UNCOMMON STANDARD AMERICAN ENGLISH ACCENTS, LIKE
BODIES, STILL MATTER: STORIES OF NON-NATIVE ENGLISH
SPEAKING WRITING INSTRUCTORS

By

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation is a decolonial project that examines a rhetoric and composition minority teacher identity I call *NESI*, which means Non-Native English Speaking Instructor. I define NESI as writing instructors who teach writing with a non-native Standard American English (SAE) accent. Through a collection of oral histories stories, the project examines and interrogates traditional definitions of college writing teacher profile and identity. The stories disrupt and problematize NESI teacher identity.

Following footsteps of academic elders, feminist rhetoricians, theories, theorists and practices, the project surveys three leading discipline journals to argue for a NESI in/visibility that identifies a gap in rhet/comp minority teacher identity discourses. The stories provide better understanding on NESI invisibility that connects its invisibility to broader disciplinary concerns. The project ends with a response and suggestion on how to address NESI invisibility. Project findings conclude a need to publicize NESI struggles and challenges and create spaces NESI research and scholarship.

I dedicate this project to my deceased dad, Lamin A. Fofana Sn., who opened my mind and imagination to higher education.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Making Sense of Rhet/Comp
Traditional Teacher Identity

This dissertation is a decolonial storytelling project that contain stories from a minority rhetoric and composition (rhet/comp) teacher identity I call Non-native English Speaking Instructor (NESI). I define NESI as college writing teachers who teach writing with foreign Standard American English (SAE) accents. This definition of NESI is important to this project because it deliberately place the teacher identity on the margins of the discipline and draw attention to the struggles and challenges they encounter as they attempt to make and mark disciplinary identity and space. As the project unfolds, I may interchange NESI for SAE, when that happens, keep in mind it a reference to the same minority teacher identity, non-native English speaking writing instructors.

An objective of this project is to respond to a disciplinary lack in NESI research and scholarship. The project attempts to fill this gap through a use of NESI stories which in turn will facilitate a disciplinary conversation and research on NESI related discourses. Another project objective is to utilize NESI stories to provide better understanding of mainstream students and writing programs perspectives toward non-native English instructors through a NESI standpoint. Both of these

objectives attempt to dismantle and disrupt canonization of Platonic and Aristotelian rhetorics, which are often regarded as disciplinary monolithic epistemologies (Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee).

For this reason, contemporary researchers, scholars, and teachers often turn to Socratic, Platonic and Aristotelian rhetorics for definitions, practices, and applications of rhetorical ways of thinking, doing and being. While a value and use of traditional Western epistemologies remain, interrogation of it epistemologies and practices are central in knowledge construction space-making projects. Martin Bernal in the *Black Athena* project exemplifies a space-making interrogation practice when he critiques Western epistemologies for not making visible its usage of non-Western practices in construction of its knowledge systems and structures. Likewise Jacqueline Royster in "Disciplinary Landscaping, or Contemporary Challenges in the History of Rhetoric" asks rhet/comp to reimagine its disciplinary landscape, which supports the traditional white elite male and female paradigms to an inclusion and integration of alternative gender and race rhetorics.

Although the works of contemporary rhetoricians continue to challenge these traditional assumptions, an area of critique that still needs work is on definitions of the college writing teacher identity. That is, in a globalized digital age, questions such as who should teach college writing in North America universities is an area of concern for both mainstream students and writing program directors.

For this reason, this project examines such concern and question through enactments of feminist decolonial storytelling framework. To clarify, when I say story or storytelling, I follow in the footsteps of Malea Powell and Lee Maracel use of the word "story". In her "2012 CCCC Chair's Address: A Performance in an Act", Powell states,

> When I say story I don't want you to think easy...Stories are anything but easy...they hold some of the complex shimmering strands of a constellative, epistemological space long enough to share them with you. When I say "story," I mean "theory" in the way that Lee Maracle" and Powell "tells it". (1)

While I am no Maracle and/or Powell, what I do in this project is tell NESI stories that contain complex theories that would help us as a field understand to their experiences and contributions to the research and teaching of writing.

I arrived at this project while attempting to answer the following question, who should teach college writing? In trying to find answers to this question, I discover a limitation of research and scholarship on the discourse matter. As a matter of fact, most of my project analysis comes directly from primary sources, which are stories from people who disciplinarily self-identify as NESI. Their stories enable us better understanding challenges individuals some minority groups experience as they work and live on the margins of rhet/comp academic discipline.

As a result, traditional representations and definitions of the college writing teacher needs troubling and re-examination to account for alternative teacher identities that have emerged in the last recent decades. Another clarification, this project re/examination attempt is by no means to devalue traditional teacher definitions; rather, it aims to extend and advance alternative cultural pedagogy approaches to teaching and researching writing.

Project Genesis: Coming to rhet/comp & the NESI Project

To illustrate a need for this project, I turn to a personal anecdote as a project backdrop on how I come to the discipline and research. As a naturalized American citizen from Sierra Leone, West Africa, the first English Language I came in contact with was the British English. As a former British colony and its commonwealth, Sierra Leone remains loyal to the British language even after sixty plus year of independence.

Although British English became my first language, while in Sierra Leone, I remember longing to speak the American English. Regardless of my access to one of the world's most powerful languages, I recall moments in Sierra Leone when I longed for days I could use "wannas" and "gonnas" in a sentences. A use of those words to my elementary school mind at the time suggested that I spoke American English, which

to the non-western global mind, was the most powerful language in the world.

The moment finally came in the early 2000s when I moved to the U.S. and began to assimilate and integrate the American English as my everyday language. I still remember moments when I entered the U.S. educational system and was bombard with this question from native SAE speakers each time I speak; "you have an accent where are you?" To an immigrant, regardless of their length of stay in this U.S., this question attacks our very being, presence and individuality; it marks us as outsiders to the U.S. language and cultural practices. To avoid answering this question, which I now see as an explanation of my very presence in those spaces, I resulted to not speak in class and/or next to a native SAE speaker.

It was during this moment that I discovered that the American English I dreamt of was not as accessible as I anticipated. As I journey through higher education, I recall a handful of English instructors who inform me of a difficulty to understand my accent and writing. One's comment on one of my papers states, "gosh...can you even write English?" This comment for years scares my writing identity; I mean it's a paralysis I currently struggle with, especially when it comes to how I sound on paper. However in the last five years of my graduate career, the scholarship from translingualism scholars, Min Zhan Lu, Paul Matsuda,

Suresh Canagarjay, and Bruce Horner, encourages a reimagination of my non-native English accent as linguistic resource and not a deficit.

As I think of my encounters with American English language and accent, and the everyday language battles I wrestle, I can't help but think about a wave of 21st-century immigrant and international students who are increasingly occupying first year writing classes with hopes of becoming English and or writing teachers. In thinking of this population of students, I can't help but reflect on the NESI struggles I encountered when I first came to the field.

For example, I came to rhet/comp in 2008, as a graduate program in master's student. Unlike my peers who come to these programs with knowledge on what the field offers, I came in with nothing. Prior to 2008 I had did not know what rhetoric means; neither did I have a clue about its theories, pedagogies and/or practices. What draws me to the field is my desire and passion to teach, research, and mentor students on writing processes and practices.

At the first *Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) convention* I attended, which was my second year as a master's student, I had hopes to meet other NESI scholars. To my surprise, I found no special interest group on non-native English speaking instructors. I left the conference disappointed yet compelled to want to know more about NESI invisibility. My first attempt to make sense of this invisibility was to design a pilot study that surveyed African graduate

students at my local university who self-identifies as NESI on how they navigate their disciplinary spaces.

The other question I attempted was to discover how they experience and interpret NESI invisibility at a programmatic and/or national organizations level. Findings from the pilot project suggest a lack and a need for training international teaching assistants (TAs) who will be teaching traditional Western courses, such as English, writing, and rhetoric, for the very first time. Recognition of the lack/need became the genesis of this project as well as the origin of the question, who should teach college writing in North American universities.

I share this anecdote for a number of reasons: first, I self-identify as NESI and each time I enter a college writing classroom, my students' gaze at me questions my very presence and authority in the classroom as a non-native SAE instructor. Their gaze surface and echo reactions to the "you've got an accent, where are you from" question. My reaction to this gaze embodies this project, that is, a disciplinary critique of the discipline's gap in NESI literature, research and scholarship. Thus this project tells stories that broaden definitions of rhet/comp minority teacher identities.

As already mentioned, my definition and use of story follows Lee and Powell, as such in doing this work, I listen to a handful of contemporary feminist rhetoricians, scholars, researchers to help dismantle and disrupt assumptions of traditional of writing teacher

profile identities and carve space for alternative minority teacher identities.

Listening Before Doing: Project Description, Definitions, Assumptions & Limitations

In *Open Spaces: Writing, Technologies and Critical Research Practices*, Pat Sullivan and Jim Porter make a case for doing research through a feminist approach. According to them, "feminist approaches to the research process problematize the practice of research because [it] challenge[s] the core of scientific knowledge making practices on the basis that it does not accommodate gender construct of knowledge categories" (58). Sullivan and Porter foreground and encourage a use of feminist research methodologies instead of traditional paradigms, which they see as limitation to research and knowledge advancement. For Sullivan and Porter, traditional research methodologies advocate for a use of "…theory in the sense of rules governing practice" (47).

That is, a traditionalist approach to research methodology enacts a continuum of positivist embodiment of unreflective, so to speak, objective and naturalistic practices and naturalist (49). In other words, tradition sticks with rules all day long. They argue against this and suggest praxis as an alternative research methodology because it open spaces for critical reflection, along with "…continuous critical framing of research practices" (67). For Sullivan and Porter, praxis, or "practical rhetoric"

open productive spaces that foregrounds relationship building as essential yet complicated element required in doing research (26).

Jacqueline Royster and Gesa Kirsch extend a similar argument for feminist research paradigm in their recent collaborative project. In *Feminist Rhetorical Practices*, Royster and Kirsch repeat one of their disciplinary critiques, which is state "For centuries, the world of rhetoric has been anchored by Western patriarchal values. They go on to explain and problematize this anchorage as a linkage to:

> [D]eemed figures such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and the list of other mostly male rhetors over the centuries to be exemplary pacesetting. These valorizing processes have thus constituted operational paradigms that have come highly entrenched in rhetorical theory and criticism and in establish criteria for worthiness. (30)

In agreement with these scholars call for doing research differently, in "Decolonizing Methodologies," Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues against Western research practices by pointing to it marginalization of outsiders. A commonality in these scholars call for doing research differently is that it's an option that opens space for research and scholarship that reflects the face of the discipline; this includes the NESI teacher identity.

In listening and following the footsteps of these scholars, the work I do in this project embodies definitions of feminist rhetorical practices Royster and Kirsch describes as engaging with and doing revisionary

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work that first "break[s] the persistently elite, male-centered boundaries of our disciplinary habits; and the second "reforms the terrain to create a much more open and expanded view of rhetorical performance, accomplishment, and rhetorical possibilities (21).

I rely on Royster and Kirsch description of feminist rhetorical practice because it comes close to explain the practice as challenging, exhausting and above all, it takes time. Gesa Kirsch and Liz Rohan edited collection, *Beyond the Archives*, provide a discussion of challenges that embodies research methodology, such as feminist. They describe it as a "liv[ing] process[;] that is, [it encourages a]... back and forth [movement] between past and present, between vising historical sites and bringing them into the present, between searching archives and walking the land" (87). While this movement charts new spaces for rhetorical inquiry, it also carries sets of demands that are rhetorically and physically demanding.

A demand of this back and forth movement as suggested by Royster and Kirsch, is that it tasks a researcher to listen to data sets through what they, Royster and Kirsch, see as both "reflective and reflexive" practices. That is,

> [N]ot only about the extent to which these scholarly actions
> are actively participating in the shaping, growth, and
> development of feminist rhetorical studies but active also in
> forming an innovative vanguard for general practices in

rhetorical studies rather than functioning mainly at its periphery. (31)

To this end, reflexive and reflective practices make allowances for a collection of data sets to speak directly to a researcher. It is in the data speaking back to researchers where meaning and revisionary work takes place. In this decolonial storytelling project, I was force to do just that, which in the words of Powell is a feminist rhetorical practice called dwelling. That is a process of seating on the data and allowing it to soak and settle. Drawing from Powell's suggestion, this process gives agency to the research and allows it to lead and direct an emergence of new meaning, particularly in the data analysis process.

A lesson that comes with enactments of dwelling practice is an emphasis of space-making project as one that has deep demand for time and commitment. For instance, in this project, I enact both listening and paying attention as feminist dwelling methodologies when interviewing project participants and data collection.

It is in paying closer attention to NESI stories that broader definitions of rhet/comp teacher identities emerge. That is, NESI invisibility is not new and/or unique to this teacher identity; in fact this issue is an ongoing disciplinary concern. We see examples of this in recent scholarship what comes through Indigenous, Queer and African-American Language scholars.

To problematize NESI invisibility, I survey three decades (2000-2010) of language diversity scholarship from three leading discipline journals (*NCTE, CCC, JAC*). Due to limitation of NESI research and scholarship, I also turn to and borrow from other disciplines, English and Teacher Education to connect NESI invisibility research gap to a broader humanities discourse. I end this project with discussion and suggestion on how to make sense of NESI invisibility as well as how to move beyond this disciplinary scholarship and research gap towards a validation of its visibility.

Opening Spaces for NESI Invisible Narratives

Overall, this project is an extended interdisciplinary project on the research and teaching of writing through a global/cultural epistemology. In its totality, the project trajectory asks us to critically rethink and extend definitions of alternative rhet/comp minority teacher identities. This rethinking will move us to development and designs of curriculums, training, and mentoring projects that complicate traditional Western epistemologies.

The project exemplifies an attempt to complicate traditional knowing in ways that mark and make spaces for minority visibility inside and outside academia. For example, in this project, the NESI stories shared provide a deeper and broader understanding on how a non-

Western minority teacher identities struggle to belong to traditional Western disciplines, such as rhetoric and composition. As a cultural decolonial storytelling project, the project validate NESI experiences as cultural epistemologies through the following acts: a) build a theoretical framework for understanding NESI related struggles as always already tied to a colonial matrix of power; b) advocates for a "delinking" from such perception because it posits foreign English accents writing/English teachers as incapable.

Project findings conclude the following: 1) a lack of NESI visibility in rhetoric and composition literatures; 2) Connects NESI's invisibility to a gap in language diversity discourses; 3) The findings connects NESI invisibility to broader disciplinary discourse on struggles and challenges of minority visibility.

Chapters Organization

As a qualitative, interview-based research project, I collect Non-native English Speaker Instructor (NESI) narratives and experiences to illustrate NESI as an emerging minority group. Through a decolonial theoretical framework and contemporary feminist rhetorical methods and methodologies, this project creates space for telling NESI stories and experiences as well as invites the discipline to re/listen to and represent NESI stories and contributions to teaching and researching writing.

The dissertation is a five-chapter project that employs decolonial framework and feminist rhetorical practices to conjecture that uncommon foreign SAE accent as knowledge construction site. Employing decolonial framework, the project surface, question and critique disciplinary and mainstream suggestion on who should teach college writing. Also by employing a feminist rhetorical practice, the project forces us to experience some of the struggles and challenges contemporary minority groups such as NESI, encounter on navigating disciplinary discourses and securing (visible) academic membership.

In Chapter 1, "Making Sense of Rhet/Comp Traditional Teacher Identity," I introduce the project as well as state its need and agenda. Chapter 2, "Listening and Following: A Global feminist rhetorical theory, method and methodology" I discuss a subscription to Walter Mignolo's assertion, "I am where I think and do" to explain a development of writing research methodology and writing pedagogy. I discuss playcook as a project framework for understanding NESI stories as well as the overall project.

In Chapter 3, "NESI Stories: Alternative Perspectives on Standard American English Accent" we listen to four NESI stories followed by an initial response and reaction to the stories. The stories present four main alternative perspectives on NESI struggles and contributions to language diversity discourses. The concluding story brings us to suggestions to

disrupt and delink from colonial assumptions of Standard American English.

Chapter 4, "A Return to Playcook: Publicizing NESI Stories and Experiences," I return to playcook as a cultural epistemology and provide an extended analysis on NESI stories that connects to alternative development of writing pedagogies and research methodologies. I do this through an enactment and use of Royster and Kirsch's revision rhetorical practice.

In Chapter 5 "Making Concluding Circles: NESI Project Agenda, Successes and Failures," I make a couple of circles that returns to the project's agenda, which explore and problematize NESI disciplinary invisibility. The last circles I make reflect project lessons and how we, as a discipline, could make use of these lessons to better advance disciplinary theories, narratives, and practices.

CHAPTER 2

Listen, Follow & Reimagine: A Feminist Rhetorical Practice

In the *Darker Side of Western Modernity*, Walter Mignolo tells a story "Western modernity" that values its contributions to the developments of many histories and cultures of civilization around the planet; however, his story also cautions traditional assumptions that posits Western modernity as "the point of arrival of [all] human existence" including its knowledge systems and structures as the model for civilized cultures (xiii-xiv). Mignolo's decoloniality poke holes at Western traditional epistemologies, histories and cultures. According to Mignolo, the West's promotion of its traditional histories and narratives as the model for all civilization is a deliberate attempt to design knowledge systems and structures Mignolo calls the Western code.

In his description of the Western Code, Mignolo states, it "serves not all humanity, but only a small portion of it that benefits from the belief that in terms of epistemology there is only one game in town" (xii). Efforts to advance this Western monolithic story could be seen in Descartes' "I think therefore I am". Mignolo's story of the Western modernity rejects this ideology; in fact he because according to him, the ideology restricts one's thinking and doing to a specific site "configured by the colonial matrix of power." He describes the colonial matrix of

power as a rhetorical space that embodies "the rhetoric of [Western] modernity and the logic of coloniality (xvi & xviii).

To counter Descartes' "I think therefore I am" ideology, Mignolo proposes another, "I am where I think and do". In Mignolo's version, the "I am" constitutes of a place one "dwells" instead of "resides" (xiii). To further deconstruct Western modernity and understand it systemic influences, Mignolo discusses five epistemic trajectories calls options. These include: rewesternization, dewesternization, re-orientation, decolonial and spiritual options (35).

Of the five options he discusses for understanding Western colonial dominance, his focuses on the one he calls decoloniality, which he describes as "analytic task of unveiling the logic of coloniality and the prospective task of contributing to build a world in which many worlds co-exists" (54). His decolonial option allows for a value of Western contributions to human civilization which at the same time "strip" out all "pretense that it is the point of arrival and the guiding light of all kinds of knowledge" (82).

I am drawn to Mignolo's use of decoloniality for the same reasons I observe Malea Powell usage of it to in her research, teaching, and mentoring practices; which is her approach to unveil hegemonic assumptions and make space for alternative ways of thinking, doing, and being. Also, it is the option that provides clearly instructions on how to "change the terms" and "direction" of Western epistemology and beliefs

(23). What this means in relation to this dissertation is that it provides a theoretical and methods framework for collecting, crafting and telling NESI stories that come from both personal and professional dwelling sites. In addition, the option makes space for a critique of neo-monolithic assumptions, as in the case of NESI, where mainstream students perceive NESI uncommon English accents as drawbacks to NESI teacher identity.

What follows in this section is a discussion of NESI literature review followed by a discussion of project theory, methods and methodology. This discussion charts a path that initiates change and redirect NESI invisibility research and conversation. In other to do this work, I stepped away from traditional research configurations, which demands a use of grounded academic theories and research methods. While aspects of conventions of traditional research are scattered across this project, the theories and methods that grounds this project comes from non-academic cultural meaning-making practices.

The theory, method and practice I draw on is playcook; it is common among indigenous West African feminist rhetorical practices. I envision my use of playcook as a return to my rhetorical dwelling site, which is a place where I think, do and be. This return allows me to use and integrate reflection and revision as meaning making practices.

One of the leading research and scholarship on NESI related discourse is a two plus decades old dissertation, *Effects of Country of Origin, Educational Status, and Native Speakerness on American College Student Attitudes Toward Non-Native Instructors*, by socio-linguist Kimberly Brown. In the study, Brown documents and examines students' reaction and tolerance levels towards instructors they, meaning the students, perceive as accented English. Brown's overall argument is that students find it difficult to tolerate and accept instructors with uncommon accents. Brown's project posits students' reaction to uncommon English accents as coming from influences of U.S. economic implications, which posits Standard American English accent as a global currency.

She begins her project by stating that most NESIs are self-aware of the positionality of non-native English accents in Western. Brown claims that this self-awareness comes from the fact that in most societies, communication and language usage are require to navigate both social and class status, or in her words, "move ahead" in society (1). She goes on to state that in most societies, one is expected to use language in a:

> [...] manner congruent with majority. If individuals have accents that differ from accents of the majority, i.e. if they stand out from those around them because of their style of speaking, members of the majority culture will perceive them as outsiders. (1)

In attempt to resist, counter and/or accept this outside positionality, Brown suggests that NESIs turn to a use of communication practices that integrates verbal and non-verbal skill. Employments of communication and language skills may differ among NESIs, what is worth noting is in the classroom, non-native SAE speakers are configured to speak and sound like native speakers otherwise, they may be marked as outsider. In the case of NESI marginalization, mainstream students demand on NESI to speak and/or sound American creates an additional challenge for NESI path to navigate academic spaces as well as construct credible teacher identities.

For example, in recent years, percentage of NESI population in academia experiences a rapid increase. While this may have influence a positive change in students' attitudes towards NESI uncommon accents, most of the participants I interviewed notice that mainstream undergraduate students still question NESI teacher authority because of the instructors uncommon English accents. The participants also point students' attitude towards NESI's accents exemplify the struggles and challenges NESI navigate as they strive to belong, claim, mark, and visible academic spaces and discourses.

As a way to help address NESI invisibility and its language challenges, Brown puts forward two suggestions: First, she suggests that departments and programs should develop "effective TA training programs … designed to help TA adapt their speech [patterns]" to

dominant and/or "in-group" SAE accent. Next, she notes that while the in-group mentor programs are in place, "no training programs have been developed to enable American listeners to learn effectively from their foreign instructors" (4). A lack of these listening programs could be interpreted as Western codes attempts to control and standardize the English language.

Although on one hand this approach protects and preserves language usability and traditions; on the other, it becomes an enforcer. That is, it marks those who don't sound native as outsiders. In fact, an implication from Brown's study concludes that a "possession of a nonstandard accent reduces [one's] employment opportunities and to a larger degree decreases the chances of complete social integration, a goal perceive by many as crucial to successful economic survival" (1).

Drawing from Brown's project, sounding American carries heavy global and economic rewards. To this end, acts of sounding American could be imagine as part of the colonial matrix of power. As a Western code, standardization of the English language challenge mainstream students to listen to, engage with, and positively react to uncommon SAE accents instructors.

In the next section, I define playcook as a decolonial theory, methods and pedagogical frame. The discussion provides an alternative approach for understanding NESI invisibility and the language obligations it invoke.

Playcook Definition: A Decolonial Theoretical Framework

I define playcook as observation practices that utilize cookery to teach, mentor, and normalize young girls into gender roles and practices. The definition comes from oral tradition accounts as well as personal observations and experiences of the practice. In playcook, the kitchen is both a physical and rhetorical space for new and old knowledge re/construction.

To better understand the above definition, I draw on classic Western play theorist and scholar, Levy Vygotsky, whose research and discussion on play positions it as a meaning making space. In "The Role of Play in Development", Vygotsky explains that "in play, a child is always above his average age, above his daily behavior; in play, it is as though he[she] were a head taller than [her/]himself." For Vygotsky, play enables and empowers a child to perform as expected while at the same time acquire agency to move and bend traditional rules accordingly. Additionally, D.W. Winnicott, who is also a play theorist, states that "playing has a place and a time" (41) and it is "immensely exciting" (47) because "one has to do things, not simply to think or to wish, and doing things takes time. Playing is doing" (italics added, 41).

Together these scholars conceptualize play which compliments my imagination of playcook epistemology. That is, they both note that children use play for self-teaching, which make spaces for thinking and doing that draws on and integrate meaning situated knowledge. Play

therefore advances a development of cognitive, analytical and critical thinking skills useful for knowledge production and consumption. In other words play makes allowances for a meaning-making practices that demystify traditional knowledge systems, which may then contributes to alternative acts for doing research.

My interest in playcook as literacy practice begins when my mother invited me to join her in the kitchen. In retrospect, her invitation opens my mind and imagination to re-visioning the kitchen as a rhetorical dwelling site. Additionally, as a NESI scholar, teacher and researcher, playcook as a cultural epistemology becomes the place where I think and do. An embodiment of playcook as an alternative feminist theoretical framework make allowances for listening to existing NESI literature as a way to better understand its discourse visibility and/or invisibility. Moreover, this framework allows me to closely listen to NESI stories and to articulate them in similar ways Powell listens to the language of survivance, which is includes survival and resistance.

In "Listening to ghosts: an alternative (non)argument," Powell share stories of Native peoples, Sarah Winnemuca Hopkins and Charles Eastman, to illustrate the ways Native peoples reimagine and reinvent themselves when they "encountered Euroamerican cultures" which was to "learn[…] the language of the colonizers and negotiated demands of 'civilized' life as they critiqued, resisted and survived its impositions" (14). Powell explains that Native peoples use the English language to

deliberately transform their marginalized identities from "object-status within colonial discourse in a subject status;" this approach, enables them to crave visible presence within Euroamerican discourse (14). Through these stories, Powell calls our discipline to reimagine "alternativity" which she may now refers to as a decolonial project and/or agenda. By paying attention to and listening to American Indians rhetorics, we see a use of writing that re/imagines, reclaims and recovers Native rhetorics and epistemologies. This exemplifies a use of the master's tool, meaning, the English language, to dismantle the master's plan, thereby breaking its Western code. As a cultural epistemology, playcook creates an alternative possibility that encourages a close listening to invisible and/or "ghosts" NESI stories as stories of survival and resistance.

Pedagogically, this practice makes space for a design of writing syllabus I call *playcook-sankofar.* Loosely defined, *Sankofa* means, "return to and/or for it," in a Ghanaian Akan language. As such, a combination of these two cultural concepts, playcook and sankofar, creates an approach to a teaching and learning of writing that bell hooks, in *Teaching to Transgress*, describes as a place where learning takes place. As a cultural informed pedagogy, playcook-sankofar pedagogy demystifies a teaching and learning of writing that encourages students to develop inquiry and practice as well as critical and analytical skills. In practice, playcook-sankofar pedagogy contributes to a teaching of writing

that equips and empowers all students and instructions with critical and analytical transferable tools needed to clearly understand and articulate the worlds around them.

Thus, my use of playcook exemplifies my use of decoloniality option to interrogate Western assumptions of non-native English accents. A playcook research methods and methodology and writing pedagogy problematize NESI invisibility and make for a re-examination of rhet/comp teacher minority discourse.

My alignment with decolonial theory and theorist forces me to draw heavily on feminist scholars I regard as elders as well as the NESI research participants I call co-researchers (Shawn Wilson, *Research is Ceremony*). In sum, playcook epistemology offers this project a play space that combines mix-methods and methodologies to critique and problematize rhet/comp teacher identity as well as make space for NESI visibility.

Playcook: A Feminist Decolonial Mixed-Methods & Methodologies

While decolonality may come across as glorifying projects, particularly since it promotes projects that push against and break Western codes. In practice, decoloniality projects demand a value and commitment to space, time and practice. That is, in academic circles, decoloniality research option is labor intensive; it demands a move

beyond theory and theorizing to a thinking and doing practice. For this reason, I envision decolonality option as messy and exhausting. By messy I mean it encourages a design of research projects that operates outside conventional academic requirements. Next, decoloniality encourage and advancement of process-orientation as meaning making practice.

As a messy and exhausting space-making project, enactments of decoloniality in this project responds to Jackie Royster's call for a re-imagination of rhet/comp disciplinary landscape. Meaning, by listening to these stories through a NESI lens, we begin to identify more gaps and slippages within the discipline histories, historiographies, theories, and practices (Royster). Reliance of decolonial framework is important for a number of reasons: first, it provides a practice space for self-discovery that parallel Western epistemologies, such as the colonial matrix of power. Next, as a theoretical and methodological framework, it compliments global feminist rhetorical practices, thereby making an allowance for a use of playcook as a cultural epistemology. As a result, employment of playcook as a global feminist rhetorical practice is crucial to this project because it makes for a research option that value mix methods and methodologies.

For instance, this project utilizes oral history interview and indigenous storytelling to capture and craft stories of NESI invisibility. A combination of mix methods causes us to not only pay attention the

stories, but also to the frame. As a research theory and method, the frame demands a close listening to literatures, research and practices of those I call disciplinary elders; those who have and continue to do similar decolonial projects. Next, to paraphrase Royster and Kirsch, it makes for a better approach to "challenge and transform the basic methods, subjects, and standards of judgment shaped by the Western rhetorical tradition" (Royster & Kirsch, 37). As a methodology, it plays with and complicates NESI invisibility as a broader disciplinary concern.

Likewise, as a writing pedagogy, the frame makes for a development and design of writing curricula that accounts for all students lived experiences, especially those marked as outsiders.

Participant Search, Background and Description

As already stated, I refer to my research participants as co-researchers. I do this for a number of reasons: first the stories we are about to listen to are much longer when compared to traditional quotes and excerpts which may be limited to few lines, about the size of a paragraph. The stories in the next chapter run three to four pages in length.

Next, as co-researchers their contributions come from places of knowing that reflects both the individual and the collective. Also, I call them co-researchers because my encounter with them did not start and

end with the thirty minutes interview session. But rather we continued to have online and offline conversations about the project. In fact, I shared the full interview transcripts with each of them plus I gave them four weeks to read and provide feedback. They returned extensive and analytical feedback to me with within the required timeframe. In sum, my co-researchers project investment are equal to mine, which is to publicize NESI experiences while at the same time problematizing its invisibility.

For project purposes, co-researchers are required to self-identify as NESI teaching assistants (TA) who have less than three years of teaching experience. This time frame is important for a number of reasons: first, it allows us to understand the NESI invisibility struggle through a graduate student perspective. Next, it draws attention to how NESI navigate disciplinary spaces as well as construct credible teacher identity that counters and/or speaks to the traditional writing teacher profile.

To ensure a NESI teacher identity that reflects disciplinary representation, I conducted a national participant call. A goal of this was to secure ten participants and from the poll of ten select four contributors who will go on to become co-researchers. Participants search started in Fall 2013. To reach participants, I emailed[1] a number of academic organization list servs. The email search was random and it went a number of *Conference on College Composition and Communication*

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[1] See Appendix B

(CCCC) caucuses: Asian, Translingualism and South American caucuses. I also posted the description on my social media sites. The search email included the project IRB and consent form. The consent form asks participants to carefully read through the study documents and then to sign and return the consent form to me electronically. Upon receipt of the replied emails, I issue another email to interested participants. The email details interview questions with suggested times for a 30 minutes face-to-face or video interview session.

Initial responses from the email were slow. For example, the initial call went out in the early summer, and by early fall I had three potential participants out of which I secured a project contributor who later become co-researchers. I discussed this concern with Malea, my project chair, and she normalizes the concern by reminding me of the fact that decolonial work "takes time". To better help manage my concerns, she recommends a use of social media platform, such as Facebook, to post the call. I posted the description to a number of Facebook writing and rhetoric program groups. The post went out early September 2014 and by mid October, I secured another interview. At this point in the data collection, I had two interviews. With a fast approaching deadline, my concerns increased dramatically. At that point, I turned to traditional word of mouth snowball approach. I did this by reaching NESIs at my local institution. Through this, I secured another interview.

About a week before my data collection deadline, I attended the inaugural *Cultural Rhetorics Theories and Methodologies Conference,* which was hosted by my local rhet/comp department, MSU's Writing, Rhetoric and American Cultures. In addition to attending and presenting at the conference, I also volunteered to work the registration desk. While at the desk, I had opportunities to meet a number of NESIs attending the conference. I took that opportunity to share the NESI project with them and through it, secured another set of interviews.

In the end, I secured the required co-researchers and they are from four continents: Asia, Africa, Europe, and North American Caribbean Island. Of the four participants, two are males and the other two are females. While three of them identify as naturalized U.S. citizens, the other is an international student. Since the project agenda is to make space for NESI stories and contributions as rhet/comp teacher minority, contributions that connects to and intersects gender and racial discourses may be mentioned but not fully explored and/or discussed.

In regards to participants' names, I use pseudonyms for all participants. While I did not select the pseudonyms, I did suggest the idea of using pseudonyms to all my participants, and they select their names. The decision to use pseudonyms is to protect co-researchers relations at their local institutions and the field in general. As a result, when referencing participants' academic institutions, I use geographic locations instead of the actual institutional names. For example, if a

participant attends, let say, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), a geographical reference will be the state of Virginia.

I call my first co-researcher Lee and he is of an Asian descent. Lee moved to the United States from China at the age of eleven. His research interests are on comparative rhetoric, and digital modality and pedagogy. At the time of the interview, Lee was in transition to become an assistant professor. Unlike the other co-researchers, Lee has extensive ESL teaching experience, however he has limited experience teaching first year writing.

John is next co-researcher and he is from Ghana, West Africa. At the time of the interview, he was a second year PhD student in the state of Michigan and now, like Lee, is in transition to a faculty position at a research one institution. His research interest intersects rhetoric, international technological communications and relations, cultural and genre studies. John is an international student who came to the United States to pursue his master's degree and continued to the PhD upon completion of his M.A. As a MA student, John was awarded a teaching assistantship position for a first year college writing course. Though his teaching experience is not as extensive as Lee's, John taught a college literature course while in Ghana before migrating to the United States. While he had the practical college teaching skills for a non-western college classroom, he was, however, new to both FYW teaching, the culture of its classroom and its students' population.

After John, my next co-researcher is Helene who is from Guyana. At the time of the interview, she was a second year PhD student at an Ohio institution. Her research interests are in minority orality and vocality plus first year composition multilingualism and multiculturalism. Helene has over two semesters of first year college writing, but less than three years teaching experience. While Helene does not identity as African-American, she passes for one. And unlike the other co-researchers who posit their non-native Englishness as pushing against their teacher identity, Helene is an outlier in this situation. She envisions her non-native English accentedness as an add-on to her teacher subjectivity/identity.

Inen is the fourth co-researcher, and she is from Spain. Her research interests focuses on Latino feminisms, with a particular interest on testimonial pedagogies and theories of the flesh. She also has extensive ESL teaching experiences and some first year composition. Like Helene who passes as African-American female, Inen though she does not identity as white Caucasian female, passes; well until she speaks.

Instrument and Procedure Description

The interview section of the project composes of ten prompts[2] that encouraged my co-researchers to think on particular NESI experiences that reflect the stories they experienced and shared. A week before our scheduled interview session, I emailed collaborators project documents that grounds their understanding on the paths of inquires to explore. In the email confirming our interview I remind them once again to re-read the consent form along with the interview prompts and to return the consent form with a signature at least 48 hours before the interview. At the beginning of every interview, I take time to go over the project as well as the prompts and then ask for clarification points before we start. This small talk allows me to go through the comfortableness that usually comes with interview, but also, it lets my co-researchers and I to get on the same page; that it to talk around the project.

Regardless of the fact that I had problems recruiting NESI participants at the beginning stages of the project, I was able to conduct a total of eight interviews, which gave me a solid poll to select collaborators. Additionally, the poll allows me to have a set of contributors to return to while working through the analysis portion of the project. While a majority of the interview was face-to-face, two was done online.

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[2] See Appendix B (questions)

In calling this project a decolonial storytelling project, it is important that my approach to data collection is transparent and understandable to all my participants. As such, it is important that my participants are comfortable and familiar with my unconventional research methods. It is also important that participants see the interview site as a space to validate and normalize NESI stories and experiences.

One way I enacted this paying attention methodology, was to go traditional. That is, instead of utilizing contemporary technologies during the interview, I used pencil, notepad, and an audio recorder. I went this way because it forced me to fully listen to my participants completely without pop-ups, which could create distractions.

This approach, I also believe took away the formalities of the interview, which may cause people to get into the interview zone and become all serious. While this project is serious, it was very important to me that my participants were comfortable sharing their experiences, which for me included expressing the emotions they felt while going through those experiences. That is, I wanted them to smile when they needed to, laugh where they find fit and cry accordingly. These emotions are what make this project decolonial; it allows us, the discipline, to feel and experience what NESI participants felt and responded to when comforted with problematic accentedness discourses inside and outside the classroom.

In the next chapter, we listen to NESI stories. In listening to these stories, let us draw our attention to references of colonial influences as contributor to mainstream understandings of uncommon English accents.

CHAPTER 3

NESI Stories: An Alternative Perspective on
Standard American English Accent

Stories matter.[3]

In this section, you will listen to and experience four NESI stories. The stories provide multiple perspectives on NESI invisibility. These perspectives point to the following: 1) mainstream North American undergraduates perspective on NESI teacher identity; 2) writing program directors' reaction and response to NESI emergence and its teacher identity; 3) NESI embodiment of its identity and contributions. I illustrate these perspectives using the first three stories and I end with a story that ties all of them together. The fourth and final story circles us back to Mignolo's discussion of decoloniality. It exemplifies a thinking of accentedness that connects it to colonial matrix of power as well as points to ways we could delink from advancing such thinking.

A quick cautionary note before we listen to these stories; they may come across as "easy", they are not. In fact, each story is rich and carries deep complexities. As a result, the excerpts you are about to experience are long, and the length is deliberate. Part of this deliberateness is to slow the pace of the stories as well as to invite listeners/readers to experience NESI stories and worlds through reflective lenses.

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[3] Thomas King, *Truth About Stories*

Story #1: My Accent Is Not Going To Go Away

By Inen

Since I started [rhet/lit/comp program] as a master's student because I wasn't sure I wanted to do a PhD and because I have not been encouraged to do a PhD in English. I had actually been told that because I was not a "native English speaker" (air quotes) I will never get an assistantship in an English program; I was also told that I will never get a job or anything like that… that actually kinda pushed me out of the field and I didn't want to apply, like I didn't know if I really wanted to do this. But luckily my friends played a key role and convinced me to apply to a master's degree instead of a PhD when I already had a master's degree. So I think I kinda wanted to test the waters; see ok since people are telling me these things about how I am not going to be accepted because of my non-native accent, let's see if I do get into the master's degree and if I do get into the master's degree let's see if I do get the financial scholarship and then how would people treat me. The beginning of my…of my semester as a masters student was really bad.

The first time I came here [U.S.] it was so hard to communicate because I used the word that people did not understand. A lot of the English that I use in my everyday language when I speak is the language I learned from TV and

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talking to friends and all that. You can really say there is a difference because I don't use that common language so much when I am speaking.

[My] first semester [teaching first year composition] experience was awful. The first semester I taught composition I was actually not the instructor. And I think, this happens to a lot of people right, the first time you teach a class, you are not so sure, the second time you are more sure but you still have some doubts, the third time you are like, oh my god, I'm a pro here right. I think my experiences are telling me a lot. But actually the thing is I'm a literature/ rhet/comp so and actually I can see the difference whenever I'm teaching the composition class and when I'm teaching the Latino lead class. The Latino lead class is like oh you have a Spanish accent well that's awesome. When I'm teaching the Latino class they are all like where are you from? Whereas when I go to the composition class they are like, what are you doing here?

And also I just acknowledge it, and I do tell them in the class in the very beginning, I have an accent; my accent is not going to go away. It's been here forever; to not have an accent. And if you think it's going to bother you, I should, I think you should probably drop the class because my accent it might get stronger especially the nights haven't slept or whenever I get really excited

or things like that. And then whenever its possible, it comes into topic, I would say things about my own learning of English in Spain and I think the students have received that.

One of the moments, this was my second semester teaching. It was actually when I became an instructor. I was going to teach my students how and when to do a [digital footprint search on a major search engine...] And so I, actually taught Monday, Wednesday Friday at 3; the Friday around lunch time at noon, I said well I am going to check again [name on this search engine] to get myself ready to talk about it to my students. When I found that one of my students had used [a major social media site] and had written, "Fuck you my Spanish speaking teacher". It was a very weird thing. At first I was kinda, I didn't even know what my initial reaction was. I did go to class and I did show it to students and the student did apologized.

At first I thought I could let it go. But then over that weekend I realized every time I opened [that search engine], I could not helped but type in my name and I looked at that. I even [went back to the course] schedule to look at what assignments or what was it that [motivated the student to do such a thing]. I began to think, did I gave him a bad grade, which made him write like that. [so I realized they were still working on] the first project [and] it was due like in two days, so I hadn't even given him a grade or

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anything…that was really memorable. It's memorable in the sense because it shocks how I approach the classroom in the future.

And then, but then, it's weird it really depend on the classroom and I had another classroom where everybody was so accepted and I had so much fun in that class. And they were, I remember once where they would just keep asking me, questions about Spain, and they knew that my boyfriend was Mexican and they would ask, "do you speak Spanish with your boyfriend?" is it different? Is it similar? Is it? It was and they were very curious; it was one day teaching the content I was planning to teach was not as important to teach as responding to these students' questions. I feel like [this] is teaching me, or preparing me in a sense that I am having these experiences now as a grad student where I am counting on the support of my mentors; I also have other colleagues and other graduate students who are also NESI, so it helps to share.

Story #2: A Baptism of Fire

By John

My first year was, hum, was very "interesting". I called it, "A Baptism of Fire" [because] once I got to this place with a little knowledge about rhetoric was or is, and how instructors teach in American classroom and how they relate to students [I realized it was] different. So my first year I had to lean on my experiences from Ghana and I realized that that didn't helped at all. First year assessment was hell; it was way below what institutions required. So the director called me to her office and we talked about it. We talked about what I felt went wrong and what I think I can work on. So...and I think, I also read the students evaluations and most of them said that how, when you talk we can't hear you, when you do this, and I thought I was very "ok". I thought I put that forward telling them that if I pronounced a word and you are not sure of what I said, they should let me know. But I think they couldn't do that, I don't know why. They couldn't do that, but they used that against me. [which is why for a while I] stopped reading evaluation comments, I don't even read the comments. Because I feel that [as a NESI teacher] you put a lot of effort into teaching and the students feels that evaluation process/assignment is how to get back at you. If they student did something wrong, may be the student wanted an "A" and s/he didn't get it because that student

didn't put in enough effort. Evaluation will be the means of getting back at you [the teacher] and they would get to write a lot of things that get to demoralize you. You feel that you put in a lot of effort and the evaluations, throw everything down…it is so frustrating so I don't read evaluations. I don't.

So when I talked to the director about these experiences, she told me how to deal with it. She, well, she told me how to deal with that, and this was her suggestion. "When I enter a class, anytime I enter a class the first time, or I should let them know or I should accept the fact that I am not like them. I should accept the fact that I am not like them, and that I ah, I am different from them, and accept the fact that… (Cynical laugh)…I wish I could recall the exact words that you can't be them; I felt it was demeaning, I felt her suggestion was very demeaning. It's just like what the students say and what they are is right that you are far from them, you are different from them, and it, it's like apologize that you are not going to talk like them. That was the feeling… that was the sense I got. Well, I tried that, well not accepting the fact that I am inferior to them, I am going to write on the board. So I really felt she [the director] wanted me to demean myself and make them [my students] aware that I am inferior to them, and that is the only way the students are going to relate. So she's said you have to relate to them and if you are going to relate with them you have to make

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them aware that oh, well you are not like them, you accept that you so different from them. And it was one of the main reasons why I shift from composition to technical composition. Because then I realized that I stay in composition I had to change myself; I really got to be like them. I am not going to demean myself I can't change my ways, I can't change my personality so I think it really got to me.

I have always told my students that if they think I have an accent, well they also have an accent, right? I can't change anything. That's me, and this is who I am and I can't change it. So I don't talk about it, I don't talk about my race, [or] my accent. I only tell them that we have different [educational] systems. If they are [un]able to hear what I want to tell them, I use PowerPoint slides and other things so you get to see… to teach… So for course evaluation, I have the reflection paper, that's where I asked them about the concepts they have learned and how they see themselves applying those concepts. I think that's more useful than the evaluations.

When I talk to people outside my class, I get irritate about the fact that I have to almost always say something three times, four times, and the person will be saying "excuse me" "excuse me"…but they talk time and I am able to hear them the first time they speak. Because of this, I am not sure that students are still

ready to accept diversity. I'm not sure, they are. I mean, it's out there, let's talk about diversity, let's talk about people different from us, people with different accents, I'm not sure they received that well, I'm not sure they received that well. I talk to other international students and they also say that well, once you are not an American, it becomes very hard to prove to them that you can teach them grammar, you can teach them composition, you can teach them research. Yes you do what you have to do but I feel that the students questioned the ability. That's the feeling I get and other [TAs] also share the same sentiment that they have to go extra to let their students know that they can teach them grammar and that they can teach. Interestingly, domestic TAs, they don't understand what international TAs go through.

My first challenge, I know the director didn't like the fact that I critiqued the program. So my challenge, I still feel that grad students from other non-western societies are not giving enough tools to teach composition. This is, first semester, you come here and they tell you go and teach composition, right? Use rhetorical approach to teach composition. What is rhetoric? How do I teach it. I mean you only have orientation for a week; just a week and you have to draw a schedule. And when I got here, you had to draw your own syllabus; there wasn't any syllabus for you to use. So one week you expect me to know the students that I am going to teach,

how they react and I have come to realize that you have to even know the educational system. They have different systems in different places. It's not like my country where, ok, from high school to this place this is what you are going to study. So you have a laid out calendar or syllabus. I got here in January and you want me to start teaching… how I going to know that. What is rhetoric?

This year [2014] I was named the best teacher on campus. I received the best teacher award. So that makes me feel like maybe, I am able to articulate what the students wants. After the first semester, I haven't gone below the instructional requirement on students evaluations.

Story #3: When it comes to Accent, I have a Knowing

By Helene

When it comes to accents, I have the ability to hear different accents, in terms of me and listening to accents. So when it comes to accents, I don't have an assumption, I have a knowing. I know that I have an accent and I know that they [students] have an accent. So my first semester teaching composition experiences-nothing momentous just like another course I taught elsewhere. Its' the same, the same activities I do with Guyana students, it's the same I do here. When I get into a classroom here [America], day one of the semester, two minutes in " I say good morning, and they don't answer, and I say common good morning, hi, I have an accent and so do you (laughs). I tell them a little bite about me. And I tell them, I hear you, and I know you hear me and I have an accent and so do you. You hear me different and I hear you differently so we all have an accent. And they will just laugh or smile.

Then I said, where you from are and they tell me their places and from there I begin to draw on the board a map and I start talking. I have them predict where my accent is from and we have a little discussion about location and things like that and we do a little map work to show them where I am from and those cultural and geographic things that produces the accent and we those have

that talk again and we never have an encounter with accents or anything like that. So I know that even when I teach in other context with American English speaking students who are not on the main land, I have that discussion as well.

And I also do naming because when I taught in the native context, non-native English, names matter; so I will do names, Japanese, Koran names, English names, all kinds of names and then do a huge ice-breaker so the accent thing comes along with backgrounds so they can tell me where they are from and how they got their names and then we get Russian descent, and we have the German roots, the Italian roots, so all that comes out when they tell me their names, they place themselves geographic to their affiliations and cultural affiliations, and it's amazing the diversity I get even in the classroom here at [a mid-western university] there are Germans, there are heavy Germans, European, I have one, but I have quite a bite, and we don't go from there and we don't talk anything about that.

In my first classroom here, I had predominantly Standard American English speakers, native speakers so to speak. One of them has a dual citizenship'; he is Nigerian and America. One of his parents is Nigerian and the other American. He had spent some time in Nigeria and I know it because when he wrote, I heard it in his writing. In his first essay, I picked up on the accent…I started

asking myself, why does he write like this. His writing has elements of classic English, [which echoes] the way I have been raised to write from a British colonial background. Also I was interested in his word choice.

So I wanted to recognize what it was; I knew his English was different. I thought, hmmmm this is interesting so I had a talk with him. [in our conversation,] I said to him, there's something about your English. Tell me about yourself...where did you go to school? Like that...that was when he told me he went to school in Nigeria and then he came back [to the U.S.] when he was in high school, finished high school here and then college. He said, why, and I said, I can hear an accent in your writing. He said "what?" I said, why are you writing like this, he said they had to do an essay before they entered college, he said, I didn't know who my audience was so I was performing in the essay; so it read like poetry. I told him I noticed it read like preaching, the redundancies, like the cadence of preaching or poetry, or classical English, this long sentences.

After that, I started showing him some of the things that he was saying that flagged and disrupt the flow of the writing. So we struck a bond right there. He wasn't saying anything incorrect it was just that the cadence was different. And I started showing him, he would say something like, I can't remember exactly what it

was, he would say something like walking down the street "they were", "doing this this this they did", like that, so I said ok, lets revert that who is doing what to whom and whose doing what... let's try that. And that's one time and after that he went straight back to his American ways... he did fine after that.

Story #4: Problematizing Standard English Language

By Lee

I came here (U.S.) when I was 11. English is my second language and you will hear in my speech and accent will come out soon. There are certain words that I cannot pronounce, overall, people don't think that I have an accent, so to me, accent is not an issue, at least from my prospective, my students might say something different…it's not an issue because immediately I start speaking people realize he is a "fog".

I really didn't encounter resistance teaching first year writing to Native American English speakers but I encounter resistance teaching in a community ESL program. In teaching my first class, there was a student that walked into my class after registration office, the student was an Asian gentleman, he walked into class, saw me and then he walked out and told the office that he doesn't want this class. I don't know what happen but the impression that I got was that the student wanted a native speaker and given that I'm Asian automatically my subjectivity was a marker against me. Among the international speakers communities, there is the assumption that you learn English best when you are a native speaker that ideology is maintained by teaching English that in other to teach that subject you have to be a native speaker.

Also I noticed that when I was teaching in the ESL program a lot of people were mistaken me as a student. I remember one of my early classes I got up to say hello and everyone looked at me…my name is Lee, I wrote my name on the board and told them I will be the instructor, everyone looked at me with facial expressions…who is this weird student getting up to the board. And then when I said, I am your teacher, that's when their facial expressions changed…it's interesting to have this contract, when you work with ESL students, you will think that they would have empathy, and then when I teach native speakers, I don't have that issue.

Making Sense of NESI Stories: Initial Response & Reaction

Initial response to these stories comes in the form of a question: with depth of complexities these stories contain, why a lack in NESI disciplinary discourse? In listening to these stories, it is arguable that these stories and experiences are not exclusive to NESI population. For example, Inen and John stories help us understand students' reaction to non-native SAE writing instructors. Together, their stories illustrate expressions of students' attitude and tolerance levels towards uncommon and foreign English accent instructors who teach writing.

In particular, Inen's story reveals an area of complexity that is less discussed in academic circles; that is, she discloses that her TESOL faculty discouraged her from studying Western related subjects, such as literature, rhetoric, and writing, due to the fact that she is not a native English speaker.

Another complexity John and Inen stories point to is a need and demand for NESIs to publicly "out" their teacher subjectivity as non-native SAE speakers. My use of the word 'out' aligns with its queer roots, that is, it denotes a disclosure of one's identity/subjectivity, such as gender or sexuality, which may or may not be in alignment with hegemonic assumptions.

While a practice to out one's identity and/or subjectivity may be valuable to some marked and marginalized identities/subjectivities, it does not always favor other minority groups. For example, even though

Inen out herself when she claims that she finds time to talk about non-nativeness, and "learning of English while in Spain," that did not address her some of students' concern with accepting non-native English writing instructors like Inen.

In a number of post-interview conversations with Inen and other co-researchers we talked about this outing phenomenon as a common practice among minority groups, both visible and invisible. In one of our conversations, Inen questioned what would have happened had she decided to check her digital footprint as a class activity. She states that would have been the most "embarrassing moment of my life." From her story and John's we get a sense that NESI have to constantly watch out for students' attempt to sabotage NESI's teacher identity. To this end, mind, we discussed acts of accentedness outing as vulnerable and unhelpful to minority teacher identities.

As an aside, I find Inen's reaction to her student's action as both interesting and remarkable. First and foremost, it is difficult to hear and/or read about any teacher who would transform such ugly moment into a teaching and learning experience for all her students. And to see that Inen did just that as a graduate teaching assistant, that speaks of a teacher character that cares deeply invested in students learning.

Similar to Inen's story, there are also a number of interesting yet complex observations in John's story. To begin, John's question, "what is rhetoric" is a question that most international TAs raise when ask to

teach a college composition course. Interestingly when most international TAs come to understand Western definitions of rhetoric, they are able to connect those definitions to their cultural ways of knowledge re/construction. Thus, I believe a question this questions is less theoretical and more pedagogical. It is a question about how to teach rhetoric and less of rhetoric's definition. An approach to answer and address this pedagogical concern may begin with a design of professional developments, training and mentoring programs specific to international TAs prior and lived experiences.

Another interesting observation in John's story is that we get a first hand experience on how some writing program directors respond to NESI-student related tensions. The scenario with John's teaching evaluations is a good example. For a quick reminder, John discovered through his below institutional marks discovered that some of his students took issue with his non-native English accent. As a reminder, John discovered through students evaluations that some of his students had difficulty understanding his accent. Because of this, his program director, who is a white female, had a length conversation with him to discuss the evaluations and strategize a way forward.

Although most of the director's suggestions are useful, it is arguable that most of it may apply to privileged veteran instructors; that is, the traditional teacher identity, meaning middleclass native English speakers. As a result, John finds her advice, which is for John to tell his

students "he can't be like them," both difficult to accept and do. Additionally, this could be a reason why John thought the director's comments is "demeaning".

In fact, John notes that he was troubled that his students could not speak directly to him about his non-native English accent; regardless of the fact the encouraged them to do just that. He made sense of that fact by stating that some of his students, "used it, [his accent], as a point against me… and it makes me feel like you put in a lot of effort into teaching and the students feel that the evaluation process is how to get back at you". This is not to suggest that student's use of teaching evaluation to speak his/her instructor is wrong; rather, what is troubling is, as John points out, is a use of it to personally attack marked and vulnerable teacher identities. To use teaching evaluations for this practice maybe useless and unproductive for both students and instructors.

In Helene's story, we get a better sense of what John means by a "lot of effort". That is, a majority of NESIs are self-aware of their non-nativeness. Thus in coming to the classroom, they come with a mindset which is to teach students alternative understandings of the English Language. For example, Helene assertion, "when it comes to accent, I have a knowing," illustrates her NESI self-awareness as well as her pedagogical approach to teaching writing.

She further explains this NESI self-awareness when she describes her class activity on the first day of class. She states that by asking students to geographically map their accents, she invites them to critically reflect on how the students envision accentedness. Her attempt with this activity is to disrupt as well as re-orient students to assumptions of the English Language. Another example that comes from Helene's self-awareness is on how she draws on it pedagogically. Her story exemplifies NESI attempts to engage, enable and empower their ESL students to envision and discover non-native SAE accents as linguistic resources. We see an example of this when she shares about her dual-citizen student.

In listening to all of these stories, we hear influences of the colonial British English Language. In Lee's story we hear some of the colonial sentiments Mignolo refers to as Western code and/or colonial matrix of power. For instance, when Lee shares about his ESL students, we get an insight on how subjects from former colonized countries relate and respond to non-native SAE writing instructors. That is, Lee suspects that some of his students, particularly those who share his Asian ethnicity and background marked his NESI subjectivity "against" him.

While Lee's observation on some of his ESL students' attitude towards marked NESI subjectivities may be surprising to native SAE speakers, it is not the case when it comes to non-native SAE teachers and scholars too. In fact, Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks*,

speaks of a French immigrant who desires to speak the language properly like a native speaker. He explains that the Afro-Caribbean French immigrant desire is to speak "French French," which is another way of saying, to speak the language like a French native speaker.

This idea of sounding native is no new phenomenon and it is well grounded in the colonial matrix of power. That is, any form of the English Language short of the master's usability is othered. As such when immigrants come to Western countries, such as North America, they come with a strong desire to speak and sound like native language speakers. In a way, to speak a language in a native's tongue denotes a sense of acceptance and belonging, which is probably why Brown speaks of communication as an approach to "move ahead" in society.

Overall, initial response to these stories bring us to this question, why a disciplinary invisibility in NESI research and scholarship? While I am yet to come up with answers to this question is uncertain, what clearly comes across in these stories is that more work is needed to help us better understand NESI invisibility. Next, the stories let us know that NESI teacher identity disrupts mainstream students' perception and expectation on who should teach college writing.

Perhaps a way to disrupt and address this assumption is to go back to Lee's attitude towards mainstream assumptions of accentedness:

> For me, my attitude towards mainstream American and Non-mainstream American accents is this: I see accents as a

flavor. It's a part of linguistic persona, which to me has richness and interesting quality to our communities so that we are not so damn boring. If we speak the same way…the same sound…I mean this brings diversity, this brings flavor into every society or culture. The reason why I see it that way rather than another way is because to me accent is really an ideology, in a way that is often oppressive to Anglo-normativity.

In other for us to avoid language boredom as suggested by Lee, it is important for us to envision non-native English accentedness through a cooking spice and/or flavor metaphor/analogy. In fact I see this metaphor echoing my usage of playcook pedagogy. That is similar to playcook, as s spice/flavor metaphor, language agency is with all users, this includes both instructors and students, or on a lighter note, should I say, both chefs and sue-chefs. In the next chapter, I offer extended analysis that connects these stories to playcook pedagogy and methodology that advances the teaching, learning, and researching of writing.

CHAPTER *4*

A Return to Playcook: Publicizing NESI Stories & Experiences

In this chapter, I discuss project findings plus playcook epistemology and its contributions to a development of writing pedagogy/methodology. Both discussions follow Royster and Kirsch's use of revision as a rhetorical practice to extend and validate definitions of feminist rhetorical practices as a fundamental model for knowledge making. As already mentioned in previous chapters, an agenda of this project is to publicize NESI disciplinary invisibility. This publicity helps us make sense of the NESI invisibility in ways that offer suggestions for how to address some of the struggles and challenges highlighted in NESI stories.

Drawing from the NESI stories, the findings discussion will emphasize Royster and Kirsch description and development of a "feminist-informed operational framework" (Royster and Kirsch 18). I do this through illustrations of my use of playcook epistemology as a global feminist rhetorical practice that honor and value "women's rhetorical performances in research, scholarship, and teaching" (14) regardless of cultural and/or geopolitical backgrounds. Following this conversation, I discuss my design and use of playcook-sankofar pedagogy as an approach to address NESI invisibility in teaching writing, particularly freshman composition. At the end of this chapter, we connect NESI

invisibility to a discipline wide challenge to recruit, mentor and retain marginalized teacher identities.

Playcook Realization: Stepping Back to Step Forward

An initial project finding is this: as a discipline, more work is still needed in the development of alternative research practices to reach and address discipline invisibility for minority groups such as NESI. While this stories shared in this project problematize NESI invisibility, which is a good start, what it attempts to also do is to remind us, particularly faculty members working with international graduate students and writing program directors, of what it looks like to research and teach writing from the margins. Developments and advancements of alternative research practices make spaces for us to address both the seen and the unseen. That is, it is through the works of discipline elders like Powell and Royster and Kirsch that makes my return to playcook possible.

For example, my return to playcook illustrates my enactment and embodiment of Mignolo's decoloniality option as my rhetorical dwelling site; a place where I think, do and be. This return provides both frame and cultural context I employed to carefully pay attention and listen to NESI stories, both visible and invisible. Additionally, playcook offers a frame for understanding and validating ancient rhetorics.

As previously mentioned, my playcook is because it values a use of mix knowledges to re-invent new meaning. As a feminist-decolonial practice, playcook makes use of alternativity in ways similar to some of my elders, particularly Powell as well as Royster and Kirsch, discussion of revision as a feminist meaning making practice. In Powell et al "Our Story Begins Here: Constellating Cultural Rhetorics," they discuss Royster and Kirsch emphasis of feminist rhetorical practices as "acknowledging our discipline's ancestors while simultaneously encouraging us to recognize the manners in which our well-rehearsed patterns of assessment and valuation have limited our scope and vision" (19).

Playcook acknowledges that ancestry while at the same time demands an exploration of ways to reclaim and recover marginalized epistemologies. As a result, enactments of revision as feminist rhetorical practice encourage a move beyond everyday discipline stories, which celebrate traditional ways of thinking, doing and being, such as definitions of rhet/comp teacher identity, and mark them as limiting the scope of disciplinary literatures and literacies. Thus an acceptance of alternative would allow is to integrate:

> [V]alues and perspectives [...] that honors [...] particular
> traditions of the subjects of study, respects their
> communities, amplifies their voices and clarifies their vision,
> thus bringing evidence of our rhetorical past more

dynamically into the present and creating the potential

…with the contemporary research subjects for a more

dialectical and reciprocal intellectual engagement. (Royster

and Kirsch 14)

Without a doubt, playcook provides a frame and a mirror tell this NESI story. This mirror creates a space for critical reflection that results to self-discovery and positionality. Let me explain this through a brief recap of my re/turn to playcook as well as my discovery and construction of a NESI teacher subjectivity.

My initial rethinking and use of playcook started when I enrolled in a histories and theories of rhetoric seminar; this was during my first year as a doctoral student. In one of our class discussions on ancients', Plato's *Gorgias*, we witness a debate between Socrates and the sophists, mostly Gorgias, use cookery to argue for and define the art of rhetorics. This conversation is important for a number of reasons: first, it reminds me of playcook as a cultural meaning making practice. Second, it was during this conversation that ancient rhetorics begin to make sense. That is, through cookery metaphors, playcook allowed me to reflect on ancient rhetorics (theories, methods and practices) through a cultural orientation. That is, I begin to envision rhetorics beyond its western limitations.

Although it is widely known and practice across Africa, when it was time for me to define playcook as an indigenous feminist cultural

practice, there is no academic scholarship. As such, I turned to my cultural community elders for oral tradition narratives, definitions, and its usages. The elders I consulted with are mostly from West African: Nigeria, Ghana, and Sierra Leone.

Interestingly, majority of the elders I spoke with describe playcook as a self-discovery practice. For example, one of them, Aunty Ana, which is her real name, describes playcook as "how I learned my responsibilities as a young girl in my family…it is how I taught my daughters to know theirs as well". Additionally, a value they all emphasize is that playcook makes learning life lessons practical and interesting. That is, paraphrasing Aunty Ana, most young girls want to "feel and act like adults". So to have them pretend cooking with an adult that makes it easy for most parents to "bring their daughters to the kitchen and then teach them how to cook".

This brings me to the other project finding; more work should be done to promote and advance scholarship that re-imagines failure as meaning-making site. While it could be argued that NESI invisibility is a failure on rhet/comp's part. On a first glance, an absence of NESI literature provides a direct and firsthand experience on NESI stories, which includes who they are and the contributions they bring to a teaching and researching of writing. On a second and closer re-examination, NESI invisibility should be re-imagined as a knowledge construction site and an opportunity to mark a NESI space.

For example, in the stories shared, co-researchers recall experiences from their first semester teaching writing as a challenge. For most of them, the challenge comes from NESI uncommon SAE accents, which could be connected to a lack of training programs that enable and equip mainstream American undergraduates on how to listen to and understand uncommon English accents lectures.

In addition to not having listening programs for undergraduates, it could also be argued that NESI themselves find it difficult to integrate uncommon SAE accents discourses into class situated knowledge. Due to the fact that NESI struggle to see and find visible connections that situate accentedness in teaching, some NESIs stories/experiences are silenced. That is, except for first day of the semester class introductions when NESI disclose and out their teacher subjectivity as non-native SAE writing teachers, they, meaning NESI, almost never discuss and/or integrate accented discourses to class situated knowledge. Perhaps, disciplinary visibility of NESI literatures would encourage and facilitate conversations that connect to NESI struggles and challenges to broader disciplinary issues.

Drawing from the NESI stories, another example for re-imagining a lack of NESI invisibility as a site for knowledge construction could be envision in how NESIs insert their diverse English accents in teaching writing. For example, John and Inen share a use of first day of classes to inform students about the diversity of their English, which has direct

British influences. In one of my post interview conversations with my a few of my co-researchers, and other graduate teaching assistants, who are mostly from African and Asian countries, some disclose being uncomfortably when forced to out their accentedness; meaning speak of their accents as othered and marginalized to native Standard American English.

A number of my co-researchers mention that prior to moving to the U.S. to further their studies, a variety of English they speak carries a heavy global and economic currency. However, on coming to the U.S. and teaching writing, they discovered a number of drawbacks connect to the variations of Englishes they speak. With this backdrop, mainstream perceptions of uncommon English accents may impact NESI's teacher confidence and authority. Perhaps a visibility of NESI experiences in rhet/comp disciplinary literatures may contribute to ways to address accentedness drawback in research and scholarship.

This dissertation attempts to chart inquiries and begin conversations that might lead to a NESI visibility. While this specific project finding motivates the long and exhausting dissertation journey, this recognition quickly forced me to rethink the project gravity, and that rethinking quickly translates to fear. The fear I experienced was influenced by variations of this question: what if I fail? What if I am unable to make space for these rich yet complex NESI stories? What happens then? I still wrestle with these questions; nonetheless, one thing

is clear, regardless of whether I choose to go with the project or quit, I still have something to do.

After weeks of thinking on these questions, more questions emerged in form of answers to the previous ones. Questions like, what the hell am I doing here? And by here I mean, 1) commitment to a PhD; 2) teaching first year writing to students who question my teacher identity; 3) and above all, working on a project that my peers and mentors believe will make a disciplinary difference. I am truly far from attempting answers to these questions. The one thing that is undeniably clear is that this NESI project chose me and it needs me to see it through, to the end. A return to playcook not just as a cultural practice, but also a feminist rhetorical practice, brings me to a revision site, a place where I can think and do something, even if that something translates to failure.

Knowing that a potential project outcome maybe failure ironically becomes a project motivation. With this recognition, the decision to lean heavily on playcook epistemology becomes paramount; this is because with playcook, failure is an equally demanding outcome. In the next section, I discuss the final project finding, which is a call to action, response and suggestion to addressing NESI in/visibility. I discuss my design and use of playcook-sankofar pedagogy as an approach that values alternativity to expand writing pedagogies.

An Opportunity to Act: Designing Playcook-Sankofar Pedagogy

When I first entered the writing classroom, I was confronted with tensions that questioned my identity as a foreign SAE accent-writing teacher. These questions and tensions eventually moved to me rethink both how I research and teach writing. For years, as a graduate teaching assistant teaching first year writing, I spent considerable amount of time reflecting on my physical and rhetorical presence in composition classroom. These reflections causes me to re-examine disciplinary discourses on language diversity from feminist-decolonial perspective.

The framework allows me to delink from traditional writing pedagogies. For instance, I teach first year writing at Michigan State University (MSU). An emphasis of the program's meta objective is to encourage alternative ways of thinking and teaching freshman composition. This encouragement centralizes on a major curricula objective, which is to teach students how to write beyond tier one and across disciplines. According to the program's description on the department website,

> Perhaps the best way to describe First-Year Writing is to say
> that it's a class about you [the student]… because your
> experiences and prior knowledge are important in learning to
> write…FYW is a place where you can spend some time
> thinking about your plans for college…reflecting on where

you've been, what that means for where you are now, and

how to imagine where you're headed. (wrac.msu.edu)

Reading this description through cultural rhetorics lens posits meaning making as socially constructed and situated. With this description in mind, plus students expressed concerns towards my NESI multiple minority teacher identity, I experienced a pressure and tension to deliver both programmatic and students' expectations accordingly. In fact, in my first semester teaching, I struggled to make sense of the learning spaces between major writing assignments, which are programmatic designs aim to teach students a value for integrating prior knowledge in meaning making.

As such, the program's meta-objective is to teach students how to disrupt traditional approaches to writing; plus it focus is to also re-orient students to writing practices that validates their lived experiences. The curriculum encourages a use of reflective writing that moves through a sequence of assignments that moves from literacy memoir to cultural/object analysis and then to the major research paper. I find the sequence limits students knowing; that is it assumes that students are unable to make sense of how their narratives contend, interact, intersects and/or complicate dominant discourses. In most first college writing programs both at the community college level and university levels, the research paper is usually the last and final project students work on at the end of an academic semester.

My attempt to teach this default pedagogy failed in that first semester teaching. My failure was not that I could not teach the sequence, but rather that I struggled to embody and enact the curriculum through my epistemic dwelling site. To help make sense of the curriculum, once again, I turn to playcook but this time, I couple it with another African indigenous rhetorical practice called Sankofar.

Sankofar means return to and/or for it. It is a cultural and rhetorical practice that comes from a Ghana peoples also known as the Akan. For the Akan people, *Sankofar* enables them to understand that knowledge construction projects require constant re/visitation to and integration of former and/or prior knowledge. As a result, I imagine a reverse sequence that begins with the research paper project as a better approach to a teaching and learning of writing that disrupts and re-orient students to build on and engage reflective writing processes and practices.

Additionally, the reverse sequence posit students as knowers; that is, it takes into consideration the fact that most freshman composition students come from high school where traditional writing process and practice is emphasized. This assumes that students come with limited understanding on how to do research using existing academic knowledge. Thus to mark this place as a writing assignments starting point position students and encourages them to learn disciplinary language and culture. This sequence not only disrupts traditional writing

pedagogy, but it also provides students with agency to re/imagine and re/invent themselves within academic and cultural discourses.

Playcook-sankofar syllabi challenge all of students on multiple levels. For instance, a majority of our college freshman writers are trained to think of writing through a product model (Donald Murray); this means total reliance on traditional structure and organization. In playcook-sankofar writing pedagogy, process theory is privilege; particularly at the front end of a writing project, which Murray describes as pre-writing and argues that it makes "85%" of a writing project (Murray page). In playcook-sankofar writing assignments, structure and organization comes after brainstorming and pre-writing. At that moment in the writing process, I believe students have clear sense of not only the writing assignment, but also how the assignment connects to a lived experience. Playcook-sankofar informed assignments challenge students to envision themselves as experts of their own meaning making practices, which counters the default programmatic writing pedagogy.

With this challenge in mind, often at the beginning of a semester, a good number of my students are usually reluctant and almost resistant to practice writing through playcook paradigm. My approach to bring students to appreciate playcook-sankofar pedagogy is to design classrooms spaces and assignments that encourage students to develop and practice writing skills that integrate situated classroom knowledge and prior experiences. To do this, I follow backwards pedagogy syllabus

design, which I posit as student-center. By student-center, I mean a syllabus that encourages students to validate prior knowledge.

Overall, as a feminist-decolonial informed practice, playcook-sankofar pedagogy allows learners to see and mark failure as epistemic sites. In relation to playcook practice, food wastage is discourages. That is for under developing countries such as Sierra Leone, food wastage is a taboo. This assumes that if one fails to follow a recipe accordingly, instead of drawing away the food, it is strongly encouraged to modify the recipe to make something different. This takes away pressure to perform thereby lowering any high stakes. In the end, playcook emphasizes process as fundamental theory and model to teach first year writing.

A reliance on playcook-sankofar pedagogy also brings its set of challenges for a NESI writing instructor. For me, it means that I have to play the messiness and no-structure meaning making practice game. Some students at the beginning of a semester might read as a dis-orientation and a disruption. In fact, they often share with me during first class conference that they are unfamiliar with a writing course that sees them as experts and that by encouraging them to play and mess with writing theories and processes is uncomfortable and difficult. Hearing this is from my students is never exciting, as students do talk to each other, which means one person could begin to interpret the course as "hard" and before I know it, most of them will be saying it, which might lead to students dropping the course. While this was a fear I had

the first two semesters I pilot playcook-sankofar pedagogy, I am yet to see a student drop the course because he/she could not take the challenge. In fact, I hear from a number of them during the course and after, who find value in employing a messy process model in writing. Bringing students to this place of thinking and doing is no joke; in fact, it is very hard particularly for a writing instructor with multiple minority identities.

Regardless of the challenges it bring, this pedagogy enables and empowers minority instructors, such as NESI, to talk about struggles and challenges they experience and see inside and outside the class. To clarify, all instructors face a challenge or two in the classroom; the problem with a minority teacher such as NESI is that though we could see and hear the problem, nobody wants to talk about it, let alone do something about it. My decision to use playcook-sankofar pedagogy is more valuable to my students because it allows me to bring them to their meaning making practices, but I could only accomplish that by first bringing the students to my epistemic dwelling site; the place where I think and do.

In doing this, I see myself delinking from dominant pedagogies that suggest a need for teachers to meet students at places where students think and do. To me, taking this direction is another way to look away from the problem, and though I attempt that with all the questions I mentioned earlier, this project, that is paying attention to and listening

other NESIs share their struggles and tensions inside and outside the classroom, will not permit me to look away.

Addressing the NESI Problem: A Need to Validate NESI Experiences

In bringing this chapter to a close, I make a final observation and comment, which suggest possible approach to addressing NESI disciplinary invisibility. The comment ties the findings together in a way that validates playcook as a global feminist rhetorical practice. My comment exemplifies NESI invisibility as a discipline wide challenge experienced by minority groups across the field.

Going back to my co-researchers narratives, it is clear that a need to establish visible NESI disciplinary stories and identities is paramount. To do this, we as a field need to carefully listen and re/listen to NESI stories. Meeting this need responds to Royster's call for expanding the discipline territory as well as Powell's call to value alternative discourse, which includes theory, method, pedagogy, and practice. Re/listening to these stories is critical because in doing that we begin to see connections and hear relations of NESI invisibility that speaks to broader disciplinary concerns. Therefore a starting point in this visibility establishment is to validate NESI experiences.

For this reason, I interpret the struggles and challenges that surround NESI teacher identity as encouraging. I say this because as I

said earlier, the NESI teacher identity problem is not new in academic circles. In fact in the past four to five decades, we have seen variations of this problem in rhet/comp. For example, the scholarship of Audre Lorde and Barbara Christian's criticism of early feminisms reminds me of women of color struggle to make academic spaces. In Lorde's classic essay, "The Master's Tool Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," Lorde pushes against Western constructions of feminisms because, she argues, it excludes non-Western forms of feminist rhetorical practices. At an academic conference she attended, which agenda was on women resistance towards hegemonic assumptions, Lorde notice an absence of "lesbian consciousness" as well as "third world women," which for Lorde, leaves a serious gap within conference and its papers (1). The absence of these minority groups causes Lorde to push her suspicions a step further by making the following statement:

> If white American feminist theory need not deal with the differences between us, and the resulting difference in our oppressions then how do you dean with the fact that the women who clean your houses and tend your children while you attend conferences on feminist theory are for the most part, poor women and women of color? What is the theory behind racist feminism? (2)

Lorde's critique and observation open space for broader criticisms of white feminisms that moves to revisioning of feminist theories, practices,

and methods that value difference and diversity. And while contemporary feminisms are reflective of contemporary Western cultures, more work was need to acknowledge and validate Western feminist rhetorical practices. In fact, I believe and see Royster and Kirsch's work exemplify the types of feminist work that makes academic spaces for alternative knowledge practices, including identities and subjectivities. In fact Royster and Kirsch's call to redefine and revise feminist rhetorical practices through a global lens circles back to Lorde's observation:

> Difference between women is the grossest reformism… difference must be not merely tolerated but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic. Only within that interdependency of difference strengths, acknowledge and equal can the power to seek new ways of being in the world generate as well as the courage and substance to act where there are no charters. (2)

In a way Lorde critique points to a systemic fight and struggle that most minority groups encounter in making and marking academic spaces. That is the NESI stories that come through these pages is no different from the struggles that most minorities groups and individuals encounter in carving academic spaces and communities. Lorde's critique of white male heteropatriarchal supremacy and early feminisms exemplify and problematize power and traditions. NESIs struggle to

belong to academic communities demonstrates a systemic complexity and struggle that comes when minority group strive to gain academic membership. Thus with a disciplinary validation of these struggles and challenges will not only make the NESI struggle visible, it will also advance the disciplinary alternative discourses and territories.

A way to address this NESI visibility problem starts with listening to and following John's suggestion, which is to design TAs orientation programs for internationals. Another is to follow through with Lee's suggestion, which marks the NESI problem as one that is inform and influences by Anglo-normativity. Lee's describes this by encouraging us to envision non-native English accents as a linguistic add-on, one that posits it as:

> A flavor. It is a linguistic persona which … adds richness and interesting quality to our [language] communities so that we are not so damn boring. If we [all] speak the same way…the same sound…I mean [accents] bring diversity and flavor into our society and culture. (Lee)

With this attitude towards non-native SAE accents, Lee re/imagination of accentedness historicizes the English language in way that delinks it from its colonial utility. That is, I see Lee's re/appropriation of NESI uncommon SAE accent as both innovative and disruptive. It opens possibilities for a revisioning of the discipline

literacies in ways that Royster may consider, extends discipline rhetorical landscape (Royster).

Helene's narrative also exemplifies this. In fact, her story on her work with her dual citizen student makes us better understand the mindset of most NESI who also see their teacher identity as mentoring opportunity to work with all their students, especially those with non-native English accents. In rethinking her first day class activity, where she asks her students to:

> Tell me the places they are from; their names...names matter...all kinds of names. After that we have a huge icebreaker activity so the accent thing comes along with their backgrounds so they can tell me where they are from and how they got their names. This activity allows them to place themselves on the map in connection to their geographic and cultural affiliations. (Helene)

Helene's deliberate attempt to not only delinks students from traditional assumptions of the English language but also to re-orients them to globalize perspective and usage of the language is worth trying. In choosing to do this type of work, Helene enacts and embodies what Royster and Kirsch's describes as "paying particular attention to the implications, not only for knowledge making but also for innovative pedagogical theories and practices (33-4).

Finally, the findings discussed in this chapter circles back to Mignolo's description of Western Code and/or the colonial matrix power. His statement, "I am where I think and do," along with Malea Powell's scholarship and practice, bring me to playcook epistemology. My subscription to decolonial scholarship forces me to critically re-examine my knowledge construction sites, which begins with re/listening to stories non-native SAE accent and body carries. Additionally, subscription to decoloniality brings me think of the places and spaces we occupy plus the meanings we re/produce while we occupying these places.

CHAPTER 5

Making Concluding Circles: NESI Project Agenda, Successes and Failures

In this concluding chapter, I make a couple of circles: the first starts with a circle back to the project's agenda, which explore and problematize NESI disciplinary invisibility. The next circle goes back to project methodology and outcome. The last two circles are a reflection on project lessons and how we, as a discipline, could make use of these lessons to better advance disciplinary theories, narratives, and practices through enactments of alternative epistemologies. To help me make these circles, I look to Lucan's take on definitions of psychoanalysis theory. In *How to Read Lucan* Slavoj Zizek's paraphrases Lucan's fundamental understanding of psychoanalysis as a focus that transcends theoretical "technique of treating psychic disturbances" to a practice that "confronts individuals with the most radical dimension of human existence" (3).

This practice of confrontation, though a critical requirement, is often discourage in traditional knowledge construction circles. Discouragement of knowledge confrontation may cause some of our incoming freshman students, particularly those new to academic discourses such as writing, to not employ knowledge confrontation as a rhetorical tool. Playcook in action brings students to conceptualization and application of messiness and failure as meaning making sites and

practices. That is a use of play theory and messiness practice may demystify and lower performance stakes that often challenge and marginalize our minority students to engage in knowledge construction work. Lowering academic traditions that demand students' to performance in particular ways that promote and value product theory, playcook use of modeling and observation, students are encourage to re-imagine process pedagogies, such as playcook-sankofar, as epistemic.

By closely paying attention to Malea Powell's work and scholarship, which creates epistemic dwelling sites for all her students, both undergrads and graduates, a value to recreate similar safe spaces in my work, particularly for all my co-researchers during the interview process becomes a need. For example, an aspiring teacher/scholar and one of Powell's students, I pay a lot of attention to her doing practices.

Let me explain what I mean by this, my ability to return to playcook as rhetorical practice, begin with listening to her scholarship and practice with beadwork and basket weaving practices. In one of her graduate seminars, "Native Rhetorics", Powell brings in a set of tools, beads and thread and she asks us to make key chains with the tools. As we work on our individual chains, she encouraged us to think of them as rhetorical sites or knowledge construction. It was during this project that I first had a playcook flashback. Since that point, I begin to pay closer attention to how she directly influences academic areas of studies, from

rhet/comp to Native Studies. Watching her do her work encourages me to re-imagine, appreciate and appropriate decoloniality.

While I don't imagine this project as one that might lead to a development of an academic area of studies, I do see in this decolonial storytelling project provide opportunities for self-discovery as knowledge construction projects. For instance, I became aware of the fact that I cannot tell NESI stories without sharing my own. To do this, I had to first listen to the stories my body and non-native English accent carries. I could only listen to the stories we, NESI teacher identity, carry because I see Powell enact these practices in her archival project at the Newberry Library.

In "Dreaming Charles Eastman: Cultural Memory, Autobiography and Geography in Indigenous Rhetorical Histories," Malea Powell describes sets of experiences I see as hegemonic transgression. In fact Royster and Kirsch turn to this piece when they describe Powell's visit to the Newberry Library in Chicago as an exemplification of what they consider "tacking in" project. They go on to describe this as "the use of long standing analytical tools […] in other to focus on existing resources, fragmentary and otherwise and existing scholarship to assess what we now understand and speculate about what seems to be missing" (72). I explain Royster and Kirsch's thinking of "tacking in" by looking at Powell's recount of her experiences at the Newberry Library.

Using her body as an epistemic site, Powell critically reflects on the archival and rhetorical placement of her Indigenous elders, which in this case is at the basement of a museum. Royster and Kirsch paragraph recollection of Powell experience states, "[I] often felt chills in the cold basement of the building. [My] bones ached because the words [I] read inflicted violence upon [me] and [my] ancestors" (88). The use of her body allowed her to pay attention to the stories of her people, to feel what the souls and ghosts of her people may feel in a cold and chilly basement.

Theorizing through and with her body allowed to become "fully [become] aware of imperial narratives surrounding her identity and her culture" which in turn enabled her to pay careful attention to the stories at the archive and learn from it. This enablement empowered her to speak and write back to the archives (88). Powell's decision to listen through her body is an act of transgression that exemplifies ways of disrupting and dismantling colonial and imperial systems and structures. As such, my use of Mignolo's decolonial delinking option and playcook as a feminist rhetorical practices allows me to carefully create listening spaces as well as examine existing stories and narratives that connects not only to NESI struggles, but to broader rhet/comp teacher minority discourses.

My enactment of playcook as a global feminist rhetorical practice allows me do just that, which is to create are safe, comfortable, and relatable interview spaces. Creating safe interview spaces become an

initial and critical step to address the NESI stories my co-researchers and I carry as rhet/comp minority teacher identity.

Thus it is important that I communicate the design of this space to my co-researchers that it is a deliberate attempt to acknowledge their stories and experiences. In doing this, I believe it validate the stories as well as let them know that I am aware of the struggles and challenges they encounter as non-Native SAE accent writing instructors. For this reason, what counts as project data includes both verbal and non-verbal stories; this include emotions and feelings.

Additionally, my enactment of feminist-decolonial rhetorical practice follows Native American researchers and scholars' description, definition, and employment of storytelling as a rhetorical practice and an epistemic dwelling site. Thomas King, a Native American scholar, in *The Truth About Stories* asserts, "story matters" (King, 2). Lee Maracle in "Oratory: Coming to Theory", echoes King's statement when she claims, "there is a story in every line of theory" (7). These applications of storytelling draw attention and suggest an importance for a deployment of storytelling that move meaning beyond surface value and interpretation. That is, in listening and re/listening to NESI stories we get to hear and experience some of the frustrations NESI encounter inside and outside the classroom.

For example, in re/listening to the NESI stories from previous chapters, we hear a distinct sense of frustration underlining the stories and the storytellers. For example, John states:

> I thought I put that forward, telling them that if I pronounced a word and you are not sure of what I said, they should let me know…It was one of the main reasons why I shift from composition to technical composition. Because then I realized that if I stay in composition I had to change myself; I really got to be like them. I am not going to demean myself, I can't change my ways, I can't change my personality so I think it really got to me. (John)

We also hear this in Inen's voice:

> I tell them in the class in the very beginning, I have an accent; my accent is not going to go away. It's been here forever; to not have an accent, I should have learned English when I was two years old. And if you think it's going to bother you, I think you should probably drop the class because my accent it might get stronger especially the nights I haven't slept or whenever I get really excited or things like that. (Inen)

The same is in Helene's assertion:

When it comes to accents, I have the ability to hear different accents, in terms of me and listening to accents. So when it comes to accents, I don't have an assumption, I have a knowing. I know that I have an accent and I know that they [students] have an accent.

The emotions that come through these excerpts are real and demand full attention. For NESI, and this may extend to other minority groups as well, a practice that demands one to out his/her marginalize identity and/or subjectivity is practical emotional and exhausting.

As a result, to share this safe space, particularly its agenda with my participants, becomes a way to inform my co-researchers that I hear and share the burdens they experience as non-native SAE accent writing instructors. Additionally, by sharing this agenda with my participants, I invite them to join forces with me to advance NESI research and visibility. To this end, I posit my co-researchers agreement to do the interview as an act of rhetorical alliance; a collaboration that positions them as co-researchers (Shawn Wilson) agreement to do the interviews is sign of solidarity and an assurance that as NESI we all bear a singular agenda, which in this case, is to draw disciplinary attention to our NESI struggles.

Making Bigger Circles: Failure and Success Stories

In the first two chapters of this project I describe a need for this study and discuss an employment of cultural epistemology to help gain better understanding of and make sense of NESI disciplinary invisibility. In chapters three and four, we listen to NESI stories, through the voices of my co-researchers and myself. The stories we hear offer us initial opportunity to response and react to them plus an opportunity to do rhetorical analysis of what the stories say or don't say.

As we circle back and re/listen to these stories, we begin to hear faint expressions of frustration that is directed to disciplinary forms of loneliness. These faint expression of loneliness are heard when hear the stories we hear a them share and discuss on a lack of disciplinary training, preparation, and/or mentoring specifically designed for international teaching assistants (TAs). In fact for most NESI I interviewed, they make a comment or two about their programs that suggest the departments/programs doing very little to address NESI feelings inside and outside the classroom when a student questions the NESI's teacher identity authority based on his/her non-native English accentedness.

As already mentioned elsewhere in this project, I also share similar forms of disciplinary frustration and loneliness, particularly in doing this project. For example, at conferences presenting on this research, I find myself in concurrent session that has two or three people in attendance;

this excludes the panel of presenters. This example could be read through multiple perspectives. For instance, it could suggest that NESI related discourses are not interesting to the field, which raised the following question/concern, so what?

Although this project has brought me to a realization and acceptance of the fact that there are multiple questions I cannot answer. What this and other project questions suggest is that it is impossible for me to stand on the sidelines and do nothing. Interestingly, when I started the dissertation journey, I thought that is all I am going to do. That is, stand on the sideline and notice a problem; then stop at problematizing the problem. This practice, the sideline standing, is what most of us do and call it theory. It is perfectly fine to do theory, in fact, I believe part of what I do here is theory, but doing theory without practice I find is limiting. However, to couple the two means work that gets one's hands dirty.

I decided to get my hands dirty in my second year (2012) as a PhD student at Michigan State University (MSU). The decision starts when I help establish a campus organization, *International Women Support Group*. This group's objective is to create a safe space and community for international female graduate students across my local university to ask questions on how to survive and thrive academic life. Some of our discussion topics range from: conflict resolution with academic advisors; to questions about class participation, as a number of the students come

from cultures where women and/or students are not allowed to speak in public; and to asking general questions on culture transition, adjustment and survival in North America.

In addition to my work with this group, I also, for the last three years, facilitate a graduate writing group. In the last two years of my program, my group by design was made of four females, a Caucasian American and three Asians. My responsibility as a facilitator goes beyond reading and responding to drafts to creating a workshop space where each student is able to offer constructive and critical peer-response that challenges content development, analysis and structure. To accomplish this objective, in the first few weeks of a new group in session, I share readings on academic writing theories and processes and have conversations on the need for students to discover and design an individual writing process. As a facilitator, my relationship with these ladies evolved to one I describes as sister scholars.

Facilitating this graduate writing group was my first attempt at mentoring graduate students; this role caused me to critically think about my role as a teacher, researcher, and scholar. And since I was still new to the field, I could only do this effectively from places where I believe I think and do. So my reliance and usage of playcook rhetorical practice help me mentor this group of graduate students. That is, since I value a writing space that allow students to learn through modeling and demonstrative practices, my goal as a facilitator was to design a writing

group space that encouraged all students to draw on disciplinary and cultural knowledge.

Additionally, my work with graduate students help me think of a need develop and design a graduate seminar on non-native SAE accent epistemologies. I see this course as a further exploration of NESI struggles and always as it contributions to rhet/comp. An even exciting value for this course design is that it makes space for NESI visibility. In fact, my work with graduate students circle back to when I first attended and presented at *CCCC*. It reminds me of the loneliness I felt then and the loneliness I often experience in this project.

A common denominator with these experiences is a need to do address it by starting a special interest group. I began talking to my peers about this possibility and in 2013 we had our first *CCCC* meeting to discuss that establishment. We had few meetings thereafter, but in 2014, I noticed the presence of what I will consider a NESI small group. Group member wise, the group I was working to start is different from the one I on the *CCCC* program. At that meeting, we made the decision to join alliance with the established group. I reach out to the chair of the SIG and shared my research and work on establishing a SIG. She gladly invites me to the group as one of its leaders. Attending these *CCCC* meetings have been more than useful to this project, and to my NESI teacher identity. Similar to the small groups I worked with at MSU, this

SIG becomes a disciplinary safe space where we, NESIs, are able to share our experiences and have them normalized and validated.

The next circles I make goes back to what I actually did and how I did it. The last two circles return to lessons from my co-researchers and how we could make use of the NESI project lessons to advance disciplinary theories, narratives, practices through enactments of alternative epistemologies. I came to this project with a lot of assumptions, most of which continues to be examined. One of the assumptions I continue to wrestle deals with understanding the complexities of space making project. Meaning, when I started this project, my confidence was on doing something for the NESI community, which in turn response to Royster's call for discipline landscape re-imagination. As the project draws to a close, at least with the dissertation, I am beginning to notice unexpected transformations that are becoming more and more difficult to describe and express.

This visibility is encouraging and could be reproducible. That is, by developing a graduate seminar on non-native SAE accent rhetorics would offer writing programs and the discipline a deeper understand on NESI contributions to a teaching and researching writing. This course could further explore NESI self-announcing frustrations. Additionally, this seminar might also be a step towards a design and development of orientation training and mentoring programs.

That is, looking that this through John's perspective, most rhetoric and composition writing programs that recruit international graduate students as teaching assistants, often assume that all TAs, domestics and internationals, carry similar disciplinary background. For example, at my local institution, new international TAs received the same orientation as do domestic graduate TAs. While there is great value in this sameness, it does not take into account the difference interpretation of theoretical and pedagogical approaches to teaching and researching writing through global perspectives.

Although this project accomplishes some of the objectives it set out to do, it also has many failures. Before I restate some of the project failures, let me quickly remind us of the items the project set out to accomplish. Through employment of NESI narratives that come through my co-researchers and I, we argue for an invisibility of NESI teacher identity in rhet/comp. Through analysis, I posit the invisibility as a form of disciplinary silencing and devaluing of a minority teacher identity. While these stories make sense and a strong claim, they do not however tell the whole story. And for this reason, I believe the project failed more than it accomplished.

Let me explain: on coming to rhet/comp and look around and cross the field, I see and hear people who might pass as NESI, meaning they speak with an uncommon Standard American English accent. And as we heard from Brown earlier, it is arguable that NESI's presence in

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Western academic institutions like the U.S. is a result of the country's race, class, and gender diversity politics and implications. However in comparison to other humanity disciplines, I believe rhet/comp is ahead of the game on recruiting both graduate students and faculty who maybe considered as NESI. Taking note of this has caused me to NESI invisibility; that is, the invisibility we experience does not come from the fact that we are not here, but rather we ourselves are not talking. And if we who self-identify as NESI are not engaging with our own epistemologies, it make less sense that we should expect those outside our discourse communities to do likewise.

Results of these blind spots cause me to rethink some parts of the project as failed. Let elaborate; failure in this sense does not refer to popular cultural assumptions, which denotes lack of success. Rather in this case, failure implies I get something out of the project that I did not thoroughly examine as an outcome at the beginning of a project. Some might describe this as a surprising element, and they will be correct. However, I refer to this as a failure moment because my inability to see that outcome provides another opportunity for a project do-over. In the case of this NESI project, while I will not re-do the framework, I will however re-do the following: include and integrate voices from veteran NESI faculty and seasoned graduate students, perhaps those with degree candidacy.

Another project failure that translates to a project turn around happens after the semester I teach playcook-sankofar pedagogy for the very first time. Although the discipline's move to recruit and hire non-native English speaking instructors and graduate students could be considered progressive when compared to other Western humanities disciplines, more work is still needed to publicize its teacher identity.

A concluding lesson from these stories suggests that NESI teacher identity is experiencing a disciplinary vulnerability. This vulnerability is challenging, because as most of my co-researchers state, accent is not something that is instantly modifiable. As such, addressing this vulnerability is a challenge. Perhaps a way we could go about to address NESI accent vulnerability challenge is to create spaces where NESIs could share experiences and receive validation; and these spaces should not only be at annual conferences, but the classroom too. I strongly believe that if NESIs are encouraged to integrate cultural epistemological practices in their teaching/research of writing would be both enabling and empowering.

The encouragement could also be envisioned as a disciplinary add-on. With a rapid increase of international students, NESI integration of cultural ways into their teaching will provide the field with alternative and diverse pedagogies would help us meet and address globalized needs of the twenty-first century classroom. I believe that this generation of learner no longer come to the classroom expecting traditional ways of

meaning making, but rather they come with expectation to interact with alternative epistemologies that will advance the students' global, diverse, and economic interest. Thus playcook-sankofar pedagogy meets students' expectation by meeting them at sites where students can think and do.

With academia's demand for students to perform in particular ways playcook-sankofar pedagogy allows for an enactment of academic demands that uses transparency to gain better understandings of processes and practices. To this end, enactments of playcook-sankofar pedagogy encourage students to envision themselves as life long writers.

For instance, the interview spaces I create, whether virtual or face-to-face, are safe, comfortable and relatable become a way I enact feminist rhetorical practices to communicate my research agenda. By employing feminist-decolonial rhetorical practice, I was able to design these spaces, which enable me to focus on and build relatable alliances. For example, for the face-to-face interviews, I was interested in having an interview space where my interviewee and I were in closer proximities, that is, instead of them on one chair and I on the other, we shared a couch. This is important to me because it communicates to my participants that I share similar experiences.

An approach that helps me create safe and relatable spaces for my participants was by calling on our mutual relations. That is, for most of my interviewees, we share mutual friends and/or colleagues. A

foregrounding of these relations takes place during the earlier minutes of each interview. Conversations that emerged from those discussions transform the interview atmosphere in ways that cause each co-researcher to feel relax and comfortable to share deep, reflective personal, and professional stories. Calling on these relations is a way to ensure my co-researchers that their stories are meaningful and contributes to rhet/comp alternative discourses.

For the face-to-face interviews, which take place at the Cultural Rhetorics Conference, finding private room to conduct the interviews was challenging since all the rooms were occupied. So I suggested to my participants that we use a couch, which was about twenty-five feet away from the conference registration desk. While at first thought/glance this location might seem distracting since people we know, mostly colleagues came by to say hello and asked about what we were doing. In fact, Malea at one point came by to say hello and give me a hug. An important factor about this location was that it offers the project visibility to conference participants.

That is, for those who stopped by during the interview sessions and questioned what we were doing, it provide the opportunity to share project description and then received the following responses "great work", "it's about time someone does that," and "that's definitely an area of need" comments from those who stopped by. These comments where important because they validated what the participants and I were doing.

Additionally, that signaled to my participants that what we were doing was already making a difference. As such, we did not see the location as a distraction site but rather a visible site that draws attention to NESI struggles as an emerging rhet/comp teacher identity.

Making Interdisciplinary Circles

In drawing closer to the end of this project, I begin to think of playcook cultural epistemology as an interdisciplinary practice that moves meaning-making practices beyond traditional classroom spaces. This move is important because it validates alternative meaning making spaces, such as kitchen, as equal to traditional classroom rhetorical spaces. Another importance of playcook epistemology is that it emphasis collaborative work as central contributor to knowledge production practices.

For example, in fall 2012, I was a second year PhD student and new to my thinking of playcook as a pedagogy and methodology for teaching writing, I had an opportunity to cross disciplinary collaborate through a research fellowship at Michigan State University' (MSU) residential college, James Madison. The College of Arts and Letters, which is home to my PhD program, Writing, Rhetoric and American Cultures as with James Madison, has a yearly and highly competitive research fellowship program called *Interdisciplinary Inquiry and Teaching*

(IIT). An objective of the program is to mentor future faculty in the scholarship of teaching and learning across disciplines. So IIT brings together grad students and faculty to work on interdisciplinary related research projects.

As a two-years fellow, I collaborated in two projects. In the first, I collaborated with another IIT fellow, Emily, from anthropology, to redesign an interdisciplinary syllabus on gender, violence and conflict. In my second year, I co-taught, observed and analyzed enactments of the syllabus Emily and I modeled and re-designed. The faculty member I worked with is Linda Racippo and the course we co-taught was MC 482, "Gender, Violence and Conflict". The course is one of Madison's interdisciplinary upper level courses.

For the syllabus redesign project, we, Emily and I, followed closely Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe's backwards design pedagogy, which they define and discuss in their book, *Understanding by Design*. One of their leading arguments suggests that following a backwards syllabus design methodology enables us to design play oriented syllabi which allows us to create spaces within a course that invite, allow and enable all students to become meaning makers.

At the beginning of my first project with Emily, we were quick to discover the realties of collaborative work. A reality we encounter is that meaning making is hard and to do that type of work across disciplines and/or in a collaborative space is difficult and almost impossible to do. A

challenge we encountered at the beginning of the first project was that in an interdisciplinary project neither one of us, Emily and I, was willing to let go of our individual discipline handles. That is, for Emily, a Caucasian female and an anthropology doctoral candidate (at the time of the project). And I am a naturalized American citizen from Sierra Leone, West African who studies rhetoric and composition. At the initial stages of our project we both assumed that coming from disciplines in the humanities, the integration our disciplinary knowledge, which is a marker for doing interdisciplinary related projects, is going to be less messy and painful. We were wrong.

Though Emily and I come from different disciplines, we share similar research interests. Emily's research is on gender and religious practices of Senegal, West Africa. My research interest is on cultural rhetorics and decolonial theory. Combining my research interest with my experience as a survivor of the Sierra Leone Civil War, we decide to redesign a course syllabus that focus on West African wars, instead of the European and American wars. The course description and learning objective we finally design is playcook-sankofar oriented. In fact, in my second year as an IIT fellow, I had the opportunity to observe enactments of the syllabus as well co-teach sections of it.

When Emily and I began to work on our IIT syllabus redesign project, our determination was to follow interdisciplinary scholars, Lisa Lattuca, Lois Voigt, and Kimberly Faith's definition for doing

interdisciplinary scholarship and teaching. In "Does Interdisciplinarity Promote Learning: Theoretical Support and Researchable Questions," Lattuca et al. define interdisciplinarity as, doing knowledge production work that integrates "existing disciplines" (24). As such, our project objective was to carefully integrate our disciplines in the design of interdisciplinary syllabus. The first thing Emily and I did was to draft a course description that highlights the course learning outcomes. What follows was our first draft:

> This course seeks to examine gender discourses in post-colonial Africa, especially West African context, to explore and illustrate how everyday practices and concepts of gendered forms of resistance influence and informs identity construction in non- Western cultures. The course aims to engage critical discussions to understand what it means to be a man or women in a society does not ever mean the same thing to every culture. Another goal is an identification and illustration of resistance and gender in every practices, i.e. religion, politics, the family, etc. The challenge of the course is to see how gendered practices and resistance enables an understanding of this complexity.

In going through the thinking behind this draft with our IIT fellows and mentors, the feedback we received points out contradictions in both our oral presentation and the written draft. A first contradiction they

notice points to our use of theory, which they site as heavy and difficult for students to access. As we go through the draft, we, Emily and I, notice another contradiction; the draft is more of a pulling together of our disciplines than an integration. Looking back at this course description, I could clearly pull apart the lines I construct in the project objective. I came up with the following sentences: "to explore and illustrate how everyday practices and concepts of gendered forms of resistance influence and informs identity construction in non- Western cultures". And Emily, "an identification and illustration of resistance and gender in every practices, i.e. religion, politics, the family, etc." The sentence in-between Emily's and I was the closest we came to integrating our disciplines. Beyond this, it was more of a pulling on our individual disciplines.

Emily and I attempt to undo our contradiction by scheduling face-to-face meetings since with the first draft much of that work was done online. We met biweekly at Michigan State University's (MSU) main library for two hours. Our first meetings were interestingly intense because we still found ourselves pulling on our disciplines instead of integrating them. Interestingly this time around we were both aware of what we were doing but neither of us had a clue on an alternative approach. For example, I remember coming out of a meeting frustrated because we each thought that our discipline informed reading list would better enable students to engage with coursework and develop advance

critical and analytical thinking skills. When we noticed that we were not going anywhere and that our due date was fast approaching, we decided to go back to the drawing board.

We soon realized that our disciplinary thinking moved the focus of our syllabus design, and not meta-objective we designed, which raised the question, "what exactly do we want students to get from this course and/or experience?" To answer this question, we realized that our first step was to divorce our interdisciplinary blinders. We that by aligning with Lattuca's definition for interdisciplinary, which she states is a process of integrating academic disciplines to reinvent new knowledge. With this definition and guidance, we opted to a use of an inverted tree, with the roots at the top, to explain that knowledge integration occurs at multiple levels, which might being with the roots.

In addition to Lattuca, we also follow Wiggins and McTighe's backward syllabus design in their collaborative project. In backwards syllabus design, failure is apart of the process. Knowing that part of our project outcome was to fail, Emily and I begin to pay more attention to the materials we pull in and its direct relation to our meta-objective. In following Wiggins and McTighe we were able to move past our disciplinary differences to focus on our meta-objective, which is to enable students with an alternative non-Western way of thinking about gender, conflict and violence. This move relates to playcook cultural epistemology

because it suggests that there is no such thing as mistake. It lets us imagine every moment as teaching and/or learning.

My work with Emily was made possible because I followed my elders' footsteps. In following my elders' value for collaborative practice, playcook epistemology let me understand importance of knowledge construction work and its complexities, particularly knowledge construction work that involves space making and encourages students to think and do from epistemic dwelling sites.

The Last Big Circle: Beyond Playcook Cultural Epistemology

At the start of this project, the state of NESI invisibility in rhet/comp suggests a lack of disciplinary research and scholarship. That is, due to the fact that disciplinary discourse on this subject matter of accentedness centers on undergrad international second language learners affirms this observation. However, with the evolution of this project, especially towards the end of its analysis, new meaning emerge that challenge and problematize NESI invisibility from this standpoint. That is, the project suggests that the very presence of NESI teacher identities in Western academic institutions, such as rhet/comp, accounts for its NESI visibility.

While this may sound as a contradiction, it is a useful contradiction, especially when it comes to retaining NESI teacher identity

and minority group in higher education; this includes graduate students and faculty. In attempt to address this contradiction, I suggest we begin with John's suggestion for designing TA orientation programs especially for internationals. I take this a step further to suggestion a further development of professional developments that provide support and resource is equally critical.

Although this support could come from any veteran faculty, it will be more impactful and effective if it comes directly from NESI veterans who have and are walking and working that path. I say this to say, the number one help we need in rethinking NESI in/visibility comes from within the NESI community. And by looking around the field, I can see a number of leading scholars who could take on this leadership role and responsibility. With this approach, I imagine an increase in NESI visibility that accounts for its research and scholarship.

In bringing this project to a close, I return Lee's description of accentedness. He describes accents as:

> "[A] flavor. It's a part of linguistic persona, which to me has richness and interesting quality to our [language] communities so that we are not so damn boring...I mean this brings diversity and flavor into every society or culture...to me accent is really an ideology, in a way that is often oppressive to Anglo-normativity. (Lee)

His description of non-native SAE as a flavor aligns with themes of this project. That is, regarding accentedness as a flavor open spaces for NESI visibility in the class through development of writing pedagogies that utilize alternativity practices to encourage all students to develop critical and analytical skills. Additionally, Lee's description relates Royster and Kirsch's call for re-imagining global feminisms, which according them is involves an active engagement in practices that push:

> Towards better-informed perspectives of rhetoric and writing as global enterprises addressing various practices in other geographical locations through feminist-informed lenses: rescuing, recovering, and (re) inscribing women rhetors both distinctively in locations around the world and in terms of the connections and interconnections of their performances across national boundaries; and participating in the effort to recast perspectives of rhetoric as a transnational, global phenomenon rather than a western one. (25)

This push-pull engagement is critical to extending the disciplinary landscape. Its employment allows us to engage in rhetorical practices that validate storytelling practices. This dissertation makes space for both the stories and the storytellers.

Possibilities of playcook epistemology move beyond my discussion and suggestion. For instance, with the face of college writing students shifting to higher internationals, a turn to alternative pedagogies such as

playcook-sankofar, would enable us to meet the sets of demands, challenges, and frustrations, that it brings. With academia's demand for students to perform in particular ways, such as inventing the university, playcook epistemology enable all students to better understand academic writing processes and practices.

As such, playcook-sankofar pedagogy creates spaces for students to reimagine writing processes through lived experiences. Attempts to retain and validate NESI experiences could begin with inclusion and integration of NESI cultural ways of knowing in their teaching and research of writing. This option ensures and secures a NESI teacher visibility because it communicates to all NESIs that they belong.

My strong commitment to NESI space-making and minority visibility projects is reflected in this project in working with this population of scholars, both at local and national levels. By working to help establish and support NESI experiences, I believe we as a discipline have a better chance to listen to these emerging disciplinary research and narratives. Additionally, establishment of these mentor spaces allow for NESIs to connect and share. Overall, this project extends language diversity discourses in ways that challenge rhet/comp writing programs to rethink and reimagine programmatic and curricula developments, such as teacher training/mentoring support.

As I make this last and final circle, I return to a paraphrase statement from Malea Powell's CCCC chair's speech; she cautions us to

not imagine stories or storytelling as an "easy" practice. This is because stories open opportunities for projects that impact and transform dominant narratives. In listening to the NESI stories contained in this project, we are provided with opportunities to do the kind of academic labor that would bring and allow our students to interact with academic discourses in ways that validate how they feel, think, do, and be inside and outside the classroom.

Since personal transformative work is hardly discussed in academic circles, I find a need to include and integrate that in my teaching and research of writing. Playcook-sankofar pedagogy allows me to do just that. In fact, it is playcook epistemology that allows me to re-imagine ways for integrating my NESI teacher identity discourse inside and outside the classroom. This re/imagination is impossible without listening to and following the scholarship and practices of those in our field of studies who are devoted to drawing disciplinary attention to marginalize groups, identities, and subjectivities. For me, this process begins with listening to disciplinary storytellers like Malea Powell.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

NESI Participant Call

Greetings:

I am a 4th year Michigan State University PhD. candidate in the Writing, Rhetoric & American Cultures program. I write to request research participants for an IRB-approved teacher diversity project on classroom experiences of Non-Native English Speaker Instructors (NESI's); that is, writing instructors who teach writing in American Standard English (SWE).

About the Study:

This study aims to catalog NESI narratives and to analyze how this population of rhetoric and Composition College writing instructors thinks, teach and do research in a traditionally Western discipline. Building on contemporary storytelling scholarship on reclaiming, recovering and reimagining alternative rhetorics, epistemologies and discursive practices, my dissertation hope to tell stories of NESI experiences that calls our discipline's attention to think on how it respond, react and represent marked accented college writing instructors in leading discipline literature; journals and publications.

Interested Participants

Non-Native English Speaker Instructor (NESI) graduate teaching assistant with less than three years (3yrs) of college writing teaching experience in Standard American English (SWE). Willing participates should please reply to my direct email (fofanaka@msu.edu). Email reply should indicate your agreement to a 30mins audio/video face-to-face or online interview. Timeline for completion of all interviews is October 31, 2014.

I encourage you to please contact me with further questions, request to see the consent form, or interest in learning more about the details of the research project.

A million thanks to you advance. And a special thanks to CCCC caucus leaders for generously circulating and promoting this research participation request!

Sincerely,

Lami

Appendix B

**Graduate Teaching Assistant
NESI Interview Questions**

1. Please state your full name, academic institution and research interests.

2. How long you have been teaching freshman composition in American university/ies?

3. What course/s are you currently teaching? (You can think back to last academic year (AY) or upcoming AY.

4. What was your first semester of teaching freshman composition like?

5. How do you situate/position your accentedness in your writing courses?

6. Describe challenges/struggles you encountered as a NES rhet/comp graduate student and as writing instructor.

7. And how is your graduate career preparing you to teach freshman composition as a NESI ?

8. How would you describe students' perception towards your Non-native American English accent?

9. Describe one or two memorable moments/encounters you have experienced in teaching composition to mainstream American English speakers with a non-native American English accent?

10. Are there additional comments or stories you would like to add?

Appendix C

Research Participant Information and Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent form to inform you about the research study, to convey that participation is voluntary, to explain risks and benefits of participation, and to empower you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

Study Title: Uncommon Accents, Like Bodies, Still Matter: Stories of Non-Native
      English Speaking Writing Instructors

Researcher and Title: Lami Fofana, PhD Candidate
      Department and Institution: Writing, Rhetoric & American
      Cultures, Michigan State University

Address and Contact Information:
      4060 Springer Way, # 323, East Lansing, MI 48823
      Principle Investigator (PI): Malea Powell

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH
You are being asked to participate in a research study that aims to collect and catalog stories and experiences of graduate Non-Native English Speaker Instructor (NESI) in first year writing classrooms. The collected narratives will focus on NESI constructions of teacher identity/subjectivity as well as unveil some tensions and struggles that NESI regularly encounter while working within parameters of a traditional western discipline, rhetoric and composition. For this study, the researchers will conduct an interview session (face-to-face or online) that will ask NESI to tell stories on experiences of teaching writing in North American universities.

Your participation in this study will take about 30 (face-to-face or online) minutes interview time.

I learned about you when you responded to the participant email call for this study.

In the entire study, __6-10__ people are asked to participate

WHAT YOU WILL DO

Since there is little and mostly unrelated scholarship on this subject; my goal in this dissertation is to collect stories through oral history interview methodology, catalogue and analyze those stories in a way that interrogate contemporary assumptions of writing instructor diversity in composition classroom. An objective of the study is to make visible assumptions of diversity in composition classroom, which make allowances for an address on who is and which English accents are qualified to teach college writing?

Interview questions have no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

You will not directly benefit from your participation in this study. However, your participation in this study may contribute to an understanding of how particular bodies/accents are marked and perceived in particular spaces/places. This understanding may enable an appropriate training and preparation for diverse instructors who intend to teach courses that are traditional marked for Western masculine and/or white bodies.

POTENTIAL RISKS

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY
- The data for this project will be kept confidential.
- Information about you will be kept confidential to the maximum extent allowable by law.
- Data will be locked in a drawer in my office, where I am the only one with access to the key.

The results of this study will be published in a dissertation and/or presented at professional meetings, and subjects will be identified.

I agree to allow my identity to be disclosed in reports and presentations.
0 **Yes**   0 **No**   Initials_____
I agree to allow audiotaping/videotaping of the interview.
0 **Yes**   0 **No**   Initials_____

Audiotapes will be securely locked in a safe at my office, where I am the only one with access

YOUR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE, SAY NO, OR WITHDRAW

- Participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
- You have the right to say no.
- You may change your mind at any time and withdraw.
- You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time.
- Remember
- Choosing not to participate or withdrawing from this study will not make any difference in the quality of any services you may receive.
- Whether you choose to participate or not will have no affect on your grade or evaluation.
- You will be told of any significant findings that develop during the course of the study that may influence your willingness to continue to participate in the research.

CONTACT INFORMATION
If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researcher (name and complete contact information: mailing address, e-mail address, phone number).

4060 Springer Way, #323
East Lansing, MI 48823

Tel: 804-537-0804
Email: fofanaka@msu.edu or lamifofana@gmail.com

If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, and would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at 207 Olds Hall, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT.

Your signature below means that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

_____   _____
Signature   Date

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

A signature is a required element of consent – if not included, a waiver of documentation must be applied for.

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WORKS CITED

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