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Challenging the "Non-Native English Speaker" Identity in U.S. Higher Education: A Case of International Graduate Students

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The present study is grounded in the theoretical understanding of U.S. graduate-level classes as a community of practice and the poststructuralist understanding of language use and identity. In this study, I use a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to explore how graduate students—both native and non-native English-speaking—perceive their own and others' participation in class discussions. Also, with a focus on their identity negotiated during their class interactions, I examine possible unequal power relations in graduate classrooms. The results showed that the native students had negative attitudes toward non-native students' participation, most participants felt that unequal power relations exist in classroom communities, and some non-native students felt marginalized in the classroom. Lastly, some suggestions are presented to bring about equal positioning and harmony in graduate classroom communities.

Introduction

A traditional view of the ownership of English in which English belongs only to native English speakers has been questioned (Norton, 1997; Widdowson, 1994). That is, while there was a tradition of imposing native English language rules on non-native English speakers unilaterally in the past, many researchers nowadays attempt to problematize this lopsided imposition. There are a series of social trends in keeping with this shift in the way people view English use. Around the globe, more and more people are using English as their second or foreign language, and approximately 80% of English teachers around the world are so-called non-native English speakers (Canagarajah, 1999).

Similarly, the total number of international students in the U.S. is on the rise. Over the last decade, enrollment of international students in higher education has increased by 32 percent from 582,996 to 764,495 (IIE, 2011). After increasing for six consecutive years, the number of graduate-level international students was 300,430 in 2012, which constituted more than 44 percent of the total graduate-level enrollment in the U.S. (IIE, 2012a). Of these, international students from China comprised nearly 29 percent of the whole population of international graduate students, and students from South Korea and Taiwan each constituted more than 12 percent (IIE, 2012b). Thus, given an ever-increasing number of non-native English speakers in and outside of the U.S., we may assume that, in many cases, English is being used as a means of communication between non-native English

speakers. Accordingly, given such tendencies, the traditional view of English as belonging only to native English speakers may be fading.

In the current situation, then, do English users have the same, or at least similar, level of ownership of this language, irrespective of their linguistic backgrounds? If so, both native and non-native English-speaking students in the U.S. may have similar proficiency and attitudes toward the use of English. In addition, international students using English as their additional language would have similar status in any community as long as they have adequate proficiency in English. However, the use of language is always context-dependent. According to poststructuralist theories of language, using language is a social practice, in which users' identities are constantly negotiated (Morita, 2004; Norton, 2000; Weedon, 1997). Also, while actively participating in oral discussions is a highly valued skill to gain recognition in graduate-level classes in the U.S. (Tatar, 2005), many studies have reported that East Asian international students tend to have difficulties in taking active roles in class discussions because of their insufficient English skills or different cultural backgrounds (Chen, 2003; Cheng, 2000; Flowerdew, 1998; Flowerdew & Miller, 1995; Jones, 1999; Littlewood, 2000; Liu & Littlewood, 1997; Tsui, 1996).

Given that East Asian students studying in the U.S. may experience such difficulties, it seems important to investigate their perceptions of classroom participation in order to reveal situational factors that either alleviate or aggravate difficulties. Unlike many previous studies on this topic drawing on the data only from international students (Cao & Philp, 2006; Day, 1984; Duff, 2002), the present research includes the perceptions both of international graduate students and domestic graduate students who are taking classes with East Asian students. In terms of research methods, a questionnaire and interviews are used to explore how graduate students perceive their and other students' participation in class discussions, as well as the unequal power relations and shifts in students' identity during class interactions.

Theoretical Framework

The present study is built upon the theoretical understanding of a U.S. graduate-level class as a *community of practice* (CoP) and the poststructuralist understanding of language use and identity. At first glance, these theoretical bases may not seem entirely compatible. A CoP model emphasizes the internal, collective cooperation through the communication within a community (Wenger, 1998), whereas post-structural theories of identity mainly deal with "the dynamic, multiple, and contested nature of subjectivity," with greater focus on individuals (Morgan, 2007, p. 1046). However, the dynamic yet collective nature of individuals' identities and language can be explored in depth through these two theoretical lenses (Morgan, 2007). Through a CoP perspective, we can view focal participants as members who belong to a community, enabling us to discover collective, common features of the group members (Wenger, 1998), while drawing on the poststructuralist understanding of identity may make the multiple, fluid, dynamic characteristics of *individual* identities apparent (Benjamin & Afful, 2010). In this study, these seemingly conflicting theories are reconciled by taking mutually supportive twofold lenses: one aimed to understand graduate students' common participation features in a classroom community and the other intended

to understand individually distinctive patterns of classroom participation and accompanying identity negotiation.

Graduate-Level Class as a Community of Practice

Cognitive psychologists have long regarded learning as an accumulative cognitive process working in learners' individual minds (Haneda, 2006). However, situated learning theorists consider learning to be part of social practice, which occurs while people engage in joint activities in a certain community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This community of practice framework was first put forward by Lave and Wenger (1991), which has its conceptual roots in Bourdieu's (1977) theory of practice. This perspective defines a community by "mutual social and interactive engagement" (Garrett & Baquedano-López, 2002, p. 347). Subsequently, Wenger (1998) identifies three characteristics as determining features of a CoP: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. Mutual engagement is collaborative relationships and norms established through community-based participation, joint enterprise is a shared understanding based on such relationships, and a shared repertoire is common resources produced and used in a community as a result of a joint enterprise (Wenger, 1998).

Grounded in the theory of community of practice, a more recent study (Hall, Cheng, & Carlson, 2006) focuses on the learning process through mutual engagement with others by using a language as a cultural tool. In this study, Hall et al. (2006) argue that participating in activities using a language may lead to advanced competence in that language, which is against a common belief that language competence, knowledge of language, precedes language performance (Clark, 2003). Similarly, drawing on *performativity*, which refers to the role of speech acts in interlocutors' identity construction (Butler, 1990), Davies (2005) puts stress on "*doing* things in a way which reinforces membership in that community of practice" rather than on predetermined positions in a community (p. 560, emphasis added). Such a characteristic is consistent with the definition of a CoP suggested by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992):

> an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in some common endeavor. Ways of doings, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations—in short, practices—emerge in the course of their joint activity around that endeavor. (p. 464)

Active participation in oral discussions seems to be a representative form of joint engagement in graduate-level classrooms in which students may perform their membership in the academic community (Tatar, 2005). Also, these cooperative contributions to oral discussions enhance each other's perspectives (Lee, 2009) and can develop community members' shared repertoire, which may include skills such as using discipline-specific terminology appropriately.

Furthermore, Lave and Wenger (1991) introduce the notion of legitimate peripheral participation as "a descriptor of engagement in social practice that entails learning as an integral constituent" (p. 35) to describe such a social concept of learning. While novice learners or newcomers participate in the practice, they learn from the practices of experts in a community as they move toward full

participation with improved skills and knowledge. Thus, Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that for newcomers to experience learning processes, they need to engage in legitimate peripheral participation. Through these social practices at a local scope, participants earn their legitimate membership in a particular CoP (Davies, 2005). In the case of graduate-level classes, international students who have little prior experience of the U.S. classroom may regard themselves as newcomers due to their limited familiarity with the practices of domestic students in the classroom. Particularly when international students are from countries with different classroom socialization practices (e.g., teacher-oriented classes), they, as relative newcomers, may encounter a large gap in the way they learn and participate in the classroom in the U.S. and in their own countries.

Power Relations Influence Identity Negotiation in a Classroom Community

The aforementioned concept of legitimate peripheral participation describing newcomers as going through inward movement toward skillful practice may overlook power issues in relation to identity negotiation (Haneda, 2006; Morita, 2004). In her qualitative study, Morita (2004) investigates how non-native English speaking learners struggle to negotiate their membership in graduate-level classrooms, focusing on the lopsided power relations between non-native and native English-speaking students. Morita (2004) discusses some serious difficulties non-native English speakers experience in gaining recognition as legitimate members in their classroom communities, leading to the construction of inferior identities, in which they consider themselves incompetent. Thus, although a few non-native students in Morita's (2004) study successfully exert their agency and negotiate their positions in their CoPs, this does not indicate equal power relations among all members in their communities. In a similar vein, Kanno (2000) warns that labeling non-native English speaking students as *peripheral* members in a CoP may lead to the legitimatization of their marginality. That is, by taking it for granted that non-native students are not full participants, many members may neglect unbalanced power relations and accompanying marginalized feelings that non-native students may experience in the community.

According to Lave and Wenger (1991), "identity, knowing, and social membership entail one another" (p. 53), and Lave (1996) maintains that "crafting identities in practice becomes the fundamental project subjects engage in" (p. 157). However, as mentioned above, the negotiation of identities in a CoP is not always equivalent for every member. As acknowledged in Lave and Wenger (1991), a community includes unequal dominance "over resources for learning and alienation from full participation" (p. 42). Similarly, Hall et al. (2006) assert that individuals have unequal power and access to participation influenced by their positioning within a community. That is, participants with greater language proficiency and better discussion skills may position themselves as superior to others with limited skills, resulting in power and access disproportionally distributed to members in a community. In graduate-level classes, such unequal power relations may also be prevalent depending on the ways graduate students participate in the classroom (Morita, 2004).

If such unequal positioning really exists in graduate classrooms, determined by the speaker's status as a native or non-native English speaker, international

graduate students who use English as their additional language would be likely to shape relatively inferior identities in the classroom, possibly due to their difficulties in oral participation in class. However, there would be variation in the way international students construct individual identities in a community because of subtle or significant differences in their CoP experiences. Thus, rather than understanding graduate students merely as members of a collective group, I attempt to include a post-structural perspective in grasping individual students' differing perceptions.

Poststructural Understanding of Identities and Investment

Over the last two decades, increasing attention has been paid to research on identity and language learning (McKinney & Norton, 2008; Morgan & Clarke, 2011; Norton & Toohey, 2002; Ricento, 2005). As indicated in Block (2007), poststructuralist theories of identity have "become the approach of choice among those who seek to explore links between identity and L2 learning" (p. 864). Poststructuralist theories of language postulate that language communities involve heterogeneity and struggles, and one's identity is assumed to be "multiple, contradictory, and dynamic, changing" (Norton, 2011, p. 2) across time and space through the means of language in inequitable power relations. According to this theory, the language used in a particular community has different meanings according to the relational contexts and the individuals who speak, read, or interpret the language (Norton, 2011), and a person negotiates a sense of self through this language use (Weedon, 1997). Therefore, participants are likely to build differing identities depending on their language use and interactions with other interlocutors.

With these dynamic features of language use in mind, Norton (2000) attempts to explain the phenomenon of the lack of participation in language communities. The results show some inconsistencies between the level of motivation and that of active participation, which implies that the construct of motivation is not sufficient in explaining the complex, context-bound features of language practice. Thus, drawing on Bourdieu's concept of *cultural capital* (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977), Norton (2000) develops the construct of *investment* in which language learners are seen as having changing, ambivalent desire for engagement in interactions across time and space, along with their complex, variable identities. Using this construct of investment, rather than low motivation for language learning, unequal power relations between language learners and native speakers of the target language contribute to lack of participation and even withdrawal from school (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Accordingly, a learner may invest little in the language practices of a classroom for situational reasons, despite being highly motivated (Norton, 2011).

Duff (2002) applies poststructural theories of language to the setting of a multilingual secondary school. By adopting the notion of investment, Duff reveals that many English language learners with high motivation did not actively take part in classroom interactions for fear of being ridiculed by native speakers. Although their resistance to oral interaction was intended to avoid humiliation, native English speakers mistakenly interpreted English learners' marginalized behavior as "a lack of initiative, agency, or desire to improve one's English" (p. 312). In this respect, Norton and Gao (2008, p. 112) introduce two factors which

may influence oral participation in relation to investment in class: "knowledge and expertise" in the subject matter and "freedom and control" with which learners can develop confidence and ownership of their disciplines. In U.S. graduate-level classes, students are expected to hone their expertise in a content subject as well as develop their ownership through oral participation (Ferris, 1998). Through these oral class discussions, graduate students can also share their own ideas with other students (Murphy, 2005). This implies that graduate students who find difficulty with oral participation may lack ownership of their disciplines in a classroom community. Thus, considering the findings that East Asian students may have difficulties in oral discussions (Chen, 2003; Cheng, 2000; Littlewood, 2000), we need to investigate how East Asian graduate students, using English as their second language, participate in their classrooms and how differently their identities are negotiated compared to the identity construction of native English speaking graduate students.

The purpose of this research is to explore how graduate students—both native and non-native English speaking—perceive their classroom participation and negotiate their identity in classroom settings. In the present study, henceforth, *native students* indicates U.S. domestic students who acquired English as their mother tongue in their infancy, and *international students* refers to non-native English speakers who learned English as their second language and had no formal education in English-speaking countries prior to the current graduate programs. The data analysis and interpretation are guided by the following research questions:

   (1) How do graduate students perceive their own and others' classroom participation?

   (2) How do graduate students negotiate their identities in the classroom in relation to their oral participation in class discussions?

   (3) To what extent do graduate students recognize power relations in classroom communities, and how do power relations influence students' attitudes toward these communities?

Methodology

The present study adopts mixed research methods which consist of a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with graduate-level students. Such research methods were employed to enable fuller description of participants' experiences. Detailed description regarding the research methods will be presented in the following sections. Prior to obtaining primary data of this study, preliminary observations were conducted for eight hours to identify common oral interactions in a graduate-level course. This observation revealed some findings: first, class discussions were mostly governed by native graduate students. Although most East Asian international students were attentive to the class, as expressed by constant eye contact and nodding, they rarely initiated discussions. During the small group discussions, native students tended to take on a leading role, which could decide specific discussion topics. Another distinct feature in classroom interactions were the patterns of interaction. While many native students had very dynamic, complex interaction patterns, international students were mostly involved in linear, simple one-on-one interactions with the professor, which were not disturbed by other interlocutors.

These distinctive interaction patterns between native English-speaking and East Asian international students at a graduate level provide rationale for a more in-depth study, investigating how they perceive themselves and other students in the classroom community. Further, to address potential marginalization of international students, underlying reasons for such different levels of oral participation are also researched.

Participants

The participants in the present study were first-year graduate students studying at a private university located in the eastern U.S. enrolled in the Teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), Language and Literacy (L&L), and Intercultural Communication (ICC) programs. Participants were chosen from these programs because their student bodies provided a balanced mixture of native and international students. In terms of international student participants, the present study includes only international graduate students from East Asian countries due to their alleged reticence in class (Chen, 2003; Cheng, 2000; Littlewood, 2000) and their increasing proportion of the international student population in the U.S. (IIE, 2012b). A questionnaire was administered to 20 native graduate students and 38 international students from East Asian countries (25 Chinese, 11 South Korean, one Taiwanese, and one Thai). Their ages ranged from 22 to 31. International students had an average of 13.5 years of English study experience, ranging from eight years to 24 years. Their lengths of stay in the U.S. varied from four months to eight years, with a mean of 11 months. Also, according to the university personnel, international students are required to have internet-based TOEFL scores higher than 104 to gain admissions to the aforementioned programs, which may indicate international students' overall high proficiency in English.

For individual interviews, 10 participants (four native and six international students) were randomly selected from the whole participant pool. Native English-speaking students consisted of two Caucasian-Americans, one Korean-American, and one Taiwanese-American, all of whom acquired English in the U.S. as infants. International students who participated in the interviews were four Koreans and two Chinese. All graduate students participated in this study with a guarantee of full anonymity. Table 1 displays detailed information about the interview participants. All participants' names used in the current paper are pseudonyms.

Table 1: *Interviewed Participants' Profiles*

English	Name	Nationality	Age	Gender	Major	English Study	Stay in the U.S.
L1	John	Caucasian-American	25	M	TESOL	N/A	N/A
L1	Victoria	Taiwanese-American	27	F	TESOL	N/A	N/A
L1	David	Korean-American	25	M	TESOL	N/A	N/A

L1	Susan	Caucasian-American	26	F	ICC	N/A	N/A
L2	Dong	Chinese	25	M	TESOL	15 Years	8 Months
L2	Mei	Chinese	25	F	ICC	18 Years	6 Months
L2	Bora	Korean	24	F	TESOL	16 Years	2 Years
L2	Jina	Korean	25	F	TESOL	18 Years	1 Year
L2	Minho	Korean	31	M	L&L	20 Years	6 Months
L2	Sumi	Korean	24	F	TESOL	15 Years	1 Year

The international students who participated in the interviews had similar English learning experiences. They all began learning English as a foreign language between ages seven and 11 in their homeland with a focus on reading and grammar, and did not experience formal education in an English-speaking country prior to the current graduate programs.

Data Collection

The present study uses mixed methods that include a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire was given to the participants at their convenience, mostly at the end of their graduate-level classes. Five-point Likert scale items and multiple-choice questions were adopted to elicit participants' responses regarding their background information, perceptions about oral participation, and marginalized feelings in the classroom. A few survey questions were modified to accommodate qualitative differences between native and international students—for example, there was no question about the length of studying English on the questionnaire intended for native students. However, the overall format and main questions were the same. The questionnaire was carried out first in order to gain a general understanding of ideas and attitudes of the two student groups about their classroom experiences. These results were then corroborated by qualitative data from interviews.

After collecting all questionnaire data, a series of individual interviews were conducted to obtain more in-depth perspectives of the participants on their class participation and constructed identity. Semi-structured interviews were conducted since interviewers can guide an interview without strictly directing it in a particular way (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes, and the responses from the participants revealed emerging themes, such as classroom participation, perceptions about classroom communities, power relations, and identities.

Data Analysis

The primary purpose of the questionnaire was to compare the perspectives between native and international students quantitatively. The dependent variables were desire for oral participation, actual level of participation, and marginalized feelings in graduate-level classrooms. These variables were addressed by asking:

(1) To what extent do you desire to be an active participant in the classroom? (2) To what extent do you actually participate in the classroom? (3) How often do you feel marginalized or helpless in the classroom? The results were analyzed using descriptive statistics and independent samples t-tests.

Interview transcripts were read multiple times to identify emerging themes. Recurring topics were classified into a few distinctive categories, which were then refined as categories dealing with similar topics were clustered (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Consequently, the key topics were finalized as classroom participation, identity construction, power relations, and accommodation.

Results

A total of 58 graduate students completed the questionnaire. During data analysis, they were categorized into native or international student groups based on their L1s. For the comparison between the two groups, I included the three dependent variables: desire for oral participation in class, actual level of participation, and classroom marginalization. The statistical results of the independent samples t-tests for these variables are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: *Descriptive Statistics and t-tests for Classroom Participation and Marginalization*

	Native (n = 20)		International (n = 38)			
	M	SD	M	SD	t	df
Desire for Participation	4.40	.75	4.18	1.01	.84	56
Actual participation	4.00	.86	2.74	1.01	4.77**	56
Marginalization	1.25	.44	2.34	1.19	-3.94**	56

**= p <.01. M = Mean. SD = Standard Deviation

The self-reported data revealed that native students generally have higher levels of participation desire and actual participation than the international students do. However, the difference between the two groups in average desire for participation was insignificant (4.40 and 4.18). In terms of marginalized experience in the classroom, the native student group showed a significantly lower average rating than the international student group. While nine participants in the international group answered that they experience classroom marginalization *frequently* or *always*, no one in the native group indicated frequent or higher marginalization experience. Also, it should be noted that the international group had greater internal variation than the native group in all three variables, suggesting that international students had more conflicting opinions about classroom participation and marginalization than did native students.

To further investigate whether the mean ratings of the two groups showed statistical differences in terms of the three dependent variables, independent

samples t-tests were conducted. The first t-test showed that the two groups are similar in their desire for oral participation in the classroom, $t(56) = .84$, $p = .41$. That is, they seemed to aspire to contribute to class discussions to a similar extent. On the contrary, the two groups were significantly different in the perceptions of their self-reported actual participation in the classroom, $t(56) = 4.77$, $p < .01$. The self-perceived class participation of the native group was significantly greater than that of the international group. Lastly, the two groups statistically differed in their experience of marginalization in the classroom, $t(56) = -3.94$, $p < .01$. The international group felt marginalized far more often than the native group.

Thus far, the quantitative data show that native and international graduate students have differing perceptions of their positionality within graduate-level classes and that the two groups differ significantly in their self-reported level of actual engagement in class discussions despite their similar desire for classroom participation. Given these findings, what are the underlying reasons for such distinctive perceptions about their classroom activities? Why do international students tend to feel more marginalized than native students? Qualitative data were collected using semi-structured interviews to gain fuller explanation of these phenomena, and some salient topics were addressed by the interview participants.

Native Students' Perceptions of International Students' Participation

Overall, the graduate students whose first language is English showed rather negative perceptions of international students' class participation. Mostly, these negative ideas were attributable to the perceived lack or even absence of class participation of many international students.

> "Some of them have no idea what's going on in these classes. They can't finish the readings. They are not able to really work in this... I almost feel like, they are not talking, they are not doing anything. I don't know if they are learning." (John, Male, Caucasian-American)

> "I think I'm an average, like not too much, not too little... It's definitely more than most of the nonnative speakers here." (David, Male, Korean-American)

> "They don't participate. Usually, um, it's usually me and two other native speakers speak in class. It is frustrating. They are always quiet. Really frustrating because it's like, I wanna hear what they're thinking... So I find that even when they do say something, it could also be shallow... and that we have already discussed. Sometimes they say something that we discussed in the previous class, and they keep bringing it up again. So I am thinking did you pay attention?" (Victoria, Female, Taiwanese-American)

While showing negative attitudes toward the perceived lack of international students' participation, the native students simultaneously implied that they are somewhat superior to the majority of international students not only in terms

of class participation but also in content knowledge, as shown in John's quote, "some of them have no idea what's going on in these classes. They can't finish the readings" and in Victoria's quote, "I wanna hear what they're thinking... So I find that even when they do say something, it could also be shallow... and that we have already discussed." This quote can be interpreted as Victoria's frustration at a rejected invitation for international students to participate legitimately in a CoP, but her utterance at the end clearly indicates her negative attitude towards some international students' capability. Based on these quotes, it can be inferred that, equipped with superior self-esteem, some native students may not regard international students as equally competent members in their communities.

However, native students' responses were not always negative. Some showed clear understanding of cultural differences as possible reasons for international students' non- or limited participation in class. As these native students suggested, it has been reported that for international students whose cultural or educational backgrounds are different, oral participation in U.S. classes may be challenging (Leki, 2001; Liu, 2001; Morita, 2004). The following quotes need extra attention as they suggested the different social and educational expectations of becoming good students in East Asian countries. Instead of judging international students solely based on their level of class participation, David and Susan appreciated international students' East Asian cultural backgrounds as a cause for their reduced participation.

> "In terms of China and Korea, in order to be the best student, so they are really good at studying... But, in order to become the best American student, they just, they can talk... I think maybe in our field in this situation, what was valued to become such a great student, it's slightly different, which is why we have this gap." (David, Male, Korean-American)

> "I think there is certain culture where you are, you don't want to assert yourself even in whatever language you speak. Listening is more valued, but in many western classrooms, we do value speaking a lot." (Susan, Female, Caucasian-American)

Thus, there is a wide variation in how native English-speaking students understand international students' lack of class participation. While some native students recognize different cultural backgrounds as an obstacle to international students' active classroom participation, other native students attribute international students' lack of participation to their limited knowledge of a discipline. To reveal genuine reasons for international students' lack of participation, we need to turn now to how international students view their own classroom participation.

Why Not Speak Up?: International Students' Perceptions of Classroom Participation

In one case, an international student showed low confidence in his English skills. Although Dong wanted to participate in class discussions, he felt that his accented English might be poorly judged or even ridiculed by native students:

"In this semester, I went into a class which is composed mostly by Americans. So, in that class, I do feel the pressure to speak up because when I feel like, I wanna say something, I just have to concern that oh, how about my accents? Will they, will they feel something weird about the way I talk? Yes, and then I feel not so confident to speak up. So I keep quiet a lot of time in that class... I feel like, I just have to concern about I might be despised by native speakers in terms of language... I still have a concern that they will, they will judge my language." (Dong, Male, Chinese)

Despite his high proficiency in English, Dong was overly concerned about his spoken English, especially about his accent. Due to his low confidence caused by such concerns, Dong became a relatively reticent student in the classroom. This is where another difficulty of international students comes into play in terms of their classroom participation. International students whose first language is not English tend to worry about their English use in class, while what native students want from international students are unique and critical ideas formulated by their different backgrounds, not their perfect English. This point is well displayed in Victoria's quote, "I think they don't have any confidence in their English, and so they are trying to think up something perfect. But the thing is we are not listening for perfect English." (Victoria, Female, Taiwanese-American)

In addition, Mei and Minho talked about the comparatively longer processing time they needed to conceptualize and formulate ideas in English. Unlike native English-speaking students, international students sometimes needed time to translate contributable ideas from their native languages to English, causing them to miss the right timing.

"I can't compete with native speakers because I think if we want to produce something, we need to process our information much slower than native speakers. While you are, how to say, processing your information, maybe the native speaker already spoke out their similar opinions of yours. So you got quite discouraged." (Mei, Female, Chinese)

"I can't jump in well first of all. I think I don't say because of the thinking that it's so simple that everyone else might know this... And, sometimes, I want to ask a question, but the English sentence itself is not made in my brain." (Minho, Male, Korean)

Thus, by being too conscious of other students in the same classroom, international students sometimes feel discouraged and helpless in the classroom. Based on their overly humble responses, I noticed the gap between their actual English abilities and their perceptions of them. They all were capable of delivering what they wanted to say without much difficulty, but they seemed to focus more on deficient aspects of their English. Some studies demonstrate that such discrepancies can indicate language anxiety, which is constructed due to perfectionism (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986) and L2 users' unequal experiences in a community (Norton, 2000). Thus, while struggling to negotiate competent identities in a classroom community, international graduate students may become nervous and reticent members in the classroom. When international students have difficulties in actively participating as competent members, they are also likely to

have marginalized feelings in classrooms, as shown in the interview data of the present study.

International Students' Marginalized Feelings in a Classroom Community

International students experienced some feelings of isolation, which made them construct marginalized identities or even withdraw from the course. In particular, some international students mentioned that when the conversation was seen as being filled with cultural jokes or being dominated by fast-paced native speakers, they could not fully understand and so felt marginalized.

"I think we experience that [marginalization] a lot, you know... What the teacher said or what other students said, I mean the native speaker, I can't understand their history behind the joke or cultural embedded idioms... And I even don't have motivation to understand because it's repeated again and again, and I don't think I have, how to say, met a way to solve this kind of problem. It's too late for me to understand their diverse culture." (Mei, Female, Chinese)

"At the beginning of this semester, I got into a class with another Korean. And we were put in the same group, but during group discussion, two native English speakers spoke a lot. We were almost stunned... They did eye-contact between themselves. They didn't even look at us... After then, we dropped out of the class." (Minho, Male, Korean)

As shown in the above quotes, despite Mei and Minho's high English proficiency, they tended to have difficulties in fully performing as competent members in the classroom, especially when they encountered unfamiliar interaction patterns or culturally embedded jokes of native English-speaking students. As a result of these frustrating experiences, they may have lower confidence in their use of English, resulting in marginalized identities in a classroom community. Furthermore, as indicated in the following section, it is plausible that such identity construction may also shape lopsided power relations in the classroom.

Power Relations in a Classroom Community

With regard to power relations in the classroom, both native and international students seemed to acknowledge the fact that power is unevenly distributed among graduate students depending on the nativeness of English. That is, native students who need much less effort in formulating and articulating utterances in English may gain better positions in classroom communities.

"It is pretty steep power relations because we can think faster and when we wanna say something, we don't have to think too much. We just go, Boom. We can just say it... I feel like we should accommodate... And because we are native speakers, we have more power." (Victoria, Female, Taiwanese-American)

"Speaking English is power, and a native English speaker, that's power."
(John, Male, Caucasian-American)

"Like the native speakers definitely in the predominance position in a classroom dynamics for everything that's, like any time the teacher threw out the questions, I think native speakers are very responsive and very instant in coming up, um, no matter how meaningful the answer is."
(Dong, Male, Chinese)

While lopsided power relations were mainly attributed to a fluent, native-like command of English, these power relations were also performed in interruptions by native speakers in the classroom. As indicated in the quotes below, while understanding and acknowledging the different power positioning in the classroom, international students showed some dissatisfaction with the way these patterns exist. Jina felt especially offended when her talking was interrupted by native students. Although this might have occurred due to cultural differences regarding interaction patterns, Jina attributed these interruptions to unequal power relations in the classroom setting. Given the pivotal roles of collaborative relationships and common endeavors among community members in developing a joint enterprise (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992; Wenger, 1998), I assume that such incongruity in the graduate-level classroom may hinder them from developing mutual engagement and joint enterprise in a classroom community.

"In reality, I feel power relations many times, and sometimes they become so arrogant only for a reason that they're good at English... While I'm speaking, even though I'm speaking, they jump in and finish it. That is one case, and um, sometimes when I or other students with thick accents speak, they did not pay attention." (Jina, Female, Korean)

"For us, we are more like audience, not the, how to say, the same level participant as them. So we listen to their lecture, listen to what they speak, but actually, even we talk, we show some comments. So I think they're more like the speakers, and we are more like the listeners." (Mei, Female, Chinese)

Given this inequality in the English use and some dissatisfaction of international students with their perceived inferior status in a community, international graduate students may expect a range of accommodations for better harmony in their communicative interactions. The next section shows how differently native and international students have expectations of language accommodations for struggling students.

Different Expectations of Accommodation

The interview data revealed that native and international students had different expectations of accommodation for international students' communication difficulties. Whereas international students expected native students' accommodations to reduce difficulties, the native student participants

felt that international students should be treated in the same way as domestic students without any accommodation.

"Since we are in America to study, we have responsibility to improve listening skills, participate in class, and try to know more about their culture... Native speakers should also somehow care for us if they know our efforts." (Jina, Female, Korean)

"I think, though we should try, but they should try more because English is now a common language and it's not a language that belongs only to them anymore. We, as foreigners, have learned English and tried a lot to study in their language. So when speaking to us, it seems right for me that they have to speak slowly and easily. I think that's a right thing because they already have power." (Sumi, Female, Korean)

"I understand that this program takes people from other places, but you are in an American school, getting an American degree. Therefore, you use American academic culture, and American academic culture is non-modified English, participating in class, doing group work, and when you come to this program, I think you have to conform into the American academic culture... If they don't understand, I will modify it begrudgingly, but I don't like it." (John, Male, Caucasian-American)

"If they can't meet the standard of an equal, then maybe they shouldn't be in this program. That's how I feel... When it's with graduate students, I expect them to have similar level, so I don't slow down." (Victoria, Female, Taiwanese-American)

These contradictory perspectives among graduate students may indicate the widened gap in their expectations between native and international student groups, making each group disgruntled with their counterparts. Especially, under the situation where an increasing number of Asian international graduate students are drawn to the U.S. (Davis, 2000), all graduate students in a classroom community need to build a shared repertoire—the way of communicating in a mutually beneficial way—and a sense of common membership, rather than judging each other based on superficial behavior and confining them into such a limited category as *silent* East Asian. The interview quote below indicated that international students can reformulate their marginal identities and feel more comfortable with classroom participation when they see themselves as equal members as others in the classroom.

"In other two courses, I don't speak a word during the class, but in one class, I participate a lot. There are eight students in the class... I did a group project with four of them, after then, I feel friendly with all of them. So although I hadn't talked a lot before, when the professor asked me something today, I just said something because it was so comfortable. So just with the feeling that I am friendly with other classmates, I am naturally speaking so comfortably in the class." (Minho, Male, Korean)

By participating in the group project, Minho could have the opportunity to build rapport with other students, regardless of their nativeness, and this experience led him to feel comfortable speaking up in class. Because of this rapport, he was able to move beyond the dichotomous native/non-native distinction, which had silenced him in other classes. Accordingly, although he was a marginalized student in the other two classes, he became a legitimate member in this class, who actively participated in class without much concern. From his experience of identity reformulation, Minho seemed to understand how to construct a legitimate identity as a competent graduate student, which can be extended to other settings.

Conclusion

The current study presents the questionnaire and interview data with regard to graduate students' perceptions of classroom participation, marginalization, power relations, and need for accommodation. First, the quantitative survey data revealed that despite graduate students' high desire for classroom participation, East Asian international students' actual participation may decrease significantly for situational or contextual reasons. Also, along with this reduced participation, international students' low confidence in using English seems to result in their marginalized feelings in the classroom. This can be understood as the gap between motivation and investment of L2 users (Norton, 2000). In more detail, although non-native L2 users are highly motivated for class participation, they may have much lower investment in their actual language use because of some situational factors such as unequal positioning in the classroom. Considering the argument that students' lack of oral participation in class can lead to academic failure in higher education (Dunnett, 1985; Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001), it seems necessary to identify and problematize some factors that play a significant role in silencing international students. By analyzing the interview results, differing perspectives of native and international students on classroom participation were identified. While a few responses from native students showed clear understanding of cultural difference as a possible reason for limited participation, most responses showed negative attitudes toward international students' reticence in the classroom. International students answered that their lack of oral participation stemmed from their insufficient English skills, longer processing time needed to express ideas in English, and unequal power positioning. All the international and native students were well aware of imbalanced power relations due to the use of English, but they had different ideas about accommodating non-native English speakers' language use, such as adjusting the speech rate or refraining from using idioms unfamiliar to international students. Due to these discrepancies, instead of making collaborative efforts for a joint enterprise (Wenger, 1998), graduate students may become more dissatisfied with other students who belong to different factions in the student body. To address this issue, all members involved in graduate-level classrooms need to broaden their perspectives and understand each other's responsibility.

Therefore, graduate students and professors in the U.S. should endeavor to address these situations. First, native students need to have a better understanding of the cultural differences and of potential difficulties international students may experience in the classroom. Equipped with this understanding, native students may be able to avoid hastily concluding that international students are silent due

to their lack of knowledge. In addition, instead of dominating class interactions at a fast pace, native students should leave some room for international classmates to participate in oral discussions. Also, professors can help reduce international students' marginalized feelings in the classroom by understanding their cultural differences and refraining from making culture-laden jokes or idioms during their classes. Further, professors can encourage international students to speak up in class by allowing somehow extended floor for them. Attending to the difficulties of international students may be another responsibility of professors, which can be fulfilled by offering extra office hours. While this accommodation may lead to the assumption that international students require a series of concessions from other members to be as competent participants as native English-speaking students, it should be a provisional condition needed until international students get accustomed to the new U.S. classroom environment. In so doing, native students can learn from international students' ideas, and these diversified contributions will enrich their perspectives. International students will also be given the opportunity and confidence to associate more with domestic students. With these temporary accommodations, international students should try to better understand social, cultural, and educational differences prevalent in U.S. classrooms.

Most important, international students are the main agents who need to try hardest to be active, legitimate participants in classrooms. They should keep trying to raise their cultural awareness and to become legitimate participants in classroom communities through active engagement. Making an effort to get to know their native-speaking peers can be one of the ways to better understand authentic interaction patterns. In the case that marginalized identities were shaped in class from the outset, international students should make greater efforts to reformulate their identities throughout the semester. Through such mutually collaborative efforts of professors, native and international students, all members can develop a strong joint enterprise in a classroom community, and international graduate students can gain greater confidence in their L2 use in the classroom. Lastly, from these experiences, all students will be able to build strong rapport and harmonious relationships, enabling international students to have a sense of belonging to the graduate community of practice.

Given some limitations in its methodology, conducting further research may clarify some issues dealt with in the present study. Although I implemented mixed research methods to triangulate research perspectives, this study does not include the actual changes in students' participation and identities over a long period of time. With regard to identity shifts, I drew conclusions based primarily on the interview data. I look forward to conducting future research on this topic adopting a series of interviews with target participants throughout an academic-year or so, along with close classroom observations. Such future research may yield valuable insights. Also, in revealing the gap between motivation and investment of international students, I drew on the self-reported data obtained from a questionnaire survey, which might not be sufficient evidence showing a lower level of international students' actual participation. As Davies (2005) suggests, longitudinal ethnographic analysis would better describe the process in which members in a particular CoP negotiate their legitimate membership and identity. Thus, I suggest that it would be valuable to conduct additional longitudinal research on dynamic, fluid identities of international graduate students. Furthermore, since

the entire data in the present study were collected only from graduate students at one university with no inclusion of other perspectives of professors or program administrators, another possible future research direction is to collect further data from other graduate-level settings in the U.S. as well as from other stake-holders' point of view.

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