



## A Meaning-Making Journey Toward Transformation: A Korean English Language Teacher's Identities\*

Soon Bok Park\*\*

Kyungil University

### ARTICLE INFO

Received 15 September 2018

Revised 24 October 2018

Accepted 10 November 2018

Examples in: English

Applicable Languages: English

Applicable Levels: Secondary/  
Tertiary

### KEYWORD

*Korean English  
language teacher's identities/  
meaning-making process/  
transformative teaching*

*한국인영어교사정체성/  
의미형성과정/  
변형적 교수*

### ABSTRACT

**Park, Soon Bok. (2018). A meaning-making journey toward transformation: A Korean English language teacher's identities. *Modern English Education*, 19(4), 39-49.**

This qualitative research explores how a Korean English language teacher's identities have been constructed by delving into her perceptions on herself and her teaching as a language teacher, and examines how these perceptions contribute to her professional development. The participant teacher who was selected has been teaching for more than 20 years, and she is self-identified as a critical language teacher who has critical perspectives on education. Three methods were used for data collection: in-depth interviews, class observations, and the researcher's field notes. The data was mostly collected in 2011 and then supplemented and reinforced in 2016 as the researcher resumed thinking over teacher identity and transformative learning theories. The data was analyzed based on the grounded theory, and key findings were discovered through coding processes. The participant teacher's identities have been constructed with perceptions of herself as a text, a reflective practitioner, and of her teaching as a meaning-making process towards a change. The results are discussed with concepts of transformative teaching, and implications on teacher education programs in the Korean English language teaching field are suggested.

### I. INTRODUCTION

We teachers acknowledge that we always need to be on the alert for our professional development in our specific field of teaching. The professional development results in being engaged in constantly developing ourselves, which in turn leads to an on-going process of constructing teacher identity that is not fixed, unitary, or stable, but transformational or transformative (Burke & Reitzes, 1991). A body of research has been made on teacher learn-

ing or teacher as a learner (Cranton & King, 2003; Kiely & Davis, 2010; Miclellan, 2012) and characteristics of a good teacher (Al-Mahrooqi, Denman, Al-Siyabi, & Al-Maamari, 2015; Chen, 2012; S. B. Park & J. Bang, 2016a) as important resources for teachers' professional development. These are works suggestive of a theme of teacher change or transformation as their ultimate goal. Namely they signify that teachers can have an opportunity to make a difference through their teaching (Spanier, 2001) by refining themselves. This process itself would contribute to

\* The study is partly based on the researcher's doctoral dissertation exploring Korean English language teachers' identities in the teaching context of Korea.

\*\* Author: Soon Bok Park (Kyungil University, Assistant Professor)

constructing and reconstructing their professional teacher identities.

Over the years, Korean English language teachers and researchers have been devoted to the English teaching and research setting. They report a variety of results and reflections about critical language learning and teaching (S. Huh & Y. M. Suh, 2015; M. K. Kim, 2015; K. W. Sung, 2002), and yet the literature to elucidate identities of critical language teachers themselves who are under the on-going practice of professional development toward their change is scarcely found in the Korean research context. However, teacher identity construction is and should be related to the growth of the teacher. We should have time to ponder over some fundamental questions such as who and what we are as teachers and what goals should be in our profession. Just asking these questions might make meaningful changes in our point of views. This research has begun with these inquiries with a belief that they are essential in finding a clue for change in our existing perspectives and assumptions.

Considering this, the research has been devised to reveal perceptions of a Korean English Language Teacher (KELT) who addresses and perceives herself as a critical language teacher and what implications it could have towards KELTs' professional development and for teacher education field. To this end, the study explores how the participant teacher perceives herself and her teaching as a language teacher, and how such perceptions contribute to her professional development. It is expected that this study could support and enable KELTs to create new self-images and identities for their better selves.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 1. The Teacher's Professional Development

The ultimate and challenging goal in professional development does not only change attitudes and behavior (Gaylie, 2009), but also “brings our habits of mind about teaching into consciousness and allows us to examine critically what we believe and value in our work” (Cranton & King, 2003, p. 34). The process of professional development can help a teacher himself extend his perspectives of teaching and learning into a transformational or transformative image through his own cognition and behavior. Thus, for meaningful professional development we should go beyond the mere learning about new techniques or methodologies. The learning about skills or methodologies is considered the traditional way of professional development where teachers are regarded as passive receivers and the primary focus of teachers' learning is to transmit expertise or teaching strategies useful for their conceptual understanding of the target knowledge (Kiely & Davis, 2010; E. J. Kim, 2009). In the learners' part as well, traditionally, students merely play a receptive or passive role (Bourdieu, 1998), and they repeat verbatim what their

teacher offers, which is considered the “banking” (Freire, 1970) concept of education (Rodriguez, 2008). From the professional development perspective, however, teachers are free to direct their own learning processes while continuing to conceptualize what it means to be teachers in the classroom (Jurasaitė-Harbisson, 2005; Kwakman, 2003). Teachers actively build their own knowledge of practice, shape and reshape their own teaching contexts, and internalize what they learn and realize into those contexts (E. J. Kim, 2009).

An indispensable concept we should eventually consider for teachers' professional development is deeply concerned with the transformation of teachers, whether it is cognitive or psychological. It evidently represents positive reformation they could go through in their teaching lives. That is, the place for the teachers to be free, active, and powerful agents (Jeyaraj & Harland, 2014) is where the final goal of professional development is situated, making transformative learning possible. Transformative learning is based on and expands Freire's (1970) emancipatory concept of social transformation (Sifakis, 2007) and Habermas's (1984) fundamental distinction between instrumental and communicative learning (Mezirow, 2003). It is a process which critically examines and revises adult learners' frames of reference – habits of mind, meaning perspectives, or mindset – that have been formed as a result of experiences over time (Sifakis, 2007). It is also fundamental transformation regarding perspective and meaning structures, creating “a process of personal and social change called reframing in perspective” (Mezirow, 1990, recited in Kumi-Yeboah, 2012, p. 171, emphasis in original). Thus, the ultimate goal for transformative learning would be for teachers to be more open, penetrable (Cranton, 2011), flexible and embracing. Moreover, the transformative process, in itself, implies that teachers are willing to become students by creating learning communities with their students in order to be free and independent learners as well. This is partly why teachers first need a personal transformation by having a deep introspection of who they are (Nieto, 2012) as teachers and humans as well as their teaching practices.

The other essential element which is embedded in transformative learning for professional development is reflection. In the process of transformative learning Mezirow advocates, reflection is a key source. It is not only defined as “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends” (Dewey, 1933, p. 9), but also as “the process of critically assessing the content, process, or premise(s) of our efforts to interpret and give meaning to an experience” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 104). Teachers as reflective individuals have been attributed to having open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness (Dewey, 1933; Farrell, 2007). Their reflection could be separated into two types, a weak form and a strong form. A weak form is informal reflection, and reflective practice is merely regarded to be thoughtful practice. Whereas

in the strong form of reflection, teachers systematically reflect on their own teaching and take responsibility for their actions in the classroom (Farrell, 2007). We can say that the authentic meaning of reflection would lie in the stronger form of reflection, primarily considering that “reflection is the process through which teachers comprehend and learn from their teaching experiences and assign significance to their teaching practices” (Zhao, 2012, p. 57).

Reflective practice in teacher professional development is based on the belief that teachers can improve their teaching by consciously and systematically reflecting on their teaching experiences (Farrell, 2004, 2007), and that teachers can transform by critically examining the contents, assumptions, and values of frames of reference (Mezirow & Associates, 2000). Thus, reflective teaching should be based on critical reflection. Critical reflection demands an understanding of the nature of reasons and their methods, logic, and justification (Mezirow, 2003). It also entails “a deep exploration process that exposes unexamined beliefs, assumptions, and expectations and makes visible our personal reflexive loops” (Larrivee, 2000, p. 298).

Critically reflective teaching promotes transformative learning as a form of collaboration and increases awareness of the different social and political contexts in which teaching is embedded (Parra, Guitierrez, & Aldana, 2015). Teachers themselves should take reflective action (Dewey, 1933; Farrell, 2007), and they will become more cognizant of the interdependence between teachers and students, become more aware of how they are interactive participants, and build new frames of reference and actions or behaviors (Cranton, 2011; Larrivee, 2000; Mezirow, 1997).

## 2. Language Teacher Identity

Teacher identity construction in which teaching practices are necessarily embedded sheds light on the idea that teachers themselves should be put on a priority in any form of discussion related to teaching, whether they are methodological problems, experiences, or school policies. Primarily, teacher identity is represented in classroom situations, and the classroom performance represents the invisible nature of the teacher’s identity which is embodied and shaped by the language. How teachers use the implicit meaning of the language is expressed in the discourse, in which we understand and describe their experiences as professionals (Cohen, 2008), thereby regarding language as the core of conceptualizing their identity construction.

Language teacher identity is at the center of any form of action and perspective language teachers bring to the classroom. It causes educators and researchers to delve into intriguing and controversial issues associated with teaching English as a second or a foreign language (ESL/EFL) such as curriculum in teacher education programs (Farrell, 2012; Pinho & Andrade, 2015; Richards, 2008), professionalism (Cooper & Olson, 1996; Tickle, 2000), classroom situations and performance (Cohen, 2008;

Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005), teachers’ lived experiences (Tsui, 2007), and nativism and ownership of English language (Amin, 1997; Tang, 1997). One of the frequently-discussed issues is that there are struggles pre-service or novice teachers experience that evolve from the distance between expectations prior to actual teaching and the practical realities they are faced with (Farrell, 2012; Trent, 2012). Another issue which has been widely dealt with in ESL/EFL teaching contexts is the matter of power and ideology which is deeply connected with the dichotomy between native and non-native English speaking teachers (NNESTs) (S. B. Park & J. Bang, 2016b; Phillipson, 1992). However, the constant and consistent recognition among non-native English teachers is internal, namely the teachers’ own feeling of deficiency of English ability and “external pressures resulting from the expanded need for competent language teachers worldwide” (Richards, 2008, p. 158).

Focused on the discussion in higher education, the arguments of KELTs’ identities in the English teaching context (H. Choe, 2008; H. K. Kim, 2017; Y. M. Kim, 2013; S. B. Park & J. Bang, 2016a, 2016b) have been predominantly concerned with the perceptions KELTs have of themselves and how to negotiate with their status as a non-native English speaker (H. K. Kim, 2017) and with students, so regarding teacher identity as pedagogy (Y. M. Kim, 2013). They did not only perceive themselves as second-rate, inferior and permanently lacking in language ability (H. Choe, 2008; S. B. Park & J. Bang, 2016a), but also struggled with the sense of native speaker ideology or fallacy (H. Choe, 2008; H. K. Kim, 2017). They recognized themselves as just a general teacher and not an English teacher, whereby constructing their self-image as a caring person like a mentor, a trainer, or a guide (S. B. Park & J. Bang, 2016a). As well as such a desire to become a competent and good teacher, they further advocated for KELTs’ advantages as local teachers, simultaneously feeling insecure, in which they have been under on-going unemployment at the Korean universities owing to the English education policy in favor of native English speaking teachers (NESTs) (S. B. Park & J. Bang, 2016b).

On the other side of debate, KELTs’ identities have also been portrayed from the reflective practice perspective (S. J. Choi, 2013; M. K. Kim, 2015; S. Yang & Bautista, 2008). The tool of reflection was used to discover the complexities and transformative potentials of teachers’ self-identity and to explore their beliefs and assumptions of the class. In spite of their good use of reflection in search for teachers’ professional identity, it appears that the exploration of teacher identity in the Korean research context should be much more widely examined from the reflective perspective in particular. This study provides an example of informal reflective practice performed by the participant teacher and explores how the teacher understands and interacts with her world in meaningful ways (Glaser, 1998) through her reflection on her teaching and herself as a language teacher.

### III. METHOD

#### 1. Participant

The participant, Jaein, was recruited according to criteria for the participants I set up in 2011 as follows: The participant would identify herself as a NNEST, self-identify as an expert or at least an experienced teacher qualified to teach English through long term English study and English teaching experience, teaching one or more English language courses in higher education institutions, and demonstrating some interest in the research topic. In addition, she is a self-identified critical<sup>1</sup> language teacher and also a teacher educator, though she has never been affiliated in any teacher education programs. She has been teaching every component of English to undergraduate and graduate students for more than twenty years in Korean universities as a part-time instructor, and completed an M.A. degree in English education at a Korean university at the time of data collection.

After completing her M.A. degree, Jaein entered a doctoral course in the same English education field in 2008 after some years of teaching experience. While teaching, she had the opportunity to take courses such as applied linguistics and critical English education from which she came to better understand what critical educational theories represent. Above all, the courses helped her to recognize the importance of teacher identity. Moreover she was interested in obtaining qualifications to engage in teacher education programs.

The class she taught in 2011 when I observed her was designed for graduate students, most of whom were primary and secondary teachers in the department of liberal arts. She was strongly motivated to teach what she had been taught in her graduate studies. She prioritized teaching critical pedagogy which views education from the critical theory perspective.

#### 2. Data Collection

The participant, Jaein was invited for the study in 2011, when I was looking for participant teachers for my dissertation exploring five Korean English language professors' identities. Unlike the other participants who were my acquaintances, Jaein was contacted through e-mail after I read her article that explored identities of a KELT. At that time, I was impressed since she was very willing to open her mind, get interested in and join the study.

Since the completion of my dissertation, I have revisited the data and worked with topics which emerged from it. Since Jaein's data was very different and unique in thoughts and perspectives from the other participants' data, I reserved it for later research to make my every

effort to elaborate it as a theory. Thus it was not revisited until 2015 when I became interested in and concentrated on transformative learning put forward by Jack Mezirow. Then I resumed interviews with Jaein in 2016 with the purpose of supplementing and reinforcing the 2011 data, not to compare the data of the two periods of time. Though there was a possibility of changes between the two periods, she herself expressed that her perceptions rarely changed since the first interview in 2011, but instead, they have been more intensified since her working on and obtaining her Ph.D. degree in 2015. This was evidenced in the interviews as well. Accordingly, the data for the study was collected mostly in 2011, and the 2016 data shown in this paper was added as reinforcement.

Among the three methods of data collection I had originally planned to use, Jaein did not complete her teaching journals as a method, but participated in two interviews (April 18; June 20, for 1 to 2 hours respectively) one class observation (May 30, for 70 min.) in 2011; and three more interviews (Jan. 5; Feb. 17, for about 1 hour respectively; March 1, for an e-mail communication) in 2016. For triangulation, I added my field notes. The interviews were semi-structured, and Jaein was asked to narrate her views regarding 'teacher the self' and 'teacher related to teaching.' The interviews were conducted in comfortable places like coffee shops or the teachers' lounge in school. The observation method planned to have three parts including the class observation, follow-up interviews (post-observation) and a video playback session, but the video playback was not made because she was unwilling to watch the video for she was shy and reluctant to do that. As a result of the data collection, it seemed that the observation would support the interviews. In fact they shared complementary aspects. Unlike the general view in qualitative research in which each method is considered non-complementary, grounded theory methodology considers that there is an inter-complementariness between interview and observation (Glaser, 1998).

#### 3. Data Analysis

Based on the inductive research methodology, grounded theory approach was adopted for data analysis. I let the data speak for itself without predicting or assuming the result of my research, which is the principle of grounded theory. What I really looked for in the data was that the truth was not what was discovered but what was (re)established through the process of the participant's lives (Glaser, 1998).

For data analysis, the audio data was transcribed verbatim and translated into English since the interview language was in her mother tongue. The language was first translated by myself as the researcher and my dissertation advisor who is a Korean American, and then checked by

<sup>1</sup> When I use the term "critical" in this paper, I follow Brutt-Griffler and Samimy's (1999) statement which is based on the term "*critical theories* which are positioned in relation to counterhegemonic social movements" (Fraser, 1987, p. 31, as cited in Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999, p. 419, emphasis in original).

the participant for the member checking. In the data analysis, the study has focused on obtaining core categories. Thus the analysis was iterated until it was saturated from the conceptualization of the data in terms of coding (open, axial, and thematic codings), sorting, and memoing (Charmaz, 2006) from which meaningful themes were emerged to account for the research topic.

## IV. RESULTS

The first section shows the results from data collected in 2011, and the second one presents the results in 2016.

### 1. Storyteller and Artist

#### 1) Appreciating Sense and Beauty

Jaemin perceives herself primarily as a storyteller in her English classroom. For her, a storyteller is a person who explains and clears up the meaning of texts and connects them with the world. What she ultimately intends to achieve in her English reading class is to provide her students with meaning and how to find the meaning. As a storyteller, she attempts to read, understand, interpret, and explain the class texts and her students' thoughts of them while affording basic language knowledge.

She also considers herself an artist since language teaching is something beautiful like an art for her, rather than a skill or a technique. Thus her role is to share with her students in learning to appreciate the beauty of and beautiful use of the English language. In an essay writing class, for example, she wants her students not only to grasp the meaning of the essay, but also to feel the beauty from the writing in the same way as they might appreciate a musical piece:

An essay has an introduction, main body, and conclusion. It's the same for a sonata. They are ultimately developed in the same way. The process from the introduction of the theme toward making a concord later [is the same]. We can feel the beauty from language in the essay as in a sonata. We can also find meaning out of the essay and adapt it in our lives. (Interview, April 18, 2011)

As stated above, she considers her class similar to a process of making art, consequently creating meaning. This is a characteristic that her class demonstrates.

#### 2) With a Text, Herself

On top of focusing on language and language education, collecting and selecting a variety of class materials is part of the process of searching for meaning for Jaemin. They encompass various issues in every field of society such as gender, generation, class, and race, and through these kinds of topics, she intends to help her students em-

pathize and reflect on others' experiences in their lives. This is a practice of unearthing connections between diverse sources, and consequently an action to excavate meaning.

Jaemin's class materials – including books, handouts, and documentary videos – are also found in the observation, dealing with various kinds of genres and fields. What she hopes to ultimately accomplish from this data is to help her students find and connect the common meaning on a particular issue, and in turn, make meaning in their own lives through discussion of those meaningful issues.

The connection of class materials with class participants' own experiences and views has to do with what texts mean to her:

A variety of things around us can be texts, not only textbooks. I play a role in delivering, connecting, and interpreting the texts. I mean, not simply absolving knowledge of the English language. And what can we do with those texts? I would say, through the processes of treating the texts, I ultimately want to draw on a change of ourselves. (April 18, 2011)

She is convinced that her involvement in the class works is to enable understanding of others as well as self-understanding for her and her students. Her emphasizing meaning via making connections between teaching materials is to become an empowering agent of change.

Peculiar and significant in her perception, however, the teacher "herself" is also a text for her students to learn from and tells her stories, that is, her experiences and viewpoints about the given texts, for the purpose of making connections. This is why she and one of her students, Sang-Hyun exchanged their experiences in the class as the video illustrates. During her discussion about a topic, she pronounced his name wrongly, and he reacted instantly and began to uncover his experience in which he was hurt by his teacher's words during his secondary education. And then she was reminded of an article that deals with an author who lived in an orphanage and whose teacher called his name incorrectly in his school days and it hurt him. Jaemin was empathetic since she herself also wrongly called Sang-Hyun, Seung-Hyun. It appeared at the moment, she tried to associate his and her experiences with the topic of the reading.

What is implied in the function of herself as a text is her conception is that each person has their own unique significance, and she has one too. As an answer to the interview question, "what is your teaching philosophy?" she talks about her belief in her own way:

I am a value in myself. It's very important with what value the teacher enters the classroom. I bring my own philosophy so that my students take their own values with them from the learning. I might be a person to help and support them to have their own value though I don't usually force it. (April 18, 2011)

As in above excerpt, her role is to provide, as a source, her notions and perspectives for her students to use for their learning and meaning making.

### 3) Depending on What Type of Teacher

Jaen's most central concern is what a teacher thinks before and after the class. She believes what the teacher should regard most is "what" and "why" rather than "how" she teaches. She elaborates on the controversial issue in ELT:

We too often talk about the methodology whenever we get together in social settings, workshops, and seminars, etc. But I doubt how long its effect lasts. Only when a teacher changes her paradigm and reflects on 'why I teach' will the methodology organically develop within the teacher. Otherwise, it will not be internalized even though she repeatedly attempts to learn it. (April 18, 2011)

Her recognition represents that most KELTs have a strong motivation toward acquiring methodology and how much they stick to it. Yet she questions their emphasis on it:

An idea is hidden in their motivation to learn methodology, which is, they feel there's something lacking in their teaching. They are looking for something new, ignorant to themselves but no more than general educational philosophy, or history of certain theory. The reason for teaching should be taught in teacher training programs. They need to provide something substantially necessary, foundational. I learned about critical theory, and it helped. (April 18, 2011)

As in the above, she points out that Korean language teachers are inclined to seek methodology for the purpose that needs to be reexamined, asserting their interests should be turned around focusing on more fundamental issues for their teaching, and the curriculum of teacher education programs should be revised. She strongly states that the methodology will automatically take care of itself after enough self-examination on the content and motivation for the teaching activity. Similar to the concern with methodology, according to her perception, improving their English ability and an emphasis on it may be inevitable and leaves them with no room for interests other than English language itself. Depending upon her acknowledgment about Korean ELT, simple but problematic, their main interest is on 'how can I speak English more fluently?' so they can't even think of how to make use of it. The necessity for English speaking ability is too burdensome for them. She understands that most KELTs have a passion to become more knowledgeable, but she also believes this passion is only a small part of the ability to teach well.

Jaen's point of view of types of teachers is very important and brings about a disputable problem of ELT as well, which is nativism, including both NEST's and NNEST's. Acknowledged as a KELT who teaches EFL,

she ignores or denies a sense of a dichotomy between native and non-native teachers in English education:

No matter whether a teacher is a native speaker or not, what's important is what type of teacher he is. Just because a foreign teacher speaks English fluently does not make him a wonderful teacher. Then, are all the KELTs wonderful teachers? And also, if a class aims at improving reading comprehension, grammar, or exam-taking knowledge, what's the benefit of creating the categories of NEST or NNEST? (April 18, 2011)

As in this quotation, she recognizes that nativism does not play a role in the ability to become a good language teacher. For her, social constructs like nativism of language does not belong to the core with which she is concerned. Rather than such external factors, the perspectives or philosophies the teacher has are what really matters.

### 4) Through Self-reflection

Jaen emphasized on meaning-making activities and her students' practicing reflection on themselves for her class. Her belief in the value of making connections lets her have a tool of self-reflection as she tries to interpret her students' ideas to make meaning by letting them talk and present in groups and write their own experiences and reviews as homework. The researcher's observation of her reading class enables her to notice the teacher's motivation of the whole process of what she is doing in the classroom – summarizing a literary work dealt with during the last class, confirming her students' writing their reflection essays, and letting a volunteer introduce his essay to the class. Rather than obtaining knowledge simply for knowledge sake, or only understanding the literal meaning of the language, she makes the interchangeability of knowledge worthwhile between students and between the teacher herself and students so that they can reconstruct their own "knowledge," i.e., constructed meaning.

In the video where the researcher observed her graduate class, she reminded her students of her distribution of an article in her previous class titled 'Butterflies' written by Roger Dean Kiserdml, checked their homework of reflective writing, briefly summarized the article, asked her students to volunteer to present their writings, and then commented on two students' presentations. In order to assist her students with English vocabulary acquisition, she had them work in small groups to find some vocabulary associated with butterfly, jot down the vocabulary they found on the board, and explain the meaning of some words. This group activity seemed to help her students work together as a team. While monitoring the activity, she picked a word 'metamorphosis' out of the words on the board and accounted for its meaning, a symbol of change. This vocabulary activity also represents her concern with the students' meaning-making action through their reflection on the language:

Whenever my students do vocabulary work, they find words like ‘metamorphosis’ or ‘butterfly effect’ without exception. The discussion always leads to the topic of ‘teacher’ as a final class goal, no matter what topic I deal with. I think that a teacher can have the same effect on students as the butterfly effect has. I have them think of that. (June 20, 2011)

Encouraging the students to be engaged in the meaning more deeply, she showed a picture and a video titled ‘Butterfly – The Mystery of Transformation’ which described the process of how a larva transforms into a butterfly. After she provided the students with an article regarding its definition and origin, she gave them some time to try to make their own definitions about the butterfly effect in order to encourage them to derive their own ideas from their thinking. The class observation made me further perceive her motivation and reason for her class:

She said that the end of the world should be like a butterfly, and ultimately its reason is that we should make the world better. It’s a unique idea that I have never heard of, but I have suddenly realized that I have always had the same idea in my mind, and maybe it is in everyone’s mind. She expressed a concern with the teacher herself, namely the difficulties as a teacher – how well she can play a role of mediator linking class materials with meaning. I could see how meaningful this type of class was for her. (The researcher’s note, May 30, 2011)

My note as a researcher is an echo of her emphasis on self-reflection, the teacher’s necessity and desire for a change like that of a butterfly.

A significant support, she acknowledges, to exercise her own reflection is sensitivity to language. The goal of reflection for her always lies in becoming a teacher that has an ability to see through things, so to be well-versed in reading and comprehending between the lines of language, her students’ views, and more widely the world’s. Not only has she encouraged her students to practice reflection, but she herself has been trained to get benefits from reflexivity as a critical language practitioner before she becomes a teacher:

Whenever I take a look at the reflection journals written by myself during my M.A. and Ph.D. studies, they are still touching, and I come to recognize the potential of reflective writing again. Obviously the more I’m engaged in reflexivity, the more I think of myself not anything else. (April 18, 2011)

With this profound benefit she experienced, what she desires as a teacher is to give and share the same thing with her students. That is why she practices and emphasizes reflective writing in her class.

## 2. For a Change

### 1) Beyond Knowledge

To support the function of her language class she mentioned in 2011, she suggested her vision of what an ideal language class should provide:

They read and translate. What does it mean? Their English ability may improve a little. So what? I teach the same thing [i.e., English knowledge] as other teachers do because after all, it is English class. But it’s not what I envision since I should teach something beyond that. If it’s only teaching English, they can learn without teachers. (Interview, Jan. 5, 2016)

She implies that her role as a language teacher is something different and more meaningful than merely providing knowledge of English. This recognition is consistent with her viewpoint represented in 2011 in which learners should feel sense and beauty in the language class on one hand, and the importance of teachers is highlighted on the other hand.

### 2) The Purpose of Self-reflection: For a Better World

As for the relationship between knowledge and textual meaning in her previous statement in 2011, her attitude is clear in explaining the ultimate goal for knowledge is reconstructed through reflections:

That’s for a better world. A better world, I mean, is a world where democracy and justice are realized as shown in the curriculum [of Korean education], a society in which cooperation rather than competition is highly appreciated. To teach students how to live together with others in this world should be what the teacher should do in the class. So, the interchangeability of knowledge should also be achieved through cooperation. But actually, this is important values we cannot know unless we learn and experience. (Feb. 17, 2016)

She believes that the above account of the better society should apply to English education and should be a class goal, and also the teacher herself should practice it. However, she has doubts about how much her idea has been practiced in Korean education:

But I think that this thinking is not being realized in the education field, and I regard it as one of the reasons why the world is getting tougher and tougher for us to live in. The teacher lies at the center of education. I have my own value and philosophy or view of the world. In other words, I myself am a basis to see the world and people. (Feb. 17, 2016)

She stresses the role of teachers again and suggests a rationale for putting a priority on herself as a teacher.

### 3) By Means of Teacher Agency

While linguistic fluency is most desired for English language teachers in general, language speaking ability does not seem to be essential for Jaein to become a good language teacher. This stems from what she wants to achieve in her classroom, a goal of change, not a mastery of four language skills. She indicates that KELTs are experiencing greater and greater disadvantages since Korean universities are putting a priority on linguistic ability in their evaluation of language teachers:

KELTs feel uneasy. They may be evaluated as teachers lacking ability by their students or students' parents, only by the criterion of poor English ability. They don't consider other things. There is a stigma in our society, and what I really worry about is the existing societal judgment of fluent-speaking English teachers as superior and less fluent teachers as inferior. (March 1, 2016)

Her specification above implies that language fluency is not only a factor that needs to be appraised, but rather versatility should be considered for requirements of language teacher. As a consequence anyway, the KELTs are being forced by universities to only use English in their classes. This monolingualism (i.e., "using English only") makes teachers feel limited in their ability, even though they can flexibly use both English and their mother tongue. This is a situation where the teacher's agency is required. How much he would use English or Korean in his class is within the teacher's discretion. Her following narrative represents where the agency is required:

If my class is an English only class, I would not go over all things I want to talk about. And the students would be silent. Students are scared to speak English. One day a student said to me, 'I was so worried you would make me speak in English.' I thought that's a pity. (March 1, 2016)

In the class observation in 2011 as well, it was evidenced that using English was optional for her, and even neither obligatory nor appropriate for her class since her students' level of language proficiency was so low that it would be impossible for them to understand an English-speaking-only class as she acknowledged.

## V. DISCUSSION

The data gleaned from two periods of time represents that perceptions of the second data collection in 2016 are consistent with those of the first data collection in 2011, in which the participant teacher's recognitions and perspectives are supported and strengthened in later ones. In fact her perceptions are still stronger and clarified in detail in later interviews. For example, she suggests in the second data collection that the purpose of self-reflection previously mentioned is to make a better world. Furthermore, the

teacher Jaein's recognitions have become focused more on teacher agency and empowerment toward teacher change or transformation. However this point of view is not only in the same vein as regarding herself as a value, so a text for her students but also accounts for a rationale for her self-reflection. That's how her perceptions for two periods of time are coherent with each other.

As specifically discussed with Jaein's consciousness, she plays a role of a critical and reflective language practitioner who makes attempts and efforts to teach differently from the existing educational ideologies that may be also called traditional methods of teaching governed by results-driven pedagogy (Gaylie, 2009). Rather, her viewpoint goes beyond the information-transmission perspective (Freeman, 2002). The methods she chooses are to comprehend and connect language, its interlocutors, and the world around them so as to make reader-oriented meanings other than the textual meaning literally translated. This meaning-making process she practices is in accord with the view that "the teachers' role is to design learning experiences that actively engage students in sense-making" (Parra et al., 2015, p. 20). She is not a transmitter of knowledge who is expected to absorb knowledge and duplicate it later in her instructional actions (E. J. Kim, 2009; Spanier, 2001). Rather, she, as a guide, facilitator, and mentor (S. B. Park & J. Bang, 2016a; Spanier, 2001), plays a role of encouraging her students to apply it for their own reflection and meaning-making. Moreover, she resolutely uses herself as a learning tool in addition to the general class materials such as documents, audio and video materials. She perceives herself as a significant tool for her students to refer to, make use of, and relate to in the classroom so the students benefit as learners.

An essential tool for this value discovery and her professional development is self-reflection. Reflection is viewed as the cornerstone of her professional development (Kwakman, 2003). The use of reflective practice in her professional development is based on the belief that she can improve her own teaching by consciously and systematically reflecting on her teaching experience (Farrell, 2007), and she aims at reaching a level where her action in the classroom is guided by reflection and critical thinking (Farrell, 2007; Richards, 1990). Furthermore, using reflection has a clear purpose of changing herself as a teacher as well as her students, by her opening up to learn more about herself and her students (Parra et al., 2015). It is apparent that the experience with her engagement in critically reflective teaching does not only involve increasing English technical knowledge, but also an inclination to act for a change and to become a social and historical being, a deep thinking and communicative being as well as a transformer and a creator (Freire, 2006, recited in Parra et al., 2015). Her idea is an echo of that "The way reflection shows itself most fully is....a change of self" (Boody, 2008, p. 505). For transformation which is her final destination as a teacher, it is inevitable to have the teacher's reflexivity on herself and on her actual teaching. As such, she dealt with the metamorphosis of a butterfly as a class

topic, and the process in itself symbolizes transformation which she desires in her life as an educator. I as a researcher felt that she would like to become a transformative teacher and learner like a butterfly. It also has authentic meaning of what she said in relation to her aspiration to become a teacher who is well-versed in reading, comprehending, and associating a variety of sources with the world. That Jaein inherited this approach of language education from her M.A. and Ph.D. programs has allowed her to examine critically what she believes and values in her work since she became a teacher. At that time she believed that the critical examination would bring forth effective professional development as a teacher. From the teacher learning perspective, her experience at graduate schools and her basic teaching preferences have shaped her habits of mind about teaching (Cranton & King, 2003). Besides, the concept of transformation has a deeper motivation and goal in her language teaching, which encompass the ultimate purpose of living together in the world. Therefore connecting class topics with herself and her students, so the meaning-making process would be a prerequisite for a transformation of herself. Consequently, Jaein's putting importance on self-reflection and self-evaluation should be attributed to her desire for change as a way of accomplishing her dream as a social member as well as developing her teacher identity.

As understood according to Van Manen's (1977) three levels of reflection – technical, interpretive or practical, and emancipated or critical, Jaein's reflection exceeds technical reflection where attention is given to the polishing of methods. Rather, her reflection would belong to practical reflection in which every teacher is a generator of knowledge and the teacher's choice is founded on a value-based interpretive framework or critical reflection in which teaching practices are loaded with value. Also, while using practical reflection teachers seek to criticize ideology through the inspection of a foundational value system (Zhao, 2012). These key concepts of practical and critical reflections seem to parallel Jaein's basic assumptions that she is a text in herself since she is a value or significance and that her teaching practice is to create values.

Given this practical reflection leads to the liberation and empowerment of teachers (Schön, 1983; Zhao, 2012), the empowerment of Jaein herself as a critical language teacher plays another important role in achieving her goal of transformation. The teacher agency is the practice of empowerment by which the teacher could actively make use of her own decisive ability, thereby making herself an independent decision maker. In the process of teacher development, it gives birth to the change of both teacher the self and the activity engaged in (Johnson, 2009). As such, teachers' potentially transformative power is largely dependent on agency, a capability of the individual teacher to make a difference (Ollerhead, 2010). Being an independent agent, she uses her teacher discretion as related to language for her class, either with English or Korean. Depending upon her perception, a teacher can exercise her agency which language would be most appropriate in

terms of language proficiency of the level of the students. However, teacher agency, namely the right to choose the class language is not simply a matter of the choice of language. It specifies her recognition which is noticeably embedded in her talk about the significance of what type of teacher, considering "what" and "why" a priority, not "how" in teaching plans and practices. This conveys that a teacher should significantly consider what and why she teaches, which implicates that the teacher can be an agent based on the teacher's robust belief and philosophy on her class. Thus Jaein denies a strong attention to methodology and its learning which should be organically grown out of the teacher's belief system but is still most KELTS' concern. Underlying her system, there lies in her ambition to change the world, the class, and essentially herself at the center. Jaein's identity as a transformative teacher has been constructed with this thought system which has been formed by her teaching experiences, numerous reflections of herself, and a solid aim and constant yearning toward transformation. This is also what she desires for teacher education programs in the Korean ELT field to be more concerned with.

## VI. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS ON TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

This study explored how a KELTS Jaein's identities have been constructed by delving into her perceptions of herself as a language teacher and her teaching practices. Her perceptions have some significances in accounting for teacher the self, ELT as a foreign language, and other classroom components such as class issues or the relationship between the teacher and students. She is not a technician simply promoting knowledge of the four major language skills, but rather creates meaning and value from and for herself and her students in her teaching. In making such a creation, she is definitely an independent decision-maker and a reflective practitioner. Through the reflection on herself and her teaching and also urging her students to do their own reflection, she hopes to continuously connect with things around her, so change occurs in herself above all. It also helps her dream of a democratic society living together, and she regards it as a class goal. On a basis of her thought system and real teaching practice observed, she is already a transformative language teacher in ways discussed from the critical theory perspective. The meaning-making process she wants to have in her class is itself a practice to discover herself as a transformative teacher and it also represents a stable motivation for her professional development, in which she is in an on-going construction of teacher identity, and the identity has been constructed with a concept of transformation.

The transformation could be individual or bigger in scope and be an essential topic in the future teacher education programs in the Korean ELT arena. What is desired in the programs is the KELTS' transformation that is operated at a psychological level (MacLellan, 2012), allowing them to contemplate themselves and their teaching practices that

may have been regarded as traditional. In the process, critical reflection would be at the center as it involves examination of personal and professional belief systems. Since perception is subjective, it can be distorted. Through self-reflection, the teachers would learn to see beyond the filters of their past and the blinders of their experiences (Larrivee, 2000). Therefore it is implicated that they need to develop the practice of self-reflection. This could be an accurate reflection on Jaen's conceptions of what and why we teach.

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