



Becoming a Teacher Educator in the Korean Primary School English Teacher Training Context: An Autoethnography on Identity Development

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ABSTRACT

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This article aims to explore formation of identity of an English teacher educator in the Korean primary school English teacher training context. Utilizing an autoethnographic approach, the author represents the ways by which his English teacher educator identity becomes a site of an ongoing struggle for various identities with language learning and teaching experiences situated at the meaning negotiation. By investigating multiple resources made relevant in the past 6 years by the author's participation in the primary school English teacher training program, the current study recognizes that his English teacher educator identities are academic-self, teaching-self, and emotional being. Each identity is influenced by the other, being realized in the teacher training program as a classroom discussant (not a knowledge deliverer) on local and global ELT issues, as a researcher (not a monetary compensation seeker) who wants to bring local teachers' stories to the broader academic world, and as an emotionally sensitive teacher whose professional development is closely tied to overcoming emotional vulnerability and being encouraged by positive feedback. This study ends with a call for further research and practical implications for teacher educators and teacher education programs.

I. INTRODUCTION

Language teacher identity has been one of the fastest-growing interdisciplinary fields that explore the complicated nature of identity formation. Much research on non-native English speaking teachers in particular has examined the various contexts in which teachers' identities become a site of struggle (Norton, 2013). Their participation in the constant negotiation and interaction with personal, institutional, and social influences can lead to the recontextualization of who they are as teaching professionals in local and global contexts (Moussu & Llorca, 2008; Yazan & Lindahl, 2020; Yuan, 2019). Despite increasing

interest in the topic, one of the teacher populations we know little about is teacher educators (Percy et al., 2019; Trent, 2013), those who teach pre- and in-service teachers in higher educational institutions (e.g., Yuan et al., 2022).

This lack of interest has caused a dearth of theoretical and practical models that capture teacher educators' characteristics, resulting in an unawareness of how to properly address the development of their professional identity and knowledge and how to teach teacher trainers about teaching teachers (e.g., Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Liu, 2013).

In some local context – the Korean English teacher training program – teacher educators (or trainers) are not always part of higher institutions such as colleges, nor do

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they typically have a professional career as an individual who has a type of job teaching teachers. In addition, the way teacher training is realized also varies; one format is the intensive teacher training program that takes place for a short period of time during summer and winter vacations. As shown from H. J. Kim's (2020) review of English teacher education in Korea, one of the less commonly discussed areas is the stories of teacher educators who participate in official intensive teacher training programs and teach for in-service teachers' professional development. Although this type of teacher education is assumed to play an important role in developing teachers' professionalism (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2016), we have rarely seen research on the teacher educators who take charge of these programs. This shortage may cause us to lose an opportunity to improve the teacher training programs in a more effective and locally appealing way.

To fill this gap, this study aims to provide a narrative of an English teacher educator's identity formation in the context of the Korean primary school English teacher training program. Through the lens of autoethnography, my narrative describes when, how, and why I became aware of diverse aspects of the English teacher educator, which influenced the formation of my professional identity as an English teacher educator. This autoethnographic approach thus embodies an insider perspective that can enhance our understanding of the primary school English teacher training program and, furthermore, allow us to consider how we can improve in-service English teacher education and prepare teacher educators as well.

Before starting my personal narrative on the journey to the teacher educator, it is worthwhile to make a note of the terms *teacher educator* and *teacher trainer* presented repeatedly throughout the paper. These terms may sometimes be categorized separately. The former refers to those aiming to deliver specific professional knowledge of the field to pre- and in-service teachers, while the latter indicates those involved in a more direct and focused context, usually for training novice teachers during a short period (see Barkhuizen, 2021; Freeman, 2016; Richards & Farrel, 2005). However, they are used interchangeably in the current study because the Korean teacher training program, or at least the one showcased by this study, involves both novice and experienced teachers, and each teacher educator/trainer of the program takes different roles in terms of theories and practices. Also, although the program is held for a relatively short period (i.e., two weeks), the amount of time required (approximately 60 hours) cannot be regarded as small in comparison to other programs provided by higher educational settings. The oversimplification of the distinction would not be accurately applied to the English teacher training program in Korea discussed. Therefore, the aforementioned two terms will be used interchangeably in this paper to describe a teacher's journey whose multiple identities are located on the dynamic path to reaching professionalism in teaching Korean primary school English teachers.

II. A JOURNEY TO PRIMARY SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHER EDUCATOR

This section will describe how the English teacher educator job began and what experiences influenced the construction of the teacher training work as a profession. It will begin with an overview of the methodology of the study (i.e., autoethnography). A brief description of the research context is provided, followed by the data collected and an analysis that centers on the issues of the teacher educator identity formation.

1. Methodology: An Autoethnography

Autoethnography, which is being increasingly used in social science (Muncey, 2010), is a research approach that seeks to understand personal, cultural, and social issues of persons by analyzing and interpreting their lived experiences and insights (H. Chang, 2008; Poulos, 2021). Autoethnographies of researchers or teachers are "highly personalized accounts that draw upon the experience of the author/researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding" (Sparkes, 2000, p. 21). This lets the author/researcher use their own voices or participation and observation from an insider perspective to get closer to the specific culture of a community or discourse in comparison to the outsider perspective (Pelias, 2003). In this vein, the methodology is useful for making visible the long-term experiences of an individual in a particular context or field through his/her reflection and systematic introspection (Poulos, 2021). It is especially useful when we seek to explore the critical moments and processes of *becoming* (Choi, 2012).

Autoethnography consists of essential components which include, but not limited to, researchers' own observation of themselves, self-questioning/answering about their own stories (Canagarajah, 2012), artifacts that recall and record personal histories (Abas et al., 2020; Fox, 2019), and critical dialogues within or with other individuals who share similar interests and experiences (Yung, 2020). By adopting various approaches, researchers' *stories* are focused on and reconstructed as a valuable form of knowledge that conveys important, community-specific information in a way that preserves the speaker's identity. Thus, autoethnography's focus on local knowledge about persons or cultures emphasizes that what is being told by researchers should be self-reflexive and grounded in their active participation, which inevitably situates *I* (i.e., researcher-self) at the forefront on the surface of academic discourse formats that enjoy subjectivity (Poulos, 2021).

This highly personalized and individually contextualized methodology has begun to appear in the field of English education and applied linguistics, functioning as a means of expressing a language teaching professional's own reflexive voice (Canagarajah, 2012; De Costa et al., 2022; Kemaloglu-Er & Lowe, 2022; Warren & Park, 2018; Yazan, 2019; Yazan et al., 2022). Along with the researcher's stance as a critical observer of their own behavior, attitude, and changes (Rivers, 2019), this methodology

is suitable for the current study because it helps in examining how I positioned myself in an educational discourse (i.e., primary school English teacher training program) and how I raised my awareness of my teacher educator work and developed a teacher educator identity.

2. The Research Context

The primary school English teacher training program that I have joined is held in a metropolitan city in Korea every summer. Except for the two years of 2020 and 2021 when Covid-19 hindered offline gatherings, the program invited primary school English teachers and Korean and native English speaking teacher educators. The program consists of two-hour long classes three times a day for two weeks in which teachers learn theories and practices of English language teaching and have opportunities to practice English and produce their own teaching materials.

It was the summer of 2015 when I first found a job opening for intensive English teacher training for primary school teachers called TEE (Teaching English in English) on a job-seeking website. The job recruiter was looking for knowledgeable candidates of English education theories and practices for which my qualification seemed to meet their requirements. After a short interview with the head teacher who was in charge of developing the program, I was told to prepare approximately five subjects from the textbook he provided. The textbook, he called, consisted of approximately 30 chapters and appendices in which teaching methods were introduced, along with sample teacher talks for the school events were included. While the two native English speaking teachers had worked for colleges in Korea, the other two Korean teachers did not belong to any higher institutions. Instead, they were private, freelance teachers who did not specifically define their jobs as teaching primary school-level English; thus, working for the teacher training program was another form of short-term contract work to them.

I was told by the head teacher that he would like me to bring what I learned from my Ph.D. program to the lessons but was also told that I could run my classes however I wished. My duties and own themes changed over time as briefly described in Table 1. Initially, I aimed to deliver what I was assigned to teach such as grammar, phonics, etc., and did not consider using other news, media, or academic reference resources as supplements. However, as my teaching experiences accumulated, I recognized that other teachers almost always focused on practical aspects of teaching and thus, I tried to incorporate new content that should be more useful and important for teachers to improve their professionalism and take a more active approach in designing their classes. It was also a goal to provide the participants with something new that they might not have learned during their college education or from other teacher training programs (e.g., S. B. Park, 2018). I also did a short survey at the beginning and at the end of the program each year so that I could understand what the teachers expect from the training and what has not been

introduced to them. This re-designing effort was realized through the incorporation of trending literacy theories widely discussed in the field of literary education, including translanguaging (Canagarajah, 2013; Li, 2018), hip-hop-based education (HHBE) (Love, 2015), teaching English as an international language (McKay, 2018), and the use of other practical technologies (e.g., apps, websites, TED Talk, free online TV channels of English speaking countries) that primary school teachers might not be familiar with but would find interesting.

TABLE 1
Teaching Themes

Year	Teaching themes	Description
2015	-	No specific theme determined; focusing on teaching what I was assigned to teach (e.g., listening & speaking skills; teaching grammar; phonics; etc.)
2016	The discursive construction of being good at English in Korea and teacher responsibilities today	In-class discussion about the teachers' perception on their roles, purposes of English learning, the role of English, etc.
2017	Hip-hop-based education and its possibilities in Korea; media (e.g., pop culture) and Korean ELT (e.g., teaching cultures)	Introducing hip-hop-based education in the US; discussion on the inclusion and exclusion of cultures in textbooks & using media for teaching cultural aspects of ELT
2018	Three circles of English (i.e., Inner, Outer, and Expanding circles; ENL, ESL and EFL); alternative approaches to English speaking countries and speakers	Theoretical frameworks on English(es); academic terms to describe English varieties and speakers
2019	Good English teacher identity	Young learners' perception on good teacher; teacher identity; teaching and technology and the role of teacher
2022	World Englishes; Good English teacher identity	Introduction to various frameworks on English(es) and its(their) speakers; media sources that show characteristics of English varieties; new approaches to teaching English internationally (e.g., EIL; EILcL)

The main sources of my teaching were the textbook provided by the head teacher and PowerPoint slides that I made. After several years of teaching, I began to bring other resources such as academic books and journal articles as supplementary material. For example, in explaining the Total Physical Response (TPR) method, I brought a de-

scription of an English village in Korea that describes their program as helping Korean young learners of English “experience” learning. While covering team-teaching subjects, the news clip was shared that the educational ministry of the metropolitan city decided to cut the budget for English speaking foreign teachers at the primary, middle, and high schools. This was all in an effort to make my teaching localized, connecting textbooks and classroom teaching to the participating teachers’ reality. For the 2022 TEE session, I depended more on my own resources but used the textbook sparingly, which will be discussed later.

The program was held biannually, inviting both those who teach English and those who want to teach English. After completing the training and passing the final written and spoken exam, the teachers received a certification. The number of participants varied: approximately sixty teachers joined the 2015 summer program, but the number decreased later after which about forty teachers joined in consecutive years. The teacher trainers usually consisted of two Korean teachers and one or two English native speakers.

3. Data Collection and Analysis

To investigate my 6-year teacher educator journey in primary school English teacher training I pulled from a diverse selection of data sets. The first is the teaching materials (i.e., PowerPoint slides and textbooks). The combination of these materials shows which subjects I was interested in and how I sought to deliver the content. By looking at the changes made each year, I was able to reflect on my attitude, belief, and behavior change. The textbook also included my reflection memos, which told me what I thought of the class, the teachers’ reactions, my feelings toward the participating teachers, and what materials I taught. Secondly, email communications with other teachers of the program were also included, in which I discussed what and how to teach as well as miscellaneous tasks with other teacher educators participating in the program with me. Also, mobile messenger communications with my academic colleagues and American personnel are another important component of the data in which my emotional aspects of identity formation were inscribed. This type of casual communication not only functioned as academic discussions on the issues that I wanted to introduce to teacher participants and the correction of English errors and mistakes from the textbooks but also as an emotional vent where I shared both delightful and unpleasant experiences that I gained while in the program. Another data set includes voice recording files. I initially wanted to improve my teaching practice by monitoring myself and later aimed to use them as research data. The recorded interviews were about (dis)advantages of the program, teachers’ perception of what a good English teacher in Korea looks like, attitudes toward using hip-hop and black culture media in the classroom, etc. In addition, there were several teachers who sent me emails after the teacher training ended to which I also replied. This email interaction informed me of what satisfied the participants and what I did well; thus, it is a lens to understand how I emotionally responded to my work and

how it influenced the formation of my professional identity. All the data mentioned are not separated from each other; they are intertwined, each of which is based on another. While I was making teaching materials, my online casual communications with my academic colleagues were partly engraved with error correction, written discussion on the more authentic English language in use, and teachers’ feedback on certain aspects of my classes as shown in emails and recordings, which were also reflected when I prepared for the following year of the teacher training program. Thus, each data source is an interactional discourse in which the relationships among me as a teacher, teachers participating in the program, and outsiders who indirectly influenced my preparation for my teaching were inscribed.

After pulling all data, I followed the analytic processes of autoethnography (Muncey, 2005; Wall, 2008) and drew upon thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012). First, I looked over multiple data sets, looking for recurring topics that particularly have to do with teacher educator *culture*. In other words, my focus was on my responses to the teacher educators’ duties that I undertook and the ways I prepared for my own teaching. After the initial attempt to understand the data, I compared each year’s data sets, aiming to detect the ways I determined what to include and exclude and how I overcame challenges that I faced as a novice teacher educator (Yuan & Lee, 2014). This was followed by searching for exceptional cases through which I focused on non-repeated occurrences that were important in understanding my teacher educator identity formation. After multiple times of careful readings of reflective self-observation (Bochner & Ellis, 2016), I categorized cases according to larger themes that can display the insights I gained in developing and recontextualizing my teacher educator identity as professional work.

For writing the autoethnographic research, evaluation criteria suggested by Richardson (2000) and Poulos (2013) were considered for quality and integrity purposes. The selection of my “stories” presented throughout the paper, for example, was determined by the *substantive contribution* that asks if what this research shares can contribute to the understanding of a teacher educator’s life and by *reflexivity* or *express a reality* that asks how accurately the researcher seeks to make sense of and make critical judgments about their viewpoints and experiences (Richardson, 2000). Moreover, by linking my teacher trainer story to the larger socio-cultural discourse and previous studies, this autoethnography sought to interpret the subjectivity of the researcher (e.g., emotions) as a venue to invite readers to relate themselves to the issues being discussed in terms of their emotional vulnerability and their own judgment (Poulos, 2013).

III. DEVELOPING TEACHER EDUCATOR IDENTITY IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAM

While interrogating various resources whereby I was

able to detect my identity changes, I found three identities that can encompass how I came to perceive myself as a teacher educator and invest myself in developing my own version of a teacher educator-self. I recognized myself as an individual who belongs to academia and is familiar with theories and research, as a teacher who wants to make class interesting to increase participants' motivation, and as an emotional being who wants to encourage participant teachers and also seeks credit for my work. These are not isolated; instead, they are linked together and influenced by each other, creating the various aspects of my own notion of a teacher educator. When realized in the classroom, these facets allowed me to position myself as someone who provided discussions on ELT issues; aimed to connect local stories (i.e., TEE program) with global academic discussion; and as an individual whose emotion was at the center of identity formation.

1. From Knowledge Deliverer to Discussant

The most salient change is in how I prepare my teaching materials and exam questions. As mentioned above, I initially thought of my role as a teacher who introduced academic knowledge to the participating teachers. This understanding of my role in the program, unfortunately, made me passively deliver what was included in the textbook with a few considerations for the academic concepts I learned from the first year of my Ph.D. program. For example, in teaching "debate" in English, I was interested in giving definitions about it and showcasing what English debate looks like. Giving examples of native-like elite students with high-level English proficiency who participated in English debating championships hosted by YTN and Hankuk University of Foreign Studies was in fact unrealistic for the participant teachers' own context and thus was not helpful for them to think of designing an English debate class.

Later, as more experience and knowledge accumulated, I figured out how to localize the materials in a way to motivate the participants in the class. One way I made class more teacher-centered was by creating discussion discourse whereby teachers and I talked about various issues that Korean ELT textbooks rarely include as well as educational changes happening in recent years that formal education did not properly address. For example, as seen in Figure 1, I included racial issues and political aspects of literacy education with real-life examples. And I also suggested using media (e.g., movies with Korean subtitles) and watching them critically in order to think of what has been missed in our textbooks and how we have taught so-



FIGURE 1 Teaching Material Examples

called American culture in our classroom. That is, instead of giving information about American culture, I introduced concepts for them to explore.

More locally important issues were also introduced. For example, in my 2017 and 2018 teaching materials, English as an international language (EIL) was included to present how English is understood, but it was accompanied by a localized model, such as English as an intercultural language (EICL) by a Korean scholar (K. Y. Lee, 2013). I also asked the participants to give me their thoughts on my own model of English speakers of the globe based on an identity lens, which I presented at a conference (J. Im, 2017b).

Another strategy to listen to teachers' voices was to include theoretical frameworks on English and its users in a spoken exam where teachers freely expressed their opinions before one or two evaluators. Figure 2 below shows two test sets used in different years. Whereas the first one consists of three questions only regarding practical aspects of teaching, the 2019 test has one question that is more theoretical and asks teachers to think about the importance of the relationship between local and global English speaking environments.

In other words, I sought to make classroom interaction bidirectional where the teachers and I discussed not only the contents of the class but the way the teachers' encounters with them shaped their teacher identity. For example, the teachers revealed they had not been exposed to any lectures on English varieties and their linguistic characteristics. But they were somewhat experientially knowledgeable about differences among Englishes. Thus, I found that having a discussion on this kind of topic created an opportunity to learn academic concepts and make the teachers reflect on their life histories in and out of school (Kemalglu-Er & Lowe, 2022).

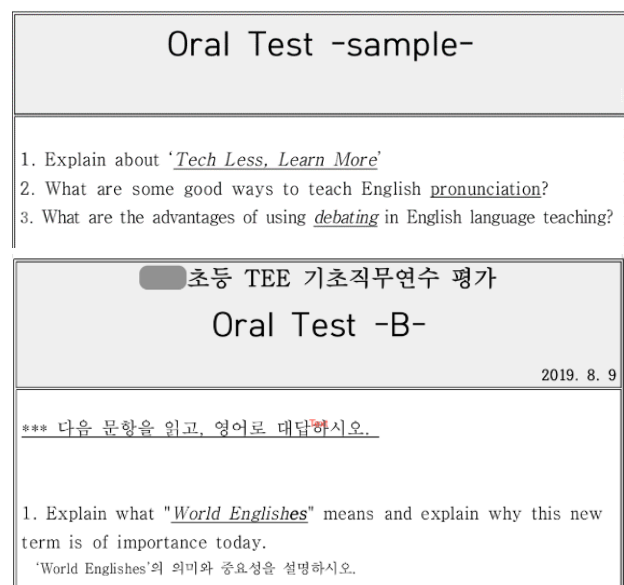


FIGURE 2 Questions from Final Exams

By resituating myself from someone who merely brings knowledge and delivers it through lectures to someone who

invites teachers and shares opinions, I was able to raise awareness of what it means to be a teacher educator who listens to them and empowers participants. Although this shift always required me to spend more time collecting up-to-date resources, situating myself in the search for various class materials is transformative to becoming a professional by making myself study more (S. B. Park, 2018).

2. One for the Money, Two for the Good: Motivation Change from Monetary Compensation to Research

I cannot deny the fact that my initial motivation was a monetary incentive to make money for a short period during the summer break. It was similar to that of accidental (Bailey & Cooker, 2019) or incidental teachers (Mora et al., 2016), who only have a marginal intention to be a teacher educator (Barkhuizen, 2021). In the first two years, I passively performed tasks and assignments only assigned to me, which I found from my lack of critical reflection on my English teacher training job. However, as my TEE teaching experiences were accumulated and as my Korean as a foreign language teaching experiences in the US were also gained year after year, I found my focus slightly moved from financial benefits to academic motivation. After each year's program ended, I thought of how to improve my TEE teaching by incorporating more noteworthy academic issues that I learned from my Ph.D. program as well as interesting media data that we consumed mundanely but had pedagogical potential. This made me prepare my teaching materials over a long period of time of an academic year, resulting in my content to be a well-timed intervention for English teachers in Korea. Moreover, learning various theoretical perspectives in understanding language, languaging, and language users that aim to disrupt native-speakerism (e.g., Dewaele, 2018; Saraceni, 2015) created an imagined community of teacher training practice, allowing me to revisit my interaction with the participating teachers and to approach the goal of the TEE program from a different perspective. For example, my reading about ESL teacher education and teacher's professional knowledge development (e.g., Crandall, 1993) made me think critically about what the TEE could and should provide to the in-service teacher participants and how other TEE teacher educators would perceive the meaning of teacher training in Korea. While reading about English teacher research, I realized that there are not many studies that showcased teachers participating in a teacher training program of this sort. I also found that previous research often focused on academic context and pedagogy, leaving teacher educators who do not belong to specific institutions relatively unread and unknown. This realization helped me to find a research gap, which led to my attitude change toward participation in the program from considering the program as a source of part-time income to a source of research. That is, I regarded my participation in the TEE program as a unique opportunity to construct the meaning of a legitimate English teaching professional and promote new

insights through interacting with my academic colleagues and in-service teachers (Warren & Park, 2018).

Detailed examples include my interventions that aimed to situate the Korean teacher education program in the academic discussion, for which I integrated literacy theories and models into my content. Some of the topics I introduced to the primary school English teachers in the program were hip-hop-based education, translanguaging, and World Englishes. I brought various non-school-based media sources, including TED Talks and news media, which made it clear that native-speakerism is pervasive in the Korean ELT and a certain group of English speakers (i.e., white Caucasian English speaking teachers) is preferred in the job market (Ruecker & Ives, 2015). I tried to help teachers to realize that Black culture, for example, has been excluded despite its cultural importance in the US and its popularity in Korea as a form of music, fashion, and youth culture (M. S. Song, 2019). Teachers revealed that they never thought of how American culture is represented in textbooks, acknowledging they could do something differently by accommodating what they learned from my class. I made this experience into the form of academic material (J. Im, 2018, 2021) to make the story visible that a short intervention of including ignored voices in the US in the field of Korean ELT – critical pedagogy in TESOL – can help Korean teachers of English raise awareness of what is missing from their local ELT discourse (S. Ahn, 2018; S. J. Choi, 2013).

I also spent several hours listening to teachers' own

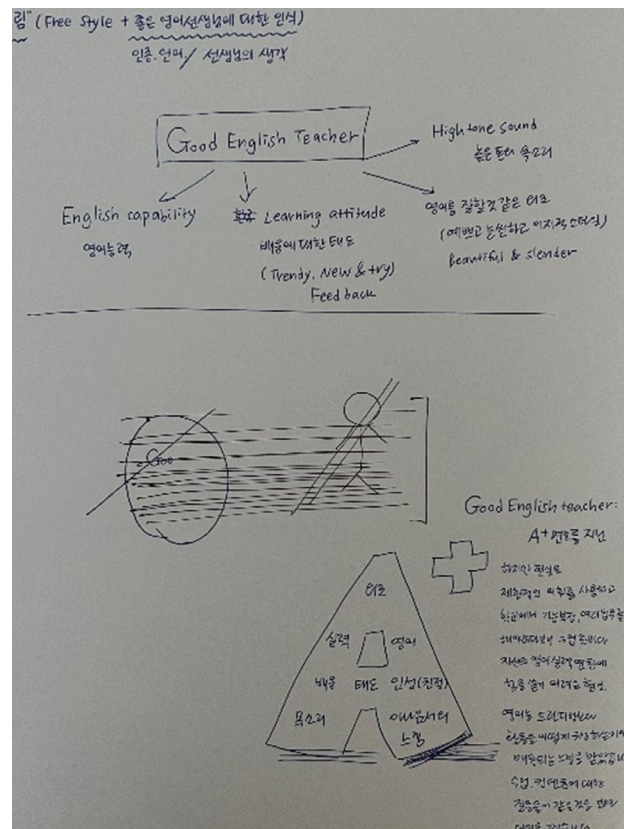


FIGURE 3 Teacher's Artwork on a Good Teacher

definitions and meanings of what a good English learner/speaker is and what it means to be good at English, as well as how they define their role according to their own definitions of teaching and learning English. From this talk, not only was I able to understand local primary school English teachers' perspective on the meaning of ELT in Korea today, but I also detected how they used categorical entitlements to distinguish competent and incompetent teachers. I brought this phenomenon into my Ph.D. journey, discussing it through a classroom discussion and an academic conference (J. Im, 2017a).

I also asked the participants to draw their version of a "good English teacher" (Figure 3). This idea originated from Ahn and West (2016) and investigated young Korean learners' perception of a good teacher. This activity was intended to provide the participating teachers with an opportunity to think of their own teaching practices (Abas et al., 2020). However, I later found that it also gave me a chance to write an academic paper for which I actively listened to the teachers and tried to compare their ideas with previous research.

In conclusion, the development of my teacher educator identity was closely related to my researcher-self whose interest was less in monetary compensation but more in the possibilities of making in-class interaction between me and the participating teachers into the research data sources. Thus, even after I left the program, I constantly revisited what I did during the teacher training by using various theoretical frameworks and continuously thought of how to improve my teaching in the following year and of what research topic to explore with new teachers.

3. Emotional Being: Teaching as Emotional Work

While the two identities mentioned have to do with cognitive aspects of teacher-self, the third identity is relevant to emotion. Teachers' identity is heavily influenced by emotion (Zembylas, 2003). Especially when facing emotionally vulnerable situations, competent teachers can recontextualize them into a self-transformation opportunity for intellectual growth and to find ways to develop their teacher agency by overcoming unsuccessful cases (Zembylas, 2003). This was also the case for the formation of my teacher educator identity.

The emotional traces left from each program year were stored in my diaries and conversations with my colleagues and family members who I trusted would understand my emotional vulnerability. I found myself having difficulties in dealing with occasions in which a small number of the participating teachers behaved unexpectedly: (1) demotivational and amotivational teachers who seemed uninterested in my content and (2) those who seemed to depend too much on the poor-quality textbook used for the program and believed that the textbook is the most important source for their professional development.

Although I always tried to make classes more active, informative, and thought of methods to earn interest from learners by constantly drawing upon strategies I learned from my teaching experiences as an English instructor and

as a Korean as a foreign language teacher in higher educational institutes, it seems that my efforts have not always successfully met several teachers' expectations. One of the purposes and self-expectations of my teaching was to introduce recent theories and research trends in the field of English education and help the participating teachers to consider their own teaching experiences and English learner attitudes. This expectation was sometimes not instilled as several teachers protested what I was delivering. For example, when receiving questions about the most recent English teaching methods popular in the US other than techniques they learned a decade ago such as TPR, Song & Chant, etc., I was partially frustrated because I thought it was something that I should not answer but something they should figure out for themselves. I also realized that there was a discrepancy between what I believed was crucial in professional development and what they wanted to take from the teacher training program. To the participating teachers, teacher education seemed to have a different meaning – learning about teaching methods that can be mastered through the program and applied to their own classroom. Thus, this gap that I somehow failed to fill made several teachers less properly invested (S. H. G. Ahn & M. W. Lee, 2017).

Another instance that caused an emotional whirlpool was the times when I felt I failed to persuade the participating teachers to have a more active attitude in searching for English learning and teaching resources independently. Oftentimes I was asked which section of the textbook my PowerPoint slides were covering. Although I constantly sought to let them know that what I was presenting is what is being hotly debated in the field of English education globally, I felt that some teachers were not satisfied with my class that dealt with out-of-textbook topics. Instead, they seemed to want to study with the textbook that I found had a tremendous number of errors and nonsense English. Thus, not only did I have to correct many English mistakes, but I also had to make it clear that the poor-quality textbook should be used as one of the many materials provided during the program, not as the only resource

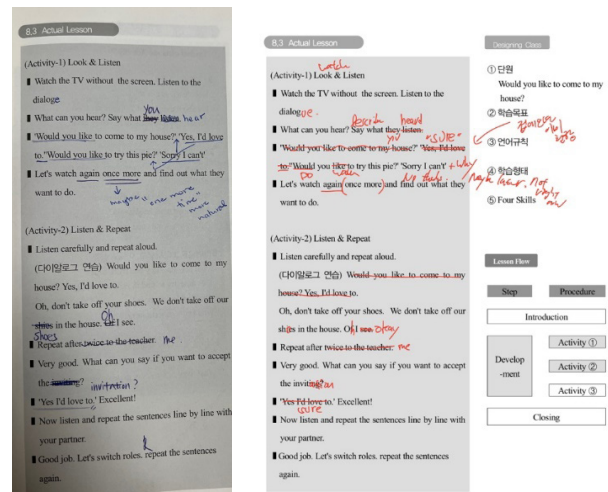


FIGURE 4 Textbook Error Corrections

that is treasured above all. To help teachers have a more critical eye in consuming the textbook, I often brought up what conversations I had with my American friends and how they reacted to the textbook dialogues (Figure 4), but teachers seemed to have a tendency to put complete trust in their textbook. The reason for me to mention “my American friends” in arguing against their dependence on the textbook was that some teachers seemed to have little trust on me in terms of an English speaker status because I was regarded as an English teacher to whom English is also a foreign language.

Various emotional difficulties, however, were partly compensated when other teachers personally sought me out to say that they learned a lot from my classes and were motivated to continue learning English and reconsider how to build upon their teacher identity. The teachers’ warm thanks confirmed to me that I was doing okay and there were at the very least some teachers who found me helpful and motivational (Figure 5).

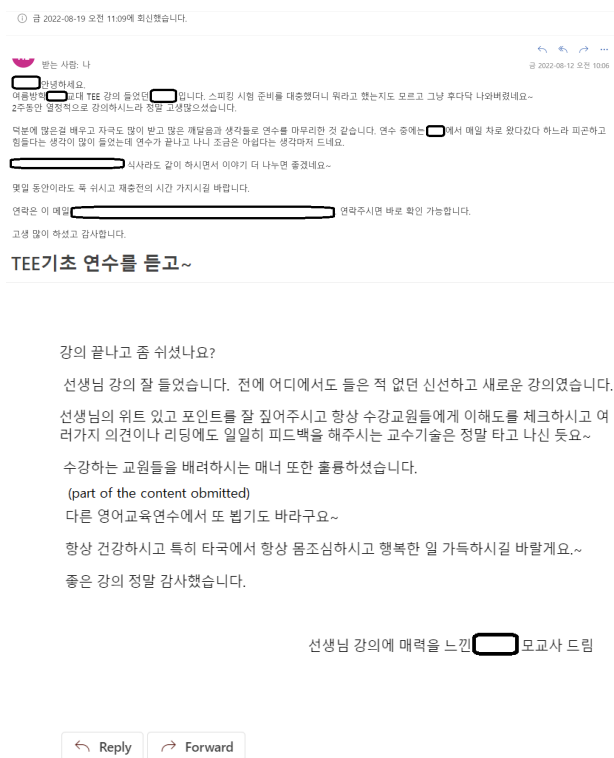


FIGURE 5 Emails from Teachers

Additionally, my self-acknowledgment as someone who does not have any teaching experience in the context of primary school English also helped me to realize that what I present or what I strongly stand for in terms of theories, for example, might not be locally appealing to the primary school teachers. This led me to design the program in a way that focuses on the teacher from a learner perspective for which, as TESOL programs often do (Y. Kang, 2009), I tried to include various English learning resources and share helpful books, lectures, and apps to improve English proficiency.

IV. DISCUSION AND CONCLUSION

My ethnographic reconstruction of the formation of the teacher educator identity aimed to make visible how my participation in the primary school English teacher training program over many summers has shaped my identity as an English teacher educator. Through the retrospective investigation of multiple sources from which my teacher educator-self was deeply involved, I was able to make sense of the formation of multiple intertwined identities that explain who I am as a teacher educator in a specific context. Figure 6 can be considered a simplified visual graphic to describe the factors that influence the formation of my teacher educator identity. The teacher educator identity works as a site of three different aspects of being a teacher, each of which is also influenced by various teaching and learning experiences.

One aspect of the teacher identity that was not shown in my case, compared to previous teacher identity research, was the identity of the teacher-as-a-carer (J. Im, 2022; J. Ro, 2019). Some teachers who are teaching students younger than them often regard their roles as someone who takes care of students’ emotional well-being, but in my journey to the formation of teacher educator identity, this caring person identity was not detected. This could be caused by the age factor between me and the participating teachers. Or it would be more plausible to think of it as a lack of time to create a close bond. It was also interesting to see that my teacher educator identity was developed without any experience teaching at primary school. Although field experience was argued to be important for teacher educators (Bullock, 2009; Yung, 2020), it is probably not mandatory for a teacher educator to have the same experience as participant teachers when perceiving one’s professional identity.

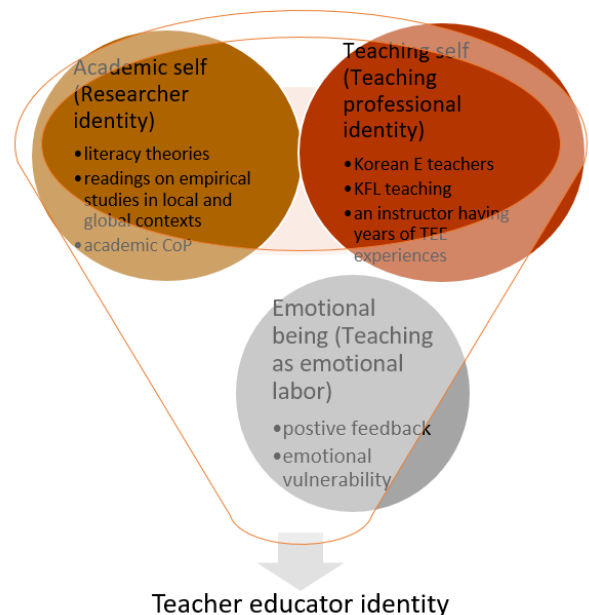


FIGURE 6 Factors on Teacher Educator Identity

All things considered, this subjective narrative should be a meaningful addition to the language teacher educator identity field that, as Yazan (2018) pointed out, is “undertheorized and underresearched” (p. 141). However, the current study should be understood as a call for more academic discussion and research on teacher educators in diverse contexts. From 2015 to 2022, I met several Korean teacher educators for the program, and surprisingly not everyone, in my opinion, seems to be qualified to stand in front of the participating teachers. This might sound bold and even arrogant in the sense that I judged their qualification. Nevertheless, not only was it my genuine impression that I would like to share with those involved in the teacher training programs, but it should be seen as an appeal to readers that there is no proper education for those who do teacher training. Besides English proficiency or teaching experiences, the most urgent problem that should be solved was the fact that no one was trained to teach teachers. In other words, although the teachers whom I worked with had English major backgrounds or self-proclaimed to be English specialists, no one had primary school English teaching experience and did not situate themselves in any kind of professional development. This also applied to some English speaking teachers hired for the teacher training program. Most of the native English speaking teachers belonged to colleges in Korea where they usually exercised their *native speakerness* to teach English to Korean learners; they were not specialized in teaching young learners or training teachers. In this vein, we should think of how to uprear good teacher educators whose existence will play an essential role in developing an effective program that is specifically designed for intensive teacher training at the local level.

Further research on teacher educators out-of-higher education contexts is also needed through which we can better understand the reality of intensive teacher training. One way to invite the teacher educators could be using methodologies such as autoethnography, duoethnography, collaborative autoethnography, or critical ethnography by which those who are experienced and skillful can reveal transformative experiences and eventually fill the research-practice gap (De Costa et al., 2022).

Regarding teacher participants, further research should investigate how those who participate in the intensive teacher training program change their perception as a teaching professional and what it means to teach English in Korea, which might differ from other Asian English teachers who joined TESOL programs in English speaking countries (Liu, 1998). As mentioned above, not every participant seems to be interested in learning new trends or literacy education theories, contrary to my expectation. Their indifference may be due to their practicality; teachers may want to learn something practical so that they can directly apply it to their teaching practice (e.g., Y. J. Choi & T. E. Kim, 2016). It is also due to the limited space for the program not being able to properly provide teachers with enough opportunities to practice teaching techniques. For example, while teachers find task-based teaching help-

ful for young learners of English who would be relatively free from exam pressure (S. Shin & H. Kim, 2012), what the teacher training program could do was to put it as one chapter and explain its theoretical underpinnings via watching YouTube clips of its use in different countries. This would not help teachers to find any better way to develop their task-based teaching skills. Based on my years of experience working for the TEE program, it is highly doubtful that any of the aspects – theoretical updates and improving teaching skills – could be fulfilled with the way the teacher training program is run as of right now. Therefore, we should now think of how to improve teacher training programs that are, in most cases, mandatory for teachers and explore what is happening in the program. In conclusion, we need to admit that we still know little about teacher educators, teacher training program participants, and teacher training programs, without knowing of which we also cannot make meaningful development in the field of teacher education.

In this vein, this personal narrative, though it might have looked too personal and subjective which should be in effect the beauty of autoethnography (Poulos, 2021), will hopefully function to provide readers with an opportunity evocative of their similar experiences as a teacher-learner or as a teacher teaching other teachers. And, as my story revealed how I perceived myself as a teaching professional in my own way, it will open more conversations with readers having similar interests in various contexts, inspire others who may have different experiences and perspectives from mine to join academic interaction, and encourage more questions regarding teacher education in local and global contexts. To fulfill these goals, our stories need to be located at the center of academic discussion and to be theorized in the nexus of personal, social, political, and academic practice.

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