaningful. One notable absence from this assessment is a rating of their speaking abilities, and this is a particularly important skill I believe in the construction of the participant's sense of themselves as legitimate speakers. The IEP that the participants were studying in does not use such a test in placing students. Moreover, such tests are generally fraught with subjectivity as they rely on raters'

judgments of the individual's accuracy, fluency, and intelligibility. Therefore, I have no standardized data to report about the participant's speaking proficiency.

In order to provide some description of the participants' speaking ability I have analyzed the transcriptions of the participants' interviews for difficulties I encountered understanding them. I used the first interview for each participant for two reasons. First, Chevy only participated in one interview, so in order to make comparisons between him and the others I wanted to keep the language samples as similar as possible especially because the participants presumably improved as time passed. Second, I feel that the first interview offers the best baseline for the participant's basic intelligibility due to my (as the researcher and interviewer) lack of familiarity with each of the individuals and their specific ways of speaking. Therefore, I analyzed each participant's first interview looking for evidence that I had not understood the participant. I chose to focus on my own comprehension of the participant as I believe this represents a measure of their contextualized speaking intelligibility. A measure of the participants' listening comprehension is already provided from the proficiency tests.

There were two categories of evidence indicating lack of intelligibility: (1) "[inaudible]" in the transcription, indicating I could not discern the participant's word(s) during the transcribing process and (2) comprehension checks or requests for repetition during the interview. For the first category, I simply counted each instance where "[inaudible]" appeared in the data. The second category required more careful delineation especially in terms of what counted as a relevant

comprehension check. This was particularly difficult because for some of the participants I utilized frequent comprehension checks as in Excerpt 7.3 with Sam.

Excerpt 7.3 [Sam, Data collection point #1]

- 1 **Researcher:** ok so how often did you speak English in English class?
 2
 3 **Sam:** how often uh maybe every minute maybe five three or five minutes
 4
 5 **Researcher:** every three or five minutes? So you talk a lot in class in English?

In line 3, Sam answers my question from line 1. In line 5, I repeat his response in a questioning intonation. However, I go on to ask him a question without waiting for a verbal response to the initial restatement of his response. Therefore, I excluded this exchange from the category of comprehension check. Although it is possible that I received some type of inaudible or non-verbal cue from Sam that indicated that I had in fact heard correctly, I chose to err on the side of fewer relevant comprehension checks, because I so frequently used this strategy of repeating the participant's previous utterance even when it appears I understood it.

However, what I did categorize as actual comprehension checks involved instances where I re-phrased, repeated, or used contextual clues to recover some otherwise unintelligible feature of the participant's utterance and then paused for confirmation from the participant. Excerpts 7.4, 7.5, and 7.6 provide examples of such comprehension checks, and each was counted as an instance of communication difficulty. I will discuss each briefly so as to illustrate the process by which I counted communication difficulties.

Excerpt 7.4 [DK, Data collection point #1]

- 1 **Researcher:** very poor? Ok umm so are you satisfied with it?
 2

- 3 **DK:** yeah I'm very sad at read
 4
 5 **Researcher:** oh satisfied?
 6
 7 **DK:** satisfied
 8
 9 **Researcher:** satisfied means yeah I'm ok with it it's good enough if you if I say I am
 10 satisfied with it it means yeah it's good good enough
 11
 12 **DK:** no I don't think so the reason I come to America is is uh I wanna learn English
 13 it's why I come to America but uh I think my English is improve slowly

In Excerpt 7.4, DK responds to a question in which I have asked him whether he is *satisfied* (line 2) by answering in the affirmative, *yeah*, and stating that he is *very sad* (line 3). I am initially unsure of what he intends to say due to the contradiction of the affirmative answer and the use of *sad* (which would have the opposite meaning of my original question) but eventually assume he intended to say *satisfied* but is unfamiliar with the pronunciation. Therefore I assist him by saying *oh satisfied?* (line 5), which DK repeats apparently confirming that he did intend to say *satisfied* (line 7). However, after I define the word for him (lines 9-10), he seems to reject this as his intended meaning (lines 12-13). DK seems to have been unfamiliar with the lexical item *satisfied* and rather than asking for a definition assumes it to have a negative connotation due either to his complete confusion of it with *sad* or its phonological similarity to that word. It is not until I clarify the meaning of *satisfied* that he recognizes the contradiction of what he is communicating and begins to explain his intended meaning. This instance was counted in DK's communication difficulties, because I at first clearly misinterpreted

his intended meaning (as evidenced by my suggestion in line 5) as a result of his contradictory first statement (line 3).

Excerpt 7.5 [Abu, Data collection point #1]

- 1 **Abu:** I will be happy when I hear or listen to the news and I will understand each
 2 words the single words when I make my presentation and the people just
 3 understand what I said and ask me about what I said and the meaning I will be
 4 happy when can I answer any question in the test without use dictionary my
 5 problem is the dictionary
 6
 7 **Researcher:** umm so you said you said you want to be able to give a presentation
 8 and you want people to ask you questions but you don't want them to ask about you
 9 want them to ask about your topic not about your language?
 10
 11 **Abu:** yeah what I said yeah yeah

Excerpt 5 is also an example of a comprehension check. In lines 2-3 Abu describes his aspiration to have interlocutors focus on the meaning of his ideas and possibly to have questions about their content and complexity as opposed to having to focus on his language and ask questions due to communication difficulties caused by his language use. However, in lines 7-9, I reveal that I am not entirely confident that I have understood his intended meaning. Therefore, I rephrase his answer in order to be sure that I have understood. In contrast to Excerpt 7.3, where I rephrased Sam's utterance in order to continue on, here I have paused to gain confirmation from Abu. This pause, I believe, is a critical difference as it represents an apparent perceived need for confirmation of the intended utterance (whereas no pause would seem to indicate that the confirmation was unessential), and therefore I counted this instance as a communication difficulty evidenced by a comprehension check.

Excerpt 7.6 [Sam, Data collection point #1]

- 1 **Sam:** umm I just I can understand most of people said and I can take the class umm
 2 but maybe I have the accent
 3
 4 **Researcher:** accent?
 5
 6 **Sam:** accent yeah

Excerpt 7.6 is one final example of communication difficulty evidenced by a comprehension check from me. In line 2, Sam discusses his *accent*. However, due to his pronunciation I am not completely confident that that is what he has said and I ask *accent?* (line 4) and pause to confirm. Sam repeats the word this time attempting to approximate my pronunciation of the word, apparently recognizing that his previous pronunciation has caused intelligibility problems for me, and confirms that that is the word he intended to say: *accent yeah* (line 6).

In addition to comprehension checks as evidence of communication difficulty, I also counted explicit and implicit requests for repetition. The category of requests for repetition was much more straightforward to define. It included instances of echo questions, the response *what?*, or explicit requests to repeat (e.g. *one more time*).

Table 7.2 displays the occurrence of both (1) [inaudible] and (2) comprehension checks and repetition requests as evidence of communication difficulties experienced by myself in attempting to understand the participants' spoken English. Although my main focus in this chapter is on Mo and Chevy, I have included the other participants so as to demonstrate that this analysis process did reveal communication difficulties and can serve as a reasonable approximation of the participants' intelligibility. However, the most striking finding of the analysis is

	Chevy	Mo	DK	Abu	Fahad	K3	Sam
[inaudible]	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (0.36)
comprehension checks/repeat requests	0 (0.00)	1 (0.27)	8 (2.03)	2 (0.43)	3 (0.54)	6 (1.13)	7 (2.49)
# of words	2815	3645	3943	4610	5572	5295	2812

Table 7.2 - Occurrences of communication difficulties in transcriptions: The table displays frequency counts for the occurrences of two different types of breakdown in intelligibility. The first category derives from the use of “[inaudible]” during transcription to denote places where during transcription, I could not understand something the participant said. The second category involved checking the data for instances of requests for repetition or comprehension checks signaling a failure to understand something in the participant’s previous turn (as described more thoroughly in this chapter). The number in parentheses represents the number of occurrences per 1000 words. Harry is missing from this analysis, because his first interview could not be transcribed due to technical difficulties.

that in communication with both Mo and Chevy, I encountered almost no communication difficulties of this nature, whereas with each of the other participants these were infrequent but nonetheless present. In Mo’s interview there was one occurrence of a comprehension check, but in fact the degree to which this is a shortcoming of Mo’s language is rather questionable. The problem related to Mo’s use of the lexical item *accountancy* to describe the degree he was seeking, which I was unfamiliar with. After I asked him if he meant *accounting* (the more commonly used name at US institutions for that field of study), he confirmed my understanding. I believe that most individuals would not fault Mo for this communication difficulty and may even point to ignorance on my part as the source of the problem.

Tables 7.1 and 7.2 support the view that both Chevy and Mo are highly proficient users of English. Their standardized test scores are comparable and extremely high. In fact, both participants’ reading scores would exempt them from their intensive English program’s reading courses, although both were enrolled full-

time in the program and therefore also in the program's reading courses. In addition, there were virtually no instances of language-related communication difficulties in their first interviews (with the possible exception of the use of *accountancy*, although this is questionable as I discussed above). As a result, it is my position that these two participants are extremely proficient and comparable in their proficiency. I turn my attention now to the participants' own perceptions of their English.

Mo: Chasing the NS norm

From his interview data, it is clear that Mo perceives his English as intelligible. In both interviews Mo expressed an assessment of his English in terms of its functionality. Excerpts 7.7 and 7.8 illustrate this.

Excerpt 7.7 [Mo, Data collection point #1]

- 1 **Researcher:** ok umm how good do you think your speaking is?
 2
 3 **Mo:** umm speaking uh I think I can make the normal communication just as the
 4 umm umm just as a uh express myself uh say what I really want to say and umm
 5 make uh the counterpart uh completely understand yeah
 6
 7 **Researcher:** ok umm how good do you think your listening is?
 8
 9 **Mo:** I think umm when I listen to some speech and umm if uh if there's not so much
 10 academic words may uh maybe uh not maybe and I can handle it and umm if there's
 11 so many uh uh words that I don't know or I'm not familiar maybe there's some
 12 problem yeah
 13
 14 **Researcher:** ok umm what about your reading how good is your reading?
 15
 16 **Mo:** umm I'm not I'm not uh I'm not that sure about about that how you evaluate if
 17 you uh just let me read something in very short of time short period of time maybe
 18 uh maybe sometimes I can uh I can get the how information but sometimes maybe
 19 not and it also depends on the the the writing habits of the of the author yeah some
 20 some some articles pretty fluently and really fluently and I can umm quickly get
 21 what he or she means some words not

22

23 **Researcher:** ok umm what about your writing how good do you think your writing
24 is?

25

26 **Mo:** umm just uh just like my speaking yeah I think uh there might be some uh umm
27 grammar mistake but generally I think I can let readers know what I'm trying to say

28

29 **Researcher:** ok umm how good is your pronunciation?

30

31 **Mo:** I think my pronunciation is is good

32

33 **Researcher:** k why?

34

35 **Mo:** because umm because people have uh say uh have said that to me yeah

36

37 **Researcher:** when did they say that to you who said that to you?

38

39 **Mo:** uhh just umm somebody I met when I uh arrived united states and some native
40 speaker and umm the teacher from umm my umm previous institutions and my
41 college my high school yeah

In Excerpt 7.7, I ask Mo about his various language skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing, grammar, and pronunciation), and he responds in great detail remaining quite positive about his abilities. He describes his speaking as capable of producing any meaning he might wish to communicate and being understood by any interlocutor (lines 3-5). He is also fairly positive in his evaluation of his listening, although he does spend a great deal of time qualifying the claim by pointing out that there may be unfamiliar vocabulary that would prevent him from understanding (lines 9-12). He evaluates his reading (lines 16-21) and writing (lines 26-27) similarly to his listening: fairly positively but focusing on a few isolated shortcomings. Finally he evaluates his pronunciation as *good* (line 31) citing the praise of NSs and past teachers (lines 35 and 39-41). At the next data

collection point, Mo's evaluation of his English is that *it's better than uh the the first time we meet*.

Despite what to me at least seems to be a strong evaluation of a successful L2 user of English, Mo expresses dissatisfaction with his English. This dissatisfaction can be attributed to his desire to conform to a NS norm. As noted in Chapter 5, Mo expressed quite a strong, consistent desire to attain native-like English, indicating on his GSIS that he held himself to a NS norm standard for both pronunciation and lexicogrammar (see Chapter 5, Table 5.5). Data from his interviews further illustrate this dissatisfaction.

Excerpt 7.8 [Mo, Data collection point #1]

- 1 **Researcher:** ok umm how good do you think your English is right now?
 2
 3 **Mo:** I think umm I think there will not be such big big problem if I attend class or do
 4 some assignment yeah but I still need to improve my english
 5
 6 **Researcher:** how so?
 7
 8 **Mo:** uhh because uhh I'm I'm I'm I'm I'm not totally umm satisfied with my english
 9
 10 **Researcher:** ok in what ways are you not satisfied?
 11
 12 **Mo:** umm because I'm I'm still not sounds like native speaker

Excerpt 7.8 is taken from the first interview directly prior to Excerpt 7.7. It is interesting to note that although Mo's perceptions of his English that arise from the extensive follow-up questioning in Excerpt 7.7 seem to suggest that he believes it is overall intelligible and functional, when asked generally about his English (line 1), he expresses dissatisfaction with it: *I'm not totally umm satisfied with my english* (line 8). He links this dissatisfaction directly to the presence of features of his

English that do not conform to a NS norm: *I'm still not sounds like native speaker* (line 12). Even without the audio to hear the phonological features of Mo's speech, it should be clear that he is in fact correct; his English in many ways does not conform to a NS norm.

Despite some lingering dissatisfaction, as of my second interview with him Mo had not lost hope in his ability to conform to a NS norm. In Excerpt 7.9 he describes his progress since the previous interview in terms of the steps he has made toward achieving 'native-likeness'.

Excerpt 7.9 [Mo, Data collection point #2]

- 1 **Researcher:** ok so how good do you think your speaking is right now?
 2
 3 **Mo:** umm I think uhh it's umm through the train uh the the training umm umm
 4 especially on the the tones and on the stress and uh something like that and uh I
 5 think it my speaking could umm sound sound uh more like umm a native speaker
 6 than before yeah

After stating that he feels he has improved since the first interview, I begin to ask Mo a series of questions to encourage him to elaborate on this improvement (line 1) similar to the series of questions asked in the first interview (cf. Excerpt 7.7). In Excerpt 7.9, Mo, referring to his improvement in speaking, references his pronunciation class in the intensive English program. He feels that the focus on rhythm, stress, and intonation in this advanced pronunciation class has aided him in sounding *more like a native speaker* (lines 3-5). Thus, it is clear that he is seeking to conform to a NS norm and also that he feels he is making progress toward this goal. However, Mo's comments in Excerpt 7.10 reveal underlying contradiction, naïveté concerning NS language, and uncompromising ideology.

Excerpt 7.10 [Mo, Data collection point #2]

- 1 **Researcher:** ok umm do you know any people who speak English in a way that you
2 want to be able to speak English?
3
- 4 **Mo:** mmm uh I'm not sure but I uh I don't have a specific model or some something
5 yeah I just want others to know what I'm saying and umm yeah just like that
6
- 7 **Researcher:** ok so you just want to be understood?
8
- 9 **Mo:** yeah
10
- 11 **Researcher:** ok umm are there any people who speak English in a way that you are
12 afraid that you will sound like?
13
- 14 **Mo:** umm sound like it's not the the I mean or accent not not not that important to
15 me but I I uh but some accent I I I I can I can hardly understand and uh and I don't
16 want others to don't know what I'm talking about yeah
17
- 18 **Researcher:** is there a specific accent you can't understand?
19
- 20 **Mo:** umm it is umm it is some some some people may speak umm may may maybe
21 the span uh the Spanish speaker and and and when they speak English and some
22 some something I just can't can't know that well
23
- 24 **Researcher:** ok umm so you said you're not all that important or you don't think the
25 accent is all that important are there other parts of people's English that you don't
26 like?
27
- 28 **Mo:** umm I think umm I think uh people in the united states so far as I know are
29 umm totally ok and normal uh the east coast umm accent or west coast accent or
30 umm African English or some uh country English it's umm it's interesting I think it's
31 both ok
32
- 33 **Researcher:** ok what do you mean by ok?
34
- 35 **Mo:** it's uh understandable and uh receivable
36
- 37 **Researcher:** ok umm do you ever think about yourself in the future speaking
38 English? Do you ever think to yourself maybe in a year or two years or something
39 like that how you will sound or speak or write?
40
- 41 **Mo:** umm I just umm I just want to be professional if I uh if I umm I have started my
42 uh career career life and I want to be professional I want others think well this uh

43 this guy's well trained and he's he he he he can speak decent English write good
44 article or pass passages yeah

45
46 **Researcher:** mhmm when you say decent English what do you mean by that?

47
48 **Mo:** just like the native speaker

49
50 **Researcher:** so umm you would sound like a native speaker?

51
52 **Mo:** yeah

The first point I would like to make concerning Excerpt 7.10 relates to what appears to be the underlying contradiction in Mo's discussion of his aspirations concerning NS language. Much like DK (cf. Chapter 5), Mo seems to waver between a standard based upon intelligibility and one based upon conformity to a NS norm in Excerpt 7.10. In line 5, he appears to reference an intelligibility-based standard: *I just want others to know what I'm saying*. He even expresses a lack of concern with the notion of 'accent' (lines 14-15), although later in the interview he expresses his satisfaction with his growing conformity to NS phonological features in terms of *the tones* and *the stress* (Excerpt 7.9, line 4).¹ These statements seem to conflict with the comments he makes expressing commitment to a NS norm in Excerpts 7.8 and 7.9. As a result, I believe Mo's commitment to the NS norm is not merely a lofty goal; rather it appears to be a source of personal conflict for him.

The second point I would like to raise about Excerpt 7.10 concerns the presence of what I believe is rigid and naïve ideology about NS language. When asked if there are individuals who speak English in a manner that he does not

52

¹ It is possible that Mo does not consider intonation, stress, and rhythm to be aspects of 'accent', although this seems unlikely.

appreciate (lines 11-12), Mo specifically mentions 'native' Spanish speakers using English as their L2 (lines 20-22), whom he apparently finds difficult to understand. He contrasts these NNSs with NSs of a variety of dialects, betraying some amount of awareness regarding issues of linguistic variation in the US. He lists several different varieties: *east coast*, *west coast*, *African English*, and *country English* (lines 29-30). He labels all of these 'accents' *ok* (line 31) and, upon request for further elaboration, *understandable* and *receivable* (line 35). While Mo's comments are certainly politically correct, they may also be somewhat naïve, because even NSs of these different varieties are not always perfectly intelligible to each other, and they have in the past been associated with comprehension difficulties for NNSs (e.g. Eisenstein and Verdi, 1985 on African American English and 'New Yorkese'). He seems to label these varieties intelligible due to their speakers' status as NSs, while finding fault with the speech of Spanish-speaking NNSs. It appears that Mo feels NSs are above critique and that it is his and his fellow NNSs' responsibility to understand their perpetually intelligible varieties. As a result, I believe he is appealing to the same hierarchy of intelligibility that I identified in Chapter 4.

The final point I would like to raise concerns Mo's description of what he hopes his future language abilities will be perceived by others as. He claims to want to appear *professional* (line 42) and *well trained* (line 43) and to speak *decent English* (line 43). When I ask him to elaborate on what this model looks like (*decent English*) he simply appeals to a NS norm, stating *just like the native speaker* (line 48). This response seems to indicate that Mo believes the use of NNS varieties of English

to be an indication of a lack of professionalism. Although I have previously indicated that research has demonstrated NNS language to be generally stigmatized (Chapter 3), Mo's perception that NNS language is inconsistent with an identity as *professional* is quite naïve given the wide use of English by and among NNSs especially in the types of international business correspondences that Mo describes himself participating in in the future (cf. Excerpt 7.11).

Excerpt 7.11 [Mo, Data collection point #1]

- 1 **Mo:** umm yeah uh I think umm china is uh getting more and more uh open and more
- 2 more international so there's a lot of umm chance to uh do some business with
- 3 English speaking country and and so uh if if if my English is is good and I can get a
- 4 good job in china and maybe I can promote I can I can be promoted really fast and
- 5 bright future

In conclusion, I would characterize Mo's English as intelligible (to me at least) and highly proficient on the basis of his interviews with me as well as his proficiency test scores reported in this chapter. However, although Mo himself is aware of his ability to communicate, he remains dissatisfied with his English. This dissatisfaction stems from his reported desire to conform to a NS norm. However, I believe data from his interviews reveal several concerning aspects about this goal. First, Mo seems conflicted about the NS norm appearing at one moment to support it and at others to accept a standard based upon intelligibility. Second, Mo's commitment to the NS norm seems either to stem from or to cause a rigid ideology concerning NS language. He seems to place NSs of any variety of English in a

category of intelligible² while finding NNSs at times unintelligible. Finally and most concerning, Mo's ideology seems to suggest that the use of NNS varieties of English is incompatible with a professional identity, although in all likelihood he will use a NNS variety of English in a future setting much like the one he describes in Excerpt 7.11. It appears that if he is unable to satisfy or abandon a NS norm, his perspective on the topic may shift from optimistic appraisal of his progress (cf. Excerpt 7.9) to more severe dissatisfaction with his English, a sense of failure or inferiority, and possibly even the avoidance of English use and contexts associated with it.³ In the next section, I will explore Chevy's very different perceptions.

Chevy: Resisting the identity of 'learner'

From the moment I pressed the 'stop' button on the digital recorder at the end of our first and only interview, I knew that Chevy's place in this study was problematic yet prominent. Chevy was clearly unlike any of the other participants; at times I struggled to continue the interview as I had approached the creation of the questions with certain assumptions about who the participants were, and Chevy clearly did not fit into the box that I had drawn for them. In this section, I will demonstrate how Chevy consistently resisted the identity of 'learner' that

² I do not mean to imply that each of these varieties of English that Mo refers to are not intelligible but rather that they are not necessarily universally intelligible even among NSs of English who speak different varieties.

³ This prediction is of course based upon the assumption that Mo will be unable to satisfy the standards of a NS norm. Given research presented in Chapter 3, it is incredibly unlikely that he will manage to do this especially assuming he does not enroll in 'accent reduction' courses. In my opinion, it is much more likely that he will adjust his own views of what constitutes 'good English' than that he will reach a point where he can satisfy a strict NS norm.

participation in my study seemed to imply and instead asserted his legitimacy as user of English.

I will begin my discussion of Chevy by examining how he evaluates his English. Excerpt 7.12 contains Chevy's perceptions about his English.

Excerpt 7.12 [Chevy, data collection point #1]

- 1 **Researcher:** ok umm so now I'm gonna transition again to another topic uh we've
- 2 we've already kind of covered this but I wanna go in detail now so how good do you
- 3 think your English is?
- 4
- 5 **Chevy:** umm I've been classified as advanced many times I think I'm advanced
- 6 enough
- 7
- 8 **[... 8 turns skipped...]**
- 9
- 10 **Researcher:** nope ok umm so now I'm gonna ask you about some specific skills
- 11 umm are you satisfied with your speaking
- 12
- 13 **Chevy:** yes
- 14
- 15 **Researcher:** yup are you satisfied with your ability to listen or understand spoken
- 16 English?
- 17
- 18 **Chevy:** umm yes
- 19
- 20 **Researcher:** yup are you satisfied with your reading ability in English?
- 21
- 22 **Chevy:** yes
- 23
- 24 **Researcher:** yup uh are you satisfied with your writing ability in English?
- 25
- 26 **Chevy:** yes
- 27
- 28 **Researcher:** are you satisfied with your grammar?
- 29
- 30 **Chevy:** umm I would say not fifty-fifty well let me say seventy or eighty percent
- 31 satisfied
- 32
- 33 **Researcher:** ok seventy or eighty percent are you satisfied with your
- 34 pronunciation?
- 35

36 **Chevy:** yes

37

38 **[...4 turns skipped...]**

39

40 **Researcher:** ok umm alright uh alright so these questions I'm going to modify them
41 a little bit for you umm so you're satisfied with your English abilities uh when do
42 you think that you reached this level how long did it take you to reach this level?

Chevy describes his English as *advanced enough* (lines 5-6) acknowledging that it may not satisfy every standard but his repeated answer of *yes* to most of the subsequent questions (with the exception of grammar which in lines 30-31 he claims to be *seventy or eighty percent satisfied* with) suggest that he is personally satisfied, and indeed at other points in the interview he claims to be satisfied with his English (cf. e.g. Excerpt 7.15, line 9). Interestingly, there are subtle indications in Excerpt 7.12 that Chevy does not seem to fit my expectations of a participant. His responses of *yes* (lines 13, 18, 22, 26, and 36) do not generate the type of discussion and elaboration that I had hoped that negative answers would have (and did for the other participants). Furthermore, I acknowledge in the interview that the next set of questions on the list require adjustment for his unique situation framing his satisfaction to a past and present as opposed to a future state (lines 40-42).

The satisfaction that Chevy expresses is indicative of an identity as legitimate speaker. In particular Chevy presents himself as a legitimate participant in a multilingual, multinational English-speaking community. Excerpts 7.13 and 7.14 provide evidence of this identity.

Excerpt 7.13 [Chevy, Data collection point #1]

1 **Researcher:** ok don't exclude bleh exclude it that's fine umm so how do you
2 imagine that umm your English will benefit you when you finish your master's
3 degree?

4
 5 **Chevy:** during the last few years I've been doing a lot of writing for a magazine and
 6 for my work i I did a lot of translation between Arabic and English my aim is to
 7 continue doing this in the future in both languages

Excerpt 7.14 [Chevy, Data collection point #1]

1 **Researcher:** ok umm so in the past umm well my next question then is why are you
 2 so comfortable?

3
 4 **Chevy:** I've been using the language for a very long time now umm I use it for
 5 studies I use it and I've been using it for my work I work with the multi-national
 6 company uh with people from all over the world the main language between us was
 7 English spoken and written

In Excerpt 7.13, Chevy not only describes himself in the future as using English (line 7), but he also presents himself as having already used it for a legitimate communicative purpose (lines 5-7), writing and translating. In Excerpt 7.14, he elaborates on the nature of his work context in a *multi-national company with people from all over the world* (lines 5-6). He states that he has already *been using the language*, and thus constructs an identity of user of English for himself.

The identity of user of English that Chevy asserts comes in conflict with the frame of my interview questions. For example, in Excerpt 7.15, Chevy resists the assumption that he still needs *to learn* English (line 1).

Excerpt 15 [Chevy, Data collection point #1]

1 **Researcher:** ok umm how do you attempt to learn or improve your english?

2
 3 **Chevy:** I didn't understand

4
 5 **Researcher:** ok so we're moving on I'm sorry we went through a huge transition
 6 here I'm going on to a new set of questions how do you attempt how do you try to
 7 learn or improve your English?

8
 9 **Chevy:** uh I'm satisfied with my level uh umm I think uh the normal practice is
 10 enough for me now

11

12 **[...8 turns skipped...]**

13

14 **Researcher:** ok umm do you attempt to practice using English in every day
15 situations?

16

17 **Chevy:** no I don't call it attempt I just use it

In line 1 (and repeated again in lines 5-7), I ask Chevy a question framed from the perspective that all of my participants were language learners studying English in an IEP. However, Chevy resists the idea that he would need such improvement. He states that he is *satisfied* with his English (line 9). Several turns later, I ask him whether he attempts *to practice using English in every day situations* (lines 14-15). He again re-frames the question stating that he wouldn't *call it attempt* he just uses it (line 17). The strong resistance to the frame of these questions shows that Chevy is clearly committed to this identity.

Chevy's identity as legitimate user is made possible, I believe, because he appears to place less value on the ideology that places NS language hierarchically above L2 varieties. In fact, he appears to waver between outright rejection of the deficit view of NNS language and mere tolerance of NNS forms. Evidence of these positions can be found in Excerpts 7.16 and 7.17.

Excerpt 7.16 [Chevy, Data collection point #1]

1 **Researcher:** ok umm are you comfortable speaking English with students from the
2 united states?

3

4 **Chevy:** yeah I didn't find any problem with that

5

6 **Researcher:** ok why do you think that is?

7

8 **Chevy:** I think I'm familiar with the language because of my long use of the language
9 umm my work and my life between multinational people from different accents

10 different way of pronunciation made it easier for me to communicate with the more
11 various people from different backgrounds

Excerpt 7.17 [Chevy, Data collection point #1]

1 **Researcher:** practicing ok umm so how good do you think your grammar is in
2 comparison to say uh the average native speaker?

3

4 **Chevy:** umm I would say eighty percent maybe

5

6 **Researcher:** eighty percent?

7

8 **Chevy:** yeah

9

10 **Researcher:** what about your pronunciation in comparison to them?

11

12 **Chevy:** umm no umm pronunciation is much less yeah but uh I'm satisfied with it
13 I'm not trying to imitate their accent

In Excerpt 7.16, Chevy states that he is comfortable speaking with US students (line 4), after being asked to explain why he is so comfortable (line 6), he references once again the multinational, multilingual community of professionals that he envisions himself being a part of (lines 8-10). This community he claims has familiarized him with various *accents* and *people from different backgrounds* (lines 9-11). It is important to note that he chooses to use the word *different* as opposed to describing the NNSs in his multinational community as deficient compared to the NS students he has just been discussing. In fact, he uses the familiarity with a wide range of accents that he has been exposed to as the basis of his comfort for speaking with US students, implying that their accents might otherwise cause communication difficulties for him. As I mentioned previously in Chapter 4, Chevy does put forth the idea that NS accents can be unintelligible.

In Excerpt 7.17, I ask Chevy to evaluate his English in comparison to that of a NS (lines 1-2). Unlike in previous excerpts, he does not seem to resist this frame that implies his English is deficient, and he does respond that it is *eighty percent* in conformity with the NS language (line 4). However, his response to the same question about pronunciation is quite different. In this case, he begins by framing his pronunciation as deficient or *much less* in comparison to NSs (line 12). However, he goes on to state that he is *satisfied with it* (line 12) and more importantly that he is not *trying to imitate their accent* (line 13). In this way, Chevy reframes the issue of acquisition of NS accent to be more about ‘imitation’ than about acquisition of ‘proper’, ‘correct’, or ‘real’ language. It appears that Chevy is more invested in the NS norm for lexicogrammar than for phonology. This is further substantiated by his GSIS responses, which show that he selected the NS norm as his personal preference for grammar but “accented intelligibility” as his preference for pronunciation (see Table 4.5, Chapter 4).

Overall, Chevy is quite positive about his English abilities and this, in my opinion, is clearly warranted given the relative ease with which I was able to communicate with him as well as his impressive proficiency test scores. Furthermore, his professional experience writing and translating in English as well as using it as a common language in a multinational company clearly point to an accomplished L2 user. In recognition of his success, Chevy resists being portrayed as a learner of English and instead asserts his legitimacy as a user. He portrays himself as a legitimate participant in a multinational community of multilingual

professionals, which he has previous experience in and which he aspires to reenter upon completion of his studies in the United States. English, then, is the language he uses to participate in that community, and he sees himself not as an apprentice or learner but rather as an 'old-timer' or adept practitioner.

Comparison of Mo and Chevy

Mo and Chevy's cases lend themselves to fruitful comparison due to their similarity in linguistic ability. As I demonstrated above, Mo and Chevy appear to have linguistic abilities that are functionally indistinguishable at least in the contexts that I have been able to observe them in: standardized testing and an interview setting with me. Moreover, both participants personally express the perception that they are able to communicate effectively with a wide range of interlocutors on nearly any topic.

However, despite my and their perceptions of their communicative efficacy, major differences between their perceptions exist. Mo expresses dissatisfaction with his English (cf. e.g. Excerpt 7.8, line 8), while Chevy appears to be quite satisfied and comfortable with his (cf. e.g. Excerpt 7.12; Excerpt 7.15, line 9; Excerpt 7.17, line 12). The stark difference in their perceptions of their English rests not in a discrepancy between their 'proficiency' but rather in a discrepancy between the standards they hold themselves to and the ideologies they espouse. On the one hand, Mo seems to be seeking to conform to a NS norm (cf. e.g. Excerpt 7.8, line 12; although as I pointed out above he may be conflicted about this goal); on the other

hand, Chevy expresses satisfaction with his English while acknowledging differences between it and the language of NSs (cf. e.g. Excerpt 7.17).

Of particular concern are the consequences of this basic difference in perspective for Chevy and Mo's access to the "imagined communities" (cf. Norton, 2001) that each portrays and their relationships with and access to them. Norton draws on work by Lave and Wenger in developing the concept of communities of practice (cf. Lave and Wenger, 1991) and the later elaboration of three modes of participation: engagement, imagination, and alignment by Wenger (1998) to arrive at the notion of imagined communities or communities of practice that grow out of the participants' tendency "to create images of the world and see connections through time and space by extrapolating... from experience" (Norton, 2001, p. 163). In other words, Norton coins the term to refer to a community that is not necessarily immediately present but which the participants envision themselves belonging to either in the present or future. Norton argues that much of her participants' investment in language learning derives from the value that English has for entry into or participation in their imagined community.

This construct I believe is relevant to the situation of Mo and Chevy. Both portray imagined communities in their interviews with me, and interestingly each has a fairly similar community in mind. Both are studying in a pre-university IEP, and as a result certainly envision their participation in that community extensively. However, for both of these individuals (and the other participants) the United States appears to serve primarily as the sight of their advanced education and not as the

ultimate community that they envision themselves entering as they state in Excerpts 7.18 (Mo, lines 7-12) and 7.19 (Chevy, line 4) in response to my question about whether they plan to live in the United States.

Excerpt 7.18 [Mo, Data collection point #2]

- 1 **Researcher:** [...] do you want to eventually live in the united states?
- 2
- 3 **Mo:** mmm we'll see
- 4
- 5 **Researcher:** we'll see? Umm what would make you want to do that?
- 6
- 7 **Mo:** hu it's umm I don't know yet umm uh from now uh so far I think I will not
- 8 eventually stay in united states but if I meet meet somebody whatever she's she's
- 9 Chinese American or from other country and umm if we get married and and she
- 10 wants to study uh or or stay in united states and I think it's ok maybe we will st stay
- 11 in united states or if I found a job or some better uh opportunities that I should stay
- 12 in united states and maybe I will do that

Excerpt 7.19 [Chevy, Data collection point #2]

- 1 **Researcher:** ok ok umm would you want to eventually live in the united states or in
- 2 another English speaking country?
- 3
- 4 **Chevy:** umm I never thought of that but I don't exclude the possibility
- 5
- 6 **Researcher:** ok don't exclude bleh exclude it that's fine umm so how do you
- 7 imagine that umm your English will benefit you when you finish your master's
- 8 degree?
- 9
- 10 **Chevy:** during the last few years I've been doing a lot of writing for a magazine and
- 11 for my work i I did a lot of translation between Arabic and English my aim is to
- 12 continue doing this in the future in both languages

Rather than envisioning assimilation into the United States as their imagined community, both Chevy and Mo seem to envision working in a multinational organization that uses English as one of its languages of communication, likely still in their home countries, Saudi Arabia and China respectively. Chevy expresses this in Excerpt 7.19 when he states that he claims to have been writing and translating

and plans to do both *in the future in both languages* (lines 10-12). He also mentions already having worked in a multinational setting in Excerpt 7.14 (lines 4-7) and Excerpt 7.16 (lines 9-11). Mo describes a similar imagined community, in which he is a professional at a Chinese company with international partners especially *English-speaking countries* (Excerpt 7.11).

Despite having similar imagined communities, the participants clearly portray the entry requirements into these communities differently. Chevy portrays himself as a legitimate participant in his imagined community and cites his experience with such an organization as evidence of his status as legitimate user of English (Excerpt 7.16, lines 8-11). Furthermore, his portrayal of the community stresses multilingualism and diversity of ‘accents’ (Excerpt 7.14, lines 4-7). In this manner, he rejects the NS norm as a necessary or appropriate standard for language learning and rather than labeling language that conforms to a NS norm as ‘good’ or ‘real’, he asserts that he is not attempting to *imitate* NS speech (Excerpt 7.17, lines 12-13).

Chevy’s perceptions are in stark contrast to Mo’s, who presents the NS norm as the standard most appropriate and relevant to his imagined community (Excerpt 7.10, lines 41-52). As a result, rather than portraying himself as a legitimate user in the present as Chevy does, he claims that *decent English* is only that language that conforms to a NS norm. Therefore, it appears Mo believes that NNS varieties of English are not compatible with entrance into his imagined community of professionals in an international business setting.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated that despite having seemingly equal levels of communicative capacity in English, the two participants, Mo and Chevy hold quite different perceptions of their own English. Although both acknowledge their ability to communicate effectively, they differ in their acceptance of their English variety. On the one hand, Chevy expresses satisfaction with his English, rejects being positioned as a learner, asserts an identity as user, and downplays the importance of conformity to a NS norm. On the other hand, Mo is confident in his English but expresses some dissatisfaction with it and desires to conform to a NS norm. Both individuals describe similar imagined communities of future English use, but the standard of English use inherent in these visions are quite different. Chevy's imagined community stresses multilingualism and a view of NNS speech as different from rather than deficient to NS speech, while deemphasizing NS or NNS status altogether. Mo's imagined community stresses a need to conform to a NS norm for the ultimate purpose of communicating with NSs and being perceived as 'professional'.

It remains unclear whether the imagined communities themselves are the cause of the differing perspectives or whether their differing perspectives cause Chevy and Mo to imagine differing communities of future English use. Furthermore, it is not entirely clear whether one of these perspectives is more informed or naïve than the other. Mo could certainly be characterized as chasing an unrealistic and unnecessary goal, because it is unlikely that he will ever be able to satisfy a NS norm

nor is it likely that he will need to in order to be successful in his future profession as an accountant in China. However, Chevy's perspective may also ignore the degree to which NS language is viewed as prestigious.

In the end, however, it is my contention that Chevy has adopted a more realistic and empowering perspective that asserts his communicative capacity in English without attempting to *imitate* NSs, whereas Mo clings to a fantasy born of a NS ideology that ignores (or is ignorant of) both the constraints on adult L2 acquisition and the sociolinguistic reality of English used as a lingua franca. Norton, citing Simon (1992), argues that "students should be encouraged to interrogate why they desire what they do, and whether such desires are consistent with a vision of future possibility" (p. 171). Furthermore, Jostmann and Koole (2009) suggest disengagement from unrealistic or unattainable goals may be as important as achieving goals for psychological well-being. As I pointed out above, Mo may already be in the process of disengaging himself from the NS norm. His conflicting statements about intelligibility as a model seem to suggest that he is not as committed to this standard as other statements suggest. Perhaps then the only difference between Chevy and Mo is the empowering experience that Chevy has been fortunate enough to have as a legitimate user of English in his imagined community.

Chapter 8: Conclusion - 'Nativeness ideology' and international education

In the course of this work I have attempted to contextualize the findings of this research as well as avoid overstating them. However, it is important that I note several key shortcomings of this research that limit its generalizability. First, the sample dealt with here is obviously extremely small ($n = 8$), but this was of course intentional so that a more extensive picture of each participant could be presented. However, I had originally intended to have 10 participants, who all completed the study, which means that the body of data that I gathered is substantially smaller than I had intended (I discuss attrition below). Furthermore, their demographic characteristics are fairly undiverse. They are all male (for a detailed description of the gendered experience of language learning from a female perspective cf. Norton, 2000), and they come from only two different countries. Although these countries are the best represented in the IEP they were studying in, there is nonetheless a large number of other nations not represented in this study. The results therefore need to be interpreted in light of the fact that members of other cultures, ages, and genders might offer differing perspectives. In particular exclusions of participants from so-called 'Outer Circle' nations (e.g. India or Pakistan, cf. Kachru, 1985) limits the findings specifically to those from 'Expanding Circle' nations (perhaps even more narrowly to Saudi Arabia and China) as results from Timmis (2002)

demonstrate that L2 users from 'Outer Circle' nations differ greatly in their views on appropriate standards for English use and learning. Furthermore, the fact that these participants come from well-represented national origins in their IEP, they had more opportunity to participate in unintegrated enclaves of their compatriots. In other words, international students studying in a place where very few or no other students come from their home country might have vastly different experiences than my participants.

Furthermore, the attrition that was experienced had an undeniable effect on the study. The loss of Sam and Chevy was detrimental to the study (as was the limited data of Mo and K3 as a result of their late entry into the study). Chevy in particular represented a very different perspective, but he unfortunately withdrew from the study after only one data collection point. It is perhaps important that future research explore the challenges an international student who asserts his/her legitimate speakerhood (as Chevy does) faces as he/she continues to have experiences at a US university. This is an especially important limitation in that I have presented Chevy as an example of an empowered international student, whose perspectives are perhaps those that should be fostered in other international students. The fact that I am unable to say definitively whether he faced challenges as a result of his rejection of the NS norm is a major shortcoming of this research.

Furthermore, although I tracked the participants for as long as possible (in four cases, nearly 8 months), the time was insufficient to observe their experiences outside of the IEP in which they were studying and in their academic programs.

Most of the participants had just finished their IEP coursework at the very end of the study. As a result, the research lacks perspectives informed by experience within the actual academic communities that international students are seeking to enter. This I believe is also a major shortcoming, and data from participants who had already entered their academic programs and engaged in the types of interactions that my participants were preparing for would have been a valuable addition to this research.

Although I acknowledge the importance of these limitations, it is my contention that the research here has extracted several key notions about the participants' perceptions, beliefs, and ideologies concerning NS norms as a standard for language learning that can nonetheless be generalized to other situations and contexts and that I feel are critical to an understanding of the needs and desires of international students vis-à-vis NS language.

First, despite repeated assertions that language learners not only need but *want* to conform to a NS norm on the part of proponents of the continued use of the NS norm in English language teaching (e.g. Carter, 1998; Kubota, 2006; Kuo, 2006; Prodromou, 2006; Scheuer, 2005; Sobkowiak, 2005), this study has uncovered a far more conflicted and uncertain state of affairs. Consistency over time in the selection of a preferred standard (whether NS norm or some alternative standard) was not the norm among the participants. More typical was a tendency for them to arrive in the United States with a NS norm in mind and then adjust this position as time passed and they gained more awareness of the relevant sociolinguistic issues.

Furthermore, their interview data revealed contradiction and a variety of complex issues that do not suggest the unequivocal desire to conform to a NS norm as asserted by proponents of the NS norm. This finding especially is in line with the findings of both Adolphs (2005) and Jenkins (2007b).

Next, one of the major complicating factors for the participants is the issue of the feasibility of satisfying the NS norm. They generally perceive the acquisition of NS language to be extremely difficult if not impossible, which for many of them conflicts with their desire to satisfy the NS norm. They display a range of strategies to deal with this issue. One participant, DK, appears to retreat from situations in which he feels that ideologies valuing 'nativeness' are prominent such as meeting US students. Abu and Fahad take a different approach, looking to other NNSs whose English they view as acceptable but not ideal models for their own end goals in language learning. Finally, Harry's approach might be dubbed 'denial' in that he appears not to have reconciled the two beliefs that on the one hand he will probably never satisfy the NS norm (or at least certainly not during his short stay in the United States) and that on the other hand he sees a great value to acquiring NS language. Therefore, the feasibility of the NS norm as a standard for adult language learning is one of the chief sources of conflict for the participants regarding this issue.

In addition to a conflicted perspective, the study also revealed that one of the issues facing international students with regards to the NS norm is the ideology associated with it regarding the roles and responsibilities of individuals in

intercultural communication. When using the NS norm as a standard, NS language acts as the pedagogical target and therefore represents the only 'correct' or 'real' form of English. This position is extended by some of the participants in this study to imply that whatever language a NS might produce is inevitably intelligible, and NNSs are at fault for being unable to understand in the case of communication difficulty. This belief manifests itself in the perception that when a NS uses accommodations in his or her speech as a means of promoting intelligibility, that by extension the NNS has failed by being unable to cope with 'real' English or English that is governed by the norms of NS-NS communication. I believe that this is a particularly dangerous piece of the 'nativeness' ideology which I also described as being articulated in a similar manner from US students in their descriptions of their NNS instructors' English (cf. Chapter 3), and therefore it will be addressed in the following sections.

Finally, I also described how the NS norm has the effect of preventing the participants from feeling a sense of empowerment in their use of English. I compared two participants with comparable 'proficiency' and communicative capacity in English. Both recognize that they have the ability to communicate virtually any meaning that they might wish with any interlocutor. However, only one of them, Chevy, expresses satisfaction with his language abilities. The other, Mo, referencing deficiencies vis-à-vis NS language expresses lingering dissatisfaction with his English. I concluded, therefore, that the NS norm was incompatible with the pursuit of empowering international students, because it seemingly places them

permanently (at least if one assumes that acquisition of NS language is impossible by these participants due to their age) in a position of finding deficiencies between themselves and their NS peers. The idea of an alternative to the NS norm serving to empower NNSs is a theme also seen in other similar research particularly with pre-service NNS English instructors (e.g. Pavlenko, 2003; Golombek and Jordan, 2005).

In light of these important findings, I feel confident in labeling the NS norm problematic in the context of a university purporting to be 'international' (cf. also Jenkins, 2011). While I feel that some further research might help to further corroborate these findings, which are largely in line with the findings of the few other researchers who have attempted this type of study (Adolphs, 2005 and Jenkins, 2007b), it appears to me that this research is best viewed as having identified a major problem, namely 'nativeness ideology' and its incompatibility with the goals of multiculturalism in higher education. In the remaining sections I will briefly describe the 'nativeness' ideology that I am referring to and its effects, which I believe this research has demonstrated this ideology to be at least partially responsible for. I will then proceed to discuss my recommendations for research and pedagogical action for developing solutions to the problem of the 'nativeness' ideology.

'Nativeness' ideology described

The analysis of the ideas that the participants in this study have regarding the NS norm has revealed for most of them a rigid ideology about the 'superiority' or 'authenticity' of NS language. It has manifested itself in a variety of overt beliefs that

I believe can be generally distilled into the following basic two, which are themselves related¹:

- (1) The NS norm is the ideal model for language learning
- (2) NSs are permanently intelligible, whereas NNSs cause communication difficulties due to their deviations from NS norms (a hierarchy of speakerhood)

However, (1) and (2) come into conflict with another widely-held belief, discussed in particular in Chapter 6:

- (3) After a certain age, it is impossible (or extremely difficult) to acquire a NS variety of English (or any language)

This basic conflict between (3) on the one hand and (1) and (2) on the other is largely responsible for what Jenkins (2007b) labels “linguistic schizophrenia” (p. 123) or the contradiction between the rational understanding of (3) (and other ideas such as the rejection of the ‘inherent value’ of the ‘standard’) with the continued pursuit of a NS norm.

If we evaluate the validity of these three beliefs, we find that they are not all equal and worthy of protection. First, (1) is clearly a matter of personal preference, although in many individuals (e.g. Harry, but cf. also Jenkins, 2007b for further examples) it is justified on the basis of the inherent value hypothesis (cf. Trudgill and Giles, 1978) or beliefs about the inherent ‘superiority’ of NS language, which is

¹ In conceptualizing these ideological notions, I remain uncertain whether they are distinct. Alternatively it may be that (1) is actually caused by (2) or vice-versa.

at best a questionable, arbitrary assertion and at worst a form of linguistic prejudice.

Like (1), (2) also relies on assumptions that NS language is 'superior', but is even more of a logical leap than (1) due to its complete denial of variation in NS language or miscommunication among NSs. In other words, proponents of (2) fail to note that NS language is not uniform and certain varieties are often unintelligible to each other or at least require quite a bit of accommodation between speakers. Furthermore, communication breakdowns occur frequently in NS-NS interaction (albeit often for different reasons than they occur in NNS-NS interaction). If NSs can cause communication breakdown in NS-NS interaction, then it would seem feasible for them also to cause such in NNS-NS interaction as well.

(3) is the best supported of these three beliefs in language research. As I noted in Chapter 2, negative correlations between 'native-like' acquisition and age of acquisition have been repeatedly reported by researchers (cf. e.g. Flege et al., 2006, Flege, Munro, and MacKay, 1995; Flege, Yeni-Komshian, and Liu, 1999; Munro, 1996; Munro and Mann, 2005). Although there are isolated reports of second language speakers achieving 'near-native' or 'native-like' status (e.g. Birdsong, 2007), these individuals are clearly not the norm. Furthermore, it is unlikely that international students planning to stay in the United States only temporarily could satisfy such a standard (not to mention the question of whether it would truly be a more valuable pursuit than focusing on the fields of study they came to the United States to pursue in the first place). For example, the participants in this study plan

to stay for a range of time from DK, Harry, and Sam who are planning to stay only two years and Abu who is planning to complete a doctoral degree after the completion of his IEP coursework. There are of course a variety of factors that affect rate of acquisition, but given the fact that each of the participants has arrived in the United States beyond the 'critical period', it is unlikely that 2-6 years will be sufficient for acquiring 'native-like' English (cf. e.g. Collier, 1987; Long, 1990; Long, 2005).

Despite the 'facts' gathered by researchers related to intercultural communication which especially in the case of age-based constraints on second language acquisition are fairly well known even among lay audiences (including the participants in this study who reference the idea that children are better able to acquire NS language, cf. Chapter 6), 'nativeness' ideology continues to prevail. I pointed out in Chapter 3 that some of the students commenting on the *Rate My Professors* pages of some of the university's NNS instructors clearly believed in (2) above. Furthermore, the participants themselves clearly held perceptions of themselves that were skewed by an ideology that places NSs in a privileged position as 'superior' speakers. For example, in Chapter 7, I discussed how two participants with comparable ratings of their English abilities have drastically different perceptions of themselves as English users. On the one hand, Mo finds himself to be generally intelligible and communicative yet he remains dissatisfied with his English, because he maintains features of NNS speech, which he believes mark him as unprofessional due to their deviation from NS language. On the other hand,

Chevy resists the label 'learner' and instead asserts an identity of 'user' who does not concern himself with 'imitation' of NS norms but who nonetheless was (and will be again in the future) a legitimate participant in a multinational company using English as its medium of expression. Chevy's view of his and other NNSs' 'accents' as 'different' as opposed to deficient makes an apparently large difference in how he feels about himself and his English.

The effects of the ideology

One of the effects of this ideology, then, is clearly that it prevents individuals who are otherwise competent communicators from viewing their English as legitimate. As I pointed out above, Mo is a prime example. However, the same could certainly be said of some of the other participants. For example, Harry completed his IEP training shortly after his final interview. Therefore, by his fourth and final interview, he was near a point when he would be institutionally recognized as competent in English (by completing his IEP course work and thereby fulfilling his English language requirement) and expected to participate as a legitimate speaker in a variety of academic discourses. Despite his de facto institutional legitimacy, Harry still framed himself as inferior to NSs. Excerpt 8.1 illustrates his mild dissatisfaction.

Excerpt 8.1 [Harry, Data collection point #4]:

- 1 **Researcher:** mhmm ok umm how good do you think your English is now?
- 2
- 3 **Harry:** umm I think my English is prove is improved and I I don't realize that umm
- 4 yeah I I can compare now and in the past I don't know when I umm when I come to
- 5 came to America the first week it's really different I now I know how to umm say
- 6 hello or hi to to other people but umm but at the first I don't know how to umm

- 7 communicate with with American people and umm maybe I just don't know the
8 umm what is a right way to to to communicate
9
- 10 **Researcher:** what is the right way to communicate?
11
- 12 **Harry:** umm you can say hello or something like I I think most black people like to
13 say what's up and then umm you can say what's up or not much or some but umm
14 we uh my Chinese friends umm uh of course at the first when when they asked them
15 what's up they just say good [laughs] yeah it's strange but now we we know that
16
- 17 **Researcher:** ok how good do you think your speaking is?
18
- 19 **Harry:** speaking umm so umm I think I just speak word by word now
20
- 21 **Researcher:** what do you mean by that?
22
- 23 **Harry:** like umm like umm native speakers for example native speakers say umm
24 whatareyadoin it's very fluents but for me I just say what are you doing it's very
25 slow very slowly not so fluents yeah and sometimes I'm I make some a little bit uh
26 grammar mistakes maybe I think more practices I will do better
27
- 28 **Researcher:** mhmm mhmm ok uh how good is your listening?
29
- 30 **Harry:** listening umm listening is uh the most difficult part of english
31
- 32 **Researcher:** ok why do you think that?
33
- 34 **Harry:** umm as I said now I'm when I communicate with American people umm I
35 not understand everything they they talk to me and when I listen to a lecture I not
36 get the very important information so I'm I'm practice the listening everyday umm
37 and in uh on the website ted yeah and the more and more lectures there so I
38 practice and practice
39
- 40 **[...14 turns skipped...]**
41
- 42 **Researcher:** mhmm ok umm how good is your pronunciation?
43
- 44 **Harry:** umm it's ok but not very good I should also practice it
45
- 46 **Researcher:** mhmm mhmm why do you think that?
47
- 48 **Harry:** umm because I speak not like a native speakers do you realize that?

In Excerpt 8.1, Harry assesses his English abilities with my prompting (line 1). He does acknowledge that he has *improved* when he compares his current abilities in English with those he arrived in the United States with (lines 3-5). He discusses his increased understanding of the norms governing NS-NS interaction (lines 5-8, 12-15). When asked specifically about his speaking (line 17), he expresses dissatisfaction with his lack of fluency. He appears to use the word fluency (or *fluents* lines 24-25) to refer to reduced NS speech resulting from the 'blending' of sounds in such phrases as "What are you doing?" or "What did you say?" (line 24). He criticizes himself here for speaking in a manner that is *very slow* (lines 24-25) and only progresses *word by word* (line 19), which apparently means he does not 'link' or 'blend' words in the way that NSs do. He also criticizes himself for the fact that he does *not understand everything* that NSs say to him (lines 34-38). Finally, he expresses dissatisfaction with his pronunciation because he does not speak *like a native speaker* (line 48). The comparison of himself to a NS is consistent throughout Harry's evaluation of his English, and leads him to conclude that his English is *improved* but still 'inferior'.

It is my contention that this perspective is inappropriate for a democratic, 'international' model of education in which students from diverse geographic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds are to be valued for their differences, asked to contribute to academic discourses, and expected to perform academically at a level equal to their US peers. In other words, international students such as Harry should not permanently feel that their contributions carry less legitimacy due to a

perception that their utterances are not “formulated in the legitimate phonological and syntactic forms” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 650) that are in all likelihood beyond their potential to acquire. Furthermore, such perceptions should not be fostered by existing ideologies at the university. As a result, educational institutions should take steps to address these feelings in order to more thoroughly incorporate international students into their institutions thereby fulfilling their objectives of creating a multicultural and international community. The findings from this research suggest some possible directions for this that I will present in the next section.

Future directions

Having established the existence of a ‘nativeness’ ideology both in the participants and to a lesser extent among some of their NS peers at the university (particularly with regards to (2) above) as well as the resulting conflicted and unempowered state that many of the participants find themselves in with regards to these issues, it is my intention now to discuss the implications of these ideas particularly with regards to the university context in which this study was conducted. However, given that as I stated in the introduction hundreds of thousands of international students study in the United States every year at a variety of US institutions (Institute of International Education, 2010), it is likely that the same set of issues and recommendations are at least partially applicable to other similar contexts as well (cf. also Jenkins, 2011). Therefore, in discussing this particular context it is my assumption that applicable information can be extracted

to the benefit of others, especially other US universities enrolling high numbers of international students.

Selecting a norm for English language learning

First, supporters of the NS norm have generally claimed that they represent the voices and the interests of students and language learners who overwhelmingly wish to speak like NSs. For example, Scheuer (2005) concludes that

The preferences shown by the learners themselves is something that LFC advocates may want to consider. MacKenzie (2003) makes an excellent comment on Bertolt Brecht's proposal, offered after the 1953 Berlin uprising, that the East German government should dissolve the people and elect a new one. MacKenzie (2003, p. 60) suggests that the proponents of the ELF model(s) may need to do the same with students in European English departments, who look up to L1 speakers as models to follow (Scheuer, 2005, p. 127).

She goes on to claim that European students are not alone and to cite Timmis (2002) to provide evidence that learners around the world desire 'native speaker' norms. Despite Scheuer's and others' attempts to tout NS norms as the unequivocal will of the people, I believe that these claims are unfounded and misguided. Given the conflicted sentiment of the participants in this study as well as those in Adolphs (2005) and Jenkins (2007b), it seems that the idea that students unequivocally 'want' any particular standard is clearly an overstatement. Certainly cross-sectional, questionnaire-based research (e.g. Timmis, 2002) tends to yield results that show strong support for the NS norm, but this likely has more to do with prevailing ideologies of 'nativeness' rather than any purely personal preference on the part of individual learners. As this study has shown, when L2 English users are asked to seriously probe their own thoughts on the matter, their responses are much more

conflicted particularly as they gain awareness of the sociolinguistic issues most critical to this issue (cf. Chapter 5; also Adolphs, 2005). Therefore, educational institutions should be skeptical of claims that international students or other L2 users of English unequivocally expect a NS norm. It is my recommendation instead, given that NS norms are both unnecessary (for the purpose of achieving cross-cultural intelligibility) and unrealistic as well as a source of conflict for learners and L2 users, that alternative standards should be explored for international students studying at US universities and in other contexts as well.

Before an educational institution can utilize an alternative standard extensively, however, serious concerns must first be addressed. In particular, how to establish a standard clearly, equitably, and practically without depending on NS norms remains an open question that is exceedingly difficult to address. I believe that ELF researchers have made quite a bit of headway in offering up just such an alternative particularly in outlining a methodology for how such a norm will be described and established. In particular, Jenkins' (2000) proposals (cf. e.g. Chapter 2, Figure 2.1) represent a clear standard based on promoting intelligibility in pronunciation in order to prevent a chaotic 'anything goes' mentality while still making allowances for regional variation that is the necessary result of constraints on adult language learning. Jenkins performed various studies in which NNSs interacted. Their interactions were recorded and transcribed, and Jenkins also relied on post-interaction interviews with the participants to elucidate communication difficulties. She noted instances of communication difficulty, and

from these she extrapolated occurrences of difficulty and made recommendations for an ELF pronunciation syllabus based upon features that promoted and hindered communication in ELF. Other researchers in the same vein have attempted to describe the features of ELF in other areas especially lexicogrammar (cf. e.g. Björkman, 2008; Hülmbauer, 2006; Meierkord, 2004). In each case, the focus has been on those features that present potential problems for intelligibility in NNS-NNS interaction regardless of their status in NS language. This, I believe, is a commendable pursuit.

One caveat that I would add to my otherwise adamant support of ELF as a possible alternative standard, is what I believe is the artificiality of the standard in terms of the communication it anticipates its speakers engaging in. ELF researchers such as Jenkins specify that they are researching the practices of NNS-NNS interaction in order to inform pedagogy used to instruct learners who wish to speak only with other NNSs. This idea derives from the fact that according to estimates such as Crystal (2006), NSs of English are greatly outnumbered by NNSs. Therefore, according to the logic of ELF researchers, NSs should play a far smaller role in theorizing what is necessary for ELF standards. In practice, the influence of NSs has at times been completely eliminated from ELF research such as Jenkins' (2000) seminal work, in which none of the participants in the intelligibility research she performed were NSs. In addition, responding to the strict definition of ELF from Firth (1996) as strictly involving communication between NNSs (and only NNSs), researchers of VOICE [the Vienna-Oxford international corpus of English] have

granted the concession that English communication in cross-cultural contexts does often involve NSs and therefore they have included some NSs in their corpus. However, of its over one million word corpus, the VOICE project attributes only 7.7% of those words to NSs (VOICE project, 2007). The limited presence of NSs in ELF research is largely a reaction to the abundance of research on NNS-NS interaction (and the corresponding perceived lack of research on NNS-NNS interaction, cf. Jenkins, 2000) as well as an attempt to clearly delineate ELF from English as a 'native' language. Additionally, NNS-NNS interaction is thought to play a much larger role in European institutions using ELF as a common language such as in Björkman's (2008) research of a Swedish technical university or in the European student exchange program, Erasmus (cf. e.g. Kalocsai, 2009).

However, according to the findings of this study, international students in the US at least are unlikely to desire to learn English exclusively for NNS-NNS interaction. All of the participants in this study are planning to enroll in academic programs at the university and therefore clearly anticipate needing to communicate with NSs. Furthermore, all mention wanting in their later life once they have returned to their respective home countries to use English for purposes of communicating globally, which for them clearly involves NSs to a range of degrees (cf. e.g. Mo's discussion of doing *business with English speaking countries* in Chapter 7, Excerpt 7.11). Therefore, it is my contention that international students both need and desire to learn English for the purpose of communicating with both NSs and NNSs, whoever the interlocutor of the moment may be. In response to this, ELF

research if applied to international students would need to more accurately represent the presence of NSs in the world. If we use Crystal's (2006) estimates of ~400 million NSs and ~1 billion NNSs, then we arrive at a total of ~1.4 billion English users to serve as possible interlocutors for the individual speaker. In this total, NSs represent 28.6% of the possible interlocutors.

In addition, it should be kept in mind that L2 users will probably not use English with interlocutors with whom they share a native language, although the effect of this in increasing the representation of NSs for most L1s is marginal. For example, the *Wikipedia* entry for "List of countries by English-speaking population" (List of countries by English speaking population, 2006)² arrives at a slightly lower figure for the number of total English speakers world-wide than Crystal: ~949 million. The article cites Yiang's (2006) estimate of the number of Chinese English speakers, ~10 million, and through a variety of sources arrives at an aggregate total of ~335 million NSs. NSs in this estimate represent 35.3% of the total English-speaking population, but for a Chinese speaker, eliminating other Chinese English

² I acknowledge that *Wikipedia* is a fairly unorthodox source to cite in an academic work such as this. However, this particular page offers the most comprehensive breakdown of English speakers by country that I have seen. In addition, the sources are documented and appear to be reliable as they include scholarly journal articles and government census documents. As of my last access, the article had been tagged by users of *Wikipedia* for some issues related to the article's reliability. Its accuracy then should not be accepted fully, but it is after all an estimate, and I would offer the same advice to readers regarding the Crystal figure that I (and other researchers) have made wide use of.

speakers, NSs represent a slightly higher number of their total potential interlocutors: 35.6%.³

All of these figures of course assume that the international student is equally likely to encounter any of the over 1 billion English speakers (depending on the estimate) in the world. This assumption is especially faulty for international students in the US, who are far more likely at least while earning their degrees to encounter NSs than would be suggested by these figures. Furthermore, given English's use in education and commerce, the high demand for UK, US, and other 'inner circle' nation's higher education, and the high volume of importing and exporting of these nations, NSs probably feature more prominently in English in international contexts than these figures would suggest. However, it is not my intention to suggest a specific higher benchmark than 35% (or approximately one-third) for the representation of NSs in corpora of ELF. My main objective is to argue that although NSs are clearly not a majority of the potential interlocutors of ELF, they are however a significant population of potential interlocutors for the English language learner. Their participation in ELF should not be ignored or downplayed especially if proposals from ELF are to be applied to international students.⁴ NSs, however, as I mentioned before are completely absent from Jenkins' work and

³ It should be noted that not all Chinese speak languages (or 'dialects' of Chinese) that are intelligible. However, I assume here that rather than use English in this situation Chinese compatriots would likely revert to speaking standard Mandarin Chinese between them before they would use English as their common language.

⁴ I acknowledge that it is not necessarily Jenkins' and other ELF researchers' intention to apply ELF to international students in the United States (although a more recent article by Jenkins (2011) seems to suggest this). However, I feel that this is a worthwhile endeavor.

represent less than 10% of VOICE. It is clear then that these works while influential cannot serve as the only basis upon which an alternative standard for US international students would be based.

In order to move toward such a standard, English instructors and university administrators (not to mention faculty of other disciplines, students, and other shareholders) will require a specific model of what such a standard might look like. Future research then should explore a standard based upon intelligibility for both NSs and NNSs, who are proficient in intercultural communication (cf. the next section for a discussion of the need to train NSs in intercultural communication). The model exemplified by Jenkins and the VOICE project offers researchers an excellent point to begin collecting intelligibility data.

However, one major issue that the present study is well-suited to comment on is whether such a standard would satisfy the expectations of shareholders, particularly those of international students themselves. I have found in analyzing the participants' perspectives that while NS language is clearly valued, intelligibility is also highly valued by all of the participants. Whether the two concepts (intelligibility vs. conformity to a NS norm) are distinct in the minds of all of the participants is not necessarily clear. Mo, for example, in Excerpt 7.10 of Chapter 7 claims that he has little concern for *the accent* (lines 14-15) and that instead he is concerned with being understood (lines 4-5). However, later in the same excerpt he appears to conflate intelligible or *decent English* (line 43) with English that conforms to a NS norm (line 48). As I argued in Chapter 2, research has

demonstrated that NNSs with proficient English abilities can be widely intelligible even to NSs despite the presence of linguistic features that do not conform to a NS norm. Interestingly, Mo is also one participant who offers no specific adept practitioners as models of language learning (cf. Chapter 6), suggesting that he has no awareness of NNSs who maintain broad intelligibility despite deviation from a NS norm. For Mo and other international students like him, challenges to introducing a standard based upon intelligibility would be derived from the conflation of 'intelligible' with 'conforming to a NS norm' (perhaps an extreme extension of belief (2) above). Researchers and educators would need to demonstrate to Mo and others like him that intelligible NNS varieties of English exist.

DK represents another international student perspective, particularly one focusing on the capacity of NS language to make NSs more socially receptive to him and other international students. He describes this position in Excerpt 5.5 of Chapter 5 when he states that it would be *more easy to connect with them* [NSs of English or US students] if he were able to *speak like a native American* (lines 10-11). Unfortunately, an intelligibility-based standard alone will not necessarily address DK's concerns as the language attitudes and the social functions of 'accent' will not change merely because instructors and administrators have changed their perspectives on NNS speech. However, it is also not the case that continued adherence to the NS norm as a standard for English language teaching will adequately address this issue. International students will continue to use English in a way that is distinctly different from NSs as a necessary result of the restraints of

adult second language learning (cf. Chapter 2). DK's concern may however be addressed through the implementation of other necessary changes and programs that could create a more supportive environment for the type of intercultural contact that university administrators at the participants' university expect (see the later section titled "International students and intercultural communication on campus"). Of course, as I have previously demonstrated, DK's perspective on his own eventual English use is not unequivocally tied to NS norms, and he frequently references his desire to achieve an intelligibility-based standard (cf. Chapter 5).

One final concern about introducing an intelligibility-based standard can be found in the views of Harry. Harry expresses strong views about the aesthetic value of NS language. In Chapter 6, Excerpt 6.5, Harry justifies his desire to speak like a NS by claiming that NSs' speech *sounds good* (line 29). An intelligibility-based standard will also not necessarily change this personal preference, although once again this is hardly a reason to maintain a NS norm as insistence that NNSs speak like NSs because of the alleged 'pleasant sound' of their speech will not enable NNSs to speak like a NS. However, perhaps what Harry lacks is a positive example of a NNS as adept practitioner of the language. If he is provided with an example of an intelligible, articulate Chinese speaker of English, then he may be able to adjust his binary view that NS language *sounds good* and NNS language does not.

Furthermore, as with Mo and DK, Harry's interview data does not suggest that he is unequivocally committed to a NS norm. Instead he occasionally appeals to a desire to be intelligible rather than conform to the NS norm.

While Mo, DK, and Harry would all require adjustment to an intelligibility-based standard, it appears that Fahad, Abu, and Chevy are strongly advocating for this type of standard. As I pointed out in Chapter 6, both Fahad and Abu present NNSs who they feel are adept practitioners of English, individuals that the two would like to speak like. Although both Fahad and Abu still maintain that NSs' language is 'superior', they still feel that intelligibility to a broad audience is an acceptable standard. Furthermore, Chevy clearly argues for an intelligibility-based standard. In Chapter 7, I discussed how Chevy asserts his legitimacy as an English speaker despite not conforming to a NS norm especially in terms of his 'accent'. To Chevy, his successful communication in the past serves as evidence of his legitimacy, and in this way Chevy argues for an alternative standard, one based apparently on intelligibility and communicative capacity rather than a NS norm.

In the end, I believe that a standard based upon intelligibility is not incompatible with the desires of the participants as international students. Although it alone may not satisfy every single desire, each of the participants makes direct reference to the value of intelligibility. Addressing their other concerns such as the social power of NS language and the conflation of 'intelligibility' and 'native' may require that in addition to a clearly articulated intelligibility-based standards, researchers work toward developing the following: (1) methods of developing an environment more supportive of intercultural communication (see the next section) and (2) attractive models of successful NNS language use.

In conclusion, it is my recommendation that instructors, IEPs, and universities move toward a standard based upon broad intelligibility to both NSs and NNSs of English abandoning traditional NS norms. Jenkins and other ELF researchers offer an excellent model for approaching a research agenda that will be necessary in order to describe such a set of norms. However, the importance of the NS interlocutor will have to be elevated in future research to insure that this population of speakers, who play a highly important role in international students' experiences, is not ignored. I believe such a proposal is more appropriate in light of facts such as the constraints on adult language learning that past research into language use and language acquisition has revealed (cf. Chapter 2). In addition, the data I have collected in this study support the view that an intelligibility standard could meet the expectations of international students assuming that certain conditions such as providing both an environment more supportive of intercultural communication and attractive models of successful L2 English use. In the next section, I address one of these issues: creating an environment more supportive of intercultural communication.

International students and intercultural communication on campus

In considering issues of English language usage at the university, it is important that two speech communities be discussed. The first is the obvious daily use of English on the campus required for the communication that drives every aspect of the community from teaching and learning to eating and living. The second is the future, imagined communities that represent the various vocations

that students seek to enter in the future and for which the university seeks to prepare them. In this section, I will take up the first of these communities.

As I discussed in Chapter 3, the university that serves as the context for this study made strong efforts to increase the diversity of cultures represented in its student body as many other US universities and according to Jenkins (2011) many other English-medium universities around the world have also attempted to do. It did so by making the recruitment of international students a major initiative in its *Strategic Plan*. Furthermore, the introduction of a large number of international students, mostly NNSs of English, has caused an increase in the need for English as a second language instructors at the university. As a result, the university has attempted to offer international students necessary training to prepare them for the use of English at the university. However, two pieces of evidence suggest that the university community holds the general expectation that communication at the university should proceed according to the norms of NS-NS interaction. First, the overt attitudes expressed by students on the website *Rate My Professors* [RMP] suggest that some NSs at the university hold the inaccurate belief that I identified as (2) in the section titled “‘Nativeness ideology’ described” to be true: that NSs are never the cause of communication difficulty in intercultural communication (cf. Chapter 3). Furthermore, although the university explicitly advocates for the importance of cultural diversity, it is silent about the value of linguistic diversity and does not include in its 5-year plan any plan to increase the communicative capacity of the individuals at the university whether NS or NNS (cf. Ball State University,

2007). Instead its approach has been to increase the enrollment and teaching capacity of its IEP.

The ideology of 'nativeness' is so strong in the two pieces of discourse that I mentioned previously that it goes completely unexamined. It is simply taken for granted as part of the underlying logic of the speakers' ideas. In the *RMP* discourse, the belief that NSs are never the cause of intercultural communication breakdown is used as an implicit assumption for the speakers' arguments that their NNS instructors are poor communicators. The argument proceeds in the following manner: (1) the student claims that the instructor is a poor communicator, because the student could not understand the instructor. (2) Because the instructor is a poor communicator, he/she is also a poor instructor. Left unexamined is of course the role the student has played in the failure of this intercultural communication, a role that many researchers now acknowledge to be quite critical (e.g. Lippi-Green, 1997; Lindemann, 2002; cf. Chapter 2). However, this logical omission is tolerated due to the prevailing ideology of native speakers as the 'real' speakers of English.

Furthermore, although the university's *Strategic plan* identifies the need for tolerance toward and sharing of cultures, language is not identified as something that can legitimately display diversity. While it is argued that students will benefit from the creation of a community with cultural diversity, the administrators appear to be unaware of the potential benefits of the potential diversity of Englishes that introducing a large population of international students into the university community could have. This is clear both from their silence on the issue of linguistic

diversity as well as their solutions to the issue of intercultural communication and its inevitable difficulties: the establishment of minimal scores on standardized tests of English as entry requirements and the use of the IEP to train international students considered to be 'deficient' in English to develop the necessary 'proficiency' to perform in the university's academic programs. These strategies are of course not unique to this university as they are precisely those that Jenkins (2011) reports other English-medium universities use to deal with linguistic diversity in their student bodies.

Furthermore, I do not believe that this university is in any way an anomaly in regards to the attitudes and ideologies inherent in the texts I have explored. The prevalence of difficulties with NNS-NS communication and attitudes such as those expressed by students in the *RMP* data at US universities is clear from the extensive literature on international teaching assistants (cf. e.g. Smyrniou, 1995; Plakans, 1997; Yook, 1999; Yook and Albert, 1999). Furthermore, Jenkins (2011) has also observed that English-medium universities expect to conduct themselves according to norms of NS-NS interaction while claiming to be "deeply international" (p. 926). Therefore, while I am relying on context-specific information to draw my conclusions about the context of this study, the ideology that I have identified in this work is likely quite prevalent elsewhere.

While undoubtedly international students at any university may lack sufficient command of English to be intelligible to a wide audience, a point often missed is that NSs can also contribute to breakdowns in intercultural

communication. I suggested in the previous section that NSs be included among the participants and in the corpora of research attempting to define a standard of broadly intelligible English. ELF research in attempting to define such an intelligibility-based standard has acknowledged that not all NNSs are equally proficient in English. Jenkins (2000), for example, uses advanced learners of English in her study claiming to prefer them over participants of lower proficiency due to their greater communicative capacity. In addition, Meierkord (2004) breaks her participants into two groups: 'competent speakers' and 'less competent speakers'. It is my belief that in including NSs in a study of intelligibility of English used in intercultural communication, it is important that it be made clear that not all NS participants would be equally competent in intercultural communication or ELF.

This, I believe, is evident in the variability displayed in the assessments of the NNS instructors' English by the *RMP* commenters (cf. Chapter 3, Figures 3.1 and 3.2). In particular, those commenters stating that they found that after a short adjustment period they were able to understand their NNS instructors appear to demonstrate the type of attitudes and willingness to accommodate necessary for intercultural communication. This point is also brought forward by Bell (2006), who discusses the impact that one NS interact with experience in intercultural communication, Sandra, had in contributing to successful communication with the NNS participant in Bell's study, Pum:

NSs with intercultural experience provided interactional support in ways that those without did not do, or did not do regularly, for example, by reformulating utterances to show that they understood and to scaffold Pum's humor. [...] Sandra, Pum's classmate and part of yet another group, provides

several examples of this type of support. Sandra is a monolingual, white, NS, however, she has had experience with other cultures, having lived and worked in Australia for three months and also having traveled extensively throughout Asia (Bell, 2006, p. 21).

This observation has not only been made by researchers. Some of the participants in this study made the observation that they believed some NSs were more competent in communicating with them due to their experiences and perhaps also their patience. For example, Fahad, in Excerpt 4.7 from Chapter 4 differentiates between on the one hand his IEI instructors, professors in other departments, and me (the researcher) who he considers to be effective and *clear* communicators (lines 1-3) and on the other hand a pair of US students who did not accommodate his and his NNS classmates' needs and who, he claims, did not *talk very well* (lines 3-4). A further example comes from Abu who, in Excerpt 8.2 below describes a similar set of attributes that his English instructors have that make them effective at intercultural communication with him:

Excerpt 8.2 [Abu, Data collection point #2]

1 **Researcher:** ok umm are you comfortable speaking English with your English
2 teachers?

3

4 **Abu:** yeah yeah I like to to speak sometimes I uh how can I say start any
5 conversation to just to speak with them yeah they will speak slowly they will correct
6 me they will able to understand what I mean if if I sometimes did or used the
7 mistake word they will know because they have experience about international
8 student or non-native speaker

Abu mentions that his instructors *speak slowly* (line 5), *correct* him (lines 5-6), and are able to interpret his meaning despite 'mistakes' (lines 6-7). He attributes this to his instructors' *experience with international student or non-native speaker* (lines 7-8). Therefore, the need for a distinction between NSs who are competent and less

competent in intercultural communication is supported both by past research as well as the experiences of the participants in this study.

It is clear that like NNSs, NSs cannot be considered equally competent in intercultural communication, and, therefore, it is also my contention that for a university purporting to be dedicated to creating an international community, training in intercultural communication for all community members is a necessity. It is, for example, contrary to the creation of an international community in which English will be used as a common language among the community members, for NNSs to be labeled 'unintelligible' by NSs who are themselves unskilled in intercultural communication.

Rather than allowing such ideologies to prevail at the university, all community members should be appropriately trained in intercultural training programs making use of suggestions of proposed models found in the language acquisition and world Englishes literature (e.g. Kubota, 2001; Derwing, Rossiter, and Munro, 2002) and those suggested as appropriate in the business communication literature (e.g. Charles and Marschan-Piekkari, 2002; Ehrenreich, 2010). Both Kubota and Derwing et al. reported improved attitudes toward NNSs, which as other research has shown can play a role in the NSs' perceptions of the intelligibility of the NNS (e.g. Rubin, 1992; Yook and Albert, 1999; Lindemann, 2002; Kang and Rubin, 2009). Furthermore, Derwing et al. reported increased confidence in communicating with NNSs. Despite some successes both Kubota and Derwing et al. reported no actual improvement in terms of the comprehension of foreign-accented

speech by NSs. However, Bradlow and Bent (2008) were more successful in this particular area and argue that their experiments “provide evidence for highly flexible speech perception processes that can adapt to speech that deviates substantially from the pronunciation norms in the native talker community along multiple acoustic-phonetic dimensions“ (p. 707). These proposals are, however, just the beginning of the necessary research into this area, but they suggest that such training is potentially fruitful. Further research needs to be undertaken in order to develop syllabi for increasing comprehension, improving attitudes, and fostering confidence in intercultural communication for both NSs and NNSs.

Preparing students for ‘the real world’

I am aware that the recommendation that NSs be required to receive training in intercultural communication will be interpreted by some as an inconvenience borne out of a desire to be extremely politically correct. NS students in particular will likely object, appealing to an ideology of ‘nativeness’ (ironically precisely the ideology that such a training program would need to combat) and claiming that it is not their responsibility to accommodate NNSs who *hardly speak English* (cf. the comment left on Professor Chen’s *RMP* page on 12/6/09, Figure 3.2, Chapter 3). This is especially pertinent if we examine only the daily interactions that take place on a US university’s campus due to international students’ minority status. For example, at the university that serves as the context for this study, international students comprised less than 5% of incoming students in 2010. From this perspective the need to engage in intercultural communication can easily be

interpreted as an unnecessary inconvenience to accommodate a small minority of students.

However, while universities are certainly concerned with improving the quality of their own communities (cf. e.g. Objective D, Goal 4 from this university's five year plan quoted above), their missions extend beyond this to preparing students to participate in the communities and discourses they will be a part of in their later professions. We need not look further than the participants in this study to inform us of what these communities might look like.

The participants describe imagined and real communities that resemble many of the professions that US university students themselves wish to hold. For example, in detailing his career goals, DK describes several possible future communities for himself such as living in the United States and working for the company Google or working at an import-export business in China doing business with US- and UK-based companies. Harry, Sam, Mo, and K3 all describe similar communities, living and working in their home countries and cooperating with companies from other countries. Fahad, who has a current position in the Ministry of the *hajj* ('pilgrimage') in Saudi Arabia, describes how he and his colleagues make use of English to communicate with visitors to their city who often do not speak his native language, Arabic. Abu is planning to earn his doctorate in Special Education and enter an academic field that transcends national boundaries. He speaks highly positively of the efforts of US education institutions to be inclusive of individuals with special needs and he anticipates some day using English to exchange ideas at

conferences and through publications about his field of study. Finally, Chevy describes having worked in a multinational company using English as a common language between himself and the people of diverse backgrounds working with him.

Clearly, the participants' ideas about what awaits them beyond the campus involves a great deal of intercultural communication. Whether US students realize it during their time at the university, they may some day find themselves negotiating business deals with a foreign company that employs Harry, Sam, Mo, or K3. They may also find themselves travelling to another country where they will rely on the support of someone like Fahad. Perhaps they will enter academia where they will encounter scholars from all over the world such as Abu. Finally, they may also find themselves working at a company employing a diverse staff that includes DK or Chevy.

In any case, the need for the ability to communicate across cultures and nationalities is a real one in a world that is ever more rapidly traversed both digitally and physically, and a university such as the one in this study that heavily recruits international students and values the diversity they bring can and should serve as a training ground in English communication (or ELF communication) both for its NNS international students and its NS students. This is especially apparent when one considers the call for further training in intercultural communication for NSs who will be working in multicultural settings in the business communication literature (e.g. Charles and Marschan-Piekkari, 2002; Ehrenreich, 2010).

Final thoughts

The problem of 'nativeness' ideology that I have identified in this study is hardly a new finding. It relates strongly to the 'standard' language ideology that has long been recognized by sociolinguists (e.g. Lippi-Green, 1994, 1997; Wiley and Lukes, 1996; Wolfram, 1998). Furthermore, others have also noted the application of this ideology to language teaching and have criticized the fields of TESOL, second language acquisition, and applied linguistics for their tolerance of it (e.g. Jenkins, 2007b; May, In Press). The contribution of the present work has been to provide detailed description of international students at a US university grappling with this specific ideology and the effects that it appears to have on their perceptions of their own English.

Although as I pointed out in the beginning, description of L2 users' attitudes and ideologies could continue seemingly indefinitely, it seems that a change of direction is necessary. I believe that the research presented here and elsewhere has sufficiently demonstrated that 'nativeness' ideology is a problem for universities attempting to internationalize themselves and incorporate the diverse perspectives and cultures of international students into their academic discourses. The fact that this ideology poses an obstacle to international students feeling empowered, identifying as legitimate speakers of English, or feeling as though their contributions are equally important or valid is I believe a sufficient identification of the problem.

Given the scarcity of researchers and resources able to be dedicated to research that will ultimately provide descriptions of alternative standards based on intelligibility, successful models of L2 users, effective intercultural communication

training programs for NSs and NNSs, and suggestions for fostering attitudes that counteract the prevailing ideology of 'nativeness' (not to mention the gargantuan nature of the tasks themselves), it seems that a more prudent pursuit would be to direct valuable research efforts toward these objectives as opposed to continued description of the problems facing NNSs. Although I recognize that critics (e.g. Sobkowiak, 2005; Scheuer, 2005) will continue to be dissatisfied with the evidence presented, I believe their dissatisfaction ultimately rests not in a disagreement about what we can observe but rather how we should interpret it and respond to it. It appears that our differences in perspective have less to do with empirical evidence and more to do with our own ideologies. Ultimately, the question rests in what we see as the roles and responsibilities of researchers and practitioners toward shaping the situation of university education and the experience of international students in it. Do we believe that we should describe the norms as they exist and attempt to adequately prepare language learners to exist in a world in which 'nativeness' is valued and prestigious, and deviations from 'standard' language are considered 'inferior'? Or, alternatively, do we believe that we should suggest alternative modes of being that better approximate the ideals of ourselves and those institutions that we seek to improve while empowering learners to work toward those ideals as well?

Unfortunately, the second option is the one that will prove far more difficult. As I noted in Chapter 3, the 'nativeness' ideology is so entrenched in the discourse about NNSs that its basic tenets are slipped into arguments as unstated

assumptions. Addressing these assumptions, therefore, will prove extremely difficult. As Jenkins (2007b) points out there are a large number of researchers and practitioners in the fields of TESOL, applied linguistics, and second language acquisition who are themselves supporters of the use of NS norms in language instruction. Without broad consensus in the field, it seems unlikely that researchers will succeed in effecting positive change for international students through avenues outside of the field. Furthermore, the experience of those advocating for awareness and acceptance of nonstandard NS dialects of English demonstrates that the battle to change language attitudes and ideologies is anything but easy (cf. e.g. Reaser, 2006; Wolfram, 2007), as despite decades of linguists acknowledging the legitimacy of African American English and other nonstandard varieties, it appears that very little policy-wise has actually changed as a result of the continued support of 'standard' language ideology among nonlinguists.

In conclusion, if the experiences and perceptions of DK, Harry, Sam, Mo, Chevy, Fahad, Abu, and K3 are indeed as troubling as I have interpreted them in this work to be, then the following areas of research need to be explored in order to provide future international students with the vision of multicultural education that US universities seek to provide:

- (1) Descriptions of features of English and communication critical to the maintenance of intelligibility in intercultural communication (a pursuit exemplified by Jenkins, 2000)
- (2) Successful, attractive models of L2 users of English
- (3) Effective curricula for intercultural communication programs designed for NSs and NNSs, which can serve to increase intelligibility on both ends (i.e. speaker and listener), promote accommodation, increase confidence, and combat dysfunctional ideologies and attitudes

These paths, already begun to some extent by other researchers, I believe are the route to realizing the ideals expressed by universities about the value of cultural diversity and the free exchange of ideas between US students and their international counterparts.

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Appendix A: Goals and Standards Inventory Survey

Please read the directions and the information below carefully. Then respond to each item. Remember, these questions are asking for your ideas and opinions. Therefore, you should consider only what you believe not how others might answer.

Here are four students, who have finished studying English. They are talking about what their pronunciation is like. Read each one carefully. Then answer the questions below.

Student A: Most people do not understand my English, because of my pronunciation. That is OK, because I do not need to speak English. I only need to write in English.

Student B: I can pronounce English clearly now. Native speakers and non-native speakers understand me wherever I go, but I still have the accent of my country.

Student C: I can pronounce English just like a native speaker now. Sometimes people think I am a native speaker.

Student D: I can pronounce English pretty clearly. When I talk to non-native speakers from other countries they usually understand my pronunciation. However, native speakers often say they cannot understand me. But, that is not important, because I really only want to speak English with non-native speakers from other countries.

1. My English teachers want me to be like... (circle only one)

Student A Student B Student C Student D

2. My family wants me to be like...

Student A Student B Student C Student D

3. My friends from my country want me to be like...

Student A Student B Student C Student D

4. American students want me to be like...

Student A Student B Student C Student D

5. American professors want me to be like...

Student A Student B Student C Student D

6. I want to be like...

Student A Student B Student C Student D

7. How long will it take you to be like the student you chose?

I am already 1 semester 1 year 2 years 3-5 years 6-10 years It's impossible

Here are four students, who have finished studying English. They are talking about what their pronunciation is like. Read each one carefully. Then answer the questions below.

Student E: I use all the grammar rules that native speakers use, even the informal grammar native speakers use when they speak to each other.

Student F: I know all the grammar rules I need so that I can say anything I want. I use these rules correctly, but sometimes native speakers use grammar that isn't in the grammar books, and I don't want to learn this.

Student G: I can say everything that I want to say. Native speakers and non-native speakers understand me wherever, but I use English my own way and sometimes I say things that native speakers think are grammar mistakes.

Student H: I don't really think grammar is important. Native speakers and non-native speakers often correct my grammar, but I can speak really fast and I know a lot of vocabulary. So I think it's OK, because most of the time people can figure out what I mean, even if I don't know a lot of grammar rules.

8. My English teachers want me to be like... (circle only one)

Student E Student F Student G Student H

9. My family wants me to be like...

Student E Student F Student G Student H

10. My friends from my country want me to be like...

Student E Student F Student G Student H

11. American students want me to be like...

Student E Student F Student G Student H

12. American professors want me to be like...

Student E Student F Student G Student H

13. I want to be like...

Student E Student F Student G Student H

14. How long will it take you to be like the student you chose?

I am already 1 semester 1 year 2 years 3-5 years 6-10 years It's impossible

Appendix B: Original Interview Questions

The following are the questions that will be used in interviews conducted between myself and research participants. These interviews will be recorded and transcribed (data will, of course, be kept anonymous). Main questions are numbered (ie. 1, 2, 3, ...) and follow-up questions necessitated by the participant failing to elaborate, not understanding the question, or indicating interesting information that is deemed worthy of pursuing are listed under each main question with letters (a., b., c., ...).

1. If first interview: establish pseudonym
2. Discuss previous session success
3. Why do you want to learn English?
 - a. What purpose or purposes does learning English serve for you?
 - b. Do you want to earn a degree in the United States?
 - c. Do you want to eventually live in the United States or another English-speaking country?
 - d. How will knowing English benefit you years from now?
4. How comfortable are you speaking English?
 - a. (if participant is taking English classes...)Are you comfortable speaking English in English classes? Why/why not? In the past month, how often did you speak English in English classes?
 - b. (if participant is taking academic classes...) Are you comfortable speaking English in academic classes? Why/why not? In the past month, how often did you speak English in English classes?
 - c. Are you comfortable speaking English with students from the United States? Why/why not? In the past month, how often did you speak English with students from the United States?
 - d. Are you comfortable speaking English with students from other countries? Why/why not? In the past month, how often did you speak English with students from other countries?
 - e. Are you comfortable speaking English with your professors? Why/why not? In the past month, how often did you speak English with your professors?
 - f. Are you comfortable speaking English with other people in the community? Why/why not? In the past month, how often did you speak English with other people in the community?
5. What are your goals for learning English?
 - a. Do you have a goal for the end of your studies?
 - b. Do you have a current goal you are working on?

6. How do you attempt to learn English?
 - a. Are you taking English classes? Do you think they are useful? Is your English improving because of your English classes?
 - b. Do you attempt to practice using English in everyday situations? Do you think this is useful? Is your English improving because you practice outside of class?
 - c. Do you use any other specific strategies for learning English? How successful are these?
7. How good do you think your English is?
 - a. Are you satisfied with your English skills?
 - b. In the past month, have you had any problems communicating with people in English? Can you describe these situations/this situation?
 - c. Are you satisfied with your speaking?
 - d. Are you satisfied with your listening abilities? Are you satisfied with how well you understand spoken English?
 - e. Are you satisfied with your reading?
 - f. Are you satisfied with your writing?
 - g. Are you satisfied with your grammar?
 - h. Are you satisfied with your pronunciation?
 - i. If you could improve one of these skills, which one would it be?
8. When will you be satisfied with your English abilities? (Think about yourself in the future. Picture yourself using English in the way you really want to be able to use the language. Describe your future self's language abilities. How is your English now different from the English of the future you?)
 - a. Describe your final goal for learning English.
 - b. How good will your grammar be?
 - c. What will your pronunciation be like?
 - d. Will you understand everything you hear and read always?
 - e. How different will your English be from the English of a native speaker?
 - f. How long will it take you to reach this goal?
9. What do you think about United States culture?
 - a. Have you noticed any differences between your culture and the United States?
 - b. Do you enjoy United States culture?
 - c. Have you had any positive experiences with people in the United States?
 - d. Have you had any negative experiences with people in the United States?

Appendix C: Revised Interview Questions

The following are the questions that will be used in interviews conducted between myself and research participants. These interviews will be recorded and transcribed (data will, of course, be kept anonymous). Main questions are numbered (ie. 1, 2, 3, ...) and follow-up questions necessitated by the participant failing to elaborate, not understanding the question, or indicating interesting information that is deemed worthy of pursuing are listed under each main question with letters (a, b, c, ...).

1. (If first interview) establish pseudonym
2. (If not first interview) discuss previous and current session happenings
3. Describe the situations when you use English or the people that you use English with.
 - a. Do you speak English in class? How often? What do you talk about? Do you feel comfortable using English in class?
 - b. Do you have friends or acquaintances that you speak English with? How often? What do you talk about? Do you feel comfortable using English with these friends?
 - c. Do you speak English with other people in the community? How often? What do you talk about? Do you feel comfortable using English with these people?
 - d. Do you know any people who speak English in a way that you want to be able to speak English?
 - e. Do you know any people who speak English in a way that you are afraid you will end up speaking English like?
4. Do you ever think about yourself in the future as an English speaker? I want you to describe to me what you:
 - a. ...think you will probably be like as an English speaker in the future (future L2 self).
 - i. What will you probably be able to do?
 - ii. Will there be anything that you probably can't do?
 - iii. What will people think or say about your English? (Who?)
 - b. ...would really like to be like as an English speaker in the future (ideal L2 self).
 - i. What would you really like to be able to do?
 - ii. What would you really like people to think or say about your English? (Who?)
 - c. ...are afraid of being like as an English speaker in the future (ought L2 self).
 - i. What are you afraid of not being able to do?

- ii. What are you afraid of people thinking or saying about your English? (Who?)
5. Imagine that you are speaking English with a _____ from _____. You make a small grammar mistake, you forget to use a plural -s on a plural noun (e.g. you say “two day”). Do you think the person would notice the mistake? Why/why not? What do you think they would think about it?
 - a. Professor... the United States
 - b. Professor... Russia
 - c. Student... the United States
 - d. Student... Russia
 - e. What about if we changed it to writing?
 - f. Are you afraid to make mistakes like this?
6. How good do you think your English is now? Describe your English abilities in detail.
 - a. How good is your speaking? Why do you think this?
 - b. How good is your listening? Why do you think this?
 - c. How good is your reading? Why do you think this?
 - d. How good is your writing? Why do you think this?
 - e. How good is your grammar? Why do you think this?
 - f. How good is your pronunciation? Why do you think this?
 - g. Have you had any communication problems in the past month? If so, can you describe these?
7. Why do you want to learn English?
 - a. What purpose or purposes does learning English serve for you?
 - b. Do you want to earn a degree in the United States?
 - c. Do you want to eventually live in the United States or another English-speaking country?
 - d. How will knowing English benefit you in the next year or two?
 - e. How will knowing English benefit you years from now?
8. In your opinion, what is the best way to learn English (or any other language)?
 - a. What things do you have to do to learn the language?
 - b. Are there specific people you should talk to? Specific things you should talk about?
 - c. Are there specific tasks you should do? Specific ways to practice?
 - d. Do you do these things?
 - e. Do your English teachers do these things or ask you to do these things?
9. What do you think about United States culture?
 - a. Have you noticed any differences between your culture and the United States?
 - b. Do you enjoy United States culture?
 - c. Have you had any positive experiences with people in the United States?
 - d. Have you had any negative experiences with people in the United States?

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