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ABSTRACT

Although self-study practices have become prevalent among researchers within the general teacher education field since the 1990s, language teacher education (LTE) research has yet to witness its equivalence. This paper describes and demonstrates how a TESOL teacher educator adapted an interactive approach to narrative inquiry by designing a dialogic self-study of her professional identity and teaching practices in an MA TESOL program at a private university in South Korea. In so doing, this paper calls for *interactive narrative inquiry*, suggesting that teacher educators should engage in interaction with their student teachers' reflective narratives by immersing themselves in the stories being told in the narratives and interacting with their own reflective narratives. As the two sets of narratives interact and intersect with one another, teacher educators may discover insights that may not have been otherwise possible. This paper suggests that *immersion* and *interactivity*—key terms underlying the notion of interactive narrative—have powerful implications for self-study methods, narrative inquiry, and teacher education research.

KEYWORDS

Language teacher educator identity; autoethnography; self-study of teacher education practices; interactive narrative; narrative inquiry; critical language teacher education

Introduction

When Connelly and Clandinin (1990) began introducing narrative inquiry as a powerful tool for exploring teachers' lived lives in the early 1990s, qualitative researchers not only embraced the narrative approach for studying the complexities of teacher identities, but teacher educators within the general teaching field were also quick to adapt narrative inquiry to self-studies in an attempt to understand their own professional identities and practices (e.g., Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998; Korthagen, 1995). Since then, a vibrant community of Self-study of Teacher Education Practices—known as S-STEPs—has led to an increase of self-studies committed to practicing reflexivity through self-observations and analyses of teacher educator identities and teaching practices (e.g., Loughran et al., 2004). A self-study may encompass various research approaches, including diary studies, autoethnography, and narrative inquiry in which the researcher is the primary subject of a study. Within the context of teacher education, a self-study involves "inquiring into the researcher's own professional experiences to improve their practice … by reflecting upon, critically analyzing, and evaluating it through interaction" (Pithouse-Morgan, 2022, p. 3).

Despite the wide application of self-studies within the general teacher education context, the field of TESOL and language teacher education (LTE) has yet to witness its equivalence. Furthermore, despite ongoing efforts of TESOL/Applied linguistics researchers to advocate self-studies—which surprisingly date as far back as the 1990s (e.g., Bailey et al., 1998; Banegas & Gerlach, 2021; Barkhuizen, 2017, 2021;

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Canagarajah, 1996, 2012; Casanave, 2011, 2012; Edge, 2011; Norton & Early, 2011; Pavlenko, 2007; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000; Song, 2022; Yazan et al., 2021; Yuan & Lee, 2022)—these studies seem to have been published sporadically and there remains a paucity of literature that *specifically* address issues in LTE. Peercy and Sharkey (2020) point out, "Twenty-five years after the founding of the S-STEP SIG and considerable development of the self-study literature across many disciplines, self-study methodology still has not found much foothold in the LTE literature" (p. 110).

In response to recent calls to adapt self-study methods in LTE research and the call to "push the edge in narrative inquiry"[1] (Barkhuizen & Consoli, 2021), this paper describes how I—a teacher educator of a TESOL program in South Korea (Korea hereafter)—constructed a bricolage (Kincheloe et al., 2018) by "employing methodological processes as they are needed in the unfolding context of research situation" (p. 244) and developed an "interactive" approach to narrative inquiry. The notion of *interactive narrative* is a widely discussed topic in disciplines that explore social media, virtual reality, online game/multi-user worlds, and new textual genres (e.g., Ryan, 2001, 2006) and I have found that *immersion* and *interactivity*—key terms underlying the notion of interactive narrative—have powerful implications for self-studies, narrative inquiry and teacher education research. I define *interactive narrative inquiry* (Park, forthcoming) as an approach to self-study in which narrative inquirers openly engage in *dialogue*[2] with the written narratives of their informants. In so doing, researchers immerse themselves in the narratives that have been written by their informants, which lead them to interact and respond with their own narratives.

From interactive narrative to interactive narrative inquiry

The concept of interactive narrative originally derives from various domains, which include Human Computer Interaction (Laurel, 1993), Artificial Intelligence (Sgouros, 1999), and video games (Szilas, 1999). The goal of these studies was to "combine the linear tradition of narrative with interactivity that is specific to computers" (Szilas, 2010, p. 62). Nowadays, interactive storytelling is prevalent in the online game industry, which allows players to change the story by taking an active role in which they assume the role of a character in a fictional virtual world, issuing commands to computer-controlled characters or directly manipulating the fictional world state (Riedl & Bulitko, 2013, p. 67). One of the most common forms of an interactive narrative involves the user taking on the role of a protagonist in an unfolding storyline; in a way, this may resonate with how teacher educators might engage in an *interactive narrative inquiry* as they immerse themselves in their students' written narratives by taking an active role and constructing their own narratives, from which the two sets of narratives co-construct one another. Although the term, interactive narrative, is mostly discussed within VR, online/multiuser settings, it goes without saying that the concept has been around for centuries, such as in indigenous Hawaiian cultures that use interactive storytelling procedures in which a storyteller and the audience participate in the co-construction of a story (see Au, 1980; Au & Mason, 1983). The way I see it, *interactive narrative inquiry* is a common, day-to-day human experience, and social science research should be as well.

Immersion and interactivity

In the groundbreaking book, *Narrative as Virtual Reality*, Ryan (2001) suggests that the process of reading—especially when readers immerse themselves in a text—*is* virtual reality (VR). Nowadays VR is a buzz word that conjures up images of individuals donned in HMD (head-mounted display) and experiencing "virtual realities" such as flying in the sky, walking on water and visiting exotic places in a virtual setting; in this sense, the notion of VR is a world limited to a digital environment equipped to provide such experiences since in reality, we cannot fly, walk on water or visit exotic places within a snap of a finger. Ryan (1999, 2001), however, points out that the process of being immersed in literature is akin to engaging in VR in that both involve *immersion* and *interactivity*. In this study, I adapt Ryan's view of

immersion and interactivity and focus on the reading process—especially the kind of reading that transports the reader to a specific time and place where she finds herself emotionally, psychologically involved and engaged with the characters and the plot of the story. A reader who is immersed in a story also interacts with the text from which she is often enlightened, inspired, informed, and transformed in various ways; thus, immersion and interactivity are inextricable concepts for individuals who engage in deep, immersive reading processes.

Despite its strong association with VR and electronic media, the concept of interactivity is also metaphorically compared to theatrical performance as "users"—that is, individuals engaged in online, interactive activity—are like "audience members who are able to have a greater influence on the unfolding of the action than simply the fine-tuning provided by conventional audience response. The users of such a system are like audience members who can march up onto the stage and become various characters, altering the action by what they say and do in their roles" (Ryan, 1999, p. 122). Just as a reader who is immersed in a story in which she becomes emotionally and psychologically "involved"—oftentimes inspired and transformed, leading to self-actualizations—an LTE researcher seeking meaningful approaches to self-study methodology may begin by considering one of the most accessible sources of data available to many teacher educators—reflective narratives that our student teachers are often asked to complete as course assignments.[3] These reflective narratives may become powerful resources and meaningful input for helping teacher educators to understand their own professional identities as well as that of their students; and yet, reflective narratives are often regarded as course assignments and whereas researchers have recognized the inevitability of co-constructing narratives during oral interviews (Mann, 2011), the possibility of interacting with written narratives is rarely discussed. However, interacting with written forms of narratives is not new and we have been interacting with written narratives for as long as books and literature have existed. We have all had the experience of immersing ourselves in a fascinating novel in which we visualize, imagine, fantasize, and inevitably interact with the characters and the plot of a story. I have found that the experience of reading TESOL students' reflective narratives resonates with the above descriptions in that the reading process would often lead to "virtuality" as the intimate, poignant stories in the narratives trigger my own memories and thoughts that may have been suppressed or hidden since childhood and adolescence as well as certain aspects of my teaching practices that I could not otherwise understand or *notice*.

If narrative researchers are admittedly involved in the co-construction of narratives during oral interviews, researchers may also consider the possibility of interacting with written forms of narratives and begin by taking a sincere look at the significance of reflective writing tasks that our student teachers are often asked to complete. In so doing, teacher educators may benefit from interacting with student narratives with their own reflective writings, thus engaging in interaction and practicing reflexivity rather than reflective practices. In short, we might consider the possibility of developing *interactive narrative inquiry* as an approach to self-study in teacher education research.

Methods and materials

This study adapts a hybrid approach to combining self-study methodology and narrative inquiry, in which I—as the researcher of the study—*openly* interact with my own self-narratives as well as those of my informants, who are my students. The student narratives in this paper were written by four graduate students enrolled in an MA TESOL program at a private university in Korea.[4] All of the students were Korean women in their twenties and thirties at the time of the data collection, and they had not lived outside of Korea for an extended period of time. I am the primary researcher of the present paper, and I am a Korean-American teacher educator with graduate degrees in TESOL and applied linguistics. In addition to teaching EAP courses in Korean universities for five years, I have been working as a teacher educator of a TESOL program at a Korean university for 13 years.

Data collection and analysis

One of the most important things taken into consideration during the process of generating the data for my research was the ways in which student narratives would be integrated into my study. Although I had initially planned on using autoethnography as a method, I wanted to include my student teachers' narratives, as I could not imagine how it would be possible for me to construct my professional identity without understanding my students. Initially, I attempted to do what most narrative researchers do—conduct oral interviews; however, I found myself guiding and directing the course of the dialogues in a way that *I* wanted it to go, or trying to get my informants to provide more "interesting," "intimate," detailed responses. After attempting to conduct several oral interviews, I could not shake off my "research agenda" which made me feel uncomfortable, especially because the informants were also my students and I did not want to place any pressure upon them to "cooperate" with me as research participants; as a result, I decided to rely on written reflections instead and adapted Richardson's (2000) theory of *writing as a method of inquiry* in which the *process of writing itself* generates the data as writer identities (Ivanic, 1998) are also constructed throughout the discursive writing process.

The student narratives in this study stem from a longitudinal study that lasted two years during which I obtained a collection of nearly 65 pieces of reflective writing completed by MA TESOL students enrolled in my graduate courses. I had a collection of written narratives that my students had submitted for TESOL courses that they had graciously allowed me to use for my research,[5] but I did not know what to do with them at first. Due to limited space, only six pieces of student narratives were used in this study. In a study employing traditional narrative inquiry, I may have relied on a thematic analysis (Saldana, 2009) by analyzing the narratives and making interpretations based on the implications and findings of the texts; however, since I had to place my own narratives at the heart of the study, it was important to find a tangible method of juxtaposing and synthesizing the two sets of narratives. In other words, I had a set of student narratives, but I needed an approach to "interacting" with the narratives with my own. After agonizing over this predicament for a long period of time, I was reminded of how I usually respond to my students' reflective writing tasks which takes the form of a "letter" in which I always begin with "Dear (student's name)," and respond to the stories told in the reflections with my own stories; in other words, instead of evaluating or providing what may be seen as "feedback" in which we point out the strengths and weaknesses of a written assignment, I wrote back to my students and responded by sharing my thoughts on what they had to say, which always led to sharing my own stories relevant to theirs; thus I began to realize that I had *always* been engaged in an "interactive narrative inquiry."

As I began immersing myself in student narratives, certain excerpts and stories *triggered* my own memories and led to what Denzin (2014) refers to as a *sting of memory*. According to Denzin (2014), a sting of memory 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" (p. 32); in other words, some of the stories that my students were sharing in their narratives provided *input* which in turn triggered a relatable story from my own past, thus helping me to respond by reflecting and writing about my own experiences. As I read through my student teachers' narratives, I kept a sting of memory log in which I recorded excerpts that triggered stings of memory, which were later used for interactive writing. In a similar vein, my student teachers' reflective narratives have been instrumental in triggering multiple stings of memories which led to noticing aspects of my past and present experiences as well as those of my students, helping me to gain a deeper understanding of myself as well as the TESOL field as a whole. Thus, the two sets of narratives were engaged in "interaction" and dialogue. In so doing, my narratives are presented alongside those of my students in an attempt to discover how our perceptions and experiences interact and intersect with one another, which 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). Figure 1 illustrates the process of interactive narrative inquiry in which the researcher begins by immersing

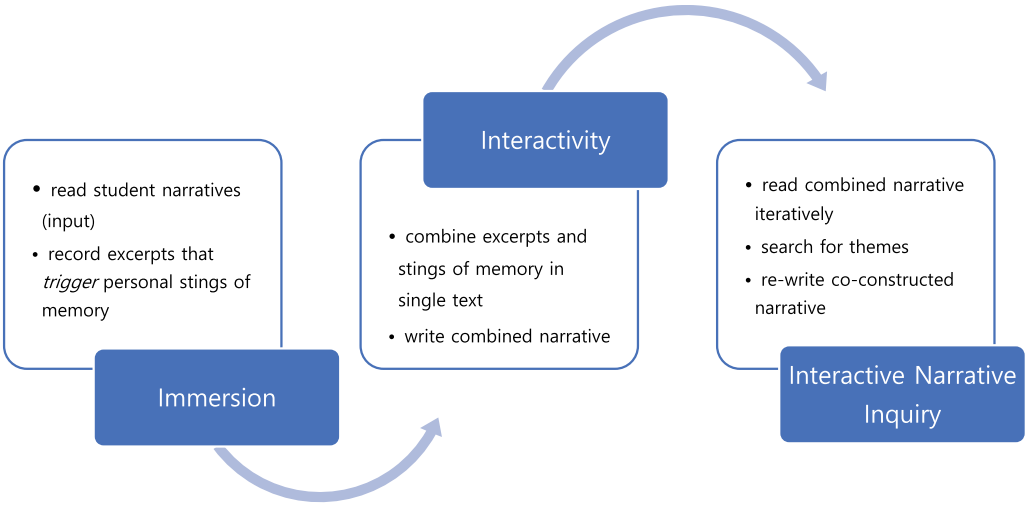


Figure 1. Framework for interactive narrative inquiry.

herself in the narratives of her informants. She then engages in interactivity by responding with her own narratives from which the two sets of narratives are combined into a single text.

Teaching in a TESOL program in Korea has opened up many opportunities to engage in conversations with my students—both in and outside of the classroom; as a result, I began to realize that many TESOL students had been influenced by childhood language learning experiences which have subsequently influenced their identities as language teachers; furthermore, I began to recognize the importance of understanding critical perspectives within the Korean EFL context. The experience of interacting with my student teachers' written narratives seemed to resonate with the face-to-face interactions that I have had with them over the years. As such, this study seeks to address the following research questions:

RQ1: In what ways does an interactive engagement with TESOL students' reflective narratives help the researcher to understand childhood L2 identities?

RQ2: In what ways does an interactive engagement with TESOL students' reflective narratives help the researcher to gain a critical perspective of the TESOL field in EFL contexts?

Results and discussion

The following excerpts stem from a longitudinal study that examined three major stages of my life that seemed to be important for understanding my professional identity: *From Language Learner to Language Teacher*; *From Language Teacher to Language Teacher Educator*; and *From Language Teacher Educator to Critical Pedagogue*. Due to limited space, I am only able to show brief snapshots from the first and third sections, which demonstrate how the process of understanding my language learning and teaching experiences alongside those of my students have subsequently influenced my understanding of critical pedagogy. Here, it is also important to note that the following excerpts were drawn from *various* student reflections rather than focusing on a particular individual or individuals whose narratives are analyzed in depth; in other words, since this study is a self-study rather than a traditional narrative inquiry which focuses on the data provided by research informants, I am drawing upon various excerpts of student narratives to construct my own story. As a result, there is no consistent focus on a specific individual or individuals since the primary aim is to tell my story, *inspired* by the stories told by my student teachers.

As such, the primary aim of the present study is to construct my own professional identity as a language teacher educator, which will subsequently affect how I perceive my student teachers as well as the ways in which I go about revising and developing my curriculum (see Pinar, 2019).

Language play and the L2 ideal self in childhood language learning memories

One of the most interesting discoveries that I have made from interacting with student narratives is that our childhood language learning experiences were similar, despite the fact that I had learned English in America, whereas my students' English language learning had taken place in Korea. I had always believed that learning English in an ESL setting would be vastly different from an EFL setting such as Korea where English language learning has a strong instrumental purpose (Gardner & Lambert, 1972) and is driven by test-taking preparations (Seth, 2002); however, the stories that my students were describing in their narratives revealed that much of their initial English language learning experiences from their childhood had been positive, involving "language play" (Cook, 2000), just as a child learning a first language might experience. Jung Eun describes how she began to develop her love for English by engaging in pseudo-English conversations with a doll that her father had brought from England; although she was not speaking "real English," she began to develop a fascination with the idea of speaking a foreign language, which subsequently led to a strong motivation toward English language learning:

> I was five or six years old at that time. 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)

Reflecting upon Jung Eun's story, I am reminded of my own experience of coming into contact with the English language for the very first time. Although Jung Eun and I subsequently developed our English language skills in very different contexts, the initial fascination with the foreign sounds of the English language and the desire to engage in language play were similar. Just as Jung Eun began to engage in pseudo-English conversations with her doll, my brother and I began to engage in pseudo-English conversations by using nonsense words, which were neither English nor Korean, to communicate the minute we realized that we were on our way to America. We continued to converse in "English" (although it was mostly made-up, nonsensical words) after arriving in America and continued to do so until we learned how to speak "real English":

> Today we are moving to America. We are sitting in an airplane on our way to San Francisco. My brother and I start[ed] speaking "English" to each other. Of course, it is not "real English," but we are convinced that if we keep speaking to each other this way, we will be able to speak in real English soon, so we cannot stop speaking this way. In a way, I know these words are not "real," but it gives me comfort, and I have a feeling these words will soon turn "real," but I must keep speaking like this. (Researcher)

Both Jung Eun and I felt that the idea of speaking a foreign language was fascinating, and we immediately began to immerse ourselves in what we believed was English. Were we simply engaged in language play? Looking back, I believe it was more than language play, and we may have already begun to develop an L2 ideal self (Dörnyei, 2005) by imagining ourselves as fluent English speakers, motivated by a strong desire and perhaps even an urgency to speak this new language immediately.

The effects of shame in childhood language learning experiences

Such seemingly positive experiences of learning English, as described above, however, did not always last. Hye Ri describes a negative childhood experience:

> When I encountered English for the very first time, I was in kindergarten. There was an English class several times a week. [The] teacher played a video clip for teaching English to kids. Alphabet letters, their pronunciations, and

> simple English songs were shown. Everyone seemed 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. (Hye Ri)

Hye Ri's narrative suddenly takes me back to a painful memory of struggling as an ESL learner in America:

> I am sitting in Mr. Pearson's fifth-grade class. Mr. Pearson does not seem to notice that I am completely lost in his class. Since he does not seem to notice my problem, I remain silent. As usual, it is time for a 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 comprehension questions. As soon as Mr. Pearson turns on the cassette player, I hear nothing. Someone is telling a story, but it is as though the narrator was speaking an incomprehensible language. I hear nothing and therefore 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 multiple-choice questions. I am unable to answer any of them, and as usual, I receive an F. (Researcher)

The listening quiz was a terrifying moment because I could never answer any of the questions correctly. For some reason, I was overwhelmed by anxiety the moment Mr. Pearson turned on the cassette player, and for the next ten or fifteen minutes, while the story was being told, I would black out, and I could not hear anything. 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 program at the time, 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 realize 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 would require cultural schema (Carrell, 1983), which I obviously did not have at the time.

Recognizing the side-effects of an English-only policy in the TESOL classroom

Reflecting upon Hye Ri's narratives has helped me to draw upon my own childhood memory of failing Mr. Pearson's listening quizzes, which has helped me to recall painful memories of remaining silent and feeling helpless in the classroom. I had forgotten such feelings of alienation and began to realize how oblivious I had been toward the negative impact of an English-only policy in the TESOL classroom. One of the greatest challenges that I have experienced as a TESOL teacher educator in Korea is the English-only policy that we must adhere to in the classroom. Although the majority of our students are Korean, many have studied abroad in English-speaking countries, and some of the students speak English fluently; on the other hand, there are others who have strong reading and listening comprehension skills, but engaging in discussions and expressing their thoughts in English may be difficult for them.

I always knew these students were struggling, but I had no idea how much of a challenge it was for them—that is, until I read Yujin's narratives:

> 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 a paragraph. So, I took the extra classes outside of the classroom at Pagoda and Wall Street English[6] to catch up [on] the classes. At Pagoda, I chose the one-on-one program with the foreigners. At Wall Street English, I signed up [for] the language program for [a] 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)

When Yujin disappeared from our program and returned after a year, no one knew why she was gone; we figured she was busy or had a personal reason for needing a break from her studies and did not bother asking where she was during her absence. When I discovered that she had taken a leave of absence in order to take intensive one-on-one English conversation classes with a native speaker teacher and then to work full-time in order to compensate for the money she had to pay for the private English lessons, I was not only shocked, but I also felt embarrassed. I was told that one of the main reasons why our students enroll in TESOL is that it is an all-English program taught by native speaker/bilingual faculty, which is seen as a highly desirable component of the curriculum. I had never questioned the English-only policy before, but I now find myself questioning the effectiveness of such practices.

Yujin's narratives may also reflect the theoretical perspectives of Giddens (1991) and his views of reflexivity and the duality of structure—the idea that individuals are not only bound by social structures but they also have the ability to transcend them. On the one hand, Yujin seemed to exercise a sense of agency when she decided to take a break from her TESOL courses to take a one-on-one conversation class with a native speaker teacher in order to participate more actively in her TESOL classes; at the same time, she could not deny the barriers of social structures that may be difficult to transcend on her own:

> I strongly believe [that] the reason why power structures exist in human nature. Now we live in the society dominated by capitalism. Mostly, some groups are richer than others who have more power. However, power could be given to different kinds of groups depending on the context they involve. In private English education field in Korea, someone who are native English speakers have more power than non-native speakers, even if they are not professionally educated in Education field and they don't have enough experience. 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)

Yujin's words are haunting. Yujin's story has led me to question our role as TESOL educators in Korea. We were hired to provide TESOL training, but we were also hired to provide an all-English immersion experience for our students. Do we—the seemingly privileged TESOL lecturers in a highly neoliberal setting like South Korea—*understand* that we are involved in the process of reproducing the invisible oppression, alienation, and suppression of students like Yujin in the TESOL classroom? Suddenly, I am beginning to see the world differently, and I am able to see other "Yujins" on the streets of downtown Seoul:

> I am driving in Gwanghwa Mun—downtown Seoul—which has also become a popular site for protests and demonstrations in Korea due its close proximity to many government offices. 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." As I am trying to get past the usual traffic jam during a protest, I see "Yujin" in them. (Researcher)

When I first began my teaching career in Korea, I was fascinated by the TESOL field and truly believed that an English-only policy was necessary in order to prepare the students for English language teaching; upon reading Yujin's narratives, however, I have begun to see the vicissitude of the TESOL program as the gap between students like Yujin and her "fluent-speaking" classmates seem to widen each year. I began to notice that there were more "Yujins" in my classrooms—usually silent and passive, sitting in the back and rarely speaking a word in class. Driving to work, I began to see other "Yujins" among the screaming protestors on the streets of downtown Seoul and for the first time, noise and traffic caused by protests did not seem to bother me anymore and instead of complaining about the inconveniences, I began to wonder what they were fighting for and whether anyone would listen and take their needs into sincere consideration.

Giving them the "right to speak"

As I reflect upon Yujin's narratives, which has helped me to recognize the lack of empathy toward the silenced and oppressed individuals around me, Joo Hyun's narratives have helped me to see the impact of positioning in day-to-day conversations and interactions. In what follows, Joo Hyun describes her experience of traveling to Toronto on a study abroad program during which she visits a Korean-Canadian friend named Paul:

> Paul placed [an] order for me. We were at a Vietnamese restaurant at the outskirt of Toronto. I was about to order the waiter a noodle soup for myself when he cut in and ordered the 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 in my far-from-perfect English. Sometimes I was made to feel as though he was ashamed of being with me. (Joo Hyun)

Joo Hyun describes a painful experience in which she is humiliated at a restaurant in Toronto. The primary purpose of her visit to Canada was to develop her English-language skills and yet, Paul does not want to give her "the right to speak" (Norton, 2000). Despite Paul's indignant attitude toward her, Joo Hyun quickly denies the positioning imposed upon her:

> I myself was not particularly intimidated when I spoke to Canadians 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 [to] and treat English as one of the many foreign languages in the world that are equally important and useful. (Joo Hyun)

Reading Joo Hyuns' narratives turned out to be a transforming moment from which I began to develop a critical perspective of the TESOL field. To begin with, I began to recognize the role of positioning (Harre & Langenhove, 1999) and how we are positioned, but also participate in the very act of positioning others without even understanding its profound impact. 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.

Joo Hyun's story reminded me of my own experience of being "positioned" when I was studying in an MA TESOL program in the United States. The TESOL course had been a course aimed at teaching English grammar, and one day, the professor asked us to divide into two different groups, depending on our language teacher identity and status:

> I am sitting in my Teaching English Grammar course. The professor says he wants to try something different today and says, "Everyone, stand up, please! Now, I'm going to divide the class into two separate groups. If you are a native speaker, please stand on the right side of the room and if you are a nonnative speaker of English, please stand on the left side." Everyone in the class moves quickly to where they "belonged." That is, everyone but me. I stare at the professor, not fully understanding what he meant by "native speaker" and "nonnative speaker of English" and not knowing where I belonged. "This is an awkward moment," I say to myself as I remain standing in the middle of the classroom. (Researcher)

Looking back, I now realize that the purpose of the above activity was to conduct a grammaticality judgment test. At the time, I had just begun my studies in TESOL, and I was not familiar with terms like "native speaker English teacher/nonnative speaker English teacher" and wondered how to position myself since Korean is my L1, but English is the language in which I am able to freely express myself. Having worked within the TESOL field in Korea for over a decade, I have begun to notice how positioning affects individual identity in the day-to-day. Whenever a new group of TESOL students are admitted into our program, the students seem to separate themselves into two different groups—those who are able to speak comfortably in English and those who are unable to do the same. Although we have never attempted to "group" them, the students seem to quickly position themselves into one of the groups; in a way, the English-only policy in the TESOL

classroom has played a significant role in positioning our students and I am wondering whether we, the TESOL faculty, have been complicit in doing the same, though it may have been unintentional in some ways.

As Joo Hyun demonstrates in her narratives, individuals may re-position themselves despite being positioned by others. Just as Joo Hyun denied the position imposed upon her by re-positioning herself as a tourist in Canada and legitimatizing her variety of English, I am reminded of the need to engage in the process of ongoing re-positioning of myself as well as my students in a way that seeks to transcend the oppressive environment imposed by the neoliberal schemes inherent within the English-only policies and the TESOL field in Korea.

Conclusion

The process of immersing and interacting with my students' reflective narratives has helped me to address the two research questions stated earlier. In response to the first research question—*In what ways does an interactive engagement with TESOL students' reflective narratives help the researcher to understand childhood L2 identities?*—I have been able to draw upon my childhood memories to gain a deeper understanding of the struggles that I had encountered with literacy as an immigrant child in America, which I had not confronted before; that is, I had never tried to understand why I had experienced so much difficulty with literacy as a child until I began interacting with my students' narratives, which began to trigger my own childhood memories of failing Mr. Pearson's listening quizzes and remaining silent about my struggles. Since I seemed to speak English with relative ease, no one seemed to suspect that I may have had a language problem, *including myself*. I never thought about Mr. Pearson and his listening quizzes until now, and interacting with Hye Ri's narratives has helped me to draw upon forgotten memories, which is an important part of my identity as an Asian American immigrant. Suddenly, I began to understand my identity as an ESL learner in America and studies such as the Kamehameha Early Education Program (KEEP)[7] (Au, 1980) and the Funds of Knowledge Teachers' Project (Gonzalez et al., 1995) which suggest that mainstream classroom practices and the home literacy practices of minority children often do not match, causing negative impact on their academic performances. It was not until I began interacting with my student teachers' narratives that I suddenly began to realize that our family literacy practices had not matched the literacy practices of my schools. Coming to terms with my identity as a child of a struggling immigrant family in America has helped me to understand my childhood identity as an ESL learner and a child 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 not having the time to do so; and 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 (p. 165). In this sense, fracturing seemed to have occurred in both settings—home and school—for me.

Furthermore, interacting with student narratives has also helped me to reflect upon a few pleasant childhood memories of engaging in language play and developing a strong "L2 ideal self" from an early age; in any case, immersing myself in my students' narratives of childhood language learning experiences and reflecting upon my own has helped me to see that early L2 learning experiences—both positive and negative—have lasting effects on our identities and as language teaching professionals, it is important to draw upon such memories in order to gain a deeper understanding of ourselves as well as the complexities of second/foreign language learning in general. Furthermore, the opportunity to juxtapose my stories with that of my student teachers has helped me to see the *simultaneity*[8] (Bakhtin, 1981) of ESL and EFL identities; that is, despite the different contexts from which my students and I encountered and acquired English as a second/foreign language, the initial fascination with the foreign sounds of a new language, the desire to speak the target language, the ways in which we engaged in language play and how we seemed to construct an "L2 ideal self" from early on—were different and yet similar, helping me to identify myself with ESL learners in America while at

the same time identifying with the positive and negative language learning experiences that Jung Eun and Hye Ri describe in their narratives.

In what follows, I address the second research question: *In what ways does an interactive engagement with TESOL students' reflective narratives help the researcher to gain a critical perspective of the TESOL field in EFL contexts?* Continuing from the first research question, understanding the impact of childhood language learning experiences has played an important role in helping me to develop a *stronger* interest in critical perspectives in TESOL as I have been able to draw upon my own experiences of failing Mr. Pearson's listening quizzes and realizing the lasting impact that such experiences have had on subsequent academic performances, which I had always blamed myself for; specifically, I have learned to develop a critical eye to my teaching environment, especially toward the English-only policy in our TESOL program. I began to recognize how oblivious I had been as a TESOL professor. I began to realize how blind I had been of the role that I had been given, not taking notice of the painful experiences that students like Yujin were faced with in the TESOL classroom. I am beginning to question the effectiveness of an English-only policy—which may be seen as an implementation of English-medium instruction (EMI) for TESOL students in EFL contexts; as such, I believe the TESOL curriculum in EFL contexts like Korea is in need of critical evaluation as well as the implementation of critical language teacher education (e.g., Crookes, 2013, 2017; Gray, 2019; Hawkins & Norton, 2009; Pennycook, 2004). In so doing, TESOL practitioners may begin by considering the possibility of integrating translanguaging (Garcia & Li, 2014; Li, 2018, 2022) and translingual practices (Canagarajah, 2018) as alternative approaches to the English-only curriculum. Furthermore, the integration of a language-supported TESOL program might be a viable option as well. McKinley and Rose (2022) question whether ELT and EMI can "potentially inform each other, both in research and in practice" (p. 86) —an important research topic that should *also* be explored among TESOL programs—especially those situated in EFL contexts, since the majority of the TESOL students in these settings are L2 users of English. Unfortunately, many TESOL teacher educators in EFL contexts like myself—expat/former English language teachers—are often unaware of the complex, socio-political implications underlying such schemes such as EMI; furthermore, heavy teaching loads coupled with various administrative responsibilities often result in mechanical, "reflective" exercises in which we find ourselves "jumping through hoops and ticking boxes" (Block & Gray, 2016, p. 16) just to get through the day and as a result, we often find ourselves exhausted and burned out as we go through the motion of "doing" teacher education year after year. At times, we may need to step aside from discussing teacher education practices and focus on the process of *reading*—the kind of reading that we do when we are immersed in a good book by losing ourselves in the story as we laugh, cry, connect, reflect, and internalize, ready to explore new paths and challenges in our trajectories. The purpose of this study is not necessarily aimed at sharing any "fascinating insights" that I may have discovered from the data; instead, it asks us to focus on the reading process by immersing ourselves in the narratives of our students from which we may better see ourselves as well as our students, and the sociocultural milieu in which we live and work.

We have spent the past few decades asking, "Who are language teachers?" Indeed, the LTE research community has built an immense body of literature responding to this question through countless state-of-the-art research studies and findings that have helped us to develop a profound understanding of language teacher identity (e.g., Varghese et al., 2005) since the early 1990s. In a recent monograph, Barkhuizen (2021) asks, "Who are language *teacher educators*?" It may have taken more than three decades to ask who language teacher educators are and "what language teacher educators do" (p. 34), but it is exciting to see that the journey has finally begun.

Notes

1. Although this study adapts an autoethnographic/self-study approach, narrative inquiry inevitably plays an essential role since the aim is to explore the researcher's identities through storytelling and narratives.

2. I adapt two approaches to "dialogue": (a) A Bakhtinian approach to dialogue and intertextuality, focusing on the co-construction of meaning; (b) and Paolo Freire's call for teacher-student dialogue.
3. It is important to note that using student teachers' reflective writings would involve the same level of ethical standards as that of using oral interviews, diaries, and other forms of data by obtaining permission from the students to use their narratives for research and using pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.
4. In a traditional narrative inquiry in which the researcher focuses on the participants, detailed information regarding the background of the informants might be necessary; however, the present study adapts an auto-ethnographic approach and thus information pertaining to the informants are not provided in detail.
5. All of the names of the students have been changed to pseudonyms. Students wrote their narratives in English and they have not been edited in any ways. The reflective narratives were originally written as course assignments in which students were asked to describe their past and present language learning and teaching experiences. I have received permission from each student to use their narratives for my research.
6. Pagoda and Wall Street English are franchised private English language cram schools in Korea.
7. KEEP stands for Kamehameha Early Education Program, which was developed in 1972 to improve the academic achievement of low-income children in Hawaii.
8. Simultaneity stems from Bakhtin's notion of dialogism and the idea that we can only understand ourselves through others.

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