

The interface of global migrations, local English language learning, and identity transmutations of the immigrant academician

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Abstract

As global migrations of both teachers and students have increased, so has the need to re-learn English in response to local parlances. Thus, the use of formal and informal language styles, the masking of accents, and the understanding of the differential use of certain specific words, expressions, and the like become critical for teachers and students. For international, cross-cultural educators who also face pedagogical culture shock, issues related to the differences in teaching and learning styles, curriculum, and assessment must also be addressed. Concomitantly, therefore, the identities of international educators become reconstituted into academic cosmopolites. Using data collected from 55 student evaluations as supporting evidence, this paper contends that international educators undergo personality differentiation in response to local forces, including socio-linguistic pressures. The hybridization of migrant academicians' native states with cross-cultural forces precipitates new permutations of international, transmuted identities, brewed in the crucible of educational cross-culturalisms.

I do not want my house to be walled on all sides and my windows to be stuffed; I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. I refuse to live in other people's houses as an interloper, a beggar or a slave.

-Mahatma Gandhi, 1921

Introduction

In a U.S. (National Public Radio) program called "This I Believe" (January 16, 2006), Dr. Pius Kamau, a Kenya-born medical doctor related an arresting experience: When he first arrived in the United States, it dawned on him that when he was working in the hospital, he was seen as a "Doctor." However, when he was outside the physical limits of the hospital, he was racialized and given the identity of "Black," and was thus subjected to predetermined race relations prescribed by the American sociological machinery. (This machinery included the factors which defined the nature of the society in which he lived, including how different groups of people viewed each other.) He also reported an encounter with a White supremacist who had a swastika tattoo on his chest. Although this person was rushed into his hospital coughing up blood, the

White supremacist refused to be treated by him; a Black doctor. This man would rather have died than to be treated by the “wrong” kind of person. On the other hand, many international people report of the warm welcome they experience as immigrants in the U.S., and how they are viewed in a positive light.

When immigrant educators arrive in the classroom, however, they encounter peculiar problems which are pedagogical in nature.¹ The kinds of experiences noted above bear the beacon for the broad range of issues—including linguistic and identity development—that ultimately define international educators. In this paper, *academic cosmopolite identity* denotes the personality that evolves as the resulting product of psycho-social forces to which the immigrant academic worker is subjected. The confluence of forces that emerge during global migrations are hereby discussed, with an emphasis on how *academic cosmopolite identity* is developed in light of the pressure to conform to the local parlance. Using data collected from 55 student evaluations as supporting evidence, this paper contends that academic immigrants undergo personality differentiation in response to local socio-linguistic forces.

Defining the Structural Forces Shaping Academic Cosmopolite-Immigrant Identity Development

People who engage in any form of international or cross-cultural travel necessarily subject themselves to certain kinds of structural forces. Such forces lie primarily on the axis of the socio-cultural, and define the norms and conventions of a society. According to Bodley, there are several domain-specific aspects of culture, including the topical, historical, behavioral,

¹Hutchison, C. B. *Teaching in America: A cross-cultural guide for international teachers and their employers.* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2005).

normative, functional, mental, structural, and symbolic aspects. These are the unspoken but compelling forces which drive the nature of any society.²

For people engaged in longer tours of travel, including students and academic migrants, there is a second tier of organic, structural forces to which they are exposed.³ This group of travelers (i.e., academic migrants) enter their new assignments only to confront often unexpected differences in their new educational environments.⁴ This is not surprising, since teaching is a human enterprise that is influenced by institutional and cultural frameworks.⁵ Related issues may include differences in teaching and learning styles, curricula, assessment, and available resources.⁶ In sum, academic migrants are likely to face a pedagogical culture shock from which they need to recover and reconstitute themselves.

The identity development process

One of the most powerful influences to which academic migrants become exposed is how they are defined or perceived by the local macro-culture. For example, instructors from hierarchical societies would behave differently towards their students than ones where students are viewed as social equals.⁷ To this local definition or perception of them, they do respond—consciously or unconsciously. By this response, they would have undergone the process of identity development, in an evolutionary sense. Cross, Parham, and Helms observe that identity

² Bodley, J. H. *Cultural anthropology: Tribes, states, and the global system*. (Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1997).

³ Fortuijn, J. D. (2002). Internationalizing learning and teaching: A European experience. *Journal of Geography*, 26: 3, 263-273.

⁴ Aikenhead, G. S., & Jegede, O. J. (1999). Cross-cultural science education: A cognitive explanation of a cultural phenomenon. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 36(3), 269-287.

⁵ Lemke, J.L. (2001). Articulating communities: Socio-cultural perspectives on science education. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 38(3), 296-316.

⁶ Hutchison 2005

⁷ *ibid.*

development occurs when minority individuals encounter the majority culture to which they feel subordinated.⁸ Although members of the majority culture may sometimes arrive at the consciousness of their majority position, they have the prerogative to confront this consciousness or avoid it if they are not comfortable with the process.⁹ However, the onus rests on minority individuals (in this case, the academic cosmopolite) to undergo the necessary adaptation process to suit the new educational environment.¹⁰

The nigrescence model of Cross¹¹ and Hardiman's¹² model of social identity development model will be used as the basis of this argument. The theory of nigrescence was created to explain the identity development of African Americans as a cultural-racial minority in the U.S. Specifically, Cross' model involves five separate stages which are: pre-encounter, encounter, immersion-emersion, internalization, and internalization-commitment. A person in the pre-encounter (Hardiman's naive) stage has not begun the identity development process, since they have not yet been exposed to the external defining agents. They therefore exist in an unexamined identity state. Having traveled to become a minority in a cross-cultural context, individuals may arrive at Cross' encounter (Hardiman's passive and active acceptance) stage, whereby the academic cosmopolite realizes socio-cultural differences and their minority status. U.S. born minority groups have natural rights of abode and other socio-emotional buffers, such as the support of close relatives. Therefore, they have the resources to move into the next stage

⁸ Cross, W. E., Jr. (1978). The Thomas and Cross models of psychological nigrescence: A review. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 5(1), 13-19.

⁹ Helms, J.E. (1984) Toward a theoretical explanation of the effects of race on counseling: A African American and White model. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 12(4), 153-163.

¹⁰ Hutchison 2005

¹¹ Cross 1978

¹² Hardiman, R. (1982). White identity development: A process oriented model for describing the racial consciousness of White Americans. (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Massachusetts). Dissertation Abstracts International, 43(01-A), 104.

and may be characterized by Cross *resistance* aspects of the encounter stage (Hardiman's passive and active resistance stages). However, being *voluntary migrants*, academic cosmopolites necessarily conform to the local pressures with less resistance and friction. Thus, they are likely to skip the immersion-emersion stage, and arrive at the internalization and internalization-commitment stages (Hardiman's redefinition and internalization stages respectively); the stages of mutual acceptance of both the defining culture and self-definition. In this connection, Watson explains that African students in the United States go through similar identity formation processes, although they do not experience the immersion-emersion stage.¹³

Definition through communication

It is vital to note that socio-linguistic forces (that is, need to re-learn English in response to the local parlance) pose as issues for this population.¹⁴ This includes the need for cross-cultural academic workers to conform to the local language conventions, including formal and informal language styles (i.e. verbal and non-verbal communication), accents, understand the differential use of certain specific words, expressions, technical language, and the social function of language. Ming Fan He illustrates this new academic cultural plunge as a situation whereby the international traveler may initially negotiate new experiences, become influenced by the new culture, and ultimately assume a new cross-cultural identity.¹⁵

¹³ Watson, M. A. (n.d.) *Africans to America: The Unfolding of Identity*. Retrieved November 24, 2005, from www.africamigration.com/articles/watson.html.

¹⁴ Hall, E.T. and Hall, M. 1984. Hidden differences: How to communicate with the Germans. In Kuhn E. 1996. Cross-cultural stumbling block for international teachers. *College Teaching* 44(3): 96-100; Hutchison, C. B., Butler, M. B., and Fuller, S. (in press). Pedagogical communication issues arising for four expatriate science teachers in American schools. *Electronic Journal of Science Education*; Kuhn, E.D. 1996. Cross-cultural stumbling block for international teachers. *College Teaching* 44(3): 96-100.

¹⁵ He, M. F. 2000. A narrative of inquiry of cross-cultural lives: lives in Canada. In He, M. F. 2002. A narrative inquiry of cross-cultural lives: Lives in the North American academy. *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 34(5): 513-533.

From a social-constructivist (and situated cognition) standpoints, teachers in cross-cultural settings may experience changes in their linguistic worldviews in several ways.¹⁶ First, in the school setting, their discourse and dialogue become exposed to local, conforming pressures owing to the new input from teacher-colleagues, students, and parents. These new linguistic forces may alert them to new linguistic conventions and, consequently, an expansion of their linguistic-cognitive structures. Second, they are exposed to new linguistic ideas and even traditional beliefs or other kinds of information that may contradict their native beliefs and cause them to consciously examine and restructure those beliefs, where necessary. Finally, migrants' communication with local people may force them to articulate their ideas differently in the pursuit of clarity during communication. In so doing, they would have experienced the process of assuming new linguistic identities; a parallel to the process of identity development.

Therefore, international, cross-cultural academicians necessarily present their indigenous identities to be partially eclipsed by the local forces described above. For this reason, they are inadvertently engaged in the process of academic cosmopolite-immigrant identity development.

The pressure to define and to be defined—by language

Immanuel Wallerstein contends that to pose the question, “What are you?” is to open the Pandora’s box.¹⁷ He illustrates thus:

The setting is South Africa. The South African government has by law proclaimed the existence of four groups of “peoples,” each with a name.... Somewhere in the 1960s or perhaps 1970s—it is not clear when—the ANC slipped into using the term “African” for all those who were not “Europeans” and thus included under the one label what the

¹⁶ Good, T. L. and Brophy, J. E. 2003. *Looking in classrooms*, 9th Ed. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

¹⁷ Wallerstein, I. 2000. *The Essential Wallerstein*. New York: The Free Press.

government called Bantus, Coloureds, and Indians. Some others—it is not clear who—made a similar decision but designated this group as “non-Whites” as opposed to “Whites.” In any case, the consequence was to reduce a four-fold classification into a dichotomy.¹⁸

After living in the United States for seven years, I (Hutchison, one of the authors) decided to return to Ghana (where I was born and abode for 28 years), for a visit. At the airport, one of the workers inquired if I was an African American. This got me thinking, since back in the U.S., I am never mistaken for a U.S.-born native, owing to (what I thought was) my “unmistakable” African accent and parlance. It is interesting and important to note that when in the U.S., I am first of all, “Black” until I speak. When I speak, I become “African.” This connotes that the notion of linguistics is inherently tied with locational-cultural identity. The subsequent question then becomes: What kind of African are you?—since, as a cross-cultural teacher in the U.S. for 13 years, one of the questions to almost certainly expect of students during the first day of class (if given the opportunity) is, “What part of Africa do you come from?” For academic migrants, therefore, there is a potential slipperiness of designation that becomes a part of their self-identity landscape that has to be navigated. Their shifting locational-linguistic identities can usher them into a linguistic “homelessness,” whereby they can become strangers both in their native lands and their new lands. To me, the airport inquiry above by a Ghanaian as to who I was by dint of my acquired accent crystallized my linguistic homelessness: I had arrived at a social location whereby I spoke with an enigmatic accent to people both in my own native

¹⁸ Wallerstein 2000, 293-294

land and my adopted country. In commenting on the cross-cultural experiences of ESL students, Roth and Harama¹⁹ observed that,

[C]hange in language entails a change in the way we experience ourselves, and in the way we relate to others. Learning a new language and living in a new culture changes how we relate to the Other and to the world; learning a new language, therefore, changes who we are, how we experience ourselves, and, therefore, our Selves.²⁰

Like ESL students, academic cosmopolites' need to engage with the *Other* and the consequent products of such relationships precipitate a transmutation of the immigrant academician's identity. In a Wallersteinian sense, these teachers are migrating from the periphery and semi-periphery to the core.²¹

The duality of being and its precarious meaning

From the personal, airport narrative above, one may contend that, *to speak is to become*. It is hereby argued that the locus of *the process of becoming* occurs in Anderson's²² "social-imaginary"—a discursive space whereby one becomes reconstructed via the imaginational mechanisms of his or her observers.²³ Such imaginations are mediated by the history and cross-cultural knowledge base of the local environment, given the notion of "societal mind" or traditions.²⁴ These include how certain groups of people are viewed historically, and thus,

¹⁹ Roth, W.-M. and Harama, H. 2000. English as second language: Tribulations of self. *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 32(6): 757-775.

²⁰ Roth and Harama 2000, 758

²¹ Wallerstein 2000

²² Anderson, B. 1983. Imagined communities; Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism. In Ibrahim, A. K. M. 1999. Becoming black: Rap and hip-hop, race, gender, identity, and the politics of ESL. *TESOL Quarterly* 33(3): 349-369.

²³ Ibrahim, 1999. Becoming black.

²⁴ Bodley 1997

through *symbolic interactionism*, may determine the kinds of relationships that occur among cross-cultural groups, in the tradition of Schultz's phenomenology.²⁵

Contingent on the above propositions, therefore, the academic immigrant is laden with the burden of cogitating the questions: Who do people think that I am? Who do I think that they think that I am? Who do I think that I am? Who really am I?²⁶ These kinds of questions are vital for several reasons:

a) They help to determine the products of self-definition, self concept, the ideal self, and therefore self-esteem.²⁷

b) To be labeled as a minority (especially Black) in the U.S. carries its own psychological burden, since one's identity may be juxtaposed against that of the majority identity, with tangible consequences.²⁸

c) The very idea of one being a duality (an immigrant-American) mitigates the value of one's citizenship: It connotes a dilution of the purity of being a "full citizen."

d) To be labeled as "African" carries a duplicitous connotation. On the one hand, being African may carry an acceptance that may even go beyond that offered to native African-Americans. This is because of inherent prejudice against Blacks in America.²⁹ On the other hand, being immigrant-African could sometimes be rather precarious. This is so because of the strong influence of the media. There have been several very popular movies such as *Mandela*, *Hotel*

²⁵ Schutz, Alfred. 1967. *The Phenomenology of the Social World*. Translated by George Walsh and Frederick Lehnert. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

²⁶ Cooley, Charles Horton. *Human Nature and the Social Order* (Revised edition). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons (1922). Retrieved from http://spartan.ac.brocku.ca/~lward/Cooley/Cooley_1902/Cooley_1902toc.html.; Rice, F.P. and Dolgin, G.D. 2005. *The adolescent: Development, relationships, and culture*. 11th Ed. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibrahim 1999; Kunjufu, J. 1984. *Developing positive self-images & discipline in black children*. Chicago: African American Images.

²⁹ Kunjufu 1984

Rwanda, and Tarzan (just to mention a few), and National Geographic episodes of African landscapes (capturing Safari scenery, including tantalizing flora and fauna).

Based on the above, the psychological faces of native-born Africans in the U.S. may therefore be approximately categorized into the Kenyan Safari, the Ethiopian famished, the South African (Mandela) freedom fighter, or simply a resurrection from the movie Tarzan. These are simply so because of the perennial media coverage that inadvertently serves as psycho-emotional fuel for stereotypical framing, as opposed to serving as ambrosia for feeding the intellect. These media images have been burned into the psyche of many consumers, creating lasting and unintended, but erroneous images of Blacks at large. Concomitant to the above, in a majority-Black school, Traoré 2002 found an evident hierarchy of blackness, whereby Caribbean-Americans were assigned to a higher social position than African immigrant students. Consequently, many African students spoke with a Jamaican accent.³⁰ This pathological view of Blacks, however, is not a surprise, since it is a part of the legacy of slavery and forgotten history. Ironically, however, Herodotus, the Greek historian, and several historians of antiquity wrote that ancestral Black Africans were the originators of the oldest known advanced civilizations. Herodotus also demonstrated that “Greece borrowed from Egypt [a colony of the then Sudan/“Aethiopa”] all the elements of her civilization, even the cult of the gods....” (As cited in Diop, 1974, p. 4).³¹ By extrapolation, and ironically therefore, the forgotten but true basis of Western civilization is Black African, according to Greece’s Herodotus. This fact is not only in oblivion to the larger global society, but also to many Blacks in America, who therefore do not view themselves with the pride and abilities that appertain therewith.

³⁰ Traoré, Rosemary L. 2002. *Implementing Afrocentricity: African students in an urban high school in America*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Temple University, Philadelphia.

³¹ Herodotus. *History, Book II*. Cited in Cheikh Anta Diop (1974). *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*. Brooklyn: Lawrence Hill Books.

In a psycho-logico-hierarchical sense, it may be contended that when a group of people has been psycho-socially placed in a location of need—whereby even children are sympathetically compelled to empty their “piggy banks” in order to help the likes of them, this group’s psychological estate or placement would thus been lowered to the position of the “recipient” as opposed to the “donor.” The defined recipient would then be easier psychologically viewed as a group in need of benefaction of different forms, including the linguistic. For this reason, no matter what one’s level of command of English is, it may potentially be less valued, especially when there are differentiating factors such as spelling, differences in the meaning of words and idioms, and accent, etc.³²

Accent as a communicational structural force

Speaking with an accent can influence a listener’s impressions about a speaker.³³ Non-standard accents are often thought of less favorably than what is considered “standard” accents. This may easily be illustrated by the fact that the “Queen’s English,” for example, or the British accent is deemed more admissible and even viewed as being superior to Indian or African accent. Even when both accents are articulated with correct grammatical content, it is not likely to ask one speaking a “more admissible” English to change his or her accent, but the converse is likely.

In many parts of the world, certain regional accents lend positive or negative traits to their speakers. For example, in the U.S., the Midwestern accent is considered standard (or non-accented). In Ghana, West Africa, the Fanti language spoken in the Cape Coast area is favored over that in the surrounding areas, and in England, the “standard” British English is favored over

³² Hutchison 2005

³³ Giles, H., and Powesland, P.F. 1975. *Speech evaluation and social evaluation*. London: Academic Press.

the “non-standard” Birmingham British English.³⁴ In a research study, the way in which various Irish regional accents affected students’ impressions of a man reading a passage on Irish history was investigated.³⁵ The matched-guise technique was used to record five stimuli accents. Students were asked to rate five recorded stimuli accents that had been modified using the matched-guise technique. Each accent was rated for nine qualities, including intelligence, ambition, and friendliness. It was found that regional accent indeed had a significant effect on all traits. The Donegal accent was rated most positively, and the Dublin accent rated least positively.

Given that some accents may attract prejudice against the speakers, the phenomenon of accent reduction or change is evident in several areas of the U.S., especially in the broadcasting professions where the “standard mid-western” accent is deemed the “broadcaster’s quality,” but southern accents are less favored, and negatively captioned as “having a southern drawl.” In 1993, one of the authors was advised to attend an “accent reduction program,” in a well-known university in the south-eastern U.S. The purpose was to reduce his foreign accent in order to better reach his students. Interestingly, however, many American professionals were in attendance of this program, trying to “reduce and polish” their own accents in order to be more presentable for their current competitive jobs.

Dixon, Mahoney, and Cocks studied the negative consequences of accent prejudice. In this study, the participants were presented with an audiotape of a criminal investigation in which a person was being interrogated by the police. The race, crime-type (blue- or white-collar), and accent of the accused person were manipulated by the researchers, using the matched-guise technique. They found that the attributions of crime (i.e., the likelihood of being found guilty on

³⁴ Cocks, R. 2002. Accents of guilt? Effects of regional accent, race, and crime type on attributions of guilt. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 21: 162-168. (Also retrievable [October 12, 2006] from <http://www.psych.lancs.ac.uk/people/uploads/JohnDixon20040416T131109.pdf>.)

³⁵ Edwards, J.R. 1977. Students’ reactions to Irish regional accents. *Language & Speech* 20: 280- 286.

a 7-point bipolar scale of *innocent* to *guilty*) increased as a function of non-standard English (Birmingham) accent, minority race (black suspect), and blue-collar job. This inadvertent criminalization of accent by the participants is reminiscent of criminalization of race in the U.S. (cf. Elizabeth Loftus' works such as, *Our changeable memories: legal and practical implications.*)

In summary, accent evaluation is a compelling issue with tangible consequences. It is therefore a significant structural force in the educational environment. For academic cosmopolites, one of the strongest forces which elicit socio-linguistic redevelopment is the students of the academic cosmopolites. In the next few sections, the linguistic issues (with an emphasis on accent) faced by an academic cosmopolite is discussed as viewed by his own students.

A case in point: An immigrant professor and his external evaluators

Global travelers may be privy to cross-cultural issues on two levels. For some, cross-cultural issues are just transient, since they may be mere tourists. For this group, the challenges of bilingualism are short-lived. For the second group; those who are immigrants on long-term basis, this is a long-term challenge which deserves an intellectual investment. For this second group, although bilingualism could be viewed as an academic strength, the linguistic differentials may emerge as a pedagogical issue of interest. The following sections describe 55 student evaluations of an immigrant professor's course and include analyses of these ratings. This data illuminates how his students (external assessors) viewed him—both as a person, and a bilingual speaker of English, and how these perceptions may have contributed to the identity development of this immigrant academic cosmopolite.

Method

Student evaluations of their professors are a common practice in U.S. higher institutions. The primary objective is to allow the students to illuminate both the areas where professors are effective and ineffective so that they can further improve their pedagogical practices. There are some public fora (a.k.a. “forums”) such as, rateyourprofessor.com where students may do exactly that: discuss and rate their professors. Many universities have their “underground,” networks of knowledge dissemination, whereby they can rate their professors for both noble and ignoble reasons. While the noble reasons may include how to select a professor for content of interest and teaching style that may suit different students, the ignoble reasons for rating professors may include how to find an easy professor, or resolve personal vendetta. These ratings are generally voluntary and subjective since students’ comments are not subjected to stringent guidelines. There are unofficial but comprehensive platforms where students may do this. One example is Shippensburg University's “Shipunderground” for rating professors (available at <http://www.shipunderground.com>).

Since, at this website, students voluntarily rate their professors, it fulfils the requirements of having knowledgeable sources or “key informants”³⁶ and willing participants.³⁷

From the “Shipunderground” website, the database on an identified immigrant professor (whose personal information is altered for anonymity) was identified and used as the unit of analysis. This professor was evaluated by 55 of his own students. Each student was expected to declare some initial information, such as the class taught, the grade obtained, and general

³⁶ Schensul, L.S., Schensul, J.J. and LeCompte, M.J. 1999. *Essential ethnographic methods*. Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press., p. 122

³⁷ McMillan, J.H. and Schumacher, S. 1997. *Research in education: A conceptual introduction*. New York: Longman.

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commentary. However, their names were not declared, thereby protecting their identity, and promoting honesty. For the ratings of each professor, they were required to fill out numerical ratings on a Likert scale of 1-10, based on the following questions:

1. How effective was this professor? (“not effective” [with lower numerical ratings] to “very effective” [with higher numerical ratings])
2. How easy are this professor's classes? (“very hard” [with lower numerical ratings] to “very easy” [with higher numerical ratings])
3. How would you rate his/her availability? (“never around” [with lower numerical ratings] to “always there” [with higher numerical ratings])
4. What is your overall rating for this professor? (“needs work”: not recommended [with lower numerical ratings] to “very good”: highly recommended [with higher numerical ratings])

This website was a very powerful source of data since it was easy to see how the honesty and the true feelings of the students were apparent. Even in the best ratings, the students did not hesitate to intermingle both positive and negative comments that represented their true views of, and feelings about this professor. It was also obvious that some of the other participants were aware of the other students’ ratings and reacted to them, either in agreement or disagreement. For these reasons, this data source was even more powerful than other forms of data collection, whereby identifiable parties were collecting the data for a specific identifiable reason. For the purposes of this study, therefore, this data source was affectively neutral. It is apparent that this data source is meant as a site to inform students about what students truly felt about their professors and therefore an advising source for future students.

Data Analysis

Strauss and Corbin's 1990 open, axial, and selective coding schemes was used to analyze the data.³⁸ All the 55 data entries on the immigrant professor were printed out and read through several times, looking for cross-cultural issues in general. Ideas with similar meanings were used in the formation of concept clusters. Having identified linguistic issues as a clear theme, any language-related comments were highlighted in one color. Subsequently, accent-related comments were differentiated and counted. Finally, the professor's conscious or unconscious responses were sought in the light of previous research.³⁹

Findings

The findings from this website are grouped into two sections. The first reviews the numerical ratings of his students. The second part (voluntary comments) sheds some light on the ratings.

³⁸ Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

³⁹Hutchison, C.B. 2005. *Teaching in America*; Hutchison, C.B., Butler, M.B., Fuller, S. in press. *Pedagogical communication issues*.

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Numerical Ratings

From the website, this professor's average ratings were as follows:

Item number	Question for Rating	Average Rating
1	How effective was this professor?	7.27
2	How easy are this professor's classes?	6.21
3	How would you rate his/her availability (outside of the classroom)?	7.79
4	What is your overall rating for this professor (Would you recommend this professor to your friends)?	7.88

Student comments

In analyzing the comments part of the student evaluations, it was obvious that the professor in question was generally identified not just as a professor, but a one with an accent. Out of 55 voluntary total student entries, 21 of his students made a language-related (mostly accent) comment. It is important to emphasize that the issue of language was not even solicited information in the professor's evaluation; these were *voluntary* comments made by his students. On this issue, there were two factions of students: those who complained about not understanding him well (and even made a rather pejorative comment), and those accommodated his accent (and one even commended the professor for his superior mastery of English). From the first (negative) category of students, there were comments such as the following entries:

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Anonymous (Undeclared): My roommate and I had this class together and were really scared when he first started talking and sounded like Abu from the Simpsons. As it turns out, this is the easiest class I had and I HATE history. He prints out his notes for you everyday on a handout, basically gives you the test answer key to study from and his grading scale is AWESOME: 85-100=A. It is the BEST!!!

Anonymous (Comm/Journ): I stopped doing the readings after three weeks, took frequently incomplete class notes, studied the night before tests, handed in an incomplete paper for which I got a "B," and I still managed to get a "B+." While my habits of procrastination did not hurt me, I would recommend that you still do work in this class just to be safe. Dr. B--- is a very effective professor. He is not only an easy grader, but operates on a very generous curve. His accent -- he was born in [Africa], I believe -- is quite thick, and his frequent mispronunciation of words is pretty damned funny.

The second group of students made comments such as the following:

Anonymous (Biology): Dr. B--- is one of the most brilliant profs here at Ship. Throughout, the entire course, he never referred to any prepared notes. He comes to class well prepared and he is the most organized prof I have seen. He is exceedingly helpful. He goes out of his way to help students. I know for fact that he does extra work with students who don't do well in some aspects of his course. For example, I did not do well on the midterm and he asked me to see him during his office hours. Once there, I met a number of students with the same problem. Dr. B--- devised a strategy for all of us to improve our grades. Yes, Dr. B--- has an African accent, but he speaks excellent English, in fact, better than most American professors

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I know. He also prepares his students for exams, and he is very good at it. I think that that is why students do well in his course and it is not that he is easy as most of the comments here shows. Dr. B--- is simply an excellent professor, someone who is committed to helping students to attain their academic potential.

And

Anonymous: Dr. B--- is a good guy. He always tries his best to make things easy for you. The only thing is he is hard to understand (but that's not his fault). He gives a review sheet for the test which makes it so easy. This class is boring... but simple. If you can [bear] to sit through a boring class, I would recommend Dr. B---.

It is important to note that out of 55 students, 34 did not make any comments about his language issues. 4 students rated him with what was classified by the website as “negative comments.” Out of these 4 students, 3 of them made negative comments about this accent. The numbers involved indicate that his effectiveness as a communicator was not an issue for most of the students. This however, does not reveal the obvious fact that his foreign accent, and therefore his foreignness was obvious to all his students. From a further analysis of the student comments, it was clear that even those who rated him positively (and many extremely positively for his superior content knowledge) put on their subject lines such entries as: “Truly an African giant,” “African man man,” “Brilliant African intellectual scholar,” “Greatest African man I ever met,” “Excellent Africa man,” and “In my opinion, Dr. B--- is an African who is very proud of who he is, and it comes out, as someone pointed out here, in the way he carries himself.” These comments clearly indicate that the students were very conscious of his native origins in juxtaposition to his obvious accent. In fact, the

professor was fully aware of this new identity as the “professor with accent,” as the following comment indicates:

Anonymous (Psychology): Dr.B--- is hard to understand at the beginning of the semester, *but he will tell you that himself*. [Emphasis mine] Don't worry [because] he is willing to repeat himself many times and you will get used to his accent. He is really nice and understanding. He wants his students to do well. He gives awesome notes! You never have to do the reading as long as you go to class. He really knows what he's talking about and can answer almost any question you ask him. I definitely recommend!

As indicated earlier, the students who were less accommodating of his foreign accent were more likely to rate him worse (3 of 4 negative comments were accent-related), thus potentially influencing his peers' perception of him as a professor, and consequently, his potential success on the job.

Discussion

The evaluation of this professor is comparable to the social imaginary (see Anderson, 1983) to which he was catapulted and examined by his external assessors; his own students. The products of this imaginary, therefore, yielded the reactants for phenomenological interactions with him (cf. Giles and Powesland's and Traoré's works). Granted that his accent was non-standard (and he was aware of it, as noted by one of the students), he was therefore consciously subjected to the linguistic structural force to which he had to respond.

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Although the voice of this professor is silent in this data set, he did respond to the local pressure partly by providing his students with copious notes on the board. He also provided print-out copies of his course notes. He also repeated himself, as some students observed. These were interesting adaptations that would mitigate any linguistic and cross-cultural pedagogical dissonance (cf. Hutchison's work).

Given that U.S. universities students generally evaluate their professors each semester for each course taught, this professor was likely to receive returned copies of his students' evaluation of his teaching at the end of each semester. In these evaluation forms, it is customary—even standard—to provide areas for voluntary student comments. If students were willing to visit a voluntary website to offer comments on his linguistic issue, they are likely to do the same in their course evaluation, in anonymity. By this means, the linguistic structural force would have found a formal outlet to exact from the professor, a linguistic re-development or re-conformation to the local tongue (cf. Hutchison, Butler, and Fuller's, and Roth & Harama's works). Given the conglomeration of the forces above, this professor would have undergone the process of academic cosmopolite identity development via linguistic re-development (or local English language learning). This socio-linguistic evolution is reminiscent of Habermas' notion that since the use of language is a common denominator in society, it could also be a conduit for social inequalities, whereby external, dominating agencies may impose structural forces in specific directions.⁴⁰ In this work, the power of students as external agents was evident in exacting directional linguistic evolution from their professor, and thereby affirming Habermas.

⁴⁰ Jurgen Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, Translated by Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), vii-68.

Conclusion

This paper argued that to be a cross-cultural academician is to offer oneself to be analyzed on the platter of the *social imaginary* machinery. The forces exerted by this machinery remold the cross-cultural academician both consciously and unconsciously, resulting in the creation of a new personality—the *academic immigrant cosmopolite*. One of these forces is socio-linguistics. As evident from the 55 student evaluations (see comments above), academic immigrants may be necessarily have to respond to socio-linguistic forces by re-learning local English conventions. For academic cosmopolites, one of the strongest forces which elicit linguistic redevelopment is the students. To his students, this professor was reconstituted as “the professor with an accent.” As demonstrated in the students’ comments, accent evaluation posed as a significant communicational structural force in the context of education. The same comments also revealed that the negotiation of cultural and linguistic forces during the development of the identity of the migrant academician can be rather complex. Ultimately, it shows that the hybridization of one’s native socio-culturo-linguistics and emergent cross-cultural forces have the capacity to precipitate new permutations of international, transmuted identities.

The limitations of this study are obvious. A more directed study of identity development may have provided a richer context for this study. Besides, a direct interview with the professor in question to could have addressed his own responses to his students’ evaluations, not to mention the richness that further elaborations of the students’ comments could have provided.

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