WRITING ON THE MARGINS AND ENGAGING IN TEACHER-STUDENT DIALOGUE: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY OF A KOREAN-AMERICAN TESOL EDUCATOR IN SOUTH KOREA

Laura Eunae Park
UCL Institute of Education, University College London

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2021
I, Laura Eunae Park, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Word count
88,133

Signature___________________________________________________
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I began my PhD studies at the IOE in 2010 and the excitement that I had felt when I stood in front of the IOE building for the very first time is still vivid in my mind. At that time, I had no idea the next ten years would turn out to be the darkest, most challenging and painful period in my life and to this day, I see each step of the long journey as a ‘miracle’ – a miracle that would not have been possible without the support of the many people who have stood by me over the years. It goes without saying that the very first person on my mind is my supervisor, Professor John Gray. I would not have made it this far without Professor Gray’s patience and ongoing support. On many occasions, I kept him waiting and waiting for my drafts to arrive and more often than not, I would spend months in ‘silence’, occupied with nearly everything in the world – that is, everything but my thesis. Then an email arrives with a ‘gentle’ reminder and I am relieved and motivated to write again. Professor Gray not only encouraged me to adapt an autoethnographic approach to my thesis but he has helped me to understand the inextricable relationship between second language teacher education, neoliberalism and critical pedagogy, helping me to recognise the numerous gaps in my understanding of these topics. In addition to providing pages and pages of detailed feedback on my writing, he always remembered to include a few words of encouragement, which, in retrospect, has played a significant role in maintaining the ‘will’ to keep going. This ‘will’ to continue has also become an important theme in my thesis – the human will to survive and transcend obstacles and challenges; indeed, the past decade was filled with obstacles, challenges, pain and suffering but through this autoethnographic study, I have found hope and comfort in knowing that we, as human beings, are indeed capable of confronting and overcoming what may seem impossible, through dialogue and interaction. Thank you, Professor Gray, for helping me to remain hopeful over the years. I am
grateful that you were – and always will be – my teacher.

I would also like to thank my examiners, Professors John O'Regan and Pat Sikes, for providing me with many insightful comments and helping me to recognise the tension between autoethnography and critical pedagogy and helping me to articulate my thoughts on autoethnography as a form of narrative. Thank you, Professor O'Regan and Professor Sikes, for creating a warm atmosphere during the viva and allowing me to discuss my thesis without feeling intimidated. Your insightful feedback has helped me to improve many areas of my thesis.

This acknowledgement would not be complete without recognising Professor David Block with whom I began my doctoral studies at the IOE in 2010. Professor Block opened up a ‘new world’ for me when I first began my studies and through his guidance, I was introduced to the notion of reflexivity, which laid the foundation for constructing the theoretical backdrop for the autoethnographic approach that I would later adapt for my thesis. Thank you, Professor Block, for giving me a chance to study with you at the IOE.

Writing a PhD thesis was indeed a lonely process as there were many days and nights when I felt very ‘alone’; at the same time, I have been able to overcome these dark moments with the support of my family. My parents, who both passed away while I was working on this thesis, supported me in every which way they could. The enormous amount of sadness that I am feeling at this very moment is difficult to express in words and it is extremely painful to think that I am unable to share this moment with them. They have taught me to work hard and to empathise with others and I will always be grateful for having had such wonderful parents. Thank you, mom and dad, for believing in me and teaching me to persevere.
My husband and my daughter have had to witness the physical and emotional struggles that I have had to endure while I pursued two different doctoral degrees which took more than sixteen years. Words are not enough to express my gratitude towards the love and support I have received over the years. Thank you for the encouragement and the unending conversations. Thank you for not asking me to cook or clean – and thank you for telling me, ‘It’s okay. Keep going.’

Finally, this thesis would not be complete without acknowledging my TESOL students. The past decade has been enormously painful and challenging in many ways but I have been able to withstand the difficulties because of the encouragement and support of my students. They were the ones who reminded me time and time again that I was indeed ‘doing something right’ when those with authority were telling me otherwise. Social structures, inequities, discrimination, hatred and human cruelty will always exist; however, I find hope in knowing that we do have agency and the right to imagine a community in which we will continue to exchange dialogue and work toward creating a better world for all. Thank you, Na Young, Jung Eun, Eun Jin, Ka Hyun, Hye Ri, Mira, In Jung, Ji Hye, Jin Hee, Ji Won, Jiyeon, Joo Hyun and Yujin, for sharing your stories with me, allowing me to learn from you and helping me to experience the power of dialogue. You are the reason I stayed for ten years.
ABSTRACT

This study takes an autoethnographic approach to exploring teacher educator identity in which I take on the role of an observer as well as the observed of a post-graduate TESOL programme in South Korea. As a novice teacher educator who has struggled to make the transition from a language teacher to a language teacher educator during a time in which the South Korean government as well as the nation at large is faced with numerous economic and socio-political challenges, my reflective thoughts are juxtaposed to that of my students as we attempt to battle the countless social barriers at hand. Inspired by Bakhtin's (1981) theory of dialogism which stems from the understanding that we can only understand ourselves through others, I am able to discover that my students and I share many similarities as well as differences in terms of language learning and teaching experiences. As the two sets of narratives – my narratives and student narratives – interact with one another, I discover the intertextuality of the engagement as the process of dialogue leads to a deeper understanding of teacher identity as well as the role of TESOL in Korean society. Furthermore, the study adapts Giddens's (1991) interpretation of reflexivity which seeks to understand the duality of social structures, suggesting that individuals are considered to have the ability to transcend social barriers while at the same time being subject to the inevitable consequences of socioeconomic obstacles and power relations in society. My interpretation of reflexivity is viewed as an approach to obtaining ‘transcendence through dialogue,’ one of the primary beliefs supported by Paolo Freire (1970) and his thoughts on critical pedagogy. Based on the implications from the study, I seek to integrate autoethnography as an approach to exploring teacher identity in second language teacher education.
This thesis aims to create impact in both academia as well as the Korean TESOL field and the local communities of English language learners and their families in South Korea. Within academia, the implications drawn from the study seeks to make a contribution to the burgeoning field of autoethnography as a qualitative research method, specifically aimed at, but not limited to, second language teacher education. Whereas self-studies and autoethnography have been gaining wide recognition in the field of communication and culture (e.g., Adams et al., 2015; Denzin, 2001, 2003, 2014; Ellis & Bochner, 2000), education (e.g., Sikes, 2010, 2013) and mainstream teacher education (e.g., Hayler, 2011; Loughran et al, 2004) for more than a decade, autoethnography has yet to be embraced as a ‘tangible’ approach to qualitative inquiry in the field of TESOL and applied linguistics; thus, one of the primary goals of this study is to provide the theoretical as well as the methodological approach to employing autoethnography for research and teacher training purposes. Furthermore, the autoethnographic approach promoted in this study emphasises the importance of co-construction and dialogue based on the theoretical perspectives of Bakhtin (1981) which focus on the *simultaneity* of the self – the idea of understanding the self through others – as well as that of Freire (1970) who calls for teacher-student dialogue in working towards social justice.

First, the benefits inside academia could occur through collaborated efforts among researchers/teacher educators working within the field of TESOL and applied linguistics. In so doing, the impact of this study may extend beyond the local context of the South Korean English language teaching field as researchers from various parts of the world collaborate in an effort
to produce output relevant to their own contexts as well as the international community at large; as a result, such efforts may result in publications in scholarly journals, textbooks for second language teacher education, anthologies of autoethnographies, etc.

Second, the benefits outside academia could occur as teacher educators and their students work with members of their local communities in order to address the specific needs and problems that exist in their socio-political contexts. For example, an online community of teacher educators, TESOL students and parents of young children promoting the benefits of extensive reading (Day & Bamford, 1998) and home literacy practices may lead to creating workshops and developing teaching materials aimed at helping families to use English story books for engaging in parent-child shared reading sessions at home; thus one of the goals of such a project would be to encourage parents to ‘wean’ themselves from a strong dependency on private English language education, which is not only prevalent within the South Korean context but is also considered to be one of the main side effects of neoliberalism that creates a strong divide among the socioeconomic classes.

In sum, the benefits of this study aim to impact studies in teacher/teacher educator identity by presenting a theoretical and methodological approach to autoethnographic inquiry in second language teacher education, which subsequently seeks to influence the local and international communities of English language teaching.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPACT STATEMENT</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0. Prologue</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1. Origins of the study</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2. Research aims and research questions</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3. Background: A historical overview of the political-economic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impact of English language education and TESOL in Korea</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.1. English language education and the strive toward globalisation</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3.2. The establishment of TESOL in Korea</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4. Structure of the thesis</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0. Introduction</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1. A Bakhtinian approach to autoethnography</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2. Dialogism: Polyphony and heteroglossia</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3. Carnival: Toward liberation through dialogue</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4. Autoethnography as novel</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3. LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0. Introduction</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1. Writing as method of inquiry</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2. The narrative turn in teacher education</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3. Exploring new dimensions in teacher cognition:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The mental lives of teachers</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1. Constructing teacher identity through PPK</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2. The construct of ‘image’ in personal practical knowledge</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4. The reflective practitioner</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4.1. Shifting from technical rationality to reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action 70
3.4.2. Studies in reflective practices in education 72
3.4.3. Criticisms and limitations of reflective practices 73
3.5. Reflexivity or reflective practices? 75
3.6. The reflexive turn in social science research 78
3.7. Defining autoethnography 81
  3.7.1. History of autoethnography 85
  3.7.2. Making a case for autoethnography 88
  3.7.3. Interpretive autoethnography 91
    3.7.3.1. Tapping on the sting of memory and locating the moment of epiphany 95
    3.7.3.2. Performance in interpretive autoethnography 98
  3.7.4. Analytic autoethnography 100
  3.7.5. Critical autoethnography 102
3.8. Critical pedagogy as reflexivity and dialogue in teacher education 103
3.9. Bridging the gap between post-structuralism and critical pedagogy: Toward a bricolage 106

CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY
4.0. Introduction 109
4.1. An eclectic approach to autoethnography: Revisiting the bricolage 109
4.2. Research context and participants 110
4.3. Data collection 113
4.4. Data analysis 116
4.5. Limitations and ethical considerations 117

CHAPTER 5. FROM LANGUAGE LEARNER TO LANGUAGE TEACHER
5.0. Introduction 121
5.1. The funny sounds of English 121
  5.1.1. Reflections 128
5.2. From fascination to confidence 132
CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSION

8.0. Introduction 264

8.1. Constructing researcher/professional identity through the ‘autobiographical self’: A coping strategy 264

8.2. Heteroglossia as carnival: Celebrating the freedom to speak and write on the margins 266

8.3. The reciprocal effects of dialogic engagement: Reflexivity 271
   8.3.1. Language play and children’s L2 motivation: Simultaneity of ESL and EFL identity 273
   8.3.2. Sting of memory: A dialogic effect 278
   8.3.3. Critical incidents, sting of memory as chronotope 283

8.4. Implications for reconstructing TESOL education in Korea:
   Co-constructing knowledge based on the ‘Freirean model’ 286
   8.4.1. Implications for reconstructing TESOL education in Korea:
      Calling millennials to challenge neoliberalism 287
   8.4.2. Implications for reconstructing TESOL education in Korea:
      Seeking a balance between structure and agency 292
   8.4.3. Implications for reconstructing TESOL education in Korea:
      Problematising Freire’s ‘Pedagogy of Hope’ 298

8.5. Epilogue 305

REFERENCES 309
1.0. PROLOGUE

The dawn came, but no day. In the gray sky a red sun appeared, a dim red circle that gave a little light, like dusk; and as that day advanced, the dusk slipped back to darkness, and the wind cried and whimpered over the fallen corn. Men and women huddled in their houses, and they tied handkerchiefs over their noses when they went out, and wore goggles to protect their eyes. When the night came again it was black night, for the stars could not pierce the dust to get down, and the window lights could not even spread beyond their own yards. Now the dust was evenly mixed with the air, an emulsion of dust and air. Houses were shut tight, and cloth wedged around doors and windows, but the dust came in so thinly that it could not be seen in the air, and it settled like pollen on the chairs and tables, on the dishes. The people brushed it from their shoulders. Little lines of dust lay at the door sills. (Steinbeck, 1939, p. 5)

I have developed a new habit lately. One of the first things that I do in the morning is check the air quality instead of the weather. Good weather has become a luxury that I cannot afford to be concerned about any more; cold or hot, it really does not matter – what matters more is whether the air is clean enough to walk around and whether I can open my window to let some fresh air into the house, which typically is not the case as most of the days
are filled with what most people living in South Korea have now learned to live with – micro-dust.¹ Looking outside the window, I see people scurrying to their destinations, heads hung low, mouths covered with face masks, shoulders hunched low and hands in their pockets; the sky is filled with thick layers of smog and micro-dust - no clouds to be found anywhere - it is almost as though I am looking at a black and white photograph in broad daylight as I am unable to distinguish any colours. As I look outside the dust-filled streets of Seoul, I am reminded of the grim reality of my job and career at the moment. The degree of anxiety that I am currently experiencing, however, is probably incomparable to the sufferings of the tenant farmers in Oklahoma from Steinbeck’s story during the dustbowl drought. During this time, the tenant farmers must have been overwhelmed with fear and despair – no hope, no dream, nowhere to work; and yet, what they did have was the will to survive and this will to survive is what drove the thousands of tenant farmers to head West from Oklahoma to California during the Great Depression in America in the 1930s. Although this thesis is an academic project, it is a story of survival – specifically, the human will to survive against social barriers and structures through dialogue, empathy and altruism, which I have found, are the core components and quite possibly, the most powerful tools for resisting power abuse, social inequities, and self-interest.

Although I now live in the 21st century in a heavily populated, metropolitan city in Asia – undoubtedly a very different context within a different era from the time and place in which Steinbeck’s story takes place – I find myself noticing many similarities between the stories told in The Grapes of Wrath and what I am experiencing at the moment. Just like the tenant farmers from

¹ Microdust is an ‘incredibly small,’ particular matter in the air caused by diesel vehicles and incinerators. Approximately 97% of South Koreans claim microdust causes physical and psychological pain in their lives (Bicker, 2019).
Oklahoma who travel to California only to find severe discrimination and various forms of power abuse, I feel alienated in the country in which I was born as an ethnic Korean with an American nationality – oftentimes referred to as a ‘gum-eun muh-ree whye-guk-in’ (검은 머리 외국인) which literally translates as a ‘black-haired foreigner’ - by the locals. Furthermore, the dust-filled climate and the effects of a depressed economy and the push toward global competitiveness shockingly resonate with the discoveries made by Steinbeck, a native Californian who went to live among the Oklahoma tenant farmers by traveling cross country with them and listening to their stories, which showed how cruel humans become when they feel threatened by ‘the other’ and instinctively feel the need to protect what they believe is theirs by exercising power abuse over the weak and the powerless. For the first time in my life, I have begun to experience the side effects of being subject to power abuse – particularly, what it means to be weak and powerless in society; in this sense, I have begun to sympathise with my students who often feel such powerlessness as nonnative speaker English teachers (NNSET) trying to establish a career within a field that seems to ‘lack an institutionalized career structure’ (Johnston, 1997, p. 29).

Writing towards the end of the last century, McKnight (1992) argued that most ESL/EFL teachers work without job security or benefits and ‘suffer from low morale to low status, lack opportunities for study leave, have high rates of attrition from the field, frequently lack a power base within their institution, and may be treated as an underclass by colleagues and superiors’ (p. 30). This assessment remains as true today as it was then; furthermore, I have begun to realise that both TESOL\(^2\) instructors like myself and ESL/EFL teachers like my students share similar experiences.

\(^2\) TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages)
within the field. As a TESOL instructor who has experienced the painful side effects mentioned above, I have begun to develop a critical stance on the field of TESOL and a strong interest in understanding critical pedagogy and how both teacher educators and TESOL students may benefit from integrating critical perspectives into the curriculum.

1.1. ORIGINS OF THE STUDY

Before addressing the specific aims of this study, I need to provide a more detailed picture of its origins in my own biography. In 1977, my family emigrated to America from South Korea. From what I recall, moving to America was extremely stressful as I had a very difficult time saying goodbye to my paternal grandmother, who seemed to have been overwhelmed with sadness, not knowing if and when we would ever meet again.3 We settled in our new home in the suburbs of Northern California and did not move very often. Although I spent the majority of my life living in California, I also lived in New Jersey for a few years while my husband undertook doctoral studies from 1997 to 2001. I returned to Korea in June 2002 after my husband accepted an offer at a Korean institution; however, before coming to Korea, I decided to complete an MA in TESOL in America in order to prepare to work in the Korean English language teaching (ELT hereafter) field, and in order to do so, my husband had to leave for Korea first in order to begin his new job while I moved back to California with our daughter, who was five years old at the time. The primary reason for moving back to California during this time was to live with my parents, who would help me look after my daughter while I took TESOL courses at a local

3 My paternal grandmother eventually joined us in America; however, by the time she was able to come to America, she had already developed dementia and my parents took care of her in their home for the remaining part of her life.
university. I completed an MA TESOL at California State University in San Jose and while I was a student in the TESOL programme, I became fascinated with topics in sociolinguistics and World Englishes but had no intention of pursuing further studies at the time since I had planned on going to Korea to join my husband immediately upon completion of my degree in TESOL. In fact, the most important thing to me back then was to find a job in Korea and when I told one of the professors in the TESOL programme that I had planned on working in Korea, she told me there would be ‘many jobs’ for me in Korea and that I would be ‘respected’ and ‘sought-out’ as a bilingual teacher with TESOL qualifications.

Just as the professor had predicted, I was able to land a teaching position as a full-time lecturer at a private university in Seoul within a very short period of time – specifically in January 2004, about a year and half after arriving in Korea. During the late 1990s and early 2000s, most Korean universities began implementing mandatory English language courses which all the students, regardless of major and discipline, were required to take before graduation. These mandatory English language courses typically ranged from conversation to academic reading and writing courses, which were to be taught by native speaker instructors. Although I was happy to have found a full-time teaching position so ‘easily,’ I could not forget the excitement that I had felt when I came across literature addressing topics in sociolinguistics and World Englishes during the course of my TESOL studies in America; as a result, I decided to start a PhD programme in English Education at a Korean university while at the same time

4 Korean universities typically categorise ‘native speakers’ as anyone who speaks native or ‘native-like’ English provided they are citizens of an English-speaking country.

5 In Korea, English Education is a programme aimed at training pre-service English teachers who are planning on teaching in primary and secondary schools. The curriculum is equivalent to that of TESOL; however, whereas TESOL is only offered at the post-graduate level, English Education places a strong emphasis on the undergraduate programme, although post-graduate programmes
maintaining my university teaching job. Unfortunately, I would soon discover that most Korean universities do not offer courses on the topics that I had wanted to explore, so I decided to write my thesis on second language (L2) writing instruction - which, to me, was the most interesting topic available at the time.

Without a doubt, juggling a full-time job, doctoral studies while at the same time tending to family responsibilities was enormously challenging; nonetheless, I completed my PhD in 2009 and received an invitation to join the faculty under the category of a ‘foreign language professor’ – a non-tenure track position specifically created for foreigners teaching English language courses in Korean universities – in the department of English Education at the same institution where I completed my doctorate. Although I was fairly content with the university teaching position that I had had at the time of receiving this new job offer, I accepted and began teaching undergraduate pre-service English teachers in March 2009; however, the desire to explore further studies in the topics that I had originally wanted to study grew even stronger and I decided to resign after a year and began my second doctorate at the IOE in October 2010. While I was in London working toward my PhD upgrade, I received an invitation to teach at my

---

6 My teaching position was at a four-year, co-ed university in Seoul whereas the university where I undertook doctoral studies was at a women’s university in Seoul; fortunately, the two institutions are located in very close proximity to one other, which made it easier for me to travel back and forth from ‘work’ to ‘school’ throughout the week.

7 Although I had seriously considered leaving the programme by taking a leave of absence in between my studies, I decided to return and complete my studies; however, I could not forget the excitement that I had felt when I came across topics in sociolinguistics and World Englishes in the US and began mentally preparing to undertake doctoral studies in the UK upon completion of my PhD in Korea.
former employer\textsuperscript{8} once again; this time, however, I was asked to join the TESOL department, which had just been established at the university the year before in 2009. Although I was not very happy about the idea of working as a ‘foreign language professor’ again, I was told that this would be the only option for now; after a few days of contemplation, I accepted and I have been working as a TESOL instructor in Korea since September 2011. To be honest, I must admit that I had accepted the offer hoping there might be an opportunity to transition into a tenure-track status within a few years; to my dismay, however, I began to realise that I was not welcomed to cross over to the ‘other side of the track,’ and the reasons for this will emerge in the chapters which follow.

The past ten years of working as a TESOL instructor in Korea turned out to be an extremely painful period in my life and I am now realising that the role of writing – specifically reflective writing – has always played an important role in helping me to release emotional distress, which subsequently influenced my interest in adapting an autoethnographic approach for this thesis. As an awkward teenager growing up in America, keeping a diary hidden underneath my bed was a secret that I had treasured throughout my adolescence; my diary was a primary source for helping me to release bottled up emotions of fear, anger, insecurity and \textit{amotivation} – among others. Writing always seemed to comfort me and it was the one thing that I enjoyed doing; thus, the decision to embrace autoethnography as an approach to writing this thesis seemed to have occurred naturally, although it took several critical incidents (Farrell, 2007; Richards & Farrell, 2005; Thiel, 1999) to identify how autoethnography would be integrated into a doctoral thesis.

\textsuperscript{8} This was the same institution where I had received my PhD in Korea.
The first critical incident to making the decision to do an autoethnography took place when I began teaching Korean students in the MA TESOL programme in September 2011. During this time, the TESOL industry had been fuelled by the Korean government which aimed at implementing and expanding afterschool English language programmes which were to be taught by Korean teachers rather than native speaker English teachers (NES) who were typically the preferred group of individuals to teach at the private sector. Perhaps for the first time, Korean teachers were given a ‘preference’ over their NES counterparts, creating a strong motivation to pursue TESOL, which was often cited as the ‘preferred, minimal qualifications’ to teach in the afterschool English language programmes. I had just returned from London, having been successfully upgraded in the doctoral programme at the IOE and according to my original research proposal, my study was to focus on the nonnative speaker English teacher (NNSET) identity of TESOL students in Korea.

Despite the plethora of literature already available on this topic and the ongoing publications during that time (e.g., Amin, 1997, 1999; Braine, 1999, 2004, 2010; Kamhi-Stein, 2004; Medgyes, 1992, 1994, 2000; Tang, 1997), I was convinced that the topic had not been widely explored within the Korean EFL context and naively rejoiced at the idea of becoming a ‘pioneer’ in the area of Korean NNSET identity. However, it did not take long before I began to realise that the results and findings of the NNSET studies, which often addressed issues of discrimination (e.g., Braine, 1999, 2004; Canagarajah, 1999; Clark & Paran, 2007; Mahoob et al., 2004; Motha, 2006; Rubin, 1992), self-perceptions (e.g., Medgyes, 1992; Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Tang, 1997), student perceptions (e.g., Benke & Medgyes, 2005; Cheung, 2002; Kelch & Santana-Williamson, 2002; Liang, 2002), strengths and weaknesses of NNSETs (e.g., Llurda & Huguet, 2003; Pavlenko, 2003; Reves & Medgyes, 1994; Sifakis & Sougari, 2005; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler,
1999) among others somehow did not seem to resonate with my students as much as the immediate concerns that they were sharing with me inside and outside of the classroom – that is, the challenges of, ‘*What do I do after graduation? How am I going to live?*’ (Block, 2015) were being addressed. In other words, they seemed to be struggling with the challenges of knowing that they were entering a job market and a field that has no clearly defined career path, nor understanding why they wanted to do TESOL in the first place. These questions appeared to be much more ‘rhetorical’ in nature *per se* – than the common questions found in most of the previous studies that I had attempted to model after; in fact, the questions that my students were asking seemed to resonate more with Giddens’s (1991) theme of structure and agency in *Modernity and Self-identity*:

The reflexivity of modernity extends into the core of the self. Put it another way, in the context of a post-traditional order, the self becomes a reflexive project. Transitions in individual lives have always demanded psychic reorganisation, something which was often ritualised in traditional cultures in the shapes of *rites de passage*. But in such cultures, where things stayed more or less the same from generation to generation on the level of the collectivity, the changed identity was clearly staked out – as when an individual moved from adolescence into adulthood. In the settings of modernity, by contrast, the altered self has to be explored and constructed as part of a reflexive process of connecting personal and social change. (pp. 32-33; italics in the original)

As Giddens suggests, identity construction is a ‘reflexive project’ – one that
requires introspection and ongoing interaction with others as well as the social structures at hand; as such, I began to realise that the ‘reflexive project’ was something that had to start with me – the researcher and teacher educator – prior to analysing and exploring the research participants in order to understand my role and position within the TESOL field in an EFL setting like South Korea, which appeared to be significantly different from TESOL programmes in ESL contexts for obvious reasons since English is predominantly learned for ‘instrumental’ purposes such as college entrance examinations and employment rather than ‘integrative’ purposes such as cultural integration (Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Lambert, 1972).

The second critical incident occurred when I began questioning how the notion of ‘reflexivity’ might contribute to my study given the unexpected responses of my students, which I obviously could not have foreseen prior to taking up my current position. Furthermore, the more I interacted with my students, the more I began identifying myself with them; that is, I began to realise that we all shared the same fears and questioned our futures in the TESOL field. Shortly thereafter, I came across Julian Edge’s (2010) book, The Reflexive Teacher Educator in TESOL, and Suresh Canagarajah’s (2012) autoethnography published in the TESOL Quarterly; I realised then that reflexivity had to be linked to autoethnography and that my thesis could not simply consist of interviews and narratives of NNSETs in Korea, but that it had to tell my story (Denzin, 2014), a ‘personal mythology, a public story, a personal narrative, and a performance that critiques’ (p. 60) through which the unexpected, painful moments that I was experiencing – somehow had

---

9 ESL, which stands for English as a Second Language, is often distinguished from EFL – English as a Foreign Language; whereas ESL is considered to be language education for individuals residing in English-speaking countries such as the US, UK, Canada, etc. (e.g., immigrants, international students, etc.), EFL is foreign language education for those who reside in countries in which the English language does not have an official status, such as Korea, China and Japan.
to be told and integrated with the stories that my students were telling me.

The third critical incident occurred when I was introduced to the vast body of literature in second language teacher education and the inextricable relationship of neoliberalism and English language teaching (Block, Gray & Holborow, 2012) by my PhD supervisor. I had had very little knowledge of the theoretical approaches to second language teacher education at the time and to be honest, neoliberalism was a topic that I had never even heard of; however, after being introduced to the literature on these two topics, I began to recognise the implications suggested in the literature – and the more I engaged with my students’ narratives and reflected upon my own past and present experiences, the more I began to understand the impact of neoliberalism on the Korean ELT field as well as the TESOL industry in Korea.

The fourth critical incident took place recently – during the process of editing this thesis – when the pieces of my story, which begins by recalling childhood language learning moments, shameful classroom experiences, initial teaching encounters, transitioning from a privileged full-time lecturer at a Korean university to a marginalised foreign language faculty member of a TESOL programme, as I will explain in the subsequent chapters – suddenly came together in revealing the detrimental effects of the highly neoliberal educational scheme of South Korean universities on a rigorous push toward internalisation and global ranking competition. At the heart of this thesis tells real-life stories told by me – the researcher – and by my students, both currently at the mercy of the side effects of neoliberalism and the English language education market in Korea. Furthermore, the overall process of writing, reflecting, editing and engaging with student narratives
has led me to change the primary theoretical framework from Giddens’s (1991) notion of reflexivity\(^\text{10}\) to a Bakhtinian framework which provides a much more detailed overview of an autoethnography as Bakhtin’s theory of the novel in which an ongoing dialogue among the author, reader and the characters of a story are thought to occur through time and space; in this sense, the interaction between my narratives and the narratives of my students provides a ‘multivoiced, polyphonic and heteroglossic’ (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986) perspective on our lives.

1.2. RESEARCH AIMS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In view of the above, my aim in this thesis is to explore the construction of professional teacher educator and researcher identity and its ongoing processual and relational nature through autoethnographic writing. Developing research questions for my thesis was a difficult process since the research process did not adapt traditional approaches to qualitative research and perhaps more importantly, I was not sure whether I had any research questions in the first place. The primary ‘method’ that I seek to adapt is ‘writing as a method of inquiry’ (Richardson, 1997) in which the writing process itself is the fundamental means of discovery as moments of critical incidents, the sting of memory and epiphanies (Denzin, 2014) are likely to emerge naturally from the discursive process of writing. Additionally, I integrate Bakhtin’s (1981) theory of dialogue by engaging with my students’ written narratives and attempt to make sense of my professional identity as

\(^{10}\) As explained earlier, Giddens’s (1991) notion of reflexivity was the original theoretical framework that I had adapted for this study; however, a close analysis of the narratives has led me to realise that Bakhtin’s (1981) concept of dialogism is much more relevant since the primary aim was to explore the dialogic engagement between student narratives alongside my own reflective writings. Nonetheless, reflexivity and Giddens’s notion of the duality of structure remain as an important theoretical underpinning for this thesis.
a TESOL educator situated within the highly neoliberal context of the English language teaching field in South Korea. In so doing, I seek to discover the following:

1) In what ways does an autoethnographic approach help the researcher to construct her professional identity?

2) In what ways does a dialogic engagement with student narratives help the researcher to make new discoveries about herself and her students?

3) Based on the above, what implications can be drawn for reconstructing TESOL in Korea in light of past and current socio-political conditions?

1.3. BACKGROUND: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE POLITICAL-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND TESOL IN KOREA

The process of writing this thesis has helped me to realise that the English language education field in South Korea has been heavily influenced by the tumultuous political and economic situations dating as far back as 1883 during the last phase of the Joseon Dynasty during which Western influences were impacting the Korean society for the very first time. As Gray

---

11 The Joseon Dynasty was the last phase of the Korean dynastic kingdom which lasted five centuries. The last emperor during this time was King Gojong, who was very open to Western influences and attempted to move toward westernising Korea before the Japanese took official control of Korea in 1910.
(2016) suggests, ‘English studies did not emerge in a political or ideological vacuum’ (p. 1) and in order to understand the meteoric rise of the English language in Korean society which subsequently led to the establishment of the very first TESOL programme in 1998 during the Asian Financial Crisis, it might be helpful to provide a historical overview of the economic and political impact on the development of the ELT market in Korea; in so doing, I am able to create the historical backdrop in which the stories in my thesis are being told, which I have begun to realise, is heavily situated within a neoliberal framework. As such, there is a need to understand the concept of neoliberalism and its impact on the Korean ELT field. According to Block and Gray (2016), neoliberalism may be ‘understood as the further advancement of traditional capitalism, but by more efficient means in more globalized and technically advanced times … [and] entails a number of diverse phenomena, activities and behaviours’ (p. 3). Furthermore, Gray, O'Regan and Wallace (2018) argue that neoliberalism is not only a ‘market-based and governmentally-authoritarian phenomenon … [but also] a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade’ (p. 471).

Such characteristics of the neoliberal scheme described above have impacted the Korean workplace profoundly since the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997 when the Korean government was forced to sign an IMF ‘bailout contract’ in order to avoid a national bankruptcy. As I will explain in more detail in the chapters to follow, the repercussions of the Asian Financial Crisis and the IMF bailout contract have significantly impacted the Korean workplace by implementing the ‘flexibility of the labour market’ criterion and creating the ‘non-regular employment’ paradigm which has led to a massive proliferation of temporary, contract-based hiring practices, allowing
employers to ‘hire and fire’ employees as they wish while at the same time avoiding the burden of giving them promotions, salary increases, pensions and other fringe benefits that individuals under the ‘regular employment system’ receive. As someone who has worked under the ‘non-regular employment’ system for nearly ten years in Korea, I seek to answer how we – my students and I – may transcend the prevalent ‘structures’ in society by exercising our ‘agency’.

1.3.1. English language education and the strive toward globalisation

Upon signing the IMF contract in 1997, the strive toward globalisation became even stronger as the Korean government vowed to overcome the financial crisis as quickly as possible and saw ‘global recognition’ as the key to reaching their goals. As such, the push toward English language education also soared during this time and the exponential growth of the ELT market in South Korea has become the subject of heated debates and discussions since the early 2000s (e.g., Kwon, 2000; Park, 2009; Seth, 2002). Without a doubt, English has become a necessity for social mobility and by examining the ways in which English language education has evolved in Korea, we are able to understand the significant impact of the political and economic situations at certain historical periods of time.

English language education in Korea began in 1883 during which the nation faced major political and economic challenges as King Gojong, the last emperor of Korea before the onset of Japanese colonisation in 1910, began to embrace Western influences, allowing American missionaries to introduce Christianity to the Korean people. During this time, ‘English education was launched and expanded under the influence of two political factors – modernization and enlightenment movement and the propaganda
of Christianity’ (Choi, 2006, p. 6). To this date, the relationship between Protestant Christianity and the Korean people have had a very strong connection to one another, making the Christian faith the most popular religion in Korea (Choi, 2002; Kim, 2004; Min, 1992, 2006); however, the percentage of Protestant Christians living abroad – especially in America – is much higher than those living in Korea. More than 70% of the Koreans living in America consider themselves as Protestant Christians (Kim, 2004; Min, 1992, 2006) whereas only 26% of the Koreans living in Korea claim to be Protestant Christians. This may be due to the role of the Korean-American church as it has been known as a site of community engagement and heritage education for the younger generations and quite possibly the most common site for Koreans living in America to gather and build a community of their own.

The strong relationship between Protestant Christianity and the Korean people, however, did not begin among the immigrants living in America; in fact, it is surprising to find that Koreans had already begun to associate English language learning with modernisation and social mobility during the 19th century as American missionaries began taking on the role of English teachers as a path to evangelism (Park, 1974; Sohn, 1992). Unfortunately, King Gojong’s vision for modernising Korea came to a halt when the Japanese government took official control in 1910; although Japanese colonisation did not officially begin until 1910, Japan’s intrusion had already begun in the early 1900s and by 1903, English language education had been replaced with Japanese language education and American missionaries were eventually forced to leave Korea during the colonisation period which lasted until 1945.

When the Japanese colonisation period ended in 1945, English language
education was revived and managed under the American military administration until 1950 when the Korean War\textsuperscript{12} broke out, during which English education came to a temporary halt once again until the war ended in 1953. After the war, English language education became an important component of the National Curriculum but the South Korean government was ruled under a military regime until 1993, causing decades of national uprising and chaos in which university students were heavily involved in organised protests and demonstrations (Pae, 1990, 2000, 2002; Park, 1974; Sohn, 1992; Sohn \textit{et al.}, 2006). In 1993, Kim Young Sam became the first South Korean president to win a democratic presidential election in which he was elected by the Korean people. A right-wing politician and a devout Protestant Christian, Kim made it very clear that the primary goal for the South Korean society was ‘globalisation’:

\begin{quote}
Fellow citizens: Globalization is the shortcut which will lead us to building a first-class country in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. This is why I revealed my plan for globalization and the government has concentrated all of its energy in forging ahead with it. It is aimed at realizing globalization in all sectors – politics, foreign affairs, economy, society, education, culture and sports. To this end, it is necessary to enhance our viewpoints, way of thinking, system and practices to the world class level … We have no choice other than this. (Kim, 2000, p. 1)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{12} Although the Korean War took place from 1950 to 1953 between the North (supported by Russia and China) and the South (supported by the United Nations and the US), the war is still not considered to be ‘over’ as an \textit{armistice} – a formal agreement of the two warring parties – is currently in effect; thus based on the armistice, the parties have only agreed to a cessation of hostilities and as such, the goal of obtaining ‘lasting peace’ or a formal termination of the war has yet to be achieved.
Just as Kim Young Sam had envisioned, globalisation and economic advancement became the central aim of the Korean government and as a result, English language education was fuelled by his administration as English became a compulsory subject in primary school and a ‘push’ toward developing a communicative approach began to emerge during this time. Despite such efforts, however, the South Korean government would experience an unexpected turn of events when the Asian Financial Crisis broke out in 1997, just one year before the termination of Kim’s administration; and during this time, the Korean government would agree to restructure its labour market into a ‘flexible’ one as per ordered by the IMF in order to receive the monetary bailout that the Korean government had desperately needed in order to avoid a national bankruptcy. As mentioned earlier, it is also important to note that the ‘flexibility of the labour market’ created a new ‘paradigm’ – specifically, the massive implementation of the ‘nonregular employment’ system which allows employers at every sector from corporations, small businesses to schools and universities to hire contract-based employees who are not only subject to layoffs at the end of the contract but also ineligible for salary increases, promotions, bonuses or other fringe benefits that the other employees receive; furthermore, since nonregular employees are ineligible for promotions, they are often subject to power abuse and oppression from their superiors.

1.3.2. The establishment of TESOL in Korea

Kim Young Sam’s administration ended in 1997, shortly after the outbreak of the Asian Financial Crisis and Kim’s long-time political opponent, Kim Dae Jung became the next South Korean president. Immediately upon taking office, despite representing the democratic party, Kim Dae Jung made it very clear that his primary goal was to continue Kim Young Sam’s vision and
claimed he would adopt even *stronger* measures for globalisation in order to recover from the devastating effects of the IMF crisis; furthermore, what is even more interesting is that the very first TESOL programme in Korea opened its doors in 1998 at Sookmyung Women’s University alongside the start of Kim Dae Jung’s new administration. In his inaugural speech on 25 February 1998, Kim Dae Jung stated, ‘We must keep expanding trade, investment, tourism and cultural exchanges in order to make our way in the age of boundless competition which will take place against a backdrop of cooperation’ (Kim, 2000, p. 1).

As mentioned above, the very first TESOL programme in Korea was established alongside Kim Dae Jung’s new administration in 1998 – a period in which the Korean people were still trying to recover from the Asian Financial Crisis, which led to numerous devastating socio-political and economical challenges such as corporate bankruptcies, thousands of job losses and the restructuring of the labour market – to name just a few. Until Sookmyung Women’s University introduced TESOL to Korea during this time, English language teaching was simply known as a career for individuals enrolled in teachers’ colleges preparing for certification and teaching in primary and secondary schools;¹³ however, the surge of private language academies during the 1990s was an indication that there was a strong demand for English teachers to work outside of the public school system, which simply could not be fulfilled by those preparing for teaching

---

¹³ Prior to the establishment of the very first TESOL programme in Korea in 1998, the only formal training available for English language teachers was offered in teachers’ colleges in which the majority of the students - mostly young men and women in their 20s - were preparing to teach in public schools, which is still considered to be the *mainstream* teaching context; however, the availability of TESOL training allowed a much more diverse group of individuals – particularly women seeking second careers after having had their careers interrupted by marriage and family - to receive teacher education in order to work as English teachers, especially at the private sector.
certification and public school teaching, who may have had little interest in teaching at the private sector, anyway. TESOL became an instant success and numerous TESOL programmes in other Korean universities were established. Today, there is a ‘surplus’ of TESOL programmes throughout the country – some of which are run by universities but others that are offered online through foreign institutions and organisations, creating a saturation of TESOL programmes in Korea, making TESOL widely accessible and available through numerous institutions and organisations.

Despite the twenty-plus year history of TESOL in Korea and the ubiquity of TESOL certification programmes and post-graduate programmes throughout the country, however, studies exploring a specific focus on TESOL programmes (e.g., Tanghe & Park, 2016; Yeom, 2012) are scarce whereas a plethora of studies focusing on mainstream English teacher education range from teacher qualifications (Lee, 2007; Park, 1980; Park, 1998; Shin, 1982), teachers’ role (Kang, 2003; Kim, 2002; Hung & Lee, 2012), pre-service training (Kim, 2008; Kwon, 2000; Park, 2013), in-service training (Chang, 2003; Chang et al., 2010; Jung, 1997; Na et al., 2008; Yang, 2009), teacher cognition (Ahn, 2008; Choi, 2000; Guilloteaux, 2004; Kim, 2002; Lee, 2007), team teaching (Kim, 2011; Chung et al., 1999), teachers’ English language skills and teaching methods (Choi, 2002; Kim, 2003; Ko, 2005; Lee, 2004), teacher identity (Ahn, 2014; Lee, 2010; Kim, 2010; Kim 2011) and teacher assessment (Chin et al., 2002; Hayes et al., 2011; Jeon et al., 2004; Lim, 2014).

One of the primary reasons for the paucity of studies exploring TESOL programmes may be due to fact that the vast majority of the TESOL faculty are native-speaker foreign faculty without doctoral degrees whose primary role is to provide English mediated TESOL courses rather than conducting
research. Furthermore, there is a general underlying assumption that TESOL is simply a profit-making programme for Korean universities and one that does not necessarily require the attention of scholarly research and/or ‘researchers’ since TESOL students will most likely end up working in the private sector rather than the public-school system, which is the primary concern of the Ministry of Education. The paradox however, is that the majority of students in primary and secondary schools receive their English language education at the private sector and most do not take English classes in mainstream classrooms seriously because the content is typically either ‘outdated’ or ‘behind’ than what is being taught at the private sector (Byun, 2014; Chun, 2003). In other words, most Korean students rely on learning English from private language academies, also known as ‘hagwons’, which literally means a ‘place of learning,’ whereas universities and the Ministry of Education denounce the validity of the private language sector, claiming that private language education is responsible for creating educational inequities among the wealthy and the poor. As a result, the Ministry of Education had never formally 'recognised' TESOL as a legitimate academic subject for teacher education – at least not until 2009 when Lee Myung Bak became South Korea’s 10th president.

Although Kim Dae Jung was Lee Myung Bak’s predecessor, it might be worthwhile to compare Lee to Kim Young Sam instead since they shared similarities as well as differences. For example, both Lee and Kim were conservative politicians and devout Protestant Christians; however, whereas Kim had wealthy parents who provided him with the financial support throughout his political career during which he never had a ‘real job’ other than protesting against the military regime for more than three decades, Lee came from a working-class family and was the epitome of Korea’s ‘rags-to-riches’ story as he worked his way up to becoming the CEO of one of the largest corporations in Korea and subsequently the mayor of
Seoul, followed by his presidency from 2008 to 2013. During his presidential campaign, Lee’s slogan was ‘Poverty must not be passed onto the next generation’.

When Lee Myung Bak took office in 2008, one of the priorities on his agenda was to make English language learning much more available outside the traditional classroom by allowing Korean students to access English language learning in school-based extra-curriculum and afterschool programmes. The idea was to make English language learning *widely accessible* in order to reduce the heavy reliance on private English education, which has been singled out as the primary source of causing the ‘English Divide’ (Crookes, 2017) in Korea, creating a division between those who can afford private English language learning and those who cannot; furthermore, the wide implementation of school-based afterschool English language programmes was also targeted at reducing the number of ‘wild geese families’ (Cho, 2005; Lee & Koo, 2006), prevalent from the late 1990s to the present, which was also considered to have a negative impact on Korean families as women were rushing to English-speaking countries with their children while husbands remained behind in Korea to provide the financial support necessary for their wives and children to live abroad.

Throughout his presidential campaign, Lee Myung Bak expressed concern at the growing number of the ‘wild geese families’ in Korea, which was seen as a ‘disturbing social phenomenon’, and vowed to implement government-funded English language programmes in order to discourage Korean families from taking young children abroad for English language learning. As soon as Lee’s presidential victory was confirmed, he formed a steering committee whose job was to create an innovative plan to expand English language education beyond the traditional classroom setting, while at the
same time distinguishing itself from the private language education sector by appointing Lee Kyung Sook as the head of the team. Lee Kyung Sook seemed to be the perfect individual for the job, not simply because she was the president of Sook Myung Women’s University at the time, but more importantly, because she is better known as the woman responsible for implementing the very first TESOL programme in 1998.

As mentioned earlier, second language teacher education in Korea primarily took place within the context of teacher’s colleges, specifically aimed at training teachers to enter the mainstream teaching profession; however, the qualifications required to become a school teacher are enormously difficult to obtain as the percentage of applicants far exceed the percentage of available openings. When Sookmyung Women’s University established Korea’s very first TESOL certification programme and subsequently the MA TESOL programme, the response was enormously positive, prompting other universities to follow in their footsteps. When Lee Kyung Sook was appointed as the head of the steering committee of the English education project, the key word was ‘TESOL’ and not surprisingly, it did not take long before the newly elected President, Lee Myung Bak, began sharing his new ‘vision’ to make English language learning widely accessible to Korean students. In order to do so, the reliance on native speaker English teachers would be reduced by encouraging Koreans – especially housewives, recent

14 One of the social phenomena that has emerged since the IMF bailout in 1997 and the proliferation of the ‘non-regular employment’ paradigm is the desire to have a ‘stable’ career that guarantees promotions and pensions; as a result, the younger generation in Korea has developed a strong desire to work as civil servants and the teaching field, which may not pay as well as corporate jobs or other fields such as law, medicine and engineering; however, these government-affiliated jobs guarantee ‘stability’. Unfortunately, even the education sector — primary and secondary schools — has been hiring contract-based teachers under the non-regular employment system, leaving hundreds and thousands of teachers rushing to take the national teachers’ examination, which would guarantee a teaching position under the ‘regular employment’ system; as a result, the competition for the national teachers’ examination has become enormously high, which most individuals are unable to pass, leading many school teachers to work on contracts under the ‘non-regular’ system. This also applies at the tertiary level.
college graduates, those considering a second career and just about anyone seeking to develop a career in English language teaching – to obtain TESOL training in order to teach in the afterschool programmes to be implemented across the nation. Coincidentally, the institution in which I am currently employed suddenly decided a TESOL programme was necessary and began accepting applications in March 2009. Not surprisingly, when our institution, an all-women’s university which is also one of the most competitive universities in Korea,\(^{15}\) announced it would finally offer a TESOL programme, hundreds of women rushed to enrol. The average number of applicants for the MA TESOL programme during the first few years was approximately 100 per semester, totalling more than 200 per year, and a similar number of applications was received for the certification programme as well. Today, the certification programme no longer exists due to low enrolment and the average number of applications for the MA programme nowadays ranges from ten to fifteen per semester.

Given the significant drop of the applications, it might be natural to suspect that the quality of the courses may be questionable or that the faculty are not doing their jobs well; however, our department has been receiving one of the top course evaluation scores and the highest satisfaction reports from our students among the other graduate schools within the institution. Aside from the saturation of TESOL programmes which has created brutal competition, the recent global rise of the Korean pop culture and music industry has also led to the popularity of TKSOL – Teaching Korean to Speakers of Other Languages – which has become extremely popular for teaching Korean as a foreign language in many parts of Asia as well as other

\(^{15}\) The university was founded in 1886 by an American missionary whose vision was to provide an education for Korean women. Since then, the institution has become one of the most competitive universities in Korea.
parts of the world; as a result, those who may have considered a career in TESOL in the past are now pursuing TKSOL instead, making it even more difficult for TESOL to survive in Korea. However, the massive decline of the applicants to our programme is also heavily influenced by its unique management structure, which is specific only to the institution in which I am currently employed.\textsuperscript{16} It is within this backdrop that this study attempts to understand the socio-political landscape of the Korean ELT field and TESOL while at the same time exploring my own identity as well as that of my students in the MA TESOL programme.

1.4. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

Chapter one presents the introduction of the thesis. I have begun with a prologue and an excerpt from John Steinbeck’s (1939) novel, \textit{The Grapes of Wrath}, from which the reader is able to visualise the dreary, dust-filled lands of Oklahoma during a severe drought that drove the tenant farmers to head toward California, which is then juxtaposed with the dust-filled streets of Seoul, where I currently live and work. One of the reasons why I have decided to integrate Steinbeck in my thesis was due to the fact that fiction and novels have played an important role in helping me to ‘awaken’ a forgotten ‘attraction’ to reading, which was one of the most important sources of excitement and stimulation throughout my early childhood in Korea. Subsequently, I began to read extensively again and re-discovered

\textsuperscript{16} One of the main problems in the TESOL programme lies in the fact that there are no permanent, tenured or tenure-track faculty; instead, the university ‘sends’ tenured faculty from other schools and colleges within the institution to ‘manage’ our programme since the foreign language faculty in our programme are contract-based, non-tenured instructors who are not allowed to take on leadership roles. The tenured faculty who are ‘sent’ to manage the TESOL programme rotate every two years; and more often than not, they are individuals who do not speak English and/or have never studied TESOL as a profession.
my love for books after completing secondary education – only this time, I was reading as an adult and reading in English, which has had a strong influence on developing an interest in pursuing a career in academia; thus, to me, scholarly literature and fictional novels cannot be separated from one another as both have played an integral role in developing my passion for reading and writing, which obviously cannot be detached from an academic life. As such, the idea of juxtaposing a novel to my autoethnography may not only be a bold attempt to write unconventionally but it is a reflection of my hybrid identity as well as a denial to conform to the conservative, traditional context of the Korean academic community. Furthermore, reflecting upon the current socioeconomic climate in Korea as well as the actual smog-filled climate in general, reminded me of *The Grapes of Wrath*, which, to me, seemed to resemble one another in some ways. The chapter also presents four critical moments which have helped me to construct and re-construct my ideas on integrating autoethnography as the primary approach to my thesis and concludes by providing the background details of how TESOL was initially introduced to Korea by Sookmyung Women’s University in 1998, and how former president Lee Myung Bak’s administration led to the ‘abrupt’ establishment of the TESOL programme at my own institution in 2009.

Chapter two provides the theoretical framework underpinning my thesis: Bakhtin’s theory of the novel which resonates with an autoethnography in many ways. One of the central themes in Bakhtin’s theory of the novel is the notion of *dialogue* in which multiple individuals are engaged in ongoing dialogue through time and space; as such, I argue that a novel is akin to other forms of writing such as autoethnography in the sense that it tells a story which involves a narrator, namely the author, who is engaged in various forms of dialogue and interaction with others in different times and
spaces as the author moves back and forth from the past and the present. Furthermore, the multiple individuals within the story may not only include the characters within a novel or an autoethnography, but we may also assume that they are not the only ones involved in the dialogue throughout the story; that is, the reader and the author are inevitably engaged in the dialogue as well as each individual brings to the story their own emotions, thoughts and reflections which in turn leads to what Bakhtin refers to as the notion of polyphony and heteroglossia, creating a dynamic, ‘multivoiced’ interaction.

Chapter three presents the literature review which discusses the theory and previous studies on the following topics: autoethnography, teacher cognition and second language teacher education, writer identity and NNSET identity.

Chapter four presents the methodology. I present the research context and the participants, followed by the data collection and analysis. The chapter concludes with the limitations of autoethnography and ethical concerns.

Chapters five to seven present an interactive ‘dialogue’ between my narratives and student narratives as we draw upon our childhood experiences of encountering the English language for the very first time. Although the learning contexts were very different from one another in that I was an ESL learner in America whereas my students were EFL learners in Korea, the two sets of narratives interact and intersect, which in turn has helped me to understand why I may have withdrawn from school as a child; furthermore, the reflections from the narratives may also provide some insights on how young Korean parents may play an important role in
addressing the negative effects of neoliberalism on English language education in Korea.

Chapter five begins the ‘dialogue’ analysis as the two sets of narratives compare and contrast childhood memories of encountering English for the very first time, accounting both positive and negative language learning experiences, and our journeys as language learners to becoming language teachers.

Chapter six begins by reflecting upon a student narrative in which she is expressing frustrations as she is unable to find a job as an English teacher in America, despite a completed MA TESOL degree and having native-like fluency of the English language; the desperations coming from her ‘voice’ reminds me of my own instability as a foreign language instructor on a non-tenure track contract and the instability of the TESOL field in Korea. I am also reminded of an important critical incident that I had experienced several years ago during a classroom lecture in one of the TESOL courses that I teach which has led me to understand my identity as an ESL learner in America whose home culture did not match the school literacy practices and the mainstream classroom practices, which in turn may have led me to withdraw from school and the motivation to study in secondary school. Furthermore, my own experiences resonate with student narratives that tell poignant stories of the desperate struggle to survive as an English teacher in the very competitive field of hagwons in which they are often forced to market their own English language courses with their own money from which only the ones who succeed in student enrolment are allowed to maintain employment; in many ways, I am able to sympathise with such desperation to survive as a foreign language faculty member of a very
competitive private elite university in South Korea, which is driven by ‘extreme’ neoliberal schemes. In this chapter, the narratives also discuss how I transition from a language teacher to a language teacher educator.

Chapter seven presents the last set of interactive dialogues in which topics relevant to critical pedagogy begin to emerge. To begin with, I am reminded of an incident which occurred when I was taking a grammar class in an MA TESOL programme in America. Furthermore, reflecting upon student narratives and their experiences as language learners and NNSETs, NNSET identity often reflects the learners’ desperate, poignant desire and strive to improve their English language skills, which often lead them to make many sacrifices just to ‘stay afloat’; in other words, NNSET identity should be interpreted from a ‘structure and agency’ (Giddens, 1991) framework in which individuals are engaged in ongoing struggles against the day-to-day challenges that they face. In many ways, I am able to relate to the day-to-day struggles as I am also faced with the structure and agency dilemma as a researcher and teacher educator working under a contract that does not allow upward mobility. As a TESOL educator practicing reflexivity through ongoing dialogues with students and self-reflections, implementing critical pedagogy has not only become a pivotal component in my curriculum, but I seek to understand how critical pedagogy may help us – TESOL students in Korea and TESOL faculty like myself – may create an enhanced programme which not only seeks to equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge to become competent English language

---

17 In Korea, I have witnessed some ‘extreme’ instances of neoliberalism such as English teachers being forced to compete with their colleagues working in the same private language hagwons by marketing their own classes (at times at their own expense) in order to attract students. Another example of what I mean by ‘extreme’ neoliberalism is English teachers who teach test taking preparatory courses get paid based on their students’ test scores. There are countless more examples of how the Korean ELT field exploits the market.
teachers, but also to work toward promoting social justice and confronting the challenges of neoliberalism within the Korean ELT context.

Chapter eight is the final chapter of the thesis in which I provide an overview of the main discoveries and implications from the study. In this chapter, each research question is addressed and discussed in depth. I begin by connecting the research findings to Bakhtin’s theory of the novel by discussing how each of the components of a novel – dialogue, carnival, chronotope and heteroglossia – emerges in the narratives and why an autoethnography may best be interpreted from a Bakhtinian framework. Finally, I conclude by problematising the notion of ‘hope’ in Freire’s (1992) *Pedagogy of Hope*, the sequel to the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*; in so doing, I engage with Le Grange’s (2011) critique of the ‘hope’ to which critical pedagogues often respond. Without a doubt, critical pedagogy is a necessary component in the TESOL curriculum and one that the ‘oppressed’ or the ‘powerless’ in society must engage with; however, the final reflections of my thesis would not be complete without a rigorous grappling with what hope actually means when the ‘structure’ is much more powerful than our ‘agency.’ In sum, I question - how we, TESOL students and TESOL educators like myself, the ‘powerless’ in the Korean society, albeit relative in many ways, may internalise ‘hope’ so as to overcome the countless structures that we face in our day-to-day lives.
CHAPTER 2
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I present the theoretical framework adapted for this thesis. Throughout the process of engaging with student narratives and drawing upon my own past and present experiences in response to the words of my students, I have begun to realise that autoethnography resembles Bakhtin’s (1981) notion of dialogue. As such, the primary theoretical concepts in Bakhtin’s works – heteroglossia, polyphony, carnival and chronotope – are discussed in relation to autoethnography in this chapter.

2.1. A BAKHTINIAN APPROACH TO AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1981) theory of dialogism has been widely discussed within the field of applied linguistics and TESOL, exploring topics in multilingualism (e.g., Blackledge et al., 2014; Blommaert & Rampton, 2011), linguistic diversity (e.g., Madsen, 2011), social functions of a language (e.g., Agha, 2007; Bailey, 2012; Lahteenmaki, 2010) and language teachers’ identity construction (e.g., Johnston, 1997). The notion of heteroglossia – the coexistence of multiple varieties within a single language – provides a lens into the social, ideological features of day-to-day interactions among individuals from various social stratum. Bakhtin (1981) pointed out that ‘language is stratified not only into linguistic dialects in the strict sense of the word, but also – and for us this is the essential point – into languages that are socio-ideological: languages for social groups, ‘professional’ and ‘generic’ languages, languages of generations and so forth’ (p. 271); as
such, a novel, according to Bakhtin, is much more ‘appealing’ than what was considered to be ‘high genre’ – such as poetry\(^\text{18}\) – at the time (Clark & Holquist, 1984) as we are able to engage with various forms of linguistic diversity spoken by the characters of a novel who represent ‘all walks of life’.

Bakhtin’s theory of the novel reveals his fascination with language and the notion of dialogism in which he viewed the word as ‘the eternally mobile, fickle medium of dialogic interaction’ (p. 197). Furthermore, Bakhtin’s view of dialogic discourse includes ‘stylisation, parody, irony, hidden polemic, internal polemic, and hidden dialogicality – all varieties of discourse shaped by the word of the other’ (Blackledge et al., 2014, p. 198), resonating with the notion of polyphony and heteroglossia in which multiple voices interact and intersect one another; thus for Bakhtin, the novel is a creative site in which characters from diverse social strata, speaking various forms and varieties of a language engage in dialogues through words and utterances, constructing an imaginary world that takes the reader through time and space as the story unfolds. Critical of traditional perspectives of genre and poetics of the era which were perceived as a ‘normative category, a la Aristotle or Boileau, where there are high and low genres piled up in a fixed hierarchy organized by some timeless essence, such as good taste,’ (Clark & Holquist, 1984, p. 275, italics in the original), Bakhtin perceived poetics ‘in general’ whereas the novel was seen ‘in particular’; that is, Bakhtin’s conceptualisation of the novel may be seen as what is now known as critical theory in the sense that the novel was interpreted as an ‘X-ray of a specific world view, a crystallization of the concepts particular to a given time and to a given social stratum in a specific society … therefore, [embodying] a

\(^{18}\) Although poetry too can be written in various dialects and contain a plurality of voices, Bakhtin seemed to have been referring to the ‘status’ given to poetry as a category of ‘high genre’ whereas the novel was not assigned the same level of status.
historically specific idea of what it means to be human’ (Clark & Holquist, 1984, p. 275). In many ways, a Bakhtinian framework resonates with the likes of Freire, Giroux and Foucault in the sense that there is an ‘emancipatory’ component inherent in his writings; that is, Bakhtin’s call for liberation and the denial of ‘categorisation’ of ‘high and low genres’ and inclusion of diverse, multiple voices representing all levels of social stratum are reflected in the notion of dialogism, heteroglossia and polyphony, which derived from Bakhtin’s understanding of the novel.

By focusing on the novel, Bakhtin’s ‘antipoetic, antcanonical’ tendencies are revealed as he discusses two major components – language and time/space – as the ‘essence’ of a novel, rather than the normalisation or the categorisation of its ‘value’ as per designated by traditional approaches to genre interpretation of the time; in other words, the specific contexts in which dialogues and utterances are being exchanged among the characters – as well as the voice of the narrator – in and of itself are to be appreciated in which ‘genres traditionally despised or dismissed are elevated to the place of honour, and the formerly exalted genres are discrowned’ (Clark & Holquist, 1984, p. 276; italics in the original). At the heart of Bakhtin’s discussion of the novel is dialogism in which individuals are ‘dynamically situated within both an interactionally and ideologically complex world’ (Dyson, 1995, p. 8), lies the notion of polyphony and heteroglossia.

2.2. DIALOGISM: POLYPHONY AND HETEROGLOSSIA

Bakhtin’s notion of dialogism is central to understanding his critique of language and society in general; oftentimes discussed as an aegis to dialogism, polyphony and heteroglossia are juxtaposed as supporting roles
to understanding the interactive and intertextual nature of dialogue involving multiple individuals, voices, utterances, thoughts and perceptions exchanged across time and space. Furthermore, verbal performance, both oral and written, responds to previous performance which in turn seeks response from others. Within the context of a novel, polyphony may represent the multiple voices of the characters involved in a story; at the same time, it might be worthwhile to note that the ongoing ‘dialogue’ in a story are not simply limited to the characters themselves but inevitably involves the narrator or the author as well as the audience or the reader, resulting in layers of interactive, intertextual activities as multiple perspectives, thoughts, ideas, utterances and words are exchanged simultaneously as a story is being told. Bakhtin’s (1981) notion of dialogism suggests that we are not only interacting with others in using language, but we are also using others’ words that are ‘ideologically saturated’ to represent our own meanings (p. 271). Furthermore, for Bakhtin, dialogue is an ongoing process and ‘is a condition of language rather than an attitude of the people’ (McAuley, 2013, p. 5) in which engaging and understanding with ‘the other’ often results in new understanding. Bakhtin (1986) stated, ‘It is only through dialogue with others that our words make sense and do we learn who we are’ (p. x). Furthermore, Bakhtin (1981) believed that the words or utterances that we speak are never ours in full as ‘the word in internally persuasive discourse is half-ours and half-someone else’s’ (p. 345).

The notion of heteroglossia provides a closer analysis of the ‘polyphonies’ involved in dialogue as varieties of language, which also includes utterances, the smallest unit of a language representing paralinguistic features such as facial expressions and gestures:
At any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form. These ‘languages’ of heteroglossia intersect each other in a variety of ways, forming new socially typifying languages. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 291)

Bakhtin (1981) explores the complexities of languages that exist in society – specifically focusing on the difference between the various discursive strata within a national language, which he referred to as heteroglossia. Heteroglossia stems from the idea that all languages contain multiple, social and cultural meanings; that is, heteroglossia not only refers to ‘different languages or different varieties of languages but also different ways of understanding and engaging in the world through language, resulting in various ways of understanding and engaging the world by different language users’ (De Costa & Jou, 2016). According to Bakhtin, the nature of an utterance reflects the struggles between centripetal forces whose aim is to centralise and unify and centrifugal forces whose purpose is to decentralise. The conflict between these two forces, as Bakhtin claims, triggers various forms of utterances among interlocutors: ‘The utterance not only answers the requirements of its own language as individualized embodiment of a speech act, but it answers the requirements of heteroglossia as well; it is in fact an active participant in such speech diversity’ (Clark & Holquist, 1984, p. 14). Whereas centripetal forces attempt to centralise by imposing heterogeneity, centrifugal forces encourage various groups of people to liberate themselves from hierarchical demands
and expectations by seeking to disrupt order, accepting ‘incompleteness’ and allowing space for reflection and change (Behizadeh, 2014). For Bakhtin, such ‘push/pull’ of competing forces are necessary and he continued to explore the ‘great duel between centripetal and centrifugal forces’ (Clark & Holquist, 1984, p. xi).

Although polyphony and heteroglossia are often discussed interchangeably and while similarities do indeed exist, polyphony may provide a ‘macro’ perspective of the multiple voices involved in dialogue, whereas heteroglossia may give us a ‘micro’ analysis of the details of words and utterances – that is, the discursive strata of language varieties – exchanged among the interlocutors engaged in dialogue and interaction.

2.3. CARNIVAL: TOWARD LIBERATION THROUGH DIALOGUE

Whereas dialogism is often discussed alongside polyphony and heteroglossia, the notion of carnival is not as frequently mentioned or explored in reference to Bakhtinian theory. However, Bakhtin ‘championed carnival because he saw it as a social sphere that embraced freedom and equality, and that created possibilities for learning and positive change’ (Lemsmire, 1994, p. 371). As society attempts to control and stratify the multiple voices and language varieties being spoken by individuals, the notion of carnival provides a platform for those who may have otherwise been silenced and oppressed. Bakhtin sought to ‘bust open and transform traditional, closed discourses’ by encouraging non-legitimated voices within a community of well-maintained legitimated voices (Lemsmire, 1994, p. 371). According to Bakhtin (1984), a carnival is a public festival – an arena where free expressions of non-legitimated voices are given legitimacy, challenging hierarchies in epistemology. Bakhtin’s conception of the carnival and its free,
liberating, democratic site provided an outlet for the socially marginalised:

Carnival festivals offered a completely different, nonofficial, extraecclesiastical and extrapolitical aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations; they built a second world and a second life outside officialdom, a world in which all medieval people participated more or less, in which they lived during a given time of the year. (p. 6)

This alternative community is, however, more than a site of ‘freedom’. As participants of a carnival express themselves through laughter and humour, they are also defying social structure and oppression by demonstrating that a carnival ‘engages the serious world in direct, open opposition’ (Quantz & O’Connor, 1988, p. 101). The concept of carnival, therefore, provides opportunity in which non-legitimated voices can freely express themselves and move toward transformation and renewal as participants ‘take up new relations not only with the people around them, but also with their world’ (Lemsmire, 1994, p. 374). These ideas have been taken up by scholars in a number of disciplines beyond literary studies, such as writing instruction. The role of writing instruction has often been referred to as a ‘site of carnival’ when learners are given a chance to write ‘freely’ (Lemsmire, 1994) rather than being confined to prescriptive writing protocols which we often define as ‘good writing’; on the other hand, writing can also be a means of therapy and a discursive site in which writers construct the discoursal self where ‘impression – often multiple, sometimes contradictory – which they consciously or unconsciously convey of themselves in a particular written text’ (Ivanic, 1998, p. 25). An autoethnography seeks to write within the ‘context of a carnival’ by rejecting any ‘methods’ prescribed by what
traditional social science researchers may understand as ‘good research’.

2.4. AUTOETHNOGRAPHY AS NOVEL

In many ways, autoethnography resembles Bakhtin’s conceptualisation of the novel. To begin with, despite Bakhtin’s emphasis on the multivocal, dialogical interaction among the characters of a novel, an autoethnography – albeit a seemingly ‘self-absorbed’ narrative of a single author – involves all the main ingredients discussed in Bakhtin’s interpretation of the novel. That is, an autoethnography always reveals the author’s interpersonal relationships with others (Sikes, 2010) thus depicting and reflecting upon the numerous dialogues and interactions that they have had throughout their lives; in so doing, just as the words and utterances of the multiple characters in a novel are inevitably told by a single person – the author – an autoethnography explores the self in dialogue and interaction with others, whose words and ideas are retold by the narrator. As a result, the reflexivity of the self in dialogue and interaction with others may reflect the multivocal, polyphonic nature of the novel from a Bakhtinian perspective.

An autoethnography that adapts a Bakhtinian framework inevitably embraces the notion of polyphony, which literally means multiple voices as the author-researcher is engaged in ongoing dialogue by responding and interacting with the words of others. Just as Dostoevsky’s Poetics contained many different voices, ‘unmerged into a single perspective, and not subordinated to the voice of the author, [allowing] each of these voices its own perspectives, its validity, and its own narrative weight within the novel’ (Robinson, 2011, p. 2), the ‘auto’ – in autoethnography – does not necessarily mean that the author must engage in a self-absorbed
monologue, or ‘monologism’ – single-thought discourse which we may refer to as ‘homophony’ as opposed to a polyphony. As is widely known, the notion of dialogism is at the heart of Bakhtin’s world, which was heavily influenced by Dostoevsky’s ‘dialogical principle’ which was counterposed to monologism. Bakhtin saw monologism as a ‘world made up of objects integrated through a single consciousness. Since other subjects have value only in relation to the transcendent perspective, they are reduced to the status of objects. Monologism is taken to close down the world it represents, by pretending to be the ultimate word’ (Robinson, 2011, p. 2). On the other hand, polyphony promotes dialogism and allows multiple voices and perspectives to co-exist in a single text; as such, adapting a Bakhtinian framework in an autoethnography places dialogism and the importance of polyphony as the central framework of discourse in which the author strives toward making sense of the world around them through ongoing dialogue with others.

Whereas the notion of polyphony simply represents multiple voices, heteroglossia may be a bit more complex in nature. Although most sociolinguists may agree that heteroglossia illuminates our understanding of linguistic diversity, the meaning of the term is not always clear or agreed upon (Blackledge et al., 2014); in fact, Busch (2013) pointed out that Bakhtin did not simply use the term to discuss his ideas on the stratified diversity of language’ (Blackledge et al., 2014, p. 194). Furthermore, Madsen (2011) argues that heteroglossia is a concept created by Bakhtin’s translators to provide an understanding of the three concepts in diversity in speechness, languageness, and voicedness, and that heteroglossia ‘describes how language use involves various socio-ideological languages, codes, and voices (Madsen, 2011, p. 4; cited in Blackledge et al., 2014, p. 194). Furthermore, an autoethnography is often considered to be an ‘alternative’
platform (Adams et al., 2015; Denzin, 2014; Richardson, 1997) – a ‘nonstandard’ approach to academic research and writing – which allows researchers to break free from the traditional boundaries of stringent protocols and research ‘codes of ethics’ which have traditionally ‘frowned upon’ the researcher’s overt engagement with data; instead, an autoethnography is akin to the genre ‘traditionally despised or dismissed … elevated to the place of honour’ (Clark & Holquist, 1984, p. 276) in which the author is given ‘the right to be free from all that is official and consecrated’ (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 257). Oftentimes, an autoethnography also provides a platform for marginalised individuals who may not otherwise have the opportunity to speak freely, just as a carnival allows participation of all in which it is not to be seen as a ‘spectacle or performed by some and watched by others. Instead, the line between spectators and performers is blurred … and the disruption of life’s routine, and especially the temporary abolition of powerful social hierarchies, allows participants to experience relations with each other and the world that are unavailable to them in everyday life’ (Lemsmire, 1994, p. 374).

In addition to understanding dialogism as a manifestation of polyphony and heteroglossia engaged in interaction in an ‘alternative’ community, it is also necessary to understand the simultaneity of time and space, which Bakhtin (1981, 1984) referred to as ‘chronotope’ in his state-of-the-art essay, Dialogical Imagination. Bakhtin was heavily influenced by Einstein’s theory of relativity and adapted the idea of time and space as being relative to one another to the notion of dialogism. Einstein’s explanation of motion stemmed from several hypothetical19 experiments of people looking at

19 Rather than conducting an actual experiment involving real people and objects, Einstein’s experiment was ‘hypothetical’ in that he simulated the study by imagining what might occur when people observed moving trains.
moving objects such as trains, from which he concluded that motions had a relative meaning from the perception of speed and light. In other words, ‘if light travels at a certain velocity in one system and at a different velocity in another system moving without acceleration relative to the first, it is impossible to detect the first system’s movement by optical means, no matter how refined: the observer’s ability to see motion depends on one body changing its position vis-à-vis other bodies’ (Holquist, 1990, p. 20). As such, according to Bakhtin, one’s body motion has meaning ‘only in relation to another body; or since it is a relation that is mutual – has meaning only in dialogue with another body’ (Holquist, 1990, pp. 20-21); thus, Bakhtin argues that all meaning is relative since dialogism is the result of the relation of two bodies occupying simultaneous but different space. Holquist (1990) notes that here, ‘bodies’, may not only be seen as physical bodies but as political bodies and bodies of ideas (ideologies) as well.

Bakhtin’s notion of chronotope is easily seen in the novel as the author, who not only represents a physical body but also upholding certain ideas and ideologies, is engaged in ongoing dialogue through the characters of the story as well as the audience of the text, who is simultaneously processing the words and utterances from the story; thus the observer is simultaneously an active participant (Holquist, 1990) and ‘reality is always experienced, not just perceived, and further that it is experienced from a particular position,’ which in kinetic terms, is seen as a ‘situation, an event, the event of being a self’ (p. 21). As such, despite the seemingly ‘self-centred’ nature of an autoethnography, an exploration of the self – from a Bakhtinian framework – can never be a self-absorbed monologue detached from others and the sociocultural context in which they exist. Likewise, Bakhtin’s conceptualisation of the novel parallels the autoethnography as the author is engaged in ongoing dialogue and reflexivity through multiple, different and
yet simultaneous times and space of her life; furthermore, just as Bakhtin had championed the novel over traditionally ‘acceptable’ genres at the time, an autoethnography – which has yet to be fully embraced in mainstream social science research within the field of applied linguistics and TESOL – offers a site for oppressed, marginalised individuals to engage in dialogue and reflexivity in a creative site – such as the carnival – where they are free to express their emotions and thoughts in the centre rather than the margins.
CHAPTER 3
LITERATURE REVIEW

3.0. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the relevant literature for this study. I begin by discussing Laurel Richardson’s (1997) theory of writing as a method of inquiry and Ivanić’s (1998) notion of writer identity. Then, I explore studies in narrative inquiry in teacher education and teacher cognition which leads to a discussion on reflective practices and the limitations of the approach; as such, I make a case for promoting reflexivity in place of reflective practices in teacher education, which in turn leads to the overarching approach for this thesis – autoethnography. I begin by providing an extensive definition(s) on autoethnography as well as the historical background and also introduce various types of autoethnographic approaches.

3.1. WRITING AS METHOD OF INQUIRY

When an ethnographer engages in the process of ‘writing up the research’, there is usually a conventional way of going about it – beginning with a research topic and formulating research questions, designing the study and research method, collecting and analysing the data, and using the analysed data to write-up the results and the findings of the study. The discoveries made from these studies typically emerge from the data while the researcher’s subjectivity is ‘absent from the report, looming behind the text’ (Canagarajah, 1996, cited in Norton & Early, 2011, p. 324); however, when
the researcher relies on the writing process as a method of inquiry, she not only becomes a 'highly visible social actor within the written text' (Anderson, 2006, p. 384), but the process of writing itself can generate data which in turn may result in new discoveries made from the study. Laurel Richardson (1997, 2000) claims that the process of writing can become a method of qualitative inquiry.

Richardson (2000) admits that she has a ‘confession to make’ and that for thirty years, she had ‘yawned [her] way through numerous supposedly exemplary qualitative studies’ (p. 924). The problem she found with most of these studies was that they were simply ‘boring’ and that they ‘suffered from acute and chronic passivity: passive-voiced author, passive ‘subjects’ (p. 924). The alternative approach Richardson (2000) offers is what she refers to as ‘creative analytic practices’ (CAP): ‘In the wake of postmodernist – including poststructuralist, feminine, queer, and critical race theory – critiques of traditional qualitative work now appear in multiple venues in different forms’ (p. 929).

CAP is a response to the postmodern ethnographic genre which has been ‘blurred, enlarged, altered to include poetry, drama, conversations, reader’s theatre, and so on’ (p. 929). Furthermore, the process of writing itself is not only a method of qualitative inquiry, but a ‘way of finding out about yourself and your topic’ (Richardson, 2000, p. 923). As implied earlier, traditional ethnographers make an attempt to ‘tell’ about the social world, but Richardson (2000) claims that writing is not just a ‘mopping-up activity at the end of a research project. Writing is also a way of ‘knowing’ – a method of discovery and analysis’ (p. 923).
The idea of the writing process itself generating new knowledge and discoveries is actually not new when we consider the origin of writing pedagogy and the discoveries made by scholars such as Jane Emig (1971, 1983), who experimented with think-aloud protocols by asking writers to ‘think out loud’ as they wrote; what she found was that skilled writers wrote in a non-linear, circular fashion in which they engaged in ongoing, ‘unsystematic’ processes of editing and revising as they moved back and forth from one section of their written text to another. Similarly, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) discovered that skilled writers had the ability to transform their knowledge through their writing, rather than reiterate what they had learned or discovered prior to the writing process. In other words, as we manoeuvre through our written texts, we engage in a metacognitive process of inquiry as we constantly construct and re-construct our words which leads to new insights and discoveries. In this sense, writing takes place within ‘fields of play’ (Richardson, 1997, 2000) in which the writer freely roams the field to find herself and to make sense of her social world rather than following a systematic procedure in which she adheres to the ‘ethnographer’s conventions’ of qualitative research method and procedures.

Given the autobiographical nature of the present study and the importance of exploring the ‘self’ throughout the writing process, the notion of ‘writer identity’ (Ivanic, 1998) needs to be addressed. In order to define writer identity, however, it is important to first formulate a general understanding of identity itself. Although we often associate the notion of identity with various aspects of ourselves that are static and unchangeable – such as ethnicity – identity may also be seen as an abstract, unstable process of multiple, ongoing changes within ourselves. Adapting social constructionist views (e.g., Gergen & Davis, 1985; Turner, 1991), identity defines
individuals in terms of who they are, where they come from, what they do, how they behave, think and so on. Furthermore, identity is not always socially determined but rather, it is socially constructed; that is, identity is ‘not solely the product of individual’s minds and intentions, but it is the result of affiliation to particular beliefs and possibilities which are available to them in their social context’ (Ivanic, 1998, p. 12). A post-structuralist perspective of identity is defined as ‘precarious, contradictory and in process, constantly reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak’ (Weedon, 1987, p. 32); thus, identity is always dynamic and multiple and it is also constructed and re-constructed by our thoughts, past and present experiences, as well as the influences of our socio-cultural contexts.

In a similar vein, the process of writing triggers opportunities for the writer to construct multiple identities throughout the text. The discursive process of writing allows individuals to constantly shift back and forth from one subjectivity to another depending on prior and current experiences or the writing task, genre as well as the socio-cultural and institutional context in which the writing process occurs. Writer identity, therefore, may also be viewed as being multiple and oftentimes contradictory as individuals struggle to negotiate their thoughts throughout the writing process. According to Ivanic (1998), there are two different categories of writer identity. The first category is concerned with the ‘actual people writing actual texts.’ And the second category is concerned with the ‘prototypical possibilities of self-hood which are available to writers in the social context of writing’ (p. 27). The first category has three different aspects of writer identities: autobiographical self, discoursal self, and self as author, whereas the second category only has one aspect of writer identity – prototypical possibilities of self-hood, which may also be viewed as subject positioning. The autobiographical self is associated with a writer’s sense of their roots –
where they come from, perhaps similar to the notion of Bourdieu's (1977) notion of the habitus in some ways, whereas the discoursal self is the writer’s ‘impression – often multiple, sometimes contradictory – which they consciously or unconsciously convey of themselves in a particular written text’ (Ivanic, 1998, p. 25). The final aspect of the first category is the ‘self as author’, which Ivanic (1998) claims is a relative concept in which ‘writers see themselves to a greater or lesser extent as authors, and present themselves to a greater or lesser extent as authors’ (p. 26). The notion of ‘voice’ in a written text is of concern here as the writer’s position, opinions and beliefs play an important role. Furthermore, within the context of academic writing, the self as author is particularly significant as writers may ask how they establish authority for the content of their writing and to what extent they present themselves as authoritative.

The first three aspects of writer identities are concerned with writers writing an actual text; however, the fourth aspect of writer identity – the prototypical possibilities of self-hood – is oftentimes constructed not just by the writers themselves, but by different members or stakeholders within the community or institutions to which the writer belongs or anticipates to belong. Furthermore, writing – particularly within the academic context – entails dominant rhetorical structures and linguistic choices preferred by the target culture; thus, ‘self-hood’, which may be defined as a distinct identity, is viewed as being ‘prototypical’ in the sense that writers within a particular community or context are expected to adhere to a certain ‘style’ or structure anticipated by the dominant culture. Inevitably, the first three writer identities – writers engaged within the actual process of writing – often do not match the prototypical possibilities of self-hood, and thus social concerns such as power relations, interests, values and beliefs embedded in the writing practices emerge as important topics for understanding L2 writing pedagogy
3.2. THE NARRATIVE TURN IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Understanding the various aspects of writer identity in relation to the process of writing as a method of inquiry itself inevitably takes us to an important milestone in teacher education research – narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As teachers, we have probably had the experience of feeling frustrated when our students appear to be bored, uninterested, or simply lost in the midst of a lesson. I have had this experience numerous times over the years, and instinctively, I often turned to ‘stories’ whenever I began losing my students during a lecture. The moment I start telling a story, however, something magical begins to take place: students slowly straighten up their bodies from crouched positions; they begin to lean toward the edge of their desks, as though this would help them to hear better. Students stop looking at their smartphones, their eyes light up; they begin nodding, smiling, responding – in short, they begin to take part in the classroom lecture.

Teachers use stories all the time – whether we teach children or adults, stories have always been a powerful tool for fostering motivation and meaningful learning in the classroom; as teachers, we rely on stories and stories are embedded in the fabric of our lives, both inside and outside of the classroom. In this sense, it may have been inevitable to have arrived at the narrative inquiry for understanding teachers’ lived lives in educational research. When Clandinin and Connelly (2000) first began grappling with the idea of developing narrative inquiry as an approach to educational research, they had been questioning the dominant approach in social
science research which seemed to have had a ‘reverence for numbers’ (p. xxiii). During this time, they began to take a strong interest in the works of John Dewey (1933, 1938), who placed ‘experience’ at the heart of all forms of education, claiming that ‘life is education’ (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxii; italics in the original):

If we imagine, as Dewey did, research as the study of experience, what might be the plotline for social science research be? The social sciences are concerned with humans and their relations with themselves and their environment. As such, the social sciences are founded on the study of experience. Experience is therefore the starting point and the key term for all social science inquiry […] education, experience and life are inextricably intertwined.’ (p. xxiii)

Dewey’s theoretical approaches to linking experience and education led to a search for an alternative approach to conducting social science research, particularly within the context of education. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000) continued to contemplate on the role of experience in education, they naturally found themselves drawn to narratives as a way of understanding experience and education:

For us, narrative is the best way of representing and understanding experience. Experience is what we study, and we study it narratively because narrative thinking is a key form of experience and a key way of writing and thinking about it. In effect, narrative thinking is part of the phenomenon of narrative.
It might be said that narrative is a part or aspect of narrative phenomena. Thus, we say, narrative is both phenomenon and the method of the social sciences. (pp. 17-18)

Story-telling and narratives have thus become instrumental in helping us to understand the inner world of teachers and the complexities involved in the process of teaching. Without the narrative approach, educational researchers may not have been able to move far beyond the ‘process-product model’ (Gage & Needles, 1989), which seeks to understand the relationship between what takes place in the classroom (process) and how it affects the product, such as students’ achievement results. Although Clandinin and Connelly (2000) may have been one of the first to link narratives to understanding teachers and teaching, cognitive psychologists began pointing out the limitations of the process-product paradigm by recognising the ‘humanistic’ aspects of teaching long before the advent of the narrative inquiry:

To the extent that observed or intended teaching behaviour is ‘thoughtless’, it makes no use of the human teacher’s most unique attributes. In so doing, it becomes mechanical and might well be done by a machine. If, however, teaching is done and, in all likelihood, will continue to be done by human teachers, the question of relationships between thought and action becomes crucial. (National Institute of Education, 1975, p. 1)

As stated above, previous research based on the process-product paradigm appeared to portray teaching as being ‘thoughtless’, thus ignoring the
unique attributes of teachers who come with a history, beliefs, knowledge and ‘thoughts’ when they enter the classroom; and in order to identify teachers’ thoughts and beliefs, the narrative approach seemed to be the missing link to solving the methodological problems of understanding teacher cognition and identity.

3.3. EXPLORING NEW DIMENSIONS IN TEACHER COGNITION: THE MENTAL LIVES OF TEACHERS

Research in teacher cognition dates back over thirty years (Borg, 2006), but most studies back then relied on the process-product paradigm, which seemed to assume the universal applicability of effective teaching methods. In other words, teachers’ prior knowledge, prior learning experiences, thoughts, beliefs, and context were not taken under consideration in exploring research in teacher cognition. The development of cognitive psychology, however (as mentioned above), paved the way for a new direction in exploring teacher cognition – one that focused on the individual teacher as a ‘knower’, with certain thoughts and beliefs which were assumed to influence the way they carried out their duties in the classroom. Thus, research in teacher cognition began to focus on teachers’ mental lives, the ‘unobservable dimensions of teaching’ (Borg, 2006, p. 163).

Earlier studies in teacher cognition primarily focused on teachers’ decision-making processes (Peterson et al., 1978; Shavelson et al., 1977), while the 80s witnessed the beginning of an interest in what has now become the dominant concepts in teacher cognition – teacher knowledge and beliefs. Furthermore, researchers began to expand the notion of teacher knowledge into different types, such as pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman,
Pedagogical content knowledge represents the integration of teachers’ knowledge of the subject and pedagogical methods, making the content comprehensible to the learner; in other words, it ‘embodies the aspects of content most germane to its teachability [...] in a word, the ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others’ (Shulman, 1987, p. 9). On the other hand, teachers’ practical knowledge ‘encompasses first-hand experience of student learning styles, interests, needs, strengths, and difficulties, and a repertoire of instructional techniques and classroom management skills’ (Elbaz, 1983, p. 5). Over the years, as Clandinin and Connelly (1988) continued to grapple with the idea of integrating narratives in teacher education research, they adapted Elbaz’s notion of ‘practical knowledge’ and coined the term, ‘personal practical knowledge’ (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988), which seems to hybridise the theoretical perspectives of pedagogical content knowledge and practical knowledge in an attempt to provide a comprehensive definition of teacher knowledge.

3.3.1. Constructing teacher identity through personal practical knowledge (PPK)

Once we grasp the notion of personal practical knowledge (PPK), it becomes easier to understand why narrative inquiry has made such a significant contribution to the field of teacher education; if PPK is the theoretical framework from which we draw an understanding of teachers and teaching, then narrative inquiry is the methodological tool for gaining access to the teachers’ world of PPK. Furthermore, PPK seemed to have been the answer to the concerns raised by cognitive psychologists during
the 1970s who questioned the validity of the process-product paradigm, which depicted a ‘thoughtless, mechanical’ image of the teacher; thus, PPK brought forth the dynamic, active personae of the teacher who thinks, struggles, and strives toward making sense out of their identities as they continuously draw upon their prior knowledge and experiences as well as interact with the current teaching contexts. According to Clandinin (1992), PPK is an ongoing process of identity construction of the teacher:

[PPK] is knowledge that reflects the individual’s prior knowledge and acknowledges the contextual nature of that teacher’s knowledge. It is a kind of knowledge carved out of, and shaped by, situations; knowledge that is constructed and reconstructed as we live out our stories and retell and relive them through processes of reflection. (p. 125)

In addition to recognising the personal, unique, humanistic factors involved in the process of teaching and the teaching environment, PPK highlights the moral and emotional nature of human beings. Clandinin and Connelly (1988) claim that ‘PPK is a moral, effective, and an aesthetic way of knowing life’s educational situations’ (p. 59). In a similar vein, Golombek (2009) states that PPK ‘highlight[s] the experiential, dynamic, and storied dimensions of teachers’ knowledge alongside its emotional and moral dimensions’ (pp. 155-156). Furthermore, Golombek (2009) points out that PPK has become a significant component of research in teacher education and ‘part of a robust scholarly tradition that has challenged the separation of knower and knowledge, experience and science, and subjectivity and objectivity’ (p. 156). The teaching profession can be a demanding field in which teachers are faced with unexpected challenges and obstacles that may require moral
decisions and actions in response to numerous situations that may arise in the classroom, thus creating an emotional element in identity construction. According to Benesch (2012), emotion and identity are interchangeable thus a teacher’s PPK – family upbringing and cultural capital, prior learning experiences, peer and teacher influences and teacher beliefs – inevitably contribute toward the emotional and moral complexities that ‘emerge from a myriad of sources and [in which] emotions play a central role in shaping teachers’ identity and professional practice’ (Wolff & De Costa, 2017, p. 79).

Despite the significant impact that PPK has made on teacher education research, only a few studies that explicitly address PPK in L2 teacher education research have been found. Golombek (1998) explored the PPK of two pre-service ESL teachers in an American university by focusing on the tensions that they faced in their classrooms. In another study, Tsang (2004) examined the PPK of three pre-service English language teachers in Hong Kong and investigated how their interactive decision-making processes were affected. Identifying PPK as a component of identity construction, Morton and Gray (2010) focused on lesson planning conferences (LPCs) with a group of students enrolled in a pre-service TESOL certificate course. The results of the study showed that the LPCs turned out to be a ‘dynamic and recursive process in which problems of instruction emerged and solutions were suggested’ (p. 297). The researchers conclude that LPCs provide a positive strategy for constructing novice ESL teachers’ PPK and professional identities.

3.3.2. The construct of ‘image’ in personal practical knowledge

One of the key elements to understanding PPK is the construct of ‘image’.
For Clandinin (1985), the image in PPK is quite different from the image that most people are familiar with; that is, when we think of the word, image, we typically think of a concept or a propositional knowledge term. Clandinin argues that her idea of image as a component of PPK is similar to the works of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in philosophy, which represent ‘an alternative account in which human experience and understanding, rather than objective truth, plays the central role’ (Clandinin, 1985, p. 363). According to Johnson (1984), ‘it is our images and deep metaphorical structures, as well as our concepts and propositions that constitute our practical knowledge …’ (p. 467; cited in Clandinin, 1985, p. 363). Likewise, Clandinin argues that her interest lies in the ‘imaginative processes’ from which meaningful, useful patterns are generated in practice:

It involves the calling forth of images from a history, from a narrative experience, so that the ‘image’ is then available to guide us in making sense of our future situations. Images are within experience and not only in the logically defined words which specify their conceptual status. Accordingly, for my work, images are embodied and enacted. Their embodiment entails emotionality, morality, and aesthetics and it is these affective, personally felt and believed, meanings which engender enactments. (p. 363)

The notion of ‘image’ in PPK, then, is a complex integration of a teacher’s personal history and her classroom experiences which potentially invoke an emotional outcry that leads to acts of morality. In a study exploring two primary teachers’ PPK, Clandinin (1985) found that one of the teachers, Stephanie, an elementary school teacher with 12 years of experience in two
inner-city schools, identified her classroom image as a ‘home’. As a child who was ‘always different’ and who ‘marched to another beat’ (p. 372), Stephanie seemed to link images of a home (or what a home should be like) to her classroom by creating certain ‘home-like’ features within the classroom, such as planting a garden outside of the classroom; she also found herself using expressions like, ‘family style’, and ‘comfortable’. Here, we can see how the construct of ‘image’ is carved out from her personal history in an attempt to offer the kind of opportunity for her students that she may not have had access to as a child; in this sense, we can see how the notion of image in PPK plays a central role in shaping teacher’s personal and professional life. As such, image represents the experiential dimension of teaching, and it is ‘a knowledge term which resides at the nexus of the theoretical, the practical, the objective, and the subjective’ (Clandinin, 1985, p. 361).

As we consider the positive influences of PPK, we cannot help but wonder how, then, it might be possible to help teachers to draw upon their PPK as much as possible during their teaching practices. Perhaps the seminal works of Schön (1983, 1987) and reflective practices may have been one of the responses to this question (Golombek, 2009). As shown earlier, PPK is a complex aspect of teacher knowledge – one that integrates the individual’s history, prior experiences, emotionality, morality, as well as the current teaching context in which she is situated; in this sense, the ‘reflective practitioner’ who is actively engaged in an ongoing process of reflecting, evaluating, and navigating through her past, present, and future has the potential to tap on her PPK as well.
3.4. THE REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER

Given that this study explores the dialogic engagement of a researcher/teacher-educator and her student teachers, it is important to consider how the current teacher education field operationalises teacher cognition for training novice teachers. As such, it is important to discuss one of the most widely employed approaches in the teacher education field – the notion of the reflective practitioner (Schön, 1983, 1992). The notion of reflective practices has now become so familiar to teacher educators that we often forget its original founder had not explicitly intended on addressing the teaching profession at the time of his writings; nonetheless, educational researchers claim that reflection has become ‘part of the language of teacher education’ (Korthagen & Wubbles, 1995, p. 51; italics in the original), thus representing a shift in teacher education away from a primary focus on the mastery of techniques and theoretical concepts to an emphasis on reflection and self-critique (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993).

When Schön (1983) first began constructing his ideas of the ‘reflective practitioner’, he, too – like Clandinin and Connelly – drew upon Dewey’s works (1933, 1938) on experience and formulated a framework for developing professional education programmes. Dewey’s main contribution to reflective practice stemmed from the ‘distinction between routine and reflective action in teaching [which] highlighted the importance of teachers reflecting systematically upon their working contexts, resources, and actions and applying what they learned from reflection in their everyday and long-term decision making’ (Burton, 2009, p. 298). In a series of case studies of professional development, Schön (1983) describes how practitioners act and understand their actions, attempting to make sense of
their practices, no matter how puzzling the situation may have appeared to be. Schön argues that the essence of professional development and expertise lies within the metacognitive processes in which practitioners engage in, which lead them to new understandings of their practices; in other words, reflection ‘involves some form of experimentation, in which practitioners constantly interpret situations by means of problem-setting and problem-solving, a process which can lead to a reframing of the situation’ (Korthagen & Wubbles, 1995, p. 52). Here, we see an active agent, taking control of her practices, carefully reflecting, monitoring and making interpretations of situations; this portrayal of the reflective practitioner displays a stark contrast from the theoretical perceptions of the technical rationality paradigm, which Schön (1983) refers to as ‘the heritage of positivism’ and the ‘positivist epistemology of practice’ (p. 31).

3.4.1. Shifting from technical rationality to reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action

In order to build his argument against the theoretical perceptions of technical rationality, Schön (1983) begins by describing the dominance of its epistemological influences on professional development:

The view of professional knowledge which has most powerfully shaped both our thinking about the professions and the institutional relations of research, education and practice – professional activity consists in instrumental problem solving made rigorous by the application of scientific theory and technique. (p. 21)
Central to Schön’s thesis is the deconstruction of technical rationality through reflection. For Schön, problem-solving is crucial in all professions, and the tenets guided by the technical rationality framework do not offer a practical solution to the practitioner who is faced with unexpected circumstances: ‘[W]hen a problem has been constructed, it may escape the categories of applied science because it presents itself as unique or unstable. In order to solve a problem by the application of existing theory or technique, a practitioner must be able to map those categories onto features of the practical situation’ (p. 41). Schön goes on to illustrate that a physician cannot apply standard techniques to a unique case that may not be found in textbooks; or a nutritionist planning a nutritional intervention in a rural Central American community may find that her plans have failed due to unforeseen circumstances that may have arisen after she had completed her plans. As such, Schön argues that practitioners should engage in reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action rather than submit to the application of scientific theory and technique.

According to Schön, practitioners make decisions during their practices all the time; teachers, for example, frequently find themselves having to make judgments and decisions in the classroom. In order to arrive at a decision, teachers must draw upon knowledge and prior experiences in order to respond to the immediate matter at hand. This is what Schön refers to as reflection-in-action. On the other hand, when teachers engage in a more ‘contemplative type of reflection’ (Edge, 2010, p. 17), they are involved in reflection-on-action, in which they are free from the immediate burden of teaching and have the opportunity to reflect on what happened and consider what has been discovered and how things might be different or enhanced in the future. In order to understand these two concepts, it is also important to see Schön’s disapproval of the division between theory and practice in
teaching. When teachers draw upon theories-in-use, they are engaged in reflection-in-action; on the other hand, when they draw up teaching experience and espoused theories, they are engaged in reflection-on-action. According to Argyris and Schön (1974), ‘theories-in-use represent the patterns and behaviours that teachers accumulate in their daily work; whereas espoused theories are models for behaviour that teacher-learners are generally taught’ (Burton, 2009, p. 299). Schön also argues that reflective practices operate via feedback loops. For example, a single feedback loop may occur when a reflection-in-action leads to a change of activity in the classroom; likewise, a double loop can operate outside the classroom when a teacher reflects upon an action or an event that took place in the classroom and makes an attempt to address the situation by drawing up various factors that may have caused the incident. Burton (2009) points out that the consequences of double-loop feedback ‘can go beyond an immediate event and be far-reaching’ (p. 299). Furthermore, teachers and students may find a systematic approach to building a repertoire of comparing new and prior experiences. Zeichner and Liston (1996) argue that ‘providing ways for teachers to explain their spontaneous actions after the event helps teachers to make informed, better decisions in the future’. (cited in Burton, 2009, p. 299).

3.4.2. Studies in reflective practices in education

As mentioned earlier, Schön’s notion of the reflective practitioner was not originally aimed at teacher education programmes; nonetheless, the concept has been widely applied in teacher training contexts and as a result, most studies exploring reflective teaching practices in teacher education have taken place within pre-service teacher education programmes. This may be due to the numerous benefits teacher educators seem to assume
when pre-service teachers are trained to reflect upon their developmental progresses as they make the transition from novice teacher to teacher. Some studies have examined how to teach and support reflection (Rodgers, 2002; Valli, 1997), while others have examined how reflection has been used in individual courses (Adler, 1993; Gomez, 1991); there have also been studies focusing on student engagement in reflection (Maas, 1991; Proctor, 1993; Spaulding & Wilson, 2002), the beliefs and thoughts of teachers and change as a result of reflective practices (Edwards, 1996; Franke et al., 1998). While reflective studies have been actively explored in general education contexts, research within the ESL/EFL contexts are difficult to find, with the few exceptions of studies exploring how reflective practices affect teacher beliefs and instructional practices (Freeman, 1996; Lee, 2004; Pennington, 1995).

3.4.3. Criticisms and limitations of reflective practices

Without a doubt, the concept of reflective practices has made a lasting contribution to the field of professional development; and thus, we will likely refer to Schön’s writings again and again as we continue to research teacher education and teacher development. At the same time, Schön’s theoretical approaches have not been able to escape the sharp criticisms from fellow scholars in the academic realm. In an article entitled, ‘Schön shock: a case for reframing reflection-in-action?’ Michael Eraut (1995) argues that Schön’s ideas in The Reflective Practitioner are questionable, particularly the notion of reflection-in-action, in which he fails to analyse everyday practice nor discusses how reflective processes serve different purposes in various contexts. Furthermore, Eraut explains that Schön’s book has not only been overwhelmingly successful and well-received due to the powerful rhetoric and eloquence presented in the writings, but also because of Schön’s (1992)
vehement criticisms toward technical rationality came at a time of ‘growing disillusion with the role of science and social science in our society’:

Its success derives from many factors: the reputation of the author, the receptiveness of readers to those particular views at that particular time, the range of examples, the eloquence and persuasiveness of its argument have all contributed to its impact. It combines a devastating critique of the dominant technical rationality model of professional knowledge based on positivist epistemology with a celebration of the artistry of professional practitioners who have avoided being seduced by it or simply found it inapplicable to their normal work. (p. 9; italics in the original)

Burton (2009) also points out that reflection-in-action occurs spontaneously and actions and reflections may also call upon feelings about actions, which are impossible to capture in the immediate moment. Furthermore, researchers have also begun to recognise that reflective activities are often controlled and institutionalised in higher and professional education (Boud & Walker, 1998) and perhaps more importantly, they have begun to question whether reflection really explains how individuals learn professionally (Erlandson, 2005; Newman, 1999; Procee, 2006). In the next section, I compare and contrast the similarities and differences between the reflective practice paradigm and the notion of reflexivity. Although reflective practice and reflexivity are similar in nature, there are fundamental differences between the two, and despite the fact that reflective practices is the more familiar concept within the context of teacher education, I argue why it is necessary for teacher educators in TESOL to adapt reflexivity rather than
reflective practices.

3.5. REFLEXIVITY OR REFLECTIVE PRACTICES?

We often use the terms, reflexivity and reflective practices, interchangeably without realising that they stem from different theoretical perspectives; while reflexivity takes a more sociological stance, the reflective practice paradigm seems to have a stronger interest on the human cognition. Both concepts assume the circular, self-referential nature of self-observation and monitoring, but the extent of the observations and the monitoring seem to differ; that is, the central question at hand for reflexivity might be, ‘How shall I live? How do I go on?’, whereas the reflective practitioner typically seeks to ask, ‘What’s going on? How can I fix this problem? How can I do better next time?’ In other words, the reflective practitioner seeks to find the answers to the problems that arise through reflections, whereas individuals engaged in reflexivity stretches the scope of their concerns to his social contexts which inevitably involves numerous entities such as other individuals, social boundaries and obstacles, often leaving the individual without clear, immediate answers to the concerns at hand.

Woolgar (1988) discusses a ‘continuum of reflexivity’, which ranges from radical constitutive reflexivity to benign introspection or reflection (which may be associated with reflective practices). According to Woolgar, radical constitutive reflexivity represents the postmodern stance in which individuals and society engage in a dialogical process of co-construction of meaning; benign introspection/reflection, however, is closer to the positivist position and is more concerned with process and verification, focusing on the measures taken to represent the participants’ actions or the strive
toward achieving ‘accuracy’ through their accounts of reality. This is an interesting perspective considering Schön’s efforts in emphasising his argument against the technical rationality paradigm, another name for positivism; in other words, it is questionable whether Schön’s depiction of the reflective practitioner is truly representative of the ‘anti-positivist’ that he sets out to be.

In this study, I argue that the reflective practice paradigm comes short of representing the current socio-cultural perspectives (Engstrom, 1999; Lantolf, 2000; Leont’ev, 1978; Vygotsky, 1978) of teaching and learning in that there is no acknowledgement of the individual’s social contexts and other individuals within these environments. As mentioned earlier, reflexivity takes a sociological approach to understanding how individuals interact with their social contexts. In order to explain why reflexivity has gained significance in the current era, Anthony Giddens (1991) begins by arguing that the ‘self’ becomes a ‘reflexive project’ in modern society as individuals continuously face new challenges and choices to be made in the face of a dynamic, multifaceted society: ‘The reflexivity of modern social life consists in the fact that social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those practices, thus constitutively altering their character’ (p. 38).

In the past, life was much simpler and tradition was passed on from generation to generation; individuals simply lived day-to-day without having to make too many choices, and identity was not often questioned nor

---

20 Whereas the notion of reflective practices has been widely discussed within the education field as a ‘tool’ for teacher training purposes, reflexivity is inherently a sociological concept as individuals seek to understand their self-identity in relation to their social contexts.
contemplated upon. In other words, ‘in pre-modern societies reflexivity was subordinated to the interpretation of tradition, which was passed on without transformation. With modernity, the interpretation of tradition is replaced by reflexivity’ (Delanty, 2005, p. 288). Rather than relying on knowledge transfer from the interpretation of tradition, individuals find a myriad of options, choices, and information and insights to help them to shape and build their lives in ways that would not have been otherwise possible in pre-modern societies. Furthermore, the notion of ‘expert knowledge’ brings forth a new perception in the sense that it is constantly being challenged and questioned by other concepts and ideas:

Expert knowledge is open to reappropriation by anyone with the necessary time and resources to become trained; and the prevalence of institutional reflexivity means that there is a continuous filtering back of expert theories, concepts and findings to the lay population. (Giddens, 1991, p. 91)

There is a plethora of how-to manuals, self-help, self-empowering, self-healing books and media available today which allows individuals the potential to shape their own life trajectories. In this sense, Giddens’s portrayal of the post-traditional individual is an empowered being capable of building and constructing his or her own biography and narrative; at the same time, it might be worthwhile to note here that there may have been a ‘celebratory’ aspect to Giddens’s work when he was presenting his thoughts during the early 1990s whereas it may be a bit difficult to embrace such thoughts now as we find ourselves in the era of the post-9/11 tragedy, not yet fully recovered from the 2008 financial crisis and undoubtedly concerned with the crisis of capitalism hastened by the current Covid19 crisis.
Nonetheless, one of the central themes in Giddens’s theory of reflexivity is the notion of the duality of structure and the question of whether individuals are inevitably constrained by social structures and obstacles or have the ability to transcend such limitations, though as the above suggests, Giddens himself seems to imply that reflexivity is parallel to the resilience inherent in human beings.

3.6. THE REFLEXIVE TURN IN SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

Beginning in the early 1970s, anthropologists began questioning whether it was possible to construct objective studies of a culture without involving their own biases and epistemologies. Such thoughts were influenced by feminist anthropologists who claimed that the researcher inevitably affects the ethnographies they write. During this time, the field of anthropology began experimenting with subjective and objective writing styles (Clifford & Marcus, 1986). Particularly, James Clifford and George Marcus’s (1986) seminal study, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, discussed the potential effects that different writing styles had on its audience. Furthermore, Clifford and Marcus’s work challenged the ‘participation-observation’ approach, a term coined by the Polish anthropologist, Bronislaw Malinowski (1913), who studied patterns of exchange in Aboriginal Australia through ethnographic documents.

Problematising the notion of participation-observation, Clifford (1986) claimed that a photo of Malinowski in which he ‘recorded himself writing at a table’ (p. 2) signalled a crisis of representation which displayed a general ‘state of profound transition within the West’ (Marcus & Fischer, 1986, pp. 8-9). At the time the photo was taken, Malinowski lamented that ‘there was
no career as an ethnologist’ (Kramer, 1986, p. 10) and considered the possibility of building a ‘writing career’ instead. Such incidents called for a radical response from the field, a shift away from the focus on participant-observation, empirical research, and ‘writing up’ the text (Clifford, 1986, p. 2). As such, the ‘reflexive turn’ called upon anthropologists to ‘bend backward’ and to look at themselves by asking whether maintaining an objective standpoint through writing was possible. Furthermore, ‘privileged ideological’ categories such as monologue, observer-observed, power and author (Tyler, 1986, p. 128) were replaced with categories such as ‘mutual dialogical production of discourse, of a story or sorts, cooperative story making, ethical discourse, and a specified ideological attitude toward the ethnography of the other’ (Tyler, pp. 126-127). Scholars writing within the field of postmodern, feminist, interpretive, and critical perspectives drew upon Foucault, Derrida, and Rorty among others in order to ‘deconstruct’ traditional ethnographic approaches and began embracing reflexivity as a central approach to social science research methods.

The reflexive turn inevitably has had a significant influence on sociology as well, and sociologists began embracing reflexivity as an important tool for research (Denzin, 2001, 2003, 2014). Denzin (1997) resonates the aforementioned concerns of objectivity and ethnography by stating that the problem of reflexivity and the ways in which ‘our subjectivity becomes entangled in the lives of others’ (p. 27) are issues which have concerned sociologists (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; Hobbs & May, 1993) and anthropologists (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Geertz, 1973; Rosaldo, 1989) for at least forty years. As social science researchers, it is difficult to ignore the integral role that we play in the social worlds that we study and ‘[r]epresentation … is always self-presentation … the other’s presence is directly connected to the writer’s self-presence in the text’ (Denzin, 1984, p.
In an article entitled, *The reflexive turn: The rise of first-person ethnography*, Venkatesh (2013) explains that the ‘reflexive turn’ in contemporary ethnography has placed the self at the heart of social science research, particularly in the past few years, and that scholars are ‘drawing on the use of the self to generate insights, establish patterns, and bring the voice of their research subjects to light’ (p. 4). Life history, case study, and ethnographic methods have been part of traditional humanistic interpretive social science discourse since the 1920s and 1930s, during which the University of Chicago sociologists, Park, Thomas, Blumer, and Hughes (Van Maanen, 1988), experimented with interpretive, interactionist approaches to qualitative research; however, sociologists in succeeding generations drifted away from such traditions and turned to ‘problems of measurement, validity, reliability, responses to attitude questionnaires, survey methodologies, theory development, and conceptual indicators’ (Denzin, 2014, p. viii). One of the reasons for this change may have been due to the ‘shifting public tastes for sociological studies [...] for understanding mass behaviour – public opinion, consumer tastes, industrial organization – and so employing methods that could shed light on such patterns were in great demand’ (Venkatesh, 2013, p. 3).

The emergence of postmodern, feminist, and critical discourses, however, has brought upon a resurgence of interest in interpretive, (auto) biographical, life history studies in the social sciences, thus following in the footsteps of anthropologists writing within the postmodern framework by ushering in ‘the reflexive turn’ in social science research. Feminists have been particularly supportive of researcher subjectivity (Grosz, 1995; Lather, 1991; Riley, 1988), and reflexivity has been an ongoing recurring theme in feminist
research (DeVault, 1990; Fonow & Cook, 1991; Olesen, 1994) since the 1990s. Furthermore, as sociologists began embracing reflexivity as an important concept and tool for research methodology, the self has become the primary informant in new social science research, such as the autoethnography.

3.7. DEFINING AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

The concept of autoethnography may often be confused with autobiography; while most people are familiar with autobiography – a story of an individual’s life written from the first-person perspective, autoethnography is not widely known to the general public. We often relate autobiographies with famous people or individuals who have been able to overcome extraordinary circumstances to achieve great success. In this sense, there is a tendency to believe that autobiographies are written by individuals who have ‘interesting’ stories to tell and more often than not, we may not that think our own lives are interesting enough to be shared with others. In the era of postmodernism, however, ‘voices of the common people’ are becoming increasingly valued and thus many have begun to ‘defy the conventional authoritative elitism of autobiography’ (Chang, 2008, p. 32). Furthermore, an autoethnography may be distinguished from an autobiography when an author experiences an epiphany and shares aspects of the particular experiences in order to illuminate more general cultural phenomena and/or to show how the experience works to diminish, silence, or deny certain people and their stories (Holman Jones et al., 2013). On the other hand, when an author simply writes to tell a story but does not integrate aspects of this experience with cultural phenomena, then it may be considered as an autobiography. In this sense, an autoethnography is a personal story with a specific purpose that seeks to illuminate social inequities.
Similar and yet different from autobiography, autoethnography is the alternative approach for ordinary individuals who find the need to discuss their ‘personal experience to examine and/or critique cultural experience’ (Holman Jones et al., 2013, p. 22). Although autoethnography is a relatively unfamiliar concept in the field of TESOL and applied linguistics, it has been a widely accepted approach since the early years of American sociology (Anderson, 2006). Hayano (1979) was the first individual known to have coined the term ‘autoethnography’ to refer to anthropologists who study ‘their own people’ (p. 101), arguing that ‘in a post-colonial era, ethnographers need to study their own social worlds and sub-cultures’ (Hayler, 2011, p. 19). Hayano defined autoethnography as cultural studies in which the researcher is a complete insider, ‘acquiring an intimate familiarity with the group, or achieving full membership in the group being studied’ (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739).

Similar to many of the terms used in the social sciences, the meanings and the ways in which the term, autoethnography, has been applied in various contexts have evolved over the years. Nonetheless, Sikes (2013) suggests that ‘if any author describes their work as autoethnography (or autoethnography auto/ethnography since all those forms are used) and explain and justify why they consider it to be such, then that is what it is’ (p. xxiv). Ellis and Bochner (2000) point out that autoethnography may fall under the rubric or other studies known as narratives of the self (Richardson, 1994b), personal experience narratives (Denzin, 1989), first-person accounts (Ellis, 1998a), auto-observation (Adler & Adler, 1987), personal ethnography, (Crawford, 1996), critical autobiography (Church, 1995), socio-autobiography (Zola, 1982), evocative narratives (Bochner, Ellis, & Tilmann-Healy, 1997), reflexive ethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 1996a), indigenous ethnography (Gonzales & Krizek, 1994), and ethnic autobiography (Reed-
Danahay, 1997). At the same time, autoethnography has also been regarded as a subtype of other genres such as impressionistic accounts (Van Maanen, 1988), narrative ethnography (Tedlock, 1991), interpretive biography (Denzin, 1989), new or experimental ethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 1996), or postmodern ethnography (Tyler, 1986).

Denzin (2014, pp. 19-20) notes that autoethnography has been described differently by different individuals:

Autoethnography is a form of self-narratives that places the self within a social context. It is a method and a text. (Reed-Danahay, 1997, p. 6)

Autoethnography is … a self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self and others in social context. (Spry, 2001, p. 710)

Autoethnographic texts … democratise the representational sphere of culture by locating the particular experiences of individuals in tension with dominant expressions of discursive power. (Neumann, 1996, p. 189)

Analytic autoethnography has five key features. It is ethnographic work in which the researcher (1) is a full member in a research group or setting; (2) uses analytic reflexivity; (3) has a visible narrative presence in the written text; (4) engages in dialogues with informants beyond the self; (5) is committed to analytic research agenda focusing on improving theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena. (Anderson, 2006, p. 374)
Autoethnography is a blurred genre … a response to the call [l]t is setting a scene, telling a story, weaving intricate connections between life and art … making a text present … refusing categorization … believing that words matter and writing toward the moment when the point of creating autoethnographic texts is to change the world. (Holman Jones, 2005, p. 765)

Denzin (2014) questions whether the above descriptions of autoethnography might be ‘apples or oranges … different tasks or different sides of the same coin’ and states, Holman Jones et al. (2013a) want to ‘move audiences to action. So do I’ (p. 20). Denzin refers to Sartre (1981) who provides an overarching description of what autoethnography means to him:

No individual is just an individual; each person is a *universal singular*, summed up and for this reason universalized by his or her historical epoch, each person in turn reproducing himself or herself in its singularity. Universal by the singular universality of human history, singular by universalizing singularity in his or her projects, the person requires simultaneous examination from both ends. (p. ix-x, paraphrase, italics in the original)

As described above, taking on the role of an autoethnographer has allowed me to acknowledge the inevitably reflexive nature of the research process and thus I have come to realise that ‘I’ as the primary subject of my study is indeed in need of an examination in order to explore the ‘singularity’ as well as the ‘universality’ of the self. In other words, an autoethnographic study not only seeks to understand the unique aspects of the ‘self’ but it also helps
individuals to discover themselves through others as they realize the ‘simultaneity’ or the ‘universality’ of human beings.

As mentioned earlier, autoethnography has been defined by different researchers in different ways, but perhaps the numerous descriptions are simply ‘different tasks or different sides of the same coin’ (Denzin, 2014, p. 20).

3.7.1. History of autoethnography

Having defined autoethnography from multiple perspectives, I now present a historical overview of autoethnography. According to Holman Jones et al., (2013), there are four interrelated historical trends that we may contribute to the development of autoethnography: (1) a recognition of the limits of scientific knowledge and a growing appreciation for qualitative research; (2) a heightened concern about the ethics and politics of research; (3) a greater recognition of and appreciation for narrative, the literary and aesthetic, emotions and the body; and (4) the increased importance of social identities and identity politics (pp. 25-26).

To begin with, early quantitative studies (particularly in biomedical and behavioural research) were often criticised for treating research subjects unethically in order to serve the researchers’ benefits. Furthermore, quantitative studies were unable to capture the ‘particular, the micro, and the situated elements of our lives’ (Holman Jones et al., 2013, p. 26) and scholars began to recognise that in order to understand society, we must also acknowledge the dynamic and unpredictable nature of society. Global
crises such as war, colonial domination and the Holocaust have also triggered the quest to understand the complex world in which we live.

Despite a growing appreciation for qualitative approaches in social science research, qualitative methods are not exempt from the ‘research abuses and manipulation’ in which research subjects are often ‘probed and prodded’ (Holman Jones et al., 2013, p. 29) throughout the research process. The same types of concerns for quantitative researchers were also relevant to qualitative researchers who enter the research field in order to observe and document their discoveries of others. Social science research in general (both quantitative and qualitative) were faced with the challenge of responding to the ethical concerns raised in the research process. Geertz (1973) referred to social science researchers as ‘askers and lookers’ and questioned ‘what it was they were trying to do’ (pp. 131-132). As a result, this reconceptualisation of social science researchers as askers and lookers also led them to question how their research findings may function as poetic representations (Richardson, 2001), thus ushering in the ‘crisis of representation’ (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Van Maanen, 1988).

The crisis of representation naturally illuminated the need to include stories and narratives in social science research, thus allowing the authentic voices of the participants to be heard and ‘poetically represented’ within the research findings. Nonetheless, storytelling and using narratives as research data continued to be dismissed and devalued within the academic context.

Furthermore, researchers’ and participants’ bodily experiences were also
abstracted and disregarded when in fact the researcher’s physical positioning within the research field can provide various insights into the cultural phenomena and context being studied. At the same time, qualitative researchers began to recognise the importance of bodily experiences within the research context. For example, Pelias (1999) questioned how one could study speech anxiety without ever having experienced such symptoms. Such instances show how ‘objective, sterile, and impersonal prose was simply inadequate to articulating the stories, the creative use of language, and image, emotion and human feeling and bodily experience’. The need to draw out the authentic experiences of individuals eventually led to exploring the challenges faced by the disenfranchised and the marginalised in society. As such, the rise of identity politics began to inspire many researchers to recognise the hidden voices of the oppressed.

Society has always consisted of the oppressed and the marginalised, and the emergence of identity politics has become the social response to such concerns. As a result, academic disciplines such as African American studies, women’s and gender studies, Latin studies, Asian studies, labour and class studies, religious and spiritual studies, and LGBTQ studies began to explore identities and the personal experiences of those who suffered from social inequity. Despite such efforts to promote identity politics, tangible approaches to addressing social justice have not always been clear-cut. According to Fraser (2003), two main approaches exist – recognition and redistribution – which are often viewed as a ‘either or’ concept; however, Fraser argues that both are necessary. Whereas recognition simply refers to the very act of recognising the differences or the needs of the oppressed, redistribution entails a ‘modified paradigm of economic redistribution’ (p. 3). In any case, Fraser argues that the ‘emancipatory aspects of the two problematics should be integrated in a single comprehensive framework’ (p.
3); in other words, while recognition is indeed an important starting point, recognition with ‘actions’ – such as redistribution or any other form of ‘tangible’ support – is necessary.

3.7.2. Making a case for autoethnography

One of the challenges of adopting an autoethnographic approach to a doctoral thesis has been the difficulty of ‘justifying’ the approach as it continues to play a minor role in the field of TESOL and applied linguistics. In April 2016, I presented a paper on autoethnography at the American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL) in Florida. Noticing that I was the only person presenting a paper on autoethnography in the entire conference where thousands of papers were being presented on a wide range of topics related to language learning theories and methods, I felt the need to begin by ‘qualifying’ my research method. I began my presentation by stating that autoethnography is underrepresented and has yet to be embraced as an effective approach to qualitative research within the field of applied linguistics and TESOL and yet, I have decided to adapt the approach in order to exercise reflexivity as a teacher educator because I wanted to make sense of my own professional identity before analysing other peoples’ identities. Shortly after my presentation, a woman approached me and said she attends many ‘non-language related’ academic conferences in Education, Sociology, Culture and Communications and advised me to visit one of these conferences in the future as I would be ‘very surprised’ to find that self-studies and autoethnographies are studied, presented and discussed ‘everywhere’, ‘all the time’ in these events; unfortunately, I have not had the opportunity to take her up on her advice, but I have begun to explore ‘outside’ of the applied linguistics and TESOL bodies of literature more actively and have been able to confirm the woman’s claims as I have
discovered a plethora of literature devoted to autoethnography and self-studies along with numerous books and articles, many of which have been published more recently. Some worthy of mentioning here might be *Studying Teacher Education: Self-studies in Teacher Education Practices* (a peer-reviewed journal), *The Handbook of Autoethnography* (Holman Jones *et al.*, 2013), *Autoethnography: The Sage Benchmarks Series in Social Science Methodology* (Sikes, 2013), *Interpretive Autoethnography* (Denzin, 2014), *Autoethnography: Understanding Qualitative Research* (Adams *et al.*, 2015), and most recently the launching of *The Journal of Autoethnography* in January 2020 by the University of California. In a recent publication of an anthology devoted to critiquing and analysing the impact of neoliberalism on higher education and qualitative research, Denzin and Giardina (2017) problematise neoliberal approaches to higher education:


The contributing authors to the above anthology, *Qualitative Inquiry in Neoliberal Times*, then discuss a variety of topics in critiquing the impact of neoliberalism on qualitative research throughout the book. Overall, the notion of ‘data’ and ‘data analysis’ in qualitative research is problematised as Cheek (2017) claims that her motivation for writing this chapter ‘stems from a long interest in trying to better understand the social mess that we,
as qualitative researchers in neoliberal times, find ourselves in – a social mess that no part of our qualitative research endeavours remains untouched by, or can stand apart from’ (p. 19). Traditionally, qualitative researchers have been engaged in what St. Pierre (2011) refers to as the use of ‘brute data’ in social research, including many approaches to qualitative research, which is regarded as ‘solid bedrock, building blocks of true knowledge that can be accumulated into regularities, generalities, scientific laws of the social world that emulate the scientific laws of the natural world’ (p. 224). Similarly, MacLure (2017) points out that ‘in conventional qualitative method, data are typically assumed to be mute until awakened to meaning by the interpretive prowess of the researcher and her specialist analyst tools. Their role is basically to nod in agreement with the researchers’ interpretations and thereafter to disappear – lifted up or subsumed under concepts or categories’ (p. 51).

Throughout the process of writing this autoethnography, I must admit that I have been afraid and anxious about writing the methodology chapter more than any other chapter because I continued to worry about how I could ‘fulfil’ all the criteria for what accounts as ‘good qualitative research’ such as membership checking, data triangulation, data coding and analysis, reliability and replicability by establishing a link between ‘evidence and assertion’ (Richards, 2003, p. 4) – all of which did not seem possible with an autoethnographic approach. After reading nearly every single book I could find on autoethnography, I have concluded that the only thing that I could do is to simply explain how I went about writing my thesis to the best of my abilities and be as truthful as possible, for much of the data would derive from my own memory and interpretations, which cannot be ‘proven’ or confirmed by others. MacLure (2017) refers to Britzman’s (1992) comment in which she ‘spoke of the need for educational research to
become *unintelligible* to itself, in order to free itself of its bad faith and its bad habits’ (p. 51; italics in the original).

### 3.7.3. Interpretive autoethnography

Although autoethnography can be broadly defined as an approach to social science research that focuses on self-narratives, researchers have found different angles to depart from. Denzin (2014) takes an ‘interpretive’ approach to his work and suggests traditional ethnography is ‘captured in the phrase, *writing culture*’ (Clifford & Marcus, 1986 cited in Denzin, 2014, p. 26):

*Under the writing culture framework the ‘culture of a people is seen as an ensemble of texts … which the anthropologists struggle to read over the shoulders of those to whom they properly belong’. (Geertz, 1973, p. 452)*

Denzin points out that an alternative approach to the writing culture framework is to view people (writers) as ‘performers’ rather than as writers. That is, rather than writing about a culture, people were seen as performers of a culture through their interpretive (writing) practices (Conquergood, 1985).

Denzin (2014) claims, ‘the turn to performance argues that we should study persons as performers and cultures as performative and ethnodramatic accomplishments’ (p. 26). The ultimate goal is to create opportunity for critical consciousness and as a result, autoethnography comes into the
picture as all ethnographers inevitably (whether reflexively or unreflexively) ‘write themselves’ into their ethnographies. In so doing, autoethnography not only presents the intersection of imagination, activism, and civic struggle, but it becomes the space of ‘performative acts of activism’ (Madison, 2010).

When a researcher sets out to adapt an autoethnographic approach for academic research, one of the most important concerns may involve the challenges of writing from the first-person narrative while at the same time maintaining the academic rigour and calibre expected of a research study. Whereas an autoethnographer may simply wish to depart from drawing upon self-narratives, there are different approaches that a researcher may wish to adapt, including evocative autoethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 1996), analytic autoethnography (Anderson, 2006), and interpretive autoethnography (Denzin, 2014) and autoethnographers may find themselves having to ‘choose’ within the overarching approach itself. Sikes (2013) provides a helpful illustration as follows:

Autoethnographers themselves debate over the pros and cons of what have come to be known as evocative, therapeutic, and analytical approaches (as will be seen). To some extent and in many respects, this discussion is a version of the well-rehearsed positivist versus interpretivist, objective versus subjective, qualitative versus quantitative, these criteria versus those criteria, debates. (p. xxvi)

Although different approaches to autoethnography may inevitably overlap with one another in some ways, each has distinctive characteristics; for
example, Denzin’s delineation of the interpretive approach seems to resonate with the dialogic nature of this thesis in which texts – specifically my narratives interacting with student narratives – interact, intersect and at times override one another in an ongoing attempt to find meaning through dialogue, thus producing intertextuality (Bakhtin, 1981). In other words, ‘meaning’ is never absolute nor truly ‘discovered’; instead, meaning is constantly created and re-created through interaction. According to Denzin (2014), the central assumption of the interpretive autoethnographic method is that ‘life is a social text, a fictional narrative production’ (p. ix). Drawing upon Derrida’s (1973) argument against the ‘metaphysics of presence’ which implies that the role of language ‘confirms’ the reality of ‘presence’, an interpretive approach to social science research stems from the understanding that the ‘full correspondence between the results of scientific inquiries and real-world phenomena is impossible in principle’ (Stimolo, 2016, p. 104). For example, a researcher’s life represented in an autoethnographic study may be seen as ‘non-fiction’ since it is indeed based on the researcher’s life story; however, much of the story being told is not only based on memory, which obviously can never be taken as having complete accuracy, but the story may present ‘difference’ – or ‘différance’ according to Derrida (1973; 1978) in which difference becomes différance when told in a different space at a different time. In other words, I have been working on my autoethnography for nearly a decade now and much of the data has not changed over the years; however, the years spent in teaching TESOL courses along with the changes that have occurred in my personal life in the past ten years continue to offer an element of ‘différance’ to my study each year and will continue to do so if I were to never reach the ‘completion’ of the writing process. In this sense, I find resonance with Bakhtin’s notion of intertextuality in the interpretive approach to doing autoethnography.
Denzin claims his project in constructing the interpretive autoethnographic approach stems from three different sources: C. Wright Mills (1959), Jean-Paul Sartre (1981), and recent development in literary, interpretive theory (Derrida, 1972, 1981). Denzin (2014) skillfully integrates Mills, Sartre and Derrida in which he ‘turn[s] the traditional life story, biographical project into an interpretive autoethnographic project, into a critical, performative practice, a practice that begins with a biography of the writer and moves outward to culture, discourse, history and ideology’ (p. 6). In so doing, interpretive autoethnography guides the researcher to move back and forth in time, using a version of Sartre’s (1963) progressive-regressive method in which ‘interpretation works forward to the conclusion of a set of acts taken up by the subjects while working back in time, interrogating the historical, cultural, and biographical conditions that moved the person to experience the events being studied’ (Denzin, 2014, p. 41). Furthermore, there is a political commitment to interpretive autoethnography, as well as a commitment to social justice agenda to inquire issues of inequity and injustice in particular social moments and places. The central question in an interpretive autoethnographic project asks, ‘how do men and women give meaning to their lives and perform these meanings in their daily lives? […] there is a pressing demand to show the practices of critical, interpretive, qualitative research can change the world in positive ways’ (Denzin, 2014, pp. ix-x). In a similar vein, Sikes (2013) refers to C. Wright Mills’ (1959) call to ‘employ the sociological imagination to translate private troubles into public issues’, in which autoethnography can provide a ‘means of challenging traditional, hegemonic, and imposed power imbalances by creating a space for people (as individuals, as possessors of certain social characteristics, and as members of particular socio-cultural groups) to describe their perceptions and experiences …’ (p. xxv); as such, autoethnography may be a ‘powerful kind of insider research (Sikes & Potts, 2008), helping to reveal organisational and institutional dynamics which
other approaches find less easy access to’ (Sikes, 2013, p. xxv).

3.7.3.1. Tapping on the sting of memory and locating the moment of epiphany

As an autoethnographer places the self in her study, personal memory plays a significant role in data collection. An autoethnographer has a ‘privileged access’ to her past, experiences and interpretations of those experiences (Chang, 2008, p. 71); furthermore, the researcher gains ‘first-hand discernment of what is important to [her] study’ (Chang, 2008, p. 71). Oftentimes, we do not consider memory as ‘legitimate’ data in qualitative research; however, Chang (2008) claims that drawing upon our memory in autoethnography is ‘no different in principle from its practice in other ethnographies. Both […] autoethnographer and ethnographers often rely on memory when collecting data’ (p. 71). Whereas autoethnographers rely on their own personal memory, ethnographers rely on their informant’s memory as well as recent memory of what they observed and heard in the research field.

Researchers suggest different ways of drawing upon our personal memories for constructing an autoethnography. Chang (2008) discusses the process of chronicling the past in which we create an autobiographical timeline of memorable events or experiences in the order in which they took place. Using this strategy ‘illuminates the evolution of [our] personal life and sequential regularity in [our lives]’ (p. 72). Another way of integrating personal memory in autoethnography is to consider the notion of the ‘sting of memory’ (Denzin, 2014, p. 32) in which the narrator places herself in history and begins to narrate her experiences; in so doing, she begins to
understand the ‘sting of the past’ and how the sting of memory locates itself in the moment, the beginning:

Once located this moment is dramatically described, fashioned into a text to be performed. This moment is then surrounded by cultural representations and voices that define the experience in question. These representations are contested, challenged. (p. 32)

Tapping on our ‘sting of memory’ then is what separates this notion from traditional approaches to drawing upon personal memory through a chronicling of the past; in other words, rather than looking backward and identifying significant events and experiences in chronological order, the narrator begins with those moments of crisis, or a turning point in her life. Denzin (2014) describes this experience by showing an example of how he located his own ‘sting of memory’:

By revisiting the past through remembered experiences, I insert myself in my family's history with Native Americans. This history is part of a deeper set of mid-century memories about Indians, reservations, life on the Midwest plains, and American culture. As I narrate these experiences, I begin to understand that I, along with my family, am a participant in this discourse. I am a player in a larger drama, performing the parts culture gives to White males. From the vantage of the present I can look back with a critical eye on those family performances, but the fact of my participation in them remains. We turned Native Americans
into exotic cultural objects. We helped them perform nonthreatening versions of Indian-ness, versions that conformed to those tame Indians I watched on the silver screen. (p. 32)

As shown above, identifying a sting of memory leads the narrator to start from a certain moment from her past in which he is ‘inserted’ in his family’s history, which in turn leads him to a deeper understanding of himself as well as his family in relation to the Native American Indians with whom they had had numerous contacts. Thus drawing upon a sting of memory does not follow a chronological order; instead, the narrator’s history becomes a montage, moments quoted out of context, ‘juxtaposed fragments from widely dispersed places and times’ (Ulmer, 1989, p. 112; cited in Denzin, 2014, p. 28). As a result, the narrator is able to discover hidden ideas and features of the present as well as of the past, from which she creates a new version of the past, helping her to form new understandings and insights. Denzin (2014) provides another vivid example of a ‘sting of memory’:

The sting of the past. A string of childhood and young adulthood memories: My brother and I are watching The Lone Ranger. We are playing cowboys and Indians – I’m Tonto. Thanksgiving, fourth grade, Coralville, Iowa: I’m dressed up as Squanto in the Thanksgiving play; my grandparents are in the audience. Summer 1960: I’m older now, drinking and driving fast down country roads, playing loud country music. I’m a cowboy now, not an Indian … (pp. 32-33)
Just as the sting of memory plays an important role in constructing an autoethnography, *epiphany* contributes toward our understanding of how the sting of memory leads to epiphanies. Epiphanies are described as ‘interactional moments and experiences which leave marks on people’s lives. In them, personal character is manifested. They are often moments of crisis [...] and alter the fundamental meaning structures in a person’s life’ (Denzin, 2014, p. 52). Denzin (2001) identifies four forms of the epiphany: (1) the *major event*, which touches every fabric of a person’s life; (2) the cumulative or *representative event*, which signifies eruptions or reactions to experiences which have been going on for a long period of time; (3) the *minor epiphanies* which symbolically represents a major, problematic moment in a relationship or a person’s life; and (4) those episodes whose meanings are given in the reliving of the experience (pp. 34-38; italics in the original). A narrator who sets out to construct a critical autoethnography attempts to connect epiphanies with culture, history, and social structure.

### 3.7.3.2. Performance in interpretive autoethnography

Performance theories in the social sciences stem from Goffman’s (1959) seminal works in symbolic interactionism and the development of his ideas of ‘dramaturgy and everyday life.’ Dramaturgy is defined as ‘the art of dramatic composition and theatrical representation’ (Wallace & Wolf, 1999, p. 229). Using this concept, Goffman analysed human behaviour in a theatrical setting and saw human beings as men and women acting out their roles in the real world. Goffman was primarily concerned with the ways in which individuals presented themselves and their activities to others; particularly, he focused on *impression management*, the ways in which individuals guide and control the impressions others form of him or her’ (Wallace & Wolf, 1999, p. 230). As such, Goffman’s notion of dramaturgy
and performance took on a micro-analytic approach in which the minute details and specifics of context were carefully observed and analysed in order to understand the underlying implications of daily human interaction. Borrowing Goffman’s ideas of performance in everyday life but departing from the micro-analytic approach, Denzin points out that Goffman’s thoughts are flawed in that they leave out the historical and biographical aspects in understanding human behaviour, thus ignoring the importance of the sociological imagination, which needs more recognition in TESOL research. Denzin states that C. Wright Mills (1959) is a good place to start:

The sociological imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two in society. The challenge is to develop a methodology that allows us to examine how the troubles of individuals are connected to public issues and to public responses to these troubles. That is its task and its promise. Individuals can understand their own experience and gauge their own fate only by locating themselves within their historical moment period … no social study that does not come back to the problems of biography, of history and of their intersections within a society has completed its intellectual journey. (pp. 5-6; italics added)

As mentioned earlier, Denzin (2014) sees stories in narratives as ‘performances’ that typically have the following elements: (1) people depicted as characters; (2) a scene, or context where the story occurs; (3) an epiphany or crisis that provides dramatic tension, around which the emplotted events depicted in the story revolve and toward which a resolution is pointed; (4) a temporal order of events; and (5) a point or moral
to the story which gives meaning to the experiences depicted (p. 4). In this sense, the qualitative researcher (or the ethnographer) is not just telling a story; rather, she is showing and performing the story. The performed text, thus, is given narrative meaning in interpretive autoethnography through ‘mystery’. Denzin (2014) defines mystery (Ulmer, 1989) as follows:

The mystery is simultaneously a personal mythology, a public story, a personal narrative, and a performance that critiques. It is an interactive, dramatic performance. It is participatory theater, a performance, not a text-centered interpretive event; that is, the emphasis is on performance and improvisation, and not on the reading of a text. (p.60)

As shown above, the mystery is a montage text as it becomes cinematic with characters, sounds, music, and images taken from the writer’s personal history and biography. The audience co-performs the text and the writer takes on the role of a narrator, commentator, guide, and co-performer leading to new discoveries and understandings of themselves. In the next section, I discuss analytic autoethnography (Anderson, 2006), which presents a balanced approach between evocative autoethnography and traditional qualitative research methods.

3.7.4. Analytic autoethnography: Searching for balance in self-studies

Traditional autoethnography, also known as evocative autoethnography (Ellis &Bochner, 2000) solely presents a series of self-narratives in a way that ‘the mode of story-telling is akin to the novel or biographies and thus
fractures the boundaries that normally separate social science from literature … the narrative text refuses to abstract and explain’ (p. 744). For the social science researcher, however, adapting such an approach may be problematic because evocative autoethnographers ‘bypass the representational problem by invoking an epistemology of emotion, moving the reader to feel the feelings of the other’ (Denzin, 1997, p. 228). An evocative autoethnographic approach denies the systematic methods (i.e., relying on interviews of other informants, following a theoretically based method of data analysis, etc.) that most traditional ethnographic studies call upon. Instead, evocative autoethnography calls for a ‘narrative text that refuses to abstract and explain’ (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 744) but instead focuses on the self and the emotional reflections of the author.

According to Anderson (2006), analytic autoethnography has key features which seek to honour the traditional characteristics of an ethnographic study in the social science field. Anderson (2006) summarises his theoretical perspectives on analytic autoethnography as follows:

The purpose of analytic autoethnography is not to simply document personal experience, to provide an “insider’s perspective,” or to evoke emotional resonance with the reader. Rather, the defining characteristic of analytic social science is to use empirical data to gain insight into some broader set of social phenomena than those provided by the data themselves. (p. 387)

In sum, analytic autoethnography is committed to illuminating the researcher’s voice while at the same time seeking to find how the researcher
and the participants intersect and interact with another. Thus, an analytic autoethnographic approach is primarily concerned with the mutual influences that the researcher and the participants have upon one another. This obviously has the potential to produce stronger implications for the wider research context than a sole representation of the participants who are often in a position in which they are unable to influence the research context on their own. Finally, I present ‘critical autoethnography’ (Boylorn & Orbe, 2014) in the next section and discuss how self-studies can help us to develop an awareness of gender, race, ethnicity, social class and orientation within larger systems of power, oppression, and social privilege.

3.7.5. Critical autoethnography

In this final section of my discussion on autoethnography, I focus on ‘critical autoethnography’ (Boylorn & Orbe, 2014), which stems from critical ethnography (Madison, 2012). According to Madison (2012), critical ethnography ‘begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain’ (p. 5). Critical autoethnographers, then, are concerned with the ‘politics of positionality’ (Madison, 2012), which in turn helps the researcher to recognise unequal power structures in society for which they take responsibility through reflexive measures. Critical autoethnographers have focused on numerous topics ranging from education (Austin & Hickey, 2007; Roberts, 2014); ethnic identity (Hao, 2014; Yomtoob, 2014), social class (Orbe, 2014), sexual orientation (Adams, 2011), social justice (Toyosaki & Pensonteau-Conway, 2013), and postcolonial identity (Pathak, 2013). In my study, the focus of my interest lies in education and critical pedagogy. Inspired by the writings and theoretical perspectives of Henry Giroux (2011) and Paulo Freire (1970) I discuss how critical pedagogy has come to play a key role in
3.8. CRITICAL PEDAGOGY AS REFLEXIVITY AND DIALOGUE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Having discussed the various approaches to autoethnography, I conclude this section of the thesis by presenting critical pedagogy from the theoretical perspectives of Henry Giroux (2003) and Paolo Freire (1970) – two scholars who have made significant contributions to the field of education – as I see critical pedagogy as an important tool for operationalising the implications drawn from my autoethnography. Critical pedagogy stems from ‘critical theory’ which stems from the neo-Marxist philosophy of the Frankfurt School, which was developed in Germany in the 1930s. Critical theory was originally defined by Max Horkheimer (1937) in *Traditional and Critical Theory*, stating that it seeks to critique and change society, as opposed to traditional theory that seeks to understand and explain. Adapting the fundamental concepts rooted in critical theory to the field of education, Henry Giroux and Paolo Freire both worked toward speaking out against educational inequalities in society.

Henry Giroux and Paolo Freire lived in different cultures, different contexts, and under different social circumstances. Giroux is an American/Canadian scholar who is still actively researching in the area of critical pedagogy in the United States, while Paolo Freire was a Brazilian educator and philosopher who had had first-hand experience of poverty and hunger, which led him to commit his life to educating the poor and the illiterate, claiming that poverty stunts the ability to learn. Despite the different cultural contexts in which they lived, both Giroux and Freire dedicated their lives to...
fight against the educational inequalities prevalent in their societies. Giroux (2003) calls on educators and parents to consider and ‘reevaluate what it means to grow up in a world that has been radically altered by a hyper-capitalism that monopolizes the educational force of culture as it ruthless-ly eliminates those public spheres not governed by the logic of the market’ (p. 13; italics in the original). Furthermore, Giroux points out that intellectuals often lose sight of their roles and responsibilities as leaders of society:

More often, intellectuals cut off from wider society fall prey to forms of professional legitimating that not only deny the political nature of their own labor and theoretical work, but also cause them to reinforce a deep-rooted cynicism about the ability of ordinary people to take risks, fight for what they believe in, and become a force for social change. (p. 13)

In this ‘fight for what [we] believe in’, Giroux suggests that educators should collaborate with parents, community organisers, labour organisations, and civil rights groups at local, national, and international levels in order to arouse public interest and awareness to address the ‘commanding institutional economic, cultural, and social structures that dominate our societies’ (p. 13). More importantly, ‘intellectuals’ or educators and researchers must continue to engage in reflexivity and problematize societal norms through a critical lens. In so doing, the classroom becomes a democratic public sphere dedicated to self and social empowerment (Giroux & McLaren, 1986). Linking critical pedagogy and democratisation allows people ‘to question what it is they have become within the existing institutional and social formations, and to give some thought to what it might mean to transform existing relations of subordination and oppression.
(Giroux, 2003, p. 35). In this sense, the classroom transforms from a place of knowledge transfer to a place in which students challenge oppressive social and educational norms. Freire (1970) shared similar visions in his seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

As the title implies, Freire’s primary concern is of oppression and liberation. Speaking from his own personal experiences of working with the poor and the illiterate in Brazil, the legacy of Portuguese colonialism in Brazil is embedded in Freire’s recursive focus on oppression throughout his book. Freire believed that education and power were inextricably tied to one another, and that educators should not simply ‘insert themselves as a stimulus toward taking of power that stops at the taking of power, but rather a taking of power that is extended into the reinvention of the power taken’ (p. 65). As such, the key to liberation is the awakening of critical awareness and the thinking processes in the individual, which he refers to as *conscientizacao*, the process of ‘learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality’ (Freire, 1970, p. 35); and for Freire, *conscientizacao* is not only central to educators and the classroom, but it is the only way to reclaim ‘humanity’ and to become ‘humanised’. In order to work toward obtaining *conscientizacao*, teachers should move away from traditional teacher-student relationships which Freire refers to as ‘banking education’:

Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the ‘banking’ concept of education,
in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. (p. 72)

As teachers begin to recognise the oppressive nature of the ‘banking concept’ in education, ‘dialogue’ becomes the alternative approach in the classroom. Freire claims that dialogues lead to a ‘problem-posing education’, and through dialogue, ‘the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with student-teachers’ (p. 80). For Freire, education through conscientizacao and dialogue is the key to humanisation and liberation; in a similar vein, Giroux (2003) calls for a ‘public pedagogy’ and urges educators and researchers to develop an awareness of the ‘paralyzing assumption’ that schools [are] neither sites of conflict nor institutions that could link learning to social change’ (p. 6; italics added). Put it simply, unless education seeks to understand the real-life problems that students encounter both in and outside the classroom, the learning process becomes blind and one-sided.

3.9. BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN POST-STRUCTURALISM AND CRITICAL PEDAGOGY: TOWARD A BRICOLAGE

One of the most important things to consider in this thesis is the theoretical tension that exists between poststructuralist and postmodern perspectives which inform many aspects of autoethnography and modernist and emancipatory perspectives which inform critical pedagogy. That is, whereas I am employing autoethnography as a research method in which I engage in ‘creative analytic practices’ (Richardson, 2000) in anticipation of constructing my identity through the writing process in and of itself – an inherently poststructuralist ‘orientation’ – I am also writing this thesis from a ‘critical’ perspective in knowing that there is a concern for social change and
that a critical researcher’s ‘ultimate aim is the transformation of the capitalist
structure and the various oppressions that help maintain it’ (Kincheloe et al.,
2018, p. 250). From an epistemological perspective, this may be deemed
problematic since I am setting out to construct my identity through
interpretive approaches while at the same time critiquing society and
structure and calling for change and a better world. Despite the seemingly
tension, however, I argue that poststructuralist and postmodern
perspectives are not entirely at odds with modernist and emancipatory
sensibility; in fact, the need for poststructuralism perspectives – the
scepticism towards claims to ‘truth’ – may be seen as a ‘response’ to critical
pedagogy.

Parkes et al. (2010) argue that ‘discourse, from a poststructuralist
perspective, acts at the political level as a legitimating force that defines the
limits of what can be considered ‘truthful and worthy of consideration’ (p. 4)
and thus that a Foucauldian poststructuralism might be made to speak to
pointed out that Foucault wanted to ‘write the history or trace the
archaeology of what they [the medical, penal, psychiatric or pedagogical
establishment] silenced, repressed, or excluded in constituting themselves
and the institutions that house them’ (p. 130). According to LaCapra (2000),
Foucault’s work was ‘forceful in bringing into prominence the ways in which
marginalization, subjection, and abjection could take place even in the
seemingly most liberal or enlightened policies and practices’ (p. 16). Parkes
et al. (2000) argue that poststructuralism are indeed compatible with social
justice pedagogy given that ‘Foucauldian theorising – its predisposition
towards counter-histories that expose how discourse functions to name,
coerce, constitute, include, and exclude’ (p. 2). Likewise, I find
autoethnography – inevitably underpinned by poststructuralist sensibility –
as an important tool for allowing marginalised individuals to illuminate and
‘expose’ the various forms of oppression and unequal power structures in society; thus, poststructuralism and critical pedagogy, although originating in very different epistemological traditions can be, I would suggest, brought into dialogue with one another.

In an attempt to bridge the gap that appears to exist between autoethnography and critical pedagogy, then, the notion of ‘bricolage’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) might be helpful. The word, *bricolage*, derives from the French word, *bricoleur*, which refers to a handyman or handywoman who employs the tools available to complete a task (Harper, 1987; Steinberg, 2011). Within the context of social science research, a *bricoleur* is a researcher who is involved in the process of ‘employing these methodological processes as they are needed in the unfolding context of the research situation’ (Kincheloe et al., 2018, p. 244). Furthermore, the *bricoleur* views research methods ‘actively rather than passively […] actively [constructing] research methods from the tools at hand rather than passively receiving the ‘correct’ universally applicable methodologies’ (Kincheloe et al., 2018, p. 244). In this sense, I have allowed myself to engage in reflective activities throughout the writing process of this thesis, open to where the writing process might lead me to, while at the same time taking this opportunity of writing from the first-person narrative to release the silenced, oppressed and marginalised voices that have been suppressed for the past ten years. Just as Foucauldian poststructuralism has naturally led to an exposure and a critique of ‘naming,’ ‘othering,’ coercion and other forms of societal oppressions, I argue that this autoethnography, inherently a poststructural approach to qualitative research, is also inevitably a *response* to critical pedagogy.
CHAPTER 4
METHODOLOGY

4.0. INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses issues in methodology. I begin by describing my understanding of autoethnography and the eclectic approach adapted for the thesis. Furthermore, the research context and the participants, data collection and data analysis are presented. In addition, the limitations and ethical considerations in conducting an autoethnographic study are discussed.

4.1. AN ECLECTIC APPROACH TO AUTOETHNOGRAPHY: REVISITING THE BRICOLAGE

Although autoethnography falls under the category of narrative inquiry, it goes without saying that there is an emphasis on the ‘visibility of the researcher’s self, strong reflexivity, relational engagement, personal vulnerability, and open-ended rejection of finality and closure’ (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013). My understanding of autoethnography resonates with Anderson and Glass-Coffin’s description above; in so doing, I adapt an eclectic approach to autoethnography by integrating interpretive (Denzin, 2004), critical (Boylorn & Orbe, 2014) and analytical (Anderson, 2006) autoethnography in an attempt to create an open space for me to engage in dialogue with student narratives, while allowing our voices to be heard and calling for social justice. Thus, in this study, autoethnography stands apart from other forms of self-studies such as self-studies in teacher education practices (Loughran et al., 2004) because there is a strong commitment to critical pedagogy, which I see as the key to understanding
my professional identity as well as the identity of NNSETs and the TESOL context in Korea. Furthermore, there is no single approach to autoethnography in this study; rather, the research process has led to what Kincheloe et al. (2018) refer to as the *bricolage* – an ‘emancipatory research construct’ which ‘exists out of respect for the complexity of the lived world and the complications of power and privilege or the lack thereof’. (p. 244). Just as a *bricoleur* sets out to make use of the tools available to complete a task, I seek to adapt an eclectic approach by integrating various aspects of autoethnography in this thesis.

### 4.2. RESEARCH CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS

The main site of the study took place within a post-graduate TESOL programme at a private women’s university in Seoul, Korea. The department of TESOL is part of The Graduate School of Teaching Foreign Languages, which also serves two other departments: TKSOL (Teaching Korean to Speakers of Other Languages) and TCSOL (Teaching Chinese to Speakers of Other Languages). Currently, there are four full-time faculty members in the TESOL department including myself. We are all categorised as ‘foreign language faculty’ from the US, UK and Canada respectively.

There are two academic terms per year – the spring term, which lasts from early March to mid-June and the autumn term, which lasts from early September to mid-December. We offer an MA in TESOL which is a two-year programme in which students must complete a total of 36 credits to graduate. Students must complete four required courses: *Teaching Reading and Writing, Teaching Listening and Speaking, Introduction to English Language Teaching*, and *Academic Writing and Research in TESOL*. 
Additionally, students are required to pass a written comprehensive exam after successfully completing three terms as well as a final graduation project which requires the development of a sample English language textbook based on a specific topic of their choice (e.g., a theme-based English language textbook for young learners, textbook focusing on extensive reading or writing, etc.). These final projects are completed on a 1:1 basis with a supervisor. In addition to the required courses, the programme also offers a variety of courses that students may take as electives; these courses include Second Language Acquisition, Language, Culture and Communication, Language Curriculum Design, Materials Development, Classroom Management, Language Assessment, Multimedia Assisted Language Learning, Teaching Practicum, among others. All of the classes are conducted in English and they are offered in the evenings from Monday through Thursday in order to accommodate students who work during the day.

I am the researcher as well as the primary informant of the study. As described in the introduction, I was born in Seoul, Korea, and I emigrated to America with my parents and younger brother in 1977 at the age of eight. The 1970s was a period in which many Korean families were leaving their homes to find a ‘better life in America.’ South Korea was not as economically strong at the time as it is today, and our family was one of the many families who took the bold step toward searching for the ‘American Dream’; however, this ‘bold step’ may not have been possible if it had not been for the persistence of my aunt, my mother’s older sister, who had emigrated to America in the early 1970s. Later, I would discover that one of the main reasons why my parents had decided to accept my aunt’s invitation to join her in America was because my father had not been very happy with his job at the National Treasury Department of Korea and welcomed the
opportunity to start a new life in America. Now this is quite different from the wealthy Korean mothers who are flocking to the U.S. with their children in order to provide them with a better education nowadays.

I speak, read and write Korean, but my spoken Korean is much stronger than my reading and writing skills. I am bilingual and bicultural which can be advantageous and disadvantageous, depending on the circumstance. Although this study places me – the researcher at the centre – I adapt a dialogical approach in which other informants are included in the data. The majority of the students are Korean while approximately 20% of the student population identify as Korean-American, Korean-Canadian or bilingual and bicultural. All of the students are women since the university only accepts female students, and their ages range from the early twenties to early forties, but most of the currently enrolled students are in their twenties to thirties. I find this to be interesting because when I was studying in the MA TESOL programme in the U.S., the age range of the students varied much more and there were quite a few ‘older’ students over the age of fifty, who were seeking a ‘second career’ as EFL teachers. In Korea, however, age is very important and most Koreans tend to believe that after a certain age - say, late twenties to thirties – it is difficult to pursue an education or to find a new career.

The data in chapters five, six and seven include excerpts from my students’ reflective writings in their online journals; however, I do not focus on a

---

21 In this study, I define Korean-American or Korean-Canadians as ethnic Koreans who have spent the majority of their lives in the U.S. or Canada and have American or Canadian nationalities, whereas bilingual students are Korean nationals who have spent a significant part of their lives in English-speaking countries.

22 Details of the writing task are provided in the data collection section
particular group of students and analyse them in-depth. Profiles of the students whose narratives were included in my thesis are as follows:\textsuperscript{23}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Nayoung</td>
<td>SLA (Second Language Acquisition)</td>
<td>April 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Jung Eun</td>
<td>SLA</td>
<td>April 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Eun Jin</td>
<td>SLA</td>
<td>April 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Ka Hyun</td>
<td>Curriculum Development</td>
<td>May 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Yujin</td>
<td>Curriculum Development</td>
<td>May 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Hye Ri</td>
<td>Teaching Practicum</td>
<td>November 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Mira</td>
<td>Teaching Practicum</td>
<td>November 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 In Jung</td>
<td>Teaching Practicum</td>
<td>November 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Ji Hye</td>
<td>Teaching Practicum</td>
<td>November 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Jin Hee</td>
<td>Teaching Practicum</td>
<td>April 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Ji Won</td>
<td>Teaching Practicum</td>
<td>April 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Jiyeon</td>
<td>Curriculum Development</td>
<td>May 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Joo Hyun</td>
<td>SLA</td>
<td>June 2014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textbf{4.3. DATA COLLECTION}

The process of collecting the data for this study was a bit different from traditional ethnographic studies in which the researcher usually takes on the role of a participant-observer who relies on interviews, observations, field notes and so on; instead, I adapted Denzin’s (2001) interpretive approach

\textsuperscript{23} All of the students’ names are pseudonyms.
by focusing on the ‘sting of memory’ and epiphanies from my own experiences, both from the past and present. In order to locate these moments of memory, I also adapted Laurel Richardson’s (1997, 2000) ‘writing as a method of inquiry’ which allowed me to experience ‘language-in-use,’ and how we ‘word the world’ into existence’ (Richardson, 2000, p. 923). In addition, I adapted Anderson’s (2006) analytic approach (details provided in the previous chapter) and conclude each of the data chapters with ‘reflections’ in which I integrate relevant literature and provide a critical analysis of the narratives.

One of the most important things taken into consideration during the process of generating the data was teacher-student dialogue; thus in order to integrate a ‘dialogic’ approach, I simply applied the same approach that I typically use to provide feedback to my students’ reflective writings which takes the form of a letter in which I always begin with, ‘Dear …,’ and respond to the stories told by my students; in other words, instead of evaluating or providing what we normally think of as ‘feedback’ in which we point out the strengths and weaknesses of the assignment, I write back to my students and respond by sharing my thoughts on what they had to say, which always leads to sharing my own stories relevant to theirs. All of the students received detailed instructions about the importance of reflective writing in teacher education and have also read sample narratives written by former students who have given me permission to share with others. The reflective writing tasks were not assessed with a numeric score; as mentioned above, they simply received a response reflection from me and received full points for submitting the assignment on time. The approach that I adapted for providing feedback on the students’ reflective assignments was similar to an interactive journal (Casaneve, 2011) in which teachers ‘write journals along with students … providing superb role models for students who
otherwise might be justifiably sceptical of why they are being asked to do this kind of uncorrected, ungraded writing’ (p. 32).

I collected student narratives from TESOL students enrolled in the courses listed in the table shown earlier in this chapter and informed the students at the beginning of the semester that I am interested in teacher identity and that some of their reflecting writings may be included in future research and publications. I also pointed out that real names will never be revealed and that pseudonyms will always be used; I also made it very clear that if anyone did not feel comfortable about the possibility of having excerpts of their stories used for research purposes, they should let me know and I will refrain from using their stories in any of my future research writings or publications. To this date, no one has objected. The online journals were semi-structured tasks in which I asked students to respond to a set of 3-4 open-ended questions that were posted online. The open-ended questions asked students to share stories from their childhood experiences of English language learning, teaching English as NNSETs, past and present experiences of the challenges that they face as NNSETs, and future goals as TESOL professionals in the Korean ELT field. Students responded to the questions and submitted them electronically on cyberecampus, an online blackboard available for students and instructors to post messages, assignments, exams, questions and answers. All of the journal entries were originally written in English and the excerpts in this thesis are presented in its original form without having had them translated or edited in any ways.

At the start of my research, I conducted semi-structured interviews with a group of students, but after a while, I did not want to ‘pursue’ my students any more as I began to lose sincerity in the way I conversed with them during the audio-recorded interviews; in other words, I could not rid myself
of the ‘researcher’s agenda’ each time I approached a student to participate in an interview. I did not use any oral interview transcripts in this thesis.

4.4. DATA ANALYSIS

As I have emphasised throughout this thesis, it was important for me to consider ‘the other’ in my study, creating a dialogue between the two sets of narratives. This dialogic process may also define how reflexivity assumes a dual-role for my study; in other words, reflexivity is not only employed as a research method in which I position myself as the primary informant of the study, but I also view reflexivity from Giddens’s (1991) notion of the duality of structure in which social structures may be seen as having the potential to influence one another. In this sense, Freire’s (1970) ideas of critical pedagogy in which teachers and students are encouraged to engage in dialogue with one another also echoes the core values of reflexivity.

When I first set out to write this thesis, I knew I wanted to include my students’ narratives because the primary goal was to explore my professional identity as a TESOL educator, which could not be understood apart from my students. I began by reading student narratives and used a thematic analysis approach (Saldana, 2009) by highlighting reoccurring themes. Then, as mentioned earlier, I used the same approach as I usually do when I respond to student narratives – that is, I ‘write back’ to my students by interacting with their narratives by sharing stories from my own experiences; thus, I selected excerpts from student narratives and ‘interacted’ with them by drawing upon my own experiences. I used Denzin’s (1997, 2001, 2014) interpretive approach and focused on the ‘sting of memory’ from my own narratives, which were often triggered by the stories
told in the student narratives; then, by employing the *progressive-regressive* method (Sartre, 1963, 1981), I tried to locate a significant theme that emerged from the two sets of narratives (see Hayler, 2011); specifically, I combined both sets of narratives and wrote a single, unified narrative by narrating the conclusion (progressive) of a particular situation (or theme) and then by moving backward (regressive) and discussing the historical, cultural and or biographical details relevant to the excerpt. In so doing, my own narratives are presented along with that of my students in an attempt to discover how our perceptions and experiences interact and intersect with one another, which in turn may provide an opportunity to discover ‘insights into some broader set of social phenomena than those offered by the data themselves’ (Anderson, 2006, p. 387). This also explains the overarching implication of reflexivity from Giddens’s (1991) perspective: when two social structures are seen as having mutual influences upon one another, insights and discoveries beyond current attainment have the potential to be found. Likewise, the primary objective of this study was to respond to the research questions stated in the introduction which in turn would allow me to see how my own experiences coupled with the experiences of my students may reveal insights on how the two groups mutually shape and co-construct one another.

4.5. LIMITATIONS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Despite the growing interest in interpretive, (auto)biographical and ‘first-person ethnographies’ (Venkatesh, 2013) in the last few decades (Denzin, 2014), autoethnographers are bound to face criticism and questioning of academic rigour and methodological validity (Holt, 2003); Denzin (2014) laments that critics have also regarded these approaches as ‘leftovers from an age of humanistic inquiry that uncritically valorized the self and its social
experiences’ (p. viii). At the same time, ‘online representations of life experiences proliferate. Virtual selves with their life stories are everywhere present. The mobile social media technologies make this possible’. (p. viii). More than ever, we are now living in an era in which we are compelled to make sense of ourselves and our lives through self-representation and performance, and social scientists have begun to understand the importance of studying the ‘self’ (Denzin, 2014). Nonetheless, autoethnographers should be aware of limitations and consider the ethical guidelines throughout the research process.

Sikes (2010) asks autoethnographers to think about how they would feel if they were to discover that secrets, unflattering, misinterpretations or misrepresentations of their lives were to appear in a book, journal or a newspaper one day; indeed, autoethnographers must not forget that the process of writing about themselves will inevitably involve stories of other people. It is important for autoethnographers to engage in ongoing reflexivity and to remember that research participants may feel hurt and betrayed at how they were depicted and that ‘these betrayal stories make it clear that writing is never neutral or innocent because it is a social and a political activity with consequences and that, as such, writing about, and thereby re-presenting, lives carries a heavy ethical burden’ (Sikes, 2010, p. 11).

Chang (2008) suggests that there are indeed ‘pitfalls’ to avoid in doing autoethnography and suggests that researchers should ‘look out vigilantly for appropriate application […] and avoid potential pitfalls’ (p. 54). These pitfalls are as follows: (1) excessive focus on self in isolation from others; (2) overemphasis on narration rather than analysis and cultural interpretation; (3) exclusive reliance on personal memory and recalling as a data source;
(4) negligence of ethical standards regarding others in self-narratives; and
(5) inappropriate application of the label ‘autoethnography’ (p. 54).

The first pitfall reminds us that autoethnography is not just a study of the self in isolation; rather, autoethnographic texts are always written with an ‘other’ in mind. ‘The presence of ‘an other’ in autobiographical and biographical texts means that they are always written with at least a double perspective in mind: the author’s and the other’s. The eye of the other directs the eye of the writer’ (Elbaz, 1987, p. 14). The second pitfall focuses on the analytic, academic rigour of autoethnography, which should be distinguished from a literary text or an evocative autoethnography that ‘refuses to abstract and explain’ (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 744). The third pitfall cautions autoethnographers to avoid over-relying on their personal memory as the primary source of data, as personal memory is ‘selective and shaped, and is retold in the continuum of one’s experience [although] this does not necessarily constitute lying’ (Muncey, 2005, p. 2; cited in Chang, 2008, p. 55). The fourth pitfall points out that autoethnographers may develop the false notion that confidentiality does not apply to self-narrative studies since the primary informant is the researcher; however, as mentioned earlier, autoethnographic studies should always include others, whose privacy should be valued as well.

Finally, the fifth pitfall calls for the need to clarify the term, autoethnography, and to apply the concept appropriately by making a distinction from other approaches such as narrative inquiry and self-studies in teacher education practices (SSTEPs) (Loughran, 2007). Hamilton et al. (2008) point out that narrative inquiry, SSTEPs and autoethnography all share the common ground of containing narratives, but SSTEPs focus on teachers’ practice and improvement whereas autoethnography typically seeks to explore the
cultural context, often from a critical perspective. In this sense, SSTEPs seems to resemble the reflective practice paradigm while autoethnography resonates with the theoretical underpinnings of reflexivity.
CHAPTER 5
FROM LANGUAGE LEARNER TO LANGUAGE TEACHER

5.0. INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins the first of three chapters in which I present the data and conclude each section with analytical reflections. Throughout the process of reflecting upon student narratives and drawing upon my own experiences in response to the narratives, I discover the similarities as well as the differences between ESL and EFL language learning processes – both positive and negative. Furthermore, considering a recent trend in which Korean parents with young children have begun to read English picture books with their children at home sheds light on the possibility of promoting home literacy practices and encouraging TESOL students to challenge the negative effects of neoliberalism within the heavily market-driven ELT context in Korea.

5.1. THE FUNNY SOUNDS OF ENGLISH

I am flipping through the channels on my television on a quiet Sunday afternoon as I am suddenly intrigued by a woman with a bright smile on her face, waving her hands enthusiastically at her audience – almost as though she is waving at me, a devoted fan of television home shopping, a massive industry in South Korea. Her voice is loud, cheerful and convincing. I find myself engrossed in her words as she insists that she has found ‘the answer’ to helping Korean children learn English ‘naturally’. The woman on the television screen is a saleswoman for one of the
leading home shopping companies in Korea and her aim is to sell a set of English picture books for children to as many parents as possible within fifteen minutes. She spends a significant amount of time emphasising that the books were published by Oxford University Press, assuring Korean parents that the books had been approved by experts affiliated with the prestigious publisher and that the books were also accompanied by what she referred to as a ‘say-pen’ – an electronic pen that reads aloud the words on the pages of a book when it taps a specific word or a sentence. The saleswoman claims, ‘it would be the same as having the book read to their children by a native speaker’ with the help of the say-pen as she emphasises again and again that this would be a great way of getting children to learn to read in English while at the same time having many opportunities to listen to ‘native speaker’ pronunciation; more importantly, however, the saleswoman emphasises that children are sure to have ‘fun’ with the stories in the books, which is how English should be learned. In between the sales pitches, there are random images of Oxford University as a narrator (who is obviously not the saleswoman) whose face is not shown on the screen boastfully claims that the books were published by Oxford University Press. The saleswoman then returns to the screen and by now her voice has increased a few octaves and her hand gestures have become even more animated as she urges her audience to hurry and order the books immediately since there is only a limited supply which may not be available again for a long period of time. The sales pitch lasts approximately fifteen minutes and the woman repeats the same lines again and again while the background EDM (Electronic Dance Music) seems to get louder and louder as the show draws to an end, causing an unexplainable psychological hype.
ultimately leading to an impulsive purchase before the next item is quickly introduced. (Laura’s vignette; August 2016)

Within 24 hours, there is a box of children’s picture books at my door. What have I done? What was I thinking? My child is no longer a child and I do not work with children nor specialise in young learners in English language education. What on earth would I do with these books? The fact that I would have very little use of the books did not seem to matter at the time of the purchase. I was simply fascinated at the thought of home shopping channels promoting English language learning and encouraging Korean parents to ‘take charge of their children’s English language learning’ by using picture books to help them to develop their English language skills. Despite the obvious aim at making a profit from the book sales, the saleswoman seemed to have pointed out an important fact in foreign language learning – that language learning should be embedded in the daily lives and routines of children and that language learning should not only be ‘fun’ but equivalent to playing since this is what most children prefer to do throughout the day. Children who learn to ‘play’ with a foreign language seem to develop a love for the target language in natural settings. Thinking about the ‘impulsive purchase’ of the children’s books from the home shopping commercial, I am reminded of Na Young’s story of her first encounter with the English language; she describes her English language learning experiences as a ‘plaything’ because English was simply ‘fun’ and fascinating and that it was her ‘favourite game’:

I remember when I was nine or ten years old, I encountered English for the first time. My mother thought it is time to start learning English or she might think it is a little late compared to
other children. Because many friends were already learning English, so my mother asked one of my friends’ parents about ways of learning English. At that time, children around me usually studied English with study aid books, Yoon’s BEFL which is a brand name of English education company. This book makes learners encouraged in self-directed learning especially for children because they can easily get bored when they study alone and nobody teaches and cares while studying. But listening to the tapes was for me really fun and fantastic. I really enjoyed listening to English sounds and imitating English words and sentences with English unique intonation and rhythm. My mother sometimes said that even though you were so young, you always sat on the piano (instead of desk I usually sat there and read a book) and enjoyed listening to the tapes alone and repeated after listening. Even my mother threw it up on me about study. I liked learning English more than playing with my brother or watching TV. I thought English as an interesting game. (Na Young, online journal; April 2013)

Na Young’s story resonates with my own experience of learning English as I had also been fascinated and mesmerised by the unique, foreign sounds of English when I first came into contact with the English language. My first encounter with English was similar in that I was instantly attracted to the unique sounds of the English language and spent hours repeating the few words that I knew over and over again. At the same time, my experience was different in that English was naturally acquired after I emigrated to America whereas Na Young’s English language learning experiences took place in Korea; nonetheless, I developed a fascination with the sounds of English before I went to America and like Na Young, the strange, funny
sounds of English naturally led to ‘language play’ (Cook, 2000) as Na Young and I developed our own ways of engaging in language play throughout the day.

When I was about seven years old, I learned that our family would be moving to America soon and that I would have to become fluent in English. This was during the late-1970s and English language education did not have the same status as it does today in South Korea, which also meant that parents were not as obsessed with having their children learn English as they are today. There were few foreigners living in Korea at the time, and although popular American television programmes such as The Brady Bunch and The Six Million Dollar Man were aired on Korean television, they were dubbed in Korean, which did not provide any ‘input’ of the original sounds of the English language. As a result, there were few opportunities to hear the sounds of English, and one of the first English words that I ever learned were ‘one’, ‘two’, and ‘three’ and this was because my father enjoyed watching wrestling on television and when one of the wrestlers got knocked down on the floor and could not get up, the referee always counted in English by yelling, ‘ONE! TWO! THREE!’ before announcing the other guy as the winner. The next two words that I learned were ‘San Francisco’ and ‘Los Angeles’ because my mother told me that we would be living in a city called San Francisco in America and that some of our friends were already living in another city called ‘Los Angeles’ which was believed to be fairly close to San Francisco; of course, I would later discover that the two cities are not as close in proximity to each other as I had imagined. Every day, I repeated the five English words that I had learned – one, two, three, San Francisco, and Los Angeles – over and over again because I loved to hear myself say these foreign sounds as it made me feel very special as though I had some secret power within me. At the same time, I began to feel
frustrated because I wanted to learn more words and I wanted to express myself in English but since I only knew five words, I began making up nonsense words with my brother and pretended to have a conversation in English; however, we did not begin having these pseudo-English conversations until the moment we stepped onto our flight to America. From what I recall, my brother and I continued to engage in these conversations even after we arrived in San Francisco and until we began to learn ‘real’ English. I am now surprised to find Jung Eun describing a similar experience in her written narratives when she made up ‘funny sounds’ and pretended to speak English with her dolls when she was a child. Jung Eun’s father, who had returned from a business trip to London, had brought her a doll as a gift:

_I was five or six years old at that time. Then my mom told me that I started making strange sounds whenever I played with those dolls. It was definitely not English for sure, because I started learning English after I entered an elementary school. It was not Korean, either. I assume that I might have understood that the dolls looked totally different from me, so I probably thought that they may make different sounds and words._ (Jung Eun, online journal; April 2013)

As Jung Eun began to ‘experiment’ with foreign sounds with her dolls, she found herself responding positively to English language learning when her mother brought home her very first English language ‘home-kit’:

_When I was eight or so, my mom bought me a little machine with_
very attractive selections of big picture cards. On top of the machine, there was a narrow long crack and little speakers side to side. The interesting thing was that the machine reads English automatically when I pass each card through the long crack. Each card contains various basic expressions such as, ‘Hello Mr. Brown! Good morning, Mr. Smith, I like apples and oranges, etc.’ I really liked to play with the machine and I naturally learned English with it. Since then I started repeating some expressions like, ‘Please give me two potatoes’, ‘Good night Peter!’ I can say that the effect of the machine was quite effective for me. I really enjoyed myself spending time with the machine whenever I had a family trip or any long journey, I always took it with me. (Jung Eun, online journal; April 2013)

Na Young and Jung Eun’s narratives are striking in that they have helped me to realise that they had begun learning English similar to the ways that I had initially encountered English, despite the fact that our childhoods took place decades apart from one another and that I had eventually learned English in an ESL setting whereas both Na Young and Jung Eun remained in Korea, an EFL environment. Nonetheless, our beginnings were similar in that we all started out by developing a fascination with the sounds of English and spending hours repeating these sounds over and over again each day; and when we ran out of words, we created them – words that were neither English nor Korean – but they were legitimate words to us at the time. Whether we were having a conversation with a doll or a sibling in these nonsense words, we ‘communicated’ in our own ways. The fascination with English words and the sounds of a unique, foreign language seemed to have led to an ongoing positive experience with learning English.
5.1.1. Reflections

Comparing the recent increase of home-shopping commercials promoting English books for children and the popular English language home-learning kits that both Na Young and Jung Eun were exposed to when they were children during the late 1980s and the early 1990s gives us a glimpse of the recent changing trends that have been taking place within the Korean ELT field. Specifically, whereas English language learning home kits typically focused on audiolingual approaches by reinforcing ‘listen and repeat’ with cassette tapes and CDs in the past, Korean researchers and practitioners have begun to recognise the numerous benefits of teaching English through picture books and story-telling (Malderez, 2010).

A recent analysis of the research trends of ELT for primary school children in Korea has revealed that a ‘shift in research methods was observed’ and that the most frequent and preferred topic among Korean researchers aimed at English language teaching for Korean children was related to storytelling and using picture books as a teaching method in the primary school classroom (Ahn & Kim, 2016, p. 5). At the same time, it is important to note that storytelling and reading for non-academic purposes – reading for pleasure (Day & Bamford, 1998) - in Korea are typically limited to primary school aged children because English language education in secondary schools begin to focus on grammar translation methods along with intensive reading and listening skills for test-taking preparations (Seong, 2007) despite government policies that clearly state the need to employ communicative approaches as well as the reinforcement of the Teach English in English (TEE) policy in primary and secondary schools (Choi, 2013). These government policies outlined in the Seventh National
Curriculum, however, are not always practiced in actual classroom settings – especially at the secondary level – for various reasons such as the teachers’ lack of confidence in spoken proficiency (e.g., Jeon, 2009), the reality of the test-driven environment (Spolsky, 2004) as well as the ‘socialisation of novice teachers’ (Shin, 2012) which typically lead them to adapting non-communicative teaching approaches prevalent in most Korean EFL classrooms.

Ironically, the recent movement toward encouraging Korean parents to read with their children may have been influenced by the aforementioned inconsistencies in government policies such as the CLT and TEE schemes that are rarely practiced beyond the primary school classroom thus inevitably returning to the test-driven, non-communicative English approaches in the secondary classroom; that is, Korean parents – especially those with pre-school or primary school aged children – may have begun to lose faith in the effectiveness of the quality of the English education that their children are receiving – both at the public as well as the private sector (Byun, 2014; Chun, 2003; Jung, 2016). As a result, there has been a growing interest among Korean mothers with young children actively involved in online interactions sharing personal ‘success stories’ of how they have decided to take an active role in the English language education of their own children by singing, playing games and reading story books with them on a regular basis and the positive outcomes that they have experienced from such attempts. These recent movements are referred to as ‘umma-pyo yeoung-uh gyo-yuk’ (엄마표 영어교육) (Kim, 2017) which

---

24 The content of school education is centrally determined by the Ministry of Education (MOE) through the National Curriculum. The current curriculum is the Seventh National Curriculum which was introduced in 1997 (Choi, 2013, p. 33).
translates as ‘Moms’ English language education’ representing a new generation of young Korean mothers who have received sufficient amount of English education during their own schooling to be able to read story books in English to their children as well as having the ability to teach English themselves, based on their own childhood English language learning experiences; in other words, the changing trends in Korean ELT may reflect a new generation of young parents who have not only received their schooling during the rise of the ‘English frenzy’ era (e.g., Song, 2011) dating back to the 1980s and ‘90s thus having obtained a fair level of English language competency themselves but also representing a generation of English language learners who have experienced the frustrations as well as the ineffectiveness of the test-driven English language classroom prevalent in the current English language learning environment.

Having lived through the ‘English frenzy era,’ the young mothers representing the ‘Moms’ English education movement’ may also reflect some of the positive experiences that they may have had when they had initially come into contact with English in a natural way; that is, a more meaningful way just as Na Young and Jung Eun had done when they became fascinated with listening to English tapes or enjoyed making up English conversations with a doll from England and simply engaging in ‘language play’ (Cook, 2000). According to Cook, ‘children use language to create make-believe worlds in which they sing songs, follow stories on television or video, read or listen to stories told or read aloud to them by adults’ (p. 3). Cook also points out that we often take such behaviour among children for granted and that we fail to wonder why it is so common in childhood behaviour; furthermore, we pay less attention to why children put so much of their ‘physical, emotional, and mental energy into following unnecessary rules and procedures’ (p. 3).
Indeed, Cook’s caveat is important in considering how the Korean ELT field tends to ignore the ‘physical, emotional and mental energy’ that children must release in their day-to-day routines by approaching English language teaching from a systematic, skill-focused pedagogy in which the four language skills along with grammar and vocabulary are taught – just like other school subjects, focusing on progress, results and scores. Based on the above narratives, however, I am reminded of how Na Young, Jung Eun and I encountered the English language in the same ways described by Cook – using language physically, emotionally, mentally and following no particular rules or procedures. Na Young poured her energy – emotionally and mentally and engaged in listening to her English tapes over and over again – simply because she was so fascinated with the sounds coming from the cassette tapes. Jung Eun engaged in non-sense dialogues with her ‘foreign-looking’ doll from England, and my brother and I created pseudo-English conversations the moment we began our flight to America. None of these behaviours or activities were guided by a teacher or parents, nor were we following any specific language learning methodologies or procedures; we were simply ‘playing’ with a foreign language that we found to be intriguing, thus acting upon the physical, emotional and mental needs of our developmental stages. We may not have spent hours memorising vocabulary words or learning to read or write systematically in English at the time; however, what we did gain was the positive, nostalgic memory of developing a fascination and attraction to the English language and language play was embedded in the day-to-day routines of our activities at home.

Such positive experiences for Na Young and Jung Eun not only remind them of what it was like to encounter English naturally and experiencing a sense
of fascination, but they also clearly remember how it felt to have such pleasant, positive experiences taken away upon entering secondary school when English language learning suddenly transformed into ongoing grammar translation and test-taking preparations – a ‘demotivating’ approach to learning a foreign language (Kim, 2011). As a result, parents representing the Moms’ English education movement in Korea may have the potential to act as change agents who seem to know better by now since they themselves have lived through the pinnacle of the English frenzy era and what Koreans refer to as the era of ‘examination hell’ (Byean, 2015) – only to discover that the countless hours spent in hagwons and exam preparations have not paid off as the current number of unemployment for university graduates in Korea have reached a record high of 3.8 million (Lee, 2020), leaving the younger generation to find themselves as the ‘first generation in Korean history to be less financially successful than their parents’ generation’ (Lee, 2020).

5.2. FROM FASCINATION TO CONFIDENCE

I am watching another home-shopping commercial about English language learning resources. This time, there is a man selling online English lectures on a tablet PC which customers can purchase and view wherever and whenever they want (e.g., subway, at home, etc.); unlike the previous home-shopping saleswoman selling children’s books, the man selling the tablet PC English lectures is the founder and creator of his own English language programme and he is now selling his portable lectures along with the assistance of an experienced saleswoman employed by a home-shopping company. Naturally, I am always interested in hearing about what people have to say about
English language teaching, so I find myself engrossed in the commercial once again before realising that his teaching approach was very similar to the direct method in which the teacher works one on one with a learner and asks questions that the learner must answer in accurate grammatical form; and if the learner answers correctly, the teacher moves on to a slightly more difficult (in terms of grammatical structure) question but if the answer is incorrect, the teacher keeps eliciting response until the learner is able to reply with an accurate sentence. (Laura’s vignette; May 2017)

Despite the similarities that I find with the direct method, the creator of the programme never mentions the term and claims that he had developed a ‘new’ approach in order to help Koreans gain the ‘confidence’ that they needed in order to communicate in English conversation. Apparently, he was targeting a different audience in the Korean ELT field – that is, rather than focusing on children or students (which most English language teaching materials have focused on in the past), the main target audience was an older group of learners such as housewives or retired people who may not need English for academic or test-taking purposes but rather, for personal fulfilment or enjoyment such as communication for traveling abroad. The target structures were simple sentences and the creator of the programme on the home-shopping commercial insisted that a lack of confidence was one of the main reasons why Koreans could not communicate in English and that his teaching method would help them to develop the confidence that they would need in order to carry on conversations in English. Today, the man on the home-shopping commercial has established one of the most successful English language businesses in Korea, not only attracting learners to his private hagwons
across the country but also by selling his online lectures on home-shopping channels. Although there is nothing ‘new’ or creative about his approach, he was successful in noticing that there was a ‘hidden’ group of English language learners whose needs were not being recognised by the Korean ELT market, which primarily seemed to focus on children and students; however, due to the plummeting birth rate in Korea (Lee, 2020), the private ELT sector has also begun to seek a new group of English language learners – the middle-aged and retired – who want to take up English language learning as a hobby or for traveling purposes.

As I continue to listen to the man on the home-shopping commercial making his sales pitch, I wonder how foreign language learners truly develop their confidence in learning the target language. There are probably numerous ways that this could take place, and the man on the commercial insists that repeating simple sentence structures over and over again and moving to a slightly more complex level upon ‘mastering’ the given structure is the key to developing confidence in English communication. SLA (Second Language Acquisition) researchers claim there are numerous factors involved in second and foreign language acquisition and perhaps an important factor might stem from a certain ‘positive experience’ which may lead to a strong motivation for learning (MacIntyre, Gregersen & Mercer, 2016). Jung Eun seemed to have had such a positive experience which seemed to have led to a stronger motivation to learn English:

When I was at middle school, I was in the top five of the class, and I knew that I was doing well at school, so I thought I was a bit conceited. I had two best friends, and were all in the same class. I remember it was a Korean class and my teacher asked me to
read one chapter in Korean. It was one of the ordinary Korean class that the teacher always has us take turn when we need to read a textbook. While I was reading one chapter, there was one sentence contains English name “Mrs. Oliver”. I read it and I felt that my English pronunciation was quite good, especially when I pronounced “Oliver.” After bell rings, one of my best friends came to me and said, “Wow, I felt that your English pronunciation was really good. Have you ever lived in another country?” I was in such a good mood that time. It was a funny episode that it was just one very short word and my friend thought my English pronunciation was so good. However, it made me treat English so special, and from that time I had a belief that I can be a special student among other students if I can speak good English. (Jung Eun, online journal; April 2013)

As I reflect upon Jung Eun’s words, I am reminded of a similar experience that I had myself shortly after moving to America. Just as my parents had promised, we relocated to Northern California and I was immediately enrolled in the third grade at a local primary school. It had been about a year since I had been living in America and I remember feeling somewhat insecure about my English language skills at the time. One day, the phone rang and no one was home except for my grandmother. My grandmother, who did not speak English, answered the phone and instantly handed me the receiver when the caller began speaking English. Although I was scared to take the call, I had no choice and to my surprise, I understood what the caller was saying and I was able to reply in a simple sentence in English. I do not remember what the call was exactly about, but it was a random caller trying to sell something and I just said something like, ‘No thank you’. When I hung up, my grandmother was glowing and she clapped her hands and
yelled, ‘You can speak English so well!’ For the first time, English was no longer a scary objective to me and I began to see myself as a ‘fluent English speaker,’ although I was probably not very fluent at the time; however, I do not remember being scared of speaking English from that moment on and somehow, I managed to survive with the limited English skills that I had obtained until I was able to reach fluency.

5.2.1. Reflections

One of the most important factors in L2 acquisition is the learner’s attitude (e.g., Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; Kormos & Csier, 2008; Krashen, 1982; Nunan, 1988) and motivation for learning the target language (Dörnyei, 2001, 2005, 2009). Apparently, Jung Eun and I both had a special attraction to foreign language learning when we were children; particularly, when we received praise and encouragement from others, motivation was likely to have led to a positive attitude toward English language learning. Although we were not competent speakers of English at the time, the motivation to do even better seemed to have occurred naturally. Studies have shown that praise not only affects children’s intrinsic motivation (Anderson et al., 1976; Cameron & Pierce, 1994) but children are also likely to engage in the praised task (Sarafino et al., 1982); for Jung Eun, this seemed to have been the case as her friend’s compliment encouraged her to improve her English language skills even more.

Although Jung Eun’s confidence and motivation derived from a very brief – as she put it, a ‘trivial’ experience – she claimed that it was the one moment that suddenly helped her to visualise an ‘ideal self’ (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009) of a competent speaker of English and perhaps someone who could possibly
do something ‘quite special’ due to her English language competence. According to Dörnyei, second language learners may develop an ideal self which reflects desirable future images upon attaining L2 proficiency. Jung Eun’s English language learning endeavours began when her father brought her a doll from England which automatically triggered a desire or the need to start speaking in a foreign language as she began to engage in pseudo-English conversations with her doll; furthermore, her interest in English learning continued as she practiced saying English words and phrases with a home-learning kit which seemed to have helped her to pronounce English sounds rather successfully and as her classmate pointed out, her pronunciation was perceived as being ‘really good’. Jung Eun recalls how she felt that very moment: ‘It made me treat English so special, and from that time I had a belief that I can be a special student among other students if I can speak good English’. Jung Eun not only felt proud of herself after receiving a compliment from a classmate, but she also realised that English could actually become a tool to set her apart from the others – that is, she may have begun to understand the privileges that come with English language competency (Park, 2009).

It is also interesting to note that Jung Eun’s classmate had noticed that Jung Eun’s English pronunciation set her apart from the others in the class and asked whether she had lived abroad, displaying envy and praising Jung Eun for having ‘good pronunciation’ skills. This is not surprising because native-like English pronunciation is often a coveted skill among many Koreans as it reflects the underlying assumption that individuals with good English pronunciation come from privileged backgrounds since they are likely to have had the experience of living abroad for an extended period of time (Park & Abelmann, 2004) or have had the opportunity to study closely with a native speaker tutor whose fees are much higher than nonnative speaker
fees (Braine, 2010; Ruecker & Ives, 2015). Thus, Jung Eun’s story depicts the realities of the ‘English divide’ (Crookes, 2017) in Korean society that separates those who have English language competency and those who do not – an ideological framework that Koreans, even from a very young age, naturally seem to develop through day-to-day interactions and spoken discourses.

Jung Eun’s story reminds me of the ways in which ideology is shaped through day-to-day interactions and spoken discourses and yet most interlocutors may be unaware of the hidden ideologies and continue to promote the belief that Koreans are ‘bad speakers’ of the English language (Park, 2009). Furthermore, ideology may be defined as a ‘system of ideas put to work to justify, maintain, or act as weapons for vested social interests’ (Holliday & Aboshiba, 2009, p. 671). When Jung Eun’s classmate praised her for ‘having good English pronunciation’ and asked whether she had lived abroad, she may have been implying that she herself was not as fortunate as Jung Eun and that she did not have ‘good enough English pronunciation’ nor have had the chance to live abroad thus setting her apart from someone like Jung Eun who ‘seemed’ to possess the highly desirable quality of a fluent, confident English language speaker with ‘good’ pronunciation; here, we witness two children – Jung Eun and her classmate – engaged in a seemingly typical, day-to-day classroom interaction and yet perhaps engaging in an ideological discourse that reproduces the English divide in Korean society as Jung Eun’s story demonstrates how native speakerism (Holliday, 2005) is so deeply embedded in the day-to-day discourses that interlocutors rarely recognise the ideological implications behind the ‘symbolic power’ (Bourdieu, 1992; Holliday & Aboshiba, 2009). According to Holliday (2005), native speakerism is defined as ‘an established belief that native-speakers represent a ‘Western culture’ from which spring the ideals
both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology’ (p. 6). This is especially true in many East Asian countries such as Korea, Japan and China in which job postings for English teachers reveal that ‘the most commonly requested criteria for [English] teachers, including a degree, native speaker status, and a passport from one of the approved NES countries, with no requirement for previous teaching experience’. (Ruecker & Ives, 2017, p. 741; italics added).

On a slightly different note, the man on the home-shopping channel may have also figured out that confidence was the key to second language learning; and as mentioned earlier, his English programme was aimed at a non-mainstream target audience in Korea – middle-aged to elderly men and women who did not have to study English for instrumental purposes (Gardner, 1985) like the majority of the younger learners whose primary focus is aimed at test-taking preparations for university entrance or employment. According to the man in the home-shopping commercial, his English programme will help this non-mainstream group of learners to gain the confidence necessary to develop the survival language skills they will need to travel abroad or to make small talk with foreigners. In some ways, the salesman’s pitch reflects some of the changes occurring within the Korean ELT market and the society at large. To begin with, the new group of target learners reflects the marked decrease in the birth rate in Korea society (Lee, 2020) which also means that the ELT market can no longer relies on children and students as the primary target learners since these groups of learners are likely to decrease as the years go by. As a result, the Korean ELT market may no longer have to focus on test-taking strategies or

25 According to Ruecker & Ives (2017), an ‘approved’ NES country is as follows: UK, US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand.
English language learning for instrumental purposes. Instead, a new group of learners who do not need English for achieving such goals may simply want to learn English for pleasure or self-fulfilment. In this sense, the purpose of English language learning is neither integrative nor instrumental as defined by Gardner (1985); as such, it might be easier to categorise this group’s motivation as being an ‘investment’ (Norton-Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000), which views L2 motivation as a way of ‘acquiring a wider range of symbolic and material resources which will increase the value of their cultural capital and social power’ (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 37), though the target learners are very different from the immigrant women in Canada from which Norton had originally based her study upon. Furthermore, the home-shopping commercial may also signify the onset of a new era within the Korean ELT market in which English language learning may inevitably lose its overwhelming emphasis on the instrumental aspects which may also transform the dominant effects of the ‘ought-to-self’ projection (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009) to an ‘ideal-self’ as learners are liberated from the instrumental needs of foreign language learning necessary for university admissions or employment, and instead are able to focus on learning for pleasure and pursuing self-satisfaction. Both Jung Eun and I began our English language learning journeys from praise and recognition of our English-speaking abilities which led to a stronger motivation and interest.

The notion of L2 motivation has evolved from a simplistic perspective of the integration vs. instrumental dichotomy (Gardner, 1985) to Dörnyei’s (2001, 2005, 2009) theory of the L2 learner identity to Norton’s (2000) focus on social investment, power and identity; however, we often forget that a single ‘positive’ incident or experience could ignite a strong motivation to ‘do something well’ and that L2 motivation does not necessarily have to be seen from a socio-political perspective; rather, L2 motivation could be triggered
by an affective, emotional incident in which we experience an unexplainable sense of joy or gratification. The salesman in the home-shopping commercial seemed to have identified this aspect of L2 motivation in his sales pitch by insisting that confidence was the key to English language learning and that taking small steps and practicing with his method would lead to confidence and satisfaction; in fact, one of the most popular promotional catch phrases for another emerging English language programme in Korea nowadays is, ‘Ya, neo doo har soo it seoh,’ (야! 너도 할 수 있어!) which translates as, ‘Hey, you can do it too!’

5.3. FROM CONFIDENCE TO DESPAIR

I am sitting in Mr. Pearson’s fifth grade class. I had now been in the US for about two years and I did not have any problems communicating in English. I had made enough friends and no one seemed to notice that I had emigrated from a foreign country just a few years ago. Mr. Pearson was tall and blond and had a moustache. He resembled Robert Redford although I am just now realising this since I had no idea who Robert Redford was at the time. I also remember feeling awkward in Mr. Pearson’s class and he did not seem to be the type of person one would expect to find teaching at a primary school, though this may sound a bit biased. He was distant and I do not remember having a single conversation with him nor do I remember him ever offering any help or taking an interest in me as a student. Mr. Pearson did not seem to notice that, despite my developing ability to communicate in English, I was completely lost in his class when it came to the weekly listening quizzes, which I repeatedly failed. Since he did
not notice – or perhaps ignored – my problem, I remained silent throughout the year and somehow made it to the sixth grade since there were no formal exams to pass before moving on to the next grade level. As usual, it is time for our weekly listening quiz. Each week, Mr. Pearson turns on a cassette tape and a narrator reads a story. After listening to the story, we take a quiz on the story and answer questions. As soon as Mr. Pearson turns on the cassette player, however, I hear nothing. Someone is telling a story on the tape, but it is as though the narrator was speaking an incomprehensible language. I hear nothing and thus I understand nothing. Within minutes, the story ends and Mr. Pearson turns off the cassette player and passes out a quiz which consists of several comprehension questions. I am unable to answer any of them and as usual, I receive an ‘F’. (Laura’s vignette; 1979)

The listening quiz was a terrifying moment because I could never answer any of the questions correctly. For some reason, I am overwhelmed by anxiety the moment Mr. Pearson turns on the cassette player and for the next ten or fifteen minutes while the story is being told, I black out and hear nothing at all. I never told anyone because I was embarrassed and Mr. Pearson never talked to me about my test scores. In retrospect, the school did not have an established ESL programme at the time during the late 1970s and I was forced to survive in mainstream classroom settings without any ESL support. At the same time, I had learned to communicate fairly well within a year or so and developed the false belief that I had become competent in English; what I did not realise at the time, however, was that I was still a language learner and that I had not developed the necessary skills to follow a listening or reading text as both not only require schema activation (Farangi, & Saadi, 2017) as well as the strategies necessary for
understanding the gist and the details. I was no longer the confident girl who had learned to speak English within a year; at the same time, I did not realise that I was still a language learner and unfortunately, the teachers at my school did not seem to know how to handle English language learners like myself. The children at my school were predominantly white and there was no established ESL programme at the time. Since I seemed to speak English with relative ease, no one seemed to suspect that I may have had a language problem, including my parents and myself.

Negative experiences of English language learning were also common for some of my students though they were different from my situation. Hye Ri writes about an ‘alien language’ in her narratives as she recalls her very first encounter with English in kindergarten:

When I encountered English for the very first time, I was in kindergarten. There was an English class several times a week. Teacher played a video clip for teaching English to kids. Alphabet letters, their pronunciations and simple English songs were shown. Everyone seemed very enjoying learning English except for me. I was not a quick learner at the time. I watched the video clip like others but English was like an alien language so I was not interested at all. One day, all the mothers came to the kindergarten to observe the class and the English class was included during that day. After my mother observed my class, she was a little angry at me because I was the only child who was not concentrating during the English class. I did not try to learn English until I became upper grade of elementary class. I had never imagined that this alien language would be one of the most
important parts of my life in the future. (Hye Ri, online journal; November 2013)

Just as Hye Ri had thought of English as an alien language, English was alien to me in Mr. Pearson’s class. It was extremely frustrating to sit through the dreadful listening quizzes each week and the only solution that I could think of was for fifth grade to end quickly and to move on to the sixth grade. Likewise, negative learning experiences naturally seemed to lead to a low self-esteem as Eun Jin describes her parents’ disappointment when she could not produce high test scores despite the financial investment that they had made in her private English language education:

When I was young, my parents expected me to grow as a smart person. It was their goals because they thought that they were not educated as much as possible. Even though my father graduated from a university, he wanted me to attend a better university in Seoul to fulfill his satisfaction. During my elementary school life, I tried to do my best on studying English especially since I liked English. However, they were not satisfied with my results even if my scores were getting better. They wanted me to get the highest test scores on every test, but it was difficult for me. Thus, my self-esteem became weaker and I was tired of their requests. (Eun Jin, online journal; April 2013)

Prior to such negative experiences, however, Eun Jin had developed a love for English when her aunt from America had sent her Disney animation videos. Eun Jin explains that she became fascinated with these videos
which did not come with subtitles since they were sent directly from America and she would spend hours watching them over and over again, memorising the dialogues and developing a love for English during this time:

_Some people can think that watching the same movies over and over is boring, but I was never bored. I found that I could memorize the lines naturally. My parents were surprised when I mumbled in English and when I was playing with my dolls. It was my first experience of learning English skills naturally. Even now, I can remember the lines because I can imagine each scene. Of course, this environment was different from a natural language learning context because there were no native speakers and I did not have any opportunities to apply my English skills in the real world. I also learned that television cannot teach language in a linguistic class. However, I was able to learn English skills naturally and I could guess the meanings through the story flows. The videos helped me to acquire listening and speaking skills naturally and I was able to imitate some lines and communicate to my English teachers. The background was a natural language learning environment for me to develop my listening and speaking skills._ (Eun Jin, online journal; April 2013)

Although Eun Jin and I were in completely different language learning contexts, we both shared similar experiences in that we started out by developing a fascination for English which subsequently led to confidence in spoken communication; however, when placed in test-taking situations, fear seemed to replace our confidence and as a result, these negative experiences continued to influence our self-esteem in the years to come.
Eun Jin explains how her love and fascination for English turned into frustration and anxiety when she began learning English in high school:

My favourite subject was English and I believed I could study my major in the United States. However, I got tired of learning English during high school life. Korean public English education focuses on preparing for the College Scholastic Ability Test. Learning English is not for fun, it is just to become a student at a prestigious university. I had to memorize grammatical rules every day and read short reading passages and analyse my weaknesses. I always translated the reading passages into Korean and memorized important structure and vocabulary. This was a stressful and painful English learning experience and I wanted to give up on my studies. I lost my motivation and my English scores dropped. Even now, I still think that the grammar-translation method was the worst learning strategy. (Eun Jin, online journal; April 2013)

Indeed, as Eun Jin poignantly describes how her interest in English began to decline upon entering high school, I realise that I, too, had developed similar feelings of anxiety in Mr. Pearson’s fifth grade class.

5.3.1. Reflections

The construct of motivation is fluid and has the potential to progress or regress, depending on various factors such as ‘the quality of the learning experience, the learner’s sense of autonomy, the influence of teachers and
parents, classroom rewards, the influence of the learner group, and the learner’s knowledge and use of self-regulatory strategies’ (Ellis, 2008, p. 688). Both Hye Ri and Eun Jin experienced the dynamics of L2 motivation as initial negative experiences were subsequently transformed into positive experiences for Hye Ri and positive experiences turned negative for Eun Jin. For Hye Ri, negative experiences of shame and embarrassment when she could not perform as well as her classmates during an open house event at her school triggered feelings of anxiety which were intensified by her mother’s anger and disappointment at her inability to demonstrate the same level of English language skills as her peers. She writes, ‘I did not try to learn English until I became upper grade of elementary school. I had never imagined that this alien language would be one of the most important parts of my life in the future’. Although she does not specify how her L2 motivation was transformed into a positive one in this section of her narratives, she reveals later that she began to take a strong interest in learning English during her pre-adolescence years when she fell in love with the American boyband, The Backstreet Boys, during the 1990s; as a result of her passion and interest in the group, she suddenly felt the need to understand the English lyrics which completely changed her attitude toward the English language.

Hye Ri’s initial lack of L2 motivation may have stemmed from the quality of the learning experience as well as the negative influence of teachers and parents as she was unable to find the overall English language learning experience to be interesting or appealing in any way as a child; furthermore, when her mother displayed anger and disappointment for her lack of participation during an open-house event at school, Hye Ri’s L2 motivation was likely to have decreased even more over the years. However, the moment she discovered The Backstreet Boys, her attitude toward the target
language quickly turned around. Here, we may observe signs of integrative motivation (Gardner, 1985) at work; according to Gardner’s socio-educational model of L2 motivation, integrative motivation can be broadly defined as the learner’s ‘genuine interest in learning the second language in order to come closer to the other language community’ (Gardner, 1985, p. 5). It is interesting to observe how Hye Ri’s lack of L2 motivation, which she claims to have lasted throughout much of her childhood, suddenly took a sharp turn the moment she began to develop an interest in *The Backstreet Boys* during the 1990s. Hye Ri’s story confirms Dörnyei’s (2005) findings from the large-scale study of 8,593 Hungarian learners of foreign languages that integrativeness is the core variable influencing effort toward learning the target language.

Hye Ri’s story may also shed some insight on Korean EFL learners’ motivational factors toward English language learning and why there appears to be a discrepancy between the overwhelming amount of time and money spent on private English language education in Korea and yet the disappointing results of Korean students’ English language performance in general; that is, researchers have questioned why the vast amount of money invested in private English language learning does not seem to help Korean EFL learners’ English language competency. According to Kim (2012b), Korean students in general ‘continued to study English learning even if they had not created the ideal ought-to L2 self, that is, English learning motivation. This phenomenon was regarded as an instance of *amotivated* but incessant L2 learning’ (p. 86). In other words, Kim may be suggesting that English learning for many Korean learners is mechanical and amotivational – that is, lacking any form of motivation – and yet incessant because it – English learning – must continue ‘incessantly’. Hye Ri’s story of developing a strong interest in English the moment she
discovered *The Backstreet Boys* may also shed some insights on one of the reasons why Korean learners nowadays may suffer from amotivation. Here, it might be worthy of pointing out that the Korean pop (K-pop) music industry has become a global, meteoric phenomenon (Kim, 2018) in the past decade and unlike their parents’ and grandparents’ generation who grew up idolising British and American musicians and listening to songs with English lyrics, which often increased their ‘integrative’ motivation to not only learn the language but the culture as well, most Korean youths nowadays listen to K-pop, which has created a ‘paradigm shift in music consumption [bringing] about a change in understanding K-pop not just a sonic genre but as a multimedia performance with a heavy emphasis on visuals’ (Kim, 2018, p. 2).

As mentioned earlier, Dörnyei (2001, 2005, 2009) argues that the most important factor for L2 motivation is ‘integration’ and the learners’ interest and desire to integrate into the target culture play an important role in L2 learning; as such, Korean youth nowadays are not only quite ‘content’ with K-pop but they may not have the same ‘adoring’, ‘idolising’ perspective toward the English-speaking culture as their parents and grandparents’ generation may have had in the past. As a result, Hye Ri’s story of her fascination with the *Backstreet Boys* back in the 1990s and wanting to learn English in order to understand the lyrics of their songs are not as prevalent among the Korean youth anymore; thus, English language learning has become a strictly academic, instrumental tool for university admissions and employment. Although English language learning has always played a strong instrumental role in Korea, the role of pop music from the English-speaking West had also played an important role for the older generations who simply enjoyed listening to the songs, singing along and naturally taking an interest in studying the lyrics and developing an interest in the cultural
Eun Jin’s story is similar in that she also experienced feelings of anxiety due to low academic performance in school and yet slightly different because unlike Hye Ri, she had originally loved English and had spent hours singing along Disney songs and imitating characters from Disney animations, immersing herself in the world of English through the videos that her aunt had sent from America. Eun Jin’s L2 motivation changed from positive to negative upon transitioning into secondary school which suddenly took a sharp turn from communicative language activities to grammar translation and test-taking preparations. Eun Jin’s L2 motivation transformed into what Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) refer to as demotivation – a condition in which second language learners who were once motivated lose their interest in the target language due to external reasons typically concerning ‘various negative influences that cancel out existing motivation’ (p. 138). Demotivation has been widely researched within EFL settings particularly due to the highly competitive, exam-driven atmosphere (Hamada & Kito, 2008; Kim & Kim, 2017). According to Hamada and Kito (2008), five factors may be contributing factors for influencing EFL learners’ demotivation: (1) learning environment; (2) teachers’ competence and teaching style; (3) little intrinsic motivation; (4) non-communicative methods; and (5) textbooks and lessons. For Eun Jin, while all of these factors may have been partially responsible for influencing the cause of her demotivation, it is important to consider the detrimental effects that the test-driven learning environment in Korean secondary schools have had on the love and fascination for English that Eun Jin had initially developed as a child.

In some ways, I can relate to Hye Ri and Eun Jin because anxiety has also had a significant impact on my own motivation to learn; at the same time,
my situation was different for obvious reasons – I was in America, an ESL setting whereas Hye Ri and Eun Jin were in Korea, an EFL environment. The interesting thing, however, is that whereas it is easy to identify specifically how and why Eun Jin and Hye Ri’s second language learning motivation decreased or turned negative due to specific moments when there was negative feedback within a test-driven learning environment, it is difficult to pinpoint specifically why I had experienced severe trouble with listening comprehension in Mr. Pearson’s fifth grade class after developing fluency in spoken English. What is even more perplexing is that I had never realised that I may have had English language problems in the fifth grade and that my inability to pass Mr. Pearson’s listening quizzes may have been related to the fact that I had not only lacked the cultural schema (Anderson & Lynch, 2003; Carrell, 1983, 1987; Nassaji, 2002) necessary for successful listening comprehension but I had not had the experience of ‘listening’ to stories as a child; in other words, I had not had the opportunity to develop my literacy skills as a child.

Ellis and Brewster (2014) point out that listening to stories requires active listening as listeners are able to process the information that they hear with the visuals they receive from the storyteller’s gestures and pictures; however, Mr. Pearson simply played a cassette tape and there were no pictures or any other visuals to activate our schema and we were forced to take a comprehension quiz afterward. There were no pre-listening activities to support listening comprehension, causing immense anxiety for me throughout the listening process. Furthermore, researchers point out that L2 listening was never a primary concern and teachers did not receive any training in teaching listening (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Larsen-Freeman, 2000) during the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) era; nonetheless, researchers have begun to recognise the importance of developing a specific theory and pedagogy for L2 listening, pointing out that it is not only
an ‘unconscious process controlled by hidden cultural schemata’ (Ross & Hill, 2002, p. 1) but a ‘complex, active process in which the listener must discriminate between sounds, understand vocabulary and grammatical structures, interpret stress and intonation, retain what was gathered in all of the above, and interpret it within the immediate as well as the larger sociocultural context of the utterances’ (Vandergrift, 1999, p. 168).

Having been informed of the above L2 studies on listening comprehension, I am able to link my childhood memories to theory as I recall feeling extremely ashamed of my inability to answer the questions on Mr. Pearson’s listening quizzes, blaming myself for not being ‘smart enough’ to understand the listening text, despite the fact that I had only been in America less than two years and had been ‘thrown into’ the mainstream classroom from the very first day without any proper ESL instructions. I do remember very clearly that the minute the cassette tape began to play, I began to panic and the sounds coming from the story did not make any sense to me. I may have begun to experience ‘shame’ for the very first time as school work had always been ‘too easy’ for me as a child in Korea and I had built up a high level of confidence during the first two years of my schooling. In Korea, I always knew the answer to the teacher’s questions and one day, I blurted out the answer without raising my hand. Mr. Park, my second-grade teacher, became very angry and asked me to come up to the front of the class and to put my hands out as he took out a long, red stick and whacked the palm of my hands several times. Unlike the shame that I had felt in Mr. Pearson’s class, however, this experience did not feel humiliating to me at the time. In retrospect, I now understand why listening had been so difficult for me. To begin with, the fact that I would be tested afterward created anxiety as my mind blanked out as the cassette tape was playing; and perhaps more importantly, I had had very little cultural schema to be able to comprehend a story which had been aimed at teaching native speakers instead of ESL.
learners. The most surprising discovery, however, is the fact that I had never questioned why I had failed Mr. Pearson’s listening quizzes until now; the listening quizzes were simply forgotten, buried memories that I did not want to recall and yet I now realise how important it is for me to understand my own language learning and past academic failures as a teacher educator.

Upon arriving in the US, I was sent to a listening lab a few times a week where I was asked to sit in a cubicle and listen to cassette tapes along with a handful of other ESL students; and of course, these cassette tapes were very different from the stories that Mr. Pearson had used for his listening quizzes. There were no trained ESL teachers in the lab and it was a very mechanical procedure day in and day out. By the time I reached the fifth grade, I was no longer considered an ESL student as I had already acquired the skills to speak fluently and my teacher did not seem to notice that I still lacked the necessary skills to keep up with the other students. I was good at ‘pretending’ to understand and fortunately – or perhaps unfortunately, as mentioned earlier, Mr. Pearson did not seem to notice my problem. According to Wong-Filmore (1976, 1979), young learners of a foreign language often use a variety of social strategies in oral communication and ‘pretending comprehension’ is one of them.

Reading Hye Ri and Eun Jin’s stories about experiencing anxiety in learning English reminds me of a painful past that I had learned to forget and hide up until now; however, I now realise that the series of ‘Fs’ that I had received on the listening quizzes in Mr. Pearson’s class had been the beginning of a lifetime of denial and academic failure throughout my secondary schooling during which I had chosen to take a passive role by immersing myself in religious activities under the false conviction that studying and going to
university were not as important as being a faithful Christian. Despite the fact that I had spent nearly two decades studying second language learning theories and teaching methodologies, I had never understood why I had failed Mr. Pearson’s listening quizzes and I had never seen myself as a remedial ESL learner during my primary and secondary schooling until now – this very moment in which I am engaged in self-reflective writing.

5.4. LEARNING TO TEACH EFL: LIMITATIONS OF AN INEXPERIENCED FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER

I am standing in front of approximately twenty-five students at a university in South Korea. I can feel my palms sweating from nervousness as the students silently stare and wait for me to speak. I hope they don’t notice how inexperienced I am. I will just try to be ‘outgoing’ and nice and pray they don’t notice. How hard can it be to teach reading and listening comprehension skills to four different groups of students four times a week? I can repeat the same lesson plan throughout the week. I tell myself: You can do this. (Laura’s vignette; March 2004)

The course was entitled General English and it is a required English language course that every student must take and pass before graduation and since it is a required course for the entire student body, Korean universities were busy hiring full-time instructors. The course mostly focused on reading/listening comprehension and the university provided me with a textbook that all of the foreign language faculty were required to use for the General English courses. There were no orientations or any training sessions and I was hired as a full-time lecturer since I had received an MA
TESOL from an American university, demonstrated an ability to speak fluent English during the oral interviews and more importantly, I had a US passport, which seemed to be an important criterion for the job as the job description clearly stated that applicants must be ‘native speakers or bilinguals with native-like fluency with passports from an English-speaking country.’ Upon receiving the textbook, I was expected to plan my own syllabus and begin teaching General English four times to four different groups of students throughout the week. I was teaching 12 hours a week but I was simply repeating the same course four times a week to four different groups of students. It all seemed to be too good to be true.

At the time of my MA TESOL studies in America, I did not realise that the curriculum would not be very helpful in preparing me to teach in an actual classroom setting as the programme had placed a strong emphasis on theory and lacked a pedagogical component; however, I would soon discover that the lack of preparations in practical language teaching methods would subsequently pose many challenges for me as I did not know how to go about teaching my classes in Korea. I could only rely on my instincts as I became heavily dependent on textbooks and teacher’s manuals, which did not seem very helpful in the end. I had no idea how to execute effective communicative methods and I had no knowledge or understanding of task-based language teaching (TBLT) methods at the time. The MA TESOL diploma stored in my closet seemed to have very little value for me as a foreign language teacher as twenty-plus confused students often stared at me in silence. I had no idea what I was doing and I was terrified at the students’ glares. I now realise that it was also difficult for me to empathise with my students because I had never had the experience of learning English in a formal classroom setting. On the other hand, Eun Jin’s disappointing experiences of losing self-esteem when she could not obtain
satisfactory test scores seemed to have had a turning point when she went to study at an American university where she was fortunate to have met a sincere teacher who guided her and influenced her in many positive ways:

The first class that I ever took at the university was a writing class. The professor was Mr. Nelson. He had studied TESOL for his MA course at Brigham Young University and had a lot of teaching experience in Asian countries. Due to his extensive teaching experience, he knew the education system in Korea very well. I hadn’t had a chance to write essays in Korea. Therefore, I worried that my writing was poor. Mr. Nelson had a unique way of teaching writing skills that I’d never experienced before: meaning-focused teaching. He thought that form was important to convey the correct meanings, but the class was a low-intermediate class. Therefore, providing confidence and emphasizing meaning was also important to the students. He taught us how to brainstorm writing ideas and to use freestyle writing. He created an effective background where students became confident in freely describing their ideas. His teaching skill was effective not only for me but for every other ESL student. He also tried to teach forms to us. He analysed his students’ common grammatical mistakes and presented them using power point. He taught the accurate forms and he impressed me with his teaching. I wanted to take another course from after that class. He taught TESOL classes, so I decided to study TESOL and become a good teacher like him. (Eun Jin, online journal; April 2013)

I am a bit ‘envious’ of Eun Jin’s positive experience which has helped her to
understand how to teach L2 writing effectively. I had never had such an opportunity as I was forced to take mainstream English literature classes when I entered secondary school. Most of my English literature teachers were a bit aloof and difficult to follow and the terrifying experiences that began in Mr. Pearson’s fifth grade class continued throughout secondary school. Just as Eun Jin had been mentored by a caring teacher, Jung Eun was fortunate to have met helpful English teachers, which ultimately led to a positive influence on her self-esteem as an English language learner and subsequently as an English teacher:

I went to the high school which is well known in boarding school in Kyungkido. We all were allowed to go home only at the weekend and even some of us refused to go home if our test results could not meet some certain score. Once in a week, we had conversation class with a foreigner, her name was Pat. She was a middle-aged Canadian woman with blond hair and blue eyes. It was the first time for me to meet real western looking foreigner. Somehow I was afraid of talking to her. I became relatively shy student in conversation class like other students, except those outstanding ones. However, I felt very comfortable even though I was not very good at speaking in class, because the conversation class was not the one of the major core tough class, so we all felt no pressure at all. I have a vivid memory of those times that we really enjoyed every moment with Pat. English class with Pat was an oasis for me in my tough high school time. (Jung Eun, online journal; April 2013)

Most Korean universities prefer to hire native speakers or bilingual speakers
like myself to teach their required English language courses under the presumption that native speakers are more qualified to teach English language skills than nonnative speakers. The fact that I had never learned English in an EFL setting surely placed me at a disadvantage as I now realise that I was much less qualified than my NNSET counterparts, who must have had vivid memories and experiences of learning English as foreign language, just like the students. Even negative experiences of learning English for test-taking purposes seem to help NNSETs understand their students better since they are able to empathise with their problems and offer suggestions and tips on surviving the test-driven environment. As mentioned earlier, Hye Ri shares her memories of making the transition from a frustrated L2 learner in secondary school to an enthusiastic learner as she developed a strong interest in American pop music:

*When I was in middle school and high school, every subject was related to college entrance examination and English was the same. English was not an easy subject any more. As time goes by, it became harder and harder to learn. I had to learn more complex grammar as the book went to the next step and there was nothing about learning how to speak English. I just studied English to take the exam it was really boring. Something happened to me when I was in the first grader of high school. One day I watched the music video of Backstreet Boys and I fell in love with them at once. I really loved their songs. I wanted to learn more and more about the band and it became my reason to study English. I bought their albums and listened to their songs. When I encountered expressions from their songs in the English text book, I felt so happy like I was the only one who knows the expressions. I sometimes asked questions regarding expressions*
from their songs to my teacher. English was no longer boring subject after I met Backstreet Boys and I decided to study English hard to go to American to see them some day. (Hye Ri, online journal; November 2013)

Hye Ri’s story reminds me of my own experiences of learning a foreign language in high school. We had to choose between French and Spanish and I chose French simply because my older cousins had selected French as a foreign language. My French teacher’s name was Mrs. Owen and she had a twin sister who was a Spanish teacher at a nearby high school. Mrs. Owen was in her forties at the time and I now realise she only used audiolingualism and grammar translation methods. She was the only French teacher at our school so every year, as I moved from French 1 to 2 and from 2 to 3, Mrs. Owen was my teacher each time. Just as Hye Ri had mentioned about English, French seemed to be fairly easy and fun in the beginning but as the years progressed, it became more and more difficult and having to focus on grammar and being tested each week led to boredom in the end. Every day, Mrs. Owen had a set of grammar exercises for us to work on individually in class and there were no interactions among the students. In December, Mrs. Owen always made us sing French Christmas carols and since we had to sing the song every Christmas season, I could still vividly remember the song and the lyrics. Indeed, this was not the same kind of experience that Hye Ri had had when she willingly, voluntarily chose to learn the lyrics to the Backstreet Boys songs until her passion subsequently led to a strong interest in learning the English language.

Standing in front of twenty-five students in a Korean university as a lecturer with no prior teaching experience and very little understanding of how Korean students learn English as a foreign language, I began to realise that
I was not prepared to take on my role and that I would have to do my best to ‘feign’ my teaching abilities until the end of the academic term. Unfortunately, the only opportunity that I seemed to have had as an ‘apprenticeship of observation’ (Lortie, 1975) came from Mrs. Owen, who did not seem to have much understanding or knowledge of CLT approaches to teaching a second language at the time. In this sense, I often questioned whether I was as qualified as my NNSET counterparts, who may have been more equipped to teach Korean students than I was.

5.4.1. Reflections

An article published in the TESOL Quarterly begins with an extract from an online recruiting agency aimed at linking native speakers of English with the thousands of private English language hagwons seeking to hire native speakers of English to teach in South Korea (Ruecker & Ives, 2015). The extract reads as follows: ‘As long as the teacher speaks clearly and has a positive attitude, the job is usually already theirs’ (cited in Ruecker & Ives, 2015, p. 733). It is assumed, of course that the ‘teacher’ will be a native speaker from one of the five English-speaking countries often (and explicitly) specified in many job postings seeking to hire native speakers to work in Korea - these five countries are limited to the US, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Porter, 2011); it might be safe to assume that there are quite a few native speakers with a ‘positive attitude’ who can also ‘speak clearly’ from one of the above countries enjoying their privileges whereas those from ‘nonnative English-speaking countries outside the approved list, regardless of qualifications, need not apply’ (Ruecker & Ives, 2015, p. 734).

Despite the grim realities of the ELT market in an EFL setting like Korea, Japan or China in which the ‘white native speaking English teacher’ has
supremacy simply for being white and having native speaker status (Canagarajah, 1999; Holliday, 2005; Pennycook, 1998; Phillipson, 1992), the TESOL field has become aware of the irrational logic behind such acts of discrimination and studies empowering NNSETs have surged over the years (e.g., Braine, 2010). Nonetheless, when one of the professors from my MA TESOL programme in America assured me that I would have ‘absolutely no trouble finding a job’ in Korea after finishing my degree, I did not understand the implications behind her words; just as she had predicted, it would take less than a year before landing a full-time teaching position as a lecturer at a well-known four-year university in Seoul, whereas my Korean counterparts would have to have completed a doctorate and even upon completion of the degree, they would have to spend years working as part-time instructors at several different universities to make ends meet. I am not white and I am not a native speaker, but I speak fluent English and more importantly, as I have later discovered, because I have a US passport and an MA in TESOL from an American university, I was able to find a job shortly after arriving in Korea. Indeed, I had a huge advantage over the Korean teachers who were probably more qualified than I was in many ways and I now realise it was not fair as I was probably less qualified than my Korean counterparts and yet privileged in many ways.

Native speaker English teachers may often begin their teaching careers with confidence since they are, after all, native speakers, which is often equated with legitimacy and competence. Although English was not my first language, it is now the primary language in my life and thus I believed I was ‘equipped’ to teach university students when I arrived in Korea after completing my MA TESOL in the US. It did not take long to realise that I would have very little understanding of what my students were experiencing as EFL learners since I had learned English in a completely different
environment. Unlike Eun Jin and Hye Ri who are able to share details of the trials and challenges that they had encountered as English language learners in Korea, I have very little memory to draw upon, making it even more difficult to understand my students since the context in which I had developed my English language skills was in America, within an ESL setting. Furthermore, it was difficult to make sense of my teacher identity because the factors constructing teacher cognition – such as teacher beliefs (Borg, 2003) which stem from personal experiences of learning within a certain environment – did not match the context in which I was situated as a teacher. For example, Eun Jin was fortunate to have met Mr. Nelson when she went to study at an American university; the negative experiences of having to study English in a test-driven environment in Korea seemed to have been compensated when Mr. Nelson took Eun Jin under his wing and taught her to do academic writing.

In many ways, Mr. Nelson inspired Eun Jin to pursue TESOL so that she could help EFL learners who might be struggling with the same challenges that she had faced when she entered secondary school in Korea. Furthermore, these experiences became the cornerstone for constructing her teacher beliefs and subsequently played an instrumental role in developing an ‘apprenticeship of observation’ which refers to the influence of teachers’ prior learning on pedagogy (Lortie, 1975). According to Borg (2004), ‘there is ample evidence’ that L2 learning influences teaching practices, which may explain why L2 teacher education has been found to have a ‘weak effect on student teachers’ (p. 275). Borg’s suggestion causes a problem for someone like myself who has no memory of receiving L2 instructions in a formal, classroom setting, which may explain why I did not enjoy teaching English language skills as much as TESOL courses; thus when I began teaching teachers as a teacher educator, I was inspired and challenged to study L2 teaching theories and methods much more actively.
when I was given the responsibility of having to explain them to my student teachers. However, writing this thesis has helped me to realise that simply teaching TESOL courses was not enough to understand my professional identity; in fact, it was not until I began engaging in reflexivity throughout the writing process that I have begun to draw upon painful childhood memories which have had a significant influence on my identity as a teacher educator and how I may go about confronting the day-to-day challenges as a struggling TESOL educator situated within the highly neoliberal context of South Korea’s ELT market.

As I reflect upon Eun Jin, Jung Eun and Hye Ri’s narratives, I am reminded of the privileges that were instantly granted to me despite the lack of experience and knowledge necessary for teaching EFL learners in a university setting. I had completed an MA TESOL within a year and had arrived in Korea after living in America for the majority of my life. As such, I had no experience or any knowledge of how Korean students learn English in primary and secondary schools – the struggles, the challenges that they had faced nor the strategies that they had learned to develop as English language learners; and yet, I was given the immediate privilege of becoming a full-time lecturer at a four-year university in Seoul simply because I spoke fluent English, had a US passport and an MA TESOL degree from an American university. At the time, I had no idea how fortunate I was to have been given such a privilege. Reading my students’ narratives and the rich experiences that they had encountered as L2 learners of English, however, has helped me to realise that Eun Jin, Jung Eun, Hye Ri and I have eventually become victims of extreme neoliberalism in the Korean education

---

26 Typically, it takes a minimum of two years to complete an MA degree but I took additional courses during the winter and summer sessions in order to graduate within a year.
system as well. That is, Eun Jin, Jung Eun and Hye Ri will never enjoy the same privileges that were given to me so easily. At the same time, I would later discover that the real reason behind the massive hiring spree of native speakers\[27\] with passports from English-speaking countries was not simply because Korean universities cared so much about helping their students to improve their English communicative skills; rather, the core reasons had more to do with the universities’ desperate race to increase their global competitiveness, which required a certain percentage of foreign faculty. As a result, we – native speaker/bilingual faculty in Korean universities – will always be regarded as a ‘strategy’ to fill the global competitiveness category in the university ranking system.

\[27\] Here, the term ‘native speakers’ includes bilingual speakers with passports from English-speaking countries like myself because most Korean universities placed us (native speakers and bilinguals) in the same ‘category’ in order to raise their global ranking scores. Put it simply, as long as we spoke fluent, ‘native-like’ English and possessed a passport from an English-speaking country, they categorised us as ‘native speakers’, which was an important factor for raising university ranking.
CHAPTER 6
FROM LANGUAGE TEACHER TO LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATOR

6.0. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I engage with student narratives which reveal the reality of neoliberalism in the Korean ELT context. During a TESOL lecture, a student who teaches business English to individuals employed at a major corporation in Korea admits that her motivation to ‘work hard’ and provide careful, individual attention to her students is simply due to the fact that her salary is dependent on her students’ test scores on a standardised oral exam, while another student reveals that she has had to spend her own money to promote and ‘market’ her English class at a hagwon. Such stories of English language programmes centred around ‘scores, ranking, and competition’ remind me of the grim realities of my own career and workplace, which is heavily managed and operated under the auspices of neoliberal policies and systems.

6.1. DO EFL TEACHERS HAVE A ‘CAREER’?

I am surprised to find a rather depressing narrative written by In Jung, who is a fluent speaker of English and a very competent teacher:

When I went to America after graduating from college, I felt so lost and I needed some words of encouragement or suggestions or advice of any sort from anyone at the time. I felt so lost and it was so hard to find a job and I was doing nothing but applying to various places that did not want me. I have never felt so useless
in my entire life. Everything seemed so confusing and complicated and all I ever wanted was to be of some use. (In Jung, online journal; November 2013)

In Jung’s main problem was that she was searching for a job in the US instead of in Korea. Although she speaks fluent ‘native-like’ English, the fact that she had received her university education as well as TESOL qualifications from Korea seemed to be a major hindrance in convincing American institutions to ‘trust’ her abilities to teach ESL. In Jung’s situation was a bit unique in that she grew up in Indonesia and in America, but she attended university in Korea; and since she had permanent residency in the US (though she did not have official citizenship), she decided to move back to America after completing university and TESOL in Korea. To her dismay, however, she discovered that having the ability to speak fluent, native-like English and TESOL qualifications from an accredited university in Korea were not enough to find a job as an ESL teacher in the US; in fact, she could not even find a substitute teaching position at a local kindergarten. On the contrary, a native speaker of English would have very little trouble finding a job as an English language teacher in Korea – even without any teaching experience, TESOL training or credentials in foreign language teaching.

In Jung quickly realised that she would have to start all over again by enrolling in graduate school at an American university if she wanted to work in the US. I began to realise that In Jung was one of the many students who seemed to struggle with building a career as a foreign language teacher after completing the TESOL programme. After a while, In Jung decided to give up on the idea of seeking an ESL teaching position in America for the time being and returned to Korea to find work. I often come across students
like In Jung who begin TESOL studies and yet struggle to find stability within the field.

As I reflect upon In Jung’s painful story, I begin to think about my own experiences of searching for a job after completing my MA TESOL in the US, which were very different from that of In Jung as I was fortunate enough to find a full-time lecturer position at a university in Seoul within a very short period of time. My situation indeed was different because I had qualifications from an English-speaking country and perhaps even more importantly, I had a foreign passport – a highly desirable asset for individuals seeking to work in Korean universities as the number of foreign faculty in Korean universities affects their score in the category of ‘global competitiveness’ in university ranking, which plays an important role in hiring foreign faculty in Korean universities. At the time, I had no idea what was happening and my understanding of the neoliberal influences in Korean universities was virtually non-existent. I just felt very fortunate to have found a full-time job at a university in Seoul within such a short period of time and I now realise that in Korea, the ability to speak fluent, native or native-like English, having a university degree well as a passport from English-speaking countries were enormous privileges that have placed me at a much higher advantage than someone like In Jung.

Although the TESOL career path had initially been a ‘smooth ride’ for me during the first five years while I was a doctoral student in Korea, I have seen countless students walk away from the TESOL field – not knowing what to do, where to go, and not fully understanding what attracted them to TESOL in the first place. For some students, however, a fascination with the English language and the confidence that they had developed in being ‘good at English’ as a child seemed to have led them to a career in TESOL;
for others, they seemed to have ‘stumbled upon’ the field through random experiences which led them to initially develop an interest in TESOL. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Na Young was one of the students who had developed a fascination with English when she developed a fascination with English as a child and although she began her career as an engineer, she eventually left the field to take up TESOL as a second career. However, her parents were unhappy with the decision and she continued to question whether she had made the right decision of leaving a stable, well-paying job for an unstable career as an English language teacher:

After graduating the university, I got a job in my major of study. But working in an engineering company did not suit me well. Always I got stressed a lot at work and I was sick and tired of the field. So I quit my job and worked in an English lab school to earn pocket money and to think what I want to be … I just enjoyed learning English and thought it was one of my interests. Even though I enjoyed working in English institute and love learning it, is it possible that an interest becomes a profession? Is having a mind to learn how to teach English and want to be an English educator wrong? (Na Young, online journal; April 2013)

Na Young questions whether it is possible to turn an ‘interest into a profession’ and whether it was ‘wrong’ to want to become an English teacher. Despite the fact that she loved teaching English, she was uneasy about her decision to abandon a stable, respected (in Korean society) career to a much lower-paying, unstable career in TESOL. Despite the inner struggles, however, I remember Na Young’s big smiles and enthusiasm in class and she did not seem to doubt her decision for making a career change,
regardless of the social pressure of having a ‘well-paying, respected’ job. Na Young recalls the experience of standing up to her peers and family for what she believed in her heart was what she ‘really wanted to do’:

My friends and acquaintances got shocked. Especially my father really didn’t understand me and was disappointed at me. He tried to persuade me to keep my career by moving to another company. Finally I didn’t follow him. I took quite a time talking with my father about what I really wanted to do and want to be. (Na Young, online journal; April 2012)

Many Korean parents often encourage their children to dream about becoming a doctor or an attorney or other careers that are considered to be more ‘stable’ than teaching in hagwons, which is where many TESOL students work; however, for someone like Na Young, discovering the English language teaching field was almost like returning to her ‘first love’ and the fascination with English that she had developed as a child. It was more than just a job – it was a path to ‘finding her way’ (as she put it) and finding herself even if it meant disappointing for her family and having less financial freedom. Na Young’s search for her ‘true identity’ as an English language teacher and having the courage to stand up for what she truly loved to do reminds me of my own journey and encountering a passion for TESOL and struggling to find myself:

Professor Kumar does not seem to want to ‘teach’ us in his course, Intercultural Communications, in the MA TESOL programme; instead, we usually sit in a circle and discuss the articles collated
in a thick course reading packet while he intervenes now and then. The reading assignment from the previous week was Yamuna Kachru’s (1999) article, Culture, Context and Writing. I have no background knowledge on L2 writing pedagogy or intercultural communication and I am not quite sure whether I am fully understanding what the author is trying to say but her writing certainly has a ‘voice’ – and it seems as though she is critical of Kaplan’s (1966) theory of contrastive rhetoric (CR) which compares the rhetorical patterns of different cultures, thus implying that ‘it is desirable for all users of English to learn the preferred rhetorical mode(s) of English’ (Kachru, 1999, p. 83; italics added). I am immediately intrigued and fascinated … almost as though I had fallen in love. I could feel Yamuna Kachru’s passion and commitment toward her beliefs in L2 writing pedagogy and before I know it, Professor Kumar suddenly sits straight up in his chair and begins to take a more ‘active role’ in the discussion. His eyes seem to sparkle as he explains Kachru’s paper … it was easy to see how much he loved the subject and how passionate he felt as he shared his thoughts with us … in the meantime, I can feel my heart flutter as though I had discovered a treasure. It was the same feeling that I had when I read Herman Hesse’s Siddhartha for the very first time. This was it. Yamuna Kachru’s world of TESOL. This is what I wanted to do. (Laura’s vignette; April 2001)

Reflecting upon this experience helps me to understand Na Young’s decision to walk away from her engineering career. Just as Na Young had become intrigued and immediately attracted to English as a child – a feeling of excitement so grand that it is unexplainable – I had felt such excitement
and fascination upon coming across Yamuna Kachru’s paper in my *Intercultural Communications* class; and just as Na Young could not forget these feelings and passion for English – even after she had become an engineer, I, too could not forget how I felt when I read papers in sociolinguistics and World Englishes during the course of my MA TESOL studies in America; unfortunately, the doctoral programme in Korea primarily focused on L2 teaching methodology and second language acquisition and critical pedagogy was never discussed, which is one of the reasons why I had decided to start a second doctorate at the IOE.

Just as Na Young could not ‘forget’ her fascination with English which ultimately led her to leave a lucrative, ‘respected’ career in engineering for an ‘unstable’ career in TESOL, I could not forget how I felt when I first came across Yamuna Kachru’s paper and what I would later discover as the world of critical pedagogy in applied linguistics; in fact, when I told a tenured Korean professor in Korea that I wanted to pursue a second doctorate on teacher identity, she responded, ‘So you’ll end up like one of those’. By this, she was referring to the fact that research in English language teaching and TESOL in Korea was primarily dominated by cognitive perspectives to language learning and only quantitative studies were considered to be ‘authentic research’ within the Korean ELT context at the time; as such, ‘one of those’ referred to the very few researchers who conducted qualitative studies and discussed issues from critical, socio-political perspectives. I could almost feel the same pressure and the disappointment that Na Young must have experienced when her father strongly disapproved of her plans to make a career shift from engineering to TESOL; at the same time, I could feel the passion – the desire to follow her heart to pursue what she truly wanted to do as I, too, had brushed off the Korean professor’s comments and stood firm in what I believed to be was the road for me to take.
6.1.1. Reflections

In a seminal paper exploring EFL teachers’ identity, Johnston (1997) asks, ‘Do EFL teachers have careers?’ (p. 681). Johnston’s study problematises the notion of a ‘career’ in TESOL – which, as he argues, should not be compared to the mainstream teaching profession which may be seen as a much more ‘stable’ profession or career; that is, the TESOL field is not as institutionalised as the mainstream teaching field and it is often considered to be ‘permeable’ (Maley, 1992, cited in Johnston, 1997, p. 685) as many ESL/EFL teachers enter and leave ‘easily. Furthermore, the field is comprised of ‘unreal’ (Clayton, 1989) teachers who often turn out to be ‘young, unqualified native speakers looking to spend a couple of years in English teaching to make money, gain overseas working experience, and so on’ (Johnston, 1997, p. 685). Johnston concludes his introduction by stating, ‘Whether [EFL] teachers have careers cannot be established; only how they talk about their life stories can be’ (p. 687).

The rhetorical question, ‘Do EFL teachers have a career?’ poses slightly different implications for In Jung and Na Young since neither is a native speaker of English nor has received higher education from an English-speaking country, and yet the question is an important one to consider in understanding EFL teacher identity in Korea. To begin with, the question may have more ‘literal’ implications for In Jung, who could not find a job in the US due to a lack of qualifications in higher education from an English-speaking country despite possessing strong teaching skills, native-like fluency in English, and TESOL qualifications; for In Jung, the crux of the problem may also resonate more closely with the plethora of literature addressing issues of power in TESOL (e.g., Canagarajah, 1999; Holliday,
2005; Jenkins, 2000), linguistic imperialism (Philipson, 1992), cultural imperialism (Pennycook, 1998) and nonnative speaker teacher identity (e.g., Braine, 1999, 2004; Canagarajah, 1999; Clark & Paran, 2007; Mahoob et al., 2004; Motha, 2006; Rubin, 1992) as she was automatically disqualified as an ESL teacher in America simply because she had not received her education in the ‘English-speaking West’ part of the world. As such, In Jung claims she feels ‘useless’ and ‘powerless’ and implies that she cannot begin to establish a ‘career’ as an English language teacher in America; thus we may conclude that In Jung simply does not have a career in ESL – at least not in America, which is where she wanted to work – due to the prevalence of an unequal power structure which prevents individuals, despite being qualified and trained, from establishing a career without official qualifications from an English-speaking country.

Na Young’s situation may be a bit more complex and rhetorical as she asks, ‘Is it possible that an interest becomes a profession? Is having a mind to learn how to teach English to be an English educator wrong?’ For Na Young, then, the question, ‘Do EFL teachers have a career?’ problematises the notion of a ‘career’ in a different way from that of In Jung as the central issue does not necessarily relate to issues of power in the English-speaking West; rather, the notion of a ‘career’ comes with a predetermined definition that the Korean society seems to impose. That is, in Korea, a ‘socially acceptable’ delineation of a ‘career’ is often equated with what many Koreans perceive as ‘highly esteemed and respected’ jobs such as law, medicine, engineering, etc. – and for women, one of the most coveted careers is the mainstream teaching profession – specifically, a permanent teaching position at a primary or secondary school – which is very difficult to obtain nowadays due to extreme competition. Similar to Johnston’s comments regarding the difference between the mainstream teaching field
and the TESOL field, the mainstream teaching field is often considered to be a respected, highly esteemed career in Korea whereas the TESOL field is often equated with instability and short-term teaching positions at private language hagwons. When Na Young asks whether it is ‘wrong’ to be an English teacher (in the TESOL field), she is implying that in the eyes of her family and friends and perhaps the Korean society in general, she may have made the wrong decision by abandoning a lucrative, respected career as an engineer for an unstable, underpaid career in TESOL while at the same time questioning whether TESOL is an ‘authentic’ career. Johnston (1997) also questioned whether it was possible to establish a ‘career’ in TESOL; however, his reference was primarily aimed at native speakers of English who were often seen as entering and leaving the TESOL profession easily and not taking their jobs ‘seriously’ – thus questioning whether TESOL should be called a ‘profession’ or a ‘career’.

For Na Young, however, the question of whether EFL teachers have careers poses a more internal dilemma as she struggles between what she loves to do and believes is ‘right’ for her and what society sees as being acceptable and admirable; thus she is questioning the legitimacy of a career in TESOL from the perspective of what Korean society sees as ‘authentic’ careers. Na Young’s struggles resonate with Johnston’s (1997) discussion of Bakhtin’s notion of heteroglossia in understanding EFL teachers’ careers by arguing that the notion of a career cannot be seen from a ‘normative, supposedly objective reference point’ (p. 687); rather, the professional life story of an EFL teacher should be seen as being ‘discursively constructed’ (MacLure, 1993; cited in Johnston, 1997, p. 687) as competing discourses are evident in Na Young’s narratives as she discusses her love of English and how much she enjoys teaching English while at the same time displaying signs of confusion as she questions whether it is ‘wrong’ to pursue a career in
something that she also enjoys doing. Thus, Johnston’s (1997) question, whether EFL teachers have careers, cannot be established – only how they talk about their life stories can be (p. 687), Na Young may never be able to fully determine the legitimacy of a career in TESOL; at the same time, she is constantly engaged in the process of making sense of her identity as an English language teacher (Tsui, 2007; Varghese et al., 2005).

Johnston’s (1997) discussion of heteroglossia in exploring the discursive nature of EFL teachers’ professional lives aims at understanding the multiple voices and identities of each individual participant of his study; as such, he points out that EFL teachers may be able to ‘enjoy their work and [be] competent at it to discursively construct a life as a teacher and thus to envision staying in this occupation longer. At present, that discursive option does not seem to exist.’ (p. 706). Johnston’s concern seems to affect In Jung, Na Young as well as myself as we all find ourselves struggling to make sense of our identities in an unstable field in which it is difficult to ‘discursively construct a life as a teacher’ – albeit from very different positions. Particularly, for someone like Na Young, who had entered the TESOL field upon abandoning a stable, lucrative career, it is likely that she may have interacted with conflicting, multiple voices within herself in order to ‘argue for her identity’ (MacLure, 1993) – that she would chose to ‘follow her heart and instincts’ by doing ‘what she likes’ – which is teaching English, despite social norms and standards. In this sense, Johnston’s interpretation of heteroglossia is indeed evident; at the same time, Johnston’s study is limited in that he only presents the multivocality of each individual rather than the dialogic interaction of more than one individual, which may be another approach to understanding Bakhtin’s conception of heteroglossia. That is, the notion of heteroglossia originally stems from Bakhtin’s theory of the ‘novel’ in which the reader is able to engage with the ‘polyphony’ –
multiple voices – of the various characters involved in the story (Holquist, 1990); thus, although there is one author, there are many voices interacting with one another, guiding the reader to construct his or her own interpretations of the text as they themselves become participants of the dialogue.

Integrating my own narratives with that of In Jung and Na Young demonstrates such dialogic interactions as well as the heteroglossic, polyphonic nature of a text. In other words, I am able to ‘add’ an additional voice to the dialogue which in turn has helped me to see that my own disposable, unstable status as a member of the foreign faculty on a non-tenure track contract, as well as the negative, helpless self-perceptions not only affect how I perceive myself but how I perceive my students. As a result, I may have failed to exercise my agency in the things that I can do, rather than focusing on what I am unable to do as a contract-based faculty of TESOL. As Johnston suggests, if the TESOL field were to offer more stability and perhaps opportunities for teachers to develop their skills and talent, they might be able to enjoy what they do and remain in the field longer. While Johnston’s suggestion is indeed important and insightful, it is not only difficult for teachers in the TESOL field to actualise such goals on their own, but the other stakeholders in the field – namely the teacher educators themselves – must also acknowledge the problem at hand and work toward creating a dynamic community of practice (Wenger, 1998) in which TESOL students and faculty work together to create meaning in the TESOL profession; as such, the notion of heteroglossia in understanding teacher identity is limited unless the essence of the theory – multivocality, polyphony – manifests in meaningful dialogue among all of the individuals involved within the field.
6.2. MONEY AND COMPETITION: THE IMPACT OF NEOLIBERALISM IN KOREAN ELT

I am in the middle of a lecture in one of my MA TESOL courses, Language Curriculum Design, and we are discussing a chapter on the process of ‘monitoring’ students from the main textbook, Language Curriculum Design, by Paul Nation and John Macalister (2010). According to the authors, there are various ways of monitoring and assessing language learners, though we tend to associate assessment with numbers and tests – especially within the Korean ELT context; however, the authors suggest that language teachers should make effort to monitor and assess their students by using alternative approaches such as observation, self-reports, surveys and interviews. I completely agree with the authors and I am explaining their approaches with enthusiasm and supporting the authors for these ‘meaningful’ approaches to assessment and monitoring. Suddenly, Ji Sun raises her hand and says, ‘I can’t really use those meaningful approaches because I teach OPIC and I get paid based on my students’ test scores. I am a bit startled by her comment and because I am not sure how to respond, I invite her to tell us more about her job, which she willingly accepts. (Laura’s vignette; May 2013)

According to Jisun, OPIC stands for Oral Proficiency Interview by Computer and it is a standardised test designed to assess oral proficiency of English. Ji Sun works for Samsung, the largest corporation in South Korea, and her job is to train Samsung employees to improve their OPIC scores; despite the fact that the objective of the test is to assess oral proficiency, Ji Sun
explains that most of her students are more interested in simply improving their OPIC scores – which is helpful for promotions – instead of improving their overall speaking skills. Furthermore, Ji Sun reveals that she is solely focused on helping her students to raise their test scores because she will get paid based on her students’ test results. I am shocked to hear that a teacher’s main concern lies in her students’ test scores simply because the results of the tests scores determine how much money they will earn; at the same time, I am reminded of how naive I am because I have never taught outside the university context and my lack of understanding of what the Korean ELT field is really like in ‘the real world’. At the same time, I am finding out that most of my students work in the private language sector and much of the ‘romantic’ and ‘meaningful’ approaches discussed in published textbooks have very little meaning to them because they are ‘out there in the field’, which is largely controlled by greedy hagwon owners who may not always have had professional training in English language teaching and are primarily focused on making a ‘profit’. Ji Sun’s story reminds me of Ka Hyun’s written narratives in which she describes her frustrations of working within the Korean hagwon industry, which placed a lot of pressure on the teachers by making them compete against one another:

Since English education market in Korea is increasingly tough and marketing strategies were full of brilliant ideas, I felt intimidated by intense competition. Many English language institutes have invested plenty of time and money to attract potential customers. In the places where I used to work, teachers in charge of the same type of English lesson were not able to get along with each other because we were not co-workers or colleagues, but rivals. It was impossible to be friends with them. I was not different from them. My team had no choice but to hire marketing experts to promote our
class and be distinguished from other classes with tremendous amount of money every month. Nothing was guaranteed in terms of enrolment of students despite the huge investment on it. Although letting them post some comments on someone’s blogs or give out some leaflets would work somehow to not to lose remaining students and to grab attention of new students, I just could not handle all the financial burden and spare extra time to monitor how the marketing agency is taking good care of us. (Ka Hyun, online journal; May 2013)

Although Ka Hyun does not go into detail about the specific context of her workplace, we can assume that she was working for a large private language academy and that she had to promote her own classes in order to attract students. Despite having to spend her own money for advertising and marketing consultation fees, she was not sure whether the investment would pay off since it all seemed to depend on how many students would enrol in her course. I had never heard of such a thing and I could feel my emotions change from ‘shock’ to ‘anger’ as I begin to see similar things happening at my own institution. Money and competition were the two key words when the new president of our university took office in 2014. The new president, who was said to have been the youngest in the history of the university, was also enormously ambitious and ‘driven’. She wasted no time enforcing numerous changes throughout the school and one of the first changes was the increase of teaching hours for all full-time faculty, particularly the non-tenure track faculty who were already teaching twice as much as the tenured and tenure-track faculty. Under the new changes, the increased number of teaching hours for the non-tenure track faculty increased from 12 hours per week (equivalent to four classes) to 15 hours per week, equivalent to five classes whereas the teaching hours for the
tenured and tenure-track faculty increased from six hours per week (equivalent to two classes) to nine hours (equivalent to three classes) in just one of the two academic terms throughout the year; in other words, the teaching hours for the non-tenure track faculty doubled the hours that the tenure-track faculty were having to teach. At the same time, the salary for the non-tenure track faculty is significantly lower than that of the tenure-track faculty and there are no opportunities for any promotions or monetary incentives and bonuses that the tenured and tenure-track faculty receive throughout the year. It is an evil system that discriminates university faculty into categories – tenured and tenure-track and non-tenure track – simply based on the ‘status’ of each faculty member.

The situation may be similar to In Jung in that her ‘status’ as a nonnative speaker English teacher without a degree from an English-speaking category simply placed her in an inferior category, blocking any opportunity for career advancement; at the same time, the overall situation represents neoliberal approaches behind the Korean education system in general. The primary reason for the increased teaching load was to meet the criteria of a government-funded project that the university was vying for and in order to qualify for the funding, full-time faculty had to teach ‘more’ classes instead of having them taught by part-time instructors. The rationale was that the quality of the classes taught by full-time faculty would be of ‘higher quality’ than the ones taught by part-time instructors; what the Ministry of Education failed to recognise, however, was the fact that thousands of part-time instructors, who were already suffering in many ways, would lose their jobs since universities had to take away their classes and force the full-time faculty to teach them instead. The second major change that took place was the push for more research and publications in order to raise the university ranking. Needless to mention, the logic behind the two changes seemed to contradict one another because first, we were being forced to teach more
classes while at the same time being pressured into doing more research. For someone like myself, we were being forced to work longer hours, penalised for not producing publications and never being granted the opportunity for a promotion or a salary increase; in other words, we were denied the right to maintain human dignity – the dignity of honest labour and hard work. Nonetheless, we worked and worked and meticulously designed our curriculum, spent countless hours counselling students and proved – according to annual reports – that our students were among the most satisfied within the entire university.

Having spent nearly a decade in the ‘non-tenure track’ category (which is equivalent to the ‘non-regular employment system’), I have begun to realise that individuals working under such conditions are at the cruel mercy of an employer that refuses to recognise ‘effort’ and ‘hard work; that is to say, our effort has no value as there are no opportunities to advance or be rewarded or compensated in any ways. I feel the same pain and anger that Ka Hyeon is describing in her narratives as I suddenly see myself sitting in front of the Dean of Academic Affairs for my annual evaluation for non-tenure track faculty:

*The dean quickly flips through some papers which appear to be a pile of my publications and course evaluations. Even though I have done nothing wrong … and even though the numbers on my course evaluations indicate that my students think of me as a good teacher, the dean does not say anything. It is obvious that he does not consider me as a legitimate member of the university faculty. He looks up after a few minutes of browsing through my file and asks, ‘Do you have any questions?’ Do I have any questions? I have a million questions: Why are we not given the chance to qualify for*
tenure when we work so hard and publish just as much as the tenured and tenure-track faculty? Why are we treated as second-class citizens at this institution? Why do we have no say in the administration of our own department? Where is democracy? Do you know how to be ‘nice’? What did I do to deserve this? Yes. I certainly have questions but I say, ‘No. I have no questions’ and I am standing outside of the Dean’s office within five minutes. I then suffer from anger and depression for the next few days until I find myself standing in front of my students once again and I am now laughing and engaged in an interesting discussion and I have forgotten what had happened in the Dean’s office just a few days ago. That is, at least for another year until the next interview for a contract renewal. (Laura’s vignette; June 2015)

Every two years, a new dean is appointed and these individuals are tenured faculty from other departments and graduate schools within the institution. Their term lasts two years and there is a similar pattern; at the start of their term, they are ‘excited’ and ambitious and in order to increase student enrolment – which is necessary to receive the ‘praise’ they so desire from the university president. They always ask us, especially me, to ‘work hard’ and to think of some creative measures to attract more students. And this is the catch – ‘if I work hard and help increase student enrolment’, I am told, then there might be a chance I could get promoted to a tenure-track status and that they would ‘do their best’ to convince the university to allow this to happen since it makes no sense that the TESOL department is fully comprised of foreign faculty on a non-tenure track contract, which also means that the department has ‘no one’ with a ‘stable’ position to look after its interest.
In retrospect, I now realise that I had been foolish in believing every word I hear and devoting myself to trying to figure out what I could do to help promote our programme; I would talk to students over coffee and tea, I would invite them to my place for dinner and we would talk for hours and surely, we would come up with plans and our plans are appealing but in the end, the deans refuse to support our plans and decide they are no longer interested as their two-year term gradually comes to an end and their enthusiasm turns to disdain and at times hostility until I realise that once again, I have been lied to and taken advantage of. I hear you Mr. Steinbeck. I hear you:

Now farming became industry, and the owners followed Rome, although they did not know it. They imported slaves, although they did not call them slaves: Chinese, Japanese, Mexicans, Filipinos. They live on rice and beans, the business men said. They don’t need much. They wouldn’t know what to do with good wages. Why, look how they live. Why, look what they eat. And if they get funny – deport them … And it came about that owners no longer worked their farms. They farmed on paper; and they forgot the land, the smell, the feel of it, and remembered only that they owned it, remembered only what they gained and lost by it. And some of the farms grew so large that one man could not even conceive of them anymore, so large that it took batteries of bookkeepers to track of interest and gain and loss; chemists to test the soil, to replenish; straw bosses to see that the stooping men were moving along the rows as swiftly as the material of their bodies could stand. Then such a farmer really became a store-keeper, and kept a store. He paid the men, and sold them food, and took the money back. And after a while he did not pay the
men at all, and saved bookkeeping. These farms gave food on credit. A man might work and feed himself; and when the work was done, he might find that he owed money to the company. And the owners not only did not work the farms any more, many of them had never seen the farms they owned. (Steinbeck, 1939, pp. 243-244)

I used to ask, ‘What is neoliberalism? Why is it a problem?’ My answer: corruption and power abuse caused by inequalities caused by the ‘flexible labour market’ and the exploitation of employees working within the non-regular employment system, which simply means working at the disposal and mercy of those who belong to the ‘regular, legitimate employment system’; in other words, it is a modern-day class system of dividing individuals into social classes. International media claim South Korea is one of the most ‘democratic societies in the world’; they have ‘impeached their president through peaceful demonstrations’; they have a ‘transparent system which has allowed them to flatten the curve in the fight against the Covid19’. Although there may be some truth to such claims, but they have no idea what goes on in the workplace and they do not understand that since the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997, the vast majority of the Korean corporations, schools and universities have binged on hiring massive groups of non-regular employees, short-term contract-based teachers and non-tenure track faculty, thus increasing the quantity of labour and avoiding the responsibility of paying for pensions and severances along with the other costly fringe benefits that ‘regular employees’, ‘permanent’ teachers and tenured and tenure track faculty enjoy. Suddenly, Steinbeck’s words begin to haunt me … They don’t need much. They wouldn’t know what to do with good wages. Why, look how they live. Why, look what they eat. And if they get funny – deport them.
On many occasions, I have been told by tenured professors, ‘Why are you so unhappy? Be happy and have a great time here! Your salary is almost the same as mine. Go find another job if you don’t like it.’ What they do not understand is that the weak and the powerless work endlessly – no, we are not lazy and ignorant and no, we are not content simply living on the basic necessities; we are human beings just like the others on the other side and what we truly desire is to be rewarded and recognised for our work and efforts and be compensated fairly – is this too much to ask? Despite the horrible treatment that I have been receiving as a member of the non-tenure track faculty at my institution and the countless moments of emotional turmoil and despair that I have experienced over the years, I have been able to sustain myself during this time because the opportunity to work with TESOL students has been my only source of hope. As the above vignette illustrates, I have encountered numerous incidents in which I was made to feel inadequate and ‘less-than-human’ at my institution due to my status; however, the more I delved into the world of ‘teaching teachers’ and the more I engaged in dialogue with my students, I have come to realise that the field of TESOL is indeed exciting and the only way I would ever be able to transcend the boundaries that continue to exist would be to focus on making a contribution to the field through my experiences rather than dwelling on my misfortunes.

6.2.1. Reflections

The impact of neoliberalism and English language teaching has been a frequent topic of discussion in applied linguistics (e.g., Block, Gray, & Holborow, 2012; Chowdhury & Phan, 2014; Gray, O’Regan & Wallace, 2018; O’Regan & Gray, 2018; Piller & Cho, 2015). For years, researchers have
examined the numerous factors influencing the ‘English frenzy’ in Korea (Park, 2009; Song, 2011) and the private English language education sector in Korea also known as the ‘hagwon’ industry in which nearly 80% of the South Korean children have been reported to participate (Lee et al., 2010); furthermore, the English frenzy phenomenon in South Korea has produced various social effects that have become one of the primary sources of creating a gap among socioeconomic groups known as the ‘English divide’ (Crookes, 2017), including the ‘wild geese phenomenon’ (Lee & Koo, 2006) that separates families as Korean mothers have been known to take their young children to English-speaking countries in order to provide an opportunity for their children to learn English in natural settings while their husbands typically remain at home to work.

Needless to mention, the impact of neoliberalism on the Korean education industry has had numerous negative effects. Piller and Cho (2015) make reference to Bourdieu who saw ‘the destruction of cultures of collective action and solidarity through economic insecurity as the universal consequences of neoliberal economic restructuring’ (p. 167) and the ways in which ‘cultures of individualism with their highly competitive subjectivities’ (Sapiro, 2010; cited in Piller & Cho, 2015, p. 167), which, in Korea, English plays a key role in expressing this new culture of competition and competitiveness. Furthermore, as Jisun’s narratives reveal, the overall atmosphere of the Korean ELT field seems to have caused an immunity to the dangers of the neoliberal impact on all of the stakeholders; that is, everyone – students, teachers, parents – seems to view English language learning from a simplistic, instrumental perspective which allows individuals to gain access to employment, university admissions, etc. When Jisun raised her hand in class and unabashedly admitted that the ‘meaningful’ teaching methods that we were discussing in class were in fact meaningless
to her since she teaches an OPIC preparatory class to Samsung employees, it was a shocking moment for me as a naïve TESOL educator; in other words, the only thing that seemed to matter was the students’ test results, and sadly, Paul Nation’s (2007) approaches to the four strands would have very little impact on OPIC scores.

In addition to affecting the primary stakeholders in the ELT field – students, teachers, parents – no group has ‘promoted’ the ‘marketisation’ (Park & Wee, 2012) of English language teaching more than those involved in the private business sector (e.g., hagwon owners). The private ELT industry in Korea is one of the largest in the world and needless to mention, at the heart of the industry is the business owners’ push for profit. As Ka Hyun shares in her narratives, the hagwon industry is brutal and the teachers themselves were not only forced to compete against one another but they had to resort to hiring marketing experts to help them promote their classes in order to attract more students. In sum, the marketisation of the Korean ELT field has turned the industry into an immoral and brutal site of fierce competition – not just among the students but the teachers themselves, who become each other’s foe and opponent in order to survive within the field.

Not surprisingly, neoliberalism has also affected the Korean university context profoundly. During the early 2000s, Korean universities developed a new obsession: to increase their ‘global ranking’ in world university ranking lists (e.g., QS ranking) and it was found that Korean universities lagged far behind their Asian counterparts in China, Japan and Singapore, primarily due to the small number of full-time foreign faculty employed at their institutions and the lack of English mediated instructional (EMI) courses offered in Korean universities. In order to raise their global ranking scores, Korean universities set out to hire as many foreign instructors as possible
and to implement as many EMI courses as possible. Although most universities set out to accomplish these two goals, no other university seemed more ambitious than the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST), one of the most prestigious universities in Korea. The president of KAIST at the time was Seo Nam Pyo, a Korean-American scientist and former tenured professor from Harvard. One of the first things Seo implemented upon his appointment was to have 100% of the classes conducted in English.

In addition to the disastrous attempt to implement EMI in Korean universities, the second ambitious goal was to hire as many foreign instructors as possible. As a result, Korean universities began a massive ‘hiring spree’ of foreigners from English-speaking countries and having them teach English language courses in hopes of fulfilling two of the necessary criteria for raising their global ranking scores; needless to point out, the vast majority of these foreign faculty were hired on non-tenure track contracts and as part of this massive ‘campaign’ to hire as many foreigners as possible to teach English language courses in Korean universities during the early 2000s,28 I was able to land a full-time teaching position at a private university in Seoul shortly after arriving in Korea after completing an MA TESOL in California. The fact that I had no university teaching experience did not seem to matter at the time, although the job description did state that a minimum of two

28 Here, it is important to remember that the early 2000s reflect the ‘post-Asian financial crisis’ era during which the South Korean government embarked on a major national campaign to pay off the IMF debt that bailed them out from a national bankruptcy in 1997. Surprisingly, Koreans worked ‘collectively’ to help the government pay off the debt by participating in the ‘gold collecting campaign’ and donating every piece of gold they owned, helping the government to raise 2.2 billion dollars. The early 2000s in Korea was an ‘exciting’ era as the nation had just recovered from the Asian financial crisis and had paid off the IMF debt in record time. The government had launched an aggressive campaign toward economic prosperity and globalisation; thus, universities were also heavily affected by such strong measures to push toward globalisation and began a massive ‘hiring spree’ of native speakers to teach English language courses.
years of teaching experience at a university were required. I had a US passport; I spoke fluent English; I had an MA TESOL from an American university. As far as they were concerned, I was ‘qualified’.

To this day, I cannot forget the horror of discovering that the university where I first began teaching in Korea had suddenly decided to hire a ‘massive’ group of native speakers to teach English language courses. This occurred about three years after I had joined the faculty and the goal was to hire as many native speakers as they could find. Apparently, the university still did not have enough foreigners teaching full-time as they were still dissatisfied with their global ranking scores. The next thing I knew, the university had hired forty native speakers at once and we were told to ‘make space’ in our offices for additional officemates. Later, I would discover that many of the forty native speakers that were hired on a single day not only had no teaching experience, but some of them did not even have a master’s degree, which was an important criterion when I was applying for the position. In other words, the university was now willing to take just about anyone – provided they were native speakers with passports from English-speaking countries.

It has been nearly sixteen years since I began teaching at the tertiary level in Korea; since then, I have also moved away from teaching English language skills to TESOL courses. Nonetheless, I am still categorised as a ‘foreign language instructor’ and receive the same amount of pay as my colleagues who do not hold doctoral degrees or produce research publications. Reflecting upon Jisun and Ka Hyuns’ narratives, I feel a sharp sense of sadness and grief as I am able to see the horrifying side effects of extreme neoliberalism in the Korean society. In some ways, we are all victims. All three of us – Jisun, who seemed to have adjusted quite well into
the lucrative market of the Korean hagwon industry; Ka Hyun, who has witnessed the brutal atmosphere of the hagwon industry by being forced into fierce competition with her colleagues – and I, have all become victims of ‘extreme’ neoliberalism in the Korean society.

6.3. DEVELOPING A SOCIOCULTURAL APPROACH TO EXTENSIVE READING IN KOREAN EFL: RESPONSE TO NEOLIBERAL ELT

Eun Ju is standing in front of twenty high school students enrolled in our after-school extensive reading (ER) programme. The programme is a joint-partnership between our MA TESOL programme and a local high school which functioned as a teaching practicum for TESOL students to work with a small group of high school students who volunteered to participate in the after-school ER programme; ideally, the TESOL students would have an opportunity to design lesson plans based on ER theory and principles (Day & Bamford, 1998) which promote second language learning through reading extensively. Realistically, however, it did not take very long to discover that ‘teaching’ a group of Korean high school students – who typically spend the vast majority of their time preparing for the college entrance exam throughout much of their school years – to read extensively was a near-impossible task.

‘Hello, everyone!’ Eun Ju has a huge smile on her face and she is waving both of her hands to the students who display very little response to their new teacher. I noticed this was a common practice for many of my TESOL students – at the start of a lesson, they would often wave both hands and greet the students, especially if they were working with a younger group of learners.
‘Did you read the story?’ Silence follows. Without waiting more than a few seconds for the students to answer, Eun Ju continues to elicit response from the students; only this time, her voice gets louder and intonation more dynamic. ‘How many of you read the story? Raise your hands!’ About half of the students slowly raise their hands. During the next sixty minutes, Eun Ju and her co-teacher, Hye Won, lead the class in a variety of communicative activities such as role play and comprehension activities on the reading assignment which the students were supposed to have read prior to coming to class. I am sitting in the back of the classroom. One of my roles, as the practicum instructor, is to observe the lesson and provide the student teachers with feedback afterward; despite the enthusiasm displayed by Eun Ju and Hye Won, the overall classroom atmosphere is a bit solemn and the students do not seem to be as engaged as they could have been. Throughout the lesson, I keep asking myself – what is the main problem here? (Laura’s vignette; October 2013)

Prior to beginning the ER programme with the high school students, I had spent ample time training the students, discussing the theoretical and methodological approaches to ER, reading materials and planning an ER lesson; the students were enthusiastic about ER and seemed to put in a lot of effort in preparing for their lessons. Each time a lesson is delivered, ample feedback was provided – peer feedback as well as instructor feedback and finally, the students themselves were asked to engage in self-reflective feedback. I had studied nearly every textbook and research paper on ER, but for some reason, something seemed to be missing. It was another disappointing lesson with unresponsive students and another frustrating moment for me, the practicum instructor, perhaps feeling more lost than the
Considering the challenges faced in running the ER programme, I have begun to question whether ER is appropriate for Korean high school students; sadly, unless the curriculum for secondary school education is able to steer away from the test-driven environment, Korean high school students will have very little time to develop the habit and motivation necessary for reading extensively (Day & Bamford, 1998). Over the years, I have become more and more pessimistic about the idea of running an ER programme with Korean high school students and not surprisingly, most of the practicum students seemed to feel the same. Jin Hee describes her frustrations of working as an ER teacher in the after-school programme in an online journal:

*One of the greatest challenges is that I cannot force really busy or unmotivated students to read the book. Reading happens through individual's voluntary will. Even though I have sent some text messages to my students every weekend to remind them of reading, if they do not read books because of any excuses or busy schedules, there is no other way to make them do it. If they do not read, the lesson will never be fun and motivating. Sometimes, I worry that my text messages as a reminder may annoy them or give them a pressure. Unless students are motivated to read by themselves, making an extensive program work well will be difficult. The other challenges is that I, as a mentor of ER, cannot always, confidently give my students some satisfying answers when they doubt something or are curious about some reading plots or characters because I cannot read books carefully as my students do. Since they are always too*
busy to read the whole study or raise some questions about the book, this does not happen to me, often but maybe, those two problems might be the biggest challenge for me. (Jin Hee, online journal; April 2014)

The above narrative seems to show Jin Hee’s conflicting issues as she contradicts her position as teacher and mentor. On the one hand, she is complaining about the students who seem to be too busy to read extensively and perhaps not wanting to be ‘bothered’ with text messages reminding them to read; on the other hand, however, Jin Hee admits that there are a few students who are actually engaged in what appears to be a ‘careful reading’ of the stories from which they propose questions about the plot and characters. However, Jin Hee is also implying that she has been unable to read the books carefully herself and thus responding to her students’ questions appears to have been a bit of a burden to her in some ways. Jin Hee’s feelings seem to represent the overall atmosphere among the practicum students.

In many ways, the practicum students seemed to feel frustrated with the high school students who did not seem interested in reading extensively; at the same time, a few of the high school students would indeed read faithfully each week and they even had questions about the stories – unfortunately, their teachers (practicum students) were not always prepared to respond to such requests because they had never had the opportunity to develop a habit of reading extensively themselves and often came to class without having read the story when it was not their turn to teach. Just as Jin Hee explained, teaching ER to EFL learners is an enormously challenging task because first, Korean students – particularly high school students – must focus on test preparations and college admissions which leaves very little
time for ER; and second, the teachers themselves have not had the experience of reading extensively in English, and in many cases, they have trouble keeping up with the reading themselves which in turn creates guilt and frustrations for the teachers.

As I reflect upon Jin Hee’s words, I wonder why it has been so difficult to implement a successful ER programme. Partially, I blame myself for not having the answers but at the same time, I cannot help but lament at the unfortunate circumstances that seem to prevent ER from succeeding in the Korean EFL context. According to Nuttall (1982), ER offers a broad exposure to the target language and is second only to acquiring the language among its native speakers. In other words, ‘extensive reading in a second language was to provide a broad-spectrum panacea for language learning ills, particularly those endemic among learners living in non-native speaking cultures’ (Green, 2005, p. 305). Indeed, ER is a wonderful approach to providing a ‘broad-spectrum panacea for language learning ills’; but this is only possible when the readers are willing to read voluntarily; to me, this is at the heart of the matter. How do individuals develop the motivation to read willingly? The first time I ever experienced the ‘joy of reading’ was when I was about six or seven years old. As a child, learning to read in Korean was not difficult. One day, when I was about seven years old living in Korea, an unfamiliar man knocked on our door:

Hello, did you know that all of your classmates have these books? Do you have these books? Ask your mother to buy them for you!’
Suddenly, I am lying on the sofa, reading these books by myself. There are stories about kings and queens and princesses. There are castles and oceans and dragons and all kinds of amazing foods that I had never seen. I cannot stop reading because I am
now the princess in the story and I must escape the evil witch with the help of a friendly dragon and a prince … the pictures are colourful and amazing and I am creating my own drawings of the story. Sketch after sketch … the story is recreated and I am eager to read more. (Laura’s vignette; 1975)

I now remember what it was like to experience the joy of reading. I read because it was fun. I read because I wanted to. And the ‘world of books’ was an amazing world in which I experienced new places, met interesting people and immersed myself in fantasies and fairy tales. These stories inspired me to make up my own stories and I spent my days drawing pictures of images and stories that I had created in my head. Just as I had ‘taken up’ reading when my mother purchased the set of story books from the book salesman who showed up at our door one day, reading for pleasure and reading extensively requires motivation, ‘desire’, perhaps even curiosity and ultimately, the ‘opportunity’ or the availability of resources. For me, the picture books suddenly became available to me one day and although I do not remember my mother reading with me or reading to me, the fact that the books were readily available was enough to get me to read them. However, my interest in reading, drawing and creating stories came to a halt when I left Korea. Come to think of it, it was as though I had lost interest in almost everything after I left Korea and I have very few memories of my school days in America. Everything is like a huge blur to me and I spent most of my days in uncertainty and silence:

I am sitting in Mr. Garfolo’s English literature class and as usual, I am lost, uninterested and silent. Mr. Garfolo is my nineth grade English teacher. He has a very strange grading system: students can only get an A, C or an F. He believes there is ‘no such thing’
as a ‘B’, and a ‘D’ is just like failing so there is no point in giving a ‘D’ and a student who deserves a ‘D’ should just get an ‘F’ and repeat the class since there was no apparent learning involved. Mr. Garfolo scares me and I have already accepted my fate in the class as he has already informed us from the beginning that most of us would end up with a ‘C’ since only a few would deserve an ‘A’ and just a few more would end up with a ‘D’. I had already given up on school a long time ago so grades were not important to me. (Laura’s vignette1984)

It is interesting to think that I had already experienced the joy of reading extensively in my L1 at a very young age but everything came to a halt when I left Korea at the age of eight. I would not be able to re-discover my love for books until I took an Indian literature course at a local community college after completing high school. By then, I had already given up on attending a four-year university immediately after high school graduation because my mother had become ill. My parents had started a small family business – a 24-hour convenience store – and when I was not attending church events and gatherings, I was working at my parents’ store during the week. Oftentimes, I would have to work late at night and sometimes even throughout the night with my younger brother when one of the cashiers failed to show up for work, which happened quite frequently.

One of my first encounters of reading extensively in English and experiencing the same kinds of excitement that I had felt as a child reading fairy tale stories as a child in Korea occurred when I came across Siddhartha by Herman Hesse in the Indian Literature class. Ironically, the experience of reading Siddhartha was one of the first moments when I discovered the
‘beauty of the English language’, though the original version had been written in German. Nonetheless, I remember feeling mesmerised by each word and marvelling at how beautifully the story had been written. Perhaps this was one of the first moments when I decided to think ‘critically’ because the story of Siddhartha was an amazing story and despite the fact that I had spent almost every single Sunday at church, I had been moved by the story of Siddhartha, whose character was believed to have been inspired by the story of Buddha. On the one hand, I almost felt guilty because I felt as though I was ‘betraying’ Jesus because my church leaders had always insisted that it was ‘wrong’ and ‘sinful’ to believe in any other forms of religious beliefs or any other god than Jesus. They had always advised that Christians had to live a ‘holy’ life and in order to do so, there were a lot of things that we were not supposed to do. In addition to obeying the ‘Ten Commandments’, a good Christian should not listen to ‘secular’ music, dance to secular music, drink, smoke, use God’s name in vain, and so on. I had already spent my childhood feeling enormously awkward and now ‘guilt’ had been added on to the awkwardness. Reading Siddhartha, however, convinced me that the world was much greater and for the first time in my life, I decided to think for myself.

From then on, books were like hidden treasures to me and I would often lay awake at night admiring the beautiful descriptions of characters and places and immersing myself in stories, just as I had done when I was a child in Korea. During this time, I began to discover the beauty of the English language in its written form and often found myself marvelling at words and the ways in which words could describe, probe, express, persuade, stimulate, inspire, reflect and so on. I had discovered the ‘world of books’ and to this day, I cannot stop thinking about the power of reading and how to make ER work for EFL learners. It is as though I had tasted the most
wonderful dish one could imagine and no matter how hard I try to replicate the dish for others, I am unable to succeed in creating the same flavour for them; I know what it tastes like – and yet, it is something that I cannot explain easily for there does not seem to be a specific ‘recipe’ to follow.

This is how I feel about ER; I have tasted it and I know how wonderful it is and yet I cannot seem to figure out how to ‘share’ this joy with foreign language learners. Again, I am reminded of the abstract, somewhat ‘incidental’ ways of learning to read extensively and for Korean students who are accustomed to intensive reading (IR) and reading short texts for practicing reading strategies to help them answer multiple choice questions (primarily focused on test-taking preparations), I agonise over how it would be possible to help EFL students to engage in ER. I feel as though I have been able to understand one of the key principles of ER – *reading is its own reward* (Day & Bamford, 1998) – and that this is the essence of ER; the problem is how to transfer this abstract ‘knowledge’ to EFL learners. Ji Won discusses an interesting discovery that she has made with the high school students in the after-school ER programme:

*I used to think ‘reading for pleasure’ or ‘reading is its own reward’ is meaningful especially when students read books out of intrinsic motivation. However, my students seemed to read books not by intrinsic motivation, but because they felt a sense of duty. Whenever asked my students how many pages they read, they often apologized and said that they couldn’t read a lot. Although I have never blamed them or punished them for not reading books, they felt obligated that they should read books in advance and participate in class more actively. However, my students seemed*
to feel proud when they read books before class, and answer questions actively in class. At first, I thought their goal was to get as many prizes as they could. However, I realized that when students started to feel interested in the topic, and if they know the answers, they focused on the class very well, and they did not care whether they got the prizes or not. Although my students could not read all the books for this course, they read as much as they can, and I think the main reason that made them to read was their desire to have knowledge about the book in order to participate in the class activities. To my surprise, they enjoy reading books now. (Ji Won, online journal; April 2014)

According to Ji Won, her students’ initial motivation to read seemed to be extrinsic, especially because a lot of the activities in the ER classroom were designed to be fun and task-oriented in which the students received small prizes (e.g., candy, pencils, stickers, etc.) for winning group competitions and games related to the reading text. Oftentimes, Ji Won’s students seemed apologetic when they came to class without having read the text; however, she began to notice when they did come to class with the text read ahead of time, their knowledge of the story seemed to give them confidence and as a result, they not only focused on the lesson more but they began to enjoy themselves, thus realising that the knowledge (of the content) created ‘fun’ and ‘enjoyment’ in classroom activities, which in turn led them to want to read before coming to class. For Ji Won’s students, reading started out as an ‘obligation’ in order to participate in classroom activities such as games and role-play; however, this initial obligation subsequently seemed to have turned into ‘pleasure’ as students began to realise that reading itself was enjoyable and rewarding, and that getting small prizes for having completed the reading was not so important after all. Despite the numerous
challenges in helping EFL students to read for pleasure, Ji Won discovered that ER is indeed a very personal, intrinsic process that students should discover naturally.

Despite the challenges of implementing a successful ER programme for EFL learners in Korea, I am still convinced that it is one of the most powerful approaches to L2 acquisition. I believe it is more important, however, to introduce ER to English teachers and to parents rather than the students because they are the ones who hold the keys to the learners’ success. In other words, ER is different from IR and it is not a skill that can be taught by having students practice effective reading strategies; rather, the sociocultural environment – the learning that takes place within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in which modelling, scaffolding, encouraging, interacting, dialoguing, questioning, eliciting (Vygotsky, 1978) – take place in the classroom and especially at home.

6.3.1. Reflections

Comparing my own childhood experience of reading extensively in my L1 and re-discovering the joy of reading in my L2 as an adult, I cannot help but wonder why it had taken so long to realise how much I had loved to read. In fact, Day and Bamford (1998) point out that L2 learners who enjoy reading in their L1 are likely to enjoy reading in their L2; however, despite developing a love for reading independently and for pleasure in my L1 as a child, it would take more than ten years to begin reading for pleasure in my L2. What could have gone wrong? Looking back at my own experiences as a child, discovering the joy of reading for pleasure in my L1 and not being able to transfer this enjoyment to reading in my L2 had a detrimental effect on my
academic performance during my secondary schooling. Upon arriving in the US at the age of eight, my literacy skills in English were non-existent. According to the Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis (LIH), good reading skills in L1 are likely to transfer to L2 reading skills (Goodman et al., 1979); however, some believe that the challenges of reading in the L2 may ‘short-circuit’ (Clarke, 1980) the learner’s high-level reading skills in L1 and reduce them to low-level decoding skills. Although such theoretical perspectives mostly pertain to adult L2 readers, the short-circuit hypothesis – also known as the Linguistic Threshold Hypothesis (LTH) – may have been the case for me as I went from a confident, fluent reader in my L1 to a timid, remedial reader in my L2. Considering the importance of reading comprehension in secondary school as most of the subjects require strong comprehension skills in understanding the main idea and having sufficient schemata as well as the strategies necessary for efficiency, I now realise how crucial it was for me to link my L1 reading skills to L2 in order to succeed academically.

Perhaps more important than the linguistic challenges of L2 reading comprehension, however, is to view literacy as a ‘process of cultural translation and transformation’ (Li, 2008, p. 164). According to Gee (1989), literacy is an ‘identity kit’ comprised of cultural ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, and speaking, often tied to a particular set of cultural values and norms; thus ‘literacy is inseparable from culture and cultural practices’ (Li, 2008). In this sense, developing literacy skills at a fairly young age and learning to read independently in Korean may have helped me to develop a high level of confidence in myself during my childhood. I learned to trust myself and during this period, I remember feeling as though I was invincible and that I could do anything that I wanted. Indeed, developing strong literacy skills at a young age had helped me to construct an identity as a confident reader and writer. As an immigrant child
in America, however, I now realise I was too proud to admit my limitations and did a good job of ‘pretending’ to understand what was going on and faking my comprehension – a social strategy ESL children were found to draw upon in social settings (Wong-Filmore, 1976, 1979). I was no longer the smart girl in class and I could not decode nor comprehend reading and listening texts quickly any more so I learned to remain silent and passive all throughout primary and secondary schooling, while at the same time somehow managing to ‘get by’ on the linguistic skills that I had developed. In some ways, I now see myself in the high school students in our afterschool ER programme and I have begun to understand how they might have felt when they were suddenly asked to read chapter books in English on their own. I remember staring at the pages as my mind would go blank. I could read the words but I could not comprehend. I spoke English effortlessly but I could not fully comprehend what I was reading. I am unable to get past the first page. I wonder if this is how the high school students had felt when they were trying to read chapter books at home.

An important missing link in ER studies is the importance of helping learners within the ZPD and helping them to do what they are unable to do on their own (Vygotsky, 1978). Furthermore, sociocultural theory (Lantolf, 2000) explores the importance of learning environment which may include learners’ home culture and environment, teachers’ influence, peer influence, physical environment. In a way, Ji won may have experienced a bit of ‘success’ in providing a meaningful sociocultural environment for her students. Although implementing an ER programme for Korean high school students was a challenging task, Ji Won began to see that while her students had initially begun to read for extrinsic motivational purposes such as receiving prizes and being able to answer questions in competitive games which contained comprehension questions from the text, their
motivation to do read on their own prior to coming to class gradually turned into an intrinsic motivation; that is, Ji Won began to see that her students were truly enjoying what they were reading and that they were looking forward to the overall process of reading extensively and having the confidence to engage in the various types of interactive, communicative activities based on the texts. In this sense, both parties – teachers and students – were able to shift their focus away from test-taking preparations and grammar-focused instructions to enjoying the overall process of ER as an alternative approach to English language learning. As Day and Bamford (1998) suggest, sociocultural environment plays an important role in helping students to develop an interest in ER and as such, Ji Won and her students were able to create a positive environment, conducive to reading for pleasure.

Having been inspired by sociocultural theory and ‘experimenting’ with ER as an alternative approach to teaching EFL to Korean students, I have begun to develop a strong interest in the need to create a theoretical framework for ER. Although Day and Bamford (1998) offer some helpful suggestions on why ER is important for second language learners and how ER might be implemented in the second language classroom, they do not seem to propose a clear theoretical basis for linking ER to sociocultural theory despite the strong need to do so; in other words, learner factors such as motivation, attitude and habit formation – all of which may benefit from the Vygotskian framework of scaffolding and interaction – are not mentioned in existing studies. Nonetheless, the experience of implementing an ‘unsuccessful’ ER programme for Korean students has helped me to develop a new approach for ER grounded in sociocultural theory; just as IR is rooted in psycholinguistics and cognitive-focused approaches to reading by using effective reading strategies, I am convinced that ER must take a
sociocultural (Lantolf, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978) approach in which the affective dimensions to foreign language learning such as motivation (Dörnyei, 2001) and activity theory (Engestrom, 1999; Leontiev, 1978) come into play by creating a community of readers in which teachers, students and parents work collaboratively to helping learners to discover the joy of reading extensively.

As I reflect upon the past ten years of working as a teacher educator, I realise that one of the major differences in teaching language learners and teaching teachers of language learners lies in the fact that as a teacher educator, I am constantly making an attempt to understand foreign language teaching approaches and language acquisition theories whereas my role as a language teacher typically focused on getting through each lesson successfully by using published teaching materials, which did not seem to interest me as much as teaching content-based courses. In other words, as a language teacher, I felt much less burdened in many ways since the only thing I had to worry about was preparing a language lesson for the day; however, taking on the role of a teacher educator had suddenly placed the burden of teaching teachers upon me and I found myself struggling to understand language teaching methods and language acquisition theories as I was faced with the task of having to articulate the concepts to my students during classroom lectures. Indeed, the role of teaching teachers requires much more metacognitive thinking and among the numerous teaching approaches in foreign language education, ER has become one of the most challenging and exciting areas of research for me over the years.

6.4. UNDERSTANDING MY IDENTITY AS AN ESL LEARNER AND AN IMMIGRANT CHILD THROUGH STUDENT NARRATIVES
Although Jiyeon started a career in a field other than TESOL like Na Young, Jiyeon’s experience with English was not one of fascination and love from the beginning; rather, it was one of humiliation and despair. Jiyeon went to Canada after completing middle school and attended high school and university in Vancouver. She majored in visual arts and design at an art college and completed a teaching certificate programme in art education at the University of British Columbia. Jiyeon describes painful experiences of being an ESL student in Canada:

*I recall my very first year in Canada: I felt myself as an alien. Everyone spoke different languages that I could never understand. The only word that I could understand in my first class in Canada was ‘hi’. However, this was just the beginning of my torture. I experienced many racial and ethnic circumstances in my high school. It was really a tough time to think and look back at my life in high school as an ESL student. The memories about my high school were not the end of my difficulty as a new immigrant in Canada. This continued in a communication design bachelor program in Emily Carr university I saw many instructors who describe Asian students are the worst group who has never participated. I also could see invisible boundaries between racial groups. Sometimes, I seriously wanted to go back to Korea, since I was exhausted to be discriminated because of my race. However, the teacher education program at the UBC appeared to help me to utilize my past for the benefit of my teaching. (Jiyeon, online journal; May 2014)
Jiyeon emigrated to Canada when she was in high school – perhaps one of the most challenging times in a person’s life. She poignantly describes that the terrifying experience of not understanding a single word on the first day of school was ‘just the beginning of torture’, but also implies that these painful experiences have been instrumental in helping her to develop her future goals as an English language teacher. When Jiyeon enrolled in a teacher certification programme in art education where there were many opportunities to encounter other ESL students, she began to accept herself as a nonnative speaker and also as a NNSET, and began to see the negative experiences from her past as a path to discovering her identity as a language teacher:

My personal experience as an English language learner helped me to comprehend the difficulties of circumstances of ESL students. As a result, constructing appropriate teaching strategies for ESL student became easier for me. Vancouver is one of the most multicultural cities in Canada; educators face the situation where they can find many ESL students in their classes. Therefore, understanding from ESL students’ point of view is a concern that I believe all teachers should have. Moreover, I think not all teachers struggle to be involved in our Canadian society due to their races and languages. Give our class or even our education program, most teacher candidates came to Canada when they were in elementary school or born in Canada. They may not face struggles with language problems. Therefore, I am determined to see the bad memories and experiences I had living as an ESL student meaningful and helpful to understand my future ESL students in class. (Jiyeon, online journal; May 2014)
Jiyeon’s words remind me of the moment when I began to understand myself as an immigrant in America and why I had failed in secondary school. I always thought that I was not smart enough and simply did not have the motivation to do well in school. However, while teaching one of my MA TESOL courses, *Language, Culture and Communication* (LCC hereafter), I began to recognise myself as an immigrant child in an American school who never quite felt ‘comfortable’ in the classroom. I never saw myself as an ESL student in America because I had emigrated at a relatively young age and had acquired spoken English proficiency fairly easily; however, what I had failed to realise was the fact that my home culture and the school culture did not match and from the very beginning, I had begun to build a wall between my world ‘at home’ and my other world ‘at school’ and it was as though I was living two separate lives.

The moment of actualisation occurred when I began teaching from the book, *Teaching and Researching Language and Culture* by Joan Kelly Hall (2002). According to Hall, children from non-mainstream families – such as ethnic minority children, children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, etc. – may have trouble in school because the curriculum has been designed to accommodate children from mainstream family backgrounds (e.g., middle class, white families). Hall urges language teachers to redesign their curriculum to accommodate children from non-mainstream backgrounds by taking an ethnographic approach and introduces the Funds of Knowledge Project (Gonzalez et al., 1995) in which school teachers and researchers collaborated to investigate family cultures of children from non-mainstream family backgrounds. For example, the researchers discovered that Mexican families liked to travel back home and bring different kinds of candies to the US to share with their fellow Mexicans because they were difficult to find in America.
Based on such cultural practices, the researchers re-designed the curriculum and integrated new themes like Mexican candy in the syllabus. All of the children learned about Mexican candy and some of the parents were asked to visit the school to introduce the candy to the children. As the mainstream curriculum began to integrate aspects of the home culture of children from non-mainstream backgrounds, children began to take an interest in school work and as a result, their academic performance began to improve. Furthermore, teachers ‘came to understand culture as a vital, dynamic process, which emphasized the lived contexts and practices of the students and their families’ (Gonzalez et al., 1993, p. 10). Gonzalez et al. (1993) also note, ‘I came away from the household visits, changed in the way I viewed the children. I became aware of the whole child, who had a life outside the classroom, and that I had to be sensitive to that’ (pp. 11-12). The Funds of Knowledge Project triggered my own childhood memories and for the first time in my life, I began to see myself from a very different perspective: I was a child from a non-mainstream family background whose home culture did not match the school culture.

As I am discussing the Funds of Knowledge Project with my students, I suddenly see myself in Mrs. O’Brien’s fourth grade class. One day, Mrs. O’Brien said we would have a party. I cannot remember what kind of party or what the occasion was, but it was for one of the holidays – Christmas, Valentine’s Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving or St. Patrick’s Day. American schools had a lot of parties and celebrated many holidays throughout the year, I would discover. Mrs. O’Brien told us to bring our favourite snack to share with our classmates on the day of the upcoming party. I did not want to disappoint Mrs. O’Brien because she was very nice and I liked her a lot. The following weekend, I asked to join my mother’s weekly trip to the grocery store and upon arriving at the supermarket, I went straight to the
snack section and immediately picked up a pack of Fig Newtons – my favourite snack in America at the time. Then, on the day of the party, I carefully placed my Fig Newtons in a brown paper bag and carried it with me to school. I could not wait to share my favourite snack with my classmates:

_Alright children, we are going to take turns and walk around the class and give everyone some of the snacks that you brought for the party today’_, Mrs. O’Brien instructs us to stand up and walk around the classroom, stopping in front of each child, offering some snacks. Finally, it is my turn and I proudly stand up and start circling the room, stopping in front of each of my classmate, holding my bag of Fig Newtons. To my surprise, the first child shakes her head and refuses the Fig Newtons. I am a bit embarrassed and quickly move on to the next child who also refuses to take a snack. I move from one child to another but to my horror, no one wants my snack! Finally, I am rejected by the last child and I scurry back to my desk – flustered and ashamed like never before. I do not understand what had just happened and I do not remember anything that happened afterwards that day. I decide not to dwell on the experience though and quickly try to forget it ever happened. (Laura’s vignette; 1978)

I never thought about the Fig Newton incident again nor did I ever wonder why no one had wanted my snack; at least not until I came across Joan Kelly Hall’s description of the Funds of Knowledge Project and the call for redesigning the curriculum, which suddenly took me back to Mrs. O’Brien’s fourth grade class. I am the immigrant girl whose family rarely ate desert or
baked brownies, cakes or chocolate chip cookies – the kind of snacks that American children grew up with. I discovered Fig Newtons on my own when I went grocery shopping with my mother and randomly picked them up. I did not know what American children liked to eat for snacks at the time and I was not familiar with them. Looking back, Fig Newtons are mostly enjoyed by the elderly who liked to eat them with their afternoon tea – but certainly not by children!

The Fig Newton incident was probably just one of the countless experiences that had made me feel ‘awkward’ throughout my childhood and adolescent years. Particularly, I always felt awkward at school – even after years of living in America. Everything about American schools and its culture – sports, parties, parent involvement, dating, proms and so on – remained foreign and alien to me until I graduated from high school. As Joan Kelly Hall pointed out, there is often a mismatch between the school culture and the home culture of children who come from non-mainstream family backgrounds, which can have a negative effect on their academic performances. I had always blamed myself and thought that I was just a bad student with very low motivation and no specific goals for the future at the time. Just as Jiyeon began to see her painful past as an instrument for discovering her future goals as an ESL teacher when she began teaching ESL students who were suffering from the same kinds of problems that she had experienced when she first emigrated to Canada, teaching TESOL courses and engaging in dialogue with my students have helped me to understand my past as a struggling child of an immigrant family who never quite learned to ‘fit into the mainstream classroom culture’ of American schools. The process of teaching itself and interacting with students have allowed me to understand myself at a deeper level; for Jiyeon, working with ESL students in a teacher certification programme had not only helped her to come to terms with a
painful past but she began to accept and appreciate herself as a NNSET and set clear goals for her future a language teacher. Jiyeon writes:

After finishing this TESOL program, I am going to go back to Canada and find a job as an English language teacher. It will be amazing to become a language teacher when I go back to Canada. I recall my high school life as an ESL student; I could remember difficulties learning a new language. Thus, I believe I could use those past experience for teaching ESL students. I am prepared and excited for my new journey as an English language teacher. (Jiyeon, online journal; May 2014)

As for me, working with TESOL students and engaging in dialogue with my students have helped me to dig up a painful past and acknowledge my identity as an immigrant child whose home culture did not match the school culture which has had a detrimental impact on my school life and academic performance. It is interesting to note that I did not begin to understand my identity as an immigrant child and an ESL learner in America until I became a teacher educator myself.

6.4.1. Reflections

One of the most powerful approaches to understanding teacher identity is through an analysis of critical incidents (Brookfield, 1990; Tripp, 1993). A critical incident is an unplanned, unanticipated event that occurs during a teacher’s career, typically personal to an individual teacher and ‘vividly remembered’ (Brookfield, 1990, p. 84). Furthermore, a critical incident is ‘an
interpretation of the significance of an event. To take something as a critical incident is a value judgement that we make, and the basis of that judgment is a significance we attach to the meaning of the incident’ (Tripp, 1993, p. 8).

Both Jiyeon and I experienced critical incidents which occurred during teaching sessions, leading us to draw upon painful memories of shame and frustration as immigrants in Canada and America, subsequently helping us to understand our roles as an ESL teacher and teacher educator respectively. When Jiyeon enrolled in a teacher education programme at UBC and began working with ESL students, she was able to empathise with the painful challenges that they were experiencing as English language learners in Canada and reconstructed her identity from a struggling ESL student to an empathetic ESL teacher as she claimed that ‘bad memories’ from her past experiences will be used to help empower ESL students facing the same challenges that she had to deal with; furthermore, Jiyeon claims that she has an advantage over NNESTs who emigrated to Canada at a younger age (e.g., primary school) as she came to Canada at a much older age, which led to many challenges and painful experiences of having to learn English as an adult, which in turn will help her to understand and empathise with ESL students faced with similar challenges. In this sense, Jiyeon seems to have discovered the essence of what Aneja (2016) refers to as ‘nonnative speakerism’. Whereas the notion of native speakerism (Holliday, 2005) is a familiar concept in the body of literature exploring NNEST identity, (non)native speakerism is relatively an unfamiliar term. According to Aneja (2016), (non)native speaking is a ‘poststructural orientation that denaturalizes (non)native speakerist ideologies and argues that (non)native speakered subjectivities – abstract, idealized notions of native and nonnative speakers – are historically grounded as well as
constructed over time’ (p. 575). Aneja argues that ‘individuals should not be seen as native speakers or nonnative speakers per se, rather are (non)native speakered with respect to different characteristics, through different institutional mechanisms, individual performances, and social negotiation’ (p. 575). In a similar vein, Jiyeon refused to accept (non)native speaker subjectivity by reconstructing her NNSET identity as someone who has an advantage over teachers whose English skills may be more fluent since she has had the experience of dealing with similar challenges and obstacles of her adult ESL students, thus highlighting her ‘multicompetent’ identity (Cook, 1991).

Just as Jiyeon encountered a critical incident the moment she began to link her language learning experiences to her own students, I began to understand my identity as an ESL learner in America from Hall’s (2002) description of the KEEP29 (Au, 1980; Au & Mason, 1983) and the Funds of Knowledge Teacher’s Project (Gonzales et al., 1995; Moll et al., 1992) which suggest that mainstream classroom practices and the home literacy practices of immigrant children often do not match, causing negative impact on the learners’ academic performances. As mentioned earlier, it was not until that moment in which the critical incident took place as I was speaking to my students when I suddenly began to see myself as the immigrant child in Hall’s book. In a way, I also realised that I had been disillusioned about my identity as an immigrant child over the years and could not relate to the immigrant children who were struggling with their academic performances. Furthermore, such confusion may have derived from the fact that I had a misconceived understanding of our social class (see Block, 2014) in

---

29 KEEP stands for Kamehameha Early Education Program, which was developed in 1972 to improve the academic achievement of low-income children in Hawaii.
America; specifically, because our family had always lived in a predominantly white, middle-class neighbourhood in the suburbs, I had always perceived our family as middle-class, or ‘an Anglo-Asian overclass’ (Wu, 2002, p. 19), which refers to East Asians (i.e., Chinese, Japanese, Korean) who have achieved a ‘higher level of education and economic success in a short period of time’ (Li, 2008, p. 58).

The moment of the critical incident, however, helped me to see that our family literacy practices not only did not match the literacy practices of my schools, but there was also a mismatch between our assumed social class as a middle-class, ‘model minority’ (Lee, 2005) and the actual family environment and the cultural, literacy practices at home. Whereas we may have lived in a middle-class neighbourhood, my parents held blue-collar jobs as small business owners who worked six to seven days a week. Throughout much of my high school years, I have had to spend most of my weekends as well as some week days working at my parents’ store, leaving very little time to focus on school work. In this sense, we were a working-class family living in a middle-class neighbourhood. My parents never accepted their working-class identities in America as they had often mentioned that they had both attended university and that my father had been employed at the National Treasury Department in Korea. Coming to terms with my identity as a child of a working-class immigrant family in America has helped me to understand my identity as an ESL learner whose cultural, literacy practices had been ‘fractured’ (Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 2005). According to Li (2008), fracturing results in two ways as parents are unable to participate in their children’s school work due to a language barrier and the logistics of having no time to do so, which was the case for me; second, fracturing may also occur in school settings when teachers fail to understand their students’ language, cultural background and their specific needs in language and literacy learning (Li, 2008, p. 165). In this sense,
fracturing seemed to have occurred in both settings – home and school – for me. As shown above, critical incidents are indeed powerful for teachers and teacher educators as Jiyeon and I have both been able to draw upon painful past experiences as immigrants and language learners which have begun to shape and reconstruct our teacher identities.
CHAPTER 7
FROM TEACHER EDUCATOR TO CRITICAL PEDAGOGUE

7.0. INTRODUCTION

In this final data chapter, I continue to engage with student narratives and reflect upon my own experiences as a teacher educator who is learning to become a critical pedagogue. Issues of nonnative speaker teacher identity as well as the challenges of teaching TESOL courses in English to a group of students whose English language skills vary at great length, forcing those with lower levels of English proficiency to feel insecure and enormously challenged to stay afloat in an ‘all-English’ content-based TESOL programme. As I reflect upon student narratives describing feelings of alienation and helplessness, I am also reminded of the challenges that I am faced with as a member of the non-tenure track faculty at my institution and contemplate upon how a dialogic engagement and the writing process may help me to develop a sense of ‘hope’ amid ‘hopelessness’ and find a way to integrate critical perspectives in the TESOL curriculum in order to empower my students – as well as myself.

7.1. THE NONNATIVE SPEAKER ENGLISH TEACHER: WHO, ME?

The year is 2000 and I am sitting in my Systems in English Grammar class. Systems in English Grammar is a required course in the MA TESOL curriculum; this time, I am a TESOL student, not the instructor. Despite the fact that the class is mostly taught in a traditional manner in which the instructor delivers a ‘full lecture’ while students sit and listen, I actually like the class.
Professor Jones, the course instructor, has written a grammar textbook, which is the primary text for the course. I have begun to treasure this book very much because it has shown me how interesting English grammar could be! Professor Jones is an energetic lecturer and I do not mind listening to him talk for an hour or two and I actually look forward to the weekly quizzes, which keep me busy and alert throughout the week. The textbook is filled with colourful highlights and handwritten comments here and there because I had been studying it so much. Then one day, Professor Jones decides to try something ‘different’ in class. Everyone, stand up, please!’ Professor Jones suddenly urges us to get up from our seats. ‘Now, I’m going to divide the class into two separate groups. If you are a native speaker of English, please stand on the right side and if you are a nonnative speaker of English, please stand on the left side of the room’. Everyone in the classroom moved quickly to where they belonged. That is, everyone but me. I stood in the middle of the room and stared at Professor Jones who stared back. Then, I looked around the room and noticed that the ‘American’ students – the local students who spoke fluent English – were standing on the right side of the room while the international students – mostly Asians – were standing on the left side. I asked myself, ‘Where do I belong?’ I did not have a clear definition of a native speaker. I was not a native speaker but I was American, too, and I spoke English like my ‘American’ classmates – in fact, the English that the Asian students standing on the left side of the room spoke did not sound like my English; after a few minutes of contemplation, I slowly moved to the right side of the room and joined my fellow American classmates. Feeling very uneasy about my decision, I looked at Professor Jones, who seemed to be a bit surprised, but did not
say anything. (Laura’s vignette; January 2001)

I do not remember exactly what happened after this but I think we had to answer some questions about English grammar and the purpose was to find the differences between native and nonnative speaker responses; in retrospect, I believe he was conducting a grammaticality judgement test. I do remember feeling very uncomfortable standing on the right side of the room with my native-speaker classmates, quickly realising that I had made a mistake and instead of paying attention to the test, I feared I was standing on the wrong side of the room. I knew I was not a native speaker of English since English is not my L1, but at the same time, English is the language that I feel more comfortable with (than Korean, especially when it comes to reading and writing) and yet I cannot call myself a ‘native speaker’ of the one language that I am able to freely express myself in. In Korea, I have noticed that the term, ‘native speaker’, is a ‘loaded term’; that is, the term is used frequently to refer to something that the average Korean often ‘admires’.

Private language academies in Korea often promote their programmes by posting photos of their white, blond-haired, blue-eyed, native speaker English teachers from one of the ‘qualifying’ English-speaking countries mentioned earlier; English teachers from other parts of the world that use English as an official language – such as the Philippines, India, South Africa or Singapore – are usually ‘not welcomed’ because they are not considered to be ‘native speakers’ of English, which to the average Korean parent, is one of the most important criteria for selecting a private language academy for their children. In Korea, ‘the native speaker’ is not only a role model for language learners, but they are also ‘the most qualified English teacher’.
Most Korean parents tend to place absolute faith in ‘the native speaker’ when it comes to their children’s English language education, thus creating a clear divide between NSETs and NNSETs in the ELT field. The preference for NSETs has become an accepted norm in the Korean society and as a result, NNSETs develop an automatic perception of inferiority toward themselves, particularly when they find themselves working alongside their NSET counterparts. Mira describes her feelings of ‘incompetence’ when she found herself in the presence of NSETs and Korean teachers who have studied abroad:

In 2002, I restarted my career working for one of the famous English kindergarten and elementary academy called Wonderland in Korea. In the beginning, since I had somewhat experiences and knowledge in teaching English, I felt kind of confident as an EFL teacher. However, as time passed by, I realized that most of teachers were native speakers and some of Korean teachers had experience in learning English as well in overseas. Suddenly I got to think myself incompetent for this job. Furthermore, as this school had a variety of English programs for kindergarten from storybook class to drama class, which were very new to me but I had to cover them every week, I sometimes had to feel marginalized in the teacher community. (Mira, online journal; November 2013)

It is interesting to find that Mira suddenly describes herself as being ‘incompetent’ as she not only begins to notice limitations in her English language skills, but she also finds herself ‘marginalised’ among the teachers because she did not seem to have familiarity with the teaching approaches
that the other teachers – namely the NSETs and the Korean teachers with ‘international’ experience – seemed to share. Eventually, Mira took her daughters to Canada while her husband remained in Korea. In Canada, Mira enrolled in a TESOL certificate programme and subsequently enrolled in our MA TESOL programme after returning to Korea. While Mira could have easily obtained a TESOL certificate in Korea without having to travel all the way to Canada, the fact that she is now able to claim herself as someone who has had the experience of ‘studying abroad’ seemed to have ‘boosted’ her confidence as an English language teacher:

_In 2008, I could finally study TESOL course in Vancouver. As I had been interested in this field for a long time, I expected a lot from this program. It was two-month short course, but it was very intensive and asked me lots of efforts. To finish this course, I had to prepare demo lesson every week and had paper exam every two weeks. Thankfully, through the course, I’ve learned a lot and got to have self-confidence again in teaching English with my own methods. However, the teaching methods I’d learned here were too specific and limited to certain topics or learners, it was kind of difficult to employ them to all classes. (Mira, online journal; November 2013)"

For Mira and many NNSETs in Korea, feelings of inadequacies toward their status as nonnative speakers are often ‘compensated’ through a ‘study abroad’ experience in which NNSETs not only attempt to improve their English language skills; furthermore, the overall experience of living in an English-speaking country for an extended period of time and interacting with native speakers seem to play an important role in ‘boosting’ their self-
esteem upon their return to Korea. Although Mira admits that the teaching methods that she had learned from the TESOL certificate programme in Canada may not be applicable or useful for her own classes in Korea, she concludes that she has gained her ‘self-confidence again in teaching English with my own teaching methods’.

Mira’s personal desire to experience ‘study abroad’ both for herself as well as for her children is shared by many Korean women with young children; the opportunity to live in a foreign country not only offers their children the chance to learn English in an ESL setting but the mothers themselves often see this as an opportunity to ‘upgrade’ themselves as the experience of living in an English-speaking country would provide opportunities to improve their own English language skills as well as a chance to pursue further studies for themselves. For Mira and the other Korean mothers who ‘strive toward cosmopolitan living’ (Park & Abelmann, 2004), the experience of living and studying abroad may be seen as an investment for their children as well as for themselves; thus English-language learning is not only enhanced but the fact that they could return to Korea and identify themselves as ‘someone who has had the experience of living abroad’ places them in a ‘desirable category’ – perhaps the ‘next best thing to being a native speaker’. Mira’s story is shared by numerous students enrolled in our TESOL programme; it is almost difficult to find a student who has not studied abroad, even for a brief period of time. Most of the students have either spent a significant part of their lives in a foreign country or they have travelled to an English-speaking country for a short-term (usually 6 months to one year) intensive language programme. It is almost as though the ‘overseas experience’ is an ‘invisible’ pre-requisite among the TESOL students. Students who had never spent an extended period of time abroad are in the minority group whereas those who attended primary, secondary
or university in a foreign country make up approximately 30-40% of the demographics in our programme. When this 30-40% is added to the students who have participated in short-term intensive language programmes, the percentage jumps to approximately 70-80% of the student population, leaving the remaining 20-30% in the minority. Such demographics are clearly demonstrated in classroom interactions as all of the TESOL courses are taught completely in English and students must only use English to engage in classroom discussions and presentations. Needless to mention, leading classroom discussions is a challenge as there is a clear divide between ‘those who have spent a significant number of years abroad’ and ‘those who have spent very little or no time abroad’. The fluent English-speaking students – who often make up a significant portion of the class – usually have much to say and take up a good part of classroom discussion time sharing their thoughts and opinions as their ‘not-so-fluent’ classmates remain silent. Indeed, the presence of an unequal power structure is clearly at work in the classroom:

As usual, Ara’s hand goes up when I ask a question during a TESOL lecture. Since no one has volunteered to speak, I have no choice but to allow Ara to talk. Unfortunately, Ara talks for a while and while she continues to share her thoughts, I notice Yujin’s frustrated look. I am starting to feel a bit anxious after a few minutes and I attempt to send a signal to Ara, hoping she would catch my message and stop talking. Fortunately, our eyes meet and she nods and wraps up. Then I call upon Yujin, who is one of the ‘not-so-fluent English speakers’ in the class and one of the few students who had never studied abroad. However, Yujin is outgoing and bold and gladly accepts my invitation. Obviously, her words do not sound as smooth as Ara’s and she often stops
herself to think of what to say next. At times, it is even difficult to understand what she is saying. I am glad Ara is no longer dominating the discussion, but at the same time, I find myself squinting and making effort to understand what she is trying to say. While I am trying to comprehend Yujin’s comments, I am simultaneously thinking of how I would respond to her comments afterward. I suddenly find myself saying, ‘Well, thank you, Yujin. That was very interesting’. (Laura’s vignette; April 2013)

Torn between students like Ara and Yujin, I am at a loss when it comes to leading classroom discussions. With someone like Ara, I could have engaged in a lengthy conversation which may have turned out to be a meaningful discussion in the end; at the same time, I am unable to encourage Ara to continue talking as I am also aware of students like Yujin, who may feel ‘left out’ when students like Ara are given too much time to talk. With someone like Yujin, we could have engaged in a lively discussion if we had been allowed to speak Korean; however, the department forbids the use of Korean in classroom lectures and discussions and as a result, I cannot make out what she is saying in class, but I do not want to embarrass her in front of the others so I try not to ask for too much clarification which in turn leads to an unintelligible conversation since I have not fully understood what she was trying to say. I am suddenly reminded of the ‘awkwardness’ that I had felt on the day when Professor Jones asked us to stand on either side of the room for a grammaticality judgment test; on the one hand, I was indeed a nonnative speaker but on the other, I was different from the other nonnative speakers standing on the left side of the room. On the one hand, I should have allowed Ara to finish discussing her thoughts; on the other, I did not want to engage in a lengthy discussion with her in class while students like Yujin observed silently from the other side of the
room. On the one hand, I should have paid more attention to Yujin’s comments and made an attempt to interact with her more by providing meaningful feedback; on the other, Yujin’s spoken English was so difficult to understand that I ended up focusing on how to respond to her comments rather than what she was actually trying to say. At the end of the grammaticality judgment test in Professor Jones’s class, I asked myself, ‘Is it really important to identify myself as either a native speaker or a nonnative speaker? And is it really important to find out how native speakers and nonnative speakers differ in response to a grammaticality judgment test?’ Although I have since ‘brushed off’ the native speaker vs. nonnative speaker divide in defining my own identity, the status of the ‘fluent speaker’ and the ‘not-so-fluent-speaker’ of English is difficult to ‘brush off’ in the TESOL classroom as I am reminded of the fact that I had refused to stand on the left side of the room with the other nonnative speakers in Professor Jones’s class on that day.

7.1.1. Reflections

Kachru’s (1986) notion of World Englishes and the classification of the concentric circles may have fuelled a lively discussion of the ‘native speaker fallacy’ (Phillipson, 1992), subsequently leading to the NNSET movement (e.g., Braine, 2010) as well as a surge of literature addressing the legitimacy of NNSETs (e.g., Clark & Paran, 2007; Leung et al., 1997; Mahoob et al., 2004; Rampton, 1990), advantages and disadvantages of NNSETs (e.g., Medgyes, 1994; Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999), self-perception of NNESTs (e.g., Brutt-Griffler, 1998), student attitudes toward NNESTs (e.g, Amin, 1997; Butler, 2007; Tang, 1997), and the negative effects of the native and non-native speaker debate on NNSETs (e.g., Golombek & Jordan, 2005; Llurda, 2006) among others. While all of these studies have shed important
insights on the NNSET movement, at the heart of the debate lies the fundamental question – *Who is the real native speaker?* Rampton (1990) suggests the ‘whole mystique of the native speaker and the mother tongue should be quietly dropped from the linguist’s set of professional myths about language’ (p. 97) as it is ‘sociolinguistically inaccurate’ to consider individuals as belonging to only one social group.

Pavlenko (2003) underscores the importance of addressing inequitable hierarchies within the TESOL profession as a whole, rather than limiting the discourse to marginalised groups; furthermore, it is important to remember that ‘empowering individuals within inequitable social structures not only fails to deal with inequalities but also reproduces them’ (Pennycook, 2001, p. 39). Reflecting upon my own experiences of questioning my teacher identity at the start of my TESOL studies, I now realise that my understanding had been limited to the dichotomy of the two groups – that is, the traditional ‘either or’ perspective which imposes the ‘need’ to position individuals as a native or nonnative speaker of English. As Pavlenko (2003) and Pennycook (2001) point out, issues of identity are far more complex and it is not only necessary to move beyond the native vs. nonnative dichotomy, but it is important to focus on the multicompetence (Cook, 1991) of ‘international English professionals’ (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999) and to understand the notion of imagination as an approach to exploring teacher identity from ideological (Anderson, 1991), identiary (Wenger, 1998) and educational (Norton, 2000) perspectives, which may be helpful in exploring the complexities of teacher identity displayed in the above narratives. Had I been aware of Pavlenko’s theory at the time of the grammaticality judgment test when I was a TESOL student, I may have asked, ‘Can I stand in the middle?’
According to Pavlenko (2003), imagination also plays an important role in teacher identity because individuals are naturally inclined to identify themselves as members of an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1991) in which meanings are appropriated and new identities are created. In this sense, Mira’s desire to belong to the community of English teachers who have had the experience of studying abroad had created an imagined community to which she wished to belong; from Mira’s perspective, the experience of studying abroad seemed to have created an ‘exclusive community’ amongst her colleagues in which they seemed to share mutual understandings of their overseas experiences that Mira could not identify with. As a result, the subsequent decision to travel to Canada for a short-term language programme allowed Mira to become a member of the above imagined community upon returning to Korea.

In my case, however, the awkward confrontation with the task of having to choose between the two groups – native speaker vs. nonnative speaker – during the grammaticality judgement test was the very first time I had questioned my second language identity (Block, 2007). Prior to this experience, however, I had never questioned whether I was a native or nonnative speaker simply because I had been living in a multicultural, multilingual environment in which I had the advantage of code-switching between English and Korean effortlessly; thus, the notion of the native speaker did not seem important to me at the time. On the other hand, Mira’s experience of working in a hagwon in which the majority of her colleagues seemed to have had study-abroad experiences may have created such a strong ‘desire’ (Motha & Lin, 2014) to share the mutual ‘communion’ (Anderson, 1991, p. 6) that she began to take steps in realising her imagined community by investing in a language training programme in Canada.
In order to address issues of ‘desire and ‘belongingness’ for TESOL students, I have found Wenger’s (1998) theory of community of practice and Norton’s (2000) approach to exploring language identity to be helpful. Whereas Mira’s desire seemed to be related to ‘overseas experience’ rather than language skills – although the two may inevitably be interrelated to one another – language skills seemed to be a much more immediate concern for Yujin, especially when she had to interact with students like Ara in the TESOL classroom. Ara and Yujin were both TESOL students enrolled in our programme, but their spoken English abilities differed in great amount; whereas Ara had the ability to speak fluent, native-like English, Yujin had trouble expressing herself in full sentences during classroom discussions. As described in the narratives, engaging in classroom discussions often created tension and awkward moments for the students as well as myself; when someone like Ara starts talking in class, the others begin to feel inadequate, negatively affecting their ‘willingness to communicate’ (WTC) (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996). As an instructor dealing with such diversities - in terms of English language abilities – I did not have the ‘tool’ nor the approach to address such challenges at the time; however, the pedagogical implications drawn from the theories of imagined communities (Anderson, 1991), community of practice (Wenger, 1998) and the notion of WTC have helped me to address the challenges that I often face when dealing with students like Ara and Yujin by introducing the notion of multicompetence (Cook, 1991) in class and helping students – both fluent, confident speakers of English and the less fluent, confident speakers – to see beyond the native vs. nonnative dichotomy by positioning themselves as multicompetent users of the English language and the importance of accepting one another as valuable members of the TESOL community. As Norton (2000) points out, language teachers must acknowledge that L2 learners have an imagined community that they seek to enter and oftentimes, they feel uncomfortable when they are forced to interact with members of such imagined
communities; as such, for someone like Yujin, both Ara – a classmate who is not only a confident, competent speaker of English but also a member of the imagined community to which she seeks to belong – and I, may be seen as individuals who are on ‘the other side of the room’, just as the students who were forced to stand on the left side of the room during the grammaticality judgement test in Professor Jones’s class may have felt at the time.

7.2. UNDERSTANDING NNSET IDENTITY THROUGH A STRUCTURE AND AGENCY FRAMEWORK

I am reading Yujin’s narratives and I am beginning to understand why she is one of the few students in the TESOL programme whose spoken English is difficult to comprehend, and yet, eager to speak in class. While most of the students who are not confident about their spoken English prefer to remain silent during classroom discussion (thus allowing the fluent English-speaking students to dominate in class), Yujin seems to take each opportunity to express her thoughts in class. I now realise that Yujin is struggling to deny the barriers that have been established against her and she was making a desperate attempt to transcend her obstacles:

_I was very excited to get the permission from this program and I thought my English proficiency and education background were enough to understand the graduate level lectures in English since I had already done TESOL certificate program. However, after I stepped into the class in my first semester, I felt frustrated. I could not understand what the professors and other classmates said in the classroom. I realized I didn’t even know how to write the_
paragraph. My classmates were grouping and interacted with one another in an unproductive way. They were eager to meet the deadline and finish the project completely and perfectly. As for the presentation, one who are not native prepared for everything and explained what the presentation was about right 30 minutes before the class to the students who are bilingual. And the students who are fluent in English made the presentation. I understand why students did it because I also used to do it when I was a university student. But I didn’t learn anything. I didn’t want to do that again even if I was behind the class and couldn’t get a great score. So, I took the extra classes outside of the classroom at Pagoda and Wall Street English to catch up the classes. At Pagoda, I choose the one on one program with the foreigners. At Wall Street English, I signed up the language program for one-year program. Through one semester, I learned a lot about English Education as a foreign language and my English language proficiency improved a lot. However, I spent most of my savings for my tuition on taking extra classes. I took a one year break from school to make money. (Yujin, online journal; May 2013)

Unlike the majority of the TESOL students, Yujin had never studied abroad and she did not come from a wealthy family who could pay for her tuition. In addition to having to pay for a very expensive tuition for studying in an MA TESOL programme, Yujin explains that she was determined to survive in the programme, despite the overwhelming challenges that she had encountered upon matriculation. She not only had difficulty understanding the lectures conducted in English, but she soon discovered that the students had developed a ‘system’ for getting through the courses, especially when
it came to group presentations, which had become a norm in the department due to the large number of students in each class when the programme was initially established in 2009. The students seemed to have assigned different roles for the ‘fluent’ English speaking students and the ‘not-so-fluent’ students; while the ‘not-so-fluent’ students spent much of their energy researching and putting together the materials for presentations (e.g., PPT slides, handouts, etc.), the ‘fluent’ speakers seemed to take a passive role and waited until the ‘not-so-fluent’ speakers passed on the presentation materials (at times as late as thirty minutes before class was to begin), from which they would effortlessly deliver the presentation while their ‘not-so-fluent’ counterparts watched quietly after spending hours poring over textbooks and articles in order to organise the presentation materials. In some ways, they may have ‘misinterpreted’ the notion of ‘cooperative learning’, which is often addressed in the TESOL classroom; that is, rather than engaging in meaningful discussions and preparing for a presentation ‘together’, the students seemed to have found a way of dividing up the labour based on their English-speaking abilities.

For Yujin, however, the investment that she had made in spending her savings by taking additional English language courses, such as the 1:1 speaking course with a native speaker, could not go to waste since she had taken a whole year off just to work in order to earn more money for her TESOL tuition. Oftentimes, Yujin expressed her frustrations in class by admitting that she had trouble understanding the ‘culture’ of native English speakers and that she had often felt awkward with the native speaker teachers at her work – a private language academy for children. I now realise that this may have been one of the reasons why she seemed to be a bit ‘different’ from the other students when it came to interacting with me on a personal level. For example, she once sent me an email with an
attachment but there was no message in the email – not a single word; then on another occasion, she left me a message on one of her assignments as follows:

Dear, Laura Park
I tried to hand in your assignment by deadline perfectly. Regardless of the score, I want to think about the questions you gave me more carefully. Could you give me more time? If it’s possible, I want to hand it in by next Monday again.

The first time I read Yujin’s message, I could not help but wonder why she had addressed me by my first and last name and did not sign her name in the end. Although it is common to address university instructors and professors by their first names in English-speaking countries, Korean students – including the ‘fluent’ English speaking students who have studied abroad – refrain from doing this, even within an English immersion context such as our TESOL programme. Most of the students address their instructors as ‘professor’, but I thought it was a bit odd when Yujin, who had never been abroad, addressed me by my first and last name or sent me e-mails with an attachment without a single message. At first, I questioned why she was sending emails without a message and wondered if she would do the same to Korean professors. Although I do not require my students to address me as ‘professor’ and while a few students do call me by my first name, which I do not mind at all, I was a bit puzzled by the way she had addressed me because the other students have never called me by my first and last name before. Yujin’s interpretation of adoption of the Western culture may be seen as a form of what SLA researchers and sociolinguists refer to as hypercorrection (Preston, 1991) or overgeneralization (Bardovi-
Harlig, 2000) in which a foreign language learner or an individual who speaks a non-standard variety of a language ‘seeks to incorporate a prestige feature into their careful speech’ (Ellis, 2008, p. 316). In Yujin’s case, she was not necessarily attempting to incorporate a ‘prestige feature’ into her speech; however, she may have obtained an ‘overgeneralised’ interpretation of the Western culture from the limited experience that she has had in studying English with native speakers on a 1:1 basis which I imagine would have taken a very casual form of interaction with one another. As a result, Yujin may have wished to continue exploring ‘casual’ interactive relationships with me, which seemed to be awkward in some ways.

Yujin’s written narratives and the seemingly awkward behaviour that she had displayed now seem to fit together like a perfectly fitting puzzle. More than anything, Yujin may have wished to establish a ‘new identity’ for herself. After matriculating into the TESOL programme, she discovered that the ‘English-only’ environment was overwhelming which led her to enrol in English language courses outside of the TESOL programme; thus she was an English teacher focusing on improving her own English language skills in order to ‘survive’ in the TESOL classroom. As a result, she ended up spending her savings and could not afford to return to the TESOL programme afterward, thus forcing her to take a year off to work in order to return to the TESOL programme. When she finally returned, however, she was not only determined to survive this time, but she was determined to ‘display’ and practice the cultural knowledge that she may have attempted to acquire from studying 1:1 with a native speaker for a whole year by practicing what she may have perceived as ‘Western-style’ interactional approaches.

As I reflect upon Yujin’s narratives, I see an individual who is desperately
‘fighting’ to survive in an environment in which she may be seen as less competent or unqualified when compared to many of her fluent English-speaking classmates; despite the numerous obstacles, however, Yujin has chosen to exercise reflexivity by placing her agency over structure. She has denied the given ‘structures’ by refusing to remain silent in classroom discussions and taking the initiative to present her group projects while her ‘fluent’ English-speaking classmates looked on from the audience. I am no longer interested in knowing why I am being addressed by my first and last name – it was probably just a cultural misunderstanding.

As I read Yujin’s post-it message again, I am noticing her desire to ‘think about the questions … more carefully’ and that she was less interested in the score and that she would rather submit the assignment late and lose a few points if she could have more time to think about the assignment carefully, which seemed to be much more meaningful than receiving a higher score on the assignment. I now see Yujin’s post-it message from a completely different perspective; rather than being surprised by the first few words on the note and the awkward structure of the message which did not follow my expectations of a message to a professor which should have included an appropriate greeting with her name signed in the end, which I now as see as being quite trivial, I see a struggling individual who is determined to engage in a meaningful learning experience. Suddenly, I am embarrassed at my ‘expectations’ and the lack of intercultural understanding.

In many ways, I praise Yujin for her courage and determination to transcend the numerous obstacles that surround her life; at the same time, I wonder how far Yujin will be able to go once she completes the TESOL programme and seeks to establish a career as a NNSET in Korea. I feel Yujin’s pain and suffering as I am reminded of my own desperate situation. Like Yujin, there
are days when I find myself battling the numerous structures that surround my career. Like Yujin, I have invested a lot of money and time into my studies. Like Yujin, I deny the obstacles and the limitations that barricade my daily life each day. At the same time, there are many days when I find myself trembling in fear – fearful of the possibility of having to remain in this position forever. Once a tenured professor asked me, ‘What's so bad about your position? Your salary is not that much lower than ours. You probably won't get fired as long as you satisfy the basic requirements, so why don't you just enjoy yourself while you're here? By the way, why don't you look for another job if you’re so unhappy?’ Her words haunt me every day; she will never know what is so bad about this position because she has never been there. True, we are considered ‘full-time’ faculty, but we are also scrutinised and evaluated every year, leaving very little room to breathe.

‘What is so bad about this position?’ In response to this question, I answer, ‘It is more about dignity.’ What is ‘so bad’ about this position is that our dignity as humans and our dignity as legitimate full-time faculty members who work just as hard – if not harder – than the tenure-track faculty are denied; what is ‘so bad’ is that the trivial, day-to-day events are ‘not-so-trivial’ and the oppression has expanded beyond the tenure-non-tenure relations:

There is something about the department office that makes my stomach queasy at times. There are four administrative assistants in the office. All three of my colleagues, who are also non-tenure track faculty, and I share similar feelings toward these women in the office, who are supposed to provide administrative support for the faculty in the department. And yet for some reason, we all feel uncomfortable around the office staff. These women
know that we are just contract-based, non-tenure track faculty, which means we are not really considered to be ‘legitimate’ members of the institution. They know it and we know that they know it. It is difficult to clearly describe what it is that makes my stomach queasy each time I walk into the department office, but for some reason, I am always careful around the office staff and I have trouble asking for help from any of them. I would rather do it myself. I would rather walk all the way down the basement to use the restroom rather than use the one near the office. I haven’t done anything wrong here. And yet I feel as though I have. I have worked extremely hard the past seven years. And yet I feel as though I have not. I am a legitimate member of the full-time faculty at this institution. And yet they make me feel as though I am not. This is what is so wrong with my position. It’s about human dignity. (Laura’s vignette; October 2018)

I now realise that dignity is something that is often taken away by oppressors within unequal power relations, and oftentimes the oppressors have no idea that they are being oppressive. What is even worse is that the oppressed live in ongoing oppression and fail to recognise the possibility of exercising their agency over structure, thus reinforcing the cycle of oppression. It is only when individuals begin to exercise reflexivity – that is, by taking a ‘critical’ look at themselves – the cycle of oppression may come to a halt. Yujin is in the process of acknowledging her dignity as an NNSET and she is denying the ‘role’ that her ‘fluent-speaking’ classmates expect her to play – the role of the ‘humble’, ‘not-so-fluent-speaking’ student who typically remains silent in classroom discussions or assumes a passive role in group presentations; likewise, I am battling the oppressive role that my fellow tenured and tenure-track faculty ‘colleagues’ expect me to play – the role of
the quiet, oppressed, yet ‘grateful-for-having-a-full-time-job’ faculty member who is not allowed any ownership nor legitimacy as a full-time instructor in the workplace. The worst part, however, is the fact that we are not considered to be ‘legitimate’ members of the institution despite the commitment and the sacrifice we have invested in the programme over the years; thus we are not allowed to have a say in any important decision making processes despite the fact that these decisions directly affect us in many ways and we are always under the ‘control’ of the dean, who often treats us as ‘second-class citizens’ and exercise full authority and power over us since our status within the institution has us categorised as those who do not have any ‘legitimacy’ within the university.

In order to uphold the dignity that all humans are entitled to, however, I am convinced more and more of the need to embrace critical pedagogy and placing it at the heart of the TESOL curriculum. I had always been attracted to the concept of critical pedagogy but for the longest time, it was just an ‘attractive concept’; that is, I did not know how to operationalise critical pedagogy nor did I have a clear understanding of the implications; specifically, I had not had the chance to ‘internalise’ the concept of critical pedagogy until I found myself at the weaker end of a power structure and began to understand the painful effects of unequal power relations.

I have begun to see the world from a different perspective. I live in downtown Seoul, which has also become the main site for protests and demonstrations in Korea because it is close to many government offices including the Blue House where the president resides, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the US embassy and the City Hall. Each time a rally or a protest is held – which seems to occur much more frequently than I had ever witnessed in America – there are street closures and massive traffic delays, leading to frustrations
and all sorts of inconveniences for the ‘rest of us’ trying to get through the
day. In other words, ‘the rest of us’ could not care less what the protestors
were screaming about – they were just a crowd of annoying people making
an awful lot of noise and causing unnecessary inconveniences for the ‘rest
of us’. One day, as I was trying to get past the usual traffic jam during a
protest, I realised that I was no longer a ‘rest of us’. I saw myself in them –
the groups of angry, tearful people who had been mistreated and abused by
greedy CEOs and corporate executives; the groups of suffering individuals
who were working twice as hard as the regular employees of a company
and yet were categorised as temporary, non-regular employees of a
company; the groups of young men and women whose university degrees
had very little value during one of the worst economic recessions in South
Korean history; the groups of men and women whose dignity had been
taken away by their superiors due to their lowly status within an organisation.
No, I was not on the ‘other’ side. I was one of them and for the first time in
my life, I began to ‘internalise’ critical pedagogy and the words of Freire and
Giroux suddenly began to come alive.

7.2.1. Reflections

According to Wenger (1998), individual identity ‘does not lie only in the way
one talks or thinks about oneself, or only in the way others talk or think about
one, but in the way one’s identity is lived day-to-day’ (p. 99). Such
descriptions remind me of Yujin as I have begun to realise that at times she
seemed to be extremely concerned about her English language skills, which
she acknowledged as being relatively lower than that of her classmates
whereas at the same time, she refused to be silenced and denied the
negative subjectivity of a NNSET (Park, 2012) in the TESOL classroom.
Furthermore, Yujin’s struggles with her NNSET identity also demonstrates
the agency over structure (Coldron & Smith, 1999) paradigm in which
individuals exercise their ability to overcome and transcend the social
structures and obstacles at hand. As mentioned earlier, Giddens (1991)
sees identity formation as a ‘life project’ and as individuals encounter the
numerous challenges and obstacles in the day-to-day, they are somehow
able to ‘make it through’ the given circumstances, placing a slight emphasis
on individual agency over structure; as such, Yujin’s strong will to survive
and transcend her limitations not only led to taking extreme measures to
stay afloat in the TESOL programme by taking a leave of absence in order
to improve her English language skills and enrolling in conversation classes
taught by native speakers but she was also forced to take even more time
off in order to save up enough money to pay for the tuition for the MA TESOL
programme and the English conversation courses with native speaker
teachers. As we can see, Yujin was not only struggling with the emotional
challenges of attempting to ‘survive’ in the TESOL classroom but she was
also dealing with the financial challenges of taking supplementary English
conversation courses.

Prior to reading Yujin’s narratives and gaining a lens into the world of her
struggles, the only objective information that I had had of Yujin as a student
was that her English language skills were significantly lower than most of
the other students; additionally, there may have been some cultural
misunderstandings on my part as I seemed to have failed to understand the
way she communicated with me. Indeed, it is difficult to define cultural norms
in an EFL setting in which the students are homogeneous and the
instructors do not share the students’ cultural background (Rose, 1999) and
as Byram (1997) suggests, ‘the goal of culture and instruction cannot be to
replicate the socialization process experienced by natives of the culture, but
to develop intercultural understanding’ (p. 19). In this sense, it might be
helpful to develop a framework which fosters a third culture (Kramsch, 1993) or a third space (Bhaba, 2004) which is ‘conceived of as the intersection of multiple discourses rather than as a reified body of information to be intellectualized and remembered’ (Lantolf, 1999, p. 29). ‘Culture’ has never been a priority in my curriculum because I had always felt that I would have very little trouble understanding my students since ‘we’ shared the same culture; however, I quickly discovered that I was wrong and students like Yujin seem to feel awkward toward teachers like myself – not a native speaker teacher but certainly different from the other Korean professors.

Although Yujin and I have different roles and positions in the Korean ELT field, our narratives reveal that we are both individuals struggling desperately to ‘survive’ in our respective professional communities. For Yujin, making it through the day as a TESOL student whose English language abilities were comparatively weaker than that of her classmates seemed to be a major challenge at hand; at the same time, Yujin’s narratives are encouraging and poignant in that she not only acknowledges her weaknesses but demonstrates a strong willingness and determination to overcome her limitations by doing everything she can in order to ‘stay afloat’ in the TESOL programme. I am also reminded of Norton’s (2000) call for teachers to ‘acknowledge the imagined communities of our students’ as they see us as ‘gatekeepers’ (Pavlenko, 2003, p. 253) to the communities that they are trying to enter. In this sense, I am not only a ‘gatekeeper’ of the TESOL classroom but I am also subject to the gatekeepers of our institution which keeps me at the periphery of the ‘legitimate’ academic community of the university. As someone who has had the painful experience of being kept outside of the ‘centre’, I am able to empathise with Yujin’s suffering, thus not only recognising the importance of focusing on the role of empathy in teacher education but also questioning what our programme can offer to
students like Yujin in order to help her to gain legitimate peripheral participation (Wenger, 1998) during the course of her studies in the TESOL programme. Perhaps one of the most tangible approaches is to offer free or inexpensive language-focused courses during summer and winter breaks, which may be taught by alumni or graduating seniors.

Despite the cultural differences and misunderstandings, the experience of being an outsider on the periphery has helped me to see myself in students like Yujin – at times confident and yet fearful, at times motivated and driven and yet rejected and denied – nonetheless constantly searching and struggling to survive.

7.3. WHEN NEOLIBERALISM FAILS

2016 July 31. It is a hot Sunday afternoon. I turn on the television and I cannot believe my eyes. There is a reporter standing in front of the main administrative building of a university in Seoul – it takes a few seconds to figure out that the university on the television screen just so happens to be where I work. The reporter is frantically explaining that 1,600 policemen have arrived on the campus of a women’s university in Seoul in response to the university president’s request to put an end to a 48-hour long stand-off between 240 students and 14 faculty members who had convened in order to conduct a meeting to launch a new government-funded programme. There are thousands of people – mostly policemen – lined up at the front door of the main administrative building. Then the camera takes us inside of the building. There are hundreds of students screaming and crying as they are being pushed, carried and dragged outside of the
building by policemen. I must be dreaming, I say to myself. This cannot be real. (Laura’s vignette; July 2016)

For the next 80 days, thousands of students and alumni gather to protest the university president’s decision to send 1,600 policemen to forcefully put an end to the standoff on the 31st of July and to demand her resignation. On the 31st of July, the students had requested a face-to-face meeting with the president; at first, the student affairs office sent the students a message that the president had agreed to a meeting and that she would arrive around 11:00 a.m. to talk to the students. The president never came. Instead, 1,600 policemen arrived on campus at 11:30 a.m. and they began to use physical force in order to remove the students out of the building. Terrified at the sight of the policemen, the students screamed and resisted; one by one, they were pushed, carried, and dragged outside of the building. The 14 faculty members who had been locked up inside of a conference room for the past 48 hours were finally released.

2016 October 19. The president of our institution declares her resignation and the 80-day university-wide protest finally comes to an end. This is just the beginning, however, to much greater calamities which would change the course of South Korean history forever.

2017 March 10. South Korean President Park Geun Hye is impeached from office by a unanimous Supreme Court decision. She is charged with 13 different crimes which include abuse of power and bribery.

2017 May 31. Five professors – including the university president – from our
university are sentenced to 2-5 years of imprisonment for involvement in a scandal in which the university had illegally offered admissions to an unqualified applicant, who was the daughter of a woman who was reportedly the former President Park Geun Hye’s ‘best friend’ and confidante – referred to as ‘South Korea’s Rasputin’ by the Korean media. On the same day – by coincidence – our university inaugurates a new president. The new president vows to implement a fair, transparent channel of communication for all members of the institution (students, faculty, tenured and non-tenured, alumni, office staff, technical staff, security, janitors, etc.) and to ‘battle inequities and unfair treatment of those members of the institution who are alienated and mistreated’. For the first time in six years, I feel a sense of liberation.

Perhaps there will come a day when I would be rewarded for my work rather than being punished for ‘working too hard’; perhaps there will come a day when I, too, like the rest of the legitimate members of the institution, could work toward a ‘promotion’; perhaps there will come a day when I could walk into the department office and talk to the office staff without feeling like an inadequate being; perhaps there will come a day when my fellow non-tenure track colleagues and I will finally be ‘free’ from the power abuses of the deans who have no business interfering with our departmental affairs since they belong to other departments; and perhaps there will come a day when I will find what they took away from me and what is rightfully mine – my dignity. Indeed, I have found what lies at the heart of critical pedagogy – the right to claim one’s dignity. Speaking of dignity, I am a bit ashamed as I read Joo Hyun’s narratives because I feel as though she had been able to maintain her dignity when I had failed in maintaining mine over the years. Joo Hyun shares her experiences of her stay in Canada in which she refuses to have her dignity taken away from her:
Paul placed order for me. We were at a Vietnamese’s restaurant at the outskirt of Toronto. I was about to order the waiter a noodle soup for myself when he cut in and ordered meal for both of us, in English. I felt a bit offended. I sensed long before that he did not like me talking to Canadians and he became nervous whenever I tried to speak to Canadians in my far from perfect English. Sometimes I was made to feel as though he was ashamed of being with me. (Joo Hyun, online journal; June 2014)

Joo Hyun describes a painful experience in which she is humiliated at a restaurant in Canada. The primary purpose of resigning from her job and going to Canada was to develop her English-speaking skills, and yet Paul, a family friend, does not want to ‘give her the right to speak’ (Norton, 2000):

Paul was a Korean immigrant Canadian. His whole families moved to Canada 30 years ago. They had been very successful. His father and my father are sworn brothers, and I call his father uncle and his mother aunt all my life. He is 7 years older than me, and we call each other a cousin. Later I gradually learned that he did not like being associated with Korea. He had very complex, self-contradictory emotions toward Korea. In his room, there was a picture of himself on the wall. In that picture, he was a young, fat and lonely immigrant Asian boy. He told me that he put it there on purpose so as not to go back to the time again. I could only imagine what he had been through to become a successful member of mainstream Canadian society. He had to detach himself from Korea in order to keep himself from the image of
poor, second-rate immigrants. To him, I was the boy in that picture.
(Joo Hyun, online journal; June 2014)

Although Joo Hyun points out that Paul had ‘created’ an identity for her – the poor, second-rate immigrant – she quickly denies the ascribed identity:

*I myself was not particularly intimidated when I spoke to Canadian in places like supermarkets, restaurants, banks, et cetera. Rather I got slightly adventurous and exciting. Because I positioned myself as a kind of tourist and in that context English was just one of the many foreign languages that I got to choose from to use. So my ego did not get hurt. ESL and EFL create different identities. I am wondering that it may help students build positive self-images if we refer and treat English as one of the many foreign languages in the world that are equally important and useful.* (Joo yeon, online journal; June 2014)

I am impressed – and envious of Joo Hyun’s agency as she reasons with herself by explaining that her positioning within the given context was that of a ‘tourist’ for whom the English language was ‘just one of the many foreign languages’ that she could choose to use; in other words, since she had positioned herself as a tourist in a foreign country, it would be perfectly natural for her to sound like a foreigner and that this was nothing to be ashamed of, which was quite different from how Paul seemed to have positioned her within the local context.

Just as Joo Hyun had learned to reposition herself as a tourist in Canada
thus validating her ‘nonnative’ spoken English – since it is perfectly natural for tourists to be foreigners who are not native speakers of the local language – I tell myself that I will need to learn how to re-position myself as a legitimate member of the academic community in order to transcend the numerous obstacles that have barricaded my world on a day-to-day basis. At the same time, I worry about students like Yujin, who seems to be stuck in the same ‘mire’ in which she is unable to enjoy the benefits of hard work and the amount of effort and investment that she has made in developing her teaching career:

*I strongly believe the reason why power structures exist in human nature. Now we live in the society dominated by capitalism. Mostly some groups who are richer than others have more power. However, power could be given to different kinds of groups by depending on the context they involve. In private English education field in Korea, someone who are native English speakers has more power than non-native speakers even if they are not professionally educated in Education field and don’t have enough experience. No matter how much I try to work hard, their salary is usually much higher than me. No matter how long I have taught English, most native speakers think they are much better than nonnative speakers. So I feel like I hit the ceiling.* (Yujin, online journal; May 2013)

Yujin’s words in the end are haunting. Knowing Yujin’s difficulties of speaking English, I fear I may have to agree with her; she may have indeed hit the ceiling. What should I tell her? Should I give her cliché-ish words of encouragement and tell her that the world will reward those who never give up? Or should I tell her to improve her English-speaking skills? Here we
may try to understand Yujin’s struggles from the perspective of O’Regan’s (2014) critique of ELF (English as Lingua Franca). O’Regan argues that it is necessary to understand the ELF concept from a diachronic socio-historical perspective in which the reality of capitalism and neoliberalism are taken into consideration in its interpretation. In some ways – despite the fact that the Korean ELT context is indeed different from what is typically understood as ‘ELF’ sites in which individuals representing various cultures and languages co-exist - O’Regan’s argument resonates with my attempt to understand students like Yujin; in other words, I am now beginning to realise how important it is to consider the language learner’s access to social, cultural, linguistic and economic capital (see also O’Regan, 2021).

Based on such implications, Yujin’s struggles may not simply be compared to the native vs. nonnative speaker paradigm nor the ‘fluent vs. not-so-fluent’ labels that I may have been guilty of ascribing to my students in the TESOL classroom; that is to say, from the perspective of a teacher who must address the challenges of conducting TESOL courses in English in a classroom setting in which individuals like Yujin and Ara are forced to ‘learn together,’ I may have been creating an ‘English divide’ in my own classrooms without even realising what I was doing.

Addressing the realities of a situation in which the gap between students like Yujin and Ara in the TESOL classroom continues to exist, I am beginning to wonder whether a TESOL programme in EFL contexts should include an intensive language enhancement component in the curriculum (see Braine, 2010) so that students like Yujin do not have to come up with an additional budget for taking language courses outside of the programme; of course, this would mean that students may have to sacrifice a few of the content courses in exchange for language courses or language courses may be taken during winter and summer breaks. Having TESOL graduates teach
these language classes and taking on the role of a ‘mentor’ or an ‘expert’ within the TESOL community, thus helping the newly enrolled TESOL students to not only improve their English language skills, but also to gain ‘full membership’ within our community of practice (Wenger, 1998) might be an option. Rather than reinforcing the English language as ‘symbolic power’ (Bourdieu, 1992) in the ‘day-to-day life [in which] it is transmuted into a symbolic form and thereby endowed with a kind of legitimacy that it would not otherwise have’ (p. 23), the English language should be employed as a means for cooperative learning in which the experts help the novices move from the periphery to the centre of the TESOL community.

7.3.1. Reflections

Norton’s (2000) longitudinal study of immigrant women in Canada explores the language learner and the language learning context, specifically focusing on the power relations among language learners and target language speakers. Norton integrates Bourdieu’s (1977) notion of symbolic power by pointing out that ‘speech always owes a major part of its value to the value of the person who utters it’ (p. 652); furthermore, Bourdieu suggests that ‘the value ascribed to speech cannot be understood apart from larger networks of social relationships … those who speak regard those who listen as worthy to listen, and that those who listen regard those who speak as worthy to speak’ (Norton, 2000, p. 8). In this sense, individuals involved in an unequal power structure within a dialogue may also be seen from the theoretical perspectives of positioning (Hárre & Langenhove, 1999) as the speaker is positioned as one worthy of speaking whereas the listener is positioned as worthy of listening.

According to Hárre and Langenhove, a position is a ‘complex cluster of
generic personal attributes, structured in various ways, which impinges on the possibilities of interpersonal, intergroup and even intrapersonal action through some assignment of such rights, duties and obligations to an individual as are sustained by the cluster’ (p. 1). Anderson (2009) demonstrates the role of positioning by illustrating failure by pointing out that the 'smallest necessary component for positioning someone as a failure is naming or orienting to what an individual does (or is) as such' (p. 291); however, the act of positioning can be accomplished explicitly or implicitly and when a person is called a ‘failure,’ there lies a ‘discursive process that brings named acts of failing close enough to rub up against the sense of a person as a failure – close enough that it sticks’ (p. 291). Oftentimes, the role of positioning impacts how individuals view themselves and as Anderson suggests, the positions that they have been ‘named’ – such as ‘failure’ – more often than not, ‘sticks’ with the individual. As Joo Hyun demonstrates in her narratives, however, positioning is not always invariant or unidirectional (e.g., the one with power positioning the one with less power); rather, individuals may re-position themselves upon being positioned by another – just as Joo Hyun had denied the position of ‘the silent, passive non-native speaker’ imposed upon her. Just as Joo Hyun had learned to ‘re-position’ herself as a tourist in Canada thus validating her ‘nonnative’ variety of English, I am reminded of the need to learn how to re-position myself as a legitimate member of the academic community in order to transcend the numerous obstacles that have barricaded my world on a day-to-day basis.

As I reflect upon Joo Hyun and Yujins’s narratives, I am initially impressed at Joo Hyun’s ability to position herself as a legitimate speaker of English as a ‘tourist’ in Canada, who does not need to speak native-like English like the locals. She was able to resist being positioned as an illegitimate, flawed speaker of English by her host, who attempted to speak on her behalf in
public places. In this sense, Yujin’s story is similar in that she also refused to be silenced in the TESOL classroom despite the relatively weaker speaking skills that she had in comparison to the majority of her classmates; at the same time, Yujin laments that there are inevitable limitations and inequalities in the ELT field as she explains, ‘no matter how hard I try, I will always earn a lower salary than the native speakers’ and that her status will always be lower than that of her native speaker counterparts.

As Yujin suggests, social injustice and inequality will always exist. Despite the historical impeachment of the South Korean president in 2017 – *in the name of justice* – social inequality and injustice continue to exist; despite the replacement of the president of our institution who called for ‘equality and justice’ as the former president was being prosecuted and sent off to prison, there have been no significant changes in our department to date. While there are no easy answers, the process of reflecting upon my students’ narratives while at the same time reflecting upon my own has helped me to realise that cultural differences and misunderstandings may exist but my students and I share the common ‘culture’ of human suffering and marginalisation from society. When I first began my teaching career in Korea, I felt confident and comfortable thinking that I would have very little trouble identifying with my students since we spoke the same language and shared the same ‘culture’; to my surprise, the most significant similarity that I now find is that we are all individuals situated on the periphery of the Korean society. The desire and the need to introduce critical perspectives in our curriculum has never been more important.
7.4. DEVELOPING A PEDAGOGY OF CRITICAL TEACHER EDUCATION

December 2019. I receive a text message from the head of our administrative office. The deadline for the spring 2020 semester applications is now over. The final number of the applicants for the MA TESOL programme is 12. I am horrified. My heart keeps beating and I am feeling dizzy and nauseous. Tears begin to fall. I had spent so much time and effort trying to promote our programme. Spending my own money to print colour copies of promotional posters, running around campus on a Sunday afternoon putting up posters around the campus, hosting workshops to attract potential students, begging our students to promote our programme on their SNS platforms, and asking them to tell their friends, family and neighbours about our programme – all of these have become a regular part of my life during student enrolment periods. According to my contract, my role is to focus on ‘teaching’, not marketing and promotion. The latest contract that I signed specifies that the university holds the right to terminate our contracts in the future if our classes get cancelled due to low enrolment. If the number of applications continue to drop, classes will inevitably get cancelled since there will be few students left to enrol. As a result, the department is clearly on its way to shutting down. The strive toward increasing ‘global competitiveness’ led to a ‘hiring spree’ of full-time foreign faculty to teach in English in the early 2000s, and yet the refusal to allow them to take any ownership of their own departments or programmes by ‘keeping them in their place’ – on non-tenure track contracts – has led to the gradual demise of the TESOL department. (Laura’s vignette; December 2019)
At times like this, the only source of hope or fulfilment comes from my students who keep me grounded and reminds me of my role as a teacher educator. Ji Hye, who was a flight attendant prior to enrolling in our TESOL programme begins to articulate her thoughts on her path to a new identity as a TESOL professional after reading Pavlenko’s (2003) paper on the ‘multicompetence’ of language teachers who speak more than one language:

As an English teacher so-called nonnative speaker teacher in Korea, I often had stressed that my English is not enough comparing to the native speaker teacher or native-like teacher. After learning about the ZPD, I have realized that I challenged myself to push into Zone 3 which I cannot get into and undervalued what I can do well as a multicompetent speaker of English. Many Korean teachers of English may have a similar experience as I do. The article indicates a reasonable point to change the way of thinking about ourselves by reimagining our identity. I hope and expect my re-imagined identity would be positively working as a TESOL professional. I, a multicompetent user of English, re-imagine my identity as an educator and a pioneer. I would like to set my identity up as an educator. Firstly, I would like to distinguish ‘Educator’ from ‘Teacher’. I think the teacher is who has a job to teach someone regards certain skills or subjects, whereas, the educator is who helps students to find their goals and dreams, cheers for their students and offers a guideline to get to their dream. I think the educator is more related to their students’ lives in practice. My experience having learned English, having used English and having studied TESOL, would play an important role as a good educator. As an educator, I would
like to boost learners’ self-confident to speak English as a multicompetent speaker based on understanding their difficulties which I went through, and introduce the different world and lives while encouraging their possibilities to play the role in the international area. Moreover I want to show actual examples how the English ability was used to expand the range of possibility and opportunities, and increase student’s positive thinking while learning English. I will devise the creative and effective lessons that the learner maximize their successful experience in communication as a multi competent speaker in class and consider how to adapt the critical pedagogy into the class. Since English is the practical medium to connect to a different world, I am pretty sure that the teacher can make the students see and experience the broad world for being broader in their outlook on the world beyond teaching English. I don’t know whom I will teach to or where I will teach the students yet, however, I want to keep imagine my identity as an educator and keep studying and prepare myself to become a good educator. (Ji Hye, online journal; November 2013)

Reading Ji Hye’s narratives bring me comfort despite the depressing environment that our department has become. I find peace in knowing that our students have learned to think critically by questioning their roles in the Korean ELT field and constructing a new identity as multicompetent users of the English language. In fact, interacting with students in the classroom or reading student narratives remind me time and time again that students want to work toward bringing change in the Korean ELT field and that they want to understand their role as change agents. Ji Hye continues by expressing her future goals as a ‘pioneer’ in the Korean ELT field:
To be a good English educator in Korea, I also re-imagine my identity as a pioneer. When I talked with my previous students' parents, they tended to show a certain view of English that English is just a subject to study for getting high scores but not to treat it as a language to communicate. Many parents are sensitive about their children's scores and it pushes students focusing on accuracy. Now, the effort is required to change the concept of learning English. Since I was a student in the '90s, many teachers were already aware of the problem of English education by rote memory. However, even though it passed 20 years, I think, it is still not much changed. When I worked in Emirates, I noticed that many of the nonnative English speaker cabin crews had just learned English in their own counties but almost all Korean cabin crews had the experience to learn English abroad. It was weird we spend a lot of time to learn English since we were young but why we still cannot speak English and need additional learning in native English countries whereas other countries could handle it under the domestic education systems. As an English teacher, I think, we should think about it seriously. My huge dream as a pioneer of the English education is to change the general concept of the English education in society and suggest a clear model of learning English. It may need a lot of support from others, however, if someone does not change it, the same situation will be repeated in 20 years again. As a teacher, I hope I or other professionals can develop the various programs including student language program based on practicality using various methods, teacher's idea sharing program, and parent education program. I expect these trials would lead to another step of English
education that students can communicate with others in English confidently with no language training in English-speaking countries. I believe, if it is possible to conduct, it will eventually draw the additional positive effect reducing “English divide” in the society that we should have a sense of responsibility as English teachers. (Ji Hye, online journal; November 2013)

Over the years, I have engaged in numerous conversations with my students in the TESOL programme; in addition, I have heard my students’ voices through their written narratives and each time, I am convinced that my students are eager to engage in critical pedagogy. Students like Ji Hye draw upon their past experiences as language learners and question why the amount of effort poured into English language learning in Korea has resulted in negative, unsuccessful results. Ji Hye claims, ‘It may need a lot of support from others, however, if someone does not change it, the same situation will be repeated in 20 years again’. As I reflect upon Ji Hye’s words, my mind is racing with all kinds of ideas for responding to her suggestions; that is, until I find myself walking around the building in which our department is located; suddenly, I am startled at the ‘un-academic environment’ and begin to realise why I had always felt so uneasy about this place. The physical space in which our department is located – a modern, state-of-the-art building designed by a prominent French architect, who claimed to have been inspired by the parting of the red sea from the Old Testament, was built in the year 2009 – the same year the TESOL programme was established. All of the rooms have glass windows and the entire building feels more like a posh shopping mall than a university. Interestingly, our department is the only department in the entire university housed in this new building, simply because it is the youngest department and there was no other space available in other buildings. The building has
elevators with glass doors and windows, and on the ground floor, there is a Starbucks, food court, bakery, book store, convenience store, drug store, flower shop, restaurants, and even a theatre. I can take the elevator down and feel as though I am inside of a large shopping mall.

Despite having access to such conveniences, I have never felt comfortable here. The posh, flashy building in which our department is located reminds me of the superficiality of our identity as a department – a department comprised of English-speaking foreign faculty – the university’s ‘brownie button’ in terms of global representation and yet, a non-academic, non-research environment, which is where we belong, according to our superiors. Likewise, the flashy, ‘multiplex’ in which our department is located does not resemble an academic setting, just as how we have been positioned within the institution – flashy in that we represent ‘global competitiveness’ and yet superficial in that we are not considered to be ‘real’ academics or ‘real’ professors. I find myself standing in front of the glass door elevator in front of our department office and suddenly I am reminded of my position within the institution – a member of the non-tenure track, foreign faculty. We were hired to represent the ‘global’ aspects of the institution and we were hired to conduct classes in English by speaking fluent, native/native-like English to demonstrate just how ‘global’ the institution has become.

Despite the ‘superficial’ status given to the foreign language faculty, engaging in dialogue with my students and listening to their stories and learning more about the dreams and goals they wish to achieve as TESOL professionals have been the only source of encouragement for me over the years. I cannot help but think about all the different things that we – the students and the TESOL faculty – as a community can do together. Over coffee and meals or conversations in the hallways and classrooms, we have often imagined what it would be like if we could implement a lifelong English
language learning programme in which our graduates could develop and teach courses for the local community; we have often imagined what it would be like if we could hold workshops for parents of young children and train them to read English picture books with their children; we have often imagined what it would be like if we could start volunteer programmes to reach out to families and children who are unable to afford private English language classes; we have often imagined what it would be like if we could establish a research centre where students, alumni and faculty gather and exchange ideas and collaborate on various projects together; we have engaged in hours of imagining – however, none of our ideas are ever accepted or taken seriously and I am quickly reminded of where I belong – on the other side of the track where individuals should simply focus on what they were hired to do, which is to simply teach TESOL courses in English. Given the reality of the situation in which I am unable to exercise any freedom to pursue any significant projects that might be helpful in enhancing our programme, however, the role of imagination and creating imagined communities (Anderson, 1991) has played an important role in helping me to stay afloat over the years; in other words, whereas reality kept us within the limited social structures and obstacles, the role of imagining what we can do is also what kept me going over the years.

As Giddens (1991) suggests, the tension between structure and agency will always exist. After spending hours engaged in ‘imagining’ a hopeful future for the TESOL programme, I am suddenly reminded of the reality in which student enrolment is plummeting at an alarming rate. I realise I may not be employed long enough to actualise any of the dreams that I had been imagining about with my students as our department is clearly on its way to shutting down in the near future; for now and for as long as I am able, the only thing I can do is to integrate critical pedagogy in my courses and introduce critical themes and topics to my students as much as possible and
hope students like Ji Hye will explore their teacher identities and work toward addressing the detrimental side effects of extreme neoliberalism and the role of English language education in the Korean context.

7.4.1. Reflections

Researchers have advocated the need to integrate critical pedagogy in the second language teacher education curriculum since the early 1990s when Phillipson (1992) began presenting his ideas on linguistic imperialism and the notion of the native speaker fallacy. Whereas a large body of literature addressing critical pedagogy and second language education (e.g., Norton & Toohey, 2004) exists, perhaps no other topic than the relationship between neoliberalism and applied linguistics (see Block, Gray & Holborow, 2012) is more important in understanding the Korean ELT field. Gray’s (2019) explanation of ‘the neoliberal project’ is a clear depiction of the strive toward internalisation pursued by Korean universities during the past decade. According to Gray (2019), neoliberalism may be seen as a ‘project in the sense of being a collaborative enterprise which has been planned by individuals and propagated by institutions dedicated to its implementation’ (p. 69). Likewise, the massive hiring of foreign faculty from English-speaking countries and implementing English Mediated Instructional (EMI) courses in Korean universities may be seen as a joint-project between the government and the academic institutions in pursuit of increasing their ‘global ranking scores’ in higher education rather than questioning what is truly necessary to benefit the needs of the students. What these ‘project partners’ have failed to foresee was the detrimental effects of the plummeting drop of the birth rate, an increasing unemployment rate for college graduates, and the ubiquity of the non-regular employment system.
In 2011, four students and a professor at the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) took their own lives (Ji et al., 2011). According to media reports, students and faculty at the elite institution had been under enormous pressure from the university’s push for reform and advancing further as a ‘globally recognised institution’; as such, at the top of the priority list was to conduct all of the classes in English. Although the university only accepts some of the brightest and hard-working students in Korea, many were not prepared to survive in an ‘all-English’ classroom environment; furthermore, the vast majority of the students were scholarship recipients upon entrance into the university and maintaining a certain grade point average was a criterion in order to continue receiving the scholarship throughout the course of their studies. Unfortunately, most of the students were not used to ‘failing’ as they had been ranked at the top of their classes during their high school years, but the sudden push to adjust to an EMI classroom environment was sure to cause tragic side effects (Cho, 2017). Students were not the only ones suffering from the pressure as many professors claimed to have been unprepared to conduct EMI classes.

Echoing Gray’s (2019) perspective on the ‘project-orientedness of neoliberalism,’ Piller and Cho (2015) claim, ‘neoliberalism is an ideology that disavows all policy and regulation and thereby dissimulates its operation as a systematic, organized, and orchestrate policy’, which may also be found in the late writings of Bourdieu’ (Sapiro, 2010, cited in Piller & Cho, 2015, p. 163). Piller and Cho also argue that such perspectives are important for understanding the role of EMI in Korea as ‘neoliberalism with its imperative to compete is a covert form of language policy, which imposes English as a natural and neutral medium of academic excellence’ (p. 163). The current situation of the plummeting rate of student enrolment in the TESOL programme at my institution reflects a classic example of the unforeseen side effects of the ‘neoliberal project’ in Korean universities. When our
university decided to establish a post-graduate TESOL programme, the grand master plan was to hire an entire faculty comprised of native speakers with passports from English-speaking countries; as mentioned earlier, the important point here is that a foreign passport was a *must* as it would count toward the institution’s ‘percentage of foreign faculty’, which was a category in the proportion of internationalisation, accounting for approximately 20% of the assessment in national university ranking competition (Cho, 2017). In other words, an individual may have spent the majority of her life in an English-speaking country, possess native-like English language skills, professional training in TESOL from an accredited university in an English-speaking country with years of teaching experience would not be hired if she did not have a foreign passport; conversely, an inexperienced native speaker with a passport from an English-speaking country with an ‘irrelevant degree’ for English language teaching may be hired instead. We may interpret this as follows - *university ranking is more important than the quality of the education that the students are to receive*; as such, the detrimental effects of neoliberalism in Korean higher education reflects a toxic paradox – from the outset, institutions are willing to stretch their budget to hire as many foreigners as possible in order to provide a ‘global learning environment’ for their students while at the same time eliminating highly qualified individuals simply because they do not have a foreign passport.

Another paradox contributing toward the demise of our programme is the fact that the entire faculty were hired on a non-tenure track contract, which also meant that we had to be ‘managed’ by Korean faculty who are tenured or on a tenure-track from *other departments* within the institution. Unfortunately, the process of ‘managing’ entails power abuse and dehumanising – a natural phenomenon that occurs whenever human beings are placed in unequal power structures – also resulted in the refusal to allow the foreign faculty to ‘cross the border’ to ‘their side of the track.’ Furthermore, while we – the foreign faculty of the TESOL department – are
the ones designing the curriculum, teaching all of the courses and directly involved in nearly every aspect of running the department, are not allowed to take any ownership of our own programme.

Despite the paradox of the neoliberal project of the TESOL programme at my institution, I often forget the unfortunate circumstances that I am surrounded by when I am engaged in dialogue with my students. We spend hours planning future projects and discussing what we can do as a community – that is, until a new dean comes into power, which occurs every two years, and our plans are always denied and suppressed. The result is what we have now – the paradoxical, detrimental effects of the neoliberal project. While I may not be allowed to take ownership of our programme, what I do have is the freedom to teach my courses as I so desire, which might be the only ‘right’ that I may have as a full-time faculty member of our department. As such, the single most important task on my agenda – *while there is still time* – is to introduce critical perspectives.

In addition to the traditional components of a critical pedagogy such as the awareness of power structure in society, inclusion and acceptance of diversity, understanding the problematic effects of a ‘recalibration’ of teacher education which resulted in the ‘removal of subjects such as the sociology, philosophy and history of education from initial preparation courses’ (Gray, 2019, p. 70) and a ‘shift from the model of the teacher as reflective practitioner to one of the teacher as effective practitioner’ (Gray, 2019, p. 71) are important to me; furthermore, students like Ji Hye, who has begun to identify her future goals in a non-traditional way; that is, by *not* focusing on teaching English language skills, but by developing an interest in helping Korean students and parents to develop a different – a more meaningful – way of perceiving English language learning as a whole. Perhaps in another
ten years, if our programme continues to exist until then, students like Ji Hye will have moved on to researching, publishing, presenting, teaching, training and the perspectives of Korean students, parents, university presidents, tenured professors will begin to understand that the true essence of education does not lie in competition, ranking or university reputation.

When I am not distressed about the challenges of working under an authoritarian management structure, I find comfort in listening to stories from students like Ji Hye and the majority of the students to whom I have introduced critical pedagogy over the years; to my surprise, the response has always been positive and I find comfort in knowing that I am doing the best I can within the limited circumstances granted to me. At times, students are quite surprised that topics such as linguistic imperialism, NNSET identity, language and power are discussed in a TESOL course; however, to the best of my knowledge, I have never met a student who has felt uncomfortable or dissatisfied when I introduced critical perspectives in class and I am now realising that teaching critical pedagogy has been a liberating experience for me and my students, something that many critical pedagogues have witnessed in their own classrooms when alternative learning approaches such as participatory pedagogy were introduced in order to help learners to integrate into their communities (see Bryers, Winstanley & Cook, 2013).

Critical pedagogy has also not only become an important component in the TESOL courses that I have taught over the years, but articulating the perspectives and approaches of the concept in the classroom has helped me to come to terms with the personal challenges that I have been up against at my institution. Freire (1970) claimed, ‘It is only the oppressed who, by freeing themselves, can free their oppressors’ (p. 56). I believe the time
has now come for me to free myself by accepting the circumstances that surround me, which clearly seem to indicate that our department may not thrive and if the number of student enrolment continues to plummet, the university will no longer need us – the foreign faculty – and as they have clearly stated in the last contract that we signed, the university ‘reserves the right to deny a contract renewal in the event courses are unable to enrol enough students’. In other words, we may become redundant soon after serving the institution for nearly a decade; the hours spent on developing course materials, engaged in conversations with students outside the classroom, proof-reading and editing statements for students applying to graduate schools in English-speaking countries, providing pages and pages of written feedback among many others are all about to become ‘nullified’. I hear you, Mr. Steinbeck. I hear you.

The spring is beautiful in California. Valleys in which the fruit blossoms are fragrant and pink and white waters in a shallow sea. Then the first tendrils of the grapes, swelling from the old gnarled vines, cascade down to cover the trunks. The full green hills are round and soft as breasts. And on the level vegetable lands are the mile-long rows of pale green lettuce and the spindly little cauliflowers, the grey-green unearthly artichoke plants … Behind the fruitfulness are men of understanding and knowledge and skill, men who experiment with seed, endlessly developing the techniques for greater crops of plants whose roots will resist the million enemies of the earth: the molds, the insects, the blights. These men work carefully and endlessly to perfect the seed, the roots … Then the grapes – we can’t make good wine. People can’t buy good wine. Rip the grapes from the vines, good grapes, rotten grapes, wasp-stung grapes. Press stems, press dirt and rot.
But there’s mildew and formic acid in the vats. Add sulphur and tannic acid. The smell from the ferment is not the rich odor of wine, but the smell of decay and chemicals … There is a crime here that goes beyond denunciation. There is a sorrow here that weeping cannot symbolize. There is a failure here that topples all our success. The fertile earth, the straight tree rows, the sturdy trunks, and the ripe fruit. And children dying of pellagra must die because a profit cannot be taken from an orphanage. And coroners must fill in the certificates – died of malnutrition – because the food must rot, must be forced to rot. The people come with net to fish for potatoes in the river, and the guards hold them back; they come in rattling cars to get the dumped oranges, but the kerosene is sprayed. And they stand still and watch the potatoes float by, listen to the screaming pigs being killed in a ditch and covered with quicklime, watch the mountains of oranges slop down to a putrefying ooze; and in the eyes of the people there is a failure; and in the eyes of the hungry there is a growing wrath. In the souls of the people the grapes of wrath are filling and growing heavy, growing heavy for the vintage. (Steinbeck, 1939, pp. 363-365)
CHAPTER 8
CONCLUSION

8.0. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I conclude the thesis by addressing the research questions and the implications of the study. I begin by discussing researcher identity which – as I have discovered – may have been influenced by an aspect of writer identity – specifically, what Ivanic (1998) refers to as the autobiographical self, which may have been developed as a ‘coping strategy’ during my childhood and adolescence. Furthermore, I discuss the central theme of the thesis – the dialogic writing process and engagement with student narratives – which have provided numerous opportunities to draw upon past and present experiences as a language learner, language teacher and TESOL educator. Finally, I discuss implications for reconstructing TESOL education in Korea.

8.1. CONSTRUCTING RESEARCHER/PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY THROUGH THE ‘AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SELF’: A COPING STRATEGY

One of the most important discoveries made from this study addresses the very first research question: In what ways does an autoethnographic approach help the researcher to construct her professional identity as a researcher and teacher educator of TESOL? Confirming Richardson’s (1997) theory of writing as a method of inquiry, the first and foremost discovery that I have made lies within the powerful writing process itself; that is, the writing process in and of itself not only provided me with the primary source of ‘data’ but also led to a discursive process in which I began...
to draw upon the past which subsequently allowed me to make sense of my current identity as a researcher and teacher educator of TESOL. In other words, the writing process became a site of identity construction in which the autobiographical self (Ivanic, 1998) – an aspect of writer identity that I had begun to develop as an adolescent – began to surface at the start of the writing task. As mentioned earlier, autobiographical self is the ‘identity which people bring with them to any act of writing, shaped as it is by their prior social and discoursal history’ (Ivanic, 1998, p. 24); thus, the concept may be akin to Bourdieu’s (1977) theory of habitus in the sense that the autobiographical self is closely associated with the writer’s ‘sense of roots, of where they are coming from, and that this identity that they bring with them to writing is itself socially constructed and constantly changing as a consequence of their developing life-history’ (Ivanic, 1998, p. 24). Ivanic states that it may be difficult to explain the nature of a writer’s autobiographical self since it is a subconscious process; however, we might ask what aspects of our lives may have led to write in the way that we do and how this access to discourses and associated positionings may have been socially enabled or constrained.

Ivanic’s description of the autobiographical self has helped me to realise that the decision to adapt an autoethnographic approach to this thesis simply may not have been the result of several critical incidents during the course of my doctoral studies which subsequently led to exploring autoethnography; in addition to the critical incidents, it may have also been the ‘autobiographical self’ – an aspect of writer identity that had been developed by the habit of keeping a diary and releasing my emotions through writing, which was an important ‘coping strategy’ for me during my adolescence. What is even more surprising is that I am now realising that the process of integrating self-narratives in my doctoral research may have
also been a coping strategy as I found myself experiencing alienation and failure all over again – only this time, I was no longer an immigrant child in America but a marginalised researcher and teacher educator working outside the mainstream academic community in Korea. Ivanic (1998) states that ‘it is the self which produces a self-portrait rather than the self which is portrayed’ (p. 24; italics in the original). Thus, in response to the first research question, adapting an autoethnographic approach to this thesis has not only allowed me to construct my researcher and teacher educator identity throughout the writing process itself, but I may have been compelled to write from the first-person narrative as my ‘autobiographical-self’ had begun to surface when I set out to undertake what seemed to be the most challenging and significant writing task of my life at the time; in other words, seizing the opportunity to write from the first-person narrative and releasing the tremendous amount of pain and suffering that I had been experiencing at my workplace during the past ten years may have provided me with the ‘tool’ – a coping strategy – to survive in an oppressive environment in which I am often silenced and dehumanised.

8.2. HETEROGLOSSIA AS CARNIVAL: CELEBRATING THE FREEDOM TO SPEAK AND WRITE ON THE MARGINS

As mentioned above, one of the most important discoveries made from the process of writing this thesis was the actualisation of an aspect of writer identity – autobiographical self – which I had begun developing as an adolescent as a coping strategy; furthermore, the autobiographical self began to surface when I was faced with the task of writing ‘the doctoral thesis.’ Here it is important to note that this was not the case when I wrote my first doctoral thesis on the topic of L2 writing pedagogy. The overall process of writing the first doctoral thesis consisted of a ‘traditional’
qualitative research process in which I collected writing samples and analysed the drafts based on the research questions. As such, I was primarily focused on collecting the data and the process of analysing the data did not necessarily call for my own personal thoughts or drawing upon my past experiences. However, writing the present thesis was different. To begin with, I was finally exploring topics in identity and language teaching, which seemed to have a strong personal appeal to me from the very beginning and perhaps more importantly, I felt a sense of ‘liberation’ from the oppressive environment in which I had been working for nearly a decade.

One of the central themes in Bakhtin’s works is a message of liberation from oppression and social structure. Bakhtin integrates the notion of carnival by pointing to this very important message – ‘the seeming obliteration of the official, established social order, and all the forms of terror, reverence, piety, and etiquette connected to it’ (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 123). Lemsmire (1994) goes on to describe how the ‘second life of carnival, behaviour, gesture, and discourse are freed’ (p. 374):

Members of all social strata mix, joke and cavort in a mood of carefree abandon and ‘universal good humour’ … Young men and women, each dressed in the clothes of the opposite sex, interact in a scandalous and provocative manner. Mock officials parade through the crowd, accusing people of horrible crimes and threatening them with arrest and punishment, which only elicits howls of laughter from the populace. (Gardner, 1992, p. 144)
The notion of heteroglossia from Bakhtin’s carnival perspective reminds me of Joo Hyun’s story of her interactions with Paul, a Korean-Canadian friend who spoke fluent, native-like English and clearly displayed his ‘disapproval’ of Joo Hyun’s ‘nonnative-sounding’ English language skills – especially in public places like restaurants. However, Joo Hyun refused to be ‘positioned’ by Paul and ‘freed herself’ from his expectations by declaring the ‘legitimacy’ of her position – that of a ‘tourist’ in a foreign country, who is obviously expected to sound ‘different’ – which in and of itself is legitimate. From the moment she liberated herself, she went about the streets of Toronto, with her head up high, speaking loud and clear with confidence and carried on with the day-to-day language activities that a tourist is likely to do in a foreign country – ordering food in a restaurant, asking for directions, bargaining at an open market and so on.

Language represents social, cultural, educational, regional identities and oftentimes, the way one speaks – pronunciation, intonation, rate of speech, language variety, regional accent, and perhaps even non-verbal forms of communication – reflects a certain set of values, an ideology, a social group, a nationality, etc. (Wei, 2014). At times, certain linguistic features – particularly features considered to have less ‘legitimacy’ – create a power structure among interlocutors. According to Bourdieu (1992), language is symbolic power:

[It] is a term used to refer not so much to a specific type of power, but rather to an aspect of most forms of power as they are routinely deployed in social life. For in the routine flow of day-to-day life, power is seldom exercised as overt physical force: instead, it is transmuted into a symbolic form, and thereby endowed with a kind of legitimacy that it would not otherwise
have. Bourdieu expresses this point by saying that symbolic power is an ‘invisible’ power which is ‘misrecognised’ as such and thereby ‘recognised’ as legitimate’. (p. 23)

Joo Hyun’s English language skills – what may have been seen as a nonnative speaker ‘variety’ of English – represents Bakhtin’s notion of heteroglossia in the sense that it may at times deviate from native speaker variety, thus misrecognised as not having ‘legitimacy.’ Just as the participants in Bakhtin’s carnival march along the streets in a ‘mood of carefree abandon’ (Gardner, 1992, p. 144), Joo Hyun roamed the streets of Toronto – free and careless – by recognising the ‘legitimacy’ of her English.

Just like Joo Hyun, the notion of heteroglossia gives me the same kinds of ‘freedom’ that the participants in Bakhtin’s carnivals were described to have; however, this freedom is expressed through writing in the ‘first person narrative’ (Vankatesh, 2013) in this autoethnography – an unconventional approach, quite possibly an approach that might be scrutinised or frowned upon, especially from the predominantly conservative Korean research community, which seems to have a clear preference for structured, quantitative, cognitive-oriented studies. There is a just few, handful of researchers in Korea who may identify themselves as critical pedagogues or those whose primary areas of research may deal with identity issues or socio-political topics; to say the least, most Korean scholars who hold prominent positions at Korean universities typically research topics related to SLA, the four language skills, multimedia assisted language learning. An autoethnographer like myself, defying traditional research protocols and writing from the first-person perspective may never be embraced nor recognised as a ‘legitimate’ researcher or scholar. Nonetheless, the
numerous publications endorsing the legitimacy of an autoethnography gives me the freedom to explore this new approach – an approach that has given me the courage to probe the inner world of a child who fell in love with the fascinating sounds of English growing up in Korea during a time when English language education had yet to become the ‘national frenzy’ that it has become today. Having the opportunity to read my students’ narratives and engaging in dialogue with the stories that they tell by drawing upon my own experiences and juxtaposing my stories alongside theirs has allowed me to understand the essence of a ‘dialogue’ in Bakhtin’s world; that is, the paradoxical nature of a dialogue – simultaneity and difference – emerge time and time again throughout the interactions. Had I written up a doctoral thesis based on several research participants by analysing their narratives from my perspective – a process that does not seem to make as much sense any more – while at the same time suppressing my own thoughts and the inclination to draw upon my own stories and including them in between the participants’ narratives, I may never have understood why I was a failing student in secondary school nor would I have been able to come to terms with the oppressive, despairing situation that I have been placed in as a member of the non-tenure track faculty, a position without legitimacy.

Although I am working within a track that dehumanises and refuses to recognise the legitimacy of my efforts, it is here – on these pages – that I write, speak, rejoice, cry and laugh – as though I am prancing about in a carnival as onlookers shout and cheer from the margins, allowing me the freedom as well as the legitimacy to ‘do autoethnography’ – an alternative variety of social science writing in the name of heteroglossia, polyphony and dialogue.
8.3. THE RECIPROCAL EFFECTS OF DIALOGIC ENGAGEMENT: REFLEXIVITY

One of the main findings of this study is the powerful effects of dialogic engagement which addresses the second research question: *In what ways does a dialogic engagement with student narratives help the researcher to make new discoveries about herself and her students?* To begin with, I have found the dialogic engagement as a tangible approach to practicing reflexivity rather than reflective practices; in other words, as a teacher educator, I have always thought that reflective practices were ‘reserved’ for student teachers while the teacher educator’s role was to ‘check’ and ‘assess’ students’ reflective activities, which often turn out to be tasks or assignments that they are asked to complete for course requirements. However, the process of dialogic engagement has allowed me to take part in reflective practices by reflecting upon my own experiences and engaging in a dialogic writing process rather than simply focusing on the students’ reflective activities and going through the task of checking and or assessing the assignments; in so doing, reflective practices – typically aimed at the students for course fulfilment – transforms into *reflexivity* as I, the researcher/teacher-educator, am also actively engaged in the reflections as the students’ narratives and ‘small stories’ (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008), ‘trigger’ critical incidents, an epiphany or a sting of memory from the past or present, which often lead to new insights or discoveries about myself as well as that of my students.

From a Bakhtinian perspective, we might compare the above phenomena to the notion of intertextuality, although intertextuality is primarily concerned with the interaction of written texts rather than individuals engaged in dialogue.
Another example in which two individuals engaged in dialogue that subsequently leads to co-construction of meaning might be what SLA researchers refer to as input, interaction and negotiation of meaning (Long, 1981, 1983). The notion of input, interaction and negotiation of meaning has been widely explored within the field of SLA (e.g., Long, 1996; Pica, 1994; Swain, 2000). In SLA, negotiation of meaning is ‘the process by which two or more interlocutors identify and then attempt to resolve a communication breakdown’ (Ellis, 2008, p. 346). According to Long (1996), learners involved in meaning negotiations often benefit through the ‘interactions between speakers who make adjustments to their speech and use other techniques to repair a breakdown in communication’ (pp. 422-423).

Although ‘interaction’ from an SLA perspective typically refers to the types of verbal and nonverbal input as well as response to the input exchanged between two interlocutors engaged in a verbal dialogue, I have found the dialogic writing experience to be similar in the sense that the ‘input’ – student narratives – ‘triggered’ a response on my part which would often lead to an epiphany or a sting of memory, helping me to ‘negotiate for meaning’ in an attempt to make sense of my own identity as a former L2 learner of English and teacher educator of TESOL. In this sense, identity may be seen as an ‘interactional and discursive phenomenon [where] attention is turned to the work people do through talk and other modes of communication to display, claim, disavow, or make relevant in any way, their own or others’ membership of any social categories’ (Gray & Morton, 2018, p. 25; italics added). I agree with Gray and Morton’s emphasis on interaction and work as I now believe that I would not have been able to fully understand my professional identity nor that of my students had it not been for the arduous work invested in the dialogical engagement and writing process.

The process of reading, reflecting upon student narratives and being
stimulated, triggered, inspired to reflect, draw upon my own experiences as a language learner, language teacher and teacher educator has allowed me to do the things that people do in social interaction, as Gray and Morton (2018) mention above. Furthermore, just as two interlocutors engaged in a process of meaning negotiation through interaction often help one another to ‘notice’ aspects of their limited language abilities which often lead to self-repair and self-corrections throughout the dialogue – in other words, noticing the ‘gap’ between their current language skills and the ideal language form – engaging in dialogic writing has helped me to recognise or ‘notice’ aspects of my childhood identity as an ESL learner in America as well as the similarities and differences between ESL and EFL language learning experiences.

8.3.1. Language play and children’s L2 motivation: Simultaneity of ESL and EFL identity

As discussed above, the dialogic writing process often led to discovering aspects of myself as well as that of my students that may not have been possible without the dialogic engagement. Such insights also parallel with Bakhtin’s notion of simultaneity. The central message in Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism is the notion of simultaneity and the paradoxical nature of the self, which according to Bakhtin, can never be a self-sufficient construct. According to Bakhtin, ‘all meaning is relative in the sense that it comes about only as a result of the relation between two bodies occupying simultaneous but different space’ (Holquist, 1990, p. 19). Likewise, as I engaged in ‘dialogue’ with my students’ written narratives, the essence of dialogue from a Bakhtinian perspective began to emerge; that is, the ability to understand myself at a deeper level was supported by the stories that my students told which in turn triggered similar experiences that I have had in the past. As I
began to engage with my students’ narratives, I not only ‘saw myself’ in them by recognising many similarities – but the differences between our stories have helped me to develop a different perspective toward myself and the world around me – a new perspective that I may not have been able to develop without the dialogic engagement.

In many ways, such experiences resemble Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of the ZPD in which individuals are able to reach an optimal level with the guidance of another individual. Although Vygotsky’s ZPD model was originally intended to explain child-adult interaction (Vygotsky & Luria, 1994) or the interaction between a novice and expert, scaffolding and guided assistance (Wood et al., 1976), which Vygotsky claims may help individuals to reach a level that they are unable to obtain on their own, do not necessarily require explicit guidance or tutorials; rather, individuals may simply prompt one another or trigger the process of internalisation through dialogue and interaction, thus helping individuals to reach beyond their current level of understanding.

While an autoethnography may be seen as a monologue in the sense that there is no ‘authentic’ conversation or dialogue – such as a study containing conversation or discourse analysis – I have drawn upon the actual narratives written by my students, without having them edited in any way and have used them to engage in ongoing dialogue throughout the writing process; that is, there was an ongoing response to the student narratives on my part and as a TESOL educator, the insights and discoveries that I am able to find may subsequently influence how I teach and perceive myself in relation to my students, which may be seen as having reciprocal effects in the end.
Several accounts from the narratives have revealed the simultaneity of our childhood L2 learning experiences. For example, Jung Eun and I both engaged in pseudo-English conversations when we were children which may be common for children who encounter a foreign language at a young age; however, by comparing Jung Eun’s story with mine, I realise that we may have been constructing an ‘ideal L2 self’ (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009) which may have been influenced by our socio-cultural environments at the time. When Jung Eun’s father brought her a doll with blond hair and blue eyes from a business trip to England, she developed an interest in speaking English and began making up pseudo conversations with the doll, which she referred to as a ‘plaything.’ As for me, the moment my brother and I got on our flight to America, we automatically began conversing in ‘English’, which obviously was not real English, but made-up words that sounded like English – at least to us, anyway. Just as Jung Eun had ‘instinctively’ felt the need to speak ‘English’ when her father brought her a doll from England, my brother and I instinctively began communicating in ‘pseudo’ English conversations the minute we got on our flight to America.

Creating ‘make-believe’ worlds is natural for children, and such behaviour is very likely to ‘involve language, as children suggest to each other what form the imaginary world might take, negotiate who is to do what, and then speak to each other in character’ (Cook, 2000, p. 39). While Cook’s description of children involved in using language in imaginary worlds is something that happens frequently, he does not provide further descriptions to explain why children use ‘made-up’ languages to talk to themselves or to each other, despite having the ability to speak fluently in their L1, which was the case for Jung Eun and I. In this sense, Dörnyei’s (2005, 2009) explanation of L2 motivation and the ideal-self may be helpful because both Jung Eun and I were old enough to understand that English was not only a foreign language
that we could not speak at the time, but we both seemed to have understood that it was also a ‘desirable’ skill to acquire; at the same time, since Jung Eun and I were in two different language learning situations, our L2 motivations may have differed. That is, Jung Eun remained in Korea – an EFL setting – whereas I was on my way to America – an ESL setting – when we began engaging in make-believe conversations. While the blond haired and blue-eyed doll from England may have triggered an instinctive desire for Jung Eun to speak in ‘pseudo-English’ with her doll, the fact that it had come from England may have been the real reason for prompting Jung Eun to engage in make-believe English conversations with her doll (assuming she has owned other ‘foreign-looking dolls’ before). In fact, Jung Eun grew up in Korea during the early 1990s when the Korean Ministry of Education announced its plans to include an English listening comprehension component in the national college entrance examination in 1991 (Park, 2009), and later expanded by the Kim Young Sam Administration to embrace globalisation as a ‘shortcut [to] lead to building a first-class country in the 21st century’ (Kim, 2000, p. 1).

During the late 1980s and 1990s, Koreans began witnessing a marked increase of native English speakers teaching in private language hagwons, which has now become an essential component of English language education in Korea, as well as a ‘pre-requisite’ for middle-class Korean children before and during their primary schoolings; as a result, having grown up in a middle-class family herself, Jung Eun may have already been exposed to having English language lessons with native speakers – who may have resembled her doll from England by appearance – and by engaging in make-believe English conversations with the doll, she may have been expressing an ‘ideal L2 self’ as someone who can speak fluent English with foreigners.
As for me, the motivation to engage in ‘pseudo’ English conversations with my brother began the moment we got on our flight to America. We had known for months that we would be moving to America, but it was not until we stepped onto a real airplane for the very first time in our lives that we would truly need to speak in English upon our arrival in San Francisco. As far as I can remember, the only time I had seen a foreigner in Korea was when I was on a bus ride passing by the US embassy in Seoul. I remember very distinctively, sitting by the window and watching the scenery outside and as the bus passed by a large house behind a row of fences, I could see American children playing in the front yard. Aside from this experience, the only time that I had seen a foreigner in Korea was probably on AFKN (American Forces Korean Network), a television network established in 1957 which was initially aimed at serving the US military community in Korea; due to popular demand, however, AFKN was made available to the general Korean audience as many Koreans began watching popular American television programmes which were aired by having the actors’ voices replaced with Korean voices. Nonetheless, my brother and I may have instinctively felt the urgency to speak in English since we were no longer in Korea and the only way to do this was to make-up nonsense words that we believed to be English.

Comparing Jung Eun’s story with my story has helped me to see that Dörnyei’s theory of L2 motivation influences children as much as adults, and the relationship between identity and L2 motivation is just as important to children as it is to adults. Furthermore, it is interesting to see how Jung Eun’s L2 motivation and my L2 motivation were similar in that we both made up ‘pseudo’ English conversations to cope with our ‘desires’ to speak English fluently; interestingly, I remember vividly that I had experienced a sense of ‘urgency’ to begin speaking English the moment I stepped onto the airplane.
on our way to America. I had seen numerous episodes of American television programs in Korea and indeed, I had had dolls with blond hair and blue eyes, though they were not brought from England or America; however, my brother and I did not start engaging in pseudo-English conversations until we were physically detached from Korea and had begun our flight to America. In other words, even at such a young age, I may have instinctively begun to construct an ‘ideal L2 self’ when it became clear that we would no longer be living in a country in which the Korean language would be a necessity. Despite the two very different contexts, both Jung Eun and I – even as children – may have developed a strong desire for re-constructing our L2 identity as we envisaged an ‘ideal L2 self’ for ourselves.

8.3.2. Sting of memory: A Dialogic Effect

Another manifestation of the dialogic writing process is the occurrence of a ‘sting of memory’. One of the most common experiences that an autoethnographer may encounter during the writing process is what Denzin (2014) refers to as the sting of memory – a memory that begins with moments that define a crisis, a turning point in a person’s life, and which ‘locates the moment, the beginning. Once located this moment is dramatically described, fashioned into a text to be performed. This moment is then surrounded by those cultural representations and voices that define the experience in question. These representations are contested, challenged’ (p. 32). Hye Ri described a sting of memory from her childhood when she was reprimanded by her mother for not ‘performing’ as well as her classmates during an open house presentation. Unlike her classmates, she had trouble with the presentation and ended up standing in front of the audience, frozen and anxious, unable to say a single word. After the presentation, her mother immediately expressed her disappointment at Hye
Ri’s performance and she would spend the majority of her primary school years with very little confidence and interest in learning English; that is, until she began to develop a personal fascination with the American boy band, *The Backstreet Boys*, which motivated her to learn English in order to understand the English lyrics of their songs.

Reading Hye Ri’s narratives naturally led me to my own sting of memory from childhood – particularly the experience of struggling with the listening quizzes in Mr. Pearson’s fifth grade class, which may have been the very first memory of experiencing failure in school for me. As Denzin (2014) suggests, the sting of memory ‘locates the moment, the beginning.’ For Hye Ri, the moment of her open house presentation and her mother’s disappointment afterward was the beginning of the painful experiences that she continued to face with English language learning throughout much of her childhood. She began by explaining how her mother had been anxious about her English language learning when most of the other children in her neighbourhood had already begun attending a private English hagwon and as a result, her mother had explicitly told her that she, too, would have to begin learning English at a local hagwon; here, Hye Ri may have been implying that her mother was like the other Korean mothers who often compete against each other with their children’s academic achievements, and sadly, this lifelong competition for many Korean children begins very early on. Thus public humiliation was a traumatic experience for Hye Ri, and her mother’s reprimand caused her to avoid English from then on, until she developed a strong interest in learning English when she became fascinated with *The Backstreet Boys*; subsequently, Hye Ri’s L2 motivation would become so strong that she would develop a very high level of English language competency which subsequently led her to the TESOL field.

Both Gardner (1985) and Dörnyei (2005, 2009) agreed that integrative
motivation was much stronger than instrumental motivation – that is, when L2 learners develop a strong interest in the target culture, thus leading to a desire to integrate into the culture. However, Dörnyei (2009) was critical of Gardner’s socioeducational model of L2 motivation because ‘it is not quite clear what the target of the integration is’ (p. 23), and proposed that L2 motivation was linked to self-identity. Likewise, Hye Ri’s sting of memory, which was located at the beginning of her English language learning, seems to have had ‘lasting’ effects as she drew upon her childhood memory of the humiliating experience at her English hagwon and questioned whether she had made the right decision by changing her career. Here, Hye Ri’s concerns may demonstrate the powerful and lasting effects of a painful, sting of memory, which seemed to cause ongoing confusion about her teacher identity.

Hye Ri’s story resonated with my own story of experiencing pain and failure as a child when I continued to fail Mr. Pearson’s listening quizzes; however, given that I was in an ESL context, there are significant differences to consider. According to Brizic (2006), immigrant children develop a linguistic identity which refers to their relationships to all their languages – their parents’ languages as well as the language of instruction at school, and in this case, ‘linguistic identity should present itself as a flexible identity, neither adhering exclusively to the L2 nor rigidly rejecting the L1 in favour of the L2’ (p. 345). Furthermore, children’s linguistic ‘starting point’ in the country of immigration ‘comprises not only their linguistic identity but in fact all language-related conditions children encounter in their family from the very first day’ (p. 345; italics added). When my brother and I began engaging in pseudo-English conversations the moment we stepped onto our flight to America, I began constructing my new linguistic identity at this time and from what I recall, it was an exciting moment for us; however, it did not take long
to discover that the language spoken at home and the language spoken at school were not only different but that our L1 and our home culture appeared to be ‘deficient’ in many ways compared to the English language and the American culture and for some reason, it was something to feel ashamed about.

Badawia (2002) pointed out that educational success in the country of immigration is not necessarily the consequences of linguistic assimilation; in fact, a positive attitude towards the L2 and the L1 as well as towards the country of immigration and the country of origin often contribute toward educational success in the target community. I may have learned to speak English fairly easily in America, thus obtaining linguistic assimilation rather quickly; however, I now believe I did not have the opportunity to develop a positive linguistic identity as I began to develop a negative perspective towards my L1 and its culture in primary school which was later compensated at the local Korean church when I began to identify myself as a member of the Korean community and kept myself ‘sheltered’ within local the Korean Christian community. I now realise I could have developed a much healthier linguistic and cultural identity if I had learned to appreciate and accept both languages – English and Korean – as well as both cultures, without having to choose one over the other, or without feeling ashamed of my L1 and the Korean culture.

Hye Ri’s context, however, was obviously very different since she was in Korea during the late 1980s. Hye Ri was a child of a middle class Korean family growing up in the late 1980s – an era in which the Korean economy had been heavily influenced by the former president Park Jung Hee (Park,
whose primary goal was to terminate poverty in South Korea and to transition into a developed country by promoting the aggressive campaign, ‘Let’s become prosperous’, which continued until his assassination in 1979, the consequence of his ‘self-designated tenure’ as the South Korean president. Nonetheless, despite the military regime which would continue under two more presidents for another decade after Park’s assassination, the Korean people’s determination to ‘become prosperous’ had already been ignited under the Park administration and the dawning of the ‘English fever’ era had begun to emerge in the early 1990s (Porter, & Gallagher, 2015).

While Hye Ri was experiencing the ‘ups and downs’ of English learning in Korea during a dynamic era in which the entire country was beginning to recognise the importance of English, I was attending school in a predominantly white neighbourhood in Northern California during the late 1970s – an era when most American school teachers had not been professionally trained to teach ESL learners nor had been equipped with ESL programmes for immigrant children. As a result, my language learning context was completely opposite from that of Hye Ri in that opportunities to learn English as a ‘second language’ were virtually non-existent as I was simply ‘thrown into’ the mainstream classroom and expected to survive on my own, which I managed to do by not asking questions and deceiving myself – as well as my parents and teachers – into believing that I had acquired full mastery of the English language since I had learned to speak English quite fluently; and unlike Hye Ri, whose parents and teachers were ‘overly’ concerned with her English language learning, no one seemed to

---

30 Park Jung Hee was the father of Park Geun Hye, who became the first female president in South Korea; unfortunately, she was impeached from office in 2017 (as described earlier) and is currently serving a prison sentence.
care and no one seemed to notice that I was failing in school. I was an immigrant child in America and my parents were working 6-7 days a week and by the time I was in high school, I was also working at my parents’ grocery store on the weekends and school work seemed to be less important at the time. Despite the fact that my parents had earned college degrees in Korea, they did not have the English language skills nor the time to help me to develop my English literacy skills at home and contrary to the popular belief that all Asian parents want their children to succeed in school, my parents seemed to believe that it was more important to maintain our ‘middle-class’ status in America by owning a single-family home in a predominantly white neighbourhood and in order to do so, they had to focus on working as much as possible and rarely bothered to check how we were doing in school. As a result, it was very easy for me to remain silent about my failing grades in school and finding comfort and belongingness at the local Korean church, where I spent the vast majority of my time.

Comparing Hye Ri’s sting of memory and mine, I realise how important it is to distinguish – and to contextualise ESL and EFL pedagogy, especially by considering the cultural and socio-political conditions of the learning environment and developing a context-specific curriculum and teaching materials appropriate for the target learners. Furthermore, TESOL programmes for both learning contexts should each develop a context-specific approach and a separate curriculum serving the specific needs of those training to teach in their respective contexts.

8.3.3. Critical incidents and the notion of ‘chronotope’

Bakhtin’s notion of the chronotope – time and space – is akin to critical
incidents (Farrell, 2007; Thiel, 1999) in the sense that when a critical moment occurs, we are suddenly reminded of a past incident which suddenly begins to make sense or fills a gap in which a lack of understanding may have existed. According to Bakhtin, time and space are cognitive phenomena; that is, time and space are the 'arena in which all perception unfolds' (Holquist, 1990, p. 22). To put it differently, chronotope is a 'way not to take leave of reality; it is precisely the opposite, a concept for engaging reality' (Clark & Holquist, 1984, p. 278). When a moment of critical incident occurs, it is occurring in the 'present'; however, we are not only taken back to a past incident – though we remain in the present – but the past incident is suddenly beginning to take new shape, thus becoming a new form of 'reality' through time and space.

Bakhtin argues that 'our particular totally integrated sense of space and time shapes our sense of reality. We are constantly engaged in the activity of re-presenting the signals we get from our exterior environment, shaping those signals into a pattern by means of particular chronotopes' (Clark & Holquist, 1984, p. 279; italics in the original). Bakhtin (1981) also makes reference to classical forms of autobiography and biography and claims that they were not considered to be literary works in the traditional sense and instead were 'kept aloof from the concrete social and political act of noisily making themselves public' (p. 131). At the same time, Bakhtin (1981) points out that the key to understanding the notion of chronotope – particularly in the autobiographical genre – lies in the 'real-life chronotope [which] is constituted by the public square (the agora) ... [where] in ancient times the autobiographical and biographical self-consciousness of an individual and his life was first laid bare and shaped in the public square' (p. 131). In this sense, the above interpretation of the notion of chronotope plays an important role in the process of autobiographical writings as a writer who is drawing upon her past is 'publicly' articulating a moment in which she is
Jiyeon’s narratives also reveal a moment in which a critical incident occurred when she began teaching ESL students in a teaching certification programme at a Canadian university. When Jiyeon emigrated to Canada as an adolescent, she was faced with the challenges of learning English during a difficult period in her life and referred to her experiences as ‘torture’; furthermore, when she enrolled in a teaching certification programme in art education, she was faced with even more challenges as the majority of her classmates – despite their multicultural backgrounds – had either been born in Canada or had emigrated at a very young age. As a result, most of her classmates were placed at an advantage as fluent speakers of English; however, when she began working with other ESL students – not as a peer but as a teacher – she experienced a critical incident moment when she realised that her ‘multicompetence’ (Cook, 1991) and an ability to understand and empathise with her students as someone who had experienced similar challenges was an advantage rather than a limitation (Pavlenko, 2003).

For both Ji Yeon and I, critical incidents – the process of experiencing Bakhtin’s notion of the ‘chronotope’ – have played an important role in helping us to understand ourselves from a new perspective – an enlightened perspective and one that may not have been possible without the occurrence of the critical incidents. In this sense, Bakhtin’s notion of the chronotope plays an important role in understanding the simultaneity of critical incidents in that we experience a moment of ‘enlightenment’, a moment of ‘self-actualisation’ which occurs as the past and present intersect and interact with one another.
8.4. IMPLICATIONS FOR RECONSTRUCTING TESOL IN KOREA: CO-CONSTRUCTING KNOWLEDGE BASED ON THE ‘FREIREIAN MODEL’

The third research question is a reflection of the dialogic writing process that took place from the perspective of a TESOL educator: *What implications can be drawn for reconstructing TESOL in Korea in light of past and current socio-political conditions?* Although this thesis stems from Bakhtin’s notion of dialogue, it goes without saying that one of the most powerful pedagogical implications demonstrates the importance of teacher-student dialogue and Freire’s (1970) firm belief in interaction in which ‘knowledge is not a piece of data, something immobilized, concluded, finished, something to be transferred by one who acquired it to one who still does not possess it’ (p. 41). Freire (1970) claims, ‘I cannot think authentically unless others think. I cannot think for others, or without others … knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry [people] pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other’ (p. 58). In this sense, engaging in dialogue throughout the process of writing this thesis has naturally helped me to internalise Freire’s suggestion that true dialogue emerges from the dialogic engagement of teacher-student interaction, resulting in the intersubjective synthesis of new knowledge; thus Freire’s ‘problem-posing’ model of education relies on a ‘transformed and transformational, respectful relationship between teacher and student’ (Bartlett, 2005, p. 347) and through ‘dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with student-teachers … the teacher is no longer merely the one who teaches, but one who is taught in dialogue with the students, who in their turn while being taught also teach’ (Freire, 1970, p. 53).
Although the effects of the dialogic engagement with student narratives were discussed earlier, the final implication now seeks to articulate how the negotiated, co-constructed, synthesised ‘knowledge’ that have emerged from the dialogic engagement may be operationalised for redesigning the TESOL curriculum in the neoliberal context of the South Korean ELT field.

8.4.1. Implications for reconstructing TESOL education in Korea: Calling millennials to challenge neoliberalism

Decades have passed since English language education has become a necessity as well as a ‘commodity’ (e.g., Block, Gray & Holborow, 2012; Chowdhury & Phan, 2014; Gray, O'Regan & Wallace, 20018; Park & Wee, 2012), an obsession as well as a national frenzy in South Korea. According to Crookes (2017), English language education in Korea has not changed very much in the past thirty years as he laments that there is a strong ‘English Divide’ – separating those who are able to afford private English language education which paves the way for upward mobility and those who cannot, unable to progress in society. Nonetheless, as mentioned earlier, the younger generation of Korean parents have experienced – and suffered – through the ‘English frenzy’ era during the 1980s and ‘90s when private English language education began to burgeon during the Park Jung Hee Administration’s ‘Let’s become prosperous’ campaign and Kim Young Sam’s fervent call for globalisation in the 1990s, leading to a strong reinforcement of globalisation and the importance of English language education under the Kim Dae Jung Administration from 1998 to 2003. As a result, young Korean parents nowadays have not only lived through the most intense English language education era in Korean history but they have begun to experience the negative side effects of neoliberalism on English language education, which they do not wish to pass onto their own children.
TESOL students like Eun Jin and Hye Ri are products of the English frenzy era. They were born in the early 1980s, making them the oldest group among the millennial generation, and they have spent their childhood and adolescence during the ‘80s and early ‘90s, a period in which English language education in Korea began to witness a rapid consumption of the private education sector. What is interesting, however, is that they are able to reflect upon two very different types of English language learning experiences from their childhood. On the one hand, they are able to recall fond memories of learning English naturally by playing, singing, reading picture books, watching Disney animations – in other words, simply having ‘fun’; on the other hand, they have also experienced a demotivating process in English language learning when English was no longer enjoyable but suddenly became a school subject upon entering secondary school. At the same time, having spent the vast majority of their childhood and adolescence ‘learning’ English one way or another, they also have the ability to teach English to their own children by reading with them and teaching them simple phrases and vocabulary.

As I reflect upon my students’ narratives, I also realise that my own English language experiences – though very different in that the language learning contexts were ESL and EFL settings – were, in some ways, similar to that of Eun Jin and Jung Eun because we all started out with a ‘fascination’ with English and engaged in a variety of ‘language play’. Unfortunately, the ‘fun’ that we were having with English did not last long as we somehow how got lost – albeit for different reasons and in a different way. Whereas ka hyu’s motivation and interest began to deteriorate as English suddenly turned into a school subject and a test-focused ‘task’ in secondary school, a lack of connection between the literacy practices at my American school and the non-existence of home literacy practices, as well as the vast differences of
cultural practices at my home had turned me into an awkward child who never felt quite comfortable in the classroom. Interacting with student narratives alongside my own, I have begun to ask, ‘How can we, as a TESOL community, as our stories interact and intersect, suggest what English language might look like in the post-neoliberalism (if at all possible) era?’

In some ways, South Korea has indeed become prosperous and the ‘desire’ to become a part of the global community has also been fulfilled; at the same time, English language education in Korea – the test-driven classroom environment in mainstream education and the absolute dependency on private language education has not changed over the years. However, the Korean society has changed in some ways; the millions of ‘Jung Euns’ and ‘Hye Ris’ out there in Korea – now in their mid to late thirties – know one thing, that the enormous amount of money and time vested into English language education during the course of their childhood and adolescence have not paid off as the nation has become what the younger generation have begun to refer to as ‘Hell Joseon’ in the past few decades.

Considering the above challenges, the Korean English education market faces an interesting paradox and what is even more interesting is that the effects of extreme neoliberalism, which have become a natural fabric in the lives of the Korean people over the years, may now witness its greatest opponent – the ‘Jung Eun and Hye Ri generation’ – products of neoliberalism; they are educated, having spent the majority of their childhood and adolescence ‘studying’ and struggling with English through private language education only to find themselves as having been betrayed by neoliberalism itself as paths and doors to financial security through stable jobs with pension and competitive pay and opportunities to advance based on achievement – have become scarce.
Thus, as young mothers faced with the task of providing English language education for their own children – they may have the courage to denounce private language education – the epitome of neoliberalism – and opt for more meaningful, wholesome, natural approaches to English language learning which promote home literacy practices rather than relying on private language education; that is, if an effective, convincing programme is made available – specifically, a programme that offers tangible guidelines and tips on engaging in day-to-day activities such as reading picture books, watching animations and doing role play, singing, dancing along, drawing, cooking, playing games and simply turning English language learning into ‘language play’ at home. Jung Eun and Hye Ri’s experiences alongside my own may shed some implications on this part by creating a meaningful English language programme for parents and their children. A literacy programme for Korean children – particularly a programme that encourages parent-child home literacy practices – may be a small beginning of a daunting, yet, an exciting journey toward addressing the challenges of the ‘English Divide’, which is described as being ‘insidious, cancer eating away at the heart of Korean democracy and social development’ (Crookes, 2017, p. 5). Crookes goes on to urge Korean English teachers and teacher educators to be reminded of critical pedagogy, which in fact is an indigenous practice that a group of Korean scholars referred to as Silhak – a Confucian based group of social critics during the 1930s who argued that critical perspectives were necessary for social development; thus critical pedagogy is not a choice but a moral obligation and the ‘role of the intellectual’ (Crookes, 2017).

As a TESOL educator in Korea, I have come to realise that creating a programme to address the harmful effects of neoliberalism is an important component of the TESOL curriculum, and the reflexive process of engaging in dialogue with my students’ narratives has helped me to recognise the
‘simultaneity’ as well as the ‘differences’ of our experiences. Prior to conducting an in-depth study of the TESOL field in Korea and exploring my own experiences as a TESOL educator, my understanding of the field was simply limited to the basics of L2 theory and pedagogy and had never imagined the significant impact of the neoliberal scheme behind the programme. Having spent nearly a decade as a TESOL educator, I am now able to grasp the ‘two-faces’ of TESOL, as Gray (2016) suggests:

TESOL can thus be seen as Janus-faced. On the one hand, it is a field of enquiry within an increasingly interdisciplinary applied linguistics where language is construed in ways which are also congruent with understandings in English studies. On the other hand, it is a multimillion pound industry which markets a model of English in which many ways could be said to mislead students about the nature of English and the nature of language using. While a degree of tidying up and simplification is pedagogically necessary at lower levels, materials produced by the TESOL industry for more advanced students show few signs of serious engagement with research in the field or the way in which English exists in the world. The English on offer is also one which is unabashedly celebratory of the values of contemporary consumerism and neoliberal individualism. (p. 96)

Understanding the impact of neoliberalism on the TESOL field may not affect my career significantly; however, having been informed and made aware of the detrimental effects of a market-driven curriculum and programme, I am now able to ‘recognise’ its underlying effects, developing an awareness of the importance of working toward redesigning the curriculum through collaborated effort. According to Hall (2002), an
approach to redesigning a curriculum focuses on reconceptualising classrooms as communities of learners in which ‘teaching and learning are considered to be inseparable parts of a socially situated, collaborative and mutually beneficial process in which learners, through their participation in their classroom activities, assume new understandings, take on new skills, and ultimately develop new sociocultural identities’ (p. 99). In other words, it would be necessary for TESOL educators to create and redesign the TESOL curriculum in order to help students to develop an awareness of the side effects of neoliberalism and the ELT field in Korea and discuss how TESOL professionals might address such sociopolitical issues at hand. In so doing, integrating critical perspectives and approaches such as participatory pedagogy and the problem-posing approach that promote ‘learners’ experiences, and in particular, the problems or complex concerns of challenges they face in their communities outside the classroom as its curricular focus’ may be helpful (Hall, 2002, p. 121).

8.4.2. Implications for reconstructing TESOL education in Korea: Seeking a balance between structure and agency

When I first arrived at the IOE in 2010 to begin my doctoral studies, I had a plan; my plan was to explore NNSET identity and I was in the perfect position to address this topic since I would be working with Korean students enrolled in an MA TESOL programme upon returning to Korea the following year. I had spent the past year catching up with the existing large body of NNSET literature and had already become fairly familiar with the major issues and studies on the subject; but as fate would have it, I would come across a new topic – the notion of reflexivity from an autoethnographic perspective31 – which would not only spark my interest but would become

31 When I first began exploring the notion of reflexivity, I was mostly focused on understanding the
the primary focus of my research which subsequently led to the decision to change from an interview-based study of Korean TESOL students to a first-person narrative based study – an autoethnography.

The more I interacted with TESOL students, the more I began to realise that linguistic limitations and challenges that they faced as NNSETs were not as important as the day-to-day, ‘How shall I live?’ issues; that is, understanding the interdependency of structure and agency became an important topic to address. In other words, Johnston’s (1997) call to address the instability of the TESOL field – as opposed to a seemingly more stable mainstream teaching field – seemed to be the core issue at hand. Johnston pointed out that the TESOL field lacks an institutionalised career structure, thus permeable in nature. In other words, unlike the mainstream teaching field in which individuals receive a teaching license at the end of their studies which then leads to classroom teaching in the public school system, TESOL students must design and seek their own career paths by learning to adapt ‘eclectic’ approaches in the post-method era (Kumaravadelivelu, 2001, 2003). Reflecting upon Ka Hyun and Yujin’s narratives, I realise that as a member of the non-tenure track faculty, I am also struggling with such day-to-day, ‘How shall I live?’ questions within an unstable, permeable profession neatly packaged as the ‘foreign language professors’ career’ in Korea – and wonder whether it would be possible for ‘the blind to lead the blind’. Both Ka Hyun and Yujin faced day-to-day struggles with numerous obstacles and barriers as NNSETs; whereas Ka Hyun desperately worked to compete against her colleagues at her hagwon in order to maintain her

concept from Giddens’s (1991) theory of structure and agency; however, this focus shifted to an understanding of reflexivity as an approach to qualitative research – that is, as an autoethnographer who is engaged in the process of writing from the first-person narrative in an attempt to explore issues in structure and agency. Thus, I might conclude that I have operationalised the concept of reflexivity in order to negotiate my professional identity.
job, Yujin found herself having to take private 1:1 English speaking lessons with a native speaker in order to improve her spoken English skills, which seemed to be significantly lower than that of her classmates in the TESOL programme, who have had the privilege of studying abroad in English-speaking countries for an extended period of time, a privilege that Yujin did not have.

In many ways, I could identify with the desperation that Ka Hyun and Yujin may have felt. Each year, I am required to undergo faculty evaluation during which I must submit evidence of research activity, which is transferred to a ‘point system.’ Despite the fact that the points that I accumulate from research will not provide opportunities for a promotion nor a salary increase, my contract still states that I must accumulate ‘100 points’ per year, which is equivalent to publishing a minimum of one research paper – individually – on a nationally recognised, peer-reviewed academic journal. Just like Ka Hyun and Yujin, we are straddling, desperately trying to keep our heads above water, with no hope for advancement or recognition of our efforts. In other words, we are all struggling to find a balance between ‘structure and agency’ as we attempt to exercise reflexivity.

Most teacher education programmes integrate reflective practices (Schön, 1992) as an important approach to helping student teachers to engage in various types of introspective activities such as conducting observations and responding with reflecting writing, completing self-evaluation reports after practice teaching sessions, watching video recordings of their own teaching sessions and identifying areas in need of improvement, etc. Richards and Lockhart (1996) offer an enthusiastic approval of reflective activities in L2 teacher education by stating that these ‘experiences can find ways to capture the thoughts of and reactions to these events themselves and teachers can develop strategies for intervention or change’ (p. 6). In
short, reflective practices provide opportunities for student teachers to engage in self-assessment and in theory, this is an ideal approach to teacher training in the sense that teachers need to negotiate with their complex identities (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Tsui, 2007; Varghese et al., 2005).

Without a doubt, reflective activities are an important component to teacher education programmes; however, researchers have begun to recognise that these activities are often controlled and institutionalised in higher and professional education (Boud & Walker, 1998) and more importantly, they have begun to question whether reflection really explains how individuals learn professionally (Erlandson, 2005; Newman, 1999; Procee, 2006). In other words, student teachers often seem to go through the motion of completing reflective assignments just for the sake of fulfilling the course requirements. Likewise, most teacher educators simply may not have the time to respond to each student’s reflective assignments carefully and as a result, the reflective assignments are often completed hastily and mechanically by the students; furthermore, both students and instructors rarely have an opportunity to internalise what was supposed to have been internalised through the reflections, which in turn defeats the entire purpose of the assignment. Recognising this problem, Johnson (2009) implies that there is a strong need for examining the dialogic process of student teachers and teacher educators:

L2 teacher education programs no longer view L2 teaching as a matter of simply translating theories of second language acquisition (SLA) into effective instructional practices, but as a dialogic process of co-constructing knowledge that is situated in and emerges out of participation in particular sociocultural practices and contexts. (p. 21)
When reflective practices are conducted solely by the student teachers, TESOL programmes may also face the danger of becoming mechanical, uni-directional and non-reflexive thus lacking the ability to examine the potentially circular, mutual influences that the participants may have upon one another. Block, Gray and Holborow (2012) refer to this phenomenon as the ‘MacDonaldisation of language teacher education’ (p. 12). The fast-growing industry of language teacher training programmes has become similar to that of the fast-food industry in that there seems to be a stronger emphasis placed on drawing more consumers and widening the programme rather than taking a sincere interest in the quality of the overall product.

In many ways, the TESOL field in Korea undoubtedly reflects the ‘MacDonaldisation’ of the English language teaching industry as they are heavily influenced by government initiatives imposing universities to hire native speaker faculty to provide English mediated courses. Giroux (2003) describes the effects of neoliberalism on education in general as follows:

> What is good for Disney and Microsoft is now the protocol for how global capitalism defines schooling, learning, and the goals of education, especially as it is imposed through the dictates of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank abroad, and corporate power at home. Schools are no longer considered a public good but a private good and the only form of citizenship increasingly being offered to young people is consumerism. (p. 7)

In regard to the language teaching field, Block and Gray (2016) point out that ‘minimally trained teachers are precisely what the commercial sector
wants and values’ (p. 19) and much of the English language teaching programmes throughout the world are staffed by young migrant workers with minimal qualifications and are oftentimes poorly paid, not unionised and working on short-term contracts. According to Braverman (1976), ‘such processes serve to strip the workers of craft knowledge and autonomous control and confront them with a fully thought-out labor process in which they function as cogs and levers’ (cited in Block & Gray, 2016, p. 19), and something very similar to what Block and Gray (2016) suggest as ‘mutatis mutandis – [which] is what is happening here’ (p. 19; italics in the original).

In other words, what we see here is the paradoxical nature of neoliberalism in the TESOL field in the sense that on the one hand, institutions are keen on hiring ‘minimally qualified’ TESOL instructors and offering minimal compensation but on the other, TESOL programmes need competent and experienced individuals capable of doing more than following a teacher’s manual and simply ‘jumping through hoops and ticking boxes’ (Block & Gray, 2016, p. 19). In this sense, the TESOL programme in general is in dire need of teacher educators willing to engage in reflexivity in which they are also engaged in reflective practices alongside their student teachers.

While reflective practices have concrete functions and activities for individuals to carry out, the notion of reflexivity emphasises the mutually shaping effects (Giddens, 1991) among individuals. If reflexivity can be operationalised with specific tasks similar to that of reflective practices, then reflexivity seems to be a much more desirable approach to addressing teacher education programmes. Specifically, in order to shift from reflective practices to reflexive practices, reflective activities should become dialectical by allowing each member of the teacher education context (i.e., researchers, teacher educators, student teachers, etc.) to engage in reflective practices.
Although reflexivity has been described in many different ways by various scholars (Archer, 2003, 2007; Beck, 1992; Bourdieu, 2004), Giddens’s (1991) reference to the duality of structure, a concept that emphasises the mutuality of individuals and society in recognising that individuals are not only affected by society but that they are able to affect society in return seems to resonate with the autoethnographic approach of my thesis. In other words, as I engaged with my students’ narratives and find that we are all faced with various social barriers despite our desperate attempts to do our best, probing the notion of reflexivity – as opposed to engaging in reflective practices – seems to provide a much more fluid, dialogical approach to understanding the numerous challenges at hand.

As I engage with Ka Hyun and Yujin’s stories, I am also inspired and challenged by their resilience and the ‘human will to survive.’ On more than one occasion, there have been moments when I would go to bed at night, determined to quit my job and seek a more ‘peaceful’ life. The ongoing pressure and the dehumanising treatment that I was receiving from my institution seemed to be less important than my sanity and happiness; however, the moment I walk into a classroom full of students, eager to learn and more importantly, determined to ‘survive’, I am able to forget my woes – at least for the time being – and walk out of the classroom re-energised and determined to find a way to transcend the obstacles by seeking to exercise the ‘agency’ that we have over structure.

8.4.3. Implications for reconstructing TESOL education in Korea: Problematising Freire’s ‘Pedagogy of Hope’

Whereas Paolo Freire’s ‘Pedagogy of the Oppressed’ has now become a household name among critical pedagogues, Freire’s sequel, ‘Pedagogy of Hope,’ has not received as much attention as its predecessor. At the same
time, enacting a pedagogy of hope seems to be the natural step to take upon internalising the main concepts presented in the ‘Pedagogy of the Oppressed’. Freire’s (1970) critique of the banking concept and the need to engage in dialogue with students by helping them to develop what he refers to as ‘conscientizacao’ – the ability to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take actions against the oppressive elements of reality’ (p. 35; italics in the original) – needs to be addressed more specifically. Indeed, if dialogue does not lead to ‘hope,’ then the purpose of a dialogue may be questionable:

Without a minimum of hope, we cannot so much as start the struggle. But without the struggle, hope, as an ontological need, dissipates, loses its bearings, and turns into hopelessness. And hopelessness can become tragic despair. Hence the need for a kind of education in hope. Hope, as it happens, is so important for our existence, individual and social, that we must take every care not to experience it in a mistaken form, and thereby allow it to slip toward hopelessness and despair. Hopelessness and despair are both the consequence and the cause of inaction or immobilism. (Freire, 1992, p. 3)

It is 8:52 p.m. on a Tuesday night and like most evenings when I do not have a class to teach, I am sitting in front of my computer – not necessarily being as productive as I should be, but indeed, sitting in front of the computer each night has been a daily part of my life for a while now. Indeed, the words, ‘hopelessness and despair,’ have become all too familiar vocabulary in my repertoire and especially during the past several years in which I have been witnessing – helplessly – a drastic fall in the number of enrolling students in our TESOL programme and the frequent ‘hinting’ at the possibility of
becoming redundant if students stop enrolling all together. Nearly a decade has passed since I have begun my doctoral studies and I have not been able to complete my thesis yet, nor has there been a significant change in my career despite having accumulated nearly sixteen years of teaching experience.

Nearly each moment of the past decade has seen hopelessness and despair; that is, except for the moments of dialogues that I have shared with my students – dialogues during classroom lectures, brief conversations in hallways, a sharing of tea or a meal, a pre-arranged conference and the dialogues that I am currently engaged in at the moment. At the end of these dialogues, despair and hopelessness do indeed ‘dissipate’ and I would often come away with ‘hope’ – hope for designing a programme which would allow TESOL students to not only develop the knowledge and skills that they would need in order to become the competent English language teachers that they had set out to be, but also a programme that would become a community of practice in which the participants would engage in dialogue with one another and develop a conscientizacao for questioning the English Divide in Korean ELT, problematising issues in native speakerism and the detrimental effects of neoliberalism in Korean education by imagining a community of TESOL professionals who envision a better world; and in so doing, creating a world in which English language learning does not have to be driven by the market and a world in which English language learning is embedded in the day-to-day activities of home and school lives through meaningful activities such as language play and extensive reading situated within a positive sociocultural environment.

The idea of transferring hopelessness into hope is, without a doubt, a desirable goal; at the same time, it is necessary to ‘problematise’ the notion of hope first. Le Grange (2011) calls for a need to develop a ‘critical’
perspective toward a ‘pedagogy of hope that moves beyond Freire’ (p. 186). In a review of articles published devoted to discussing Freire’s ‘Pedagogy of Hope,’ Le Grange claims that most of the articles published in the special edition seemed to be ‘regarded as contributions ‘in imitation’ of or ‘in pursuit of Freire’ ‘(p. 186); in other words, there seemed to be a lack of ‘critical engagement’ with Freire’s thoughts on his notion of a pedagogy of hope by recognising that Freire’s work does not take into account that there are multiple systems of oppression. Le Grange explains that ‘oppression and domination do not work in simple ways and that the nexus of race, class, gender, and location needs to be understood to appreciate the multiple and complex nature of these constructs’ (p. 186). For example, an uneducated black woman may be subjected to multiple forms of oppression that an educated black woman holding an executive position in a company may not have experienced; furthermore, the same woman would also not experience the oppression suffered by an unemployed white male living in poverty. Le Grange continues by pointing out that individuals who hold a privileged class position might also be oppressed in certain ways. One of the easiest ways of understanding this might be to see how academics, who hold privileged class positions, are often scrutinised by having their academic freedom taken away by the ‘requirements and performativity and quality assurance regimes associated with the rise of neoliberal politics and economics’ (p. 187).

Le Grange (2011) laments, ‘If hope is an ontological need (as Freire suggests), then in a globally interconnected world … we need to continuously ask the question: hope for whom?’ Moreover, and to reiterate, hope is inextricably bound up in our interactions with the range of communities with who we engage’ (p. 187). Thus, in order to move beyond a pedagogy of hope, Le Grange suggests that it needs to be ‘grounded in the lived experiences and interactions of people on the ground and not
remain ensconced in policies or academe, not form part of a corporate agenda’ (p. 188). Up to this point, I may have been drowning myself in a sea of despair and hopelessness because I had been ‘ensconced in policies and corporate agenda’; that is, I may not have been able to internalise nor enact upon the ‘hope’ that I often walk away with after dialoguing with my students because each time I had felt uplifted or motivated from a meaningful interaction with my students, I would quickly fall back on the reality of my misfortunes and find myself intertwined within a messy, political scheme; and each time I sensed a glimmer of (false) hope that might be instrumental in pulling me out of this mire and magically take me to the ‘other side of the (tenure) track – the privileged class, I would find myself desperately trying to please my superiors and wasting the precious time that could have been spent on more important things – such as writing my thesis. However, such (false) hope would always end up in despair and hopelessness and another year would pass by before I am suddenly made aware of the fact that an entire decade has passed.

How, then, do I develop a (real, not false) hope of pedagogy? I believe I have known the answer for a very long time – and as Le Grange (2011) has gracefully articulates:

Hope does not lie in what we can give or do for the poor, rural communities and the young, but in what we can learn from them and the opportunities we help make available for them to become present in an unjust world … Performing work after Freire (in imitation of) can’t mean offering hope to communities (in all scalar contexts), as if it is something that we possess and that we can give/offer. Rather hope is what emerges through serious and critical engagement in authentic partnership with
real-life challenges faced by contemporary society at local, regional and global scales. (p. 184)

When I first set out to conduct a study on NNSET identity, I believed my work would empower Korean TESOL students and that I could potentially make a contribution to the NNSET research. Even after changing my topic to autoethnography, I continued to believe that I could ’give’ my students ‘hope’ if I could just have the opportunity to change my non-tenure track position to a tenure-track position. The justification was that I had ‘no power’ under my current status and therefore I would not able to create more opportunities for my students which may have helped them to advance in their careers; furthermore, the logic was that if I, myself, was in despair and hopelessness, then how could I help my students to seek hope? I now believe I had been using these excuses by allowing myself to drown in self-pity during the past ten years – each year, falsely and foolishly hoping and believing I might be able to move to ‘the other side of the track’.

I have now decided to stop ’seeking false hope’ and start engaging in ’critical partnerships’ with my students, their students, the local community, the ‘Jung Euns’ and ‘Hye Ris’ – the millennial generation of Korean mothers – and work toward addressing the hopelessness that extreme neoliberalism has brought to the Korean society. To begin with, a group of students have been inspired to start a book club after taking my Teaching EFL with Literature course; furthermore, I have been exchanging ideas with them by encouraging them to begin by practicing ER themselves, which will not only help them to improve their English language skills but they will learn to think critically while at the same time understanding the power of reading for pleasure. In addition, upon internalising the power of extensive reading, they may begin to integrate their experiences into their teaching practices by
developing meaningful teaching materials and curriculum based on children and young adult literature, which they can share on various online platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, personal blogs among others, which may also be used to train novice English teachers or parents who wish to teach their own children. Furthermore, we have also decided to create a volunteer community for teaching English to children who are unable to afford private English language education as well as children who come from multicultural family backgrounds who may be struggling with the home-school discrepancies or North Korean defectors currently living in South Korea.

The more my students and I engage in discussions about what we can do, I realise social structure and obstacles – specifically, my status as a member of the non-tenure track faculty – have very little impact on the countless things that we can do. I also realise that this is the difference between reflective practices and reflexivity – as a reflective practitioner and teacher educator, I would be interested in observing and analysing student assignments and practice teaching sessions and providing them with my comments and feedback which tend to sound like a broken record after the fifth or sixth student as I find myself repeating the same lines again and again; however, as a teacher educator engaged in reflexivity and ‘dialogue’ with my students, I am intrigued by the stories that my students have to tell, which naturally lead to experiencing critical incidents and stings of memory, helping me to understand myself as someone who has had similar and yet different experiences as my students, which somehow lead to a greater understanding of myself and the world around me. Perhaps more importantly, the rigorous introspective, yet dialogic process of probing, exploring, reflecting, reminiscing and critiquing myself as a teacher educator has not only helped me to come to terms with my problems, but I am no longer focused on what I cannot do due to my unfortunate circumstances but I am more focused on what I can do – along with my students, who have
stood by me and confirmed my teacher educator status as being ‘legitimate’.

8.5. EPILOGUE

As the writing process is about to end for the time being, I realise there is one more ‘discovery’ that I have made. I realise that I have spent the past ten years blaming people, Korean society and its government and nearly everything and everyone related to my job. I also realise that I have ‘vilified’ my superiors – the deans, department chairs, tenured professors and even the administrative staff at my institution – for treating me and my colleagues in the TESOL department with disdain and taking advantage of their power over us; in short, it was almost as though I was reiterating the former US President George W. Bush’s infamous ‘axis of evil’ statement from his State of the Union Address in 2002 in which he referred to North Korea, Iran and Iraq as the ‘axis of evil’, implying that America was on the opposite end of the axis, therefore ‘not evil’ and quite frankly, ‘good’.

Throughout the process of writing this thesis, I have begun to realise that that I had believed that I was ‘good’ and that they – the ones with power – were evil and responsible for my miserable life. Slowly but surely, I began to question myself when I became the department chair last year when they ran out of people to appoint as department chairs and had no other choice but to appoint me – a foreigner faculty on a non-tenure track contract - which is typically not allowed; nonetheless, they knew my role would be minimal and that it would simply be a matter of formality as my status would remain the same and I would still be ineligible for a ‘real’ promotion in the future. Anyhow, I was given a minor role and yet I had the privilege of scheduling courses (which also gave me an advantage in terms of deciding when I wanted to teach my courses), hiring part-time lecturers and even appointing a scholarship recipient each semester. While these roles may not have
seemed significant enough for me to question whether I was taking advantage of my new ‘power,’ I began to realise that on numerous occasions, I was making decisions without consulting with my colleagues who do not speak Korean, which I simply used as an excuse to make ‘quick’ decisions on issues that did not seem important enough to translate and discuss. Then I found myself asking whether I would have behaved similarly to the former deans and department chairs if I had been in their position and to my horror, I could not be certain that I would not. Indeed, I have experienced some of the most horrifying levels of human cruelty over the years and I do not believe that I am capable of enacting such levels of cruelty on others; however, there have been more ‘subtle’ acts such as not sharing truthful information with us, not ‘actively’ willing or taking any kinds of actions to help us and simply watching our department fall apart and not informing the university President and the members of the executive board and pretending everything was ‘fine’ and that there was no real need to help any of the faculty members of the TESOL department to take more ownership of the programme.

I would like to believe that I am someone who is incapable of performing such immoral acts; however, since I have never been in such a position and have never known what it feels like to exercise power over others, I cannot say that it would have never happened had I been in their shoes. I am only grateful that I have experienced being on the weaker side which has helped me to understand the dehumanising impacts of power abuse. I will admit that I have never experienced poverty throughout my life; however, I can honestly say that I have experienced first-hand what it is like to be penalised for working hard and what it is like to be treated as sub-human, a member of a lower class in society and what it is like to be despised for no particular reason other than being ‘different’.
The past decade was spent in countless sleepless nights of fear, anxiety and depression and the one thing that has kept me going with the slightest amount of hope was the dialogues, the conversations that I shared with my students who encouraged me by telling me how grateful they were for what they have learned or how much they have grown as a teacher and how excited they were about their futures. And needless to say, these dialogues are what have helped me to see and understand what I may never have been able to see through a monologue. I no longer see the former deans and department chairs as evil human beings nor do I see myself as a ‘good’ human being. We are simply humans – extremely susceptible and subject to our surroundings and the socio-political system that drive us to compete, hate, turn against one another in a desperate race to prove to ourselves and those around us of our worth in the world.

Unfortunately, the neoliberal scheme has created a world – especially the academia – to adapt to the competitive world of university rankings, impact factors and to abide by the ‘publish or perish’ virtue. According to Cheek (2017), the world of academia has become a ‘research marketplace’ (p. 29) in which our roles are questionable:

We ourselves, of our own volition, may act to restrain our own critical voice by choosing to play all or some of the ‘games’ of the research marketplace in order to gain more currency and therefore get ‘ahead’ of others in that place. Looked at in this way, this might be a place in which we are ‘not simply victims,’ but also a place where we are ‘complicit, indeed we are sometimes beneficiaries. At times … we participate in all of this, not reluctantly, but ‘imaginatively, aggressively, and competitively’. (Ball, 2015, p. 259; cited in Cheek, 2017, p. 29)
I have spent the past decade believing I was ‘right’ and that they were ‘wrong’; however, the word, ‘right’, no longer has a place in my vocabulary. I now conclude this decade-long journey of doing autoethnography by quoting from the children’s novel, *Wonder* (Palacio, 2012): ‘When given the choice to choose between right and kind, choose kind’ (p. 48; italics added).
REFERENCES


Bartlett, L. (2005). Dialogue, knowledge, and teacher-student relations:


Braine, G. (1999). From the periphery to the center: One teacher’s journey. In G. Braine (Ed.). *Nonnative educators in English language*
teaching (pp. 15-27). London: Lawrence Erlbaum.


Cheek, J. (2017). Qualitative inquiry, research marketplaces, and neoliberalism: Adding some +s (pluses) to our thinking about the mess in which we find ourselves. In N. Denzin & M. Giardina (Eds.), *Qualitative inquiry in neoliberal times* (pp. 19-36). New York: Routledge.


Choi, J. (2000). Writing in the elementary English classroom: From the


teachers. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing Ltd.


Quarterly, 39(3), 513-533.


Ji, M., Jang, K., & Kim, S. (2011). “After four students’ suicides within three months KAIST immediately accepted demands from students,” *Donga Ilbo*. [http://m.donga.com/3/03/20110408/362508/2](http://m.donga.com/3/03/20110408/362508/2). (in Korean)


and contributions to the profession. New York: Springer.


Heinemann.


Proctor, K. (1993). ‘Tutors’ professional knowledge of supervision and the


Roberts, T. (2014). Negating the inevitable: An autoethnographic analysis of
first-generation college student status. In R. Boylorn & M. Orbe (Eds.). *Critical autoethnography: Intersecting cultural identities in everyday life* (pp. 47-61), Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.


Samimy, K., & Brutt-Griffler, J. (1999). To be a native or nonnative speaker: Perceptions of nonnative speaking students in a graduate TESOL program. In G. Braine (Ed.), Non-native educators in English language teaching (pp. 127-144). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.


Planning, 35(1), 35-55.


Tanghe, S., & Park, G. (2016). Build[ing] something which we could not have


