Accent, Intelligibility, and Identity in International Teaching Assistants and

Internationally-Educated Instructors

By

Mahdi Rahimian

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Abstract

Every year, thousands of students leave behind the comfort of their homes to pursue graduate studies in other countries. In many universities in North America, it is common practice to employ international graduate students who speak English as an additional language as teaching assistants and sessional instructors. They are commonly referred to as international teaching assistants (ITAs). ITA language skill is a main concern in hiring them to teach in higher education contexts. In the general area of language skills, accent and intelligibility are two main components that can directly affect communication between instructors and students. These components of speech are related to individuals' backgrounds—the same backgrounds that inform their identities. In this study, issues related to the identity, accent, and intelligibility of ITAs are explored. By learning about these issues, my intention was to find ways of improving ITAs' accent and intelligibility, thereby assisting their comprehensibility. The present study uses a parallel/convergent mixed methods research design. Social identity theory and the notion of communities of practice were used as the main theoretical frameworks for the study. Findings suggest that individuals' experiences with identity development, accent and intelligibility are different. The results also show that a complex network of factors affect second language speakers' accent and intelligibility, including their identity and experiences with social groups. The results of the mixed methods analysis revealed a relationship between identity and accent and intelligibility of ITAs. A relationship between identity and access to communities of practice was also found. A number of recommendations for the field of education were provided by exploring the best teaching experiences of the ITAs.

Keywords: identity; accent; intelligibility; international teaching assistants; post-secondary education

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Dedicated to those teachers in Iran who voluntarily serve in remote areas

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Exploring how identity can affect accent and intelligibility in a second language, and vice versa, was the main motivation for conducting this study. At the time of writing this document, I have had nearly 12 years of formal work experience in education in Canada and overseas. I speak Persian/Farsi as a first language (L1) and English as a second language (ESL). Reflecting on my experiences as an ESL speaker, I perceive my accent in English as being both informed by my background, and informing my interlocutors about my background. At the time I drafted my statement of purpose for the PhD program in Education in 2012, I had worked for a year as a writing tutor in the Academic Learning Centre at the University of Manitoba while studying for my second master's degree in Linguistics. Working at the Academic Learning Centre, I found that my accent played a role not only in my communications with L1 speakers of English, but also with other ESL speakers. I also noticed some changes in my accent during the first year of living in Winnipeg, Canada. Oddly, from comments of my peers, I understand that my accent did not begin to mimic those of Winnipeggers; rather, it shifted away. So I began questioning why my accent was changing the way it was.

In my impressionistic evaluations, I thought maybe there was something in me and in my relationships with others that stimulated my accent shift. I was away from my home country for a long time; I was experiencing cultural adjustments to Manitoba; I felt that I was often being excluded from meaningful communications with L1 speakers; and, in brief, I was going through uneasy times. I reasoned that maybe I was experiencing identity challenges that led to my accent change. This was a conjecture, yet a conjecture that resonated with me. Therefore, I decided to study the relationship between identity and accent, and how these two may be related to second language (L2) acquisition. Having been an educator for a long time, I found it interesting to learn

about the identity issues experienced by L2 speakers and how these identity issues can influence L2 speakers and learners. I thought that by learning more about the relationship between identity and accent, I could propose some pedagogical strategies to assist L2 educators in nurturing L2 learners' identities and help them to learn the language by mitigating some of its challenges. International teaching assistants (ITAs) and internationally-educated instructors are at the forefront of multicultural and international education. Learning about and finding ways of facilitating the teaching practices of ITAs and internationally-educated instructors can contribute to diversity and multicultural education, which I discuss in the following paragraph.

Diversity and multiculturalism in education in Canada have rapidly increased since the 1990s (e.g. Ghosh, 2004; Ghosh & Abdi, 2004; Ghosh & Tarrow, 1993; Shyyan, Dunn, & Cammarata, 2014). This diversity is one of the factors making education in Canada more complicated than ever. Diversity in education requires attention to the presence of those who speak a non-official language, a significant portion of whom are English language learners (Shyyan, Dunn, & Cammarata, 2014). In Canada, several groups of English language learners are present in education, including immigrants, children of immigrants, Aboriginal peoples, and francophone Canadians (Shyyan, Dunn, & Cammarata, 2014). Mainstreaming of ESL speakers in schools has increased the complexity of Canadian education (Ghosh & Tarrow, 1993; Shyyan, Dunn, & Cammarata, 2014), requiring increasing amounts of intercultural awareness from educators and students (Shyyan, Dunn, & Cammarata, 2014) and putting the onus on them all to facilitate the inclusion of minority cultures (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004). The presence of internationally-educated instructors, teachers, and teaching assistants can aid the inclusion of different cultures in the education system. Additionally, using educators who belong to minority cultures can positively influence the educational outcomes of minority students (Cherng &

Halpin, 2016). By examining issues related to internationally-educated instructors and international teaching assistants, we can learn about their teaching experiences and potentially improve their experiences and teaching effectiveness.

In the post-secondary education literature, international graduate students who work as teaching assistants (TAs) or as sessional instructors are referred to as International Teaching Assistants (hereinafter collectively referred to as ITAs; e.g. Anderson-Hsieh, 1990; Crumley, 2010; Fox & Gay, 1994). These students are often second language speakers of English. My roles as a writing tutor and sessional instructor at the University of Manitoba can be classified as ITA positions. Working in different ITA positions helped me experience ITA situations in different environments. While helping undergraduate students as a writing tutor involved a form of one-on-one training, the sessional instructor positions put me in front of undergraduate students, regulating all classroom teaching activities. Occasionally, as someone who sounds different, working as an ITA in Canada has been challenging for me. I also noticed that oftentimes it was not my speech intelligibility that influenced my experience; rather, it was my accent.

Now that I have lived in Canada for more than six years, in reflecting on my experience as an L2 speaker of English, I can say that I have encountered many occasions where my accent (while speaking English) played an important role in forming the identities that people assigned to me. On some occasions, it appeared that my identity was established by factors beyond my linguistic skills in English and beyond my accent. For example, on many occasions, I had normal interactions with people. Sometimes, when these conversations went on, people asked me where I was from, or what language my accent resembled. When I answered those questions, I could often feel the individuals' reactions change. In many cases, I was not sure whether it was my

accent or my appearance that made me sound like a foreigner/outsider. My (first) impression of these incidents was that there are elements both inside and outside of linguistic skills that make people assign identities to people. There have also been occasions when I made my accent sound similar to or unlike that of a specific group. This led me wonder "what is it that I want to converge to or diverge from?" Therefore, I decided to examine accent and identity and how they affect each other in an L2. For my PhD program, I proposed to research the relationship between identity, accent and intelligibility in English spoken as a second language. Because I work in education, I decided to examine the relationship between accent, intelligibility, and identity in the case of ITAs, so that I can address a more pedagogical issue; specifically, ITAs' identity, accent, and intelligibility. In the following section, I begin establishing the argument by discussing some social aspects of identity.

Social Construction of Identity and Accent

According to constructivist proponents, the meanings we make of different phenomena are constructed in collaboration with others (e.g. Foucault, 1966; 1970; Guba & Lincoln 2005; McHoul & Grace, 1993). Identity and self are also two mental constructs that we make in collaboration with others (MacKinnon & Heise, 2010). Because identity is constructed in collaboration with others, language, as one of our main means of communication, is an influential instrument in constructing identities (MacKinnon & Heise, 2010). However, language, as the main means of communicating knowledge, including knowledge about identity, is no longer considered to be a form of unitary knowledge (Derrida, 1976). This means that different ideas can be communicated by individuals using the *same* language and talking about the same phenomenon. This is another way of saying that, by being engaged in different communications with different social groups about any given aspect of knowledge, we are

constantly creating new *knowledges* (Foucault, 1966; 1970). Since social aspect of identity is collaboratively constructed and its construction depends on several variables, including the language and different social groups a person operates within, different identities are constructed for and by individuals, and those identities are evolving and changing. In this research, 'identity' refers to a socially-constructed knowledge about one's self; therefore, the social aspect of identity is emphasized. As I will elaborate later, the distinction between self and knowledge about self is blurred. I do not intend to intensify the distinction, which may be invalid, nor do I try to force a dichotomous differentiation between "taken" (by which I mean identities that are assumed and performed by individuals) and "assigned" (by which I mean identity positions that are given to individuals by others) identities, because I believe that simply drawing such a line would be misleading in the first place. In other words, we can fabricate a line between assigned and taken identities that is most probably not there. I will discuss the idea that "identity and self are two mental constructs that we construct in collaboration with others" (MacKinnon & Heise, 2010, p. 3) further in the discussion on social identity theory in Chapter 2.

Identity can have different meanings depending on the person defining it. A quick search in the Cambridge Dictionary of Psychology will yield different definitions of identity, such as cultural identity, ego identity, and ethnic identity (Matsumoto, 2009). Generally, however, one may wish to define identity within two broad categories: *social* and *psychological*. Social identity refers to how individuals understand themselves in relation to others in the society (e.g. Hogg, 2016; Tajfel, 1974). From a psychological perspective, identity is defined in three different sub-categories: (a) personal, a person's beliefs about him/herself; (b) collective, a person's shared characteristics with others; and (c) relational, referring to our extended concept

of self (Matsumoto, 2009, p. 245). Examples such as "I am a mom/dad", "I am a brother of three teenagers", etc., are examples of relational identity.

In analysing L2 speakers' interactions with L1 speakers, it is relevant to discuss identity through the lens of the social sciences. However, the psychological effects of social interactions on the participants also need to be considered. In L2 acquisition in an L2 context, bicultural identity may be strengthened or weakened. Bicultural identity occurs when a person accepts membership of two different cultures (Matsumoto, 2009). Therefore, in studying L2 speakers' identity-related issues, considering ongoing changes of identity can help us understand identity issues better. As Norton and Toohey (2011) pointed out, one of the features of identity that needs to be considered is its on-going and changing nature, which can play a significant role in L2 development. L2 acquisition is believed to have an interactive relationship with social identity formation (Miller, 2004), and L2 learners' identities change with respect to their relationships with others in the L2 community (Ortaçtepe, 2013). Hence, identifying with the L1 or L2 community, or both, is a matter of change and flexibility. For international students speaking English as an L2, identity, as a socially-constructed phenomenon, can be affected by interactions with speakers of the host community. Therefore, the operational definition of social identity used in this document considers it as a socio-psychological construct. Social identity refers to those aspects of a person's meaning of self that are developed through, mainly, linguistic communications, and can affect and be affected by the social groups in which the person is involved. In this sense, the social aspects of identity are considered and studied. Since the present study focuses on the identity construction of ITAs, it inherently includes and focuses on the professional aspects of identity for L2 speakers.

In the field of second language acquisition (SLA) research, mainly after Norton Pierce's (1995) call to explore the role of identity in SLA, a scholarship movement was triggered that paid more attention to the role of identity in L2 acquisition (e.g., Block, 2006, 2009; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2013; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Ortaçtepe, 2013). It was discussed that, in developing identity in a new language, the availability of communities of practice for L2 speakers can become a challenging issue (e.g. Norton, 2000, 2013). Communities of practice are social communities in which members can acquire new knowledge and skills through participation in them. The learners' identities are thereby shaped through participation in communities of practice (Lave, 1991). Since communities of practice are not limited to formal educational communities, the issue of proper participation in these communities for learning new knowledge and skills is a challenge for second language learners; it is also a deterministic factor in the success or failure of learners in acquiring and advancing their L2 linguistic skills (Back, 2011; Norton 2000, 2013). In addition to the availability of communities of practice for L2 speakers, the type or quality of participation in those communities can affect the development of their L2 language skills (Cumming, 2013; Young & Miller, 2004). Participation in communities of practice is necessary for acquiring new knowledge and skills, and for fostering identity development for participants (Lave, 1991). In turn, L2 learners' identities play a significant role in their success or failure in acquiring the language (e.g. Block, 2009; Norton, 2000, 2013).

For these reasons, looking into L2 accent and intelligibility and their relationship to identity has the potential to illuminate the underlying reasons why we have and develop certain accents. By understanding identity as a potential reason for having a specific accent in an L2, we open a window to improving the accent and speech intelligibility of L2 speakers without focusing only on the discrete linguistic aspects of L2 acquisition. For these reasons, in this study,

I will investigate the issues related to the accent, intelligibility, and identity of ITAs. In the following paragraphs, I first provide some definitions for accent and intelligibility. Then, I will address these concepts within SLA.

A dictionary definition of *accent* is "a particular way of speaking which tells the listener something about the speaker's background" (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p. 3). Crystal (2008), in *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*, clarifies the notion of accent in more detail:

> The cumulative auditory effect of those features of pronunciation which identify where a person is from, regionally or socially. The linguistics literature emphasizes that the term refers to pronunciation only, and is thus distinct from dialect, which refers to grammar and vocabulary as well ... Regional accents can relate to any locale, including both rural and urban communities within a country (e.g. 'West Country', 'Liverpool') as well as national groups speaking the same language (e.g. 'American', 'Australian'), and our impression of other languages ('foreign accent', 'Slavic accent'). Social accents relate to the cultural and educational background of the speaker (p. 3).

Intelligibility refers to "the degree to which a message can be understood" (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p. 263) and "the ability of people to understand each other" (Crystal, 2008, p. 319). Based on these common definitions, the extant research has evolved. Because participants in my research were not linguists, intentionally, I limited the definitions of accent and intelligibility to those commonly-held in order to allow meanings to be negotiated and constructed by the participants and myself. This would prevent imposing a certain definition on the participants, thus maximizing the potential for constructing meaning. I need to emphasize here that the distinction between accent and intelligibility can be blurred at times; however, based on the

perceived differences and for the sake of discipline, a distinction between them has been assumed and is considered in this document as much as possible.

Accent and Identity

Accent is one of the linguistic features that we project when we speak. As explained in the previous section, for the purposes of this study, I adapted the definition of *accent* from Crystal (2008), who defined it in its general sense as those characteristics of speech that provide information about a person's social or regional background. Individuals' languages, and also their accents, may vary depending on a variety of factors such as geographical location, social circumstances, and demographics, etc. (Wode, 1995). The notion of accent in a second language (L2) is complicated. Generally speaking, at least in the case of English, people may "hear foreign accents when they detect divergences from English phonetic norms along a wide range of segmental and suprasegmental (i.e. prosodic) dimensions" (Flege, 1995, p. 233). Accent in L2 has been explored extensively since the last quarter of the twentieth century (Piske, Mackay, & Flege, 2001). Native speakers of a variety of languages have been examined for having accent in a variety of L2s, including English (e.g. Fledge, 1995; Frieda & Nozawa, 2007; Strange, 1995, 2007), French (Birdsong, 2007), and Thai (Wayland, 2007).

One observation about accent and intelligibility is that they can be considered from both the speaker's and the perceiver's viewpoints. Consequently, as I will detail later, accent and intelligibility have relationships with both the speaker's and listener's taken identities (e.g. Bresnahan, Ohashi, Nebashi, Liu & Shearman, 2002). Therefore, studies could benefit from considering the relationships of accent and intelligibility with the identities of L2 speakers, and identities of the listeners in a conversation.

In sum, the issue of language use, specifically accent and intelligibility, has been identified in many studies addressing the employment and success of ITAs (e.g. Anderson-Hsieh, 1990; Bresnahan et al., 2002; Crumley, 2010; Hahn, 2004; Li, Mazer, & Ju, 2011; Pickering, 2001; Stevens, 1989; Tyler, 1992). Flege (1995) summarizes three groups of foreign accent disadvantages: understanding issues related to accented speech, miscommunication of emotions, and personal misjudgments of speakers. In this study, I intended to focus the discussion by examining accent and intelligibility and their roles in communications between ITAs and domestic undergraduate students in Canada. Since accent, intelligibility, and identity are all rooted in individuals' backgrounds, exploring the relationships between them may unearth some factors in the effectiveness of ITAs' communication.

It is conceivable to study the relationship between individuals' identities and their accents and intelligibility. According to some linguistic theories, we develop specific phonological categories in our minds while learning our first languages. Examining the relationship between phonological category selection and L2 speakers' sense of identity is one way to examine the relationship between L2 speech and identity. Speakers of an L2 already have L1 phonological categories available to them; however, according to Flege (1995) who developed the Speech Learning Model (SLM), and others who adapted this model (e.g., Frieda & Nozawa, 2007; McAllister, 2007), phonological space remains available to individuals throughout their lives. Therefore, while learning an L2, new phonological categories for the second language need to be developed. These phonological categories are challenging for L2 learners at first due to L1 interference (e.g. Best, 1995; Best & Tyler, 2007), but with L2 development and experience, these challenges are overcome (e.g. Flege, 1995, Kuhl & Iverson, 1995; Piske, 2007; Strange, 1995; Yamada, 1995). Adapting SLM, we may assume that in advanced levels of L2

development, L2 speakers have a repertoire for both their L1 and L2 phones, and probably

multiple allophones of each phone in each language. During speech production, different

allophones of a similar sound compete with one another (Best & Tyler, 2007). For example, if

one pronounces the word "bag", the choice of pronouncing it with a clear /æ/ sound or

pronouncing it with a more /e/-like sound is a decision made based on experiences with different

social groups with whom that person has interacted[1]. Accent-related decisions may be made at

the conscious, sub-conscious, or unconscious levels; however, these decisions are made based on

an individual's background, which also informs identity. In the following section, I will elaborate

on the relationship between social groups, identity, and intelligibility and accent.

From what I explained above, it can be said that the linguistic background of a speaker

can be and *is* communicated through the instrument of language; thus, it informs the listener

about the social groups in which the speaker has been involved. That is, the features and qualities

of speech from social groups in which a person has been involved become part of the person's

linguistic repertoire. At the same time, identity is also informed by those social groups; therefore,

accent and identity affect one another. Along this line, an investigation into the relationship

between *accent* and *identity* can inform us about how each one of them may influence the other.

Additionally, since identity is constructed as an individual participates in different social groups,

an exploration of identity may also shed light on the roles of various social groups on identity

and accent development. The relationships between social groups, identity, and accent are

summarized in Figure 1. According to this figure, the social groups a person has been involved

with influence that person's identity, and identity in turn influences accent. The order of

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[1] For inclusiveness, the plural pronoun has been used throughout this document to refer to both third person singular or plural cases.

influence is from social groups to identity to accent; however, each of these elements affects the others.
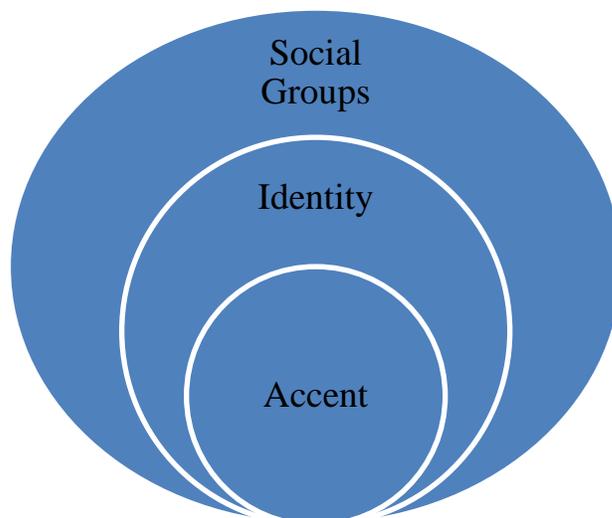
Figure 1. The relationship between social groups, identity, and accent.

A point to make clear here is that individuals also influence the social groups in which they are allowed to participate (e.g. Tajfel, 1969; 1974). In societies, in the process of categorizing the surrounding social groups in their minds, individuals identify with certain groups. This leads to associations with certain groups and *dissociations* from other groups (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel, 1974). While social groups influence their individual members, individuals also influence social groups through their actions and contributions to those groups (Tajfel, 1974). This complex relationship between social groups, identity, and accent leads to questions about the relationship between accent/identity and social groups: What relationship exists between individuals' L2 accents and their participation in certain social groups?

Accent can have both global (suprasegmental) and segmental aspects (Birdsong, 2007; Jusczyk, Hohne, Mandel, & Strange, 1995). In an ideal situation, suprasegmental and segmental aspects of accent would be examined in investigations of accent and intelligibility. However, the

scope of this study is intelligibility and accent as perceived by others; therefore, after a pilot study of segmental elements revealed little new information (see Chapter 3), in consultation with my PhD committee, I decided to focus on accent and intelligibility at their suprasegmental levels. To have an understanding of ESL-speaker ITAs' identity, accent, and intelligibility, a mixed-methods design was used involving both L1- and L2-speaker participants. The major research question addressed in this study is: How are accent, intelligibility, and identity in English as a second language (English L2) speakers related in the case of international teaching assistants in Canada? Based on this main research question, five sub-questions were formulated:

(1) What are L2-speaking ITAs' experiences with accent and intelligibility in their teaching practices in English?

(2) How do L2 speakers describe their experiences with identity construction in English?

(3) How do L1-speaking students describe their experiences with ITAs' accent and intelligibility?

(4) How do L1 speakers rate the accent and intelligibility of recordings of L1 and L2 speakers of English? Does the perceived ethnicity of the speaker affect the L1 speakers' judgements of accent and intelligibility?

(5) How do individual ESL speakers' histories with additional language learning affect their identity, accent and intelligibility?

The guiding focus of the present study is the accent-intelligibility-identity link. I provide more information on research problematization and questions in Chapter 2.

Rationale for the Study

The rationale for this study is multi-fold. First, the employment of ITAs is an important issue in post-secondary education in North America (Anderson-Hsieh, 1990). Since accent and

intelligibility have been reported as being the major challenges for ITAs (e.g. Anderson-Hsieh, 1990; Bresnahan et al., 2002; Hahn, 2004; Li et al., 2011; Rubin, 1992), learning about the potential problems related to these features is essential to proposing constructive recommendations for their amelioration. Second, identity is an important aspect of post-secondary students' mental health, and most ITAs are also students. In the process of growing into adulthood, we construct our senses of identity that will form "a firm basis for adulthood" (Woolfolk, Winne, & Perry, 2012, p. 89) through the process of making choices and decisions. If individuals do not integrate all these choices appropriately in their lives, they will suffer from role confusion, which refers to the situation where a person is confused about their role in life due to a lack of developed identity into adulthood (Woolfolk et al., 2012). Third, my research may suggest ways to improve educational services and experiences at universities and colleges where ITAs teach. If ITAs are able to improve their accents and intelligibility, then instructional delivery will improve.

In brief, I explore the relationship between accent, intelligibility and identity while looking into some linguistic and extra-linguistic factors. This way, I can contribute to the conversation about best practices in supporting ITA integration and development.

In Chapter 2, I explore the related literature that provides the foundations for this project. This includes subjects such as the relationship between identity and language, intersectionality, social identity theory, the concept of communities of practice, and international teaching assistants. It also covers research problematization, the research questions, and the positionality of the researcher.

Chapter 3 is the methodology chapter, which explores the research methodology, the different components of the study, the participants and their roles, and the materials used. I have also provided justifications for the research design.

In Chapter 4, I summarize the qualitative findings about the lived experiences of ITAs. First, I explain the qualitative data analysis. Then, following introduction of each ITA participant, I provide qualitative findings from interviews conducted with them.

While Chapter 4 was about ITAs, Chapter 5 focuses on L1-speaker students who have taken courses with ITAs. Following a short introduction of each participant in this category, I summarize the common emerging themes regarding L1-speaker students' experiences of taking classes with ITAs.

In Chapter 6, the quantitative findings of the research are presented. Along with presentation of the data, reliability tests (and explanations of them) are provided. In Chapter 7, the qualitative and quantitative components of the study are merged in a mixed methods analysis.

In Chapter 8, an overall discussion and conclusions are provided. By combining and discussing all findings together, I attempt to answer the main research question. The limitations and delimitations of the research, and suggestions for future research, follow the discussion.

In Chapter 9, I provide some educational recommendations based on the findings of this project. The educational recommendations are supported by evidence from this project and relevant existing literature. Finally, some additional speculations are provided as the closing section in Chapter 10.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I begin by reviewing background information on identity and the relationship between identity and language. Then, I refocus the conversation on explaining the relationship between identity and second-language acquisition. The major governing background theory of this study is social identity theory. Since communities as social groups are necessary for identity construction, I will discuss the roles of communities of practice on identity development, and the relationship between social groups, identity, and accent. I will review the literature on ITAs with specific attention to their communication concerns vis-a-vis accent and intelligibility, and continue with a discussion of research problematization, my researcher positionality, and my theoretical framework. Finally, I will talk about the analytical framework used for this research.

Identity as a Social Construct

Identity has been a major research focus since the 1960s, when Erikson introduced a number of identity constructs, including identity crisis, into the literature on psychological development (e.g. Erikson, 1968). In second language acquisition (SLA), the examination of identity is not new. Dating back to the 1970s and 1980s, scholars have generally emphasized the importance of identity in second language acquisition (e.g. Gardner & Lalonde, 1985; Guiora, Beit-Hallahmi, Brannon, Dull, & Scovel, 1972; Guiora, Brannon & Dull, 1972). In relation to identity, researchers in the SLA field have also explored students' motivations and desires for learning an L2 (e.g., Mohta & Lin, 2013). Over the years, the discussions about identity in L2 acquisition moved from primarily considering individual differences in language learning to the inclusion of social factors that enhance social integration and, thus, language learning. In fact, even before the early days of discussing identity in SLA, continental philosophers such as

Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, and Baudrillard had already started questioning the concept of individuality, which encompasses both self and identity concepts, as a single stand-alone construct (MacKinnon & Heise, 2010). Foucault noted that the concept of *man* is relatively new, and was created during and after the Enlightenment movement[2] (Foucault, 1966, 1970). He also argued that the creation of knowledge, and the ways we arrange and organize it, has led to the construction of a central place for man in our perception of the world. He argued that a centered stand-alone place for man may no longer serve us well, because a significant portion of *what* we know is the product of *how* we know it, and how we know something is influenced by several factors outside of us. Therefore, it became natural to begin examining *identity* as a collaboratively-constructed construct. It is important to note here that focusing on the social aspects of identity construction does not eliminate or disregard identity's internal and inherent aspects. Nor does it disregard the biological factors that may affect individuals' identities. Rather, the focus aims to include and emphasize the social aspects of identity.

MacKinnon and Heise (2010) considered identity as being mainly constructed by language. They believe "the language that lay people use to build and communicate their phenomenological worlds is the primary depository of cultural constructions [including identities]" (p. 5). Thus, MacKinnon and Heise (2010) recommend examining language usage to better understand identity construction. In L2 research, the search for L2 learning motivating factors has led some scholars to look beyond individual minds to social factors, one of which is identity. As I briefly explained earlier, identity has a close relationship with the language an

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[2] *Man* is used in a gender-neutral sense here. Foucault's discussion of the individual includes the modern perception of a stand-alone, independent construct.

individual uses. To elaborate on this, in the following section, I will discuss the relationship between identity and language in more detail.

Identity and Language

Identity, as a form of knowledge about ourselves that may or may not be conscious, is influenced by the individuals with whom we come into contact. After the introduction of post-enlightenment philosophies such as constructivism, we consider communication to have a more important role in individuals' knowledge construction (e.g. Foucault, 1970; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; McHoul & Grace, 1993). That is, social identity theory conceptualizes identities and selves as the "products of language" (MacKinnon & Heise, 2010, p. 3), while language is a social tool. Identity is developed as an individual matures cognitively, socially, and physically. In this respect, identity for most monolinguals can be connected with the processes of physio-psychological development (see also Erikson, 1968). Another point about identity is that it has been studied in the fields of both sociology and psychology (Matsumoto, 2009; Nakagawa & Kouritzin, 2009; Rahimian, 2015). Therefore, an ideal definition of identity should encompass both its social and psychological aspects. In the following section, I will explain the philosophies of knowing and how they can influence our knowledge of identity.

Some philosophical background. In the 20th century, continental philosophers such as Foucault suggested that the conception of truth as something finite and discoverable was naive (Foucault, 1966; 1970; McHoul & Grace, 1993). By this, Foucault did not mean that truth does not exist in the external world (i.e., outside our minds) but, rather, that a total understanding of the external world is impossible. In essence, this line of argument holds that although truth may exist in the external world, it can never be totally perceived by humans. Our best efforts at understanding truth would uncover only partial and local truths, according to our conceptions,

rather than exactly what exists in the external world (e.g. Foucault, 1966; 1970; Lather, 1993; McHoul & Grace, 1993). Foucault (1970) specifically argued:

> If there is one approach that I do reject, however, it is that (one might call it, broadly speaking, the phenomenological approach) which gives absolute priority to the observing subject, which attributes a constituent role to an act, which places its own point of view at the origin of all historicity – which, in short, leads to a transcendental consciousness (p. xv).

It follows then, that knowledge is not unitary, because we cannot perceive anything as it exists. Rather, we present our interpretations of what we *think* exists in the outside world. Our knowledge of self, including identity, is no exception. That is, our identities are formed under the influence of collaborations with those others with whom we communicate; identity is also a matter of our individual conception (Hogg, 2016; MacKinnon & Heise, 2010; Tajfel, 1969; 1974). As a result, one may conclude, our perceptions of our identities are constructed in collaboration with others, yet our understandings of our identities are unique to each of us. That is, identity is a form of personalized knowledge that may exist at any level of consciousness. I will turn next to a discussion of the factors that influence knowledge construction.

Factors influencing knowledge construction. Identity is knowledge about self and, like any other knowledge, it is constructed; therefore, examining how knowledge is constructed in general can help us learn about how identity (as a form of knowledge) is constructed. The construction of knowledge is influenced by many factors, including discourse and the people we negotiate with in constructing it (Foucault, 1966; 1970). According to constructivism, knowledge is constructed in collaboration with others (e.g. Foucault, 1966; 1970; Guba & Lincoln 2005; McHoul & Grace, 1993). These collaborations are often mediated through language. Saussurean

linguists once assumed that knowledge of language was divided into two categories: parole (the variable performance of a language by its speakers), and langue (the unified single entity of language in the minds of its speakers; Crystal, 2008). However, a unitary knowledge of language as once assumed by Saussurean linguistics does not seem to be valid anymore (Derrida, 1976). Language, which itself is not a unitary construct among its speakers, is used as the main instrument for identity construction. As a result, identity is multiplex, discourse dependent, and highly influenced by the language with which it is constructed. As a result, scholars in the field of SLA have dismissed a unitary concept of identity (e.g. Atkinson, 1999; Canagarajah, 2006). As I explained in the Introduction, I conceive the social aspects of identity to be socio-psychological constructs formed through communication, and affected by and affecting the social groups in which a person is involved. These social groups can be comprised of any groups or individuals with which a person is related.

Because identity is constructed continuously under the influence of several factors, it also changes depending on the contexts and histories involved in its construction. Foucault (1966; 1970; 1981) argued that our personal knowledge about the world is influenced by our personal histories. The concept of *histories* here refers to the different kinds of background knowledge that we have of a phenomenon or an event (e.g., Piquemal & Kouritzin, 2006). Interested readers may read the example in the following text box (Figure 2) for further clarification.

Near my hometown in Iran, there is a national park with a variety of wild and endangered animals. Every time my friends and I wanted to climb a mountain there, we needed to get a special permit for that. Sometimes, a park ranger would accompany us as well. We were advised not to leave any left-over food behind us. The explanation was that wild animals need to find their food in nature. Leaving remnants of our food behind would accustom them to being fed by humans and they might leave the national park sanctuary for nearby villages, where hunters could kill them. Additionally, we were told that our food often retains some smell of the plastic bags that we use to store ingredients or food. This can make animals associate plastic bags with food. Then, they might eat plastic bags and get seriously sick or die. However, I had noticed that park rangers would leave food for animals. Think about how they asked us not to leave leftover food and they themselves intentionally left food for animals. With the histories I provided you, you might think that park rangers had a secret for leaving food behind or were acting hypocritical, etc. Now, I will provide you some more histories: sometimes winters got long and extremely cold near my hometown. This was not what animals were used to and would make them get out of their 5400 acre sanctuary to lower land places for food. In that case, they might get run over by cars or hunted by hunters who were not allowed in the national park. In those situations, park rangers would leave animal feed at different designated places. Now, with these provided histories, your constructed knowledge of the situation probably changes. The park rangers no longer commit a hypocritical act, nor do they have a magical secret.

Figure 2. An example of the role of histories in the construction of knowledge.

Histories involved in the construction of knowledge influence what the resulting construction of knowledge is. In this case, knowing the conditions under which park rangers provided food for animals, and the types of food they left for the animals, are histories that probably change the readers' constructed knowledge regarding the leaving of food for animals. This is my understanding of Foucault's argument about how various histories of a reality influence the knowledge we construct about those realities (Foucault, 1966; 1970; 1981).

Knowledge about identity is similarly influenced by the histories involved in its construction. Since histories are involved in the construction of our identities, and since histories do not remain fixed (Foucault, 1966; 1970), identities do not remain fixed either. That is, we begin with hypothetical knowledge or initial knowledge, which is frequently different from our final constructed knowledge. The same can be said for identity. Although identity is a relatively

stable psychological construct for adults, it is constantly changing (e.g. Canagarajah, 2006;

MacKinnon & Heise, 2010; Motha & Lin, 2013; Tajfel, 1974). In addition, identity as a form of

knowledge is also influenced by the sites where it is practiced, which can involve different

groups and social contexts (Foucault, 1978; Tajfel, 1974), including SLA contexts (Dagenais,

2003; Morita, 2002). This means that different practice sites, as for histories involved in

knowledge construction, may evoke different identities. That is, identity is "multiple, a site of

struggle, and subject to change" (Norton Peirce, 1995, p. 9). As I will explain on the following

sections of this chapter, social identities are formed while individuals live in the society.

However, over time and due to circumstances, identities can be challenged and redefined.

In this section, I have discussed factors influencing knowledge construction, which

includes identity. Social identity as a primarily socially constructed form of knowledge for

individuals is context-dependent, multiple and *relatively* stable. In the following section, social

identity theory is discussed in more detail.

Social Identity Theory

According to social identity theory (e.g. Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg, 2016; Martiny &

Rubin, 2016; Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), today we live in societies where individuals

must belong to groups in which they feel included. From intra-group allegiance, different

behaviours emerge that are both the result of associating with certain groups and dissociating

from others (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Martiny & Rubin, 2016; Tajfel, 1974). Social

categorization, "the ordering of social environment in terms of social categories, that is of

groupings of persons in a manner which is meaningful to the subject" (Tajfel, 1974, p. 69), leads

to social identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Lüders, Jonas, Fritsche, & Agroskin, 2016;

Tajfel, 1974). A preliminary function of social identification is to make sense of the people and

groups around a person (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg, 2016; Lüders et al., 2016). Once social identification occurs, social identities are formed, which become the realities of individuals. Tajfel (1974) argued that society both "defines" and "creates" psychological realities for individuals (p. 69). Social identity, a psychological reality for individuals, refers to the "part of an individual's self-concept which derives from knowledge of membership in a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1974, p. 69). Social identity can provide explanations for why people need groups to associate with, and how belonging or not belonging to groups can cause individuals to favor some groups and disfavor others (Hogg, 2016; Lüders et al., 2016; Tajfel, 1969; Vignoles, Regalia, Manzi, Golledge, & Scabini, 2006).

To summarize my position on identity, I take the stance that although our identities are our own, they are also: (a) constructed for us and by us, and (b) are based on our perceptions of what we think our identities are. These perceptions do not necessarily match the existing realities of identities. This means the symbolic representations of the identities that we possess in our minds are based on our constructed knowledge, which may not match the identities experienced by others in the external world. However, as Derrida (1976) argued, symbolic and mental realities are as real to us as any other (objective) realities. Therefore, the symbolic representations of our identities as we perceive them are real to us. Following this discussion on identity, its formation, and the factors influencing its construction, I next discuss intersectionality.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is an important theoretical concept and means of explaining social identity. In brief, intersectionality holds that identities are influenced by multiple factors such as race, class, gender, age, language, sexual orientation, and [dis]ability, which effect an

individual's life in multiple and often mutually-affirming ways (Anthias, 2013; Stromquist, Holmarsdottir, & Manion, 2016; Wendland, Robinson, & Williams, 2015). An individual's identity is constructed in a dialectical way that results from different factors being manifested in a space we call the "intersection of different variables," where different factors do not "collide" but, rather, coexist (Anthias, 2013, p. 13). Specifically, Anthias (2013) argued for "the need to go beyond a focus on intersectional categories and to look at the broader social landscape of power and hierarchy…to consider the categories themselves and not only focus on their intersection…" (p. 14). This is what I have considered in this research on the identity of ESL speakers. More specifically, when studying each component of the research (such as identity), I explored the effects of different backgrounds of individuals on the construction of each component. Additionally, the accumulated impacts of different factors on the construction of identity are discussed.

The term *intersectionality* was introduced by Crenshaw (1989) for explaining the matrix of various forms of oppression in relation to one's personal identity. However, use of the concept of intersectionality has developed beyond just explaining personal identity, and it is used to explain the experiences of individuals resulting from social identifications and categorizations (Anthias, 2013; Hankivsky, 2014). In this study, I also explain the identities and experiences of second language speaking educators through an examination of how different aspects of their identities intersect. This includes the social and personal aspects of identity, individuals' memberships in different social groups, and the power positions of L2-speaker participants in specific cases.

In this section, I explained intersectionality as an aspect of social identity theory. In the following section, the discussion is focused on the relationship between identity and second language acquisition.

Identity and L2 Acquisition

Identity in second language acquisition has been a topic of investigation since Norton's contributions to the field in the 1990s (Block, 2009; Norton, 2013). Norton (2000, 2013) argued that identity is an important factor in L2 acquisition that must be explored separate from the role of motivation in L2 acquisition. She illustrated how learning and social interaction contexts can influence identity formation in an L2 learner or speaker. For example, Norton (2000, 2013) cites the example of Martina, an immigrant ESL speaker who worked at a fast food restaurant in Canada. Martina mobilized her identity as a mother from her L1 self to gain some power in Canada. By mobilizing her mother identity, she prevented two teenage English L1-speaker coworkers taking advantage of her and giving her orders.

Block (2009) suggested that identity issues surface more frequently and gain more significance for individuals in an L2 context. Meanwhile, Dörnyei (2005, 2009) noted that, when learning an L2, individuals are affected differently in L1 and L2 contexts, and that individual differences are responsible for L2 identity development. Another explanation for the challenges of identity in an L2 context can be provided using Foucault's (1966, 1970) concept of histories; when the living context is different, a set of different conditions are present for knowledge and, thus, identity construction. Identities are not simple; they have symbolic meanings and values in society (DeZalia & Moeschberger, 2016; Macchia & Louis, 2016; MacKinnon & Heise, 2010; Tajfel, 1974). A second language learned and used in a second language living context contains more real life representations for the symbolic meanings of identities compared to a second

language learned as a foreign language. I use the phrases *signified elements* or *signified realities* to refer to the elements in the outside world to which a linguistic chunk refers. That is, each word has associated meanings that refer to elements in the outside world. As these elements are signified in the meaning of a word, these terms reference elements or realities that are not necessarily shared across languages, nor are they in any sense absolute and concrete. Identities

Imagine a girl named Nina who is living in Russia and learning English. Nina is a math teacher. In her spare time, she volunteers for animal protection activities that try to protect wild Siberian tigers and their habitats. Nina has the identities of a math teacher and a Siberian tiger protector. These identities have signified elements in the outside world. Now, if Nina moves to Canada, chances are that she would not be a math teacher any longer. While trying to work hard to survive, she would have no spare time and may not be allowed to volunteer with any animal protection organizations. Plus, there are no wild Siberian tigers in Canada to be protected. Therefore, in her new country, her identities as a math teacher and animal activist lack any corresponding realizations, or signified elements, in the outside world (due to certification requirements for the former case and geographical location for the latter). Thus, those portions of her identity remain unrealized and become less valid in her daily life.

Figure 3. A hypothetical example illustrating differences in identity meanings in two living contexts.

can be communicated through language and, therefore, each identity label can *signify* meanings that may be different in different languages. In an L2 living context, there are different signified elements for a specific identity word.

The example provided in Figure 3 shows how the living context can have a significant impact on the identity construction of L2 speakers. Using Foucault's (1966, 1970) discussion on the influence of histories on knowledge construction, we can understand why different contexts of L2 acquisition can lead to differently-constructed identities for individuals. To elaborate, our knowledge of self and our identities are forms of constructed knowledge developed in different contexts. When we are learning a second language, the learning conditions are different to those

in which we acquired our first. This results in different conceptualizations of knowledge. Therefore, our knowledge about our *selves* and our *identities* depend on the conditions in which we learned them. This is one way of explaining why living in L2 contexts can provoke identity issues more frequently than living in L1 contexts does. In our example, if Nina had stayed in Russia, her identities as a math teacher and Siberian tiger protector would still have signified elements in the outside world, regardless of the language she used to tell us about them. However, living in Canada, the lack of those signified elements in the outside world puts her identities at risk.

Now, using the discussion on social identity theory and language socialization (MacKinnon & Heise, 2010; Tajfel, 1969, 1974; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984; 2017; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986), one can explore the construction of identities for individuals using a first and a second language. Identity development during L2 acquisition is different from general identity development, which occurs during L1 acquisition. In L1 acquisition, as individuals experience the world, they acquire language as well as the symbolic/signified meanings of its words (e.g. MacKinnon & Heise, 2010; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984, 1995, 2017; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). However, in acquiring a second language, an individual has to learn words with signified meanings that are often different.

Because identities are formed in collaboration with others, the social groups available to an individual can significantly influence how the knowledge about self and identity is constructed. Therefore, I will next examine the role of communities of practice on L2 learners' language acquisition.

Communities of Practice

In this section, I elaborate on the role of communities of practice in identity formation. As noted previously, constructivists believe that knowledge is constructed in collaboration with other people. Similarly, Vygotsky pointed out that learning is a social activity (Cobb & Bowers, 1999). Psychologists who subscribe to the social construction of knowledge believe that knowledge is situation dependent; and therefore, the type of knowledge learned depends on the communities in which it has been learned; hence, knowledge is said to be *situated* (Woolfolk et al., 2012). Situated learning emphasizes the difference between learning in the real world and the academic settings of schools. It also emphasizes the *inapplicability* of knowledge learned in schools to the outside world. Therefore, communities of practice, referring to social contexts for practicing and learning things, are necessary for actual learning to take place (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The concept of communities of practice was first introduced in the 1990s (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), and has been further explored and used in education since then.

The importance of communities of practice in second language acquisition was introduced by Norton (1995). Norton (2000, 2013) suggested that second language learners may not always have access to communities of practice where they can practice their identities and realize steps toward their future selves. In Norton's study, one of the participants, named Mai, had invested in literacy practices in English as an investment for her future. By going to college and investing in her literacy practices, Mai hoped to obtain an office job (Norton, 2000, 2013). In another study, Ortaçtepe (2013) demonstrated that seclusion from the dominant culture can be a major cause for identity crises in L2 speakers. Erol, a participant in Ortaçtepe's research, called his situation "free falling":

Some people call this phenomena [sic] "culture shock" but it's not culture shock, it's free

falling. You are not exposed to any culture, you don't talk to anyone, why would it be

culture shock? . . . This is not culture shock because in this theory, you're departed from

all your old habits, old life—and that emptiness. There's no meaning in life. (p. 223)

As evident from this interview excerpt, the L2 speaker had been secluded from society, and this

had caused him to go through identity crises. Individuals' engagement in communities of

practice can help them to shape their identities and stay motivated (Woolfolk et al., 2012).

Within the context of communities of practice, legitimate peripheral participation refers to

individuals' "genuine involvement in the work of the group," regardless of their abilities or

contribution levels (Woolfolk et al., 2012, p. 380). That is, legitimate peripheral participation

suggests that newcomers to a community should be able to first take peripheral roles in

community activities and, later, gradually shift to more central roles (Lave & Wenger, 1991;

Wenger, 1998).

In SLA contexts, the notions of communities of practice and legitimate peripheral

participation have frequently been mobilized to explain L2 acquisition (e.g. Duff, 2010; Kanno,

2003; Kanno & Norton, 2003; Norton, 2013; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Toohey, 2000). In

Norton's study (2000, 2013), for example, some of the participants had problems due to

mismatches between their expectations of participation in communities of practice and the roles

actually available in those communities. On the occasions they were granted legitimate

peripheral participation, they found it to be temporary. For example, after a lay-off happened in

the workplace, Mai, who was an ESL-speaking participant, was excluded from community

activities such as short workplace conversations. Norton (2013) suggests that "the relationships

between oldtimers and newtimers" have not received adequate attention in the original situated

learning conversations of Lave and Wenger (1991) and, thus, they require further research (p. 122). Understanding interactions between L2 speakers and the communities of practice available to them in their host society[3] was, therefore, one of my primary motivations in designing this study.

Access to communities of practice can be a key to the success or failure of language learners. For example, Back (2011) studied two individuals who were playing in the same musical band. Traditionally, the band's music and language was Quichua, which is an indigenous language of Ecuador. Back (2011) found that while one of the individuals was a successful learner of the Quichua language, the other one failed to acquire the language through participation in the band. In her discussion, she rationalized the effects of a community of language speakers on newcomers' language learning: "A community can choose to either empower a newcomer through increased legitimacy and more intensive participation or it can disempower them by preventing them from participating" (p. 1040) in the community's activities. While the successful language learner in Back's research maintained his community's cultural traditions, the unsuccessful language learner distanced himself from them. Back emphasized the need for further "research on other migrant/transnational communities using a community-oriented perspective......to draw attention to the particularities of these learning experiences and explain why different experiences of language acquisition may occur" (p. 1055-1056). While access to communities of practice for learners is crucial in developing their L2 skills, in many cases, knowing the language fluently is the key to accessing such communities (e.g. Norton, 2000, 2013). However, in many cases, language skills are *not the only keys* to communities of practice for L2 speakers. For example, many international teaching assistants

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[3] "Oldtimers" refers to the members of the host society and "newtimers" refers to L2-speakers who are immigrants.

(ITAs) have the required language skills in their L2s, yet they are not successful in their communications with L1 speakers in academia (Jenkins, 2000). Therefore, there are likely other factors influencing effective and meaningful communications between L2 speakers and L1-speaking communities.

In participating in communities of practice, many factors, such as group dynamics, individual differences, and peers, can play significant roles in L2 learners' achievements (Kozaki & Ross, 2011). Young and Miller (2004) discussed a case study where an L2 speaker gradually moved from a peripheral role to a more centralized role in different communities of practice. How are those opportunities available to L2 speakers such as ITAs? How are L2 speakers' identities related to the communities to which they have access? And how does having access to those communities affect their accent and intelligibility? These are questions that guided me in proposing this study.

Because of my interest in the roles of intelligibility and accent on identity practices and development, and because I intended to explore their influences on educational outcomes, I chose to study the roles of intelligibility and accent in relation to identity construction in ITAs. To date, there has been insufficient research on this topic.

Accent. As mentioned earlier, Crystal (2008) defines accent as the pronunciation features that identify a person's social or regional affiliations. In L2 studies, the role of accent has been investigated by a significant body of research (e.g. Flege, 1995; Piske, 2007; Piske, MacKay, & Flege, 2001; Southwood, & Flege, 1999). Accent in L2 is a complicated feature, since many variables contribute to it. Accent can function as a sign of many other attributes, such as education, social class, and linguistic background (Crystal, 2008). Even understanding what people mean by "foreign accent" can be challenging. Generally speaking, any divergences from

the norms of the local language may be considered signs of having a foreign accent (Flege, 1995). In L2 contexts, accent can play a major role in the success of L2 learners and speakers, depending on how desirable the accent is considered to be (Kouritzin, Piquemal, & Renaud, 2009). Flege (1995), for example, summarizes three major disadvantages of having a foreign accent while speaking in an L2. These disadvantages include: (a) challenges with making their L2 speech understood, (b) problems in the communication of emotions, and (c) misjudgements of the speaker's personality. Another social issue related to having an accent in an L2 is the marginalization of L2 speakers (James, 2010; Norton, 2013). In a qualitative research project conducted in 2013-2014, I found that ESL-speaker university students brought up the issue of accent several times.[4] For example, one participant, Ana,[5] commented:

> [It] is patronizing that you would … think that [just because] a person … [has] an accent, [that] English is not [their] first language, that [it] means they cannot speak it as well [as a native speaker]. That [is] … misconception and stereotyping, because having an accent and not being able to speak English well have nothing … in common. (Ana, December 21, 2013)

In Norton's (2013) study, a participant diarized "Because of my accent some people treat me as less worthy than they are (especially when I was looking for a job)" (p. 92). In the same study, another participant who worked at a fast food restaurant commented about her experience with a customer. The customer had asked her "Are you putting on this accent so that you can get more tips?" Then she had replied: "I wish I did not have this accent because then I would not have to listen to such comments" (Norton, 2000, p. 74, 2013, p. 111). Therefore, accent seems to play a

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[4] The study had the approval of the University of Manitoba Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board.
[5] Pseudonym

significant role in the lives and experiences of L2 speakers and learners, carrying with it reminders of a person's social affiliations. To elaborate on that relationship, in the following section I will discuss the relationship between accent and communities of practice.

Accent as a contributor to identity in communities of practice. Individuals carry their linguistic backgrounds when communicating in communities of practice. The linguistic background includes accent. Accent usually has in it codes and cues related to the speaker's background (e.g. Crystal, 2008). Since identity is constructed partially, if not totally, through the relationships a person has with others (Agha, 2007; Matsumoto, 2009; Nakagawa & Kouritzin, 2009; Norton, 2013; Tajfel, 1974), and since individuals function within a variety of networks that influence their speech (Milroy & Milroy, 1992), it appears that the linguistic cues of the social groups with which a person has histories are also portrayed and communicated through their language usage, and more specifically, through their accents. In communities of practice that individuals desire to participate in using their L2s, accent can have a twofold effect: it can be used by the L2 speakers to express who they are, and it can also be used by others to judge or decide who these individuals are. Therefore, examining the relationship between accent and participation in communities of practice and how these two things are related to identity can be illuminating in learning about the identities L2 learners take—their "achieved" (Blommaert, 2006, p. 238), or "assigned" (Kouritzin, 2016, pp. 4-5) identities.

When individuals learn an L2 in adulthood, they have already formed the social and psychological aspects of their identities through communications in their L1s. In these cases, it can be more challenging for them to correctly incorporate, in their speech, the aspects of the L2 that signal legitimate participation in community activities without overtly pointing to their social and historical backgrounds. Moreover, because individuals moderate their accents based

on the social groups in which they are involved (Milroy & Milroy, 1992), accent also points to the L2 identities being constructed, and the social groups in which an individual is involved. That is, these two elements—identities and social affiliations—inform each other. In the SLA literature, social groups are perceived to have significant effects on L2 learners' eventual success in learning the language (e.g. Dörnyei, 2005; 2009; Morita, 2002). However, at the same time, the social groups an individual is involved with at the initial stages of L2 acquisition are frequently ones in which the L1 is used as the main means of communication. In some cases, the social groups using an L2 as the main means of communication are less frequent than those using an L1. As a consequence, there may be few opportunities for newcomers to develop L2 accents and/or identities because their primary affiliations remain with their L1-speaking communities.

Another aspect of L2 accent comes from concepts related to resistance. It is reported that some immigrants or L2 speakers in host countries, even after years of residency, still have a significant accent that marks them as foreigners (e.g. Flege, 1995; Yamada, 1995). One reason, as discussed above, may be the unequal and imbalanced access that L2 learners have to communities of practice in their L2. Even when identities are constructed through L2-speaking communities, one should not expect that an L2 speaker would immediately adopt the accents of unknown individuals and communities. In one study, a participant reported that she had worked at a fast food restaurant for eight months where she experienced total exclusion from the social groups and communities of practice at her workplace. After eight months, she quit her job and started looking for another one. One new job application required applicants to provide references, for which she used the name of the old restaurant and its manager. Surprisingly, the manager could not even recognize her, and she had to bring cheque slips and documents to prove that she had worked there. The dehumanization of this participant is sad and is brilliantly

conveyed in her comment: "In restaurant was working a lot of children but the children always thought that I am—I don't know—maybe some broom or something" (Norton, 2013, p. 136). In another example, an international student from Turkey living in the United States was found by Ortaçtepe (2013) to be living the experience of *gurbet* to the fullest. In general, *gurbet* refers to a combination of isolation, sufferance, and homesickness that is usually experienced when a person lives somewhere other than their homeland[6]. The student in the study developed feelings of *gurbet* because, even after years of living in an L2 context in the United States, he lacked strong affiliations with enough communities to feel comfortable and to feel "at home". In such cases, one cannot expect that L2 speakers' accents might change and become closer to the social norms of the host community. When social groups, or communities of practice, are not available for many L2 speakers, there are two consequences: (a) learners cannot build and practice identities in the L2, and (b) the histories or backgrounds for the learners required to make them feel affiliated with certain social groups, and thus resemble their accents, are also lacking. In circumstances such as these, when L2 learners/speakers have no opportunities for meaningful social practices, they may find themselves unable to form social identities, which are constructed in communications with social groups. Accordingly, accent, one aspect of language learning, is also denied the potential for development.

Identity can also affect the realization of individual sounds in an L2. Best and Tyler (2007) suggest that phonological categories cover a range of allophones and that they function as markers of a person's identity. Therefore, one may assume that proficient L2 speakers may,

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[6] *Gurbet*, in Turkish, or *ghorbat*, in Persian, is the state of being far away from home. Literally, it means 'far from someone's place' (translated from the Dehkhoda Encyclopedia). A Turkish-English dictionary gives the following two definitions for *gurbet*: 1) foreign place, place far from one's home or homeland, 2) living far from one's home or homeland (available online at http://www.turkishdictionary.net/?word=gurbet).

intentionally or unintentionally, choose phonological patterns in their L2s that identify them as L2 speakers; they may alternatively choose phonological patterns that will identify them as bilinguals, or in some other way demonstrate their identities.

Keeping all of this in mind, this study is guided by a desire to understand the complex relationship between accent, intelligibility, and identity in L2s, evaluating not only L2 speakers' perceptions of their accents and their (articulated) reasons for having accents in the L2, but also how people assign identities to L2 speakers and how these identities inform and are informed by the accents that speakers perform. In the following section, I will discuss the different components of speech that can influence accent and intelligibility.

Accent-related components of speech. Different components of speech may play a role in having an accent. A major argument with respect to vowel and consonant perception is that consonants and vowels are perceived differently, with consonants being perceived categorically and vowels being perceived continuously (Strange, 1995). In addition, the perception of a foreign accent depends on both segmental and suprasegmental elements of language (Flege, 1995). Segmental elements generally refer to elements of speech that are detectable at the phone level and suprasegmental elements refer to elements that go beyond segments, such as intonation (Crystal, 2008). Consequently, any account of accent can be better conceived of if both of these elements are examined in a study. In conducting such a study, some variables that need to be considered include: (a) vowel production/perception, (b) consonant production/perception, (c) perceived intelligibility of the speech, (d) perceived accent, (e) perceived accent and intelligibility at different phonological levels including words, sentences, and passages; and (f) the visible face of the speaker, which provides information about a specific extra-linguistic factor. In designing this research, I originally had wanted to consider all of these variables;

however, due to the conceptualization of this research in terms of perception (as opposed to production) of accent, I decided to explore accent at its suprasegmental level. I will elaborate on this in Chapter 3. Another factor that researchers have examined in studies of foreign accent is the length of residency in an L2 context.

A number of studies suggest that there is a relationship between the length of residency in an L2 context and language acquisition (e.g. Flege, 1995; Yamada, 1995), while other studies suggest that residency is not a significant determinant of L2 accent (e.g. Piske, Mackay, & Flege, 2001; Munro & Bohn, 2007). However, one possible conclusion from reports that length of residency influences the acquisition of L2 accent and pronunciation is that these elements of the L2 are probably acquired at later stages of L2 development. Considering the idea that there is a positive relationship between L2 proficiency and L2 accent and intelligibility, it stands to reason that examining advanced L2 speakers could help to understand the socio-psychological factors affecting their accents. That is, expecting an advanced group of L2 speakers to have had the opportunity to develop L2 accents like those of native speakers, as well as higher intelligibility, is realistic. Explaining this expectation, when an L2 speaker reaches a high level of language proficiency in the target language, they may be involved in more communities of practices, and consequently, their L2 accents may be influenced by increased phonological exposure.

Given that the degree an L2 speaker wishes to sound similar to, or different from, a community may be revealed in accent similarities to those of the community members, it is important to understand L2 speakers' perceptions of their L2s, their (perceived) intelligibility, their (perceived) accents, and their identities. This is particularly true in high-stakes social contexts such as those faced by ITAs.

International Teaching Assistants

Over the past few decades, concerns regarding the use of ITAs in undergraduate classes have been raised across North America (Bresnahan et al., 2002). In general, three issues have been articulated, relating to ITAs' (1) cultural skills, (2) teaching skills, and (3) language skills (e.g. Anderson-Hsieh, 1990; Boyd, 1989; Crumley, 2010; Fox & Gay, 1994). In the following sections, I will discuss each of these issues separately. Although these three issues will be separated for discussion, one might argue that they are all inter-connected. For example, the use of appropriate language for instruction can be both a language-related element and a culture-related element; yet, together they can promote effective instruction. In the following sections, I will first briefly discuss cultural skills and teaching skills, followed by a more elaborate discussion on language and pronunciation skills. In each section, I will restrict my analysis to the role of accent and intelligibility on each of these issues.

Cultural skills. Cultural awareness on the part of ITAs, as well as on the part of undergraduate students, can help in bridging the gap between ITAs and L1-speaking undergraduate students. Those ITAs who were assigned to tutors (who provided them with cultural information along with other instructional assistance, such as pronunciation training) were reported to have achieved higher intelligibility ratings and to have scored higher on specific oral proficiency tests such as SPEAK, TEACH, and IDEA (Stevens, 1989)[7]. On the other hand, providing cultural sensitization information to L1-speaking undergraduate students can enable them to recognize the benefits of having ITAs as their instructors and teaching assistants (Rubin,

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[7] SPEAK (Speaking Proficiency English Assessment Kit), TEACH (Taped Evaluation of Assistants' Classroom Handling), and IDEA (Instructional Development and Effectiveness Assessment) are tests used by many American universities to validate international graduate students' qualifications for teaching undergraduate courses or becoming teaching assistants or, in brief, becoming ITAs (Stevens, 1989).

1992). Altogether, if ITAs have awareness of the host culture and undergraduate students have intercultural awareness, effective intercultural communication between them is more likely (Fox & Gay, 1994; Myles & Cheng, 2003), creating a more open-minded atmosphere for learning.

Teaching skills. Another aspect frequently articulated as a major area of concern in using ITAs is teaching skill. Basically, ITAs are hired for teaching purposes, yet the nature of their work responsibilities may depend on their positions. For example, being responsible for teaching an entire course demands different skills and instructor-student relationships compared with, for example, teaching the laboratory component of a course taught by another instructor, or teaching as a one-on-one tutor.

Boyd (1989) recommended changing our perspectives of ITAs from temporary employees to future academic leaders. In doing so, she concluded, we need to provide ITAs with a set of tools to find their own professional solutions to problems. Knowing about ITAs' personal goals and helping them set social goals are other recommendations for success and, accordingly, the success of instructional delivery at our universities (Smith & Simpson, 1993). Providing ITAs with effective ways of developing their own teaching skills, including continuous use of the same ITAs (Fox & Gay, 1994) and providing them with professional development opportunities, can benefit both ITAs and university undergraduate courses.

Language skills. Serving on different committees at the University of Manitoba as the graduate students' representative has taught me that "language" (referring to language proficiency in English) is a common concern of many educators and administrators when talking about ESL-speaking students. Similarly, the language proficiency of ITAs is one of the major concerns in their use (Fox & Gay, 1994). This has led to a number of recommendations. For example, Fox and Gay (1994) recommended giving ITAs language proficiency tests before

assigning them positions. Jenkins (2000), in examining the relationship between ITAs and faculty members, noticed a disparity between ITAs' and faculty members' perceptions of appropriate communication behaviours. She recommended having preparation courses for ITAs that emphasize communication strategies. One of the most frequently articulated and researched, yet controversial, concerns about using ITAs is their English pronunciation skill.

Pronunciation and accent are attributive to intelligibility, which is an identified problem in using ITAs (Li et al., 2011) and has been the subject of substantial research. However, as early as 1990, Anderson-Hsieh (1990) noticed a shift away from placing high importance on pronunciation; that is, she argued that there has been a move away from teaching ITAs about the segmental elements of pronunciation to teaching them the suprasegmental elements. However, finding the proper place for discussing the importance of pronunciation in conversations on ITAs is perceived as challenging (Anderson-Hsieh, 1990). For example, regardless of clarity and communication, simple, inappropriate tone choices by ITAs can be [mis]judged as a negative personality issue rather than a lack of language proficiency (Pickering, 2001; see also Bresnahan et al., 2002; Cargile & Giles, 1998). Fortunately, in order to counter this, ITAs can be taught pronunciation elements including segmental elements (Stevens, 1989) and suprasegmental elements (Anderson-Hsieh, 1990; Pickering, 2001). In order to do so most effectively, we need to know what areas of pronunciation are most challenging in terms of intelligibility and communication between ITAs and L1-speaking undergraduate students. The intelligibility of ITAs also seems to influence listeners' perceptions of accent. Bresnahan et al. (2002) found that foreign accents that were perceived as more intelligible were also perceived as more positive compared to unintelligible foreign accents.

The accent of ITAs has direct effects on education; as effective teaching, in many circumstances, depends on effective oral communication, which in turn is related to accent and intelligibility. Hahn (2004) noticed that correct placement of primary stress in sentences not only helps English listeners to perceive what is said, but also aids content retention.

While clear pronunciation is reported as a major challenge in the teaching practices of ITAs (Li et al., 2011), clear speech may not merely be the function of linguistic elements at the segmental and suprasegmental levels. Tyler (1992) found that discourse patterns, which are effective in listeners' perception of speech, may be different between American L1 speakers of English and ESL speakers, meaning that an examination of genre, sentence structure and other elements is also warranted.

Another important factor related to accent and intelligibility is that they are mainly perceptual, and significantly depend on listener judgement. Bresnahan et al. (2002), in defining *intelligibility* as the overall rate of understandability of a person, reported that L1 speakers of American English with high-status ethnic identities found L1 American accents to be "more dynamic" and "higher in status" (p. 179) than other accents in English. This was not found in groups with lower status ethnic identities. However, examining studies such as this, researchers need to be aware that defining intelligibility in this way holds the speaker accountable for something done mainly by the listener. This expectation empowers the listener over the speaker. As mentioned in Bresnahan et al. (2002), accent and intelligibility can be judged in terms of their similarity with what the listener perceives as intelligible and clear. If accent and intelligibility (perceptions) depend on the listeners' perceptions, then research on accent and intelligibility should consider listeners' perceptions. For example, in Rubin (1992), she played the same recorded message with pictures of two different individuals to two groups of participants. Then,

the participants took a comprehension quiz. The listeners' performance on the follow-up quiz changed. I will summarize Rubin's (1992) work in the section on accent and intelligibility perception.

Several scholars have called for further explorations of ITA issues (e.g. Byrnes, 2001; Hahn, 2004). Byrnes (2005) recommends conducting further research to help ITAs develop their instructional delivery and professionalism. Hahn (2004) argues that research on ITAs' pronunciation can help us learn about language comprehension as well as provide important information about the challenges facing ESL speakers working in orally-demanding professions. Examining how much L2 speakers' accent and intelligibility are attributable to actual linguistic features or assigned identities may help in unveiling the unbalanced challenges that these individuals face in different aspects of their lives. If professions play a major role on English language speakers' identity construction (MacKinnon & Heise, 2010), if accent and intelligibility play a major role in the professional development of ITAs (Li et al., 2011), and if the future (professional) identities of L2 learners and speakers can contribute significantly to their motivation for learning the L2 (Norton, 2000, 2013), then examining the relationship between ITAs' identity, accent, and intelligibility issues can help us learn about the network of factors affecting L2 speakers' identity construction and motivation for learning a second language.

Accent and Intelligibility Perception

One final factor to be considered in L2 accent and intelligibility perception, specifically in the case of ITAs, is listeners' experiences with different accents. Listeners' backgrounds and experiences can affect their perceptions of a speaker's intelligibility and accent. Ikeno and Hansen (2007) examined how listeners' accent backgrounds affect their perceptions of accents. They found that that the listeners' accent background can influence their perceptions. Rubin and

Smith (1990) reported similar findings, and recommended educating undergraduate students about different accents to help them understand and communicate with ITAs more effectively. They believed that such an effort is more productive than focusing on modifying ITAs' accents to the host community's norms. In a ground-breaking study connecting accent and intelligibility to race, Rubin (1992) explored how listeners' perceptions of a speaker's ethnicity influences their perceptions of their accent and intelligibility. She presented a passage to two groups of undergraduate students. While a passage of speech was being played, each group saw one of two images: "a Caucasian or an Asian (Chinese) woman" (Rubin, 1992, p. 514). In this document I have used the term *Caucasian* to refer to someone with a European (white) background[8]. The two women in the pictures were dressed similarly and measures were taken to make sure other variables stayed constant. The actual recording was done by a single speaker reading text on a science topic adapted from the *New York Times*. After the participants listened to the recordings, a comprehension quiz was administered. Participants who saw the Caucasian image performed better in the quiz. This shows how the listener's perception of a speaker can influence their understanding. Perception of speech is managed by listeners. The more *experience* and *familiarity* a listener has with the speaker's speech patterns, the better is their comprehension. Therefore, research on intelligibility and accent in ITAs should also consider the perceptions, ideas, and backgrounds of their students.

Research Problematization

To have a better understanding of the role of accent and intelligibility on ITAs' communication, it is best to include both speakers and listeners in the investigation. Li et al.

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[8] Instead of "Caucasian", some people might prefer "white" or "European".

(2011), for example, recommended exploring the role of interactions between students and ITAs on the ITAs' teaching quality. As I discussed previously, parts of identities are shaped through communications with other people. Therefore, by examining identity development as related to accent and intelligibility using a mixed methods design, we can learn about L2 identity development while providing evidence for linguistic and non-linguistic factors affecting ITAs' accent and intelligibility. It is recommended that research on ITA speech clarity considers the suprasegmental elements of speech (Williams, 1992). This is necessary, as much of the actual communications between ITAs and students occur at the suprasegmental level, which includes linguistic chunks larger than words.

Studies on ITA accent and intelligibility have the potential to help ITAs improve their speech intelligibility (Anderson-Hsieh, 1990). This, in turn, may improve their instructional delivery, their communications with their students, and the processing and retention of information in L1 undergraduate students (Hahn, 2004). Additionally, and like Rubin (1992), through the use of my mixed methods design I intended to covertly investigate issues of discrimination and stereotyping, both of which are essential in understanding cultural or culture-related topics (Myles & Cheng, 2003). Given that undergraduate students' perspectives of ITAs stem more from their own backgrounds than from those of the ITAs (Plakans, 1997), it is clear that stereotyping can influence students' perceptions of ITA accent and intelligibility, and thus indirectly affect instruction and learning. Rubin (1992) went so far as to propose that educating undergraduate students in cultural sensitivity and accent identification is more useful than attempting accent reduction in ITAs. Rubin (1992) also called for research on undergraduates' perceptions of "non-Asian" ITAs (p. 529). She pointed out that her ITA research participant pool was limited to individuals from Southeast Asia. However, she anticipated that the findings of her

study were not applicable to "more Western" instructors, such as "instructors from France or Germany" (p. 529).

Based on all of the above considerations, I formulated the following research question to be addressed in this study (as discussed previously):

How are accent, intelligibility, and identity in English as a second language (English L2) speakers related in the case of international teaching assistants in Canada?

The following sub-questions were formulated to provide information that will inform the main research question.

1. What are L2-speaking ITAs' experiences with accent and intelligibility in their teaching practices in English? This question will be answered using semi-structured interviews (see Figure 4 on page 52, qualitative strand).

2. How do L2 speakers describe their experiences with identity construction in English? Similar to the first sub-question, this question will be answered using semi-structured interviews (see Figure 4 on page 52, qualitative strand).

3. How do L1-speaking students describe their experiences with ITAs' accent and intelligibility? This question will be answered through interviews with L1-speaking students who have taken classes with L2-speaking instructors and ITAs. (See Embedded Study 2 on the overarching schematic representation of the research, Figure 4 on page 52).

4. How do L1 speakers rate the accent and intelligibility of recordings of L1 and L2 speakers of English? Does the perceived ethnicity of the speaker affect the L1 speakers' judgements of accent and intelligibility? Because these two questions are related, I decided to consider them under one sub-question. They will be answered using both the quantitative strand

of the study and the Embedded Study 2 section of the schematic representation in Figure 4 on page 52.

     5. How do individual ESL speakers' histories with additional language learning affect their identity, accent and intelligibility? This research question will be answered using the language history analysis (see the Embedded Study 1 section in Figure 4 on page 52). I will first answer the research sub-questions. Then, after combining their findings, an answer to the main research question will be suggested.

     The context of exploration is a Canadian context. By using a Canadian context for the research, I hope the findings will have some context-dependent pedagogical implications for universities and colleges in North America.

Positionality

     I am a multilingual Iranian national who lives and studies in Canada. From 2011 to 2016, I worked as a writing tutor at the Academic Learning Centre at the University of Manitoba. I have advised students from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. I have also taught a number of courses in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. So, personally, I can relate to the issues concerning ITAs. One of my hopes in conducting this study was to reflect on my knowledge and experience as an ITA, and bring to the surface that which is not so welcome in many academic settings; that is, the positionality of ITAs and any possible challenges they need to tackle. Challenges include, but are not limited to (a) obtaining teaching positions, (b) succeeding as ITAs, and (c) developing their professional identities. Professional identity can be considered as a smaller segment of social identity. Professional identity requires a more limited number of groups and individuals for its construction.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that, for me, the idea of accent has been brought up hundreds of times. I am from a small town in Iran named Shahrekord. The town is surrounded by mountains, making access difficult. This is probably why we have formed a unique Persian/Farsi accent. When I speak Persian with people from other areas, they almost always ask me where my accent is from. I have been asked the same question in English as well. I always think having a unique and non-dominant accent in Persian and English may show that I belong to certain groups. It may seem a good thing to be unique, but in reality, nothing is simple. My accent can determine whether I am judged as an insider or an outsider, meaning how much other group members can trust me. I believe this is a bias in my research. I hope to take measures to ensure that my biases do not interfere with the research findings even while my experiences inform the research. Reminding myself of my background, as I did in this section, is one of those measures. Another step was to use a convergent design and see how much the data from different strands converges to give holistic credibility to the research, which I will explain in Chapter 3.

Theoretical framework. The major theoretical framework for this study is *social identity theory* (Hogg, 2016; MacKinnon & Heise, 2010; Martiny & Rubin, 2016; Tajfel, 1969, 1974), which is the understanding that individuals acquire identities as they learn languages and as they participate in social groups. Examining social groups' roles in the identity construction of ESL speakers can also benefit from the concept of *communities of practice* (Lave & Wenger 1991; Wenger, 1998), allowing us latitude to examine "achieved," "assigned" (Kouritzin, 2016, pp. 4-5) and "ascribed" identities (Blommaert, 2006, p. 238). Additionally, part of my theoretical framework is that accent and intelligibility are affected by perceptions of *who* is speaking; that listeners' perceptions of a speaker's accent and intelligibility influence the perceived identity of the speaker. This part is inspired by the work of Rubin (1992).

Analytical framework. For the qualitative data analysis, I started with an on-going iterative analysis of data from interviews with participants, in order to understand the essence of their experiences (Merriam, 2001). This included finding and classifying recurring ideas into codes, then identifying common themes emerging from them and categorizing them for representation (Creswell, 2013). Social constructivism, in its general sense—where knowledge is perceived as being constructed while people communicate with each other, was used as the guiding interpretative framework for the study (Schwandt, 2003). In the interpretation of the qualitative data, the inductive approach of Srivastava and Hopwood (2009) was used, which I explain further in Chapter 4.

For the mixed methods interpretation, I used the Foucauldian concept of discourse in relation to power and subjectivity to guide me in interpreting the results (Foucault, 1966; 1970; McHoul & Grace, 1993). In examining an event, we need to examine the historical context the event is situated in, and the backgrounds we bring to the context that affect our interpretation of it (Piquemal & Kouritzin, 2009). The resulting *constructed truth*, therefore, is the outcome of multiple variables that are set in a certain relationship together, resulting the interpretation of an event (Foucault, 1966; 1970; McHoul, & Grace, 1993). To that end, constructivism also guides the interpretation of the findings, where knowledge, here referring to ESL speakers' identities and accents, is constructed in collaboration with others (e.g. Foucault, 1970; Guba & Lincoln 2005; McHoul & Grace, 1993). Additionally, intersectionality is used to explain how different factors can and do influence the experiences of second language speaking educators in constructing their identities, communicating with other speakers, and informing their educational practices (Anthias, 2013; Grant & Zwier, 2011; Hankivsky, 2014).

I agree with mixed methods researchers that using a mixed methods design can help in better understanding the phenomenon under investigation (Greene, 2007; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007; Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007). I have also argued for adapting more multidisciplinary approaches in the study of language acquisition (Rahimian, 2013). Answering this call by using a mixed methods design, I hope to gain a better understanding of the construction of identity, accent, and intelligibility in ESL speakers.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter describes the research methodology employed in this study. After a brief explanation of the method, a description of the research participants is presented. Following that, each phase of the study will be explained, including the quantitative and qualitative strands and a number of embedded studies. Finally, I will discuss and present the analyses applied to the collected data. As this study uses a mixed methods research design, the analysis section describes separate quantitative and qualitative analyses, as well as a final mixed methods analysis.

Using Creswell and Plano Clark's (2011) classification, the design of this study can be called an *embedded convergent mixed methods* research design. In a convergent mixed methods study, the researcher collects data qualitatively and quantitatively, and later combines the findings for analysis and interprets them together. In a convergent mixed method design (also known as a *parallel study*; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998), data is collected in two *strands* that complement each other. This way, a better description of the phenomenon under investigation is achieved (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Embedded components in mixed methods designs are used for the purpose of enhancing a "quantitative or qualitative design" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 92). Therefore, in this study, the embedded components (which are smaller studies) were used to enhance the qualitative strand (see Figure 4, page 52). I will explain each strand and the embedded components in the following section of this document. A schematic representation of the entire study design is presented in Figure 4 on page 52. Explanation of the participants and other elements of the methodology will follow. One note to make here is that I used the terminology suggested by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) in naming different components of the study, including *strands* and *embedded studies*.

This convergent mixed methods research design had two major strands: qualitative and quantitative. The *qualitative strand* had two embedded studies named *Embedded Study 1* and *Embedded Study 2*. In the qualitative strand, ten ITAs were interviewed to learn about their experiences with identity development in Canada and how they perceive the relationship between accent, intelligibility and their teaching practices. These participants also read aloud a set of sentences (Appendix 1 from Bent, Bradlow & Smith, 2007), a passage of text (Appendix 6 from Fairbanks, 1960), and talked about a course they wished to teach. In addition to the ten ITAs (who were ESL speakers), five L1 speakers were recruited as research participants. These L1 speakers were asked to read aloud the same set of sentences and passage of text. These readings were then used in the quantitative strand; five L1 speakers with experience in taking courses with ITAs were asked to rate the intelligibility and accent of the recorded readings. These five raters were different from the five L1-speaking participants. There were also two embedded studies in the qualitative strand. The *Embedded Study 1* included a language history evaluation of the ITAs. The *Embedded Study 2* included interviews with the L1 speakers who rated the recordings about their rating criteria and experiences with ITAs. I will explain the research design in more detail in the following sections. Figure 4 is a schematic representation of the entire mixed methods research design, as is recommended to help readers understand the research process (Creswell, 2013, 2014; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).
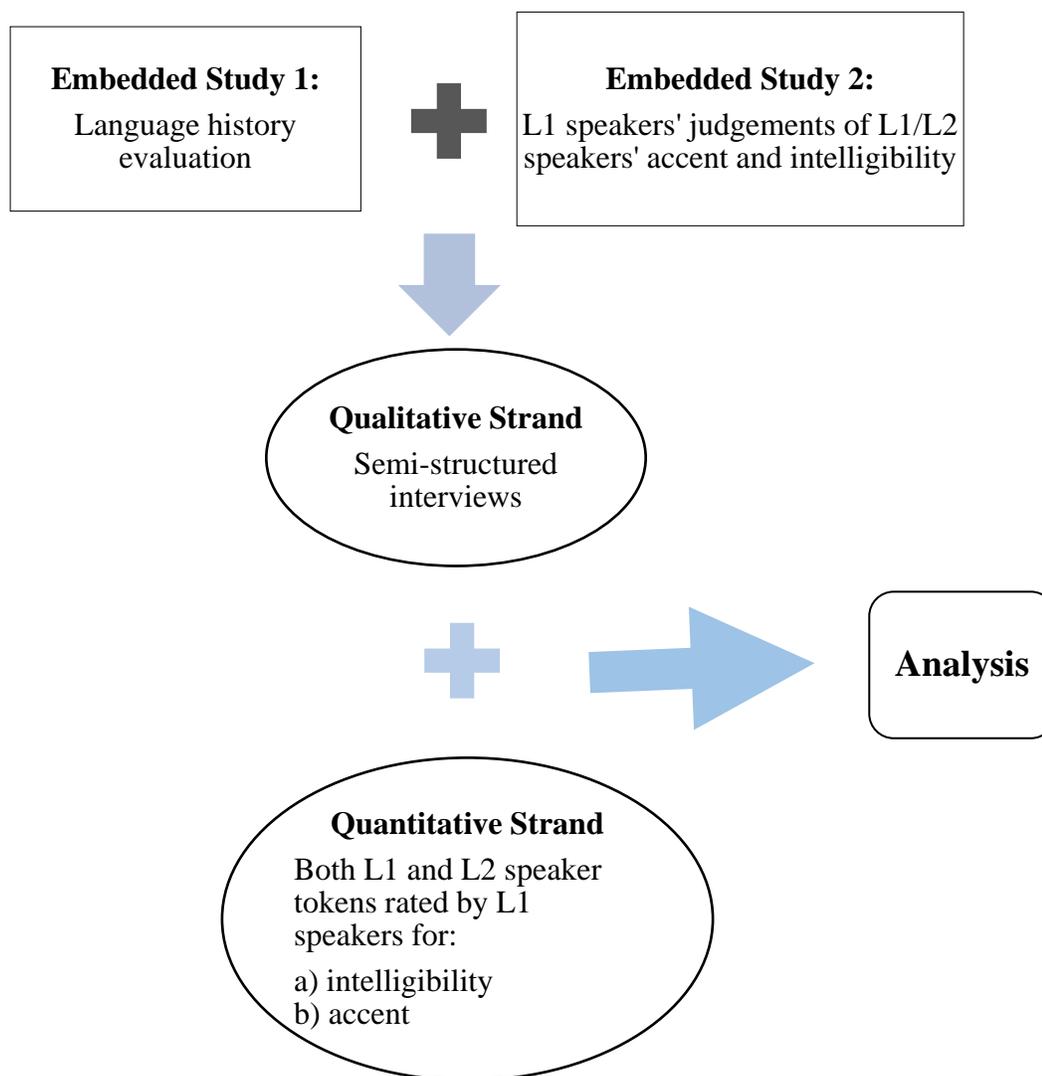
Figure 4. Schematic representation of the research design.

Participants

After obtaining approval from the University of Manitoba Education/Nursing Research

Ethics Board, posters were installed in various locations at a university in a prairie province in

Canada to recruit participants. Two groups of participants were recruited. Group 1 included ten

L2 speakers of English and five L1 speakers of Canadian English with Caucasian backgrounds who were born and raised in the Prairie Provinces of Canada. Because I intended to address ITA accent and intelligibility issues, all participants in Group 1 needed to have had at least one academic term of experience working as a teaching assistant (TA) or instructor at the university level. Group 2 contained five L1 speakers of Canadian English who had taken at least one class with an ITA. The total number of participants was 20. Figure 5 summarizes the participants used for this research. I will elaborate on some of the participants' qualifications in the following paragraphs.

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                    ┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
                    │  Research Participants (n = 20)      │
                    └─────────────────────────────────────┘
                    ┌──────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────┐
                    │  Group 1 (n = 15)     │   │  Group 2 (n = 5)      │
                    │  Had experience in    │   │  Had taken courses    │
                    │  teaching or as a TA  │   │  with ITAs            │
                    └──────────────────────┘   └──────────────────────┘
        ┌────────────────┐  ┌────────────────┐  ┌────────────────┐
        │ (A) Ten L2      │  │ (B) Five L1    │  │ (C) Five L1    │
        │ speakers of     │  │ speakers of    │  │ speakers of    │
        │ English         │  │ English        │  │ English        │
        └────────────────┘  └────────────────┘  └────────────────┘
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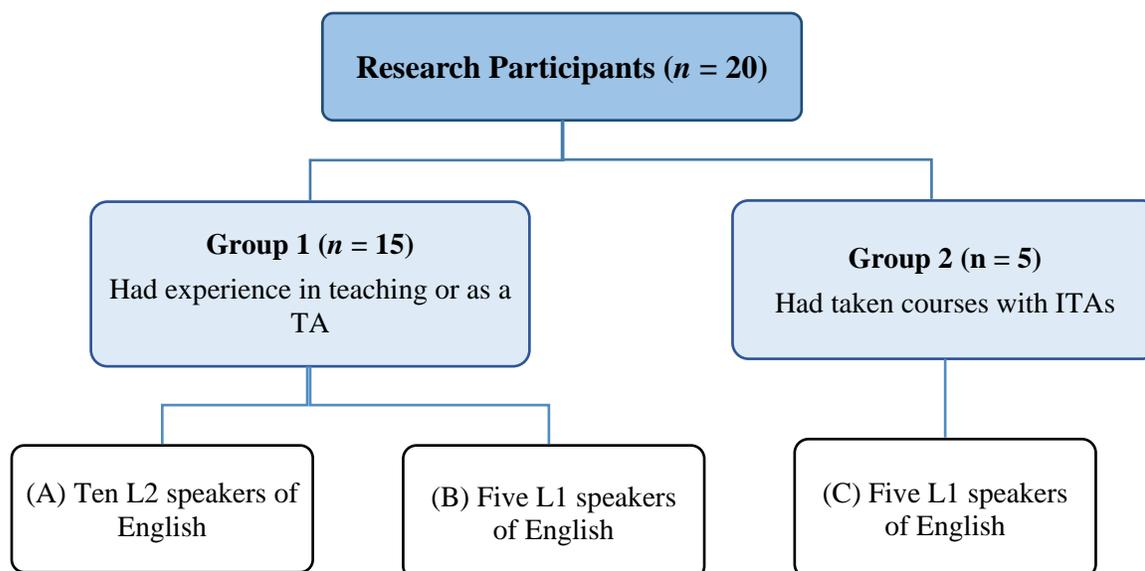
Figure 5. Participants recruited for the research.

(A) Ten L2 speakers of English. The L2-speaker ITAs were advanced speakers of English based on their self-declared proficiency levels. A certain English proficiency level was

also a pre-requisite for the admission of ESL speakers to graduate programs[9]. These participants

were interviewed about their identities and their perceptions of their accents and intelligibility in

their L2 (that is, English). The interviews were recorded and later transcribed verbatim. All the

participants in Group 1, both L2 and L1 speakers, were asked to read different sets of sentences

and a small passage in English. Some of the sentences included a specific focal word that was

intended to be rated by another group of participants; the sentences were edited to isolate the

word. Other sentences were commonly-used English sentences used in previous linguistic

experiments. The participants were also asked to present a 1 – 2 minute talk on a course they

would like to teach and their reasons why. This data was intended to represent some spontaneous

samples of their formal academic speech. Their readings were audio-recorded and edited, then

played for the other group of participants for rating. The idea was to ask the other group of

participants to rate all of these tokens for intelligibility and accent. The original tokens included

(a) a set of words, (b) a set of sentences, (c) a scripted passage, and (d) a spontaneous passage.

The recordings took place in a quiet classroom.

    (B) Five L1 speakers of English. These participants had experience in teaching a course

or being a TA for a course. They were asked to read the same sentences and passage that the L2-

speaker participants read and take one to two minutes to talk about a course they would like to

teach.

    Originally, the idea was to ask the final group of participants to rate all the recordings for

intelligibility and accent. However, after collecting the recordings and parsing the words out, it

seemed unnatural and unrealistic to ask raters to rate singled-out words. To test the plausibility of

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[9] Two common examples are IELTS and TOEFL

using such tokens in a rating test, a pilot mini-survey was created, which included some word tokens and some sentence tokens. I requested a few volunteers to go through the pilot mini-survey to rate words and sentences. The total number of items in this pilot survey was 24. After completing the pilot study ratings, I asked each volunteer about their idea of the survey itself. They said that having a context (referring to having sentences) would provide them with a better ability to provide ratings. Therefore, I decided to include only sentences and passages to be rated, and exclude single words. The fact that I was interested in evaluating accent and intelligibility as perceived constructs was another reason to include only sentences and passages[10]. Therefore, in consultation with two committee members, including my advisor, I made the decision to provide only sentences and passages for rating. In addition, I had collected four separate lists of sentences that the first group of participants had read. Two lists out of four were selected to be used in the final ratings. These lists were adapted from Bent, Bradlow, and Smith (2007) and are provided in Appendix 1. This left 480 sentences to be rated by each participant in the last group, plus 15 scripted and 15 unscripted passages.

 (C) Five L1 speakers of English. These participants were Caucasian L1 speakers of English who had experience taking courses with ITAs. They are referred to as *raters* because they rated recorded material for accent and intelligibility. This group was also interviewed about their experiences taking courses with ITAs.

ISpring QuizMaker software was used to create the surveys, including the sentences and passages to be rated for intelligibility and accent by the last group of participants (ISpring, 2014). Each token was rated on a Likert scale of 1-5. Five (5) represented *not foreign-accented at all*

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[10] The raters group in the main study were different from the raters group in the pilot study.

and 1 represented *very foreign-accented*. Similarly, for intelligibility, 1 represented *very unintelligible* and 5 represented *very intelligible*. Different ratings and rating scales have been used for rating the accents of L2 speakers (Piske, Mackay, & Flege, 2001). Although Southwood and Flege (1999) suggested that a nine- or eleven-point scale may better discriminate L2 accents; following consultation with Dr. Hagiwara (the external committee member from the Department of Linguistics), a five-point scale was adopted for two main reasons. First, as Southwood and Flege (1999) suggested, establishing inter-rater reliability on a nine- or eleven-point rating scale is very difficult. The other reason is that for categorization purposes, a five-point scale is more manageable. Additionally, a five-point rating scale still provides "a distribution resembling a normal distribution" (Likert, 1932, p. 21). Therefore, a five-point scale was used for rating in this study.

After the five L1-speaking raters rated the sentences and the scripted passage, known as *The Rainbow Passage* (Fairbanks, 1960); they were interviewed about their experiences of taking courses with ITAs. This was followed by playing spontaneous passages for them one at a time and asking them to: (a) rate the speaker for intelligibility and accent, and (b) describe their impressions of the speaker and how they would feel about taking a course with them. I will refer to this spontaneous passage as the *teaching interest talk*. The recordings were rated by the L1-speaking raters for (a) intelligibility and (b) accent to determine any possible differences between the L1 and L2 speakers.

To summarize, I recruited two groups of participants to perform certain tasks. Group 1 (as illustrated in Figure 5 above) consisted of ten L2 and five L1 speakers of English who spoke some sentences and passages in English. The L2 speakers were also interviewed. Group 2 consisted of five L1 speakers of English who rated the sentences and passages. These L1

speakers were interviewed about their experiences of taking courses with ITAs. The five English L1-speaker raters were different from the five English L1-speaker participants. In the following section, I will explain each sub-study, or embedded component, of the research in more detail, along with a representation of the sub-question(s) intended to be answered by each one.

Qualitative Strand

The qualitative strand included two sections: (1) a bigger qualitative study designed to explore L2 speakers' perceptions of their L2 accent and intelligibility, and their identities; and (2) two embedded studies exploring participants' language histories and raters' articulated reasons for assigning identities (their impressions) to different speakers. The first and second research sub-questions were: (1) What are L2-speaking ITAs' experiences with accent and intelligibility in their teaching practices in English? (2) How do L2 speakers describe their experiences with their identity construction in English? To answer these, a qualitative study was conducted using interviews. Interviews are commonly used in qualitative research to investigate participants' experiences and obtain insights into the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2007, 2013). The interview questions developed for this section are presented in Appendix 2. Each participant was asked to participate in one to three interviews, with each lasting approximately one hour. I met with each participant at a place of mutual convenience, usually empty classrooms, for these interviews. The interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed by me. Transcription and its initial analysis was conducted after each interview. The transcripts were member-checked with the participants for accuracy (e.g. Creswell, 2013). Interviews were conducted with all of the L2-speaker participants. The L1-speaking raters were also interviewed to learn about their criteria for rating each participant.

In summary, the L2-speaker participants were required to participate in both the qualitative and quantitative strands. This inclusion of L2-speaker participants in both qualitative and quantitative data collection phases was intended to provide both qualitative and quantitative data for each individual participant to aid in learning about the issue under investigation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This data collection strategy was also intended to create a triangulation mechanism that would improve the credibility of the research (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991; Creswell, 2013). It has been argued that, if chosen as a credibility/validity tool, then triangulation is used with a positivist attitude to qualitative research because "[o]bjective reality can never be captured" and triangulation can only provide more information (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 5; Luyt, 2012); however, I decided to use triangulation with the justification that, at a minimum, it does not negatively influence research credibility.

Viewed through another lens, the *qualitative* strand could be classified as a case study, where the researcher employs a comprehensive approach to better understand a real-life case (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Yin, 2009). In this view, the cases to be studied were identity, accent, and intelligibility of international teaching assistants. The results of this section are discussed in Chapter 4. Following this explanation of the qualitative strand, I will next explain the embedded language history evaluation: Embedded Study 1.

Embedded Study 1. In addition to the interviews, an assessment of the L2-speaker participants' language histories was conducted. These language histories were used to answer the fifth research sub-question: How do individuals' histories with additional language learning affect their identity, accent, and intelligibility in an ESL? To evaluate the language histories of the participants, Sereno and Wang's (2007) language history index was adopted. A summary of the information collected is presented in Table 1. A difference between this language history

evaluation questionnaire and the one used by Sereno and Wang is that I asked some additional

questions to collect more data. Additionally, for the purpose of language histories, L2 speakers

were asked to rate themselves on some features, as summarized in Table 1 in Chapter 4. The

results are discussed in Chapter 4.

Embedded Study 2. In the Embedded Study 2, the L1-speaking raters' ideas about

assigning language identities to people based on their appearance and accent were explored. This

study was designed to answer the third research sub-question: How do L1-speaker students

describe their experiences with ITAs' accent and intelligibility?

The interview questions for this section are summarized in Appendix 4 and Appendix 5.

To avoid task effects, interviews were conducted after the raters had rated the sentences and the

scripted passage[11] for the quantitative strand. I considered the possibilities that conducting the

interviews first could influence the ratings, and that by making ratings first, there could be a task

effect on the interviews. I justified doing the interviews after the ratings by arguing that raters

would then have a chance to reflect on their own performance and, hopefully, share their rating

experiences in the interviews. This would avoid me speculating on their rating experiences.

However, the *teaching interest talks*, in which the participants talked about a course they were

willing to teach and their reasons, were rated after the initial interview. After L1-speaking raters

were interviewed about their ideas about accent, intelligibility, assigning identity, and their

experience with ITAs, they listened to each *teaching interest talk* and rated it for intelligibility

and accent. This was followed by a short interview addressing their impressions about each

speaker's possible qualifications as a TA or instructor. The interview questions for this section

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[11] *The Rainbow Passage*

are presented in Appendix 5. The idea was to find out how L1 speakers perceive different accents. Based on the answers provided in each interview, the follow-up questions were slightly modified to fit the specific context of each interview. Embedded Study 2 is the main focus of Chapter 5.

Quantitative Strand

The quantitative strand was designed to answer the fourth research sub-question which has two parts: (1) How do L1 speakers rate the accent and intelligibility of the recorded material obtained from L1 and L2 speakers of English? (2) Does the perceived ethnicity of the speaker affect the L1 speakers' judgements of accent and intelligibility?

For the quantitative strand, data was first collected from the first group of participants, including ten L2 speakers and five L1 speakers of English, and later analysed by the second group of participants, including five L1 speakers of English different from the five L1 speakers in Group 1. As a reminder, the first group of participants (Group 1 in Figure 5 on page 53), were ten L2 speakers of English and five L1 speakers of English. They all had some teaching experience as TAs or instructors. The data collection consisted of digital recordings of participants read a list of sentences and a passage, and the *teaching interest talk*. These recordings were later rated by a second group of L1 speakers of Canadian English (Group 2 in Figure 5 on page 53) for two features: intelligibility and accent. These raters/judges did not have specific linguistic knowledge, rather, they were ordinary university students with no knowledge of linguistics, but had taken at least one class with an ITA.

Material. At the end of the quantitative phase, the selected data were at two levels: sentence and passage. There were two passages: one of them was adapted from another source that is a standard passage used in linguistics called *The Rainbow Passage*. The other was

produced by the participants in the form of a presentation. As I discussed previously in Chapter

2, foreign accent perceptions depend on both *segmental* and *suprasegmental* elements of speech

(Flege, 1995). However, as I explained earlier in this chapter, my intention in this research was

to examine intelligibility and accent as they are perceived. For that reason, I decided to

approximate the experiments to real-life experiences; therefore, I considered discourse levels of

intelligibility and accent, meaning a focus on sentences and passages. The sentences that the first

group of participants was required to read were adapted from Bent, Bradlow, and Smith (2007)

and are available in Appendix 1. The passage they read, which was recorded and later rated for

intelligibility and accent, was from Fairbanks (1960) and named *The Rainbow Passage* (see

Appendix 6). All the recordings were done using a digital recorder in a quiet room. Each

participant read the material while I was present so I was able to provide clarification if needed.

The recorded materials were later separated into single sentences and passages that could be

played individually. For the spontaneous passage, participants presented a one-to-two minute

talk about a course they would like to teach and why. Participants were asked to give the

presentation for the general audience. The presentations were also audio-recorded in a quiet

room.

Ratings. Ratings were done by the second group of participants (Group 2 in Figure 5 on

page 53), which was comprised of five L1 speakers of Canadian English. There were three

female and two male participants, all born and raised in Manitoba or other Prairie Provinces in

Canada. To examine extra-linguistic effects on intelligibility and accent perception, photographs

associated with each voice were shown to the raters while they listened to the sentences. These

photographs were then changed half-way through the survey. These photos matched the gender

of the speakers; however, none of them were of the actual participants. Rather, they were

obtained from public domains. In the first half of the survey, the pictures accompanying the readings were of Caucasian individuals for the L1 speakers' recordings and visible minorities for the L2 speakers' recordings. For the second half of the survey, the picture association was reversed: Caucasian pictures accompanied L2 speakers' recordings and visible minority pictures accompanied L1 speakers' recordings. I was interested in seeing how much extra-linguistic factors, such as the perceived ethnicity of the speaker, might affected the raters' perception of intelligibility and accent. To recap, there were 32 sentences read by ten L2 speakers and five L1 speakers, adding up to a total of 480 prompts. To provide the raters with a feeling for the survey, I read two sentences and recorded myself and used these two sentences at the beginning. These two sentences were "This is a test" and "This is another test". Then the raters would continue rating the next 240 items for intelligibility and accent. This was followed by a prompt informing them that they were half-way through the survey and could take a break if they wished to. After that, they would hear the rest of the sentences.

While some resemblances to the methods employed in Rubin's (1992) study may be noted, this study is significantly different in terms of complexity. Rubin (1992) presented a passage recorded by a single speaker reading text on a science topic adopted from the *New York Times* to two groups of undergraduate students while showing them a picture of either "a Caucasian or an Asian (Chinese) woman" (Rubin, 1992, p. 514). After the participants listened to the recordings, a comprehension quiz was administered, and the students' perceptions of the speaker's accent were evaluated. The present study had additional complexity due to the use of one group of participants as readers and a second group of participants as raters. I also altered the material to be rated, adding sentences and a presentation. Further complexity was added by showing pictures of visible minorities when second-language speakers spoke and pictures of

Caucasian individuals when first-language speakers spoke, then reversing these combinations half-way through.

During ratings, I did not disclose the professions of the speakers to the L1-speaking raters. The idea was that the perception of somebody's profession might influence the identity assigned to them, which could be a professional identity (MacKinnon & Heise, 2010). For example, if a rater's expectation was that an ITA should sound very intelligible, then the rater might be harsher in rating if their expectations were not met. Therefore, to avoid biasing the raters while they were rating the sentences and *The Rainbow Passage*, I withheld information about the speakers' profession.

To summarize, because of the complexity of intelligibility and accent and their relationships with identity, a convergent mixed methods study was designed. This convergent mixed methods design allowed an in-depth exploration of the areas under investigation. There were two major strands of qualitative and quantitative research, with the qualitative strand having two embedded studies. I hoped that the complexity of the design would mirror the complexity of the phenomena. In the following three chapters, I will describe the findings of the qualitative (Chapter 4 and Chapter 5), quantitative (Chapter 6), and mixed methods studies (Chapter 7).

Chapter 4: Qualitative Findings – ITAs

In this chapter, I present the findings of the qualitative strand of the study. This chapter provides answers to the first, second, and fifth research sub-questions. What are L2-speaking ITAs' experiences with accent and intelligibility in their teaching practices in English? How do L2 speakers describe their experiences with their identity construction in English? And: How do individual ESL speakers' histories with additional language learning affect their identity, accent and intelligibility? First, I will explain the qualitative data analysis. Then, I provide an overview and introduction to one group of participants; Section A of Group 1 (Figure 5 on page 53), who were second-language (L2) speakers of English and who had various instructional roles in Canada. The findings, presented next, are emergent themes related to participants' ideas about identity, accent, and intelligibility, and the relationships between them.

Qualitative Strand Findings and Analysis

My analysis of interview transcripts can best be categorized as a structural coding analysis. In this form of analysis, a *code* refers to symbols used to summarize and categorize data (Saldana, 2013). For each interview transcript excerpt, codes were used to earmark the gist of the meaning. Following Saldana (2013), these codes are then amalgamated in groups, and categorized based on their general themes, or the themes a researcher perceives in them. I had some themes in mind when I developed my research proposal, including interview questions for the qualitative components. Later, after reading the transcripts several times, and having a computer read the transcripts to me, I wrote notes on the themes. I coded one interview at a time, using the built-in highlighting tools in Microsoft Word. As I was going through the transcripts, I revisited the codes. Later, the codes were used to create categorical themes. These themes were used to answer my research questions.

To ensure a successive iterative manner of data analysis, I assigned codes to data for one section of the interview. Then, I continued coding the following sections while trying to compare and contrast the codes in the new sections with the old ones. This could lead to a number of results: assigning already-established codes to the new data, assigning new codes to them, or modifying a code so that it would include both ideas. Every time I assigned new codes, I followed up by looking for evidence of that code in the previously-coded data; and if such ideas were there, I coded them as well. The final assigned codes were later grouped together with similar codes to form emerging themes. Every time I had to modify a code so that it would fit both categories, I would go back to the coded data to ensure compatibility of the new code with previous codes. This inductive approach to data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), which is similar to an iterative framework (e.g., Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009), is illustrated in Figure 6.

Srivastava and Hopwood (2009) discuss using three major questions as the framework for data analysis. These questions are (1) "What are the data telling me?" (2) "What is it I want to know?" and (3) "What is the dialectical relationship between what the data are telling me and what I want to know?" (p. 78). In my analysis, I followed a similar framework by using coding to find out what the data was telling me. As I coded some portions of data, I developed a codebook, which in turn shaped what I wanted to know throughout the analysis. As I was moving from one interview to the next, I looked for the dialectical relationship between themes and new data. This iterative refining procedure continued until a coherent analysis was achieved. The way that the present research's analysis can be conceptualized is as follows. (A) An analytical review of the literature led to some conceptualizations of identity, communities of practice, and their relationships to intelligibility and accent in second language speech. This step can be viewed in terms of Question Two of Srivastava and Hopwood (2009), which is: "What is

it I want to know?" (p. 78). (B) Following the conceptualizations, a research design was formed, which included qualitative research. As part of the qualitative research, semi-structured interviews were planned with sets of questions designed to address the central phenomenon under investigation. (C) Following the interviews and their transcription, I analyzed the transcripts for emerging themes. This can be categorized under Question One of Srivastava and Hopwood's (2009) analytical review model, which is: "What are the data telling me?" (p. 78). (D) The emerged themes were revisited as more transcripts were analyzed. At this stage, I created a dialectical relationship between what the data was telling me and what I wanted to know. Not only that, a dialectical relationship between the analyzed data and the data being analyzed was created, thus creating a holistic, or Gestalt, research credibility, such as is recommended by mixed methods researchers (Erzberger & Kelle, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2008). Such credibility was considered in the mixed methods research quality assurance component and the qualitative research component of this study.
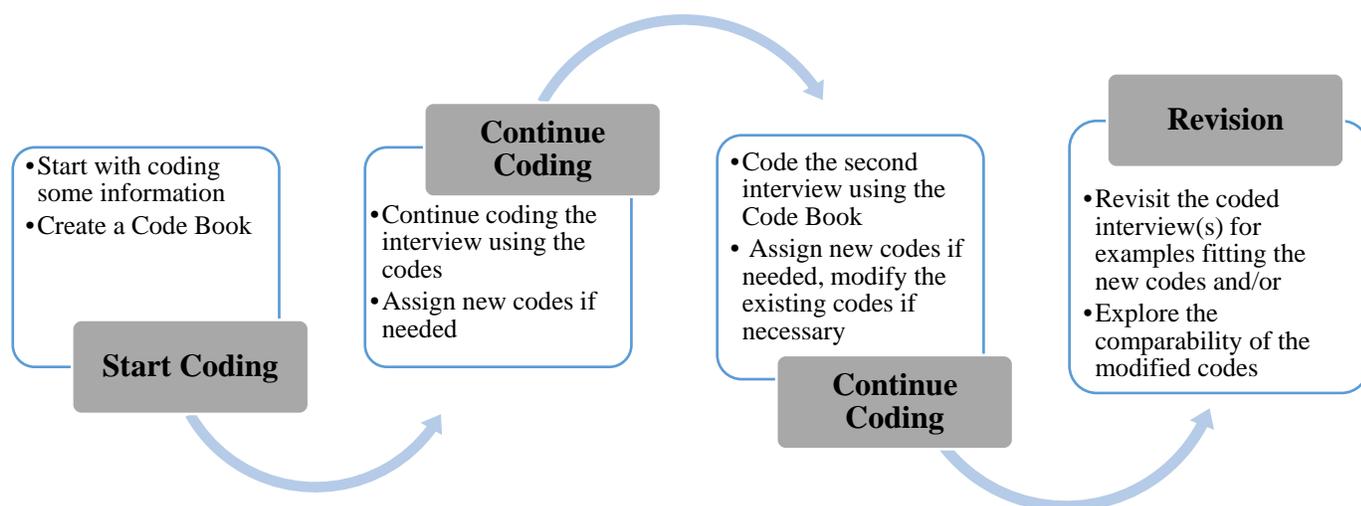
Figure 6. The process of coding the interview transcripts.

The first interaction with the transcripts included coding them. The coding involved reading the transcripts for meanings related to the concepts being researched. Examples of the

codes are: accent perception, identity, experience with accent, connections, etc. After the interview transcripts were coded, I read through the codes and categorized them into common themes. These themes are presented as the findings of the qualitative research strand. The findings must be considered in light of the participant demographics, presented below.

Second-language Speakers

There were ten L2 speakers of English who participated in this study; five of whom spoke Persian/Farsi, two spoke French, two spoke Mandarin Chinese, and one spoke Bengali. I completed a language history evaluation for each of them. Later, the language histories were put together to form a composite language history evaluation (see Table 1).

Language History. The language history table is adopted from Sereno and Wang (2007). On the left-hand side column in Table 1, pseudonyms for the L2-speaker participants are listed. The second column shows participants' ages, followed by their birthplace, time spent in the second language context, time spent in any other L2 context, time invested in learning English, their self-assessment of speaking, listening, reading, and writing in English, and their English use at home, work, and socially. The age range of participants was 24 to 36 years. Five participants were born in Iran[12], Al was from Winnipeg, Canada, Pauline was from France, Bob and Catmum were from China, and Pulak was from Bangladesh. The time that they had spent in English-speaking countries varied. Pulak and Pauline had the shortest times of 14 and 13 months, while Jack had the longest, at seven years.

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[12] I intentionally chose to have a pool of at least three Persian speakers in case I needed to compare the phonetic features of certain sounds between this group and L1 speakers, should the results not converge. However, after the mixed methods results were analysed, such an analysis was not necessary.

Table 1

Language history of L2-speaker participants[13]

Participant[14]	Al	Bob	Catmum	Elena	Jack	Pauline	Pulak	Reed	Robert	Saeed
Age	31	25	27	28	33	24	27	29	36	32
Birthplace	Winnipeg, Canada	Mainland China	Mainland China	Iran	Iran	France	Bangladesh	Iran	Iran	Iran
Time in the second language context	All	2y	6y	2y	7y	1y1m	1y2m	3y	4y9 m	4y9 m
Time in any other second language contexts	0	0	2y in a francophone neighborhood	0	0	1m-South Korea	0	0	0	0
Time invested in learning English	Bilingual	10y	11y	13y	2y6m	14y	12y	15y	1y6m-2y	2y
Self-assessment in second language speaking (1-5)	5	3	4	3	3.5	4	4	3	3	3
Self-assessment in second language listening (1-5)	5	4	5	4	4-4.5	3	3	2.5	3	2.5
Self-assessment in second language reading (1-5)	5	5	5	4.5	4	5	3	3	4	4
Self-assessment in second language writing (1-5)	5	4	5	3.5	3.5	4	4	3.5	3	3.5
English use at home (1-5)	4.5	0.5	4.5	.5-1	3	5	1	2	1	0-1
English use at work/school (1-5)	5	4.5	5	4.5	5	5	2	4.5	2	5
English use socially (1-5)	5	3	5	4	3	5	3	4	2	4

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[13] In this table, [y] has been used for year(s) and [m] has been used for month(s).

[14] All names are pseudonyms.

As shown in Table 1, none of the L2 speakers had lived in a second language context other than in Canada, except for Pauline who had spent one month travelling in South Korea. The only person who reported that they had lived in a second language context other than English was Catmum, who had lived in the St. Boniface neighbourhood of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, for about two years. Although St. Boniface neighbourhood is traditionally a francophone community, it is now a bilingual neighbourhood where English is used frequently. I lived in a nearby neighbourhood for a year and half and did most of my grocery shopping and some other business in the area. I never noticed anything resembling a dominantly-francophone neighbourhood.

The L2 speakers reported different time periods invested in learning English. Robert mentioned 1.5 to 2 years of learning English, Jack said 2.5 years, and Saeed said 2 years. However, these numbers do not include their foreign language English learning at K-12 schools and university. In Iran, for example, English is a mandatory subject for all school students in grades 7–12. At university, bachelor's students take at least one 3-credit *English for Academic Purposes* course and one 2-credit *English for Specific Purposes* course (Iran Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, 1997). I did not ask participants specifically about their English as a foreign language learning experiences. The rest of the table contains participant self-assessments in speaking, listening, reading, and writing, across three major language use environments— home, school/work, and social. A brief introduction to each of the participants follows.

Al. Al is a male Caucasian Winnipegger who has lived his whole life in Winnipeg. He is a simultaneous bilingual in French and English. One of his parents is francophone and the other is anglophone. He grew up speaking both languages: French at home and English outside the home and with the paternal side of his family. He attended a French primary school and an

English high school. He has taught a variety of courses including math, science, religion, and physics, in both English and French. Al told me that, when he went from French primary school to English high school, sometimes students commented that they could hear a French accent in his English. In that context, he took it as a "badge of honor," because it reminded him of his French identity (Al, September 17, 2016). He also mentioned that, as a francophone, he had some privileges in Canada, but that he is not sure how other language minorities would feel about hearing such comments. As he grew older, he received fewer and fewer comments from people about having a French accent while speaking English:

> I just go back to when I was going from a French school to an English school and you
> show up and, you know the thing with, like, for me I felt like 'OK, so my culture identity
> is as a francophone', but there isn't really, like some cultural, some cultural identities, the
> others say external identifiers, right? So if it's the skin colour or if it's the dress, different
> things like that; there're other things that identify you culturally; for me, there was
> nothing else that identified me culturally...because I'm kinda, I mean I'm a white male, I
> went to an all boy school at high school with predominantly white teenagers, so like
> physically there was nothing that really distinguished me, but I felt that culturally there
> was something that made me different...so I feel like the accent was really, again when
> somebody would bring that up, it was sort of a badge of honour that it..., there was
> something that...there was an external thing that identified me culturally, which I liked.
> (Al, September 17, 2016)

Al believed that an important element of teaching is communication and, therefore, accent and intelligibility play significant roles in teaching. Al talked about an instructor who had a foreign accent that was hard to understand, while another instructor had a foreign accent but was

completely comprehensible. His experiences with these instructors led Al to conclude that organization of the teaching material and personal relations with the students are important elements that should also be considered in a study examining the relationship between accent, intelligibility, and teaching.

Bob. Bob has been a graduate student in mechanical engineering in Canada for over two years. He speaks Mandarin as his first language. He has worked as a TA and lab instructor for several mechanical engineering courses. Once a week, he plays board games with a group of people for about 3–4 hours, including Canadian first language speakers of English. He perceives no problems in their communications as "...in terms of board games, accent is not a very important thing that ... it doesn't interfere with...communications" (Bob, September 29, 2016). He has stories to share of fitting and not fitting into the groups. Once a week, he goes to a church for two hours. Although he remembers a number of times when he felt connected in groups; often times, he feels disconnected or as if he does not fit in. As an example, he shared his experience in the lab where he spends most of his day:

> Like, in my lab, I meet many Canadian students, but at the same...I mean many times, they just do the things by themselves. And it's very hard for me to be fit within the group...because many times I don't get what are they talking about. They talk about many things, but it's totally not very familiar with me. So it's very hard for me to understand what specifically are they talking about. (Bob, September 29, 2016)

Expressions and certain topics are two main barriers for his communication with Canadian L1 speakers. Bob believes having a foreign accent can affect his relationships with others; however, Bob places identity in a higher position than accent. He shared with me that being Chinese would affect his accent in English because many Chinese people have a similar accent. Having a

foreign accent, specifically a Chinese accent, is embedded in his identity. As such, he told me that to be an "authentic Chinese", he needs to have some Chinese accent in English (Bob, September 29, 2016). However, he told me that even losing his accent would not change his identity.

When I asked him about factors affecting ITAs' teaching practices, he talked about a number of things. Building confidence is an area in which, he believes, L2 instructors can help second language speakers. The specific recommendations he made regarding the accent and intelligibility of ITAs were that they should speak slowly and clearly.

Catmum. Catmum is from China and was a graduate student in agriculture at the time of the interviews. She speaks Mandarin Chinese as her first language. She believes identity is initially developed within a country; however, going abroad and seeing and living in other places can change one's identity. She perceives herself to be a global citizen. Catmum has lived in Canada for six years and prefers to rely on the Canadian parts of her identity in her relationships with others. She explained that her accent in English is hard to define, yet she knows she has a foreign accent in English "because other people told" her (Catmum, September 28, 2016).

Catmum has had the experiences of feeling like a member of some groups and being excluded from others while in Canada. Like Bob, she also mentioned the problem of having a lack of shared topics as a major barrier to membership of groups in Canada. She believed that being in a higher position would make it easier for her to be respected and feel like a member of a group:

...if I am in a higher position like a TA, they all respect me and they would respect the knowledge so they wouldn't judge that much, but in ... among our peers is totally based

on other peoples' understanding, but if you're nice, others would be nice, too. (Catmum,

September 28, 2016)

As a graduate student, Catmum acknowledged that language plays a role in her engagements in

communications with the L1 speakers. Sharing one's knowledge and experience, which is often

different from that of local people, is a point she believed may empower L2 speakers in an L2

context. Analysing her ideas shows that she is still cautious and takes her time when she wants to

start a conversation with a new team of L1 speakers.

In her experience with accent, Catmum told me that people who have understanding of

L2 speakers' situations are more respectful and patient with accent; while those who do not care

or are "in a rush" are more intolerant of accent differences (Catmum, September 28, 2016). Each

of these two scenarios would stimulate different feelings for her. Catmum believes that her

identity affects her accent more than her accent affects her identity. Catmum notes that she has

tried hard to approximate her English accent to that of Canadian L1 speakers, but now she has

decided to "move on to other languages" and has stopped working on her English accent

(Catmum, September 28, 2016). She prefers pursuing multilingualism to pursuing a perfect

accent. Now, she feels that she is at a point where her interlocutors need to put some effort into

understanding her despite her (minor) accent differences: "I feel as long as they get my message,

that's OK" (Catmum, September 28, 2016). Catmum believes that her accent has no significant

influence on her relationships with others; rather, it is her knowledge that matters:

I would say it's the foundation of your own knowledge. So I was in, when I wasn't a TA,

I was a student and in this writing class, and that is required for everybody in our faculty,

and one section is debate, and as I said most of the students in agriculture are local

students, so that's when I first came, the first year in Canada; and I was like 'OK, I have

to debate like native speakers' [laughter], but then after the result came out, I got higher

marks than my peers. And then I realized that is not totally based on how you...your

English is. It's not only the language, it's the point you have made. So if you have very

solid based knowledge and you have [a] very good point, it is not the language. (Catmum,

September 28, 2016)

Catmum did not believe that elements such as ethnicity and nationality are stand-alone

elements; rather, they embed themselves in other factors such as language. As a result, it can be

said that ethnicity, indirectly and through her mother tongue, affects her accent in English. Her

TA jobs have been relatively easy as she has tried to speak intelligibly and be to the point.

Elena. Elena is a graduate student in electrical engineering. Her first language is

Persian/Farsi. She believes her identity is whatever she thinks about herself, regardless of other

people's views. In terms of word stress, sentence stress, and tone of speech, she believes her

accent to be similar to the rhythms of her L1. Initially, entering Canada was a shock for her as

she found herself incapable of understanding some people due to their accents.

Although she does not have many Canadian friends, she is happy with the friends she has

who are internationally-oriented individuals. Here, internationally-oriented individuals refers to

those who like to be identified and integrated with other international people, regardless of their

place of origin and citizenship status. Similar to Catmum, Elena brought up the issue of power in

terms of resources, "If it's a kinda something related to my research, or it's something that I have

to present something to a group, I think I'm good at that, and I can do that if I've got prepared

properly" (Elena, September 1, 2016). In such cases, she feels affiliated with other team

members, including Canadian English speakers.

She blames her lack of a local friendship circle partially on her busy schedule. Feeling as an affiliated member of a group, she feels, makes her life easier. She acknowledges that she does not have the same history as Canadian English speakers, yet she brings her work experience to the table.

> ...because I had some experiences more than others, because I worked for four years in my country in the industry, so I had...something different from the guys [who] directly come from the university to university, so from academy to academy. So because of that, I could say that: yeah, I had some suggestions for them that maybe they couldn't even think about, or...I could see something, some...maybe some upcoming results of their decisions that they couldn't see. And I just told that 'Oh, just wait, this thing might happen' and they said: 'Oh, yes you are right' and that made me feel effective there...yeah. (Elena, September 1, 2016)

Elena believes that while interacting with a group of wise people, accent is "not an issue," it becomes a bigger issue when interacting with short-sighted people (Elena, September 1, 2016).

Elena has worked as a TA for two courses each term over the course of five academic semesters. Elena considers her undergraduate program group—the group she had in her home country—as her group of affiliation. For brief moments at least, having a foreign accent and not feeling connected to Canadian groups remind her of her affiliations with her old groups, where she felt connected and belonged:

> ...what made me feel when I felt that I'm not a...[member of their groups] You know?....it reminds me...it reminded me the group which I belong to. So that's a group of my own...the thing which I have from my background, from my country, my undergraduate university, my school...and everything. It reminds me where do I belong to...just for

some, maybe some minutes or some seconds, I [am being] reminded that I have the same

community as them, but it's somewhere else, it's not here. Their community is here,

which they belong to. But they reminded me that where I belong to. (Elena, September 1,

2016)

According to Elena, accent has not played a major role in her professional group association. She

thinks her language (L2) in general and accent to a lesser extent may affect listeners when she is

talking to other people.

Elena describes her identity and the relationship between her accent and identity in this

way:

I think if identity is a kind of...as a kind of ocean or sea, the accent is just a branch of it or

a river of it. So...from the mother of identity, the accent kid is only, maybe 5%, I can say

5% of that. So accent is not stopping me from shaping a Canadian identity. Yeah, and as I

said before, identity is in my mind, it's not about either Canadian or Iranian, yeah. (Elena,

September 1, 2016)

Similar to Al, Elena endorses the idea that everybody has an accent, regardless of the

language. It is just that the main dominant groups do not consider their accents to be accents.

This de facto consideration of accent was also evident among the L1-speaking raters when they

referred to the L1 speakers as having no accent. Likewise, Elena told me that in Iran, people

from Tehran[15] believe that they do not have any accent. Elena also told me that she does not

think she has any ethnicity. To her, the Persian ethnicity is more like a combination of

backgrounds categorized by people as "Persian" (Elena, September 1, 2016). Being Persian

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[15] Tehran is the capital city of Iran.

affects her accent as it somehow embeds itself in her speaking of Persian, which in turn, affects

her accent in English. She believes that accent (referring to pronunciation) is not a problem for

her in her TA positions; yet the ways she phrases words to make sentences, and the ways that

sentences are related to concepts, and other such factors, affect her communication in English. In

her explanation, she explained how her interlocutors' understanding of her messages has

empowered her in her follow-up speech, while their non-understanding can cause

disempowerment. It is this disempowerment that causes her some stress, and her stress affects

her L2 speech negatively:

> I think about myself, the main thing that affects my speaking is not accent, but the way I
>
> feel when I talk to a person and. ...for example my supervisor is so kind, and he is always
>
> calm and he...he's very reasonable. But when I talk to him, I'm usually stressful...so
>
> when I talk to him, I'm very anxious, so I can't talk the best I can...but when I talk to my
>
> friends who I know that they don't talk very fluently, I mean my international friends,
>
> they're all like me, they have problem talking. So when I talk to them, I'm more
>
> comfortable because I believe in myself more than the others, I think. So the words just
>
> come out, I can make good phrases, and I can just put simple words together, make good
>
> sentences, and...yeah. That's all about how I feel [when] talking to people, when I'm
>
> talking to people. The other thing that...the other experience that I would like to share
>
> with you is: some people, some native people, those ones who I said that it's funny for
>
> them when we talk in their language; some of them are, you know some of them...look at
>
> us like we're smart people because we can talk in several languages, we can talk in their
>
> language, we can talk in our language, we can switch between languages easily very
>
> quick, especially when we talk very fluently with them...so it always gives me positive

feedback, so I'm better when they say, 'It's very good. It's an opportunity that you have. You had this chance to know two languages or more than two languages.' Then I feel very good and I can speak more fluently. (Elena, September 1, 2016)

As can be inferred from the interview excerpt above, the two related factors of confidence and empowerment impact Elena's English linguistic skills significantly.

Jack. Jack holds a PhD in mechanical engineering and has done a few years of TA work and lab instruction. At the time of the interviews, he had lived in Canada for more than seven years. He believes all of his characteristics form his identity, and that he speaks with a different accent than Canadian, American, and British accents. Moreover, people have told him that he has an accent in English, calling it a foreign accent. Similar to Elena, Jack also referred to stressful situations as having a negative impact on his speech and accent in English. To him, having a foreign accent acted like a barrier in job interviews, where he believes he could do better if he had a Canadian accent.

...I think...the easiest and the most obvious one is...when people cannot understand...me, when I pronounce something or when I say something because of my accent, it's simply, maybe it's not very familiar to their ears. There have been situations when I think [stress], I mean I don't have any proof for that, but I think if I had a pure accent, I mean if I had local accent, say Canadian accent, ...it would be a little easier for me. For instance, job interviews and these sort of things, it would go more smoothly, and I guess I would be, I would be welcomed...more easily...for those positions. (Jack, August 13, 2016)

Jack has noticed that both his accent and identity have been affected as a result of living in Canada, and they have become similar to those of Canadians. He has been able to participate in activities that Canadian English speakers do together. Jack knows that making relationships with

people is not always easy, yet he has been able to manage very good relationships with some people. He is involved in a number of communities with L1 speakers. Mobilizing knowledge and experience that benefit the context can influence the quality of interactions and the feelings of being affiliated with other members of a group:

> ...in my work place, well, the dominance is with native English speakers, and I think a lot of times...I felt quite important in that group as a member of that group. Mainly...because...for some reasons, one that I've had some expertise in the field that...they needed my experience. (Jack, August 13, 2016)

Jack remembers that his accent or use of literal translations have been humorous and entertaining for his colleagues on occasions. He also thinks cultural issues, and certain subjects that people talk about, can be alienating for him. He believes his accent has had both positive and negative impacts on his interactions with Canadian English speakers; those who are curious find his accent interesting, and this is an opening for further communication and interactions.

Jack believes accent has not had a large role in shaping his identity; rather, the experience of being exposed to new ideas and having time to process them has influenced his identity. In his view, he has reached a "fossilized" stage of language (Jack, August 13, 2016). He enjoys the moments when people are able to guess his nationality based on his accent. Jack believes his accent can work positively at the beginning of his communications; however, as the communication develops, he would prefer to have a more L1-like accent. On the other hand, sometimes at the beginning of a conversation his accent is a drawback because people have to get used to it:

> ...in most of my experiences, having an accent has been helpful especially in my experiences outside a workplace. Again...the differences are interesting to many people

including me. So for that reason, I think accent has been able to... promote a relationship.

But as the relationship go[es] on further, I kinda think that...if my accent could improve

as well, then the relationship could be even better. You know? Simply because I could...I

could take part further...in activities...between me and that person in the relationship.

(Jack, August 13, 2016)

In a professional sense, his accent has not been helpful as it may negatively impact the transfer of

knowledge and information. He considers his identity and accent to be "fairly independent"

(Jack, August 13, 2016). Yet he acknowledges that if we think of his "social character as part of

[his] identity" then his identity can be reflected in his "accent over time" (Jack, August 13,

2016).

Jack considers that being Persian/Iranian is not a standalone construct; rather, it entails

speaking Persian/Farsi, and in that way his nationality affects his accent. Jack described his

teaching experiences as consisting of 50% knowledge and 50% communication skills such as

organization of thought, accent, intelligibility, etc. Therefore, accent and intelligibility, to him,

play a major role in the teaching practices of ITAs:

I think it's...maybe it's 50% of it. 50% of it can be my knowledge, and the other 50% is

like, how clearly and how [organized I am], again, clearly both based on the concept and

based on the quality of the language and accent. (Jack, August 13, 2016)

Pauline. Pauline was a visiting graduate student from France. She perceives accent as

certain sound patterns existing in one's speech that are similar to the sound patterns of a larger

group. She thinks that she has a French accent when speaking English. When I asked her about

her reasons for thinking so, she explained that there are some structures that are hard for her to

pronounce in English. These structures are hard to pronounce for the majority of French speakers, and that is why she says she has French accent in English:

> ...very often, as I said, as soon as I open my mouth, people know I'm French, so there is two scenarios in that case [1] 'Oh, I, I have been to Paris when I was 12' or [2] 'Oh, I was in French immersion'....the other case [is when] they haven't forgotten everything about French immersion and they wanna practice French. (Pauline, September 14, 2016)

She noticed that at the beginning of her stay in Canada, after saying just one sentence, people would figure out she is French. However, over time and as she merged into the English environment, her accent became closer to Canadian norms.

Pauline thinks of identity as a compound of characteristics. Pauline does not have a lot of ties with Canadians; most of her friends in Canada are in internationally-oriented circles, where she finds a welcoming community. Occasionally, she engages in activities with other Canadian English speakers. She shared with me a story where she really felt she belonged and was connected with her friends—a mixed group of Canadians and international students. After a few months of travelling to France, Pauline returned to Canada and found that her peers in her department at university still remembered her name, even though she had only been in the department for a relatively short time. When they engaged her in meaningful communication, she felt she was a member of the group. In such cases, having an accent did not have a significant impact on her feeling of being connected.

On other occasions, when she could not communicate with L1 speakers, she felt excluded from the group. Similar to other participants, Pauline also mentioned topics of conversation as a contributing factor to her feeling connected or excluded. She said that when people start talking

about topics that she has no knowledge of, such as hockey, she feels excluded from the group. Accent in such cases can be regarded as one, but not the only, contributing factor.

Pauline does not believe she has an English-speaking identity. Pauline uses English as a means of communication; her accent reminds her of her origin, France.

> I think it affected me in a sense that it reminded me every day I was a French person out of France. So it reminded me that this is not where I come from. And that was at the time I was trying to start my life here, so my accent kept pulling me back to France in a way. (Pauline, September 14, 2016)

Similar to some other participants, Pauline emphasized that being French is not a standalone construct. The fact that she is a French person speaking English and having an accent in English means that she belongs to a certain social group, that she studied within a certain educational system, and that she speaks a certain first language. These factors are embedded and included in her identity.

Pauline does not perceive her accent as being problematic in her teaching practices, as intelligibility is a more important element of her communication with the students.

> ...the fact that I have a French accent in English, that's because I was a French person able to learn English, so that say[s] something about my background. Or that say[s] something to me, and to other people maybe. And also my French accent shows I'm from France. Though it's interesting because in Canada when you say you're French, people first ask you if you are from Quebec, not from France. So, you know, it can create even more complicated situations...my identity, or my nationality, my social background, my level of education, all of that I think may be heard [in my accent]. (Pauline, September 14, 2016)

Pulak. Pulak is a graduate student in physics from Bangladesh. He considers accent to have intrinsic attributes, by which he means the ways that people "naturally" speak (Pulak, October 10, 2016). He defines identity as something related to one's birthplace, family, community, etc., and also "how you expect of yourself" or "how you present yourself" (Pulak, October 10, 2016). Pulak considers identity to be an inside-outside construct; while one's background affects identity, there is also an inner-self affecting it. Pulak thinks he has a foreign accent in English, not only in his speech but also in his perception; he has both the experience of not understanding L1 speakers' accents and having L1 speakers not understand him.

Pulak has some [minimal] connections with L1 speakers. Here is an example of when an L1 speaker asked him for directions at his university and a two-way misunderstanding happened:

> I was. ... [at] one side of the university and she was looking for the University Centre. So from standing on that place, I was directing her [to] the University Center, but that way I was telling her, it was not understandable to her. But finally I managed [to get] her...to the University [Centre] because I had the time to go with her. Then I. ...talked [to] her to the University Centre. (Pulak, October 10, 2016)

Pulak has been looking for L1 speakers to talk with in order to improve his English, but he has not been very successful. In his classes and study space, he hangs out with people from Bangladesh. His connections to L1 speakers have been limited to occasional volunteer activities.

To Pulak, a common interest for learning about each other plays a major role in feeling connected and affiliated. He has frequently experienced being excluded from conversations among L1 speakers. Thus, he believes having a foreign accent has affected him negatively.

> I was looking for...some places where I can connect with people, or speak English, or speak with native English [speakers], but I didn't find something for full...even after

coming here, I was trying to interact with English speaking people. But...unfortunately, I didn't get [those] kind[s] of situations even...when I go to class, I took two courses, so there're only ten or twelve students and I found [that] some of them [are] from Bangladesh, so I will just speak Bengali. And I also live in an apartment where I live with Bengali people, so I don't have [a] chance to speak English. Even while I come to university, in my lab there's four or five people from Bangladesh taking the same courses. So I don't even have... [a] chance to speak English more because I always... discuss with them. And here, at the university...graduate students are busy with their work so I don't have [a] chance to talk...apart from studies. And that's why...I was thinking...how can I involve with English speaking people? Then I went to some [volunteer] work, or...some organizations. That's how I'm trying to speak English with native speakers. But I think still I need to connect with more English-speaking people to increase my speaking skills. (Pulak, October 10, 2016)

Pulak does not perceive a connection between accent and identity but, rather, that they are separate constructs. He thinks that identity can affect accent, but he is not sure about the nature of the relationship. Pulak believes his environment and community affect his accent. He also believes foreign accents vary depending on the speaker's L1. He believes that by speaking clearly, loudly, and slowly, people can improve their communication skills and thereby improve their teaching skills. He thinks that other factors such as intelligibility and body language are important for communication with students. He also thinks that speaking Standard English can help others understand each other better, such as when students ask questions of ITAs.

Reed. Reed is a graduate student in electrical engineering who speaks Farsi as a first language. At the time of the interviews, he had lived in Canada for more than three years. He had

taught as a TA and instructor, in English, from when he arrived in Canada until the time of interviews. Reed believes he has some foreign accent in English, but he has been trying to model his English accent on the Canadian English accent.

When I asked him about identity, he defined identity as a concept that is embedded in one's self, including all his characteristics, with two levels of meaning. One level includes the readily-identifiable characteristics with which individuals introduce themselves. The other level is what is embedded in one's self:

> I guess there're two types of identity. The first one is the one that you usually introduce yourself with. And the other one is a domain which [is] embedded inside your characteristics. So I would say identity is what introduces you completely not just what you are. I mean whatever you're gonna say [is] embedded in your characteristics. (Reed, September 2, 2016)

Reed emphasizes that Canadian L1 speakers have not accepted him as a member of their social groups. He speculates that this is because he does not have all the necessary knowledge about English language and how it is used. He has not been able to participate in many communities of L1 speakers, which he partly attributes to his busy schedule. He had done some volunteer work, but has not been heavily involved.

Similar to a lot of other L2-speaker participants[16], Reed believes that his expertise has provided him with opportunities to contribute to professional groups and thus feel affiliated with those groups. When I asked him about his reasons for feeling as if he belonged, he replied:

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[16] For example: Elena, Catmum, Saeed, and Jack.

My expertise. All I know about my job. You know? For example, I am working at system

programing and usually an engineering student doesn't have any idea about that, or they

know very basic, and I help them to learn and then they appreciate it and we become

friends. So after that, we can communicate verbal[ly] and that's why. I think I am useful

for that group and then I suppose I belong to them. (Reed, September 2, 2016)

In general, Reed perceives that Canadian L1 speakers consider a foreign accent to be a language

barrier, yet his experience has varied from person to person. When he experiences non-

understanding signals from other people, especially L1 speakers, he frequently interprets that as

reflecting a lack of linguistic skills on his behalf, and he describes himself feeling like "an idiot"

in those moments (Reed, September 2, 2016). Therefore, Reed believes accent contributes

significantly to relationships with L1 speakers.

Reed believes accent and identity are related in the sense that accent informs about

identity in several ways—such as how much effort one has invested in learning the language. He

cautiously thinks that being close to a community makes one's accent closer to those of others in

the community. Similar to the other L2-speaker participants, Reed believes that ethnicity and

nationality are complicated constructs containing many elements, including his belief that accent

reflects ethnicity. He assumes a bigger role for intelligibility in L2 than accent, especially in

teaching practices using an L2.

Robert. At the time of the interviews, Robert was a graduate student in mechanical

engineering in Canada. Robert is multilingual, and had lived in Canada for nearly five years,

working as a TA the entire time. Robert preferred to conduct the interview in Persian/Farsi, our

shared first language. All his quotes have been translated by me[17]. He believes accent informs the listener about a person's background, including where they have lived, what education they have received, and other background factors. These backgrounds also affect an individual's L2 speech. On a more personal level, he perceives his accent to be affected by his background, including the English language instruction that he has received, his L1 (Persian/Farsi), and the communities that he has been a member of. To him, identity covers a range of areas for an individual. It includes an individual's cultures, places of birth and growing up, the groups with which they have been affiliated, and other background factors. In other words, Robert perceives that identity and accent are formed by similar experiences.

When I asked him about his affiliations with Canadian L1 English speakers, Robert said that he does not think he has a lot of affiliations with L1-speaking communities. However, in our follow-up conversations, Robert talked about a number of groups of which he has been a member. He explained that in those groups, the majority were Iranian.

In his professional life, as distinct from his social life, Robert has been a member of different groups. He believes that people have an obligation to work with each other professionally, making the dynamics of those groups different from more personal and social groups. When I inquired him regarding the element that keeps people connected in those professional groups, he told me it is the "common goal" that makes people tolerant of differences, including language and accent differences (Robert, August 22, 2016, translated).

On a social level, there have been some occasions when Robert met with Canadian L1 English speakers and formed some kind of relationship. Yet to Robert, these activities were

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[17] I used the translation and back-translation technique. In this technique, I translated his ideas into English. Then I translated them back into Persian/Farsi and compared my Persian translations with his original words.

limited to volunteer positions. He believes that, as in professional groups, having a common goal and being committed to it are motivating forces that tie relationships together:

> Well, mainly it has been the common goal...yeah, interlocutors have reached this conclusion that if they cooperate with each other, if they tolerate challenges with [understanding] my accent, [and] I try to understand their accents, or things like that...it can help us reach our common goal. (Robert, August 22, 2016, translated)

Although Robert believes that having a foreign accent plays a role in his communications with others, he acknowledges that it depends on the group dynamics. For him, the most negative impact occurs when his accent is the worst in a group. In such cases, he feels that he might act as a conversation barrier, and feel segregated. However, he believes that the role of a foreign accent also depends on the speaker. On a more personal level, he thinks that having a foreign accent is a barrier for himself, making him reluctant to participate in activities where his accent is the most foreign, or where all the members are L1 speakers of Canadian English:

> ...for example, when you are sitting at a table where [people] are not your friends, all the other people are Canadians...then I felt I don't belong to the group. (Robert, August 22, 2016)

Both Robert and Pulak believe that deviations from what they referred to as "Standard English", or formal language, make it more challenging to understand L1 speakers (Pulak, October 10, 2016; Robert, August 22, 2016, translated). Like many other ITAs, Robert told me that lack of intelligibility plays a more significant role than accent in successful communication. Robert, however, has not had any major issues with his accent as he has tried to speak as intelligibly as possible.

On the relationship between identity and accent, Robert believes that identity affects accent more significantly than accent affects identity. He considers accent to be "representative" of one's identity (Robert, August 22, 2016, translated). Accent can convey information about identity, but not the other way around. Generational differences in communication were another issue Robert raised.[18] He said that he had no problems communicating with older generations of Canadian English speakers. However, with younger generations, his accent has been a problem. He also told me that some of his international friends who have sent their kids to daycare in Canada have faced the problem of their children frequently trying to correct their parents' English.

Robert emphasizes that having a good accent can affect relationships with Canadian English speakers, but that it is just one facilitating element among others. Robert believes that nationality does not affect accent; however, nationality mobilizes other constructs such as the first language, living conditions, and working conditions that a person has had in their country of origin. If we conceive of nationality that way, then it can play a role on a person's accent in an L2. In addition to using intelligibility as a strategy to overcome his foreign accent in English, Robert tries to accept feedback from his interlocutors when they correct his statements, reproducing them whenever communication failure occurs.

Saeed. At the time of the interviews, Saeed was a graduate student in electrical engineering and had lived in Canada for over five years. He has held several TA positions, both in engineering and in mathematics. To him, accent is the way one "pronounces the words" and the way one follows the "ups and downs in sentences in speaking" (Saeed, August 29, 2016).

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[18] It is interesting that several participants referred to "generational difference" as a factor affecting their communications with L1 speakers. They said that older-generation Canadians are more tolerant and accommodating than younger generations such as teenagers.

Identity to him is twofold: one is "the knowledge...and all the history inside someone's brain," and the other is "the way...those stuff inside someone's brain cause him to interact, and act, and behave in the society" (Saeed, August 29, 2016). Saeed believes that his accent in English is a "combination of Persian and English" accents (Saeed, August 29, 2016).

Saeed's initial time in Canada included a positive experience where someone commented on his accent as "...like someone who has lived in Canada for several years" (Saeed, August 29, 2016). He believes that sometimes, when he is undergoing difficult times, he experiences challenges with his English in general, including his accent. He believes that the major part of his English accent is derived from the Canadian accent because he lives in Canada.

When I asked Saeed about his connections with L1 speakers, he told me that he had been a member of some professional groups. Based on his experiences, he believes that Canadians perceive people coming from other countries as outsiders and, therefore, exclude them from their social and intimate groups, regardless of their citizenship status and how long they have lived in Canada. He attributes his inclusion into professional societies as a response to Canadians' needs.

> ...they need your collaboration and so on. But, I personally think that Canadians by themselves, or people who grew up [here] always look at people who came to Canada later as a foreigner and in their very personal communications, in their personal parties...and stuff; they don't get them involved, it's just for basically work, and that's basically for their economic needs. (Saeed, August 29, 2016)

In addition to professional organizations, he has participated in some volunteer activities with church. Saeed explained that he feels like he belongs to certain groups when he is "assigned tasks" (Saeed, August 29, 2016). This has happened to him in professional activities and in his volunteering activities with church-based English language teaching programs.

Saeed believes that there is an unfair living situation for immigrants in Canada that is attributable to the general way Canadians perceive immigrants. He explained that this policy is not an official policy; rather, it is a cultural problem. In Norton's (2013) book on the identity of immigrants, a similar problem was raised (p. 139). In Saeed's professional research team, he learned that taking leading roles in their team has worked against him as he learned that other team members, including instructors, were engaged in covering up opportunities so that he would not learn about those opportunities. On other occasions, some team members were engaged in destructive activities that undermined his position. These issues and experiences caused him to feel dissociated from the team and segregated from others.

> An example ... that actually caused me to separate from the society somehow. And an example of that is basically as I said ... in my research work. You know? At some point, for example, in my research where I grew up and found that ... I am doing important things in the, in the team, I found that ... people in the team, even profs here ...[are] hiding opportunities from team members and from one another ... I found that OK, this collaboration is ... at its edge, and at its end. So I tried to ... separate myself... from the group. That's something I experienced. (Saeed, August 29, 2016)

In the above example, Saeed explained how growing up in a team has caused other team members to envy him and try to hide opportunities from him. Basically, the other team members had tried to prevent him from developing his skills any further. Saeed thinks having a foreign accent has not been an issue for him in general as he does not have a strong foreign accent in English.

Saeed explained that as an individual's culture and identity change, accent can change as well. He feels so alienated and segregated from both his past and even present identities that he describes his feelings in a very provocative manner:

I think... that mixture causes me to feel that I don't belong to either the previous one, or the new one. And that makes me...feel like a cell, which has forgot his main characteristics and his main identity, which, I think, is made by mutation of DNA which causes a cell to [become] cancerous or something, he forgets his identity. That's how I feel about it. (Saeed, August 29, 2016)

On the relationship between identity and accent, Saeed thinks that identity can affect one's accent. He admits to speaking improper English whenever he wanted to dissociate himself from an interlocutor. Although Saeed mentioned that he did not have much of a foreign accent in English, he believed accent and intelligibility are important aspects of speech that influence ITA communications with students. He shared with me that at the beginning of his TA experiences, he wrote down the materials and memorized them, and spoke fast "to impress the students" (Saeed, August 29, 2016). He did not develop a clear organization and therefore was relatively unintelligible. Later, when students began withdrawing from his classes, he figured out that this method was not an effective one. Then, he decided to change his teaching style; he spoke more intelligibly and in a more organized manner. This revolutionized his teaching experience in a positive way.

In this section, I provided a snapshot overview of each L2-speaker participant. In the following section, I will discuss the themes summarized from the interviews with the L2-speaker ITAs.

Experiences of the L2-speaker ITAs

Some of the themes presented here are derived from the themes formulated for designing the research questions, and others emerged from the interviews. The themes discussed in the remainder of this chapter are *accent*, discussed on pages 93-96, *accent and relationships*, discussed on pages 96-98, *identity*, discussed on pages 99-104, *speaking English and access to communities of practice*, discussed on pages 104-106, *connections*, discussed on pages 106-107, *intelligibility*, discussed on pages 107-109, and *power*, discussed on pages 109-111.

Accent

In the literature, *accent* is generally defined as the speech attributes that give a listener information about the geographical and social backgrounds of the speaker (Crystal, 2008). In English, *foreign accent* has been defined as "divergences from English phonetic norms along a wide range of segmental and suprasegmental (i.e. prosodic) dimensions" (Flege, 1995, p. 233). These are general definitions of accent; therefore, during the interviews, I asked the L2-speaker participants to divulge their perceptions of *accent* and *foreign accent*.

Generally speaking, participants defined *accent* as the way one speaks; accent refers to the regional background of an individual, and several participants pointed out the influences of mother tongue on a person's second language accent. Except for Al, who grew up French-English bilingual, all of the other participants believed they had a foreign accent in English.

The importance of participants' experiences with accent becomes clearer when we look at it from a positionality perspective. A fair number of the L2 speakers (Al, Catmum, Elena, Jack, Pauline, and Reed) said that they were told they have a (foreign) accent in English. This positionality or identification seems to have become internalized, because when we were talking

about why they think they have a foreign accent in English, they frequently replied that they were told so. For example, when I asked Catmum, "why do you say you have an accent in English?" She replied "Why do I say? Because other people told me" (Catmum, September 28, 2016). Jack contrasted his accent with some of the major/dominant English accents and concluded that he has a foreign accent in English, a conclusion supported by information given to him by others:

> Well, we have American English, Canadian, Australian, you know? British English, and compared to any of these, I, I have differences...in the way that I pronounce...words, or...the type of intonations that I have for pronouncing a sentence, and these sort of things. So, yes, I think I have an accent....by the way, people have told me that I had accent, as well. (Jack, August 13, 2016)

Accent and its role in these individuals' life experiences were even greater than what I had expected initially. For example, Saeed talked about an experience during his initial stages of living in Canada.

> I remember when I came to Canada, it was like the first week, I was going to a shop...[to] buy some stuff with my wife, and I started to talk. ...to the seller about what I want[ed] and what I need[ed], and paying for the stuff. And they said: 'OK, how long have you been in Canada?' Then I said 'just a week'. And she was surprised by my accent because she said 'your accent is like the accent of someone who has been living in Canada for many years'. And she said that 'I didn't notice that you are a newcomer to Canada'. That was very surprising for me. (Saeed, August 29, 2016)

This incident helped Saeed build confidence, signaling a successful start for him in the country. When I asked him about his feelings on that occasion, he said, "Well, I really felt proud...because

I was speaking a second language very good. I think that's an ability and I was proud of it"
(Saeed, August 29, 2016).

Being an ESL speaker and ESL teacher (trainer), I asked the L2 speakers about what they
think can be done to help ESL learners and speakers with their accents. A number of them told
me that one of the ways to help L2 speakers, including ITAs, is to help build their confidence.

Sometimes...it's totally based on my own confidence, even though sometimes I can

speak...fluently, and don't need to repeat, but then my confidence is low, I have to repeat

a word...it's not the pronunciation I know, [it] is not to the perfection, that I would repeat

it again, so... (Catmum, September 28, 2016).

…when I…felt more confident and I [was] prepared well, you know? I could see that,

[then] I speak more intelligibly, students like me and they understand what I say, and they

want to stay connected with me and so on. So that definitely helps… (Saeed, August 29,

2016)

As I will discuss in Chapter 5, the L1 speakers also mentioned that speaking confidently
and projecting[19] well are two elements that help communications between L1- and L2-speakers.
It seems that the L2 speakers had differing experiences with their accents in English, leading to
different levels of confidence, which is, in turn, communicated to students. In the next section, I
will explore the L2 speakers' experiences with their accents and the roles of their accents on their
relationships.

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[19] In this document, the terms voice projection and projecting voice have been used to refer to what we know of as
"teacher's voice". In literature, enunciation has also been used to refer to this phenomenon (e.g. Ondráček, 2011);
however, as enunciation refers to a different phenomenon in Linguistics, the term projection has been used here. In
phonetics, "projection' refers to "volume-velocity and resonance" of speech (R. Hagiwara, personal communication,
December 21, 2017).

Accent and Relationships

Most of the L2 speakers also pointed out that their accents have influenced their relationships with L1 speakers in Canada. Although their experiences varied with respect to the role of their accents, they generally agreed that accent played a role. In several cases, they pointed to how their confidence levels were affected by their accents, given that the feedback they got from their interlocutors was influential. In such cases, accent was not the main contributor to their relationships with the L1 speakers; rather, it affected their confidence levels, which in turn affected their communication skills, meaning that the relationship was cyclical.

Participants perceived communication style and skills to be crucial in their relationships with L1 speakers. For example, when I asked Saeed about his ideas on the relationship between accent and his relationships with L1 speakers, he said:

> That's definitely for sure, because they're happy that a foreigner person is speaking their language. It's like when an English person starts to speak Farsi fairly good compared with somebody who don't care about...your mother language and says ... 'that's garbage', right? That causes you, as a natural behaviour to [treat] them two different ways. I think that's true for English, too. If they feel that you are speaking the language good, they feel respected and important, and they [treat] you, I think, better. (Saeed, August 29, 2016)

Very often, it seemed that having a foreign accent is perceived by L2 speakers as negatively affecting a relationship in professional situations; however, in more personal and social interactions, experiences varied depending on the L1-speaker interlocutors. Sometimes, having a slight foreign accent could help L2 speakers, and sometimes it acted as a barrier.

The idea of accent affecting communications and, thus, relationships with other speakers surfaced several times. As discussed in the literature review chapter (Chapter 2), communities

are needed for the construction of individual's social and professional identities. Therefore, when accent affects relationships with other members of the society, and given that relationships are integral to building communities which, in turn, are necessary for social identity development, one can argue that accent is one of the factors affecting the social identity development of L2 speakers. But we need to note that accent is not perceived as the only factor affecting L2 identity construction, nor was it perceived to have the same impact in different situations. Jack illustrated the role of accent in building relationships:

> …say you wanna go on a date with someone…an accent can be helpful, I mean I can't deny that, you know?, sometimes accent is, I mean, some people are interested in accents...they like it, but some other people do not like it, so ... you know? This sort of situations…sometimes…I've benefited from it, sometimes…it's been detrimental to me. (Jack, August 13, 2016)

Among participants, Al's experience was different from the rest of the L2 speakers. Al grew up bilingual, and went to French primary school and English high school. He said that he has received different feedback from people about his accent. Although he thinks he might "still have a slight French accent" in English, he thought of his accent in English as Canadian and "English Canadian" (Al, September 17, 2016). He remembered at the beginning of high school some folks had brought up his French accent in conversations. He thought that although "it's not always a positive experience being singled-out culturally", he nonetheless perceived those experiences as positive ones (Al, September 17, 2016). First, having a French accent in English was never mentioned in a negative way to him. Second, he spoke mainly French at home and perceived himself culturally more identified with francophones. He perceived comments about his accent as affirmations of a cultural identity that he had and admired. Additionally, he went to

what he described as a predominantly Caucasian middle class high school where he looked like anybody else; having a French accent was the only thing pointing out his identity. In this case, accent acted as an affirmation of culture and thus engendered a positive experience, or as Al himself put it, it was "almost like a badge of honor" (Al, September 17, 2016). It seems that two factors contributed to Al's positive feelings about his French accent in English when people brought it up: (a) they would mention it in a nice way, and (b) he was proud of having a French accent in English.

Pauline, however, who also speaks French as her first language, had a different story about her accent (as mentioned previously):

> I think it affected me in a sense that it reminded me every day I was a French person out of France. So it reminded me that this is not where I come from. And that was at the time I was trying to start my life here, so my accent kept pulling me back to France in a way. (Pauline, September 14, 2016)

As it can be seen from the above examples, different experiences have led to different perceptions of how identities and accents are influential in the participants' lives.

Identity

Exploring the L2-speaker participants' ideas about identity revealed several underlying meanings and understandings of it. Identity is viewed as both a social and psychological construct (Nakagawa & Kouritzin, 2009; Rahimian, 2015). In social identity theory, some aspects of identity are viewed as being formed socially and later becoming psychological realities for the individuals (Hogg, 2016; MacKinnon & Heise, 2010; Tajfel, 1969, 1974). During the interviews with L2 speakers, the longest pauses taken by participants occurred when I asked

about identity. Probably the best description of confusion about identity was given by Bob: "it's very hard to say" (Bob, September 29, 2016). Different ideas about the nature of identity surfaced as I interviewed the participants. However, common themes were the complexity of identity and its inner position. Another common theme was the connection between identity and a person's background—meaning where they were born and raised. On the complicated nature of identity, for example, Pauline said:

> Well, identity might be the way you define yourself in relation to the environment that's around you. So, I guess usually when we're gonna talk about identity, we're gonna talk about nationality, gender, that kind of things. So it's, it's kind of a compound, compound of different characteristics that can be social, that can be *blah, blah, blah*…. (Pauline, September 14, 2016)

Catmum defined identity as being something related to a person's knowledge of the self. She also clarified that the social and relational sides of identity depend on individuals' attachments to their social and cultural groups.

> I would say that is more cultural based…based on where I grew up, or one person grew up….I would say a country would define your identity because you have the education, you are emerged in that environment that this country is your mother land, so that defines your identity. But for me, when I go out of my own country, things change because I see different part[s] of the world, I meet people from different background[s], different culture[s], then I just feel I'm an individual living in the world….Some people may have a pride of being a citizen of some countries, but to me, I feel I just live in the world. (Catmum, September 28, 2016)

Identity was viewed by the participants as something that has become internalized. For example, Reed acknowledged the complexity of identity after reflecting and defining it at two levels: social[20] and personal:

> I guess there're two types of identity: The first one is the one that you usually introduce yourself with. And the other one is a domain which shows your, like what you said, for example, if somebody see[s] your card here, as a driving license I mean, nobody can understand you're Iranian, but its embedded inside your characteristics. So I would say identity is what introduce[s] you completely not just what you are. I mean whatever you're gonna say [is] embedded in your characteristics. (Reed, September 2, 2016)

Robert defined identity as a collection of:

> …all the traditions, values, cultures…that you are part of….This includes your birthplace, where you grew up, and communities you were a member of…even sometimes your identity becomes part of your attitude toward different issues. (Robert, August 22, 2016, translated)

Robert made it clear that he thinks "it is more identity affecting your accent than your accent affecting your identity" (Robert, August 22, 2016, translated). He explained that "your identity has affected your accent over the years, and now it has become representative of your identity" (Robert, August 22, 2016, translated). It seems that Robert perceives a complicated relationship between identity and accent, with the effects of identity on accent being more evident than vice versa. Similarly, for Saeed, identity has two levels:

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[20] Or if we consider it as related to others, we can call it *relational* (e.g. Haugh, 2008). In this document, the concept of *social* encompasses *relational*.

> Identity for me is, it encodes, I think, two things: number one is the knowledge and, and all the history inside someone's brain, number one. And number two, the way that those stuff inside someone's brain cause him to interact, and act, and behave in the society. (Saeed, August 29, 2016)

In this last example, we can see that Saeed also portrays a complicated picture of identity. He also considered identity on two levels: social and personal.

Identity as a personal construct. Social identity theory considers identity to constitute part of the psychological reality of individuals (Hogg, 2016; MacKinnon & Heise, 2010; Tajfel, 1974). At times, L2-speaker participants defined identity as something "built inside". It was described as something people think of and about themselves: "Identity is what people... think of themselves. I mean, what, how they classify themselves as a group" (Bob, September 29, 2016). This last excerpt from the interview with Bob defines identity as being something both internal and external in a very concise way. While identity is something related to individuals, it also informs the groups that an individual belongs to:

> Identity is the way I think, it's kinda my characteristic. It can be dependent on where I was born, but, maybe generally, yes it is, but about me, no it isn't. It's the way I believe in myself, that's my identity. Because I think I have found my identity, maybe in a different way. (Elena, September 1, 2016)

In this excerpt, Elena acknowledges that identity can be formed by a person's backgrounds; however, it becomes part of the person's inner self.

Identity as a social construct. Identity was viewed as being constructed socially. In the following two excerpts, Catmum and Jack explain how identity is formed socially.

I would say that is more cultural based...based on where I grew up or one person grew up

even if someone is…is highly…well, I would say a country would define your identity

because you have the education, you are emerged in that environment that this country is

your mother land, so that defines your identity. (Catmum, September 28, 2016)

Jack expressed similar ideas about identity:

...it's basically, like, your characteristics, so, you know? With what culture you've grown

up, in what culture basically you've grown up….That can be, that can have originated

from your culture or from where you have lived, or from your education or the type of

family. So, all characteristics of you combined can basically…give you an identity. So, I

would say, it would be basically all my characteristics. (Jack, August 13, 2016)

Jack's final words in the above example show how an identity originally formed by different

social factors becomes a psychological reality, making a move from external to internal

characteristics. Other participants shared similar ideas as well:

...for me the definition of identity would be where you're born and where you come from

actually and family, where you grew up. From this [region] of the world, or from this

community you would have your own identity. How do you ... expect yourself, or how do

you present yourself. So I think that ... identity depends [on] the community. (Pulak,

October 10, 2016)

Some scholars have argued that identity is fluid and changing (e.g. Haugh, 2008; Motha & Lin,

2013; Norton & Toohey, 2011). Likewise, fluidity of identity surfaced in the present study when

I explored the experiences of L2 speakers. For example, Jack emphasized the fluidity of identity:

...my identity has also been changed, you know? …it, being and living in Canada has not

only made some changes in terms of maybe a little, minor, to my accent, but it's changed

my identity a little bit as well. Like my values, for instance, have become closer to more

Canadian values as well. (Jack, August 13, 2016)

Jack considered his "social character" to be part of his identity, and suggested that his identity is

reflected in his accent (Jack, August 13, 2016). He acknowledged the importance of language in

identity and clearly pointed out that "…you can't get to a Canadian identity simply because

language is a main part of an identity, in my opinion" (Jack, August 13, 2016). And as long as he

cannot, or thinks he cannot, achieve a high level of proficiency in the English language, he thinks

that being considered Canadian is almost impossible.

Global citizens. Some individuals, like Catmum, talked about personal identity in a

different manner to other participants. Acknowledging the social and individual aspects of

identity, she discussed the uniqueness of individuals, explaining how she feels like a global

citizen when leaving her country:

I would say that is more cultural based…based on where I grew up, or [a] person grew

up….I would say a country would define your identity because you have the education,

you are emerged in that environment that this country is your mother land, so that defines

your identity. But for me, when I go out of my own country, things change because I see

different part[s] of the world, I meet people from different background[s], different

culture[s], then I just feel I'm an individual living in the world….Some people may have

a pride of being a citizen of some countries, but to me, I feel I just live in the world.

(Catmum, September 28, 2016)

Here, the concept of identity Catmum uses is different from the one expressed by other

participants. Catmum expresses a general, citizenship-free identity, a global citizen identity. This

specific concept was not discussed by other participants. It can be perceived by other people as well, but it requires its own research and exploration.

Speaking English and Access to Communities of Practice

Researchers in SLA have investigated a number of issues L2 speakers face in accessing communities of practice in English (e.g., Block, 2009; Kouritzin, 2000; Norton, 2000, 2013; Ortectepe, 2013). Al found it was relatively easy to access English-speaking communities because his father was an anglophone and because he was raised bilingual, attending an English-speaking high school. For others, two key barriers in their communications with L1 speakers of Canadian English were identified. The first was the frequent use of local expressions by L1 speakers when talking with each other, and the second concerned the topics that L1 speakers discussed. Several L2 speakers pointed to a lack of shared experiences as a major demotivating factor for them to become involved in conversations with L1 speakers:

> Well, for me…in our speaking, there are a lot of expressions that I'm not familiar with, or I've never heard of from other people. There are so many expressions that is, sometimes is hard to guess what does it mean. So that is my problems. And also for the topics, yeah, they talk about so many things that you've never heard of like some singers, some games that you've never heard of, so it's very hard to talk to them in my opinion. (Bob, September 29, 2016)

> I wouldn't say that's language itself, it is the culture, what they learn when they grew up. So, they may watch hockey when they're very young and I had never watched hockey, so I have no topic, we have no common topic. Sometimes, that's the case, yeah. But if that person is very patient with a person speaking a second language, I think there wouldn't be a problem in communication. (Catmum, September 28, 2016)

In situations that I don't understand them very well,…when two of them, for instance, or a group of them talk to each other, or the subjects that I can't follow much, or…say the type of basically entertainments that they had, which has not been…very interesting to me. Sometimes…these are the moments that I feel the difference and that…that I just feel a little disconnected. (Jack, August 13, 2016)

These are just a few examples of the cases in which L2 speakers found topics and expressions to act as barriers between them and English L1 speakers.

A number of participants explained that their social connections occur through groups that include international members or a mix of internationals and Canadian English L1 speakers. When L2 speakers felt that they were active members of groups, it made them happier and more comfortable living in Canada. Being excluded from groups and being looked down upon were reported to have devastating effects on L2 speakers' identities and feelings of belonging.

Identifying the classroom as one community of practice, Bob claimed to have encountered some issues in his classroom communications, but suggests that these difficulties are related to his English language in general, rather than to his accent. For example, Bob reported that sometimes he cannot understand L1-English speakers when they talk, outside and inside the classroom. Catmum reported not feeling confident when she talks to L1 speakers because she cannot talk as fast as they do, and she is afraid that the L1 speakers may not understand her accent. Jack claims to exaggerate his (foreign) accent in English to make jokes, thereby creating a humorous, more positive environment in the group. Jack also reports feeling "a little disconnected" when he cannot participate in conversations with his colleagues (Jack, August 13, 2016). Pauline notes feeling "excluded" when she cannot contribute to conversations, either because there was a language barrier or there was an unfamiliar topic (Pulak, October 10,

2016). Robert distinguished between his professional and social lives, explaining that people accommodate him in his professional life; while in his social life, accent plays a major role in being included or excluded from groups (Robert, August 22, 2016, translated). Robert also believes that he has a very "clear" accent that is relatively intelligible, and that this has worked to his benefit (Robert, August 22, 2016, translated). He also prefers being in a group that has other L2 speakers because he finds those situations more comfortable.

Connections. The majority of connections that L2 speakers had were with compatriots that also lived in Canada, or with other L2 speakers of different backgrounds. In general, they had relationships with L1 speakers as well, the majority of which were in professional, rather than social settings. Notable exceptions were Al and Bob[21]. Bob reported playing board games and going to church with English L1 speakers, while Al grew up in a bilingual English and French family.

Other L2 speakers had mainly sporadic social connections with L1 speakers of Canadian English. Jack was an exception, saying he goes to whatever activities he can and communicates with English L1 speakers. He perceived his involvement as being positive in general:

> I'm a fairly sociable person. So I attend social activities as much as I can. And you know? In some of them, there have been local, I mean native English speakers around as well. And it's been fairly well…I attend church from time to time. I visit my Canadian friends when I travel if there is a chance, and ... I've gone to picnics with them, I've been getting help from them, say with my, with improving my English, and these sort[s] of activities. (Jack, August 13, 2016)

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[21] Al thinks that he feels more connected with people when he knows them and they know him. In French, he feels more connected with more cultural aspects of his heritage like going to a concert in French or to French festivals.

Several other L2 speakers (Elena, Catmum, Reed, and Saeed) mentioned that their expertise is the main factor that entices Canadian English L1 speakers to communicate with them. However, they believe such connections are based on need rather than social desirability.

A recurrent theme was that a common interest can motivate people to overcome language barriers, specifically accent differences, so they can communicate and connect with each other. *Assigning tasks to people in a team* and *caring about individual members* were the two commonly-referred to factors making team members feel affiliated with a group. It seems that the presence of these two factors have deterministic influences on L2 speakers' experiences of living in Canada. Basically, it makes the difference between feeling connected and helping to build identity, or feeling disconnected, with negative effects on identity construction.

Intelligibility

All the L2 speakers believed that intelligibility of speech is very important in communication in general. They also made it clear that intelligibility of speech is more crucial in a teaching-learning environment in which knowledge must be transferred to students through language. A number of participants also considered intelligibility to be more important than accent in an L2, often mentioning organization of speech as an important aspect of intelligibility. For example, Bob said:

> ...it is more recommended that you must speak very slowly and very clearly in your teachings to make your points more clearly delivered to other students. Even, I mean especially for teachers who have a strong accent, I mean who come from other parts of the world. If they speak very fast and not clearly and with the influence of the accents, so that points are not just clearly expressed. So I think if you have very strong accent, you need to speak clearly and slowly. (Bob, September 29, 2016)

In this excerpt, Bob pointed out a number of factors that were also referred to by other L2-speaker participants, and even by L1-speaking raters. He clarified that intelligibility is crucial in making teaching communication effective. He also advised speaking slowly. Saeed also pointed out the role of intelligibility in his teaching practices:

> I don't know how many percents of the total understanding of students would depend on that, but in terms of clarifying the materials for students and in terms of helping students following a way to complete their understanding, speaking intelligibly for sure will help. (Saeed, August 29, 2016)

Robert specifies the compensating role intelligibility can have for ITAs:

> [Intelligibility] is very important….as I said … if you cannot transfer the meaning because of your accent, speaking intelligibly/clearly can help [in] transferring the meaning. (Robert, August 22, 2016, translated)

Robert perceives intelligibility as something that can compensate for accent differences. He talked about how he has used intelligibility, in terms of speaking clearly, as a strategy to overcome his accent differences and communicate meaning better. Pauline makes the distinction between accent and intelligibility clear, in terms of communication:

> I think intelligibility is more important because if you have a perfect accent but nobody can understand, nobody can hear what you're saying, it doesn't matter that your accent is perfect. (Pauline, September 14, 2016)

In general, L2-speaker participants emphasized the role of intelligibility as a crucial and compensative means to make their communications with L1 speakers more effective. Communication impacts their teaching practices, and thus it impacts students' understanding of instructional material.

Power. The last theme emerging from the data was the role of *power*, in the sense of having authority, in communication. Several participants pointed out that when they have something to share with a team, they are considered to be active members of the team. Participants varied in the ways they expressed the concept of power during interviews. Catmum explained that in TA positions she is welcomed as a member of the class:

> For example, if I am the TA of the class, even though I was teaching a reading course as a marker, but I also had another lab and TA, so most of…them are local farmers, so most of my students…are local Canadians. So if I am in a higher position like a TA, they all respect me and they would respect the knowledge so they wouldn't judge that much, but in…among our peers [it] is totally based on other peoples' understanding, but if you're nice, others would be nice, too. (Catmum, September 28, 2016)

In this example, Catmum explains that being in a position of power makes it more likely that L1-English speakers will respect her and accept her as a member of their group. She also recommends sharing knowledge and experience with English-L1 speakers, as these things give her a sense of authority. Sharing knowledge and experience can allow an L2-English speaker to assume a position of higher authority, with interactions becoming more favorably balanced. Several other L2 speakers mentioned that, on occasions when they felt they were accepted as members of a group, it was because they had some knowledge, experience, and expertise to share[22].

In this chapter, I presented the findings of the interviews with the ITAs. As discussed throughout the chapter, different participants had different experiences with

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[22] For example, Elena, Reed, Robert, and Saeed. I have explained their ideas under different subheadings, but the gist of their ideas are similar to the ones mentioned here.

identity, accent, and intelligibility. Yet, there were seven recurring themes that emerged in the analysis of the interview transcripts. These answer the first, second, and fifth research sub-questions, which were: What are L2-speaking ITAs' experiences with accent and intelligibility in their teaching practices in English? How do L2 speakers describe their experiences with identity construction in English? How do individual ESL speakers' histories with additional language learning affect their identity, accent and intelligibility? These themes were: (1) accent is a feature of language originating from an individual's background, (2) accent is a contributor to an individual's access to communities of practice, (3) identity is a complex mental reality shaped by individuals' backgrounds, (4) speaking English and having access to communities of practice depend on a variety of factors such as the linguistic abilities of the individual as well as the characteristics of interlocutors, (5) the connections available to L2 speakers vary in terms of individual access and expectations, (6) compared to accent, intelligibility is a more important contributor to communication, and (7) the power an individual possesses may facilitate access to communities of practice. In the next chapter, I present the results of the qualitative interviews with L1 speakers of English who had taken courses with ITAs.

Chapter 5 – L1 Speakers

In this chapter, an analysis of my interviews with L1-English-speaking students who had taken courses with L2-English speaker instructors (Group 2, Figure 5 on page 53) is presented. In keeping with Kouritzin (2002), who recommended being respectful of research participants and watchful of the language used in relation to them, I chose to analyze not only the students' ratings of ITAs, but also their deeper insights about their experiences. In a sense, my inclusion of these participants can be seen as an aspect of intersectionality; that is, in understanding human experience, the roles of multiple factors affecting the experiences of individuals need to be considered (Anthias, 2013; Hankivsky, 2014). In this case, learning about the student raters' experiences is beneficial, because any relationship between students and instructors is a two-way relationship that is highly dependent on communication. In exploring an instructional practice, incorporating the experiences of both students and instructors provides a more complete picture of the instructional practice and its impacts. Moreover, examining the backgrounds of L1-speaker students who took courses with ITAs leads to a better understanding of how students learn to interpret accents and intelligibility during teaching. In other words, this chapter addresses the third research sub-question: How do L1-speaking students describe their experiences with ITAs' accent and intelligibility? (Embedded Study 2, Figure 4 in Chapter 3). Learning about the life histories of individual raters can be valuable in understanding educational phenomena (Kouritzin, 2000).

L1-Speaking Raters

The five English-L1-speaking raters were born and raised in Canada. They all had Caucasian backgrounds and experience in taking at least one course with an L2-speaking ITA. They performed three major tasks in this study. First, they rated a set of English sentences and a

passage for intelligibility and accent. Then, I interviewed them about their experiences with

ITAs' accent and intelligibility. Finally, they listened to the *teaching interest talks* one at a time

before I interviewed them about their perceptions of each speaker's speech. In the following

section, I briefly introduce each rater and summarize their experiences with ITAs.

Batman. Batman is a graduate student in engineering. He has had ITAs as TAs, lab

instructors, and course instructors. He pointed to accent and grammar as being the primary

indicators of whether English is a speaker's first language or not. When I asked him his criteria

for judging accent, he responded that if someone's accent did not resemble the accent of

someone from a predominantly English-speaking country, "then…they probably learned a

different language before they learned English" (Batman, November 8, 2016). He noticed that

some people who speak English as an additional language learned it early enough in their lives

that their accents are indistinguishable from those who speak it as a first language. Batman said

that appearance might influence his initial guess about a person's first language, but it plays a

minor role; he does not use any other indicators for determining whether English is someone's

first language or not. He also clearly pointed out that if someone speaks English as an additional

language, it does not mean that they speak "poor" English (Batman, November 8, 2016).

Batman's experience at university and working with L2 speakers has helped him adjust to

different accents. He had several successful theoretical and laboratory classes with ITAs.

However, occasionally, he has experienced challenges in understanding people's accents. He

believed that accent is one of the contributing factors to understanding ITAs, but also

emphasized that it is not the only one. He pointed out that he has had more challenges

understanding TAs than instructors. Batman perceived the intelligibility of speech as crucial to

understanding, while accent does not play a major role. He even pointed out that he likes it when

people have different accents because accent "spices up the conversation," which is clearly a positive response (Batman, November 8, 2016).

Batman referred to a number of factors as deterministic of an instructor's teaching quality. To him, an effective approach to the subject matter, "driving the subject home", and making effective use of repetition were important attributes of teaching (Batman, November 8, 2016). Additionally, he mentioned that speaking in a non-monotonous style helps students pay attention to the instructor. Speaking in a halting way was perceived as distracting. He believes that, over time, students will even get used to halting styles, while at the beginning they may have to rely more on lecture notes. Batman preferred concise and to-the-point lectures with a summary at the end. Speaking clearly and projecting, having a well-organized lecture, and having an enthusiastic presentation style were seen as other important elements of effective instruction. Batman has both professional and social relationships with L2 speakers of English and meets them on a daily basis. Additionally, he speaks German as a second language.

Natalia. Natalia is an undergraduate student in kinesiology who has taken a number of courses and lab classes with ITAs. She perceived deviations from standard lexis choice or grammar as markers of someone being a second-language speaker of English. To her, appearance, clothes, and skin color may also indicate whether a person speaks English as a first or second language, but these must exist in combination with linguistic factors. She emphasized that, if someone is speaking English as an additional language, it does not mean that they do not speak it well. Rather, in such cases, she simply assumes that they probably speak another language too. During high school, Natalia went to a small school with very few international students. She knows a few people who speak English as a second language; however, they learned English early enough to be unrecognizable as L2 speakers of English. When I asked her

about her experiences of speaking with L2 speakers of English, she said that she finds she has to listen more carefully to understand the meaning. When speaking with ESL speakers, she may need to slow down. Mostly, she is comfortable conversing with L2 speakers, and her comfort level is related to how those L2 speakers react to her requests for repetition and clarification.

Reflecting on her experiences, she finds it more challenging to understand instructors when they speak rapidly. Speaking slowly and intelligibly were the two elements that she perceived as important for ITAs to be understood. The content of a presentation seemed to affect her judgment of speakers' teaching skills. Use of understandable terminology and explanation of acronyms were two other important elements she referred to as positive instructional features. Natalia pointed out: "[a]s long as it's clear, and like they get their point across, and they try to teach that, I'm fine with it" (Natalia, November 9, 2016). She expects instructors to be able to show proficiency in their fields by explaining new material clearly. Frequent pauses and signs of hesitation were two features she considered disadvantageous to student understanding. Sounding friendly and projecting the voice were two other positive features of instructors that Natalia pointed out.

Tina. Tina is an undergraduate student in science. Like other English-L1-speaking raters, Tina referred to slow speech filled with pauses as the main indicator of whether or not someone speaks English as a first language. She said that she does not use people's appearance as an indicator of their L1s. Other elements, such as hand movements, could give some clues as to a speaker's English L1 status, but as she clarified: "it's not until they actually start talking that I actually know whether English is actually their first language or not" (Tina, November 2, 2016). She thought that individuals' L1s, and how long they had spoken English, determine the clarity

of their spoken English. In her experience with ITAs, speaking clearly and projecting well were considered important in understanding them.

Similar to Natalia, she felt that when L2 speakers get frustrated by requests for repetition and/or clarification, it becomes more challenging for her to communicate with them. When I asked her whether she has ever experienced such situations, she said: "Not really frustrated but I feel asking a second time was too…'Oh, what was that that you said?' So I guess, I don't know, I just gonna feel bad for having to ask a second time" (Tina, November 2, 2016).

About one of the participants, Al, she commented, "I mean he just sounds like the average male, I don't know how to describe that, but he doesn't have, like, a super-unique or...unusual [accent]" (Tina, November 2, 2016). Thinking deeply about this comment, I think it is fair to assume that she has some preconceptions about L2 speakers. Al was raised bilingual and thus was referred to as "average" and usual, indicating that other accents are probably "unusual".

Tom. Tom is a graduate student in engineering. He grew up in a small English-speaking town in Manitoba with about 5,000 inhabitants. For Tom, the main identifier of a person's first language is accent. When he hears a foreign accent, he wonders where the speaker is from, with the exception of the Quebec French accent, which he is familiar with. When I asked him how he determines other L1 accents such as American, Australian, and so on, he explained that he gained his experience from time spent living in the United States and watching television. He also noted that there are people who are not originally from Canada, but who have lived here long enough that a foreign accent is not perceptible in their speech at all.

With regard to external factors such as skin colour, clothes, hand movements, and other non-linguistic factors, Tom said these "would make you wonder", but he tries not to make

judgments based on those factors as he has seen "a lot of people that have different cultural values or come from different backgrounds that are Canadian, too" (Tom, November 10, 2016). For him, the biggest "give-away" is when people "start to talk" (Tom, November 10, 2016). He was frank in saying that when he first went to university, he was biased against L2 speakers, especially L2-speaking instructors and TAs. But several years later, after having over half of his TAs and instructors being L2 speakers, he is not biased anymore. He likes people who have some foreign accent because, in his experience, these people are more to-the-point and often have more organized lectures.

It seems that his experience of having several L2-speaking instructors, TAs, and colleagues has given Tom an appreciation of working with L2 speakers of English. While some of the L2 accents are more challenging for him to understand, he reported that after a while he gets used to them. Speaking clearly, being to-the-point, and providing some background information were crucial elements Tom wished to see in an instructor's speech. He considered that two other positive features of a good instructor were slow and calm speech.

Zoe. Zoe is doing her undergraduate degree in education. For Zoe, the first determinant of whether or not English is someone's first language is grammar, while appearance is only a minor indicator. Zoe believes that there are varieties of ESL speakers with different English levels. Having worked with children, she found they spoke ESL very well. Zoe had the experience of living in another country for two months as a child. She also studied for a term in a French language university where she noticed some of the ESL speakers' English was even better than hers. These experiences have helped her learn that if someone speaks English as a second language, it does not mean that that person lacks English language skills.

Zoe said that she is more exposed to certain English accents via television, such as British or Australian; therefore, she can understand these accents quite well. Zoe said that she has had no problems understanding her L2-speaking instructors. Similar to some other raters, she mentioned having some misunderstandings at the beginning of the L2-speaker speech samples she rated, but as she continued listening, her understanding improved.

After analysing the qualitative interviews with English L1-speaking raters, there were four emerging themes that stood out. These themes are: (1) language-related aspects of L2 perception; (2) experience with learning an L2 and having ITAs; (3) teaching style; and (4) content, organization, and presentation style. In the following sections, I will discuss these themes in the order presented above, that is, moving from the linguistic to the non-linguistic elements of participants' experiences.

Language-Related Aspects of L2 Perception

Four out of five English L1-speaking raters mentioned that accent is one of the key factors they use to determine whether a person speaks English as a first language or not. Four out of five raters, when listening to English L1-speakers or Al, who is a bilingual French-English speaker, said that they did not hear an accent. When I probed more into this, it turned out that participants assumed that only people from other places have accents; they did not think of a Canadian accent as an accent, but rather as a norm. The only person that referred to it as an accent was Zoe, who is a student in education. "I'm not as familiar [with other accents] as I'm with the Canadian accent, but on a scale of familiarity. But that's [referring to Canadian accent] an accent that I've been exposed to in my life quite often..." (Zoe, October 3, 2016). It is likely that her field of study, or her background experience of living in another country for a short time, assisted her in realizing that all people, including Canadians, have an accent.

When I asked the raters how they could distinguish an L2 accent from that of an L1 English speaker from another country, they referred to television and travel as the two major sources of knowledge about dominant accents in English. For example, they pointed out that they hear major accents such as British, American, or Australian on TV. In the following excerpt, Tom explains how he knows other major English accents:

> I guess from experience of travelling a bit, like I have spent some time in The States, so I know what a southern accent sounds like, or from TV…like you hear British accents on TV. Yeah I guess if it, I guess the easiest way…if I don't notice anything, I guess I assume they're Canadian... (November 10, 2016)

Reviewing the ratings of the *teaching interest talk* samples, I noticed that accent played a role in a rater's preferences for particular instructors and TAs. However, accent is not the only determinant, other elements also contribute to L1 raters' preference. As Tina commented on one of the speakers "...between the accent and the way she talked, structured her sentences, or trying to say, both made it difficult to understand" (Tina, November 2, 2016).

Accent and Non-Linguistic Cues

Accent seems to be the primary indicator used by English L1 speakers to determine whether an individual is an L1 or L2 speaker of English. They explained that if someone does not have a Canadian accent, a mainstream English accent or a French accent (with the latter making raters assume the speaker is from Quebec), then English-L1-speaker participants assume that the speaker is from another country and speaks English as a second language.

> If [the accent is] not an accent from a country where, you know, English is [the] predominant language, then, then I assume that this person is, is not, English isn't their

first language. Then, so if it's not a British accent or American accent or something like

that, then I would expect all… they probably would know all the… they probably know a

different language, they probably learned a different language before they learned

English. (Batman, November 8, 2016)

I guess you just get accustomed to hear words, things spoken in a certain way. And then,

when you hear someone say [them] differently, I think that your first thing is 'Oh, maybe

it isn't their first language' or sometimes like the grammatical structure just cause I'm

having a casual conversation with someone, it's a lot different, a lot of condensed words,

a lot of quick like statements in between, or someone I notice where like English is their

second language they speak more full proper sentences. I think those things are the main

difference I would pick up on. (Natalia, November 9, 2016)

Some of the raters also pointed out that they pay attention to grammar and word choice when

judging whether someone speaks English as a first or second language; however, as Tom

explained "when people start to speak would be the biggest give away" (Tom, November 10,

2016). While factors such as a person's skin colour, clothes, behaviour, body language, etc.

might have an effect, language, including accent, seemed to be the most important indicator of

L1 or L2 status.

Yeah, I guess colour of skin and clothes would make you wonder, but there is a lot of

people that have different cultural values or come from different backgrounds that are

Canadian, too, that don't have much of an accent or, you know? So I try not to make

judgements on that, but yeah obviously that's kinda, I think everyone kinda judges people

on appearance so you definitely...that would be an indicator, but for me, when people

start to speak would be the biggest give away for me cause there is lots of people that may dress a different way and still are English... (Tom, November 10, 2016)

In addition to accent, sentence grammar, sentence pattern, rate of speech, sentence form (in terms of using proper forms, which can be a feature of L2 speech) and the use of more frequent pauses are other indicators of L2 English speech. In the following example, Tina explains factors that affect her judgement of people's L1s:

> I guess it's a, they're very clear in the way they speak and how fast they speak, too. If English isn't their first language, they speak a lot slower. They kinda think about what they say. They have pauses and breaks in there when they talk. I guess the way they pronounce something, so like a /w/ as a /v/ or a /v/ as a /w/, or even vowels for that matter, like /is/ and /es/, or when they say your name, they might ask you to say it again. (Tina, November 2, 2016)

When I asked about the language abilities of the L2 English speakers, the raters were clear that being an L1 or L2 speaker of English is not a major factor in a speaker's language abilities. Depending on their experience, the L1 raters articulated different reasons for such a statement. One major and commonly-agreed upon argument was that if someone has a foreign accent in their English, that person can compensate by projecting more and speaking at a slower rate. For example, in the following excerpt, Natalia, referring to two of the participants' *teaching interest talks*, explained her reasons for liking them: "I found that at least she was friendly and projecting her voice, so it's not like all terrible" (Natalia, November 9, 2016).

> When you have an accent, like sometimes you have to speak a bit slower. Because if they speak slower, you can kind of pick up how their word structure is, how their sentence

structure is; so we can follow. When they speak so fast to begin with, I cannot pick up

any of that, so. (Natalia, November 9, 2016)

There were a number of other speech-related elements pointed out by the raters as factors

influencing their judgement of the speakers. Projecting sufficiently and speaking at a slow rate

were the top-rated factors that raters considered to assist with comprehension.

With teachers, I would like, I hate it to say that I do prefer that they have a better

speaking with English. Like, I don't mind, it doesn't have to be perfect English, but they

have to make sure they're clear with it and then they can speak it slower. (Natalia,

November 9, 2016)

In the following case, Zoe refers to some of the positive features of one of her ITAs:

He speaks very clearly. You know, he is concise. If there is any other questions, we go

over what he said. But its only question with, within understanding based on your accent,

it's more like we didn't understand because your ideas weren't clearly articulated. But I

mean that happens with every single professor, even with others. (Zoe, October 3, 2016)

In the above excerpt, Zoe explains that being clear is one of the attributes that makes her

instructor understandable. Another factor affecting L1 speakers' perceptions of L2 speakers was

use of key content words. Even though none of the raters used the phrase 'content keywords',

they all pointed out terms that were recognizable as keywords, such as 'toy photography', which

was the topic of Catmum's speech, or 'geopolitics', which was the field within which Pauline

wanted to teach, or a number of words in Bob's speech that some of the raters reported as being

confusing. Therefore, it is fair to conclude that pronouncing keywords clearly can have a

significant impact on the comprehensibility of ITAs' speech. In addition to that, repetition of

sentences containing keywords can help the listeners normalize the ITAs' speech.

Experience with Learning an L2 and Having ITAs

The English-L1-speaking raters had varied experiences with ITAs; some more, some less. One general theme was that, no matter the number of experiences, they reported greater difficulty in understanding certain ITAs, and less with others. An emerging idea was that by gaining experience with ITAs, L1 speakers become accustomed to accent diversity and are better able to understand different accents.

... This is a university and I'm…I've been here for a while so…I've met a number of people from…English is not their first language, so maybe I've gotten better in understanding it. Maybe that's a bit of a biasing factor. I mean I can understand one of them really well. (Batman, November 8, 2016)

…it's just like if you, if you are not used to them saying it like that, [it] takes a while to adjust, but you know, after a few lectures you, you learn their accent…but I find that the most difficult…kinda you need a few lectures to kinda understand the accent if its, if its new to you. But that was kinda more so in my first few years when I wasn't used to these accents… (Tom, November 10, 2016)

In the above examples, Batman and Tom explained how being exposed to different accents has helped them learn about the way speakers with different accents interact. In the following example, Tina reflects on her experience of listening to different *teaching interest talks*:

I think also because I'm, when I'm listening to these people, I'm kinda listening for that now, listening to how they structure their sentences and their thoughts are tuned. So…their *hmms* and *aaas* are becoming very distracting.…I feel like after a while, you'll just tune that out because you listen to a person, I'm sure I do it, too [referring to hmm, mm, and sounds like them]. (Tina, November 2, 2016)

In this case, Tina explains how she thinks she will get used to different accents and different ways of talking.

There were a number of other interesting observations. For example, Batman speaks German; therefore, some of his attitudes toward L2 speakers were different to those of the other participants. Because Batman's best friend's parents are from Quebec, he has had both professional and social relationships with L2 speakers, and he reported enjoying different accents. On the other hand, Natalia came from an English-only family; in her high school, the only people she knew of who spoke a different language were four exchange students from Germany. So, prior to university, she had little experience with L2 speakers in general. Although she had both positive and negative experiences with understanding ITAs, in the following comment, which was also used in Accent and Non-Linguistic Cues section, she said:

> With teachers, I would like, I hate it to say that I do prefer that they have a better speaking with English. Like, I don't mind, it doesn't have to be perfect English, but they have to make sure they're clear with it and then they can speak it slower. If they're gonna have [a] thick accent, where they are going to be struggling with certain words, then speak slowly and then at least all the students can listen and follow. (Natalia, November 9, 2016)

Two conclusions can be drawn based on her comment: (a) she considers L2-speaker English to be a drawback, and (b) she nonetheless sees the possibility of ITAs being good instructors.

This does not necessarily mean that Natalia is biased or racist but, rather, that because of some previous negative experiences with internationally-educated instructors, or because of some learned prejudices, she may be more hesitant to choose an L2 English-speaking instructor. In

fact, in the follow up questions, she told me that she had some issues with internationally-educated instructors:

> ...because in one of my classes in our first year, we're constantly having the teacher repeat the stuff and I got to the point that I just missed her, I dropped the class. I was like 'I can't understand her' I was like 'I don't wanna have a bad mark as an outcome'…
>
> (Natalia, November 9, 2016)

Interestingly, Natalia revealed having issues with an internationally-educated instructor after I had surmised this cause in my analysis. Overall, an individual's background experiences contribute significantly to building their perceptions of ITAs' teaching quality. As I explored her answers to the questions of how she would feel about taking a course with each speaker or having them as her TA, it turned out that she was somewhat unwilling to accept people with non-Canadian English accents. It appears that her experiences with ITAs had been relatively negative, making her less willing to accept L2-speaker educators as instructors or TAs.

It is interesting to consider Natalia's comments in comparison with other raters who were more experienced with ITAs and had had more positive experiences with them. For example, Tom explained that at the beginning of his undergraduate degree he was worried about ITAs. But after a few years of studying at university, he learned how to understand different accents. Not all of his experiences with ITAs were positive ones; however, he shared with me that his favourite instructor by far is an internationally-educated instructor.

> My favourite prof is from Iran, and like his accent would probably be like three out of five or something, but he is my favourite prof by far, like he just, he really can hold your attention and really, really understands his, his, his material and kind of uses a different

tone of voice like that last guy there and kinda uses a little bit of humour, and just keeps

it, keeps it fun, still very tough, but just...yeah (Tom, November 10, 2016)

It is interesting to think about how learning about different accents has shifted Tom's perceptions

and judgements about people. He had a significant shift from being concerned about instructors

with different accents at his initial stages of going to university to identifying his favorite

instructor as someone speaking with a different accent.

Overall, all the L1-speaking raters emphasized that if ITAs speak clearly and slowly,

project their voices well, know the material well, and are well prepared, then there is no problem

having them as instructors and/or TAs.

Teaching Style

There was not a lot of agreement among the raters as to with whom they would definitely

take a course and why; however, there were certain ideas that could be classified together under

the topic of *teaching style*. The first common idea was that internationally-educated instructors

need to have a certain level of intelligibility, so that listeners are able to perceive and comment

on higher-order factors such as organization, presentation style, and teaching style. Before

reaching that minimum requirement, it was hard, if not impossible, to comment on any other

factors. For example, in the following excerpt, Natalia comments on Pulak's *teaching interest*

talk:

I don't think I could comment on his organization because, as I said, I could only pick up

very few words, like one or two. I know he was talking about physics, I know that

word…otherwise, oh and then 'nature of physics', otherwise, I don't know. I really don't

know what he said. (Natalia, November 9, 2016)

Because Natalia could not sufficiently understand his speech, she could not comment on higher-order elements of his talk, such as its organization and teaching style. Therefore, for people to comment on an L2 speaker's teaching and organization style, the speech needs to be intelligible.

On the other hand, it seemed that having a little bit of an accent, as long as it does not interfere with intelligibility, may work to the benefit of ITAs by motivating students to stay focused throughout lectures. As Tina explained when referring to Pauline:

> But accent-wise,…it can work to her advantage because I was not listening too much to what she was trying to say, because I understand what she's saying, but I was listening more closely to make sure that I'm hearing more correctly. Yeah, so I think it could be good in a Prof's situation because towards the end of the class, you start to get distracted by other things, but still will be listening closely to what she was saying, so I know for sure that I'm understanding correctly. (November 2, 2016)

Zoe had a unique reason for her preferences. Dividing classroom situations into large lecture halls versus small classrooms, she noted that some ESL-speaker instructors could teach well both in large lecture halls and smaller classrooms, whereas others are better in teaching only in smaller classrooms. In large lecture halls, there are a number of factors affecting teaching. The size of the class is bigger, so the instructor must speak louder to be heard by the students; there are more students, hence more ambient noise; the instructor has to maintain a certain pace to cover the intended material and, thus, there is less two-way interaction between the instructor and individual students. Similar ideas were supported by other raters as well. Natalia noted that when she took a course with an ITA in a classroom that was smaller than a lecture hall, she had no problems understanding the instructor. She explained that the course had "more interactive dynamics" (Natalia, November 9, 2016); she explained that a) the room was small, so he could

still speak loudly but not too loud, b) he could go through the material at a slower pace, and c) the students could interact with him more frequently and easily.

All of the raters perceived different dynamics in the interactions between students and TAs and/or students and (lab) instructors. For example, in the following case, Batman reflects on the difference between instructors and TAs:

> …that's a reasonable distinction. One of the things that I consider subconsciously...about distinguishing between a prof and a TA, I personally hold TAs to a lower standard because I don't talk to them as much as I have to....I have to listen to the professor speak more words just by virtue [of] the fact that they're lecturing to me other than a TA. But [a] TA is there mainly when I'm having trouble with a lab or an assignment although I talk to them one-on-one. But the amount of time I spend interacting with a TA is quite a bit less than a prof. So that's, I think, that's a reasonable distinction to make. In short, I hold them to [a] lower standard than a prof. (Batman, November 8, 2016)

Tina also distinguished between a TA and an instructor while reflecting on one of the *teaching interest talks*:

> As a TA, I guess, in a lab situation, there is more time to clarify what is being said and ask more questions if you didn't understand the first time. Whereas in class, you can't be putting up your hand like, 'Hey, what was that last thing you said' [laugh], whereas in a lab situation, you can ask, go to the person, 'Oh, what was the last thing you said?', or 'What was that word supposed to do?' (Tina, November 2, 2016)

To summarize the differences, the nature of relationship between students and TAs or lab instructors was characterized as less formal than with instructors, and there are generally more

opportunities to interact one-on-one in TA sessions than in lecture sessions. Therefore, raters hold lower standards of intelligibility for TAs and lab instructors in small-group settings.

Another point brought forward was that ITAs need to be as intelligible as possible. While a foreign accent may or may not affect an ITA's comprehensibility, when accent is combined with other factors such as speaking without projection, the affect is multiplied. Specifically, one factor may not have a negative impact alone, but a combination of factors does:

> Just words like *phenomena*, or it was a little tricky to understand them. I don't know if it was just a combination of his accent. I just kinda felt like his voice didn't project very much like he was saying the words…like I really had to focus in on what he was saying to understand him, like when I really focused on what he was saying, I could understand him better, like he definitely spoke clearly, but I just, yeah it didn't capture my attention right away. I can see him teaching in a lecture room, and if you're sitting past the first couple of rows, you wouldn't understand a thing he is saying... (Tom, November 9, 2016)

In the following section, I will examine other factors affecting the L1-speaking raters' decisions with regard to willingness to take a course with an L2 English-speaker participant. I categorized these in terms of *content*, *organization*, and *presentation style*.

Content, Organization, and Presentation Style

Content seemed to play a major role in the L1-speaking raters' perceptions of the speakers. It was not unusual for a speaker to be perceived as very clear by some raters but unclear and vague to others, depending on the topic. Raters voluntarily told me how they thought their background knowledge might affect their judgement:

He didn't overload me with a lot of content. So I didn't have to worry about what was important and what wasn't because he kept it short…I was able to comprehend everything he was saying. I'm familiar with that field too, so that could also be a source of bias because I know some of the stuff. Maybe if someone doesn't know what 'biomemes' is, that might be confusing to them. (Batman commenting on Reed's *teaching interest talk*, November 8, 2016)

I can't comment on, she was talking about politics, another subject... I don't do politics, at all. I don't talk about it and I don't know much about it. So in that sense, it was a little hard to follow, but at least I could find she was using political words, there were a few that I knew about like *tertiary structure*, I knew about like *urban centres*, so as much as I don't know about the subject, I could follow… (Natalia commenting on Pauline's *teaching interest talk*, November 9, 2016)

You know, if it was a subject that I knew more about, it would be easier to understand, but probably…I still need to listen more actively to properly understand. (Zoe on Bob's *teaching interest talk*, October 3, 2016)

In the above examples, different L1 speakers explained how familiarity with a subject area can affect their perceptions of a speaker's intelligibility and accent.

It seems that the better-received *teaching interest talks* were those that had some common features: first, they provided some background on the topic; second, they moved from general ideas to specifics; third, they were detailed enough to present new information to the listener, thereby avoiding being too general; fourth, they concluded by summarizing key points; and fifth, the speaker spoke in a manner that portrayed confidence, i.e., without pauses between sentences or avoidance of explanation.

One of the L1 speakers, Tim, was rated as "good quality" by all raters for his *teaching interest talk*. The positive attributes of Tim's presentation were that a) he started with a greeting, "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen" (Tim, September 16, 2016), b) he started his topic with a hook, c) he asked the listeners to use a multi-perceptual method by urging them to imagine a situation. That is, he intrigued listeners with the topic, then used multi-tone speech and, finally d) summarized the presentation using alternative words. Asking listeners to imagine a situation provided them with enough background to be ready for the main part of the lecture. Using rising and falling tones spiced up the *teaching interest talk* by keeping listeners engaged.

Providing scaffolds at the beginning seemed to be important for the raters' perceptions of each speech, as the raters knew what to expect. Another factor attracting positive rater responses was when speakers displayed passion for the subject, often by giving personal reasons for teaching the course. Making the lectures more personable and more story-like was another aspect that increased raters' interest.

A final factor I should mention is that the "openness" of the interviews, not just in terms of the wording of the questions, but also in my aim to provide a safe and trusting environment, led participants to share information beyond that required to answer the interview questions. This led to a number of serendipitous findings that I shared in this chapter. I would like to end this section with a comment by Tom, part of which I have already shared in this chapter:

> ...if your English is half-decent, I feel like it still comes down to how much effort you put into teaching like my…yeah my favourite prof is from Iran, and like his accent would probably be like 3 out of 5 or something, but he is my favourite prof by far, like he just, he really can hold your attention and really, really understands…his material and kind of uses a different tone of voice like that last guy there [referring to Tim] and kinda uses a

little bit of humor, and just…keeps it fun, still very tough, but just…yeah I don't think it

really comes down to, you know? …if you have decent enough English that you can

speak clearly and I can understand you from the middle of the classroom and I don't have

to be in the front row, I think it really just comes down to how much effort [you put into

the instruction] and how passionate you are about the subject.... (November 10, 2016)

Conclusion

In this chapter, I summarized the data collected from first language-speaking raters. The

data provided in this chapter illuminated the third research sub-question: How do L1-speaking

students describe their experiences with ITAs' accent and intelligibility? As discussed, the

individual background differences of raters affected their experiences and, thus, their perceptions

of ITAs. Most of the raters had mainly positive experiences with ITAs but acknowledged some

negative ones as well. In general, the more experienced a participant was with ITAs and with

second-language speakers, the more willing they were to accept those educators as instructors

and TAs. For example, speaking a second language or having had the experience of living in and

travelling to other countries affected raters' perceptions positively, making them more willing to

take courses with ITAs. While different aspects of speech, including accent, played a role in the

raters' judgement of the speakers' L2 English abilities, the raters unanimously agreed that

speaking English as a second language is not a (major) determinant of a person's English

language skills.

Helpfully, raters were able to identify some common positive attributes of excellent L2

English speech in ITAs. These were: (1) high intelligibility; (2) thorough knowledge of the field;

(3) clear organization; (4) well-structured presentation style; and (5) a minor foreign accent. The

last attribute refers to the idea that a minor accent in English can be advantageous, as it motivates students to stay focused throughout lectures.

In the following chapter, I will extend this discussion by presenting and explaining the quantitative data on L1 English-speaking students' ratings of ITA accent and intelligibility.

Chapter 6: Quantitative Findings

In this chapter, the results of the quantitative strand of the study are presented. I expected to extract several outcomes from the quantitative strand of the research. First, I wanted to have some descriptive statistics on the international teaching assistants' accent and intelligibility. Then, I wanted to examine how accent and intelligibility of the ITAs are rated by English-speaking raters. Finally, I was interested to explore whether or not extra-linguistic factors have any roles on people's perceptions of one's accent and intelligibility.

The findings from the quantitative strand of the study were utilized to answer these research sub-questions: How do L1speakers rate accent and intelligibility in various recordings of L1 and L2 speakers of English? And in line with that: Does the perceived ethnicity of the speaker affect L1 speakers' judgements of accent and intelligibility? The quantitative results include ratings of the intelligibility and accent for three categories of spoken English: sentences, a scripted passage, and a non-scripted passage. There were 32 sentences adapted from previous linguistic studies that each participant read (Bent, Bradlow, & Smith, 2007, Appendix 1). This excludes raters. The scripted passage used was *The Rainbow Passage*, which is a standard linguistic text used to elicit a variety of vowel and consonant sounds in English (Fairbanks, 1960, Appendix 6). The non-scripted text (*teaching interest talk*) was a short 1–2 minute speech in which participants talked about a course they wished to teach and their reasons why (Appendix 3). All the sentences and the scripted passage were read by ten L2 speakers of English and five L1 speakers of English, then the sentences were parsed into single audio files using Praat software (Boersma & Weenink, 2015). The sentences were used to create a survey to be listened to and rated for accent and intelligibility by the L1-speaking raters. The five L1-speaking raters rated recordings of the spoken sentences, scripted passage, and non-scripted passage. The

sentence ratings were conducted in two stages. In the first task, referred to as Task 1, participants rated recordings of 240 sentences that were presented in random order. The recordings were accompanied by photographs of Caucasians (for L1-speakers' voices) and visible minorities (for L2-speakers' voices). After a short break, in Task 2, the raters rated another 240 sentences that were randomly assigned and had a reversed order of photographs—Caucasians accompanied L2-speakers' voices while visible minorities accompanied L1-speakers' voices. The pictures were changed in the two tasks, and each sentence-voice pairing was presented once across the two tasks to be rated for intelligibility and accent on a Likert scale from 1-5.

Later, ANOVA was applied to explore the potential differences in ratings across the two tasks. In the following section, I will first explain how data reliability was established. Then, I will present the statistical analyses. I want to draw the reader's attention to the fact that meaningful interpretation of quantitative results requires a certain level of reliability or consistency (Creswell, 2013). Together, reliability and validity are considered to be "the yardsticks against which the adequacy and accuracy of our measurement procedures are evaluated in scientific research" (Bhattacherjee, 2012, p. 55). Reliability in quantitative research is defined as the consistency of the results that measure a construct (e.g. Bhattacherjee, 2012; McMillan, 2016; Matsumoto, 2009; Richards & Schmidt, 2002). To examine whether or not the ratings that L1-speaking raters gave to the tokens of speech were reliable, a measurement of consistency was required. I have used Cronbach's alpha for this measurement, which I will explain in the following section.

Internal Consistency Reliability

When measuring accent ratings, it is desirable to obtain consistent results for the same speaker, or to have *internal consistency*. Internal consistency reliability refers to the:

…measure of consistency between different items of the same construct. If a multiple-item construct measure is administered to respondents, the extent to which respondents rate those items in a similar manner is a reflection of internal consistency. (Bhattacherjee, 2012, p. 57)

This can include consistency across individuals, referred to as *inter-rater reliability*; and also consistency of measurements for the same individual at different times, referred to as *intra-rater reliability* (e.g. Bhattacherjee, 2012). Cronbach's alpha is a common formula used for measuring the internal consistency of measurements on a scale of more than two, for example, a scale of 1 to 5 (e.g. Bhattacherjee, 2012; McMillan, 2016)[23]. Because I asked the raters to rate tokens on a scale of 1 to 5 for each of two constructs (intelligibility and accent), I used Cronbach's alpha to measure the reliability of the ratings. Cronbach's alpha is used to examine the consistency of scores within a set of data (e.g. Bhattacherjee, 2012; McMillan, 2016). Using the SPSS 16th software (SPSS Inc., 2007), I applied Cronbach's alpha to the ratings for each set of quantitative tasks: Task 1 and Task 2. A Cronbach's alpha value of 1 indicates perfect association between the two sets of data, while a value of 0 indicates no association (Dörnyei, 2010; Dörnyei & Csizér, 2012; McMillan, 2016; Ritter, 2010). A Cronbach's alpha value of 0.7 or higher is considered to be acceptable in second language research (Dörnyei, 2010; Dörnyei & Csizér, 2012). Additionally, the SPSS package calculates the statistical significance of the Cronbach's alpha values. Wherever necessary, I have gone beyond statistical explanations of reliability. For example, as can be seen in some cases, when a participant has been completely consistent in

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[23] An elaborate discussion on different reliability measurement tools can be found in many statistics books and, sometimes, research methodology books such as Bhattacherjee (2012) and McMillan (2016). I have limited the discussion here to what method I used and why I used it, and saved the discussion on statistical measurements for the works focused on statistics and research methodology. Cronbach's alpha is "a measure of the average strength of association between all possible pairs of items contained within a set of items" (Zedeck, 2014, p. 71).

rating a speaker, then the variables are constant. This ideal condition shows perfect consistency; however, it is impossible to calculate using Cronbach's alpha formula as its formula does not allow constant variables. In these and similar cases, I have examined the data visually and provided explanations.

Inter-rater Reliability. To examine raters' consistency in rating the data, inter-rater reliability was calculated by comparing the various ratings made for each speaker (e.g. Bhattacherjee, 2012; McMillan, 2016). In the following sections, I provide a step-by-step explanation of the reliability calculations for each of intelligibility and accent in each task.

Task 1 – English L1 speakers' intelligibility. The inter-rater reliability of English L1 speakers in Task 1 was difficult to measure, as two of the raters provided consistent ratings for each participant's voice across the two tasks, probably because they found them to be uniformly comprehensible, which makes the alpha equal to 1. This is perfect consistency, yet impossible to be measured using Cronbach's Alpha formula. The mean rating for this category was 4.91 out of 5. The mean ratings of the three raters who provided various ratings were 4.97, 4.88, and 4.69. Regarding the fact that each item in the survey was rated on a scale from 1-5, the lowest mean of 4.69 is still acceptable, as it can be argued that the rater did pay attention and did not rate randomly; otherwise, the mean would have been less than 4. The ratings' standard deviations for the L1 and L2 speakers were either near 1 or less than 1 in each task, showing consistent rating trends by the raters for both L1 and L2 speakers (Table 2). When I was interviewing the rater with the lowest average ratings, she told me that some of her lowest ratings of intelligibility were due to the quality of the recording rather than the speakers' actual intelligibility. She explained that she considered recording quality as a factor affecting the intelligibility of data.

Table 2

Standard deviation across the two tasks

Task	Task 1				Task 2			
Speaker	L1 Speakers		L2 Speakers		L1 Speakers		L2 Speakers	
Component	Intelligibility	Accent	Intelligibility	Accent	Intelligibility	Accent	Intelligibility	Accent
Std. Deviation	.36	.1	1	1.03	.51	.57	1.12	1.05

Task 1 – English L1 speakers' accent. Similar to the ratings of intelligibility, two of the

raters consistently rated the L1 speakers' accents as five out of five, making a reliability

calculation using Cronbach's Alpha impossible. Summary statistics for the raters are provided in

Table 3. The maximum variance for accent is 0.06, showing no significant rating variance.

Similarly, the highest standard deviation is 0.18.

Table 3

Summary table for accent among L1 speakers in Task 1

	Batman	Natalia	Tina	Tom	Zoe
Range	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00
Mean	4.99	5.00	4.97	5.00	4.99
Minimum	4.00	5.00	4.00	5.00	4.00
Maximum	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Std. Deviation	0.11	0.00	0.18	0.00	0.11
Variance	0.01	0.06	0.03	0.00	0.01

Task 1 – English L2 speakers' intelligibility. The raters were consistent with respect to rating the L2 speakers for intelligibility in Task 1. For intelligibility, the Cronbach's alpha was 0.833.

Task 1 – English L2 speakers' accent. For accent, the raters were consistent in rating the L2 speakers in Task 1, as inferred from the reliability test using Cronbach's alpha, which was equal to 0.9.

Task 2 – English L1 speakers' intelligibility. For the L1 speakers in Task 2, there was less agreement among the raters. Two of the raters gave consistent ratings, and a low Cronbach's alpha of 0.036 for the non-constant ratings was observed. Looking at the data summaries, it is clear that the average rating for each rater was > 4. It can be inferred that the L1 speakers were consistently rated high (see Table 4). The only person who provided ratings with a relatively high variance was Zoe (variance = 1.02). I will discuss Zoe's ratings separately.

Table 4

Case summaries of the ratings for L1 speakers' intelligibility in Task 2

	Batman	Natalia	Tina	Tom	Zoe
Mean	5	4.91	4.98	5.00	4.43
Minimum	5	4.00	4.00	5.00	2.00
Range	.00	1.00	1.00	.00	3.00
Std. Deviation	.00	.28	.118	.00	1.01
Variance	.00	.078	.014	.00	1.02

Calculating Cronbach's alpha for Zoe's ratings in the second task was counterproductive as the result was -1.72, an anomalous finding. Cronbach's alpha can range from 0 to 1 and anything beyond that range is considered anomalous (e.g. McMillan, 2016). Therefore, I looked at the case summaries (Table 7 on page 142), and it turned out that the highest variance was in the case of Andrew, at 1.26. The explanation for Zoe's ratings could be: (a) she was confused

over rating because non-Caucasian pictures were associated with English L1-speaker voices, (b) she rated based on the recording quality, or (c) she rated them randomly. If she rated the data randomly, there should be a random factor at work for accent as well. If she was confused over picture-voice association, she should have less consistent ratings for the L2 speakers as well as other L1 speakers. Finally, if she considered recording quality when rating intelligibility, she should have done this for the L2 speakers as well and, therefore, should have provided less-consistent intelligibility ratings of them. Her ratings for L1 speakers' accent in Task 2, in which pictures of visible minorities were associated with their voices, were also anomalous with a reliability value of -1.25, violating the reliability conditions. When putting the rating results together for Zoe and the other raters, the raters rated the L1 speakers fairly consistently in Task 2, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.9. Therefore, the chance of Zoe having rated randomly is close to zero. Zoe told me in the interviews that she rated some of the sentences based on recording quality. When listening to Andrew's recording of his *teaching interest talk*, Zoe told me that the recording quality is bad to her and she would consider that as an attributable factor to intelligibility.

Eliminating Zoe's ratings for the L1 speakers in Task 2 leaves two ratings of 5, which were discarded from the Cronbach's alpha analysis; an analysis run for the other two values was negative, which is anomalous. Therefore, a case analysis was necessary. Table 5 summarizes the cases for the remaining raters. As is evident from this table that the variance of the ratings made by individual raters was less than 0.05, which is less than 1 point variance on a scale from 1-5. The mean is 4.92 or above, which shows consistency in their ratings. Specifically, the minimum rating mean is 4 out of 5.

Table 5

Summary statistics of L1 speakers' intelligibility ratings, Task 2

Participant	Batman	Natalia	Tina	Tom
Mean	5	4.92	4.99	5
Minimum	5	4	4	5
Maximum	5	5	5	5
Range	0	1	1	0
Std. Deviation	0	.28	.119	0
Variance	0	.078	.014	0

Task 2 – English L1 speakers' accent. For accent, two rater's ratings were deleted from the Cronbach's alpha calculations as they were constant and equal to five. The Cronbach's alpha value for the remaining ratings was negative; therefore, I examined the summary statistics (Table 6). The mean ratings of individual raters were relatively high, at ≥ 4.46. Zoe had the highest range of accent ratings (3) and a standard deviation and variance of 1.14 and 1.30, respectively. The average ratings were greater than four 4, showing less than one optional variance on a scale from 1-5. As the rating had five options from 1-5, for the variance to be systematic, it has to be more than 1.

Table 6

Summary statistics of ratings of L1 speakers' accent, Task 2

	Batman	Natalia	Tina	Tom	Zoe
Number	71	71	71	71	71
Mean	5.0	4.91	4.98	5.0	4.46
Minimum	5	3	4.0	5	2
Range	0	2	1	0	3
Std. Deviation	0	.32	.11	0	1.14
Variance	0	.1	.01	0	1.30

Table 7

Summary statistics of Zoe's ratings of L1 speakers in Task 2

Participant	Andrew	Barbara	Helen	Sophie	Tim
Mean	3.94	4.86	4.57	4.21	4.69
Minimum	2	3	2	2	2
Maximum	5	5	5	5	5
Range	3	2	3	3	3
Std. Deviation	1.12	0.53	1.08	1.12	0.85
Variance	1.26	0.28	1.18	1.25	0.73

Task 2 – English L2 speakers' intelligibility. The ratings of L2 speakers' intelligibility in Task 2 had a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.746, which indicates that the reliability of the ratings was acceptable.

Task 2 – English L2 speakers' accent. Ratings for L2 speakers' accent in Task 2, obtained a Cronbach's alpha of 0.875, which is an acceptable number for interrater reliability.

After ensuring acceptable levels of reliability in the ratings, ANOVA was applied to determine whether task differences had any impact on the ratings. The major difference between the two tasks was the pictures that were displayed with the speakers' voices. To recap, in Task 1, pictures of Caucasians were shown during the playback of recordings of L1 speakers, and pictures of visible minorities were shown with recordings of L2 speakers. Task 2 reversed this condition, with visible minority pictures accompanying L1 speakers and Caucasian pictures accompanying L2 speakers. In both tasks, all sentences were given in a random order. The pictures in each group were also randomly assigned to different speakers within each group. Gender of the individual in each pictures matched the speaker's gender.

ANOVA Analysis. One question related to this research was the effect of extra-linguistic factors on participants' perceptions of accent and intelligibility. I was specifically interested in looking at the effect of a speaker's racial background on raters' perceptions of the speaker's accents and intelligibility. Each of the two constructs of intelligibility and accent were compared

across the two tasks using a two-way ANOVA. ANOVA can be used for an "experiment involving independent samples or related samples, to an independent variable involving any number of conditions, and to a study involving any number of independent variables" (Heiman, 2011, p. 291). I used ANOVA for different elements of the quantitative analyses.

Intelligibility and accent across both tasks for both L1 and L2 speakers. The ANOVA for intelligibility, with the effect of task alone, was significant at $p < 0.01$ for both intelligibility and accent (Table 8).

Table 8

The effect of task on intelligibility and accent ratings

	F	d. f.	p
Rating - Intelligibility	38.121	1	.000
Rating - Accent	14.429	1	.000

The results suggest that L1 speakers use extra-linguistic cues to a certain degree in determining the intelligibility and accent of a speaker. Another point about ratings across the two tasks is that variance and standard deviation are slightly higher in Task 2 than Task 1 for both intelligibility and accent. In the case of intelligibility for L1 speakers, we had *var = .13*, *std = .36* in Task 1 and *var = .26*, *std = .51*. For L2 speakers' intelligibility, we had *var = 1.01*, *std = 1* in Task 1 and *var = 1.26*, *std = 1.12* in Task 2. For accent for the L1 speakers, we had *var = .01*, *std = .1* in Task 1 and *var = .32*, *std = .57* in Task 2. Finally, for accent for the L2 speakers, we had *var = 1.06*, *std = 1.03* in Task 1 and *var = 1.1*, *std = 1.05* in Task 2. Therefore, in all cases of intelligibility and accent for the two groups of speakers, a bigger variance and standard deviation was found in Task 2 than in Task 1.

This chapter summarized findings of the quantitative strand of the study, which was designed to answer the fourth research sub-questions: How do L1 speakers rate accent and

intelligibility of different recorded material obtained from L1 and L2 speakers of English? To summarize, extra-linguistic factors, such as the appearance of the speaker, influenced the listeners' judgments of accent and intelligibility to some degree. The raters showed some inconsistency in ratings, meaning some raters were more consistent in rating individual speakers than other raters. The English L1-speaker raters who had more experience with ITAs showed more consistency in rating individual speakers regardless of the pictures associated with the recordings (Batman and Tom). This observation can indicate the importance of experience in facilitating communications between ITAs and students. I will discuss the findings of this chapter in combination with findings of the qualitative strand in the following chapter. Therefore, the results of the mixed methods analysis are presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 7: Mixed Methods Analysis

This chapter combines the findings of the qualitative and quantitative strands into a mixed methods analysis that investigates identity construction in international teaching assistants and internationally-educated instructors (ITAs) working in Canada. In convergent mixed methods research designs, also referred to as *parallel* or *concurrent* designs, the major data analysis occurs at the mixed methods level (Creswell, 2011; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), and thus the main inferences or generalizations are drawn at the mixed methods analysis (Onwuegbuzie, Slate, Leech, & Collins, 2009; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010). By combining the findings of the different strands and components of this study, I will provide a descriptive analysis, followed by an inferential analysis. Accordingly, this chapter answers the main research question: How are accent, intelligibility, and identity in English as a second language (L2 English) speakers related in the case of ITAs in Canada?

In this section, I first explain my process for categorizing the findings in preparation for the mixed methods analysis. I labelled the social connections between L2 and L1 English speakers in Canada as *associations*, and categorized them based on the interviews (see Chapter 4) in which I evaluated L2 speakers' associations with other English speakers, including L1 English speakers. Three levels of association were identified in which English was the main means of communication: *Frequent* refers to situations where an L2 speaker had ample access to communities where English was used; *Rare* refers to situations where an L2 speaker had minimal access to such communities; and *Occasional* refers to situations where an L2 speaker had some, but not enough, access to such communities. I have provided three examples to illustrate this

categorization. In the following interview excerpt, Al explains his connections with both francophone and anglophone communities:

> Well, ...French connections are mostly with my family because I went to…elementary school in French, but then I went to high school in English so a lot of friends that I made, I speak English with….You know? It's interesting. It is! Because the francophone community is a minority community, like you're finding more, say partners..., spouses, husbands, wives, all of that, are not francophones. So when you get to what…what would be a sort of family... family dinner, family party, or something like that; it really is quite a mixed group, like so you don't have that kinda homogeneous group of what I would, you know? what I think of what I was growing up. When I was growing up and I was a kid, everybody spoke French…except for one person and that was my aunt's husband. [He] spoke English. Everybody spoke French. But now, fast forward 20 years, there is a real variety of a lot of…English speakers, French speakers, so it's more of mixed groups. (Al, September 17, 2016)

Al has connections with both francophone and anglophone communities[24]. Al's case is an example of the *Frequent* category because he had ample access to communities in which English is the main means of communication. Next, is an example of an *Occasional* connection:

> ... I found that I don't have a lot of ties with the Canadian English speaking persons because most of the friends of me are from outside Canada…so my roommate is…is

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[24] A shift in language use has occurred in Al's experience as well. When Al was younger, he was connected with communities that were mainly franchofone. However, he explained that these days his communities are often mixed of francophone and anglophone individuals.

from Ontario, so he is English speaker obviously, so I think that'd be my main [tie].

(Pauline, September 14, 2016)

Pauline explains that she has some Canadian friends who she speaks English with; however, as most of her friends speak English as a second language, her associations with English as a first language speakers are occasional. Finally, rare connections with English-speaking communities were demonstrated by Pulak:

I was very interested to learn the language, but I was looking for, you know, some places where I can connect with people, or speak English, or speak with native English [speakers]; but in that situations, I didn't find something for full…even after coming here, I was trying to interact with English-speaking people. But…unfortunately, I didn't get this, this kind of situations even ... when I go to class, I took two courses, so there're only ten or twelve students and I found [that] some of them [are] from Bangladesh, so I will just speak Bengali. And I also live in an apartment where I live with Bengali people so I don't have [a] chance to speak English. Even while I come to university, in my lab there's four or five people from Bangladesh taking the same courses. So I don't even have…[a] chance to speak English more because I always, you know, discuss with them. (Pulak, October 10, 2016)

Almost all of Pulak's connections are with his compatriots. Pulak's was the only case for which I decided to assign a *Rare* code to describe his associations.

Table 9 summarizes the results of the two combined phases of the research. In the first column, the participants' names are listed[25]. In the second column, the relationships between

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[25] All names are pseudonyms

these participants and other English speakers in Canada are summarized. In the third and fourth columns, the mean intelligibility and accent ratings of the recorded sentences are provided for each English L2-speaker participant. In columns five and six, the mean ratings for intelligibility and accent in the recordings of the scripted passage, *The Rainbow Passage*, are given; and in columns seven and eight, the mean ratings for intelligibility and accent in the *teaching interest talks* are noted. The information presented in this table has been extracted from both the qualitative strand (second column), and the quantitative strand (the six columns on the right-hand side).

Table 9

Summary of the intelligibility and accent ratings for the L2 speakers

Participant	Association and Examples	Sentences		Scripted Passage		Teaching Interest Talk	
		Intelligibility	Accent	Intelligibility	Accent	Intelligibility	Accent
Al	*Frequent* – He is bilingual and his father(side) is anglophone	4.9	4.9	5	5	4.6	5.0
Bob	*Occasional* but mainly *Rare* – Playing board games with Canadian English L1 speakers, church	4.0	2.9	3.2	2.6	3.0	2.5
Catmum	*Frequent* – Homestay family, internationally grouped gatherings	3.8	2.7	3.6	2.8	4.2	2.8
Elena	*Occasional* – Volunteering for conferences, international friends	4.0	2.9	3.4	2.6	3.4	2.5
Jack	*Frequent* – Work colleagues, friends, parties	4.3	3.2	3.4	2.8	4.6	3.7
Pauline	*Occasional* – Her department, mainly international friends	4.6	3.7	4.8	4.2	4.2	3.7
Pulak	*Rare* – Some volunteer work, lives and studies with people of his background	2.7	1.8	2.2	1.8	2.5	2.2
Reed	*Occasional* – Professional associations, such as working groups, research teams	4.0	3.0	2.8	2.2	3.9	3.3
Robert	*Occasional* – Volunteering, mixed international groups	4.2	3.3	3.6	3.0	4.2	3.4
Saeed	*Frequent* – Professional work, volunteering	4.2	3.2	4.0	3.0	4.1	4.0

Association, Accent, and Intelligibility

To explore the potential relationship between English L2-speaker participants' reported associations with communities of English speakers and the mean ratings of their intelligibility and accent, the results for these variables were summarized in Table 10. In this table, I used the qualitative data to categorize each L2 speaker's associations with English-speaking communities as *Frequent/Occasional/Rare*. To explore identity in the L2 speakers, I categorized their identity development opportunities as *High*, *Moderate*, and *low*. If the L2 speakers said that they had sufficient identity development opportunities, I categorized them as *High*. If they said they had some identity development opportunities (but not as many as they would like), I categorized them as *Moderate*; and if they said they had little identity development opportunities, I categorized them as *Low*. For example, in the following case, I have demonstrated why I categorized Al's identity development opportunities as *High*. When I asked Al about his perceived identity construction opportunities using English, he replied:

> You know, like again I don't think there is that much of, I don't think there is that much of difference. I feel like…because I learned, I did both at the same time, it's sort of they're both part of my identity and …so I don't really differentiate that much between two [referring to his identity development opportunities using the two languages: French and English]. (Al, September 17, 2016)

Next, L2 speakers who reported having some identity construction opportunities were assigned the code *Moderate*. This code represents the most complicated situations, where L2 speakers believed they had some opportunities for identity construction, but not enough. In other words, they believed something was missing in their identity development, but they were not sure what.

In the following case, Saeed explains that although he had some identity development opportunities, they were sporadic and context-specific:

> Well, I think at the point that I came to Canada…I was very motivated, I was very… interested to develop my abilities, you know, in terms of learning language and everything. So, the way that I started to resemble speaking English helped me to also in the other ways of my life tried to be close to them. In terms of…people respecting to one another and social roles and everything. And that caused me to feel closer to Canadian society, but later ... after a few years, when I found that ... I am not part of the society and so on, I think both my accent and ... my following rules and everything started to go down and…reduced over time, and also caused me to feel ... a bit separated [from] the society. (Saeed, August 29, 2016)

In the complex situation experienced by Saeed, there were some opportunities for developing his identity; however, due to external factors, his attitude towards Canadian English speakers' identities changed. He explained that the change resulted from not feeling as much a part of the society as he wished. As a result, his behaviour changed.

Third, in the cases where speakers clearly said that they did not have real identity development opportunities or they did not want to develop a Canadian English speaker identity, I categorized them as *Rare*, to indicate they had rare identity development opportunities. I have provided an example from the interview with Pauline:

> I don't think I have an English-speaking identity, no, just like, it's just like a tool. You know, I don't think like it's part of my identity. That's just a tool to communicate with all the people around the world, but it's not, I don't consider it [as] part of my identity. (Pauline, September 14, 2016)

In developing Table 10, I have used and combined the findings from both the qualitative and quantitative strands of the study. In Table 10, the second and fifth columns are based on qualitative data, while the third and fourth columns are based on quantitative data. Columns 3 and 4 summarize the overall mean of ratings for intelligibility and accent.

Table 10

Comparison of L2 speakers' associations, intelligibility, accent, and identity development

Participants	Association	Intelligibility	Accent	Identity Development
Al	Frequent	4.8	5.0	High
Bob	Occasional	3.4	2.7	Moderate
Catmum	Frequent	3.9	2.8	High
Elena	Occasional	3.6	2.7	High
Jack	Frequent	4.1	3.2	High
Pauline	Occasional	4.5	3.9	Low
Pulak	Rare	2.5	1.9	Low
Reed	Occasional	3.6	2.8	Moderate
Robert	Occasional	4.0	3.2	Moderate
Saeed	Frequent	4.1	3.4	Moderate

The ratings of intelligibility and accent are the mean ratings of the readings of the sentences, scripted passage, and non-scripted passage. As a reminder, the scripted passage was *The Rainbow Passage* and the non-scripted passage was the *teaching interest talk*. Five schematic representations of the results are provided here to illustrate the relationships between the various results of this study according to the average ratings of all L2-speaker participants. First, Figure 7 shows the relationship between the L2 speakers' level of association and their intelligibility and accent ratings for the three types of speech. The only participant who reported having rare associations with English-speaking communities was Pulak. Hence, the *rare associations* bars represent only Pulak, who comprised 10% of the sample. There were five L2-

speaker participants who had *occasional* associations with English-speaking communities: Bob, Elena, Pauline, Reed, and Robert, comprising 50% of the sample. Finally, there were four participants who had ample access to English-speaking communities: Al, Catmum, Jack, and Saeed, who formed 40% of the sample. Figure 7 can be regarded as a form descriptive mixed methods analysis.
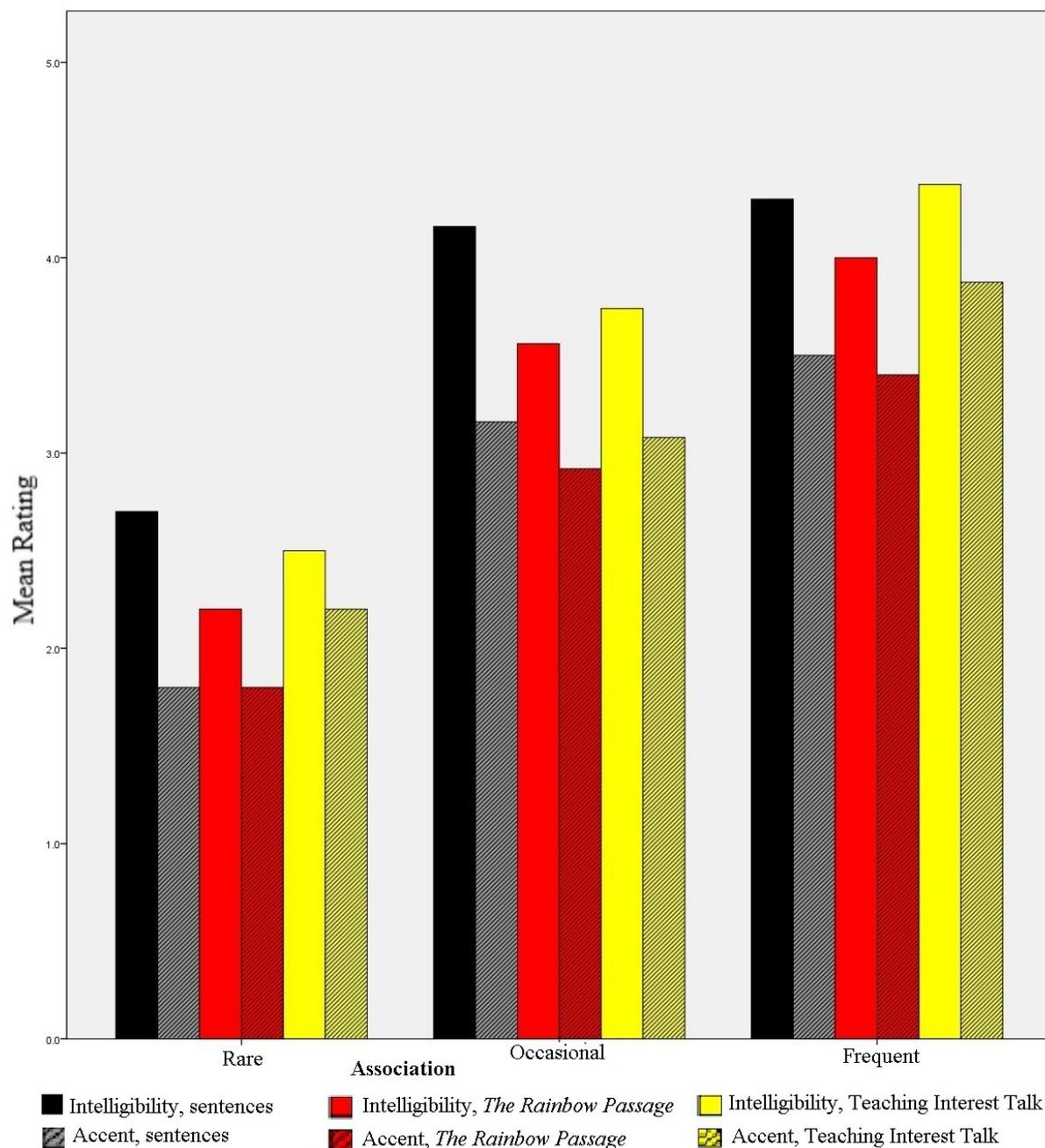
Figure 7. The relationship between association, intelligibility, and accent.

To show how the intelligibility and accent ratings change in different categories of

association, i.e. *Rare, Occasional, and Frequent*, a line graph has been provided in Figure 8.

There is a clear upward trend of rating with association level: the lowest ratings occurred for

Rare category (little associations), and highest ratings were for *Frequent* category (frequent

associations), with *Occasional* falling in between the two. This chart and the previous one are two different visualizations of the same data. While these two figures can provide similar information, the line graph better shows the trend across the three *association* conditions. The average ratings show an upward trend; however, we need to note that in different categories we had uneven distribution of participants being rated. In the *Rare* category, we had only one participant, in the *Occasional* category we had five participants, and in the *Frequent* category we had four participants. An upward trend between *Occasional* and *Frequent* associations is observable. In these two categories we have five and four participants comprising 50% and 40% of the data.[26]

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[26] Some additional statistical information about mean, confidence interval, standard error, variance, and standard deviation is provided in Appendix 7 and Appendix 8 for the interested reader's reference.
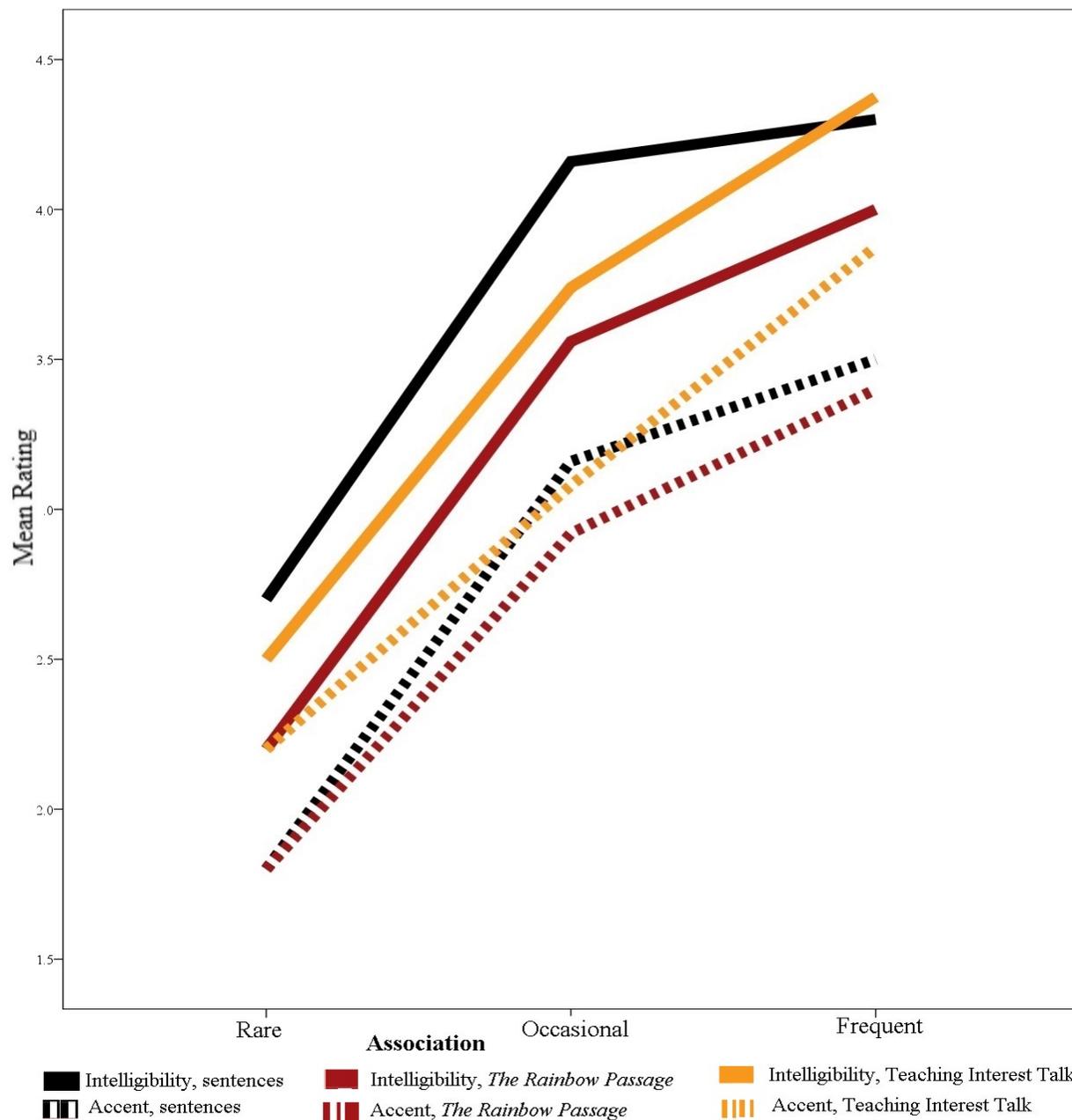
Figure 8. The relationship between association, intelligibility, and accent.

Identity, Accent, and Intelligibility

A visual exploration of the relationship between identity, accent, and intelligibility can be helpful in understanding their connections. Figure 9 shows intelligibility and accent ratings in relation to identity. As can be seen, in two out of three categories of language tokens that are *sentence* and *teaching interest talk*, the relationships between identity and intelligibility, and

identity and accent have upward trends, from having low identity construction opportunities to Moderate opportunities to High identity development opportunities. This means the ratings for intelligibility and accent in *sentence* and *teaching interest talk* categories increases from *Low* identity development opportunities to *Moderate* identity development opportunities to *High* identity development opportunities. The only category that violates the upward trend is for the ratings of the scripted passage readings, which is *The Rainbow Passage*. In other words, the ratings for intelligibility and accent increase with an increase in the degree of reported identity construction opportunities, except for the scripted passage ratings. As a reminder, there were two L2-speaker participants who either reported having little chance of developing their identities using English language in Canada or did not wish to develop an English-speaker identity—Pulak and Pauline—who comprised 20% of the sample. There were four people who reported having some identity development opportunities in Canada, but deemed them occasional. These four L2-speaker participants (who form 40% of the sample) were Bob, Reed, Robert, and Saeed. Finally, there were four people who perceived there to be no barriers to their identity development in Canada. These four people formed 40% of the sample and were Al, Catmum, Elena, and Jack (see Table 10 on page 151).
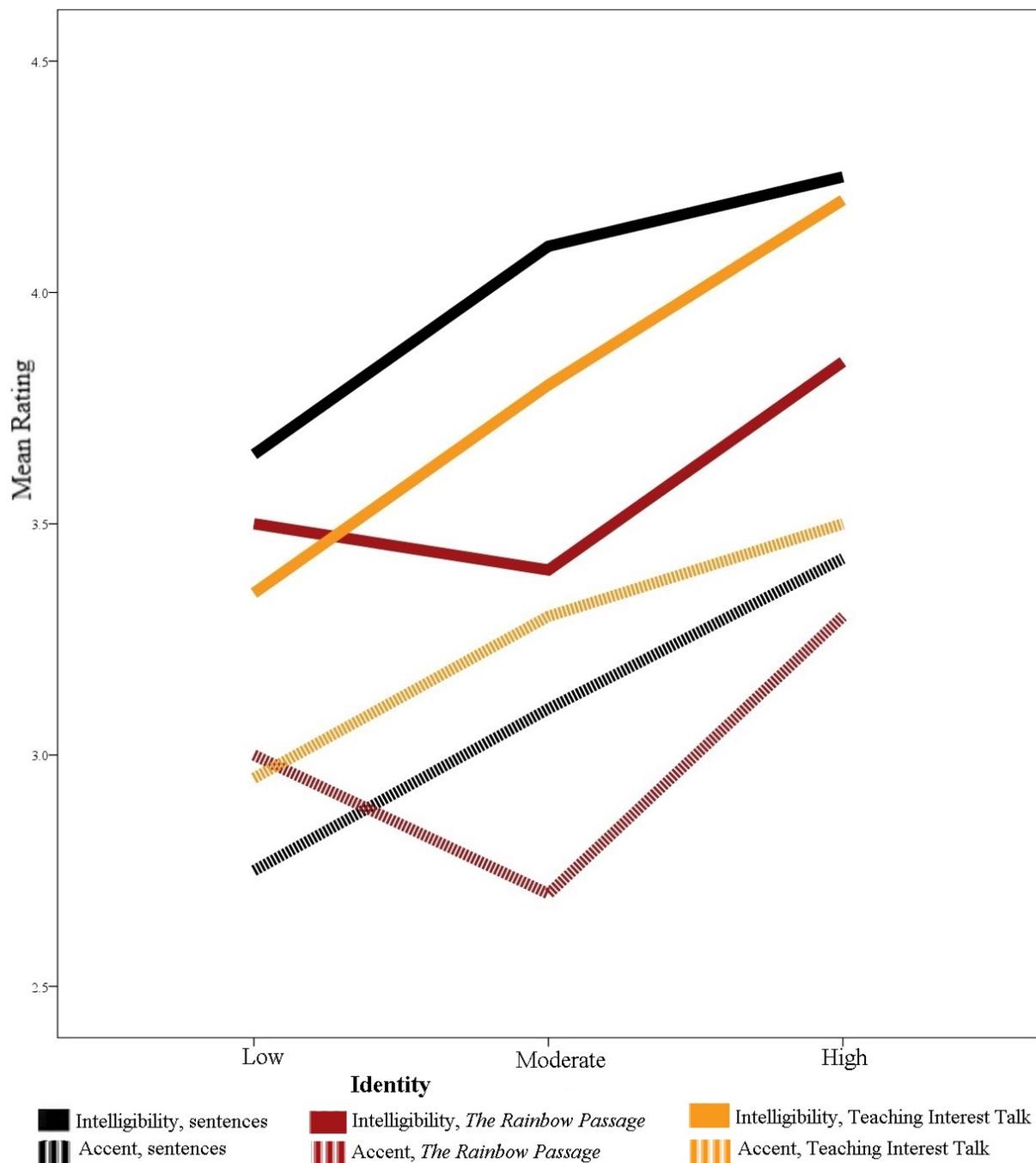
Figure 9. The relationship between identity, intelligibility, and accent.

Identity and Association

Considering the cases and data presented here, I decided to explore the relationship

between L2 speakers' identity development opportunities and their social associations.

Therefore, to graph the relationship between identity and association, I needed to assign numbers to the categories. These were: *Rare* Association = 0, *Low* Identity Development = 0, *Occasional* Association = 1, *Moderate* Identity Development opportunities = 1, and *Frequent/High* availability of Association and Identity Development opportunities = 2. With respect to associations, there was one participant who was assigned to category 0, five participants who were assigned to category 1, and four participants who were assigned to category 2. Regarding identity, there were two participants who were assigned to category 0, four participants who were assigned to category 1, and four participants who were assigned to category 2.

Figure 10 shows the relationship between associations with English-speaking groups and identity development opportunities; which is clearly a linear relationship. In other words, the more an L2 speaker had access to associations with other English speakers in Canada, including both L1 speakers of English and English L2 speakers from different L1 backgrounds, the more they felt they had the opportunity to develop their identities, and vice versa.
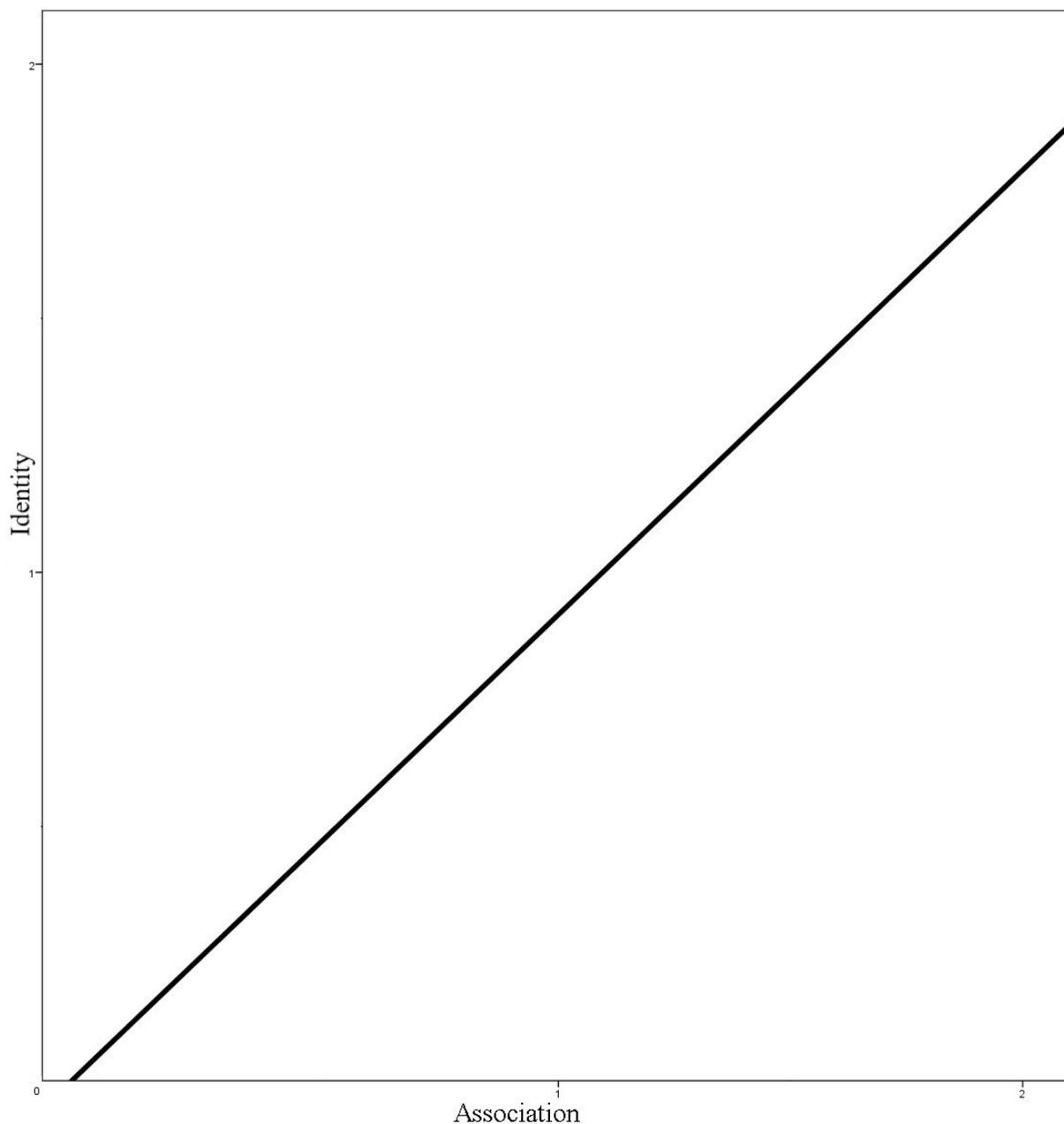
Figure 10. The relationship between identity and associations.

Outliers. In collected data, an observation that does not align with the main data distribution pattern is referred to as an outlier (Woodrow, 2014). There was a pair of outliers in the data with respect to intelligibility and accent in *identity* category. These outliers did not follow the same pattern as the rest of the data in each category. In other words, with an increase

in opportunities to develop identities, an increase in intelligibility and accent is observable,

except for the scripted passage. In *identity* categorization, the ratings of the scripted passage, *The*

Rainbow Passage, were lower for the group of individuals who were identified as having

moderate identity development opportunities than individuals who were identified as having low

identity development opportunities. There are a number of possible explanations for this

observation. The main reason for higher ratings in the *Low* identity development opportunity

group was due to the presence of Pauline. Pauline was rated relatively high among the L2

speakers for intelligibility and accent. Pauline was a visiting student in Canada doing research

here, and thus she does not have the intention of forming an English-speaking identity, so she is

not looking for opportunities of developing an English-speaking identity. Additionally, the

difference between intelligibility and accent ratings of the participants under the two identity

categories of *Low* and *Moderate* is relatively small; for intelligibility it is 0.1 and for accent it is

0.3. I decided to include this explanation here to both provide explanation for the outlying trend

in Figure 9 and also to be exact with the data representation in this figure.

Answering the Main Research Question

I wish to conclude this chapter by providing an answer to the main research question

formulated at the beginning of this project, which was: How are accent, intelligibility, and

identity in English as a second language (English L2) speakers related in the case of international

teaching assistants in Canada?

To answer this question, the findings of all the research strands must be drawn together to

demonstrate the relationships between the variables. The data analysis suggests that there is a

positive relationship between *association* with *identity development opportunities*, *intelligibility*

and *accent*. Using Lave and Wenger's (1991) terms, one can say if an L2 speaker has access to

communities of practice, there is a higher chance of developing an L2 identity. When social groups are available for the L2 speakers where they can use their L2, there is a higher chance for them to improve their intelligibility and accent in the L2. If the L2 speakers have opportunities to develop their identities using their L2, there is also a higher (though less perfect) chance for L2 speakers to improve their intelligibility and accent in the L2.

In this chapter, the mixed methods analysis of the research was presented. The mixed methods analysis presented here concludes the presentation of the research results. In the following chapter, the study's overall discussion and conclusions are presented.

Chapter 8: Discussion and Conclusions

In this chapter, I discuss the findings of the different strands of research investigated in this mixed methods research study that explored different aspects of identity. I discuss intersectionality and the social and personal aspects of identity, followed by a discussion on second language identity. Next, I address the relationship between identity, accent, and intelligibility. In each section, I have used different theoretical-analytical frameworks to explain the findings and conclusions. Connections between my research and the extant literature are made throughout the chapter to demonstrate the credibility of the research (e.g. Dellinger & Leech, 2007; O'Cathain, 2010). In keeping with the theoretical framework, I mobilize Foucault's concepts of subjectivity, power and discourse (Foucault, 1966, 1970; McHoul & Grace, 1993), and social identity theory (Hogg, 2016; MacKinnon & Heise, 2010; Tajfel, 1969, 1979).

Before discussing these aspects, it is imperative to make a few points. First of all, the discussions presented here are based on the information provided by the participants. My experiences and impressions of being an ESL speaker living, studying, and teaching in Canada may be similar to or different from those of the participants. However, this study was about the participants' experiences, and that is what I have focused on discussing. The second point is that the L2-speaker participants in this research were only ten in number, and all lived and studied in one of the Prairie Provinces in Canada where concepts of diversity and multiculturalism are new. This might have influenced their experiences. Therefore, the generalizability of the findings to other locations and situations may be challenging.

Intersectionality

Originally developed as a framework for understanding identities, intersectionality has evolved into a way of knowing that emphasizes an understanding of human beings in relation to

the various factors that affect their experiences at a certain point in time in a society (Anthias, 2013; Hankivsky, 2014). In this case, it provides a platform for looking at the interaction of the factors affecting ITA identity, accent and intelligibility. Intersectionality has a number of tenets, some of which are: (1) People's experiences and lives cannot be understood using a single factor, rather, a variety of factors need to be considered. (2) When analysing social issues, the importance of each factor needs to be explored and understood rather than pre-supposed. (3) "Relationships and power dynamics between social locations and processes…are linked". (4) Experiences of privilege and oppression can be simultaneous. (5) To understand how power relationships are created and "experienced", one needs to analyse individual, systemic, and social structures (Hankivsky, 2014, p. 3). In other words, intersectionality emphasizes on the connections and relationships among different elements affecting an experience for individuals. Intersectionality does not focus on isolated or individual factors but, rather, attends to the dynamics that exist between and among connections, and the relationships among groups and individuals. Specifically, finding out how race is constructed in my research is less important than understanding how race, accent and intelligibility can explain identity.

Social Construction of Identity

The way that individuals within a nation or social group treat others in that group (i.e., how they are placed or positioned within society) significantly affects their attitudes toward themselves and their identity development. For example, looking at images of Earth taken from space shows that there are no name tags of countries on the planet, as has been the case since the beginning of time. However, after people developed communication and created concepts through language, certain concepts developed, such as *country* and *nationality*. The idea of being Canadian, Russian, American, or Iranian is something that we are told; our position within our

nationality is also assigned and then communicated to us. Therefore, some aspects of identity are developed and communicated socially, and then become psychological realities. This is congruent with the concepts of social identity theory (Hogg, 2016; Tajfel, 1969, 1974; MacKinnon & Heise, 2010) and imagined communities (Anderson, 1983, 1991, 2006).

Looking at the interview data through the lens of social identity theory (e.g. Hogg, 2016; Tajfel, 1969, 1974; MacKinnon & Heise, 2010), one can argue that some, if not all, of the ESL-speaking individuals had been assigned identities in their personal and professional lives that influenced themselves and their positions in society. MacKinnon and Heise (2010) emphasized that individuals' professions play a major role in their identity construction. In this light, this study can make several points. Firstly, the participants' professional lives not only seemed to *play* a major role in the construction of their identities, but secondly, these professional lives were *required* to provide them opportunities to construct identity. Third, another major facilitator of identity construction in L2 English speakers was having communities of practice outside of their professional lives. For example, when I asked Reed about his associations with Canadian English L1 speakers, he said:

> ... I have been teaching here, I have been a TA for three years: even the first semester I arrived in Canada. I have been…I have been doing many different stuff. (Reed, September 2, 2016)

As Reed explains in this example, he has connections with other Canadian English speakers in the professional world. However, in the follow-up questions, when I asked him whether Canadian English-language speakers accept him in their groups, he said, "Of course *not* [emphatic]" (Reed, September 2, 2016). As it turned out, the only communities to which he had access were professional communities, which were insufficient for developing a strong, positive,

L2 English identity. In another case, Saeed provided a clear explanation of which communities he is allowed in and has access to:

> ...I personally think that Canadians by themselves, or people who grew up [here], they always look at people who came to Canada later as a foreigner and in their very personal communications, in their personal parties, you know, and stuff; they don't get them involved, it's just for basically work, and that's basically for their economic needs. (Saeed, August 29, 2016)

Saeed's and Reed's comments resonated with those of the other participants. The majority of these L2 English speakers, with the exception of Al who is bilingual and Canadian-born, felt that they did not have sufficient opportunities to participate socially in communities that included Canadian L1 speakers of English. However, they all reported having significant professional opportunities that enabled them to feel some level of connection/association to society, making them feel like useful, accepted members of groups. To this end, the professional lives of these individuals had helped them build positive forms of identity in Canada.

Jack explained how being a useful member of the group helped his feelings about himself:

> ...for instance, in my, in my workplace, well, the dominance is with native English speakers, and I think a lot of times, I, I felt quite important in that group as a member of that group. Mainly, you know, because...for some reasons, one that I've had some expertise in the field that, you know, they needed my experience. (Jack, August 13, 2016)

Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) suggest that individuals need to have access to communities of practice to construct knowledge about the self. In the above example, having an important role in professional groups made Jack feel positive about himself. His knowledge and experience of being recognized by other members of the group contributed positively to his

identity development. According to social identity theory, social identification and categorization play a major initial role in individuals' identity construction (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Martiny & Rubin, 2016; Tajfel, 1969, 1974), and inter-group conflicts arise when there is competition for resources (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The cooperation required to achieve goals has been discussed as another reason for bonding with other individuals and groups (Hogg, 1993, 2016). One can argue that when Jack acted as a resource for the group, he, predictably, was treated as (or felt like) a member of it. Another related explanation is that Jack created an opportunity for cooperation through which the group achieved goals which, without him, would have been difficult.

By exploring the data and topic more deeply, it is evident that these opportunities were just part of what is needed for a person to construct their identity. For example, individuals like Jack, who had access to communities at both professional and social levels, reported that they have been successful in constructing a "Canadian" identity (Jack, August 13, 2016), while others who reported only having access to professional communities reported having only moderate identity development opportunities. That is, although having access to different professional communities provided some opportunities for these L2 speakers, they believed that these were insufficient for becoming integrated socially in a way that would allow them to build their identities.

In many cases, the English L2-speaker participants perceived the desire for these relationships out of needs, not out of love. Here, we need to emphasize the distinction between relationships that a person feels they *need* to have and the ones they would *like* to have. For example, in Saeed's previous excerpt (p. 165), he clearly explains his experience of having a need-based attitude toward inclusion in Canadian society. On several occasions during the

interviews, the L2 speakers, including Al, considered that some level of relationship was formed in their professional lives; however, they also noted their relatively loose bindings. When a relationship is formed based on need, such as for a research project, it is not necessary to have that relationship outside of the project and, hence, the relationship can terminate at the end of the project.

> There is a difference [between work and friendly relationships]. If it is just a work relationship, it is different than when it is a friendly relationship. In a work relationship, [different] parties have an obligation according to their commitments [to their work]…but in a friendship, they don't have an obligation to continue with me. (Robert, translated, August 22, 2016)

In the case above, Robert explains how work and social relationships are different; and how, in a work relationship, there is an obligation to get along with each other. However, when the work obligation is not there, then people may choose not to tolerate challenges associated with L2 speakers' linguistic skills, such as accent differences. I need to emphasize that even during the professional binding of a work relationship, people can easily choose to separate their professional and social lives. The experiences of the L2 speakers in this study show that a majority of their English L1-speaking colleagues have divided work and social lives, at least when it involved L2 speakers who were considered to be foreigners. Such a bisected situation challenges the idea of professional groups being the main contributor to social identity construction in L2 speakers.

To provide some context, one can consider the case of L2 speakers who are considered to be "foreigners" working as university instructors. At work and in research teams, these individuals can contribute to research and scholarship, and this knowledge provides them with

social power according to the Foucauldian concept of power (Foucault, 1966, 1970; McHoul & Grace, 1993). Thus, they are considered as, and treated like, group members. The concept of *power* in Foucauldian philosophy refers to a different concept than *hierarchical power*. To Foucault (1966, 1970), power is something that is created by the societal interactions that affect an individual's position in society. In cases where the L2-speaker instructors and researchers contributed to the groups in which they operated, their contributions were beneficial to the functioning of the group, and this empowered the structure of the group. In this context, the individual is valued for making contributions and is considered to be a member of the group. If these dynamics do not work in another social group, the individual may be powerless and considered as not contributing to the group's structure. That is, the individual is not deemed necessary to the group and may not feel entirely welcome. This means that outside of certain professional groups, a person may be considered powerless in the sense of not having anything to contribute to the group, and may be excluded or marginalized. In such cases, they are assigned the identity of a non-contributor, or outsider.

Foucault's concept of subjectivity can be used to explain this situation better (Foucault, 1970; McHoul & Grace, 1993). *Subjectivity* refers to the place an individual is considered to have in social relationships. The L2 speakers in this research appeared to be considered as non-contributory to non-professional groups by L1-speaking peers. In situations where an L2 speaker is not welcomed in a sufficient number of social groups to feel a sense of belonging to the community, they are somehow situated in certain "non-participant" identities, which can be classified under Blommaert's (2006) "ascribed" identity category (p. 238). These ascribed or assigned identities, whether internalized or not by the individuals experiencing them, determine

where they are welcomed and where they are not. In other words, they become part of an individual's social reality.

Morita (2002) recommended considering the discourse of identity negotiation and development in L2 speakers. Foucault's third major factor affecting the creation of knowledge is discourse that can be used to explain what happens to ESL speakers' identities in the situations mentioned above (Foucault, 1970; McHoul & Grace, 1993). Foucault's notion of discourse includes created situations which are themselves the result of histories or backgrounds, and are effective in the construction of that discourse. His concept "shows the historically specific relations between disciplines (defined as bodies of knowledge) and disciplinary practices (forms of social control and social possibility)" (Foucault, 1970; McHoul & Grace, 1993, p. 26). To Foucault, the way we categorize objects and ideas affects how we conceive each item individually, and of them all as a whole (Foucault, 1970). Therefore, the created knowledge outcome—in this case, knowledge about self or identity—is the result of the interaction between the factors involved in its creation, that is, intersectionality. For the L2 speakers in this study, the final product of identity was produced by the interaction of all of their roles in society, whether these individuals were accepted and perceived as productive, or rejected and considered redundant. This is why profession alone cannot be considered to be the only factor contributing towards the construction of these individuals' identities, a realization that they were well-aware of and able to articulate in their interviews. This finding is consistent with previous research in social identity theory. As Ashforth and Mael (1989) noted:

> The individual's social identity may be derived not only from the organization, but also from their work group, department, union, lunch group, age cohort, fast-track group, and so on (p. 22).

That is, individuals' identities are derived from all of the social institutions in which they participate, whether be they professional or non-professional.

   Associations with Internationally-oriented Groups. One of the intriguing aspects of qualitative research is the existence of serendipitous findings. *Serendipity*, in qualitative research, refers to "significant discoveries that were unanticipated" (Richards, 2003; Whyte, 1984, p. 27). The significant impacts of membership in internationally-oriented groups on the identity construction of L2-speaker participants was one of the serendipitous findings of this research. In my conversations with L2-speaker participants, I asked about their identities and how they felt they were affected by Canadian society and participation in social and professional groups. Some of them suggested that they had few, if any, problems with constructing identities in this new context. It did not take a lot of probing to find out that these individuals were members of social groups that provided them with opportunities to feel like they belonged, to feel associated, and to feel useful. These individuals told me that the groups they participated in that used English as the main means of communication were groups in which the majority of members were second language speakers of English. Although there were a number of L1 speakers in these groups, the groups were considered to be international/intercultural groups by the participants. The discourse of the groups reflected international group identity in which each individual had credentials. Accordingly, diversity was not perceived as a problem, but rather, as a benefit. Diversity contributed to the power of the groups and helped maintain their structures. When individuals felt that they could bring something to the group that was both needed and appreciated, then their identities were both nurtured and constructed. For example, Catmum noted that, "some people may have a pride of being a citizen of some country, but to me, I feel I just live in the world" (Catmum, September 28, 2016), while Elena explained "…I don't have so many Canadian

friends ... I have lots of international friends" (Elena, September 1, 2016). In these cases, international groups were identified as being communities of practice in which ESL speakers could construct their identities. Although access to groups in which English was the main language of communication was still, in some cases, difficult for the ESL-speaker participants; a number of them managed to handle the situation by being a member of groups that incorporated L1 speakers of different languages.

To conclude this section, I emphasize that a major part of second-language identity is constructed socially. The professional groups that individuals are involved with can contribute significantly to their identity construction within society. However, other factors are needed to create the healthy environment that nurtures a person's second-language identity construction, including communities in which a person feels validated and involved. Validation comes from recognition of peoples' merits, which then results in their being assigned tasks. This can be elaborated on using the concept of legitimate peripheral participation, which suggests that group members are assigned roles based on their capabilities. Even if the roles are minor, they are still important for the successful functioning of the group (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). However, for identity within a group to be acknowledged, each person's role needs to "move from legitimate peripheral participation to central participation" (Woolfolk et al., 2012, p. 380; see also Zuengler & Miller, 2006). In the case of the L2 English-speaker participants in this study, it is evident that such opportunities were either absent for a majority of them, or were present in insufficient numbers, leading to them developing senses of disparity and segregation. However, there were also a number of individuals who felt that by considering themselves as global citizens and members of international groups, they were able to maintain healthy conditions for L2 identity construction.

Personal Construction of Identity

Congruent with the literature on social identity theory, participants spoke of a personal aspect of identity that was additional to the socially-constructed aspect. That is, for elements of social identity to become internalized, some changes and modifications are required:

> Whereas identification refers to self in terms of social categories (I am), internalization refers to the incorporation of values, attitudes, and so forth within the self as guiding principles (I believe) (Ashforth & Mael, 1986, pp. 21-22; see also O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986).

In the present study, similar ideas were expressed by the L2-speaker participants. For example, Reed said that identity, to him, has two levels: social, or what "you usually introduce yourself with" and personal, or what is "embedded" in you (Reed, September 2, 2016). A similar idea was expressed by Saeed (previously mentioned on pages 81 and 101):

> Identity for me is, it encodes I think two things. Number one is the knowledge and, and all the history inside someone's brain….And number two, the way that those stuff inside someone's brain cause him to interact, and act, and behave in the society. (Saeed, August 29, 2016)

The personal construction of identity, while having an on-going interaction with the social construction of identity, proceeds via a slightly different route. Personal identity construction proceeds by seeking affiliations within groups that may be real or imagined. That is, personal identity construction mobilizes the imagined identities of Norton (2000, 2013) in which language learners are able to motivate themselves to learn a language by imagining their future identities in desired communities of practice. Expanding her concept of imagined identities to imagined societies can aid in the exploration and explanation of the findings of this study. The L2 English

speakers in this study who were able to identify as global citizens in internationally-oriented groups demonstrated: (a) no perceived problems in constructing their identities, (b) L2 English-speaking identities that were recognized by others, even those who were not necessarily L1 speakers of the language, and (c) that they perceived themselves as having different identities which were somehow beyond the modernist concepts of citizenship, perhaps best referred to as *global citizen identity*.

To explain, firstly, individuals who reported no difficulties in developing positive L2 identities, such as Catmum, Elena, and Jack, practiced their identities beyond the solely English-speaking domain. They used English as a means rather than an end. That is, their identity practices had liberating effects in the sense that they were liberated from being constantly dependent on L1 English speakers for growth and development. They used English for communication and for constructing L2 identities beyond the limited signified identities available in the English language. This confirms McHoul and Grace's (1993) argument that "Saussure's basic conception of the linguistic sign, as split into two aspects, the signifier and the signified" is being questioned (p. 13). In the case of these L2 speakers of English, the signifiers—the words, phrases, sentences, and structures in English—are not necessarily synonymous with the signified elements, those traditionally-signified entities referred to in English. In this sense, participation in internationally-identifying groups allowed for participation in different discourses than those existing in groups consisting only of L1 speakers of English. The newly-created discourse values ensured that every member's contributions to the group were validated, legitimized, recognized and appreciated. In short, members were given power by the group because of the contributions they made to it.

Secondly, we need to be cognizant of the nature of the communities of practice to which the L2 speakers had access. These communities can be formed by individuals from different linguistic backgrounds. These communities, or what some of the participants referred to as "international groups" (e.g. Elena and Catmum), can still provide safe zones for nurturing the development of L2 identities. In other words, the distinctions between the varieties of English found in the inner circle, the expanding circle, and the outer circle (Kachru, 1988) may be more limiting and perhaps not as valid as they once were (e.g., Bhatt, 2001). Moreover, as Park (2006) suggested, ESL speakers can diverge from the idea of becoming one with the L1 community, and instead explore new identities for themselves, a change that is both empowering and constructive. I suggest that the latter occurred in a number of cases for the L2 English speakers in this study, specifically, for Catmum and Elena.

Identity and Second Language Speaking. In this section, I discuss L2 identity construction and its relationship to second language speaking; however, identity construction in L2 speakers requires its own section. As I discussed in Chapter 2 of this document, because a substantial portion of the signified elements of words may be missing in L2 contexts, the credentials of L2 speakers may be under-valued and under-validated. In such cases, the discourses in which these individuals are operating are ones that do not work to their advantage. While individuals' achievements may be valuable, the individuals are not in the right place for their values to be recognized. In the example of ESL-speaker participants, we need to remember that these individuals have valuable assets; however, a lot of those assets are not recognized and validated in the societies in which they operate. Therefore, they are struggling in terms of identity. This is not because of their attempts to be enculturated in society but, rather, it relates to whether other members of society accept them and recognize their values, contributions, and

capital. For example, Saeed pointed out that for a few years he tried hard to be integrated in society, yet achieved little success. Then he gave up and started to dissociate himself from a lot of social norms and practices:

> ...I think at the point that I came to Canada…, I was very motivated, I was very…interested to develop my abilities…in terms of learning [the] language and everything. So, the way that I started to resemble speaking English…in the other ways of my life [I] tried to be close to them…in terms of people respecting to one another and social roles and everything. And that caused me to feel closer to Canadian society. But later, …after a few years, when I found that…I am not part of the society and so on; I think both my accent and…my following rules and everything started to go down and, you know, reduce[d] over time, and also caused me to feel…a bit separated [from] the society. (Saeed, August 29, 2016)

Thinking about Saeed's comments in light of other statements, what caused Saeed to feel separated from society was not his English language skills. In fact, after his initial arrival in Canada he was told by some Canadian English speakers that his English was good, that he spoke like someone who had lived in Canada for a long time. English, it seems, was not the key to his accessing communities of practice. In Norton's (2000, 2013) book, a "Catch 22" was revealed; participants required access to communities of practice in order to learn English, while knowing enough English was a prerequisite to access those communities of practice (Norton, 2000, 2013, pp. 101). However, in my research, a number of differences created a different context. First, the L2 speakers who participated in my study were individuals who could speak English to a fairly

high degree,[27] meaning that they had been able to gain entry to graduate programs in English-speaking institutions. Second, my participants had access to professional English-speaking communities of practice related to their specializations. Norton's study was focused on immigrant women who were not employed in the professions in which they were specialized. Although they used to do specialized work in their countries of origin, they often ended up working in marginal employment after immigrating. Third, the participants in my study were in situations where the background knowledge and skills they obtained through their L1 were valued in their professional English-speaking communities. In Norton's study, the participants came from environments where their background knowledge and skills were of little value or legitimacy at work. In Norton's study, it would not have been possible to examine the impacts of foreign accent or intelligibility in formal language settings as I attempted to do here. That is, accent becomes an additional hurdle to positive L2 identity formation only after the hurdles of basic communication and understanding have been cleared.

Identity and Accent. Delving into this further, the relationship between identity and accent seems to be a unidirectional: an individual's identity affects their accent. Yet, it can also be argued that accent affects the way individuals are assigned identities. For example, Pauline told me that at the beginning of her stay in Canada, people would guess she was French immediately:

> I remember when I arrived in Winnipeg last year, I didn't know anyone, and every time I would speak to someone, I only had to speak one sentence and people would know right away that I was French, and I found that very annoying… (Pauline, September 14, 2016)

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[27] They were all graduate students and were required to pass a certain minimum requirement for English language proficiency before being accepted to their programs; in this case, an IELTS overall score of 6.5.

Later, she explained that being assigned certain identities based on accent is not a good experience:

> Like I said before, it a bit annoys me because...I...how can I say that...I feel like it should be my call to tell people where I come from because it affects the way people perceive you, so I'd like to have the hand on that and be able to let people know I'm French whenever I want them to know and not as I speak. So that annoys me. (Pauline, September 14, 2016)

However, most of the participants considered a more direct relationship from identity to accent. In other words, the discussions related to Figure 1 from Chapter 1, where social groups are shown to inform individuals' identities, and their identities, in turn, inform their accents, seemed to be more accurate than assuming that individuals' identities are informed by their accents. In other words, while I am not denying the impacts of accent on identity construction, I suggest that the impact of identity on accent is more dominant. L2 speakers' backgrounds, including the identities they have developed based on both their L1 and L2, inform their L2 accents. Individuals' accents, in turn, affect their identities and the groups to which they are welcomed. Therefore, in Figure 11, which is a revision of Figure 1 from Chapter 1, the relationships among social groups, identity, and accent are shown using arrows. According to this figure, each of the three components influences the other two.
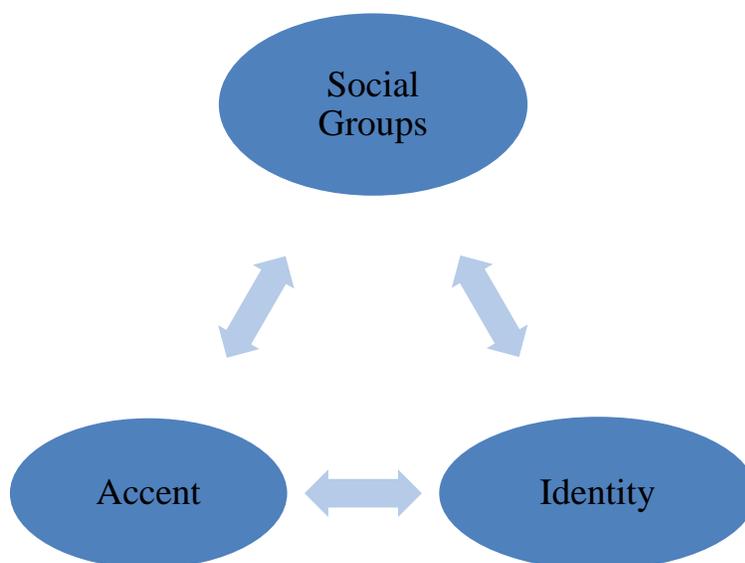
Figure 11. The relationship between social groups, identity, and accent.

In summary, for the ESL-speaker participants in this study, accent is affected and formed by the communities in which a person has been a member and the places in which a person has lived. Accents reflect elements of an individual's background. Similarly, for the ESL-speaker participants in this study, accents are developed as offspring of social groups and identities; after a certain point, they contribute to assigned identities, determining the identities that a person is allowed to practice.

Identity Construction in Second-language Speakers

Examination of the ESL speakers in this study shows that their identities are the "site of a struggle" (Norton, 2000, p. 127, 2013, p. 164) in the sense of being constantly evolving and being influenced by their past, current, and future possible interactions within different social groups. In this way, my study confirms the contributions of extant scholars in the field (e.g. Block, 2009; Norton, 2000, 2013; Park, 2006; Tsui, 2007). However, my study suggests that these highly proficient L2 speakers sometimes felt themselves to be not entirely welcome in

communities of L1 speakers, even though they had sufficient linguistic skills to take on at least some peripheral roles.

James (2010) argued that to understand the situations minorities live in, one needs to consider a variety of factors such as social justice, equity, racism, and identity. In his book, he pointed out that the individual participants in his research tried to perceive their situations based on individualism, which is insufficient, rather than intersectionality, which is more robust. Similarly, a number of scholars have pointed out that considering entities such as self and identity as individually-based constructs is no longer seem to be a valid perspective (MacKinnon & Heise, 2010). Identity is a mental construct that (at least partially) is constructed in collaboration with others. Therefore, understanding issues related to individuals' identities is not possible without considering the social factors affecting them. In fact, a complex intersection of social structures such as family, friends, professional groups, and social activity groups affect individuals' constructions of their identities. Over-emphasising one element of the factors influencing identity construction may not be the best practice in exploring and explaining identity construction. For example, in the case of the ESL-speaking participants in this study, the majority were involved with professional groups. However, there seemed to be a need for further group participation opportunities outside of work to help in constructing their identities. A suggested reason for their identities being "a site of struggle" (Norton, 2000, p. 127, 2013, p. 164) was a lack of access to social groups in which they could practice their L2 identities outside of work.

Some of the participants pointed out that there is a mismatch between what is officially articulated as the multicultural policy of Canada and the ways that minorities and immigrants are

actually treated in society (see also Norton, 2000, 2013; James, 2010). For example, Saeed believed that there are cultural issues affecting his life:

> I think for a foreigner that comes to Canada, although the government, or the
> multicultural…society is working, although they claim that, you know, the government
> …claim that … you are going toward justice in the society, I think the way that … people
> are…making these opportunities in that society should be the same, but that's something
> I don't see really. And I think that's not something related to the government,
> that's…more related to the culture… (August 29, 2016)

Being denied access to the resources that the L2 speakers felt they deserved was another factor that contributed to these individuals' identity struggles (for example, Saeed as quoted on page 91). Some of the discussions on social identity theory suggest that access to resources can be a reason for inter-group competition and conflict (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Martiny & Rubin, 2016; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In James (2010), several participants belonging to minority groups in Canada pointed to two major factors related to race, referring to (a) being Caucasian, and (b) having a Canadian English accent. A fair number of L2 speakers also displayed some level of foreign accent and did not belong to a Caucasian background. These issues seemed to affect their life experiences in Canada and thus their identity construction. However, we also need to consider access to resources as a potential candidate for explaining these situations. For example, when competition for research and professional opportunities is intense, members of a research team might be more likely to employ someone they know socially. In fact, in hiding opportunities from people they do not know well, they may not intend to deny those people access; rather, they facilitate access to individuals more likely to fit their social circles.

Intelligibility and Accent Ratings. In the quantitative strand of this research, we observed that the visual perception of an individual (that is, whether they are Caucasian or a visible minority) can contribute to English L1 speakers' ratings of their intelligibility and accent. The existence of higher variance and standard deviation in Task 2 than Task 1 point to a more inconsistent rating in Task 2 than in Task 1. As a reminder, in Task 1 pictures of Caucasians accompanied English L1 speakers' voices and visible minority pictures accompanied English L2 speakers' voices while in Task 2 the picture association was reversed. We can entertain the possibility that individuals' expectations of a speaker's intelligibility and accent influence their ratings of these two constructs. The observed difference in the ratings of the two tasks can be considered to have originated from raters' expectations of speakers with a certain background.

According to Foucault (1966, 1970), subjectivity affects what knowledge is created. That is, society can impose identities on individuals based on their skin colour. These individuals then have to live their lives struggling with the idea that every time they meet a new person, they may be assigned certain (foreign) identities that are not accurate. The importance of those instances of being assigned a foreign identity becomes more significant when we remember that many Caucasian people are not automatically assigned such identities at the beginning of conversations unless they display something in their appearance that warrants an assignation of "foreign-ness". However, on the whole, we can assume that assumptions of foreign-ness, if undesirable, can create an imbalanced situation that may cause inequity and inequality for L2 speakers and visible minorities. The newness of immigration policies that encourage people from non-European countries to immigrate to Canada may be one of the reasons for assumptions of foreign-ness and immigrant identity being based on skin colour. It was in 1976 that the Immigration Act "shifted immigration towards non-traditional countries and 'visible minorities' (the official term for non-

white groups in Canada, while Quebec uses the term 'cultural communities')" (Ghosh, 2004, p. 550). This newness of current policies and practices of including visible minorities in the Canadian immigration program may be one of the reasons why visible minorities are perceived to be immigrants and ESL speakers, especially in populations with smaller proportions of visible minorities. In addition to this, even after such multiculturalist policies have been implemented, the fact remains that "white European ethno-cultural groups were significantly more acceptable than visible minorities" (Ghosh, 2004, p. 562). The newness of immigration policies that encourage immigration from non-European countries, and greater acceptability of European ethno-cultural groups, even after such multiculturalism policies, may create imbalanced subjectivity based on individuals' skin colour. Two points need to be made here. The first point is that the identities assigned to visible minorities can be, at least partially, attributable to the subjective position of these individuals in society. The second point is that visible minorities' attitudes toward their experiences of being assigned ESL-speaker identities may differ: while one person may endorse the ESL-speaker identity, another may detest it.

On a positive note, those L1 speakers who had taken a relatively high number of courses with ITAs, and thus were more experienced in learning from L2 speakers, mostly told me that they perceived no issues with these instructors. Their ratings of accent and intelligibility were consistent across the two tasks, whether the pictures associated with the readings were of Caucasians or visible minorities. This can be taken as evidence that exposure to foreign accents is needed, as it allows students to learn from and engage with those whom they perceive as "others," even, as in this case, high-stake situations such as university classrooms, where futures hang in the balance.

ITA Educational Practices

Some findings critical to the educational practices of ITAs emerged from different parts

of this research. The interviews with ITAs regarding the teaching and instructional practices of

them explored their experiences with intelligibility and accent, and investigated how these

elements affected teacher-student communications. Similar conversations were also initiated in

the interviews with L1-speaking raters. During the interviews with both L2-speaking ITAs and

L1-speaking raters, one of the major ideas discussed by the raters, and discussed separately by

the L2-speaking ITAs, was that in the contrast of intelligibility and accent, intelligibility of

speech is a major component of educational quality, while accent is secondary. When I asked the

L2 speakers about which of accent and intelligibility they thought was more important in their

teaching practices, they said "intelligibility". For example, Pauline said:

> I think intelligibility is more important because if you have a perfect accent but nobody
>
> can understand, nobody can hear what you're saying, it doesn't matter that your accent is
>
> perfect. (September 14, 2016)[28]

The L1-speaking raters specifically told me that the requirement of being intelligible is not

limited to ITAs; it is also applicable to L1-speaking instructors. Some of them also shared

experiences of L1 speakers who were not intelligible enough, even though they did not have a

foreign accent:

> …I know plenty of people that…are native English speakers that speak very haltingly.
>
> And that's, that has very little to do with. It has less to do with foreign accent and has
>
> more to do with how a person speaks. (Batman, November 8, 2016)

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[28] Also cited on page 109.

In keeping with common sense, a certain minimum threshold of intelligibility is required for other aspects of teaching skills to be perceived and evaluated. For example, after listening to one of the readings by an L2 speaker, Natalia said that she could not comment on the organization of the speech as the talk was not intelligible enough: "I can't get a fair, a fair idea [whether or not] it was organized well" (Natalia, November 9, 2016). Similarly, in the second-language acquisition literature, scholars have emphasized the importance of intelligibility of speech for L2 speakers in general and for ITAs in particular (e.g. Anderson-Hsieh, 1990; Bresnahan et al., 2002; Cargile & Giles, 1998; Giles, Hewstone, Ryan, & Johnson, 1987).

When the intelligibility requirement of speech is met, other factors become visible markers of instructional quality to students: speech rate, projection of voice, organization of thought, having good knowledge of the field, sharing related knowledge and experience, and having confidence in the knowledge. These ideas were discussed in the interviews, especially those with the L1-speaking raters (Chapter 5). The literature on ITAs also provides support for these markers, accompanying them with some recommendations for improving instructional quality. For example, Hann (2004) and Stevens (1989) argue in favour of working on the intelligibility of ITAs' speech. Hann (2004) specifically suggested that teaching sentence primary stress can improve ITAs' intelligibility of speech and this, in turn, will improve students' understanding and retention of information. Plakans (1994) mentioned that one of the complaints students brought up about ITAs was that they do not project their voices. With such things in mind, Pickering (2001) argued that use of different voice projections is a technique teachers may use for interacting with their students. However, work on projecting instructors' instructional voices, or practicing projection as a technique for helping ITAs to be understood, were not explicitly recommended. Pickering (2001) concludes that ITAs first need to employ

voice projection to make sure that they are being heard by the students, and then use voice projection in a strategic way to communicate meaning.

One of the challenges for ITAs is *organization of thought*; that is, an ITA's thoughts may be well organized according to their L1 (Scheu-Lottgen & Hernandez-Campoy, 1998) but that may not necessarily translate into L2 logic. So they need to learn developing and presenting their thoughts according to the L2 norms. Next, having a thorough knowledge of the field being taught is essential for ITAs and instructors, and it has been suggested that this should be a requirement for them (Hoekje & Williams, 1992; Jenkins, 2000; Li et al., 2011). This finding is consistent with existing research on ITA practices. When ITAs share their related knowledge and experiences with students, they also help evoke and create shared backgrounds. In turn, when students feel that they have shared knowledge with ITAs and they know what their shared backgrounds are, they may understand ITAs better (Pickering, 2001). Additionally, when students perceive that they share a background with an ITA or a teacher, they (students) tend to evaluate the educators' practices more highly (Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Plakans, 1994; Rubin, 1992). Finally, when ITAs are perceived as more confident, they can communicate with students more effectively. The positive effect of confidence on ITAs' work has been discussed in prior scholarship as well. For example, Anderson-Hsieh (1990) noted that:

> If the ITAs are confident about their ability to make themselves understood in the classroom, they are more likely to project themselves more confidently and interact more effectively with the undergraduate students in their classes. (p. 211)

Similarly, Hebbani and Hendrix (2014) argued that "perceived lack of confidence was a hurdle" that ITAs needed to overcome to improve their teaching practices (p. 65). Therefore, as I briefly explained above, all of the elements that my research identified as being successful ITA teaching

practices are supported by the literature. In the literature, some factors had stronger support, while others, such as sharing background knowledge and experiences, were more speculative. In such speculative cases, my research provides empirical evidence.

In addition to the mentioned communication and teaching skills, English L1-speaking raters suggested that some aspects of speech were important determinants of their willingness to take a course with a particular ITA. After listening to the recordings of ITAs, the raters pointed out what they liked and disliked about each speaker. The raters also pointed out the reasons for their preferences. Specifically, desirable L2 English speakers managed to compensate for their accents by other means, such as ensuring good discourse organization, avoiding complexity, projecting well, and pronouncing key words clearly. Using sequential terms to organize presentations and guide listeners through them was a linguistic skill that positively affected raters' perceptions of L2 English speakers' speech. Natalia, commenting on one of the *teaching interest talks*, summarized it best:

> I found that he was organized, organized about what he was talking about. But I liked it because as much as he had a very heavy accent that I found was hard to listen to, he was simplistic about it. So I was able to follow what he was talking about all time. He kinda had one idea that flowed nicely into the next into the next. And he made sure to use those key words for sentences, like he used 'therefore', 'in conclusion'... Even if he had a thick accent, as soon as you hear those words, it helps you follow along. Because I know…as soon as I hear "therefore"... they're gonna tie things together. So I could listen and say like 'OK, he was saying this and this and this' and 'Oh, he's putting it together' so I liked that as much as his English was basic, I still knew what he was getting at, so…I did like that actually. (Natalia, November 9, 2016)

As is evident from this interview excerpt, using sequential adverbs allows students to follow the instructor's train of thought and perceive the organizational principles. These adverbs, by providing organization clues, can compensate for L2 accent and intelligibility.

Another point revealed in the interviews is that during the *teaching interest talks*, major comprehension problems occurred, primarily at the beginning. In a number of cases, the raters said that the talks were not clear at the beginning, but got clearer later, or they did not get the title of the course the speaker wanted to teach, which was also stated at the beginning of each talk.

As he went on along, I just got used to the way he pronounced *physics* and *mathematics*. So, you know, at first I wasn't sure what, at all, what he said, but as it went on…'OK, so that was just the way you say those things', so I was kinda like, 'OK, now I know what he is talking about'. Before, it's like, 'what words did you just say, I'm not sure'. But after, it's just the matter of adapting… (Zoe, October 3, 2016)

Yeah, I thought it was good, like I had no idea what that word was, I can't remember what was it again, *punjy,* or something. [Interviewer: culturally-relevant pedagogy] Yeah, I didn't know what any of those stuff was, but she explained it right away, right at the start and gave you a background on it. (Tom, November 10, 2016)

She, once, her accent was very light except for a very few words. For example, when she said *geopolitics*, I felt that, the first time I thought she had said, it sounded like 'she pulled aid' to me [laughter] ... That was a, that, a…'Oh she said geopolitics'. That's it, I liked her accent. It was very nice. (Batman, November 8, 2016)

While there could be several reasons why raters initially found comprehending ITAs' *teaching interest talks* difficult but found it easier with time, one explanation is that the L1-speaking raters normalized the L2 speakers' pronunciation and accents as they listened to them. *Normalization*

refers to the process by which language speakers or listeners become able to understand spoken items regardless of between-individual differences existing in speech sounds (Johnson, 2005). Because comprehension takes time, one recommendation for L2 speakers, especially educators, is to make sure they speak slowly and clearly, particularly at the beginning of their lectures, or during communications in general. More elaboration on this point is provided in Chapter 9.

After the discussion on ITAs' educational practices, in the following sections, I will discuss some of the limitations and delimitations of the study, along with suggestions for future research.

Limitations of the Study

This study had some unique features compared with other explorations of second language acquisition and second language education. It benefited from a range of theoretical conceptualizations, which can be viewed as both an advantage and potential disadvantage. One of the advantages is that it benefitted from providing explanations for the observations from different angles. However, each of these angles could be explored in more depth. In fact, each of these conceptualizations, such as Foucault's concepts of power and subjectivity in relation to discourse, can provide theoretical and analytical frameworks for a lifelong scholarship within the fields of second language acquisition and education. Within the limited time and resources provided to me, I tried to make the most of my data by focusing on major theoretical frameworks that were helpful, and applying them to the research selectively. Another limitation of the research was the number of participants in each group, especially the first language speakers of English in the first group and in the raters group. I used five participants in each of those categories. Within the recommendations of both qualitative and mixed methods research design, the numbers were acceptable. However, for better exploration of the concepts, and to give the

research greater robustness and thereby greater research quality, increasing the sample size would be helpful. Additionally, an increase in the number of participants could potentially contribute to the research's visibility and generalizability. Exploring the interactive role of segmental and suprasegmental elements in second language speech perception was another area that would benefit from further exploration and understanding of second language speech perception.

Delimitations

The process of conducting this project began one year before starting my PhD program when I started communicating with my (then future) advisor. As I moved through the PhD program and took more courses in the field of second language education and TESL, the original research ideas were modified. Originally, I wanted to explore the relationship between accent and ESL acquisition with a tentative quantitative research methodology. A focus on ITAs as the main group to be studied was one of the modifications to the original research design. Employing a mixed methods research design to gain a better understanding of the research issue was another major modification. At the proposal stage, the idea was to include both segmental as well as suprasegmental elements of speech in the research; however, after running a pilot study, together with my committee, I decided to include only suprasegmental elements of speech in the research. This was mainly due to the conceptualization of accent and intelligibility, which made inclusion of segmental elements surplus. I have explained this decision in detail in Chapters 1 and 3. For identity, different concepts were selected for exploration based on the existing literature and conceptualizations of identity. Overall, I intended to maintain a holistic, or Gestalt[29], quality of

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[29] Erzberger and Kelle (2003); Tashakkori and Teddlie (2008)

research in both conducting the research and writing the final dissertation. I believe such a holistic quality in research and final product is achieved in this work.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research could inspire interested researchers to explore different aspects of internationally-educated instructors' teaching practices. This can include their linguistic and communication practices as well as their teaching activities. Further research on extra-linguistic factors could provide information about L1-speaking students' attitudes toward international educators. Another interesting area of research could be to explore the effects of foreign accent experience on L1-speaking students' perceptions of ITAs. In line with this research, one may wish to explore specific strategies that could be used to help ITAs improve their practices and quantify the effectiveness of each strategy. On the other hand, exploring L2-speaking students' perceptions of ITAs can also be enlightening in understanding what attitudes ITAs are facing in today's classrooms. On a more linguistic note, it would be interesting to explore the distinction between accent and intelligibility, and find out if, when, and how it informs us about speech perception, as well as accent and intelligibility perception. Exploring the role of segmental and suprasegmental elements in L2 intelligibility and accent may also provide more information on the perception of intelligibility and accent. As I discussed in the findings and discussion chapters, some of the concepts of social groups have changed over time; for example, one significant change has been in the groups in which individuals can claim membership. It would be interesting and intriguing to explore how the emergence of the digital age, with its social media and virtual groups, affects identity, especially in younger generations of first and additional language speakers.

Chapter 9: Educational Implications and Recommendations

There are a number of recommendations for the field of education that can be made based on the findings of this study. The majority of these findings are based on the interviews I conducted with L2-speaking international teaching assistants (ITAs) and L1-speaking raters. The way I drew these recommendations was similar to the rest of findings of the qualitative interviews; I looked for common recurring themes. As much as possible, I used the literature on ITAs to explain and support these recommendations. There are also some recommendations that can be better explained and discussed by other fields of study. For example, when I observed the challenges facing raters at the beginning of the ITAs' *teaching interest talks*, I used the concept of *normalization of speech* to provide an explanation for these challenges. In this section, I will elaborate further on the educational recommendations I make. We need to note that (a) as research suggests, if these recommendations are not followed, there may be problematic issues; and (b) they are based on the results provided through this research. So that there is empirical support for the recommendations and to avoid uncertain speculation, these recommendations are based on the findings of this study and rooted in evidence. Knowing that some users of this study who are involved in the process of hiring internationally-educated instructors and teachers may have limited knowledge of the second language acquisition field, it is crucial to use plain and non-technical language. By doing so, I can also make the work accessible for a wide range of users.

One of my hopes in conducting this study was to provide a platform for exploring ITAs' educational practices in order to develop a set of strategies for improving their services, which would improve the efficiency of the educational services offered to our students. There were several factors highlighted by both L2-speaking ITAs and L1-speaking raters as affecting

communication between instructors and students. As discussed in the literature review, the literature highlights three major concerns in the use of ITAs: (1) cultural skills, (2) communication skills, and (3) teaching skills (e.g. Anderson-Hsieh, 1990; Boyd, 1989; Crumley, 2010; Fox & Gay, 1994). A major argument is that if we improve the teaching and communication skills of L2-speaking instructors and ITAs, we can improve the quality of their instructional services and, thereby, the quality of post-secondary education. Educators working with ITAs can help them achieve better results by looking into these factors and directing their training accordingly.

Intelligibility. The intelligibility of L2-speaking instructors' speech is a factor affecting students' speech comprehension. It is important for ITAs to ensure that they speak intelligibly, i.e., clearly. However, while work can be done to improve the overall intelligibility of ITAs, we need to also pay attention to the fact that intelligibility is co-constructed (Rajadurai, 2007). Therefore, in a multilingual context such as that existing in Canada, arguably, work needs to be done on educating L1-speaker students to be multi-language listeners. Meanwhile, the intelligibility of ITAs' speech can be increased using contrastive linguistic analysis, and providing individualized assistance for students based on their first languages. For example, L1 speakers of Japanese have been frequently reported to confuse /r/ and /l/ sounds in English. This can cause problems for their own understanding and for listeners when they produce such sounds (e.g. Pisoni & Lively, 1995; Strange, 1995; Yamada, 1995), ultimately leading to decreased understanding on the part of students. Providing L2 speakers help with their pronunciations has been documented to have positive outcomes (e.g. Beddor & Gottfried, 1995; Pisoni & Lively, 1995). On the other hand, a number of scholars have emphasized that intelligibility is co-constructed by the speaker and listener (e.g. Kang, Rubin, & Lindemann, 2015; Rajadurai, 2007).

Therefore, to gain improvement in intelligibility, we need to balance the responsibility between ITAs and L1-speaker students. In Kang, Rubin, and Lindemann (2015), they observed that after a short, one-hour, interactive, and precisely-designed problem solving activity involving ITAs, L1-speaker students' attitudes toward ITAs' intelligibility shifted, and they expressed more positive attitudes toward ITAs and perceived them as more intelligible. The researchers suggested that increased intelligibility is attributable to a variety of factors including humanization of L1 speakers' attitudes toward second language speakers. Arguably, then, educational administrators may wish to plan and implement carefully-designed activities to help familiarize L1-speaker students with ITAs—not to avoid helping ITAs improve their intelligibility but, rather, to work with all parties to maximize the outcomes.

We need to remember that, similar to Rubin's (1992) study, in the quantitative strand of this research, we observed that L1-speaking raters' ratings of L1 and L2 speakers' accent and intelligibility varied depending on the race of the person in the image displayed concurrently. However, when L1-speaking raters listened to ITAs' *teaching interest talks*, they reported better understanding after a few seconds into each ITAs' *teaching interest talk*. Taken together with previous research, this finding suggests that by holding sessions and workshops for L1-speaker students to familiarize them with ITAs and to help them overcome stereotypes of poor intelligibility in L2 English speakers, we can aim for at least two goals: (a) increased comprehension on the part of English L1-speaker students, and (b) increased normalization of ITAs' speech.

Another observation was that, on several occasions, L1-speaking raters did not understand some *keywords* at the beginning of ITAs' *teaching interest talks*. However, as raters continued listening to the ITAs, they were able to understand them better. This observation can

be related to the *normalization of speech* phenomenon, (see pages 187-188 under the section *ITAs' Educational Practices*). For now, it is sufficient to say that if ITAs attempt to pronounce key words clearly and define them, or present them in a clarifying context (perhaps with images for each keyword, their spelling and pronunciation) at the beginning of their presentations, this may provide opportunities for students to understand and concentrate on the key words and concepts of the presentation. Second, doing so is good pedagogical practice in that it highlights the main concepts and ideas and helps activate students' knowledge of them, which helps to facilitate knowledge transfer.

Interestingly, the L1-speaking raters did not think that having a minor foreign accent was a barrier to communication as long as the speech was intelligible. Raters emphasized that in education, having some accent may actually help, not hinder, instructors in their teaching practices. The L1-speaking raters said that students may get tired halfway through a lecture if there is nothing to hold their attention and become prone to losing concentration:

> …accent-wise, it will, it can work to her advantage because I was not listening too much to what she was trying to say because I understand what she's saying, but I was listening more closely to make sure that I'm hearing more correctly. Yeah, so I think it could be good in a [teaching] situation because towards the end of the class, you start to get distracted by other things, but still will be listening closely to what she was saying, so I know for sure that I'm understanding correctly. (Tina, November 2, 2016)

In the above example, Tina explained that having an instructor with a minor foreign accent may help students by forcing them to focus. In the following excerpt, Zoe explains why she thinks it can be beneficial for an instructor to have a slight foreign accent:

...it seems funny but sometimes it's almost beneficial you have to actively listen to your

profs because you can't just kinda zone out and still get the meaning. Here you kinda

need to be, you need to be on to make sure that you don't get 'metals' and 'matters'

mixed up. So I mean, you know, if he was my prof in a system and a system and a subject

that I understood, then I'd be pretty OK with that. (Zoe, October 3, 2016)

It seems that with instructors who have a slight foreign accent, the students tend to stay more

focused in comparison with instructors having no foreign accents at all. In such cases, the

students consciously want to make sure they understand their instructors. The L1-speaking raters

mentioned this as a benefit that L2-speaking instructors have over L1-speaking instructors.

Speech Rate. Speech rate is one of the factors that can affect ITAs' and internationally-

educated instructors' communication. The L1-speaking raters reported that their difficulties in

understanding L2 speakers of English increase when those speakers speak quickly. It is

interesting that some of the ITAs pointed out that at the early stages of their teaching, they tried

to speak very fast to impress the students, but later found out that the students did not understand

them[30]. It is therefore important for ITAs to speak at a slow rate, particularly at the beginning of

their presentations. This is something that can be easily remedied simply by informing L2

English-speaking instructors in advance. Moreover, the L1-speaking raters repeatedly told me

that at the beginning of the rating sessions they could not understand the people they were

listening to, but that they were able to do so later. A phenomenon called "normalization of

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[30] For example, when talking about the role of intelligibility on his teaching practices, Saeed said "...sometimes I was embarrassed before I go to the class, so I just started to, just write the materials, you know, speaking fairly quickly and…speaking gargled…materials, without any right flow of putting words one after each other and materials one after each other, that also transferred. That [was to] impress just the students in the class and at some point some time, I saw students leaving the class, especially at the beginning of my experience of teaching mathematics, for example. But later on, when I feel, felt more confident and I were prepared well, you know, you know, I could see that when I speak more intelligibly, students likes me and they understand what I say, and they want to stay connected with me and so on. So that definitely helps…."

speech" or "speaker normalization of speech perception" can explain these observations. Speaker normalization of speech perception means that listeners are able to adjust their perceptions by ignoring or incorporating differences between the input and their expectations. In other words, human speech is variable, and through normalization, speech sounds and patterns are moderated in our brains so that we can understand speakers with different accents (Johnson, 2005). In my research, this process happened quickly; raters normalized speech after just a few sentences. Given that each *teaching interest talk* was only between one and two minutes in duration, speaker normalization must have happened very quickly, which adds further support to the suggestion to expose L1 English speakers to multiple speech forms prior to taking courses with ITAs or other L2 English-speaking instructors.

A number of further implications for education are suggested. First, L2-speaking educators need to use a lower speech rate at the beginning of their presentations to provide an opportunity for students to normalize their speech. Specifically, by lower rate of speech, I refer to using fewer numbers of words per minute, but not stretching out vowel sounds to distort that speech. This recommendation is more applicable at the beginning of ITAs' presentations. Second, widespread understanding of the normalization of speech would ensure that educational administrators consider this phenomenon when hiring L2-speaking instructors, to avoid disadvantaging these individuals in the hiring process. Third, education administrators may wish to inform students about normalization and the fact that they will get used to the various accents and speech patterns of ITAs. This way, students will not become overly concerned about their level of understanding at the beginning of a course. Fourth, education administrators can suggest that students become involved in out-of-class activities with ITAs (similar to the experiment

conducted by Kang, Rubin, & Lindemann, 2015) to accelerate students' normalization of ITA speech and overcome any negative stereotypes about L2 speakers.

Projection of the Voice. Projection, meaning the careful pronunciation of words so they can be heard clearly (Burns & Seidlhofer, 2010; Ondráček, 2011) is another characteristic of L2 instructors that was deemed to be acceptable. In fact, this feature refers not only to L2-speaking instructors but, rather, instructors in general. Raters also mentioned that having a soft voice works against ITAs:

> I found that at least she was friendly and projecting her voice, so it's not, like, all terrible. (Natalia, November 9, 2016)

> Like, he talked quietly, but he also had an accent, so between the two I couldn't understand what he was saying, so I had to ask him a couple of times. Yeah, I think he was speaking quietly. (Tina, November 2, 2016)

> …there was one professor that, he wasn't, I wouldn't say that it was his accent, but he was really soft spoken and made it difficult to hear what he was trying to say…and now it was coupled with a bit of a thick, I guess, a Portuguese accent. He mumbled a lot. That, that made it difficult to understand ... what he was trying to say. (Batman, November 8, 2016)

As is obvious in the above examples, the L1-speaking raters pointed out that when L2 speakers have good projection, it facilitates listening comprehension. Therefore, ITAs, and in fact, all instructors, need to make sure that they project carefully while teaching to make sure that students have the opportunity to hear them clearly. Projection increases intelligibility, providing clearer speech samples for the listeners to process. Because the arguments for a positive role of speech projection in communication between ITAs and L1-speaking students are anecdotal, more

empirical research is needed to explore the impact of projection on ITA communications with L1-speaking students. At this stage, the discussion and recommendations on speech projection remain speculative.

Organization. The organization of speech was another major factor affecting the quality of ITA *teaching interest talks*. This factor was pointed out both by the raters as well as some ITAs. It was perceived as a major factor regardless of the speaker using their L1 or L2; in fact, organization of speech was one of the factors that emerged and was discussed by the L1-speaking raters without me specifically asking about it. For example, Zoe commented on the organization of each recording that we listened to, regardless of the speaker's L1. Regarding organization, students also expected their instructors to "drive the point home" and to be consistent with their thought processes:

> I didn't like their organization. I heard the expressions about a topic that she would like to teach about, there shouldn't be any hesitations to the ideas there, like it was something she was passionate about to teach, she should be able to get the point out there, just drive the point home, not to pause and stop and not to explain it. (Natalia commenting on Elena, November 9, 2016)

The organization of speech, as a factor contributing to the quality of ITAs' instruction, has been pointed out by a number of scholars in the field. Previous findings support the idea that the organization of thoughts is an essential instructional skill that ITAs need to acquire and use (e.g. Baily, 1984; Tyler, 1992). With confidence, it can be argued that inclusion of lexical discourse markers such as "first", "second", "therefore", etc. contribute to the organization of speech. Hence, encouraging ITAs to use these markers may significantly improve their students' comprehension. In the interviews with L1-speaking raters, one specifically referred to these

markers as signs of organization, mentioning that the inclusion of logical and chronological connectors made it easier for her to follow the speech (see pp. 186-187, quotation by Natalia). This idea has also found long-term support in the literature. Tyler (1992) suggested that discourse cues can contribute significantly to L1 speakers' comprehension of L2 speakers. Therefore, an element that can be used in ITA training is to remind ITAs of the importance of discourse markers and encourage them to use these in their presentations.

To summarize, a clear thought process can provide the students with a recognizable pathway to follow during lectures. ESL-speaking instructors need to make sure that they have a clear outline to follow through their presentations, and they should be encouraged to use lexical discourse markers, such as sequential adverbs and other organizational signposts, to help their students understand. Instructors can begin each lecture by presenting an outline. Education administrators can also explain the benefits of lecture outlines to all instructors, be they L1 or L2 speakers.

Field Knowledge and Expertise. ITAs need well-rounded knowledge of the field they intend to teach and must portray their understanding well. When they have extensive knowledge of the field they are teaching, they can focus their energies on transferring it effectively. It was suggested by the raters that knowing the field well is a requirement for both L1- and L2-speaking instructors and TAs, as demonstrated in the following interview excerpt.

> ...like, you're gonna spend a lot of time preparing for your labs and be a little more fluid, because if you sound just kinda [like you've] just learned the material ... the students wouldn't get anything out of it… (Tom, November 10, 2016)

As previously noted, it has been emphasized in the literature that knowledge of the field is essential for ITAs (e.g. Hoekje & Williams, 1992; Jenkins, 2000; Li et al., 2011). In addition to

having mastery of their field, instructors also need to display confidence in their knowledge to their students (Anderson-Hsieh, 1990). When instructors share knowledge with students that is perceived to be useful, instructors function as resource providers, providing the information and skills necessary for success. In such cases, the instructor is perceived as a productive and essential member of the community. As discussed in social identity theory, a significant amount of social categorization—the building blocks for social identity—is motivated by access to resources (Martiny& Rubin, 2016; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Therefore, when ITAs provide knowledge and skills, it is more likely that L1-speaking students will categorize them as members of their community; then, ITAs obtain access to the communities that allow them to construct their identities.

Having/Building Confidence. A major factor affecting raters' perceptions of the L2-speaking instructors is how confident they feel their instructors are. The raters wanted the ITAs to sound confident about their knowledge. They explained that, regardless of accent, when instructors explain the material in detail and provide other evidence of a deep understanding of it, students are more comfortable staying in their classes. In the following example, when I asked Tina whether she would accept an ITA participant we had just listened to as an instructor, she said:

> I would, but…I would say she wasn't as good at her speech as the first two guys I
> listened to. So if I had to pick between them, I would actually pick one of the other two.
> Because it just did seem what they're gonna say or were confident in their speech.
> Whereas she sounded not as confident of what she was going to say. (Tina, November 2,
> 2016)

In the above excerpt, Tina explains that she would be more comfortable taking a course with two other participants who sounded more confident. Interestingly, this point was also made by some of the ITAs. When I asked them if there was anything that we as ESL educators can do to help L2-speaking instructors, they said that finding ways to improve their confidence would help:

> …I think for educators or teachers, you can make students more confident that it's not a bad thing to have accent. I mean, you have to learn how to get along well with your accent and [it] will not affect your communications with others badly. So you can try to avoid many problems that arise from accent, but you should not feel very bad or upset about it. (Bob, September 29, 2016)

In this research, L2 speakers provided personal examples of when they were confident and how that confidence had a positive impact on their interlocutors[31]. They also explained that confidence allows their accents, intelligibility, and linguistic skills to function better in general. Therefore, it stands to reason that ESL educators and education administrators need to build the confidence of the internationally-educated instructors and ITAs they employ. This can be done in a variety of ways, one of which could be assuring them that they were hired based on their merits.

The importance of having confidence is perhaps best described by Anderson-Hsieh (1990):

> If the ITAs are confident about their ability to make themselves understood in the classroom, they are more likely to project themselves more confidently and interact more effectively with the undergraduate students in their classes. (p. 211)

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[31] I have provided some examples in the chapter on qualitative findings, Chapter 4.

The idea of having confidence in one's own knowledge has been reported as a main contributor to the quality of L2 speech delivery (e.g. Zukowski-Faust, 1984). Perhaps workshops and training sessions for ITAs could be focused on helping them improve their confidence in English and in delivering their courses. Such training sessions and workshops have been reported to contribute significantly to L2 speakers' confidence and linguistic performance (Anderson-Hsieh, 1990; Stevens, 1989; Zukowski-Faust, 1984).

The lack of confidence observed in some ITAs should be considered in the context it occurs in. As Foucault (1970) pointed out, knowledge is produced under the influence of the forces affecting its production. The lack of confidence in L2-speaking instructors may therefore be seen as the product of the forces influencing its construction. For example, in the context of Canada, discrimination against minorities, second language speakers of English, and Indigenous populations is still reported (e.g. James, 2010). If a social system holds one ideology as the norm and, thus, everything else as deviations from that norm, then having a foreign accent would be perceived as a sign of deficiency. As a reminder, by *foreign accent*, I refer to deviations from the norms, or from what Kachru (1988) referred to as "inner circle"[32] countries (p. 5). It therefore stands to reason that several of the participants in James's (2010) research mentioned accent as a major contributory factor to ESL speakers' alienation[33]. One point that can be understood from James' (2010) book is that to be considered as belonging to the norm, one must have a "Canadian" accent in English (or at least an accent belonging to countries of the "inner circle", in Kachru's terms) and perhaps even be Caucasian.

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[32] Kachru (1988) identifies the inner circle countries as USA, UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.
[33] The other factor was skin colour.

It is not hard to understand which identities have been imposed on ITAs who have (foreign) accents and belong to a visible minority group, and how being positioned in this way may lead to a lack of confidence when teaching L1 speakers. This is not to say there is no problem of communication between ITAs and L1 speakers of English; rather, it is to say that ITAs might have developed some forms of identity deficit for themselves (Marx, 2004). It is not surprising then, that these individuals may lack confidence in teaching in the English language.

However, knowing about these facts and informing all educators, including ITAs and education administrators, may have some enlightening and empowering effects. Marx (2004) showed how individuals with good intentions nonetheless held deficit-oriented attitudes toward other cultures; addressing these issues properly can promote educational quality. Doing so will enable ITAs to bring to the table their own knowledge and experience resulting from years of living within different worldviews and cultures. That is, ITAs and internationally-educated instructors can educate students to think "outside the box", and go beyond the limits of their (sometimes) sheltered communities. Finding means to facilitate this is just common sense.

Sharing Knowledge and Experience. Some of the ITAs recommended that L2-speaking instructors should share their knowledge and experience with their students to positively influence their education and enhance their learning experiences. For example, when I was talking to Catmum about how to communicate more effectively with L1 speakers, including L1 speaker students, she told me:

> …I would say if you have knowledge, share your knowledge, share your experience. That is something you give to them, because...no, nobody's perfect, right? So you have experience that is very different than [that of] the local people. And you should take that as an advantage and to, to show them. (Catmum, September 28, 2016)

By sharing relevant background knowledge and expertise (including credentials), ITAs can help students understand course material better, through a broader lens. Thinking back to words shared by Jack (see p. 158), some ITAs felt accepted and valued as productive members of a team when their prior knowledge was useful and necessary. Jack's sharing of his experiences as a valuable asset positioned him more favourably and led to a more favourable development of his self-concept. Others shared similar experiences to this example. These experiences have an empowering impact on L2-speaking ITAs and, ultimately, their students benefit. The ITAs feel more confident in their work and their linguistic performance improves as a result. When ITAs share their background experiences and knowledge, they contribute to students' learning of course material and its application to the real world. In such cases, the ITA can be perceived as a contributor to the community.

Using the concepts of social identity theory (Chapter 2), when members contribute significantly to the resources of a group, their membership becomes valued. In such cases, we can speculate that ITAs would feel accepted as a genuine member of the community. If that happens, then ITAs may feel more connected to their students and departments. Arguably another by-product of sharing background knowledge and experience with students is the opportunity for ITAs to become members of further communities, including class communities, research communities, work communities, etc. By doing so, ITAs are indirectly investing in their identity construction. This is speculative at this point, and more empirical data is required to support the idea that by sharing knowledge and expertise, ITAs can contribute to their own identity construction.

This section on the effects of sharing background knowledge and experience of the ITAs on their teaching quality concludes this chapter. The interview questions used for this study were

semi-structured and open-ended, meaning that the participants had the chance to raise any issues they felt were important (e.g. Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011; McMillan, 2015). Questions were posed as conversation opening tools. It was totally up to the participants to share with me what they perceived as comprising good teaching. Then, based on the shared information, I developed the educational recommendations.

Chapter 10: Final Reflections

In this final short chapter, I allow myself the opportunity to go beyond my data and reflect on other issues. In my research, it was shown that L2-speaker ITA experiences varied depending on their life and professional contexts. Using social identity theory, I explained how some of the struggles that L2-speaker ITAs face may be related to the resources available in their professional circles, such as (full-time) employment opportunities. Intelligibility in an L2 is a mutual endeavour between the interlocutors, and an important point is that any attempts to facilitate communication between ITAs and L1 speaker students must focus on both parties. This is a point that has been advocated for in the literature (e.g. Derwing & Munro, 2005, Giles & Gasiorek, 2012; Kohler & Thorne, 2011).

One element of education that has been highlighted in the literature related to ITAs is that ITAs should be helped to develop their professionalism in the academic context (Boyd, 1989; Smith & Simpson, 1993; Tarry & Cox, 2014). Some aspects of professional development for ITAs include "dependability, initiative, punctuality, cooperation, flexibility, open-mindedness, and the ability to accept criticism" of their ideas (Smith, Byrd, Nelson, Barret, & Constantinides, 1992, p. 67; also Byrnes, 2001; Tarry & Cox, 2014). By providing ITAs with opportunities to develop their professionalism, educational administrators will: (a) directly help them in their day-to-day teaching practices, (b) help them in their future activities such as teaching and collaborative activities (Boyd, 1989), and (c) indirectly contribute to their identity construction, in which professions play an important role. Of course, professional development is applicable to all instructional settings, whether the instructor is an L1 or L2 speaker.

I started my PhD program by contemplating a possible relationship between identity and accent in an L2. I explored the research, developed the research proposal, analyzed the responses

of ITAs as well as discussions with L1-speaking students, and reflected on data about ITAs' identities, accents, and intelligibility, with a view to understanding how all of these can affect communication and teaching practices. In the mixed methods component, I explored the identity, accent, and intelligibility of ITAs, along with the impacts of accent and intelligibility on their communications with L1-speaking students. While accent and intelligibility were the starting points for conversations on ITAs' teaching practices, exploring other factors was inevitable, and also fruitful in providing insight into the area.

ITAs and Multicultural Education

International teaching assistants and internationally-educated instructors, especially those from very different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, are at the forefront of multicultural education. Multicultural education in Canada has been progressing, although slowly (Ghosh, 2004; Ghosh & Tarrow, 1993). Multicultural education requires students to learn about different cultures, and different cultures need to be presented constructively in curricula (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004; Shyyan, Dunn, & Cammarata, 2014). Ghosh and Abdi (2004) argued that equity policy in Canada is based on the concept of equal opportunity for all people, including women and members of visible minorities; meanwhile, society has inherited decades of norms that favour Caucasian males. On the other hand, although race in not based on science, it exists in Canada and, as a social construct, it continues to influence society (Ghosh, 2004, 2012). Along with other factors, including gender, language, religion, class, and sexual orientation, race affects individuals' positionalities in society (Ghosh, 2012). My research uncovered an area of potential power imbalance in ITAs' classrooms that was related to accent and race (i.e. being Caucasian or a member of a visible minority). The raters in this research have actually reflected on and judged their L2 instructors in the past. Perhaps it would be a good idea to include items for rating

instructors' accents in teaching quality evaluation forms. If we do so, then if an instructor's accent is rated poorly, interventions can be made to address the issue. Constructive, not punitive, interventions can be targeted to students, instructors, or both. Not doing so allows ITAs' teaching to be judged on what may simply be an accent issue. If we address the issue of accent in ITAs' and internationally-educated instructors' teaching practices, there is potential to improve the teaching quality of these educators. By doing so, we can indirectly promote multicultural education by facilitating the integration of instructors from other cultures into mainstream education in Canada.

Participation Effects

Research *participation effects* refer to the impacts of participation in a study on the individual participants (e.g. Baldwin, Magjuka, & Lother, 1991; Lincoln, 2005). The ITAs' participation in this study may make them more aware about the relationship between their accents and how they are treated in society. These effects of their participation in this study may affect their perceptions of their quality of life. This might be a weak possibility, but it is still a possibility.

On the other hand, the English L1-speaking rater-participants had an opportunity to consciously think and reflect on the connection between accent and race. My impression of their participation is that it could be constructive in their future encounters with ITAs and internationally-educated instructors. In future, they have a chance to caution themselves against judging intelligibility solely on accent. However, there is also a possibility that they become cautious about second language speakers' accents in a negative way. Highlighting such differences is not always a good thing.

The Researcher Influence

In this study, the participants had a chance to think deeply about identity, accent and intelligibility constructs and their relationship to the social and professional communities in which they participated. The interviews were semi-structured and participants shared their own definitions of the constructs during interviews. Lack of provision of a set definitions for each construct being discussed in the interviews was intentional—to maximize the possibility of the participants' intellectual contribution even at the definition level. This could optimize the participants' role in developing research findings. However, my background in education and my life experiences influenced my research in a variety of ways, including research question formulation, development of research methodology, and instrumentation. My experience of living and studying in Winnipeg helped me observe first-hand how second language speakers may be alienated in some circumstances, and welcomed in others. I am from an area of Iran where people have preserved many traditional Persian cultural values, including philosophy and science. According to my cultural background, a single truth about something can be good, but always insufficient. Before my admission to the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba, I had the experience of studying in a program with a significant group of scholars dedicated to positivist research methodologies and specialization in one or a limited number of theories. Being specialized in one theory is good, but according to my understanding of the world, and my culture, it is insufficient. Taking the courses Qualitative Research Methodology and Mixed Methods Research helped me form a multifaceted research framework for my study. A mixed methods research methodology worked in line with my cultural background in truth— that a single truth is always insufficient. This could be seen as another researcher's background impact on the research orientation.

Additionally, I come from a culture that values sacrificing one's time for improving other peoples' lives, a culture that highly values community and social life. This high value for community and social life might have affected my decision to examine the roles of professional and social groups in shaping individuals' social lives and social identities. Professional associations can lead to social communities. The degree to which professional communities can lead to social community formation can vary in different individuals' experiences. We can speculate that if someone comes from a more individualistic culture, they might not see community building and social life the way that I see them. To be specific, I speculate that my background understanding of what constitutes a healthy social life might have influenced my research at different levels, including design and instrumentation.

As I discussed earlier, the context of this study, which was conducted in a prairie province in Canada where diversity and multiculturalism are relatively new concepts, can help in understanding why there may be some perceived associations between visible minorities and L2 English speaking. This does not necessarily indicate racism, rather, it could be that due to L1 speakers' knowledge and experience, they expected individuals from non-European backgrounds to be more likely second language speakers of English.

As a researcher in this project, in communications with the ITA participants, I perceived and positioned myself as a fellow graduate student. I explained my research and scholarship in the simplest way I could, the way I would explain it to a friend outside scholarly circles. The idea was to communicate an equal power relationship with each ITA participant. Creation of a balanced power relationship was to: (a) provide a safe environment for the L2 speakers to share their experiences with me, (b) follow ethical standards in dealing with participants, and (c) follow my principle of "researching to learn". To explain the last point, I believe when

interviewing participants about their life experiences, we are asking them to share with us and enlighten us about those experiences. By doing so, the interviews help us learn about the subject, rather than confirm the researcher's biases. I believe I was successful in creating a safe environment and communicating my desire to learn about ITAs' experiences. With a different research orientation and mentality, a different data collection approach would have been developed and different results could have been found. While being conscious of not "going native" with the participants (e.g. Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 465; Creswell, 2007, p. 134, 2013, p. 109; Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991, p. 50; Perry, 2011, p. 161), I made sure to maximise the possibility of facilitating participants' contributions to the findings and results.

Resources Available to ITAs

Another curiosity raised during and after conducting the research concerned the resources available to ITAs and internationally-educated instructors at universities. I did not ask specifically what resources ITAs used; however, some of them shared that information with me and expressed a need for more resources. These issues can be explored in a separate study. Based on my primary exploration, I noticed that resources available to ITAs vary depending on the university in which they are teaching. For example, I could not find any specific guiding documents for the ITAs and internationally-educated instructors at the University of Manitoba. However, the Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning at the University of Manitoba provides a one-on-one instructional program called *SpeakEasy* for any non-union instructor at the university (University of Manitoba, n.d.). The program is not specifically for ITAs and internationally-educated instructors; however, they can use it. The University of Toronto has a program called the Teaching Assistants' Training Program that supports

international and multilingual teaching assistants and instructors. The Centre for Teaching

Support and Innovation at the University of Toronto has also prepared a 48-page document to

support ITAs (University of Toronto, 2016). The Teaching Commons at York University in

Toronto has a 46-page document for ITAs called the *International TA Handbook* (York

University, 2015). The Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology at the University of

British Columbia has a 133-page resource guide for teaching assistants, out of which three pages

are allocated to ITAs (University of British Columbia, 2005). These are some of the resources

available to ITAs at some Canadian universities.

The ITA participants in this research project were students at a university in a Prairie

province in Canada, and they all had access to the same resources through the university. If the

ITA participants were enrolled at a different university, one of the factors that could have

influenced their experiences would have been access to different resources. What can be

speculated here is that although availability of resources to ITAs varies depending on the

university in which they work, there is still room for more resource allocation to help and

support ITAs' teaching experiences. It is necessary to remember that such resources make good

investments as they can lead to improvements in ITAs' teaching quality and professional

development, which will lead to teaching quality improvement at universities.

New Market Impacts

Another point not to be missed about the context in which ITAs and internationally-

educated instructors work concerns neoliberalism. Neoliberalism has been forcing toward an

environment or market-based post-secondary education (e.g. Kirby, 2008). Neoliberalist market

forces may cause discrimination against ITAs. First of all, with the increase value for proper

education in the job market, the stakes are higher than ever for success in school for the students,

so they want ideal study conditions. ITAs may not fit the ideal image of an instructor for many students, regardless of the quality of their work, which can create bias against them. Second of all, there are increasing numbers of foreign students in our classrooms who did not come to Canada to study with their compatriots or people from foreign countries, they may want to be taught by Canadians. I speculate that in both of these two cases, it is the created image of *ideal education* and what it entails that can damage the working conditions of ITAs.

Speculations on the Use of Methodology

Another speculation here is on research methodology. Adapting mixed methodology, I developed an embedded convergent/concurrent mixed methods research design for this study. As a student, trying to learn about and conduct mixed methods research was very educational and informative. Although I worked hard to make the research happen within the limitations of a PhD program, I speculate it would have been a better idea if I had developed a smaller project. There were numerous challenges encountered during this project. Working with different sets of data with complicated relationships among them, operating within strict deadlines, observing strict and careful planning and research design, learning about different theories in social sciences, psychology, and second language education and, finally, communicating the findings, were some of the main challenges. A research project of this magnitude in terms of theoretical framework, research orientation, and design is a better fit for a four to five year project.

The research methodology used for this study was designed to thoroughly explore the areas of social experience and social justice. Research questions were intended to make ESL-speaking participants contemplate and reflect on their social lives in Canada. Additionally, making a comparison between the interviews with ESL speakers and those with English L1-speaking raters was another intentional strategy. Themes developed from interviews with ITAs

could be triangulated with themes developed from interviews with English L1-speaking raters. By creating a context in which several sources of data converge to similar findings, questioning those findings would be very challenging. In other words, the orientation of research was to deeply explore the concept of social identity and how it is formed. Additionally, with that type of research design, if signs of power imbalance and discrimination were found, they would be strongly supported by research findings. The suggestive, and not definitive, findings can provide conversation and research platforms for further explorations. I need to acknowledge that being exposed to several cases of discrimination myself, I might have been biased toward finding such cases in the interviews and highlighting them, although I was cautious not to do that.

Mixed methods research methodology is a relatively new practice compared to quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Conducting research using a mixed methods research design requires training and understanding in a variety of areas including philosophy of research as well as knowledge and training of quantitative and qualitative research methods (Hesse-Biber, 2010). At the writing stage, communicating ideas of different disciplines coming together in mixed methods research can also be a major challenge for researchers (Hesse-Biber, 2010). However, as recommended by research methodologists (e.g. Creswell, 2014; Vogt, Gardner, & Haeffele, 2012), with more practice researchers gain more experience and expertise in using a research methodology. In addition to explore the area under investigation, I learned several lessons at different stages of this project about research methodology itself that can assist me in my future research and scholarship.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Sentence lists, taken from Bent, Bradlow, and Smith (2007).

List 1 (BKB List 7):

1. The children dropped the bag.

2. The dog came back.

3. The floor looked clean.

4. She found her purse.

5. The fruit is on the ground.

6. Mother got a saucepan.

7. They washed in cold water.

8. The young people are dancing.

9. The bus left early.

10. They had two empty bottles.

11. The ball is bouncing very high.

12. Father forgot the bread.

13. The girl has a picture book.

14. The orange was very sweet.

15. He is holding his nose.

16. The new road is on the map.

List 2 (BKB List 8):

1. The boy forgot his book.

2. A friend came for lunch.

3. The match boxes are empty.

4. He climbed his ladder.

5. The family bought a house.

6. The jug is on the shelf.

7. The ball broke the window.

8. They are shopping for cheese.

9. The pond water is dirty.

10. They heard a funny noise.

11. The police are clearing the road.

12. The bus stopped suddenly.

13. She writes to her brother.

14. The football player lost a shoe.

15. The three girls are listening.

16. The coat is on a chair.

Appendix 2. Interview questions for L2 speakers.

As you know, this is a study on the relationship between accent and identity. Here, by accent, I mean any linguistic cue communicating a specific linguistic background of the speaker to the listener. On the other hand, I have defined identity for this research as the meaning of self, what I think of myself as a male, Persian, socialist, educator, etc. This meaning has been formed based on my social interactions with many people I have interacted with. For example, being born in an area *called* Iran, people tell me that I am *Iranian*. Today, I can say that meanings such as: Persian, L2 speaker of English, socialist, educator, etc. have become part of myself, something in my mind. So the meaning of my identity has been formed in social interactions with other, and now they are parts of my inner self.

1) What is your definition of accent?
2) What is your definition of identity?
3) Do you think you have an accent in English? What kind of accent do you believe you have in English?
4) Tell me about incidents that you experienced having an accent in English caused you some weird situations/feelings in communication with L1 speakers of English in Canada? By wired, I mean it wouldn't happen if you didn't have a foreign accent.
5) Accent, in this research, refers to the general sense of it meaning characteristics of pronunciation which identifies a person's social or regional status (Crystal, 2008). How do you say you have an accent, or you had an accent before?
6) Tell me about your connections with Canadian English speakers? Do they accept you as a member of their groups?
7) Have you been able to participate in the activities Canadian English speaker friends do together? Tell me about them.
8) Tell me about occasions you felt you are a member of the group among Canadian English speakers.
9) What made you feel you belong? What do you think were the reasons of such feeling?
10) Do you think having an accent had any roles, positive or negative, in those situations?
11) Now, tell me about occasions you didn't feel you belong to the group of Canadian English speakers.
12) What made you feel you don't belong? Do you think having an accent had any positive or negative role in that?
13) Do you think having a foreign accent in English has helped you in socializing with L1 speakers of English in Canada? Or it has stopped you from socializing with other L1 speakers of English in Canada?
14) How do you think having a foreign accent have helped you or stopped you from socializing with Canadian English speakers who speak English as a first language?
15) How do you think having a foreign accent may shape your identity, or the sense of who you are?
16) How do you think having a foreign accent have helped, or stopped, you of shaping a Canadian identity, or an English speaker identity?
17) How do/did Canadian L1 speakers of English react when they hear your accent?
18) How did you feel when they did so?
19) Do you believe having an accent affected your relationship with that person positively or negatively?
20) How much do you think having an accent in that occasion affected your identity

development in Canada? And by identity development, I mean how much did you feel in that occasion having an accent helped you, or prevented you from, being accepted by the group you were interacting with?

21) Do you think your identity is reflected in your accent? How?
22) Do you think the idea of who you are affects your accent in any ways? How?
23) Do you think your ethnicity affects your accent in English? How?
24) Do you think being [nationality of the participant] affects your accent? How?
25) How do you think your accent might affect your teaching practices while you are teaching/TAing/Tutoring?
26) How do you think the intelligibility of your speech might affect your teaching/TAing/Tutoring duties?
27)   Is there anything else, or any other story that you wish to share with me?

Appendix 3. Teaching interest talk.

Please prepare a short presentation of about 1-2 minutes on: What is a course you want to teach and why do you want to teach it? This presentation will be recorded and used in other parts of the research. Please imagine you are presenting for a general audience with no background in your field.

Appendix 4. Interview questions for L1-speaking raters.

This interview is about how we basically decide if a person is an L1 speaker of English or not.

1. When you talk to someone and you don't know if he/she is an L1 speaker of English or not, how do you determine this? How do you say if the person is not an L1 speaker of the language?

2. Do you think if the person's appearance has to do anything with your initial decision on whether or not he/she is an L1 speaker of the language? For example, think of his/her clothes, colour of skin, hand movements, eye contacts, behaviour, choice of words, etc.

3. Do you think if someone's L1 is not English, his/her English is not clear? How do you say so? Can you think of some examples?

3. Do you think a person's accent has anything to do with your judgement of his/her first language? How do you say so?

Appendix 5. Interview questions to be asked from L1-speaking raters.

These questions were asked after the participants listened to a recorded speech of the L2-speaker participants talking about which course they would like to teach and why.

Have you ever had a TA or a teacher/professor/tutor who was an ESL speaker? How do you think you understood him/her?

How do you feel about these teachers/tutors/instructors/TAs?

[The presentation is played after asking the above questions and before the following questions.]

How do you think about this person's speech? Could you clearly understand what he/she was saying??

Did he/she sounded familiar in any ways? How?

Do you think his/her accent is clear to understand?

Do you think his/her accent provides any issues for your understanding?

How do you feel about this person teaching you as a university instructor? How about as a TA/tutor? Why?

Appendix 6. The Rainbow Passage.

The Rainbow Passage

When the sunlight strikes raindrops in the air, they act as a prism and form a rainbow.

The rainbow is a division of white light into many beautiful colors. These take the shape of a long round arch, with its path high above, and its two ends apparently beyond the horizon. There is, according to legend, a boiling pot of gold at one end.

People look, but no one ever finds it. When a man looks for something beyond his reach, his friends say he is looking for the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Throughout the centuries people have explained the rainbow in various ways. Some have accepted it as a miracle without physical explanation. To the Hebrews it was a token that there would be no more universal floods. The Greeks used to imagine that it was a sign from the gods to foretell war or heavy rain. The Norsemen considered the rainbow as a bridge over which the gods passed from earth to their home in the sky. Others have tried to explain the phenomenon physically. Aristotle thought that the rainbow was caused by reflection of the sun's rays by the rain. Since then physicists have found that it is not reflection, but refraction by the raindrops which causes the rainbows. Many complicated ideas about the rainbow have been formed.

The difference in the rainbow depends considerably upon the size of the drops, and the width of the colored band increases as the size of the drops increases. The actual primary rainbow observed is said to be the effect of super-imposition of a number of bows. If the red of the second bow falls upon the green of the first, the result is to give a bow with an abnormally wide yellow band, since red and green light when mixed form yellow. This is a very common type of bow, one showing mainly red and yellow, with little or no green or blue.

From Fairbanks (1960)

Appendix 7. Additional statistics for three groups of identity development categorization.

Identity		Low			Moderate			High		
Type of language tokens		Sentence	The Rainbow Passage	Teaching Interest Talk	Sentence	The Rainbow Passage	Teaching Interest Talk	Sentence	The Rainbow Passage	Teaching Interest Talk
Mean	Intelligibility	3.6	3.5	3.3	4.2	3.4	3.8	3.9	3.8	4.1
	Accent	3.2	3	2.9	3.1	2.7	3.3	3.2	3.3	3.5
Confidence Interval 95%	Intelligibility	2.5, 4.6	2.4, 4.5	2.5, 4.1	3.8, 4.5	2.9, 3.8	3.3, 4.2	3.4, 4.4	3.3, 4.3	3.8, 4.5
	Accent	2.3, 4	1.9, 4	2.3, 3.5	2.7, 3.4	2.3, 3	2.8, 3.7	2.6, 3.7	2.7, 3.8	2.9, 4
Standard Error	Intelligibility	0.47	0.47	0.36	0.15	0.19	0.22	0.24	0.24	0.16
	Accent	0.38	0.44	0.28	0.17	0.14	0.19	0.28	0.25	0.24
Variance	Intelligibility	2.26	2.27	1.33	0.48	0.77	0.98	1.2	1.18	0.55
	Accent	1.51	2	0.8	0.62	0.43	0.79	1.64	1.27	1.15
Standard Deviation	Intelligibility	1.5	1.5	1.15	0.69	0.88	0.99	1.09	1.08	0.74
	Accent	1.22	1.41	0.89	0.78	0.65	0.89	1.28	1.12	1.07

Appendix 8. Additional statistics for three categories of association.

Association		Rare			Occasional			Frequent		
Language token type		Sentence	The Rainbow Passage	Teaching Interest Talk	Sentence	The Rainbow Passage	Teaching Interest Talk	Sentence	The Rainbow Passage	Teaching Interest Talk
Mean	Intelligibility	2.4	2.2	2.5	4.2	3.5	3.7	4.1	4	4.3
	Accent	2.2	1.8	2.2	3.1	2.9	3	3.4	3.4	3.8
Confidence Interval 95%	Intelligibility	0.9, 3.8	1.1, 3.2	1.6, 3.3	3.8, 4.5	3.1, 3.9	3.3, 4.1	3.6, 4.5	3.4, 4.5	4, 4.6
	Accent	1.1, 3.2	0.7, 2.8	1.6, 2.7	2.7, 3.5	2.5, 3.2	2.7, 3.4	2.8, 3.9	2.8, 3.9	3.4, 4.3
Standard Error	Intelligibility	0.5	0.37	0.31	0.17	0.19	0.17	0.21	0.24	0.16
	Accent	0.37	0.37	0.2	0.17	0.17	0.16	0.27	0.24	0.2
Variance	Intelligibility	1.3	0.7	0.5	0.75	0.93	0.8	0.93	1.15	0.53
	Accent	0.7	0.7	0.2	0.8	0.74	0.64	1.51	1.2	0.86
Standard Deviation	Intelligibility	1.14	0.83	0.7	0.86	0.96	0.89	0.96	1.07	0.72
	Accent	0.83	0.83	0.44	0.89	0.86	0.8	1.23	1.09	0.93