Modern English Education

http://dx.doi.org/10.18095/meeso.2019.20.2.76

English Pre-service Teachers' Identity and the Negotiation of the Self*

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ARTICLE INFO

Received 5 March 2019
Revised 30 April 2019
Accepted 17 May 2019

Examples in: Teacher Identity
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Levels: Tertiary

KEYWORD

ESL/
pre-service teacher/
non-native English learner/
teacher identity/
제2언어로서 영어/
예비 교사/
영어가 모국어가 아닌 학습자/
교사의 정체성

ABSTRACT

Kim, Jungyin. (2019). English pre-service teachers' identity and the negotiation of the self. *Modern English Education, 20*(2), 76-89.

There is and continues to be growing research in language teacher identity; however, relatively limited empirical evidence exists on the development of pre-service teacher identity in the teachers experiences in teacher education programs. Taking on a qualitative case study approach, the current study explores a small group of pre-service ESL teachers in a 12-month TESOL Master's Education program in a U.S. university in the mid-west. Data include document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and class observations. By focusing on the contested, discursive and positionality of identity formation, the current study conceives identity formation as an essential feature in teacher development and practice. Results of the study suggest that through their experiences in the teacher education courses, pre-service teachers (PTs) negotiate their identities as 1) they situate the self as an ESL teacher by means of interactions online and in person in class activities, tasks, and class discussions; 2) they interact with other educators and PTs; 3) they negotiate their teacher identities as the program instructors and other PTs make use of their experiences in the local schools as important resources in the community of teacher learners. The implications of the results show that teacher education programs for language teachers need to incorporate identity as a specific interest in teacher practices.

I. INTRODUCTION

During the past 20 years, English language learners from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds represent the fastest growing group of student populations in U.S. public schools (Bukor, 2014; Goldenberg, 2008). Currently, one among eight students are labeled as an ESL student in U.S. classes. Researchers project by 2024 nearly one among five young students enrolled in schools will be an ESL learner (e.g., Cline & Necochea, 2014). As ESL learners learn English, they also need linguistic assistance in order to learn academic knowledge content. Having to address the needs, challenges, and the diverse backgrounds of these learners, ESL teachers' work is quite challenging and have an important role in the education of ESL learners (H. J. Kim, 2019). For example, H. J. Kim (2019) has noted the challenges novice English teachers face in negotiating various professional identities in their respective schools. Thus, preparing pre-service teachers for this demanding position in teacher programs is an

* The research was supported by "Research Base Construction Fund Support Program" funded by Chonbuk National University in 2018.
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important component in pre-service teacher (PT) development as future professional educators.

While the teacher education program's preparations provide pre-service teachers access to much needed pedagogical knowledge and skills, it is also comprised of building teacher identities. Partly through PT's experiences in the program and through internship opportunities, it is necessary that pre-service teachers go through the transitional process of being a graduate student to becoming an ESL professional. Depending on the policies of specific ESL programs, pre-service teachers need to know how to balance between several responsibilities and roles, which further highlights the importance of this transitional process. Thus, exploring pre-service teacher's identity formation during their experiences in their teacher education program may potentially illustrate valuable insights into their growth as ESL professionals.

As one important component in teacher education practices, teacher education classes provide meaningful experiences where PTs make sense of and negotiate their teacher identities. Examining these experiences is worth noting to gain a subtle understanding of ESL teachers' identities; however, there is relatively little empirical research that highlight or offer information on ways PTs make sense of and negotiate their teacher identities. Since English is used as a medium of instruction for ESL students, and ESL learners are the most diverse student population participating in the negotiation of linguistic and cultural identity work as they simultaneously learn English and the curriculum content, the identity construction of ESL teachers also requires much research focus (Lasky, 2005; Reynolds, 2014). Thus, the purpose of this qualitative case study is to investigate ways three ESL PTs take part in negotiating their teacher identity in the teacher education program's classes. The current study specifically addresses the main research question: Through participation in their teacher education coursework in a TESOL Master's of Education program, in what ways do three ESL pre-service teachers negotiate and build their developing identities as teachers?

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Learning to be a Teacher

Learning to be a teacher from a socio-cultural view is seen as a complex and developmental process which is composed of "engagement in the social practices associated with learning and teaching" (Compernolle & Williams, 2013, p. 280). Learning to be a teacher is informed by this engagement in various social contexts synchronically as well as diachronically (Kubanyiova & Crookes, 2016). In the process of schooling, PTs take on roles not that of teachers but more as "apprentices of observation" (Veenman, 1984, p. 151). Therefore, before matriculating into the program, they have built their own "interpretive frame" about teaching and learning (Alsup, 2006, p. 221). Through this interpretive frame they make meaning of their experiences and teaching theories and build their own pedagogical knowledge (Peacock, 2001). As PTs participate in teacher education activities and interact with other PTs, teachers, students, parents and administrators their teacher knowledge evolves (Kubanyiova & Crookes, 2016). Afterwards, as they become members in communities of practices as professional teachers, learning how to teach continues to evolve through their participation in different teaching contexts with new social practices (Vosniadou, 1996; Watzke, 2007). Therefore, the dynamic and lifelong nature of teacher learning takes place when teachers reshape and continue to question their self-understandings as teachers, understandings of their teaching activities and their students as well as their experiences and values in various teaching situations (Yates & Muchisky, 2003).

Studies in language teacher education have illustrated the importance of teacher identity both in teacher learning and in teachers' teaching practices (Alsup, 2006; Friesen & Besley, 2013). The identity of a teacher, which is multi-dimensional and continuously shifting, embodies a frame of reference for teachers to envision their idea of an ideal teacher (Alsup, 2006). Continuous research in second language teacher education began to gain interest in how certain ideas teachers have change over time, and ways teacher learning influences themselves and their language teaching activities (Compernolle & Williams, 2013). Since the recent past, scholars have continued to call attention to teacher identity as an important aspect in the "language classroom's socio-cultural space" (e.g., Fraser, Kennedy, Reid, & Mckinney, 2007, p. 162). Scholars have conceived of second language teacher identity as a hopeful site for "pedagogical mediation" in learning how to teach with a specific aim to address second language teachers' preparation in teacher education programs (Lamote & Engels, 2010, p. 11). In this regard, negotiating the development of teacher identity is part and parcel of the experiences of learning how to teach.

Perceived from a socio-cultural view, PTs' values, prior experiences and ideologies about learning and teaching contribute to their initial identity as a teacher or so called, "interpretive frame," when they enter the education program (Eyers, 2014). The PTs' interpretive frame continue to shift in diverse social spaces in the context of their teaching; moreover, the evolving identity of the PTs inform how they understand their own learning experiences as they continuously interact with other PTs in the program (Tsui, 2011; Watzke, 2007). Their identities play an important role on where and how they decide to channel their energy as they make decisions about their teaching practices and behaviors in the class (Alsup, 2006; Farrell, 2011). Moreover, they negotiate and put into practice their teacher identities in various learning spaces while they make meaning of their learning, teaching and participation in the teacher education discourse through internship and coursework (Martel, 2015; Sachs, 2010; Tsui, 2011). Thus, one can claim that the development of teacher identity and

learning how to teach are interconnected and significantly contribute to teacher development.

2. Identity of Teachers in the Education Program

Past studies on the identity of L2 pre-service teachers examined ways courses in teacher education programs supported the re-negotiation and re-construction of L2 pre-service teachers' identity (e.g., Schepens, Aelterman, & Vlerick, 2009). Schepens, Aelterman and Vlerick (2009) explored 38 pre-service teachers' journal entries that connected concepts (i.e., identity and language, linguistic diversity and native speakerism) discussed in an L2 theory class with the participants' trajectory of language learning. The authors attempted to gain insight into the interconnection between PT's identities and the imagined communities they hoped to belong to. The findings showed that PTs were able to situate themselves as legitimate L2 users through the space provided by class discussions and readings. Similarly, Masoumpanaha and Zarei (2014) designed a critical second language education course for six EFL PTs in China and explored how the PTs negotiated and constructed their professional teacher identities. Through the course, the authors observed that PTs acquired a teacher identity that perceived English language teaching as "a tool for social change and empowerment" (p. 1105). Rajagopalan and Llurda's (2005) study, which also focused on the discourses of teacher education programs, explored the identities of teachers using PTs' assignment portfolios. The authors argued that theories learned from the courses provided PTs with various identity options and new discourses in order to build agency as legitimate professionals, which in turn is likely to be linked to their future teaching practices.

Other researchers focused on ways PTs' developing teacher identity informed PTs' participation in teacher learning activities during coursework in the teacher education program. In particular, Lynn and Smith-Maddox (2007) aimed to understand what practical or theoretical aspects were useful in the course work of three ESL PTs. The authors discovered that the PTs' emerging identity informed the theoretical and practical implications of their teaching. Moreover, Cochran-Smith (2000) viewed the teacher education classrooms as micro settings that reflect a broader community of practices where learning to teach takes place in PTs' participation in "discourses and activities that are mediated by cultural artifacts" (p. 17). By focusing on identity as an important component in teacher growth, the researcher argues that PTs continuously negotiate their identity through interaction in the education classes as they make meaning of L2 teaching and learning. In addition, Walkington (2010) highlights the borders between the physical space of the classroom and the cultural context of a class and makes note of teacher identity and its positioning. Within these borders exists those positioned as students, second language teachers, and speakers of other languages. The researcher claims that PTs negotiate, appropriate and challenge these positions. Thus, the Walkington's ontological viewpoint illustrates the interplay between the discursive and the physical in understanding the PTs' production of self-experience, action and thought.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Traditionally, second language teacher identity has been examined in connection with concepts of practice and discourse. From a theoretical perspective, Sachs (2010) offers an elaborate model of teacher identity. The author presents the idea that novice second language teachers negotiate and mediate their identity through the discourse of a second language classroom and community, and course curriculum. While the author does examine the outcomes of these discourses, he places particular focuses on the structures of these discourses. By integrating various theories on identity, Fraser et al. (2007) merge post-structural and socio-cultural approaches to language in order to define identity. The authors claim that the socio-cultural view of "identity as practice" and the post-structuralist view of "identity in discourse" should be integrated when understanding and defining second language teacher identity (p. 159). Thus, the identity of a teacher from a post-structuralist perspective is perceived as an identity that is negotiated and developed through discourse and language, while a socio-cultural perspective makes reference to the development of teacher identity through pedagogical practices with communities of professionals.

Elaborating on Fraser et al.'s (2007) integration of theories, Martel (2015) examines different ways teacher identity is developed by utilizing various conceptual lenses. The author argues that second language teachers participate in negotiated, discursive and contested formations of identity. The discursive nature of teacher identity in Martel's argument correlates with Fraser et al.'s (2007) premise. Yet, he further highlights the contested and negotiated aspect of identity development. In doing so, not only does he appropriate the concept of negotiation (Wenger, 1998) over meaning in his theoretical frame, he also integrates the concept of identity from Wenger (1998) by featuring power relation conflicts when negotiating membership in a community. Thus, Martel's framework further expands on Fraser et al.'s post-structuralist perspective on language by referencing the agency and subjectivity of the teacher within the network of power relations that are sustained through discourse.

This study appropriates the framework of teacher identity development from Martel's (2015) study with one additional concept the researcher adds to the current study: the nature of positioning in identity development. While Martel (2015) briefly notes the concept of positioning to understand teacher identity, the concept is not discussed as part of his central theoretical framework. Thus, to thoroughly understand teacher identity, this study follows Fraser et al.'s (2007) suggestion of integrating various theoretical perspectives by perceiving the nature of identity as situational and dynamic. From Martel's framework, the study also conceptualizes teacher agency within power relations within the premise of positioning the-

ory (Davies & Hunt, 1994) that Linehan and McCarthy (2000) further elaborates on. Further explanation of this theory is discussed below.

Davies and Hunt (1994) argue that an individual operates in discourses that give him or her access to 'potential' subject positions. The authors argue that positioning is a discursive process which occurs when one gives the self and is given by others a specific subject position that is historically and socially constructed and negotiated. An individual gains access to various resources such as values, images and practices through different subject positions; yet, the kinds of resources an individual chooses to appropriates and internalize are dependent on his or her situation and circumstance (Watson, 2007).

Following Linehan and McCarthy's (2000) elaborative explanation of positioning theory, the authors perceive the negotiation of positional identity as a mediation that occurs in the transaction between both the micro and macro structure. That is, rather than focusing on only the micro or macro structural influence on one's positioning, the authors highlight the interplay between the micro and macro at the meso-level (for example, at the community or organization level) by examining the "here-and-now" interaction that occurs between the two (p. 441). Linehan and McCarthy (2000) are aware of the complexity of positioning, which is seen in the relationship between local interactions and the cultural factors that come into play during the formation of one's positionality. Linehan and McCarthy (2000) thus claim that specific acts we take in forming our moment-to-moment positioning as well as our identity that develops over time mutually inform each other through 1) interaction 2) type of situation, and 3) artifacts. This approach to understanding the formation of positioning provides the researcher a valuable tool to explore PTs' negotiation of identity positioning in the TESOL program's coursework, which is situated at the intersection in the moment-to-moment (synchronic) and across time (diachronic) identities of the teacher.

IV. METHODS

1. Program Background

Taking on a qualitative case study (Yin, 2015), the current study explores three pre-service ESL teachers' (Jina, Leya, Eve) identity development during their teacher preparation in a TESOL Master's of Education program at a midwest U.S. research university. The program offers a TESOL Master's of Education and a K-12 certificate, which allows pre-service teachers to teach ESL learners after their degree. The program requires PTs to take 40 hours of coursework and two internship positions: one elementary school and one secondary school. The PTs in the current study were admitted to the program in the fall semester of 2013 and completed their course work in the summer of 2014. For the next two semesters (fall 2014 and spring of 2015) they were involved in their internship positions respectively for an elementary and secondary school.

2. Main Participants

During the study's design, seven PTs were enrolled in the TESOL Master's program and they were very willing to participate in the current study. However, without any specific explanation, one PT decided not to participate after the first interview session. The researcher made the decision to include Jina, Leya, and Eve as focal participants because based on the researcher's observation these three students had almost perfect attendance in the program's classes, and willingly offered their assignments for the study's document analysis (see Table 1 for an overview of the participants' background).

All the participants were female students in their twenties. All three students had diverse language learning and teaching experiences before matriculation into the program. Jina learned French as her second language in Canada during her elementary school years. Jina hoped to enroll in middle school in Canada and continue her studies in French; yet, her parents decided to move to the U.S. after she graduated from elementary school. She chose French as her second language in a public school in the U.S., but lost interest in learning French due to lack of excitement in learning the language. In her experience teaching, Jina tutored international university students and high school students with learning disabilities for one year.

In eighth grade Eve began taking Spanish classes. She felt that the classes were not enough to help her understand the professor's Spanish when she took an intermediate level Spanish class at college. After two and a half years working as a health administrator for a company, she decided to make changes to her career as language educator. Eve made the move to Nicaragua and completed a one-semester TESOL certificate program. Afterwards, she worked in an adult language program in Nicaragua for a year and then later moved back to the U.S. to teach bilingual high school students. Eve noted that most of her teaching practices were informed by grammar error correction from her prior Spanish language classes.

Leya took Spanish classes when she was young in order to communicate with her close relatives in Argentina. After Leya stayed one year in Argentina, she took Spanish language and culture classes at the university there over the summer. Leya had studied Spanish most of her life and continued to take Spanish classes in her college years. She noted that her year-long stay in Argentina was essential in developing her cultural and language knowledge, which she believed was a valuable resource as a future ESL teacher. In terms of her teaching experience, as a college student she had tutored sixth and seventh grade students learning Spanish in a local Latino community center.

TABLE 1
Participant Background

Name	Age	Gender	Live-abroad experience	Teaching experience	Teaching content
Jina	26	F	Canada	12 months	English & History
Leya	25	F	Argentina	8 months	Spanish
Eve	29	F	Nicaragua	18 months	English & Spanish

3. Researcher's Role

Born in South Korea but raised in the United States between the ages of three and fourteen, the researcher is ethnically Asian but connects with both cultures. The researcher has often grappled with this duality when inquired about the researcher's cultural background. The researcher speaks both English and Korean, but learned Korean through language classes in the U.S. at a local Korean church starting elementary school.

The researcher was near her final year as a doctoral student when designing this study. She worked as a teaching assistant (TA) in the Linguistics Department, which the TESOL Master's Program is part of. Through the teaching assistantship, the researcher learned more about the TESOL program and through her coursework gained growing interest in ways ESL teachers developed their identities as teachers. The focal PTs in this study did not take courses in which the researcher was an assistant or instructor, nor did the researcher have any connection with whom the PTs worked with in the elementary or secondary school internships. The coordinator of the program introduced the researcher to a group of seven PTs in one of the informal seminars. As the researcher attended the seminars, she had the opportunity to build rapport with the seven PTs. Also worth noting is that because the researcher had shared with the PTs her prior experience as an ESL teacher and current experience as an international teaching assistant before the official design of this study, many of the PTs were already aware of the researcher's general research interest in ESL learners' and teachers' identity development.

Moreover, during this study the researcher was also experiencing an identity formation and developmental change. Being an international student and working as a TA, the researcher considered how her colleagues (both international and domestic), instructors, and students discursively positioned the researcher. It was a learning experience for the researcher to learn about her roles in an educational context in the United States which the researcher was familiar and at the same time unfamiliar with as an international graduate student. The researcher's interaction in such context had a significant role in the researcher's growth as a scholar and the theoretical framework in which this study is situated in.

4. Data Collection and Analysis

For the current study, class observations, analysis of documents, and semi-structured interviews constituted the data collection. There were two main reasons for this method. First, in earlier studies in L2 teacher identity, these data collection tools were commonly used (e.g., Lynn & Smith-Maddox, 2007; Rajagopalan & Llurda, 2005). In order to gain a deeper understanding of the negotiation of teacher identity, the researcher decided to combine these data collection tools. Finally, the class observations, analysis of documents, and interviews allowed the researcher to gather data about various practices of the PTs' discursive positioning and negotiation of their identity. In doing so, the researcher was able to capture (at least partially) the interrelationship between the participants' identities in the "here-and-now interaction" and "across time" (Linehan & McCarthy, 2000, p. 440).

Jina, Leya, and Eve were interviewed twice for 55 to 80 minutes. One interview conducted was when they had already began their internship in fall 2014, and one was after graduation in winter 2015. Since there were various and complex social spaces for learning to teach in the education program, three sessions for the following courses were observed: *Introduction to Language Teaching* and *Youth Literacy.* Also, the PTs' assignments and online discussion posts from three other courses were analyzed (*Second Language Reading and Writing, Language Across Cultures, and Language and the School Curriculum*).

For the interviews, the researcher borrowed Baker's (2004) definition of interviews as a social practice. Rather than view the interview data as direct illustrations of the interviewee's attitudes and beliefs, the researcher perceived the data as a co-constructed meaning-making process between the interviewee and interviewer. The gathered interviews were "phenomenon" collaboratively created through the interaction between interviewee and interviewer (Baker, 2004, p. 165). Unlike the interviews, the PTs' class assignments and discussion posts were materials that were less affected by the research process and were part of the "natural context of the study" (Yin, 2015, p. 95) even though the researcher took part in the analysis of these materials. For data analysis, as the focal PTs discussed learning and teaching in second language through their own ideas related to issues in ESL education, the researcher sought to explore the PTs' discursive practices of positioning.

A constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2014), which included open and axial coding, was used for data analysis (see Table 2). In the beginning of data collection, the researcher familiarized herself with the data by taking field notes of class observations, listening to and transcribing the recorded interviews, and scanning course assignments and online discussion posts. The researcher managed data sources from the field notes, online discussion posts, collected assignments, and transcribed interviews. As the researcher organized the data, she placed particular focus on the PTs' negotiation process of teacher

identity by taking informal notes guided by the study's research question and goal. Based on the research goal, the researcher considered 1) the PTs' teaching values and belief about English language learners; 2) as developing ESL teachers, what issues the PTs perceive to be important; 3) ways the focal PTs position themselves in relation to other PTs, English language learners, and the learners' parents; 4) the PTs' conceptualization of teaching English language learners and their responsibilities as ESL teachers. These introductory notes constituted ways the researcher "questioned and conversed with the data" based on the research goal (Yin, 2015, p. 165).

For open coding, data was read several times and further notes were taken during the organization of data. Thereafter, the process of data coding was initiated which helped show how the theoretical framework was used in data analysis through "coding segments of text" (Ericsson, & Simon, 1993, p. 129). In this procedure, codes in connection to the data were aligned with data analysis and theory. By appropriating positioning theory in data analysis, the researcher attempted to discover examples of the PTs' practices of interactive and self-positioning and resources of these positioning acts in order to further understand their negotiation process in developing teacher identity. For example, in one of the coded data (e.g., *appreciate the culture of ESL learners, instructors and PTs as foundation for validation, and cohorts' support system*) the focal PTs labeled themselves, their colleagues, professional educators, and their current students' subject positions with specific "values, practices, and images" (Watson, 2007, p. 514). In the axial coding process, the researcher looked into the relationship between the open codes and categorized them into groups that correspond with positioning theory (e.g., position the self as ESL teacher). Based on the categorized groups, the researcher created statements for the findings of this study in order to show explanations of the data in which the focal PTs negotiate their identities as teachers.

TABLE 2
Data Coding

Open coding	Axial coding	Findings
• Appreciate culture of ESL learners • Prepare ESL learners' tools for assessment of language • Appreciate first language of ESL learners • Appropriate first language and home culture of ESL learners in the class • Positioning ESL teachers in relation to their home culture and first language • Academic language important to ESL learners' success	• Position the self as ESL teacher	• Through course assignments, interactions online and in person discussions, and class tasks, focal PTs negotiate identity as teachers during program's coursework
• Consider teaching values and beliefs • The social setting of the education program • Building knowledge via interaction • Cohort's support system • Share personal experiences	• Interact in community of teacher learners	• Through interaction with other PTs and profession educators, focal PTs negotiate identity as teachers during program's coursework
• Experiential knowledge value • Practice via courses and practicum • Opportunities for teaching practices • Instructors and PTs as foundation for validation • Interaction with different track PTs • Reply and acknowledge others' recognition	• Positioned as a professional in local school settings	• As the program instructors and other PTs made use of their experiences in the schools as important resources in the community of teacher learners, focal PTs negotiate identity as teachers during program's coursework

V. FINDINGS

Based on the data coding, Jina, Leya, and Eve negotiated their identities as teachers during their coursework by 1) positioning themselves as ESL teachers through course assignments, online interactions, in-person discussions, and class tasks; 2) interacting with other PTs and profession educators, and 3) making sense of and negotiating their teacher identities as the program instructors and other PTs made use of their experiences in the local schools as important resources in the community of teacher learners. Findings for each are presented below.

1. Position the Self as an ESL Teacher

Jina, Leya, and Eve positioned the self as an ESL teacher through the program's course assignments, discussions and activities. The courses provided the focal PTs a dialogic space to share thoughts and opinions about teaching ESL learners, and to negotiate and dialogically frame various "subject positionings" linked to specific images, practices and values (Linehan & McCarthy, 2000).

1) Jina's Appreciation for ESL Learners' First Language

Jina discussed how she thought about language in a different way when she wrote a lesson plan for *Assessing and Understanding Language* course:

> With the [language] objectives, I'm thinking is my phrasing clear? and whether the language I'm using is understood by these students. . . . When I'm thinking about the audience, I'm asking myself what an English learner would feel about my teaching. I mean, the process of building the [lesson] plan does give me a different outlook

> on how I use and how they process academic language. . . (Interview, Jina, March 03, 2014)

As Jina imagined her subject position as an ESL teacher and its expectations, she illustrates ways the lesson plan assignment prompted her to consider the goals and needs of the ESL learner. In this course and her practicum experiences, Jina considered the language needs of her ESL students and critically thought about addressing these needs in her teaching and design of the language assessment instruments. In doing so, she positioned herself as an ESL teacher who is able to perceive her own teaching from the learners' perspectives.

In addition, in the *Language Across Cultures* class Jina's learning experiences as a teacher supported her positioning as an ESL teacher that planned to work with ESL learners from culturally and linguistic diverse backgrounds. Jina's self-reflection assignment in the course describes one characteristic of Jina's ESL teacher identity, which is to support ESL students' first language and home culture. From an excerpt of her self-reflection assignment, Jina notes that

> As a future teacher, it's vital that we let students know that their native language is valued because it effects the way students learn English successfully. Most of the students speak another language, so my role is ensure they feel respected with regards to their language and culture. For me, this is my way of showing that I care who they are and what they bring to the class. . . Another important component is to have students share with me and the class their language and culture. This way, I'm building rapport with my students and building a safe environment for all students of different languages. (Self-reflection assignment, Jina, *Language Across Cultures*)

In this excerpt, Jina discursively situates herself as an ESL teacher that appreciates the culture and home language of ESL learners in order to support their classroom learning. This subtle awareness was part of Jina's identity as a competent ESL teacher identity she imagined herself to be. This example shows how Jina imagines what an effective ESL teacher should be; that is, one who invests in ESL learners' linguistic identities and shows appreciation of the students by valuing all languages and dismantling the deficit viewpoint of students' limited English (Lasky, 2005).

2) Eve's Belief: Easy Access to Content Knowledge

In the *Language Across Culture* online discussion board, Eve's comments illustrate how she discursively takes on the position of an ESL professional. In the discussion board topic about parents' role in the education of ESL learners, Eve positioned herself as an ESL teacher who took into consideration both the expectations of ESL parents and the students' academic goals when introducing the topic to her ESL students:

> Food for further thought: Expectations parents place on students are important. For future ESL teachers, it's important that we allow the content to be easily understood and accessible by our students as we consider their prior education experiences. It's one way to meet those expectations. It's also vital we not overlook the students' own aspirations and achievable academic goals. (Online post, Eve, *Language Across Culture*)

Eve notes the importance of ESL students' prior education experiences, expectations parents have on their children, and ESL students' personal academic goal and aspirations. Eve believes these factors inform the ESL teacher's responsibility to make content knowledge easily accessible and understood by ESL students. Eve's explanations seems to present her view of ESL teaching, which sees the importance of balancing between ESL education and students' personal aspirations. Eve's "self-reflective positioning" surfaced as she negotiated her values and roles in ESL teaching (Davies & Hunt, 1994).

In addition, Eve perceived that teaching and learning theories from her courses helped reinforce her image as a "reflective" and "tactical" ESL teacher:

> The rules and suggestions from theories about teaching and learning a second language gives me more awareness about what and how I am going about with teaching a class. . . . Things I knew but wasn't really aware of . . . the classes did help me with the tactics in doing my reflective teaching. (Interview, Eve, February 02, 2014)

Eve positioned herself as a reflective and tactical ESL teacher as she learned and critically thought about second language theories in her teaching. This statement confirms the idea that when teachers reflect on their future teaching they take part in acts of positioning, which exemplifies on aspect of teacher identity development (Stuart & Thurlow, 2000).

3) Leya's Appreciation for Students' Home Language and Culture

Leya's online comments on the discussion board illustrates ways she made sense of the meaning of ESL teaching. In one online discussion board about revising a lesson plan in the *Language and the School Curriculum Class*, PTs were required to revise their lesson plan based on peer feedback. Leya developed a lesson plan for an advanced ninth and tenth grade ESL debate class on animal welfare. She made revisions on the lesson plan based on the questions and suggestions from her colleagues. As she replied to her peers' comments in the discursive space of the online discussion board, Leya was also positioning herself as an ESL teacher. One colleague, for instance, inquired about Leya's scaffolding strategy in the class debate in which Leya replied:

> Thanks. Maybe you're right about it being embedded culturally when students do the debate session with other

> students. I thought showing students documentary videos about animal rights would be enough, but I see the point in having to scaffold beyond that. I think I could do a mock debate with a fellow teacher and introduce a list of characteristics about debates. I could also do this lesson later in the school year since students need to build respect for each other in order to debate with one other. (Online post, Leya, *Language and the School Curriculum*)

As Leya responded to her peers' comments, she positioned herself as an ESL teacher and replied to the comments as if she were to actually carry out the lesson plan and consider the needs specific to ESL learners. Leya's reflection points out some of her priorities she wishes to demonstrate as a future ESL teacher: mutual respect among students, teacher modeling, and scaffolding. Moreover, in her grounded theory paper assignment in the *Language Across Culture* course, Leya described her idea of an effective ESL teacher. She outlined one facet of a teacher identity that reflected her instructional beliefs as an ESL teacher:

> There are several dimensions about being a teacher. Beyond methods, the human aspect is important as well as the culture and language in the class. For ESL teachers, one of the most important aspects teachers must adjust to is encouraging and supporting students' first language and culture. While in the recent past, mainstream assimilation into the U.S culture and the English only policy were upheld by many teachers, I strongly believe this approach harms the students' L1 cultural identity. What teachers should realize is that a strong command over students' first language may support their second language literacy practices. (Paper assignment, Leya, *Language Across Cultures*)

Leya outlined her perception of effective teaching in the ESL classroom, which she believes must consider the constant shift of the linguistic and cultural identities of ESL learners and consider students' background in their current learning in the U.S. classroom (Lasky, 2005). In doing so, she was illustrating her teaching values as a future ESL professional. As she wrote her assignment, Leya was also discursively stating her authority in order to challenge the dominant ideology that supports the 'one size fits all' method in ESL education (Martel, 2015).

Finally, in the *Youth Literacy* course, Jina, Eve, and Leya formed their subject position as ESL teachers. As part of their class assignment, the focal PTs selected a children's story book on social justice and multiculturalism for their internship in an elementary school. In the course, PTs were asked to do a presentation of a mock teaching by applying a reading strategy when reading the book to a group of elementary students of other languages. After presentations, PTs held a short peer discussion session about the effectiveness of the reading strategy. Before the discussion, the PTs had a short talk about the vocabulary items and offered comments about the pictures in the story book.

The researcher observed Jina's mock teaching of her selected children's book (*The Colors of Us*), which she read to her Level 1 elementary students two weeks ago. Jina presented her evaluation of the instructional value of the book, such as vocabulary, illustrations and grammar. Afterwards, she read the book out loud to her colleagues, imagining that her colleagues were elementary students. Jina selected a few vocabulary items to focus on as she read. In between her storybook reading, she attempted to have students elicit the meaning of each vocabulary word (e.g., shades, different, same) and then offered her own explanations. At the end of the reading session, Jina asked the students a final comprehension question:

> I'm curious guys. The speaker says we are all the same but different too. But, 'same,' and 'different' are two opposite words. This sounds pretty confusing, 'different' but the 'same' like being alike. What does this mean in the story? (Mock instruction, Jina, *Youth Literacy*)

After the mock teaching session, Jina shared the responses her second grade elementary students shared with her when she had actually implemented the story book in her own teaching: "Two were female students from China and one was a male student from Bolivia. One memorable response was from one Chinese student who said that they are the same because they were all learning English, which was not a response I had expected. I think it was kind of heart-warming."

In the read-aloud session, Jina had the opportunity to apply the reading strategies from the course and gain peer feedback. In addition, through the read-aloud activity, she was able to share her experiences teaching students of different levels and age. In doing so, Jina was able to position herself as an ESL teacher that actively participated in theorizing and making decisions about her students' comprehension abilities through the read-aloud English story book. Furthermore, in the learning space of the *Youth Literacy* class, Jina was able to share her feelings about the Chinese youth's answer ("it was kind of heart-warming") with her fellow colleagues, which reminds Jina and other PTs that the role of the teacher is an emotionally driven job and such experiences of emotions are a valuable component of teaching (Cowie, 2011).

2. Interact in Community of Teacher Learners

The PTs in the program took courses together for the next 12 months as a cohort, and some were designated to do their internship in the same schools with one another. For Jina, Leya, and Eve, their shared experiences helped build an active community and group identity as a cohort. In their interaction as professional educators, they often met and shared ideas and supported each other. For example, Leya explained in one interview that the tight knit and encouraging environment among her fellow PTs was an important part of their teacher development. Leya also noted that the development of each of their individual identity was also informed by their positioning as a cohort

in the program:

> We've been together in most classes. So, it makes it a lot easier to get to know each other, what we think about the classes, our teaching. . . I mean this cohort gives you that team feeling 'cause you kind of know they'll support you even if you don't always say the right things. That really helps with your confidence. (Interview, Leya, September 14, 2014)

The team environment of the PTs offered Leya the space to share her experiences and thoughts in the courses. When she participated in the practices and activities in the class community, she too made contributions to the teacher interactions that was constructed and supported in the classroom space. In this regard, the PTs participated in professional sharing in which they adopted positional identities as teachers through coursework. This outcome reflects Cochran-Smith (2000) claim that "one of the advantages of participating in language education courses is the opportunity to network and dialogue with other educators" (p. 17). Over the course of these dialogues, the PTs counted on their developing instructional beliefs and feelings about supporting ESL learners, which informed and were informed by the self- positioning and development of their identity.

In most of the courses in the program, it was strongly encouraged that PTs bring in questions for class discussion or share their experiences as a teacher or learner. Often times, such discussions became sites for PTs to showcase their instructional beliefs, exchange resourceful ideas with peers, and make meaning of and challenge the theories learned in the courses. Through collaborative learning in these sites, PTs also sought membership in the ESL teacher community as they internalized and practiced the discourse of ESL (Rajagopalan & Llurda, 2005). A case in point, when Jina participated in the class discussions, she explained her exposure to the professional conversations among other teacher learners in which she felt like a professional teacher:

> A lot of the talk are the experiences about their teaching like 'this is what I did during my internship and how this and that kind of approach is connected to what we've learned in class, or like in retrospect, I would change this and that. . . .' You learn a lot listening and taking notes about the teaching experiences and really feel like a real teacher when you're in an environment like this. (Interview, Jina, January 25, 2014)

Through these discussions on issues about teaching ESL learners, Jina was able to endorse her teaching beliefs and knowledge or modify them through conversations with other teachers (Cochran-Smith, 2000). Such professional exchanges supported her experiences as a "legitimate member" of the ESL teacher community (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

In the class discussions, Jina also explained that she perceived more of a teacher than a graduate student in the language education program. Yet, Jina was also conscious of the inner struggle between the professional teacher self-image and the pre-service teacher intern image labeled by the program. When conversing with other PTs in the classes, Jina positioned herself as an ESL teacher; yet, she had to remind herself that in reality she was a teacher intern. Jina noted, "I tell others I am a teacher and act the part but something inside of me tells me that I'm not a real teacher but a teacher-in-practice" (Interview, Jina, January 24, 2014). Jina was well aware of her status of yet to be granted formal legitimacy in the professional teacher community until graduation from the TESOL Master's program. Thus, Jina's progression from a PT to a legitimate ESL teacher was yet to be complete, but was an ongoing process.

3. Positioned as a Professional in Local School Settings

Jina, Eve, and Leya were provided with "certain experiences of participation" as they took part in their teaching practices in their internship experiences, which supported their agency as legitimate participants (Wenger, 1998, p. 143). PTs of the other Master's of Education track and the instructors showed particular interest in the focal PTs' teaching experiences since they had the opportunity to do internship in local public schools. This interest was important to the development of their ESL professional teacher identity because their positional identity is partly constructed by both their self-identification and others' validation, which continues to evolve across time (Farrell, 2011).

In a session the researcher observed in the *Introduction to Language Teaching* and *Youth Literacy* courses, the instructor saw to it that in her classes each discussion group had a minimum of one PT from the MA TESOL program so that the PT's school internship experiences could provide classmates in the other Master's track with relevant input. The main activity was to explore and respond to questions from a protocol for an individualized education program. As they completed this activity, the PTs from the MA TESOL program took on the role of providing resource to other students in the other Master's track who had limited or no public school experiences in the U.S.A. case in point, when Eve's discussion group addressed the questions from the individualized education protocol, she was positioned by her group as an expert. Eva responded to her group members' questions and shared her prior teaching experiences and experiences from her school internship to further assist in addressing their questions (Eva, field note observation, *Introduction to Language Teaching*). This example demonstrates ways Eve's teaching knowledge was perceived as a valuable resource among her peers in the group work.

Eve's experience as a teacher intern who has instructed ESL learners on a regular basis was well-known among those of her classroom community of teacher educators.

This recognition of her teaching experiences validated and legitimized her ESL teacher identity from her peers and instructors. Yet, in an interview in which the researcher inquired about this validation, Eve noted:

> The things we observe are valid and relevant to the topic in the classroom. I'm not sure about them looking up to us as seasoned teachers because I'm still learning the trade. (Interview, Eve, August 14, 2014)

Eve's positional identity illustrates an interrelationship between her identity "across time" (Linehan & McCarthy, 2000. p. 441) as a teacher learner and the legitimization as an expert teacher by her peers and instructors in the current classroom community. While Eve acknowledged the value of sharing her classroom teaching experiences with other PTs, she saw herself as a teacher-in-training. This indicates her evolving identity over "scales of activity and event" and other interactions in her preparation as a teacher (Linehan & McCarthy, 2000).

Leya commented that because of their on-site teaching experiences with and knowledge of ESL learners in local school contexts, her cohort of PTs in the MA TESOL program were often perceived as experts in the classes. She was thankful that the internship opportunities positioned them as well-informed PTs with regards to local school settings. Leya noted that her position as an expert when it came to the local schools lifted her self-confidence: "I get this sense of confidence when they look up to me for resources about teaching, and I'm usually a very shy person. . . . It's really rewarding when you are seen as a teacher among a classroom full of teachers, ya know" (Interview, Leya, August 15, 2014). From instructors and her peers in the social space of the classroom, Leya is said to have received "recognition of the [teaching] self from external references [of peers and instructors]" (Eyers, 2014, p. 164) about her teaching knowledge. This approval further supported her developing identity as a teacher with particular attention to her ability to offer valuable knowledge about local school contexts.

In addition, when asked about peer interactions in the class with PTs from the other Master's track, Jina noted that her position as an expert, because of her teaching experience and knowledge, helped with her confidence as a future teacher. However, Jina did not always see herself providing the most knowledgeable answers to her peers' questions:

> One of my groups had a few Chinese graduate students from the other track, and since they were curious about the school systems here in the U.S. some of them would ask me, "What teaching strategies did you use in teaching high school English?" Responding to those questions helped me conceptualize my own experiences, and kind of boosted my confidence as some kind of expert. . . There are time when the imposter-syndrome would creep in and I'd feel like I'm really not an official teacher yet and only maybe do half the load. . . I haven't really taken over everything that a real ESL teacher would, I guess I feel a little awkward giving them advice. I mean, it's nice they want to hear my opinions, but then again I wasn't sure if I was giving them legitimate answers or if I was misinforming them. . . In a weird way, it was nice to feel appreciated but then there's that lingering sense of guilt . . (Interview, Jina, August 14, 2014)

Jina's positioning by others as an expert supported her self-confidence and legitimacy as an ESL teacher. While Jina felt intrigued with this granted positioning, she also felt "awkward" or "guilt" in such instances. This is so because Jina was conscious of the fact that she was only a PT who was unsure of providing "legitimate answers" to her classmates' questions. In this regard, Jina can be perceived to be in a liminal space of becoming (Kayi-Aydar, 2015) a "real ESL teacher" in the course of her MA TESOL program experience.

Jina further noted that the age difference between herself and other PTs also contributed to her feeling "awkward" when viewed as an expert by a classmate older than herself:

> I guess it's more of a personal thing for me. When you have a classmate 10 or 20 years older than you and you're the one imparting all this knowledge. It was, well, it felt a bit strange. But, then this was just me feeling this way, something I had to get over. (Interview, Jina, August 14, 2014)

Being one of the younger students in the program, Jina saw herself more of a learner who could learn from the older classmates in the discussion group. Jina's comments demonstrate that the ways others perceive a PT could be different from the PT's self-positioning, which points to the complex interrelationship between the individual and social aspect of teacher identity development. Thus, what we see here is the "autonomous" dimension of PTs' identity formation (Farrell, 2011).

VI. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study illustrate that the focal PTs made sense of their identities as teachers while positioning the self and being positioned by other in the PTs experiences as teacher learners of the MA TESOL program's course work. As the focal PTs traversed various configurations of identity formation and negotiation, they took part in positioning the self while building their own educational practices for and theories about ESL learners. In addition, the PTs' membership and interactions in the micro community of teacher learners unfolded dialogic spaces for PTs to make sense of their identity development as novice ESL teachers, and this space became a valuable resource for their teacher learning. Furthermore, in the classes, Jina, Eve, and Leya were perceived by other PTs and educators as teacher experts of the local public school setting. Jina, Eve, and Leya each took on and made meaning of this positioning as part of the development of their

identity. In general, the current research maintains that the PTs' interaction with others and materials in the classes are comprised of dynamic ways of positioning (Kayi-Aydar, 2015). Also, learning how to be a teacher through the classes included making sense of and negotiating the self-claimed and assigned identities through interaction in social practices (Fraser et al., 2007).

Jina, Eve, and Leya each positioned the self as ESL teachers as they shared their beliefs about the role of language in the lives of their ESL students. The PTs were sensitive to the ESL students' home culture and language and believed in the importance of developing and integrating students' culture and native language in classroom teaching to assist in the students' academic learning. While such awareness is an important part of learning how to teach, the PTs will continue to grow as professional educators while attempting to connect their instructional practices with their teaching philosophies and by simultaneously negotiating the expectations of institutional regulations and assessments. By being exposed to various ESL learners, the PTs' experiences will call for re-examination of their current pedagogical practices and beliefs and require them to re-adjust their learning processes as teachers.

Teacher education for pre-service teachers exemplifies a process where PTs envision and build the self as teachers (Eyers, 2014; Watzke, 2007). This evolving process takes place as PTs position the self with respect to colleagues, students, and schools and simultaneously when they are positioned by others through interaction in new discourses. With regards to the values and beliefs attached to these positional identities, the PTs make sense of and negotiate the interrelationship between the other and self; thus, they build and practice teacher identities at the crossroads between social expectations and personal ambition (Martel, 2015). The PTs' development and practice of identities simultaneously include their teacher learning experiences. A case in point, while the cohort in the MA TESOL program were perceived by others as experts of local school experiences due to their internship opportunities, Jina negotiated this position by making reference to her younger age and identification as a teacher intern. She commented that such positioning by others supported her confidence as an ESL teacher and helped reflect on her own teaching; yet, Jina believed that she was technically still a teacher intern and thus did not perceive herself to be an expert. In addition, she felt that being a younger PT and having limited knowledge to offer further reinforced her current position as a young intern. Jina's reflection displays the dynamic interaction between her identity formation and positioning of the self through institutional as well as social positionings.

Moreover, Jina's negotiation of her identity was mediated through the interplay between interactions with other PTs at the micro-level and the "cultural repertoire" of the MA TESOL program's institution (Linehan & McCarthy, 2000, p. 446). The negotiation of her identity involves the construction of her "here-and-now" identity as specialist of local school settings as well as the identity envisioned and sustained "across time" as a teacher intern (Linehan & McCarthy, 2000, p. 440). Similarly, being looked upon by others as a seasoned teacher, Eve's negotiation of her identity was negotiated as a result of the interplay between ways she positioned herself in the interactions in the current classes and ways she positioned the self diachronically over time.

Negotiating one's identity and learning to be a teacher are two interrelated yet complex processes that are often times intense and strenuous during PT education (Friesen & Besley, 2013; Lamote & Engels, 2010). During the process of becoming teachers, PTs make sense of, modify, and contest new ideas based on their current knowledge and belief through their experiences as emerging teachers. Concomitantly, equally important is the venue of teacher education classes in which PTs' negotiation of their positions, roles and responsibilities as emerging teachers take place (Cochran-Smith, 2000; Lynn & Smith-Maddox, 2007). Through development of their knowledge and skills as teachers, PTs also build their instructional values that reflect the type of teacher they hope to become (Rajagopalan & Llurda, 2005). For instance, in an essay assignment for the Language across Cultures class, Leya contests the theories of assimilation when conceptualizing ESL students' integration into mainstream U.S. culture. She positions herself as a teacher who believes in prioritizing ESL students' home language and culture in their experiences learning English; thus, this positioning of the self illustrates Leya's agency as a teacher.

The socio-cultural perspective of second language teacher education placed focus on the agency of teacher learning (Compernolle & Williams, 2013; Kubanyiova & Crookes, 2016). Teacher learning as an activity that is socially negotiated is said to be informed by an array of experiences from an individual in various situations requiring "interaction and acquisition of knowledge of the self, one's students, and content to be taught" (Kubanyiova & Crookes, 2016, p. 126). The shift towards research from socio-cultural perspective paved the way for more studies examining the various aspects of teachers' professional worlds and for theorizing the identities of teachers (Compernolle & Williams, 2013). This study supports the importance of recent past studies on the complex and intimate interrelationship between identity and teacher learning in order to support ESL teachers' professional growth (Alsup, 2006; Tsui, 2011). The studies' findings point to the idea that the role of teacher identity is needed to further explore ESL teacher knowledge and learning from a socio-cultural perspective. Moreover, if we assume that one goal of ESL education is to shed light on the complexity of the practices and development of teachers, then exploring the identities of ESL teachers from a cultural or linguistic viewpoint should take into consideration ways identity informs and is informed by ways they build their knowledge and participate in the practice of teaching.

VII. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The current study offers a deeper understanding of the focal PTs' learning to teach ESL students and negotiation of their identity during their coursework in the teacher education program. The PTs negotiated and put into practice their developing ESL teacher identities as they participated in the online and live discussions and course assignments in the MATESOL program classes. Such learning experiences supported their own positioning as ESL teachers as they conceptualized their own ideas about the learning and teaching of ESL and EFL in various local schools, which frames their personal knowledge as teachers (Peacock, 2001). Furthermore, the dialogic space of their formal and informal interactions with other professional PTs informed how the focal PTs tried on various subject positions as ESL teachers. Finally, their peers and instructors acknowledged the PTs internship as well as their coursework experiences, and the focal PTs were seen as specialists of local school settings. This recognition further reinforced and supported the formation of their ESL teacher identity.

The current study suggests that the framework of identity should be considered in teacher education programs when planning teacher course activities. The complex and fluid nature of ESL teacher identity contests "being modularized" in mainstream second language teacher discourses (Lamote & Engels, 2010, p. 14). Yet, to support the development of the identities of teachers as an important component in the growth of teachers, teacher education programs can organize teacher activities to support this goal. It is worth noting that focusing on teacher identity does not necessarily divert from acquiring important pedagogical skills and knowledge. Rather focusing on teacher identity involves going beyond the traditional teacher learning of simply compiling decontextualized knowledge about learning methodologies and language (Liu & Fisher, 2006). To become a teacher, it is required that teachers perceive the self as having specific commitments and beliefs about instructional practices as a "state of becoming" rather than simply a "way of acting and behaving," which indicates the importance of "engagement with identity" (Eyers, 2014, p. 133). This perspective on teacher identity may further foster the investment, resiliency and agency of teachers.

Based on the findings of this study, a few implications for teacher education practices noted in ESL contexts are considered. First, the study indicates that teacher identity development and teacher learning mutually inform each other. While it may seem that discussion about identity negotiation and development should be ideally introduced during PT education (Alsup, 2006), the topic of identity is often overlooked in teacher education classes. The researcher suggests that ESL teacher education programs need to include a program that encompasses issues related to the development of teacher identity in all their practices of teacher education. Classes may be dialogic sites for PTs to share and examine their current and past conceptualizations about ESL education, and to envision the ideal teacher they hope to be.

In addition, interaction within a community of pre-service teachers offers an importance space for fledgling ESL teachers to try on different subject positions and critically rethink about their own teaching beliefs. To promote this atmosphere, classes in teacher education programs could include opportunities for PTs to verbalize their teaching philosophies through the ambiguity and contradiction that often arise in class discussions. ESL teacher educators may also negotiate and test their developing identities by situating themselves in the various relations in the community of teacher learning, particularly when they face discrepancies between their "interpretive frame" (Alsup, 2006, p. 143) and new ideas.

Lastly, there should be more opportunities for PTs to reflect on their current and developing identities as ESL teachers in the teacher education practices. While the practice of reflection is perceived as a valuable aspect in ESL teaching (Stuart & Thurlow, 2000), it has not always been part of teaching activities specifically when it comes to mediating PTs' development and negotiation of their teacher identity in both EFL and ESL contexts. By discursively practicing reflection, PTs may look towards their developing identity as a resource. This participation may promote profound interaction among teacher practice, identity, and learning. When reflective activities are designed with focus on PTs' identity development, there may be ample opportunities for English teachers to negotiate, construct and challenge their teacher identities.

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