

“The tutor never asked me questions”: Pronunciation and student positioning at university

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(Received 15 December, 2014; Published online 6 March, 2015)

A student who speaks English as an additional language believes that her tutor is not asking her questions during the tutorial discussion because “he’s worried I won’t understand him or he won’t understand me”. Being spared the embarrassment of this potential confusion is a good thing, but in the long term, this student is missing out on opportunities to participate and practise her speaking and pronunciation in this class. Being positioned as someone not to be called on to interact in class can have a negative impact on learners. What can Academic Language and Learning educators say and do to assist students and tutors in these kinds of situations to overcome the embarrassment associated with needing to negotiate meaning when speaking with an accent? This paper describes strategies used to address these issues with university students who use English as their additional language and puts forward a model for understanding pronunciation and its role in speaker identity formulation. Theory underpinning this model is based on sociolinguistic work on speaker identities as formulated through spoken interactions (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005).

Key Words: pronunciation, communication, academic skills development, EAL, ESL, identity.

1. Introduction

Students studying at university who use English as an additional language (EAL) face the need to speak clearly. This is particularly obvious for those in professionally oriented courses, such as nursing, education or business during their practicum placements. It is also evident with many students during university classes when their participation in discussions appears to be restricted due to their pronunciation. This paper reports on students’ experiences of this kind of restriction and how it led to work carried out within an Academic Language and Learning Unit at an Australian university. Workshops with students in small groups as well as sessions with individuals involved the development of strategies to assist these students, and indirectly, their tutors, to overcome the embarrassment associated with negotiating meaning when pronunciation appeared to be limiting communication and to find ways to assist them to recognise their strengths in speaking. This involved a focus on interactions that could be linked to the speakers’ identities. From this, a model for understanding pronunciation is proposed underpinned by theory which explains ways that speaker identities are formulated through spoken interaction.

2. Speaking clearly at university

Students need to be able to speak clearly and effectively in university contexts. Doherty et al. (2011) argue that student talk in universities has become “central to classroom activity” (p. 28) and that this is reflected in curricula and assessment that include “authentic” communication tasks that replicate the kinds of oral communication that occurs in workplaces. They also ex-

plain that where there is an emphasis on co-construction of knowledge, speaking in university classrooms becomes a central activity. Some adult students who speak English as their additional language in university classes face embarrassment or some form of exclusion or differential treatment from their tutors and possibly also peers. Studies have highlighted the need for development of spoken language skills by students with EAL in university settings (e.g. Ang & Liamputtong, 2008; Barthel, 2001; Fraser, 2011). There is also evidence that many EAL university students lack confidence in their spoken language abilities. For example, Briguglio and Smith (2012) document the reported lack of confidence in the language and interpersonal communication skills of Chinese students studying in an Australian university. Ferris (1998) conducted a survey of 768 students across three tertiary institutions in the USA which revealed the students' lack of confidence in their speaking skills and with their English pronunciation. These students felt this inhibited their participation in classes and their interactions with their classmates. This complements the findings of an earlier study by Ferris and Tagg (1996) in which lecturers and other university staff expressed the views that students have difficulty participating in class because of their oral communication abilities.

My work with EAL students studying at undergraduate and postgraduate levels at an Australian university revealed similar needs and prompted me to offer small group workshops and individual sessions that focused on pronunciation for students who felt they needed to be able to speak more clearly. One of the students I worked closely with, "Lin" (a pseudonym), explained that she felt left out of discussions during her tutorials, saying: "The tutor never asked me questions". She attributed this to the tutor's fear that "he would not understand my speaking". This suggests that speakers' abilities (or perceived abilities) can have a limiting effect on the opportunities available to these speakers to interact with their tutors and other students and present their ideas and themselves in positive ways in these contexts. This is evident in Fraser's (2011) study where she found that students from English speaking backgrounds felt that their non-English speaking background (NESB) peers did not participate equally in classes. This situation is problematic on several levels. It is largely through spoken communication that students demonstrate their engagement during class. A lack of speaking can be misinterpreted as a lack of willingness or interest in contributing. It is also problematic when we consider the central role of speaking in the formulation of identities.

2.1. Speaking and identity formulation: a theoretical perspective

A theoretical perspective is required to understand how speaking is a central element of the formulation of a person's identities. For this I draw on understandings of the multiple nature of identity particularly in relation to bi-/multicultural and bi-/multilingual individuals. Homi Bhaba's notion of a third space is useful here because it emphasises the way that positions emerge from the process of hybridity that, Bhaba argues, all forms of culture are continually undergoing (Rutherford, 1990). This suggests that a speaker can adopt or occupy different positions that may not be ones that s/he has previously experienced but which exist within this third or hybrid space. An example of speakers exploring this third space or "third place" (Kramsch, 1993) can be seen in the analysis of interactions between language teachers in the work of Kramsch (2003) which reveals "a dizzying and often quite sophisticated manoeuvring between choices of language, identities and epistemic stances in order to understand one another" (p. 148). A further perspective that is useful is Pavlenko's concept of bilingual selves and the idea that bi-/multilinguals "perceive themselves as different people when using different languages" (2006, p. 2). While Pavlenko makes the distinction between the notions of self (being based on a person's self perception) and identity (based on identity performance data such as conversations etc.), her work is useful for the current study because I engage with my participants in discussion both about how they perceive themselves and I also explore their identities through what they say and how they speak.

The theoretical perspective on identity formulation that I largely focus on in this paper is that of Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall. They offer a definition of identity that is "deliberately broad and open-ended: *Identity is the social positioning of self and other*" (their italics) (2005, p. 586). Based on research from a range of fields including sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and social psychology, their work "synthesizes key work on identity from all these traditions to offer

a general sociocultural linguistic perspective on identity – that is, one that focuses on both the details of language and the workings of culture and society” (2005, p. 586). From these works they provide a set of five principles that explain the central role that spoken interactions play in the formulation of identities. These principles highlight the different ways in which identities are created and reinforced, or challenged and disputed within interactions. We see that identities are multiple, and are not fixed, but emerge through interactions and vary from one interaction to another. Each of the five principles offers a way to interpret the identity work that takes place through speaking. In short, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) “argue for a view of identity that is intersubjectively rather than individually produced and interactionally emergent rather than assigned in an a priori fashion” (p. 587). Their principles assist us to see what speakers are doing in relation to who they are being or becoming through their spoken interactions. We see that it is not just certain language skills that assist speakers to do this, but identity formulation also involves sociocultural understandings and the ability in social situations for speakers to position themselves or allow themselves to be positioned by others in positive, comfortable and desirable ways.

Bucholtz and Hall’s (2005) principles have been used by a number of researchers to examine the ways that speakers manage their identities. However, their framework has been applied in a limited number of contexts where the language being spoken is a second or additional language of the speakers. Some examples include Rajadurai’s (2010) study of first-person narratives of L2 speakers of English in Malaysia and their struggles for participation, legitimacy and acceptance; and Miller’s (2013) research with a woman of Vietnamese background exploring how positions of self and other were co-constructed during their discussions about her experiences learning and using English in the USA. Bucholtz and Hall’s framework does not appear to have been employed to explore speaking in the contexts of university classrooms nor by EAL speakers in these situations. Furthermore, the role that pronunciation plays as part of the speaking involved in identity formulation in these contexts is not discussed.

2.2. A model for understanding pronunciation as part of speaker identities

Acknowledging the importance of a speaker’s ability to manage her positioning and the identities she creates for herself, helps us to understand the ways the EAL speakers’ spoken performances might vary from situation to situation. This suggests that the ability to speak clearly and effectively is not a fixed characteristic of a person but can vary from one interaction to the next and is dependent upon the interlocutors, the purpose for speaking and the speaking context. As a way to explore this, I propose a model (illustrated in Figure 1) that embeds pronunciation within a framework that includes the speaker and her identities, her speaking and the people with whom she interacts, and link these with the process of identity formulation.

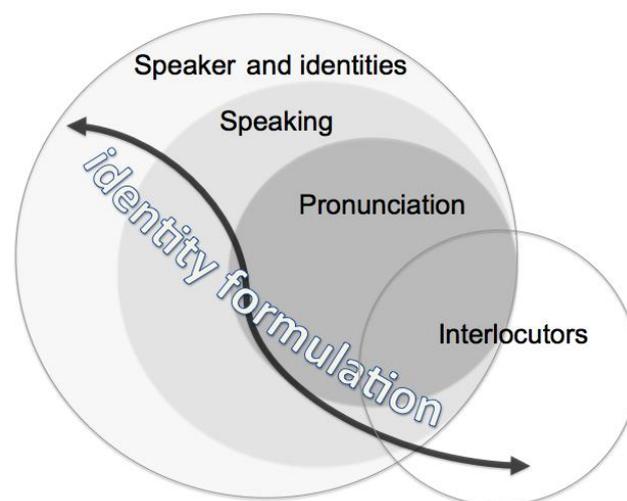


Figure 1. A model for pronunciation and its role in speaker identity formulation.

This model reminds us that pronunciation is part of speaking and together they are central to the dynamic processes of the creation of identities that individuals engage in on a daily basis. As a person using a language other than their mother tongue, or one in which they are fluent, the processes of speaking, using appropriate pronunciation along with other dimensions of speaking, shape the identities that they create. Like any speaker, EAL speakers need to manage their identities and their positioning. The risk that a speaker's pronunciation might inadvertently send out a message that results in an undesired identity position being attributed to the speaker, is perhaps greater for additional language users than it is for highly proficient or mother tongue users. Speaking with less than easily intelligible pronunciation and/or with an accent that is unfamiliar to interlocutors can magnify the difficulty of the task of negotiating meaning and establishing desirable identity positions for many EAL speakers.

The five principles from Bucholtz and Hall's framework extend this model allowing me to explore how and where the EAL speakers I worked with were formulating identities through their spoken interactions (as represented in Figure 2). I will discuss three of the five principles in this article namely: partialness, positionality and relationality. With the partialness principle, Bucholtz and Hall set out to capture the vast number of ways that "identity exceeds the individual self" (2005, p. 605). Central to this is their claim that construction of identity may be partly deliberate, partly habitual, as a result of interactional negotiation, or partly due to other people's perceptions (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). The last of these, other people's perceptions, is evident in the positioning of one of the speakers discussed below. The next principle, positionality, explains how "identities encompass (a) macro-level demographic categories; (b) local, ethnographically specific cultural positions; and (c) temporary and interactionally specific stances and participant roles" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 592). It is the third category that is particularly helpful in interpreting the temporary and situationally-dependent nature of the experiences of at least one of my speakers. The final principle from Bucholtz and Hall that I illustrate in this paper is the one of relationality, whereby "[i]dentities are intersubjectively constructed through several, often overlapping, complementary relations, including similarity/difference, genuineness/artifice, and authority/delegitimacy" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 598). In the examples given below, I use the first of these pairs to show how the EAL speakers position themselves as different or in a 'relation of distinction' to the people they interact with.

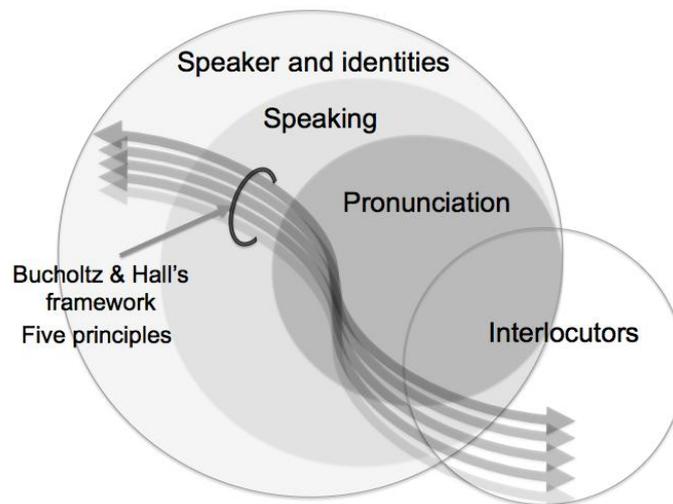


Figure 2. The model extended with Bucholtz and Hall's framework

These principles applied to a model that embeds pronunciation firmly within the speaking and the speaker and her identities are useful for understanding the ways that the students with whom I worked presented and formulated their identities during our interactions. This keeps a focus on what the speaker is saying and what that means for her, and this appeared to be more meaningful for these speakers than the sometimes arbitrary content that was available in pronunciation textbooks. Having identified these examples of speaking, the students and I could listen to the

recordings we made and focus on what she was doing well, and the features of pronunciation within this meaningful speaking that contributed to the processes of identity formulation. This allows us to recognise the strengths of the speakers' pronunciation, rather than only focusing on the elements thought to be creating the greatest confusion for me or some other unspecified interlocutor. This embedding of pronunciation as part of these larger processes potentially also offers us a way of exploring the importance of confidence, an issue evident in the literature reviewed above, and one which several of my speakers raised as being a factor that impacted on their success or lack thereof when speaking.

2.3. Pronunciation sessions for students

This study emerged from several series of workshops with students in small groups as well as sessions with individuals where speaking clearly and pronunciation were the main focuses. These students had commenced their university degrees and therefore had already demonstrated sufficient levels of English language proficiency to meet the entry requirements to their courses. The main aim of these sessions was to give students strategies for speaking more clearly but also for negotiating meaning, often when their own pronunciation was seen to be an impediment to communication within their university classes, and for those who were studying in professionally oriented courses (such as education, nursing and business), while on their professional placements. The sessions involved traditional pronunciation learning activities (development of receptive skills along with features judged (by me) to impede intelligibility, accompanied by some teaching of the metalanguage associated with teaching and learning pronunciation). A key feature of many of the sessions was the making of audio and video recordings of the students speaking, and the viewing of these as a means of developing students' awareness of how they sounded and looked when speaking English. (See Jones and Bignall (1992), Tochon (2008) and Yakura (2009) for a discussion on the usefulness of video feedback for oral language development.)

After running several series of these sessions it became evident that the students' responses warranted closer scrutiny. A number of students spoke about their increased confidence when speaking as a result of our work. This was a reoccurring theme. Additionally, students spoke about who they were when they used English. A couple of students mentioned that speaking in English sometimes curtailed their personalities or identities, while others said that it allowed them to adopt new and different identities from those they experienced when using their first languages. These responses to the learning of pronunciation became difficult to ignore. I began including questions to students about these ideas as part of the sessions. This line of questioning became one of the strategies I regularly used in these workshops as a way to explore with students what it meant to speak English, sometimes with pronunciation that was challenging for others to understand. Furthermore, these questions led to the exploration of who these speakers felt they were when they used English and whether and how that might vary depending on the different contexts they were in and the various interlocutors with whom they spoke.

I then embarked on a pilot study, carrying out a series of extended interviews with several students about their experiences of learning pronunciation and speaking English. In this paper I report on the responses and experiences of three students who were part of this pilot study.

The first student, "Lin", was a woman in her 50s from a Chinese language background. She was studying the final year of a Bachelor of Arts degree. In one of the interviews with Lin she described her experiences as a university student using her additional language, English, in classes and with her tutors. She talked about situations when she felt confident and able to communicate clearly and effectively. I also asked her how important pronunciation was for her success in communicating both in university contexts and also in other contexts. For example, when describing her experiences in a tutorial, Lin explained that she was more confident speaking with some people than with others. From these descriptions, I gained a clearer understanding of the close links between speaking and speaker identities.

L: ()¹ some people you speak English to them

S: mm

L: they make you feel comfortable and then you (..) heh heh you you have more confidence to speak out or something like that (..) some people (..) you just can't seems can't (...) say some (..) I don't know how to say (...) it seems I have more confidence to speak with some sort of people (..) than another

Lin's realisation that her confidence and her ability to speak out depend on her interlocutors fits with Bucholtz and Hall's notion that identities are intersubjectively constructed. Lin continues this point when talking about her experiences in the different classes and with the different tutors.

L: ah yeah and ehm (...) I I also realised the lecturer the tutor is (..) some tutor just eh doesn't (..) doesn't see you are a second language just (..) see you as the (..) eh native eh English speaker (..) so they just ask you question you just answer (..) him whatever you you're aware or not you just you heh heh give the answer

S: mm hmm

L: doesn't matter the grammar or (..) still I I will think but (..) not so much concern but if the eh tutor feel (..) you are the ss second English speaker they will (..) how to say (..) they: (..) sometimes they (..) they're aware they won't ask you ss so many questions as the other or (..) eh sometimes eh it's ehm (..) just (..) try to give you eh some chance to answer or something like that (..) you you ff (..) because they worry (..) eh maybe you you don't know how to answer or you can't understand what he (..) he's speaking so it would make me feel less confident heh heh

Bucholz and Hall's principle of partialness can be applied to show that the construction of identity may be partly due to other people's perceptions. Lin explains that the way her tutors perceive her can have a negative impact on her.

L: they worry about me (..) so make make me worry too heh heh heh

This results in Lin being left out of class discussion and positioned as someone not to be called on to interact in class.

L: I (..) I know this is work (..) this works both ways (..) because um (..) .t (..) once I'm in I was in a class (..) English class (..) um (..) the first the tea the tutor never asked me questions (..) he asked (..) eh his way of tutoring is () to ask people questions but he never asked me first (..) I realise what what because (..) eh: (..) he worry maybe I don't know how to answer or or (..) something like that (..)

However, Lin was able to reflect on her tutor's position and made the judgement that he was trying to include her and treated her the same as other students. She continued:

L: but ehm maybe a few lessons later (..) or half way I realised he (..) he try to cope with heh heh how to ask me too I realised and then (..) eh: one one lesson he (..) he's trying he just (..) um: .t (..) try to be normal to pick me up to answer the question

Lin reflected on how she believed her tutor perceived her and in the end felt that he was trying to "be normal" and include her in the class discussion. The partialness principle helps us to recognise the close links between speaking, pronunciation and identity formulation.

The second student that I will introduce in this paper was a 34 year-old international student from Japan who was enrolled in a one-year graduate pre-service teaching course. His teaching method was Language Other Than English (LOTE) Japanese. I have given him the pseudonym "Koichi". When I first met Koichi, he had completed his first teaching practicum teaching Japanese at a secondary school to mainly Australian students. He came to the workshop saying that he found that his speaking, and particularly his pronunciation, was limiting the ways he could

¹ Transcription conventions are defined in the Appendix.

establish his authority in the classroom with the students. He also spoke about his desire to sound “more professional” and confident when speaking with colleagues in the school staff room and at meetings. I asked him about who he was in each of the languages he spoke. His response shows that he had a sense that the differences in his abilities in Japanese and English were making him a different person and that was in some ways not what he wanted.

- S: So (..) what sort of person (...) um do you think you are when you speak English (..) are you that same person when you speak (..) Japanese
- K: mmm (...) yeah I think be (...) bit different but (..) nowadays (...) hhh I think that gap between (..) getting closer comparing to before because (..) I have slightly more vocabularies and more expressions (...) than comparing to before
- S: So the gap was caused by a lack of (..) vocabulary a lack of
- K: Or less confident or (..) just I (..) getting used to (..) the life in different place (..) or (...) I think it still depends on the person who I'm (..) talking to (..) cos I if I feel like comfortable (..) or confident to talk to (..) the person a person (..) I think I can be (...) same person as I speak Japanese (..) doesn't make much different °but° (...) when I nervous (..) or when I was in quite different (..) or strange place (..)°ah (..) still uh° (...) I can be (..) uh that gap in between (..) should be bigger (..) >I'm sorry I cannot explain well< (...) I think that's again (..) mm lack of (...) English and command (..)°or proficiency makes me bit different person° when I speak English (...) that should that should not happen

Koichi linked confidence with language abilities, but acknowledged that confidence was also connected with the person he is speaking with and the context in which the speaking occurs. Using the principle of positionality we can interpret Koichi's identities as being fluid and not pre-determined here. These are related to his feelings at the time and his familiarity with the situation. Bucholtz and Hall talk about the more “nuanced and flexible kinds of identity relations that arise in local contexts” (2005, p. 591) which fits with how Koichi describes taking a more temporary role or orientation. Interestingly during our viewing of the video recordings of the interview, Koichi remarked that he appeared very hesitant and not so confident in the video. When asked about this, he explained that he could notice lots of pausing (as evident in these transcripts) and that his lack of fluency when speaking might be what contributed to his sense that he lacked authority as a classroom teacher.

The relationality principle, specifically the one of distinction, is relevant in the next example where I asked Koichi whether he thinks his character and confidence would change as he learnt more English. His answer suggested that while he thought change was possible for himself, he distinguished himself from a Japanese friend who he said was fluent in both languages.

- K: I think continue to change ah (...) I'm (..) still wondering (...) because of (..) I don't have much ah expression (..) to express myself (...) that makes me (..) different person as a (..) °character° (...) °or° (...) even I think I knew some person even though who speak fluent English and who doesn't have (..) a problem (..) speaking English (..) and ah also he's of course fluent Japanese (..) I found him (..) different person when he speak English and Japanese
- S: in what way
- K: I just I feel like (..) he: looks more (..) lively and more confident when he speak English (...) I think the reason is (..) for him (..) I think reason is (..) like nothing to do with (..) ah proficiency (...) I think he might find ah his (..) life in (..) US (..) but he's in US now (...) just he like (..) the: the life in US or the (..) friends (..) ah American friends (..) or just he likes the place

I asked Koichi whether he was able to imagine himself in the situation of his friend who was fluent in both languages. And if so, whether he would experience a difference to who he was when he spoke each language. He responded:

K: when I was twenty-four years old when I was (..) when I went abroad first time (..) so I think I already (..) um got some foundation for myself before going to ah (..) abroad (...) so I don't know if I'm answering your question but (...) that's quite different from his situation (..) um for me: it's like (..) there is some foundation that's everything is (..) ah (...) done in Japan (..) then I just (..) compile (..) or adding all the (..) extra not extra (...) all the new ideas (..) on on to it (..) but in his case he's I think his foundation (...) is (...) also by life in US (..) so if I don't know if I even though I gonna stay in Australia for like (..) 20 or 30 years (..) I doubt if I can reach (..) his position (...) I might but I really doubt

Using the principle of relationality, specifically, the relation of distinction, we see how he positions himself differently to his Japanese friend. While his friend's "foundation" has been formed through early experience of life in the USA, Koichi's English language and English speaking character consist of adding the "extra" or "new ideas" on top of his Japanese character.

The third student, "Mei", was a 30 year-old female speaker from Taiwan who was studying a nursing degree. In our interview she described her confusion about not being able to make herself understood among her peers and not being able to understand what she was required to do in class.

M: Yep uh um I mean I expect (..) they can underst I can make the (..) the answer clear [and uh]

S: [and can] you or not

M: °no° heh heh I still can't (..) °yep°

S: °right (..) yeah°

M: () °um° (...) °yep (..) I guess that° I don't know (..) yea:h it's very hard heh (...) °yeah very very° I don't know why heh hhh

S: °mm° (...) yeah (...) it's a hard thing to do in a [second] language

M: [yeah] yeah possible but (..) I so many: friend (...) they can they ca:n respond or they can give answer quite well in the class (..) no matter (..) the answer i[h]s right or not (..) >they don't care< they just speak up

S: yeah

M: yep and uh sometimes maybe they give the wrong answer they get confidence to speak up

Given the opportunity to evaluate her performance, Mei was confused about why she found it difficult to communicate clearly. She positioned herself as different to the other members (who are mostly first language users of English). As with the previous speaker, Koichi, we can use Bucholtz and Hall's principle of relationality to show how Mei created a relation of distinction between herself and other people, in this case, her peers. She was surprised at her classmates' readiness to speak up in tutorials, even when they were not familiar with the topic and when they might have even said something that was not correct. This did not come across as criticism of her peers. In fact she referred to them as "friend[s]" and earlier in the same interview she explained that they were "quite nice" people, but rather she commented on their confidence to "speak up". Mei's speaking in the extract above included words and phrases uttered at a volume that was noticeably lower than surrounding talk. There were also quite a few pauses of longer than one second. Each of these suggests a lack of certainty or comfort with what was being said and this appears to be something that was important or worrying for her.

In the following extract recorded a couple of weeks later Mei explained how she had developed awareness of how others responded to her. She realised that her pronunciation was clearer after some sessions during which we had focused on taking into account the responses of interlocutors and the need to repeat oneself when it appears that they have not understood.

- M: last week (...) um: because ah last Saturday I have a class in city (...) ah (...) yeah I had a tutorial in city (..) so we have to discuss um: issue the tutor give us to discuss (..) um: (..) because I use the way you teach me and eh you remind me to repeat my mistake and eh (..) the tense I used so I found it's getting better because my classmate (...) they can't they can I think they can understand me more (..) and eh (...) mmm maybe I have confidence because I think I got the key point where what is point my weakness so (..) I can awareness what I'm going to say and eh (...) ah what is the meaning I want to: (..) explain to them
- S: mm-hmm so you (...). how did you know they could understand you better
- M: because they will repeat the sentence I I heh heh heh spoke to them heh heh heh
- S: you said to them mm
- M: yeah you know (...) sometimes they (..) ah when I finish my sentence (..) and eh they're afraid (..) they (..) the their understanding is different from I say so they used to repeat the sentence what I just say before
- S: right
- M: yep so (...) I can clearly understand what I say is the meaning (...) or what I meant or not
- S: and how did you feel
- M: ah
- S: after that
- M: I felt I felt um I'm getting better and ah ah I have I have more confidence to talk to them
- S: yeah
- M: yeah (...) mm so I think it's a good practice and ah a good chance for me to improve my speaking yeah

Mei's increase in confidence was at the heart of her ability to negotiate meaning when her pronunciation provided challenges for her classmates. This example reinforces the idea that when EAL students are speaking with their peers, their confidence is an important part of negotiating meaning particularly in regard speaking with pronunciation that can be understood. Additionally, the ability to position oneself positively in relation to one's interlocutors is part of establishing an identity. Mei did this in her interaction with me by describing how her classmates interacted with her, and how together they overcame the confusion. The relation of distinction between Mei and her classmates was weakened and she was able to position herself more favourably. Mei's speaking and pronunciation while talking about this development reflected her confidence. It contained fewer pauses and no phrases spoken at a lower volume.

3. Conclusion

Working with EAL speakers in the ways I have described above provided opportunities for them to explore experiences of speaking both in situations where they felt there were some limitations to how they communicated, as well as ones when they felt they interacted successfully and with confidence. When interviewing these students, their stories often included reflections on who they were when using English and how that might have been similar or different to their identities in their first language. They took opportunities to describe how they were positioning themselves in positive ways in relation to their interlocutors. A clear example of this occurred when Lin described a woman she felt comfortable speaking with. Lin said: "She doesn't see me as a second language speaker. She just saw me as a person".

These kinds of discussions were valued by the learners in my pilot study. Many indicated that they had developed their confidence through having the opportunities to explore their experi-

ences in relation to pronunciation and speaking clearly. It is also interesting to note that students' pronunciation, while describing their experiences, contained a number of features that contributed to the communication of their ideas and the formulation of their identities. Examples from the data provided above include the number and duration of pauses, and changes in volume and pace. In light of the work described here, it is evident that pronunciation work undertaken by Academic Language and Learning educators can benefit from incorporating opportunities for students to explore what speaking clearly or in particular ways might mean for them. This should include discussion about who these speakers feel they are, who they are wanting to become and how the context, including the speaking activity, the location and the most importantly, their interlocutors, position them in different ways. This opens up the possibility of exploring this positioning with the speakers and considering what they might say and do to overcome any embarrassment or other difficulty associated with needing to negotiate meaning when speaking with less than easily intelligible pronunciation and/or with an accent that is unfamiliar to interlocutors.

Speaking activities in classes at university provide students with important opportunities to establish their identities as active contributors and as capable and confident people. When pronunciation impedes this communication it can lead to students being marginalised and even excluded from the learning activities. This study has explored such situations through discussions with several students. As part of these discussions students were given the chance to reflect on what they were experiencing, and for at least two of these students, Lin and Mei, this assisted them to develop their confidence and to see and hear when they spoke well. It also helped them to recognise that their interlocutors were aiming to include them. The proposed model for pronunciation and its role in speaker identity formulation brings together pronunciation with speaking, the speaker and her interlocutors and highlights the interrelatedness of these elements. The principles offered by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) contribute to this model by providing a framework for interpreting how speakers manage to position themselves positively and formulate desirable identities for themselves. The work that Academic Language and Learning educators do with EAL students and possibly also their tutors can benefit from looking at pronunciation as part of these larger processes involving the speaker and her formulation of identities through spoken interactions.

Appendix. Transcription conventions used

[]	Overlapping speech
(..)	Unfilled pauses (periods of silence) of less than 1 second in duration occurring within one speaker's turn
(...)	Unfilled pauses (periods of silence) of 1 second or greater occurring within one speaker's turn
()	Words unclear – not transcribed
heh	Laugh syllables
re(h)ally	Exhalation or laughter within words (or bubbling through words)
hhh	Audible outbreath
°	Talk between these symbols is noticeably softer / spoken at lower volume than surrounding talk
> <	Part of the utterance between arrows is spoken at a quicker pace than surrounding talk
:	Indicates a lengthening of the sound it follows
.t	tongue click

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