

## **The determinants of the types of selves in relation to foreign language teachers**

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### **Abstract**

In the field of Modern Higher Education, the background of teachers as native or non-native speakers of the language they teach is of major concern in the field of teacher education. First things first, in teacher education each teacher has an ideal self of her or his own as non-native English-speaking teachers of English, as a second or foreign language, or English as an additional language. Teachers perceive differences between their teaching [styles/approaches] and how this perception influences the teaching behavior and attitudes of the non-native speaking teachers matters a lot. The question is: Should they develop and enhance rather than merely maintain in a static self their proficiency level? This question is also related with the self of the foreign language teacher. A foreign language teacher should never say this: "As a non-native teacher, I can never truly master the target language." Conversely, a non-native foreign language teacher should not articulate the following statement, which is contrary to professional self: "I have near-native proficiency, but I can't aspire to mastery of the language." All of this boils down to mean that the teacher has weak professional self which indicates the immatured self-fulfillment in efficiency in the target language.

**Keywords:** Determinant, Ideal Self, Ought-To Self, Feared Teacher Self, Professional Self

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## Introduction

The place of nonnative speakers as teachers of English has always been a controversial issue from the moment English language began to be taught as a foreign language, second language, an additional language, and in second language acquisition. By nature, the field of foreign language teaching is a sensitive area because by being both teachers and learners of the same subject, we are necessarily driven into a constant state of schizophrenia (Medgyes, 1983:1). In the field of teacher training, what exactly should the role of native-speaking teachers be? What about the role of non-native teachers? Should there be a difference at all? There are some types of foreign language teachers possessing different selves while teaching foreign languages. The selves of foreign language teachers inevitably influence their teaching methods and techniques in all of their foreign language teaching careers.

In addition to the self types of non-native teachers, there are self types of languages themselves. To begin with, as indicated by **Acoustic Phonetics**, there is a physical self of any language, which is composed of sounds in forms of sound waves, words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. In addition, it is a well-known fact that, as denoted by the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, different cultures structure the world differently, and that these divergences are necessarily reflected in their linguistic systems (Medgyes, 1983:4). Any language has a physical mathematical nature; its speech is transmission of language expressions, long or short, by sound waves in air.

According to **Acoustic Theory of Speech Perception** (Stevens, 2000), language sounds, which are measured by means of Hertz (Hz), occupy a wide band of frequencies between a few hundred and some thousands of hertz. Language is physical in form of sound waves and a product of the physical and social nature of humans with the speed, rhythm, and tone of voice. Speech sounds carry acoustic-phonetic qualities whose emphasis is tied up to voice quality as an index to biological, psychological and social characteristics of the speakers.

The perception of the sounds of some languages in relation to some sort of beauty contest of languages, as aggressive, hard, soft, beautiful, vivid, ugly, mellifluousness, decent, terrible, whiny, obnoxious, elegant, harmonious, sophisticated, stilted, poetic, masculine, feminine, romantic, and/or aesthetic in quality is purely and entirely subjective, and presumptuous. Such adjectives point to learned attributive behavior of speakers that has physically to do very little with the acoustics of the language. It is true to say that languages that, articulatorily speaking, harbor guttural, pharyngeal, and laryngeal sounds in relation places and manners of articulation with phono-acoustic superiority, do sound harsh and hard. Such languages run a greater risk of sounding less pleasant to many speakers of other languages, who do not have these sound in their languages. By concentrating purely on sound and intonational backgrounds, some languages are labeled as harsh, soft, and musical. German, Polish and Russian are described as harsh languages, compared to French or Italian. Italian and Spanish are labeled as a musical language. Arabic and Hebrew sound pretty hard and unyielding. In terms of accents, languages are classified as hard and soft. Soft accent languages are English, French, Latin, Portuguese, Chinese, Hindi, Hebrew, Portuguese, Korean, Finnish, Turkish, Romanian, Estonian, Thai, Laotian, Tibetan, Cambodian, Guarani, and Quechua. Hard accent languages are Bulgarian, Czech, Slovak, Serbo-Croatian, Ukrainian, Russian, German, Dutch/Afrikaans, Gaelic, Japanese, Spanish, Italian Scandinavian (Swedish, Jewish, Norwegian, Danish, Icelandic), Slovenian, and Welsh.

## Review of literature

Most of the ideas mentioned here belong to foreign language education in the fields of EFL, ESL, EAL, and SLA. The other side of the medallion is the education of non-native speaking teachers as language teachers about which very few ideas and points are formulated.

Llurda, E. (2004) and Cook (2005) mention the supremacy of the native speakers in the fields of ELT, EFL; EAL, and SLA. The “native speaker fallacy” introduced the concept that (Phillipson,

1992, 1996) native speakers were ideal teachers. Sommers (2005) stressed the point that native English speakers taught more effectively as they are better at four language abilities. In addition, Samimy and Brutt-Griffler (1999) found that native English speakers are perceived to be more accurate in pronunciation and intonation, totally fluent in conversational and connected speech. Medgyes (2001) admitted that they are more innovative in teaching English as a foreign language. Sommers (2005) defended the ideas on the supremacy of skills of native speaker teachers on oral skills, fluency, meaning and colloquial English.

Specification of the determinants of self types of non-native teachers rests on their common qualities with native and non-native teachers. Previous studies and research on teachers' attitudes toward their selves yielded mixed results. Medgyes (1983, 1992) has explored the features of non-native speaking teachers. Coppieters (1987) analyzed the competence difference between native and near-native speakers. Paikeday (1985) researched to unearth whether the native speaker issue is dead or not in the teaching profession. Medgyes (1992) looked into the matter to find out the worth of Native or non-native foreign language teachers. Reves and Medgyes (1994) described the non-native English speaking EFL/ESL teacher's self-image. Horwitz (1996) investigated the anxiety experienced by nonnative foreign language teachers and a group of teacher trainees so as to determine how non-native can influence the teaching/learning process. Liu (1999) worked on the impact of non-native ESL professionals on their students. Árva and Medgyes (2000) analyzed this issue in relation to teachers in the classroom. Matsuda and Matsuda (2001) related this topic to autonomy and collaboration in teacher education.

Maum (2002) investigated it in terms of non-native-English-speaking teachers in the English teaching profession. Paikday (2003) claims that the concept of native speaker is dead. But native speakers are often limited to their own local dialects and accents, and may not be fully competent and aware of vocational and international usages. Demirezen (2008a) unearthed the types of identity problems. Kohler (2015) stressed their type as mediators in the foreign language classroom. Cook (2003) asserted that it is impossible for an L2 user to become a native speaker.

### **Related theories on self in relation to foreign language teachers**

Teachers have a multiplicity of self-states. They are also students in the foreign language teaching profession (Medgyes, 1983) because they still learn new information every day. One of the theories of Selves is **Possible Selves Theory**, which is an extension of Self-Concept Theory. The special contribution of Possible Selves theory is its focus on the motivational power of students' views, opinions, and professional targets of themselves in the future. Students' views of the selves that they would hope to become, fear they will become, and expect to become can be powerful motivators for present school behavior. As Markus and Nurius (1986: 954) indicate: "Possible selves are the ideal selves that we would very much like to become. They are also the selves that we could become and are afraid of becoming. The possible selves that are hoped for might include the successful self, the creative self, the rich self, the thin self, or the loved and admired self; whereas, the dreaded possible selves could be the alone self, the depressed self, the incompetent self, the alcoholic self, the unemployed self, or the bag lady self."

It must be stressed that the self is one of the most complex issues of psychology, one of the most longstanding puzzles of human psychology. Self-theory is a personality theory that uses one's self-concept in connection to personality. **Self-Concept Theory** lies in the background of self, originated by Rene Descartes first and later promoted by Sigmund Freud. Self-Concept Theory holds the totality of our beliefs, preferences, and opinions in our personal existence, designed by ourselves in connection to our social lives. It denotes how we see and think of ourselves in different situations to adjust our behaviors so as to act out our various life and professional roles. We tend to let go of the things, beliefs, and ideas that are not congruent to our self-concept and world view. We hold on to those which are beneficial for us in building a more favorable perception of our personal, social, and professional existence.

The **ideal self**, being a deeply personal image, includes components of education in the family and at school, what s/he admires in others and her/his targeted future plans (Dörnyei 2005; 2013; Rowe & Sikes (1989); Higgins, et al. (1994). The ideal self might be someone who excels in the science of foreign language teaching subjects, who spends a lot of time studying and researching on these issues so as to be a model foreign language teacher. If the real self is far from the idealized and targeted image that is planned for yourself, then you might feel dissatisfied with your life, can be a burnout in your job, leading to consider yourself a failure. Self-actualization brings in a state of congruence. The closer our self-image and ideal self are to each other, the more consistent or congruent we are and the higher our sense of self-worth (Rogers, 1961). Therefore, there are multi-leveled intimate relationships between self-image, ego-ideal and self-esteem. If there is a mismatch between one's self image and her/his ideal self, then this is likely to affect how much s/he values her/his self. Ideal self represents hopes and wishes. The ideal self guides us to pay attention to cues for achievement and successful goal pursuit. This is what Higgins labels a "promotion focus" (Higgins, 2012).

If the real or **ideal self** of someone is properly aligned with the way of personality, then a feeling of a sense of mental well-being or peace of mind emerges. To achieve self-actualization brings in a state of congruence. Any incongruence, or lack of alignment, will result in personality problems, mental distress, and anxiety in life and job affairs. The greater the level of incongruence between the ideal self or real self, the greater the level of resulting incongruences in almost every aspect of life, from job possibilities to plans for the future, comes up. The **Self-Discrepancy Theory**, which was developed by Higgins (1989), provides a platform to understand different types of discrepancies between representations of the self emotional discomforts and vulnerabilities (Higgins, 1989; Boldero et al, 2005: 139; Phillips, 2005: 703; Hardin and Lakin, 2009: 245). In real self, everyone wants to adjust his/her life and themselves and their family in a way that is aligned with their plans, dreams and aspirations. The difference between the actual and ideal self can cause feelings of fear, dejection, anxiety, sadness, frustration, and shame. Our sense of ideal self is also shaped deeply by others.

The **ought-to self** as a concept points to what qualities the teachers ought to possess in connection to national, social and cultural obligations, responsibilities, or morals. **The ought-self**, which boils down to mean what others want us to be or to achieve, is determined through obligation and sense of duty. Ought self is our understanding of what others want us to be or what we ought to be and do in life (Higgins, 1989, 2012). It is the green-eyed monster of our ideal self because it may require impossible demands and ideals. Ideal self and ought self act as self guides or standards with which the actual self aspires to be aligned. Ought-to self denotes that the actual attributes of a person should meet the expectations of the ones which they ought to possess (Higgins et al., 1994). In contrast to ideal self, the "prevention focus" is defined by ought self to which we pay attention in order to avoid harm, which is also true of the motivational properties of the undesired self. We work to avoid this self via the prevention focus (Higgins, 1989). In the field teacher training, the possession of faulty pronunciation and intonation of non-native teachers of English come in right at this stage because the emotions associated with this ought to self discrepancy, namely agitation, dissatisfaction, fear, procrastination, guilt, burnout, anger, resentment, frustration, and anxiety, may create anomalies in the job of teachers. This means that their ought selves are far off from their real and ideal selves. The weight of ought self in developing their teaching job in terms of professional pronunciation and intonation in teacher education is what is expected of them. What they ought to be doing does not mean what they're actually doing.

Living the life of ought-to self may be physically and emotionally exhausting due to emerging discrepancies that could be a cause of a lot of depressed emotions. **The experience of discrepancy** from an ought-to-self incites a negative effect, which is highly unpleasant; therefore, individuals generally want to avoid it. Higgins et al. (1994) found that individuals concerned with ought selves tend to use avoidance strategies in the process of self-regulation.

So, **ought-to-self** refers to the attributes of a teacher believes s/he ought to possess, in terms of using the foreign language (Dörnyei 2005, 2013). So this self type relates to someone else's

demands and vision, institution, organization, worth ethics or Ministry of Education, with regard to a learner's foreign language usage and teaching job. Academically, ought-self is how we perceive what other people, or administrators, or academic ethics, head colleagues, superintendents, inspectors, and administrators, want us to be, which pushes us officially to be the best we can be in our field. Professionally speaking, ought self isn't something completely unattainable.

### **Feared foreign language teacher self**

In the feared foreign language teacher self, there are many lurking problems. Non-native teachers of English invariably feel unsafe about using the language they have to teach (Medgyes, 1983: 1). Primarily, there are big gaps in the vocational training of non-native foreign language teachers. Their worst fears relating to their selves are worries, intimidation, anxiety, irritation, guilt, frustration, burnout, etc., which all lead to a shattered self-confidence. A harrowing sense of guilt gives them **Schizophrenia** (Medgyes, 1983: 5; Merino, 1997: 69-79). Schizophrenia, which is a mental illness, occurs when the parts of the brain that control emotion and sensation stop working properly. Affected people may have difficulty deciding what is real and what is not, as mostly is the case of non-native speaking teachers with their shattered selves. In addition, they also fear that once their students have access to English spoken by native-speakers, they will no longer appreciate their teachers' strongly accented variant (Medgyes, 1983: 3).

For these teachers of English there are conflicts between a teacher role, L1 identity, and the desire to be at least near native-like, being conscious of their limitations. Their focus on pronunciation and intonation towards at least being native-like in terms of accuracy, fluency and in mutual intelligibility are not their first priorities. Since there is a deep-seated trauma stemming from a sense of being a non-native speaker, lurking anywhere in their ideal, ought to, and professional selves, most non-native speaking teachers of English have split personalities (Medgyes, 1983). This type of self, which also exposes **foreign accent syndrome**, a talent-bending fear, can create a subtle level of tension at work, at home, in social and vocational relations, because such teachers have a fear of not being understood by native speakers, non-native speakers, and other colleagues, whom they dread to running into. Their faulty pronunciation and intonation are their weakest sides and require additional self-regulation. The non-native teacher's shattered self-confidence must be restored. Otherwise, teachers having a feared language self will definitely be harmful to their students because such teachers might mitigate already existing skills of students.

In the case of careers, Self-theory states that people may become more adaptable if they focus on their short-term rather than long-term decisions. Hence, ought-self may be further developed via lifelong learning. Non-native speaking teachers should not give up hope; still they can get rid of the feared self by means of further experience and education in teaching. According to Dweck & Molden, (2006: 192-203), if they apply a self-theory of malleability (my personal qualities can be changed) rather than fixedness, the mastery of profession can be a final destination. Non-native teachers via professional self-improvement will conceive of their selves as patterns of normalized and improved professional behavior through time. So, non-native speaking teachers can have evolved selves, beginning with a feared self to ideal or real self, then to ought-to self, and then move towards a professional self within self-continuity across time.

Medgyes (1983) points out those non-native speaking teachers usually feel unsafe using the target language they have to teach. Similarly, Kachru and Nelson (1992: 71-102) point out, non-native speakers of English have a fear of linguistic insecurity that provokes a prescriptive and intolerant attitude. Due to fear and intense worries, they tend to adopt two kinds of attitudes: They mask their fears in pessimistic or aggressive attitudes in their foreign language classes; it is as if they teach in a climate of fear. Medgyes (1983) and Selinker (1972) believe that a non-native speaker's competence is limited, and that only a reduced group can reach near-native speaker's competence. The fear of failure begins in non-native teachers when they fear that they will make mistakes and errors of pronunciation intonation, being unable to produce the near native-like pitch patterns of intonation that give their speech strong overtones of *foreigner talk* in vocabulary as well as grammar. As Widdowson (1992:333-339) states, no one can learn a language without learning its grammar.

Similarly, according to Kachru (1982), non-native teachers of English have fears in linguistic insecurity in terms of vocabulary, semantics, and pragmatics that provoke a prescriptive and intolerant attitude in classroom management. Such a conduct calls in a bad personality and a neurotic personality. Many fears will persist due to the attacks of attentive students, which makes the situation worse and worse. The cost of fear is catastrophic, in that students lose respect for foreign language teachers, who then lose respect for the students. In the meantime, due to fear acting as a great corrupter, foreign language learning and teaching lose their potency: This is how fear works; turning the non-native teachers into teaching victims, totally influencing their teaching skills. Fear of being evaluated by principals, administrators, superintendents, inspectors and native speakers, appear to be the causes of stress, anxiety, and feelings of job insecurity

There is a fear of fight or confrontation in the self and personality of the non-native teachers. The feared teacher self puts the non-native speaking teachers in a default zone by giving into the fear, in which there's no growing or changing into any better. Sometimes, their fears frustrate them by giving them a deep sense of guilt. Even though they are able to be self-aware about their fears or can identify them, they persist: This is the dilemma. Although it can be so uncomfortable, fears can be their best teachers after some years of careful teaching experience.

Another cause of fear comes from the inadequate use of technological developments. Many non-natives are reluctant to use technology out of the fear of what lurks on the Internet. In many countries students know more than teachers about computer technology. As a teacher, the primary goal of native or non-native teachers of English is to use technology to supplement the foreign language learning process. The use of computers and Internet technology is part of the natural learning process. Teachers must seek out appropriate software applications and insert technology in the classroom where it enhances student learning and facilitates foreign language teaching.

Teachers, due to loss of confidence because of their foreign-language originated fears, lose joy of teaching and may enter into a burnout period which can harm personality variables. Foreign language teachers coming to work every day with fear in their bellies, who thus teach in fear? This is unthinkable. Many of the reasons cited above may make the foreign language teaching profession seem intimidating to non-native speaking teachers, but it remains one of the most rewarding professions to aspire to.

### **Professional language teacher self**

Professional language teacher self, which is directly opposite of feared foreign language teacher self, answers the question, "What does it mean to be a professional teacher?" and points to crucial types of competencies while performing the foreign language teaching profession effectively. It is the core of the profession. To begin with, student teachers undergo an official training, and then complete the obligatory vocational educational part. This is just academic or theoretical knowledge and is not enough, and Wallace (1991: 58) calls such professional capability "initial competence," which must be used as a touchstone for further development of professional competence via experiential knowledge connected to teaching activities, along with skills that are based on that knowledge and can thus be developed through practice and reflection in accordance with teachers' personal qualities. All of these ideas boil down to mean that native teachers are not worth more than non-natives, but only non-natives with near-native proficiency and fluency are not harmful to the students in the language teaching profession.

So teachers generally do what they are trained to do, which may not be sufficient in the forthcoming years. Hence, they must renew themselves and pursue professional development. If they continue with their practice in accent neutralization, tonal quality, differentiation in American, Canadian, Australian, and British English, voice modulation, pitch and tone training, they will enhance their perspective on the different facets of the language and the cultural nuances attached to the language they teach. Such will give them a great sense of achievement in assisting them to eradicate their accented speech. An efficient knowledge and practice of target language as a foreign language for the non-native speaking teacher is an indispensable condition of professionalism.

### **Model teachers and self-relations: Native or non-native teachers?**

It goes without saying that the most appropriate teaching models come from teachers who have English as a native language. However, it can be claimed that being a native speaker is no guarantee of being a good foreign language teacher simply because a native speaker is by nature, merely alleged, to be the best person to teach his/her foreign language. This prejudiced assumption leaves little room for non-native teachers as foreign language teachers. Referring to a native-speaker myth (Phillips on, 1992; Pakir, 1999), many non-native English-speaking educators, administrators, superintendents, inspectors, experts of the national education ministries, teachers on-the-job and learners today still prefer a “native speaker” model with unaccented English. This sort of preference is only true for teacher training programs wherein professionally-oriented training of students majoring in teaching English as a foreign language take place. A foreign language teacher with an unaccented model is not highly viewed much in EFL, ESL and SLA because such a distinction is not accepted by TESOL (2006) issue:

For decades there has been a long-standing fallacy in the field of English language teaching that native English speakers are the preferred teachers because they are perceived to speak “unaccented” English, understand and use idiomatic expressions fluently, and completely navigate the culture of at least one English-dominant society, and thus they will make better English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers than nonnative English speakers. As a result, nonnative English-speaking educators have found themselves often implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, discriminated against in hiring practices or in receiving working assignments in the field of teaching ESL or EFL. (<http://www.tesol.org/docs/pdf/5889.pdf?sfvrsn=2>, retrieved in 02 September, 2015).

Generally, native speaking teachers seem to be inherently better suited for training of non-native students as prospective teachers. Around the world today, the native speaker authority is still common and the native speaker teacher model has serious impacts on foreign language teaching policies and teacher education in the world (Jenkins, 2005; Philipson, 1992). According to Foley, (2007), there is still a strong tendency to view native-speaker teachers as the sole and authentically-oriented authority in relation to appropriate use of the English language in teacher education. The issue of using more native speaking educators is more rampant in foreign language teacher education. But native speakers are often limited to their own local dialect and may not be aware of international usages. Brutt-Griffler & Samimy (2001), Piller (2002), Kirkpatrick (2010), Modiano (1999), Leung et al. (1997); and Rampton (1990) argue that phonologically proficient non-native speakers may be more intelligible and better models for L2 learners than a native English speaker who speaks a local variety of English with a strong regional accent. It matters not if the teacher is native or non-native because all teachers must possess “professional competence,” which Wallace (1991:58) sees as “a moving target or a horizon, towards which professionals travel all their professional life but which is never finally attained”. So, no native foreign language and professional foreign language teacher is perfect.

Foreign language proficiency skills among non-teachers vary greatly, and more often than not, they are far from proficient. It must be borne in mind that there are “failed natives” (Cook, 1999: 196) in being a native foreign language teacher. This type requires not an ordinary non-native teacher of English but a teaching professional which necessitates professional credentials attendant to the ability to speak a standard dialect of English and the ability to teach English, both of which require a professional foreign language teacher self. Professional foreign language teacher is what Jenkins calls (2007: 129) “expert speaker of English.” It is safe to say that non-native teachers of English must, by definition, be proficient, expert, and very successful in teaching English as a foreign language. For these teachers of English there is no conflict between a teacher role and L1 identity. They have no fears whatsoever, and there is no conflict between a teacher role and external pressure to conform to a native speaker model and their own L1 identities since they are driven by the desire to be native-like.

### Conclusion

Feared language teacher self directly entails ideal self and ought-to self. Feared teacher self is not a wanted self type, but is commonly encountered in the non-native speaking teachers of the world, including Turkish teachers of English. There are strong links between the teacher's sense of fear and teacher evaluation by administrative authority in terms of focus of control, which comes up as a potential moderator of the relationship between teacher role fear and work outcomes. Feared teacher self makes the teachers low-achieving teachers. Controlling fear requires identifying its sources. Feared teacher self houses two major fears: internally-oriented and externally-oriented fears, mainly giving them anxiety, stress, and dread, which seriously harm their aspirations.

In internally-oriented fear, non-native teachers' acquire their educational background in pursuit of their BA, MA, or PhD studies. But teachers should not be left to sink or swim on their own. Teachers continuous professional development in language proficiency, command of subject matter knowledge, sharing of knowledge and good practices with others, and dissemination of teaching strategies and skills will be contributions to teachers 'professional development while they are on the job. There should not be a characterization of teaching as a semi-profession in their foreign language teaching.

In externally-oriented fear, there are teachers' fears of being evaluated by administrators, principals, head of the schools, etc. Teachers say they fear what might happen to them when the principal visits certain classrooms, illustrating the fear of consequences of evaluation results. The psychological uncertainty of fear caused by evaluation is an upsetting emotion that is marked by apprehensiveness, isolation, and discouragement about the future, fear of uncertainties, fearing the consequences of evaluation results, and fearing to endanger professional status, which may be harmful to teacher satisfaction. It must be noted that fair and effective teacher evaluation systems would provide for both teacher accountability and teacher personal growth (Stronge and Ostrander, 1997: 1-2). Topping the list of fears in the profession is the threat of job security by the feared self of the non-native teachers.

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