A Gyopo English Teacher's Professional Identity in an EFL Context

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There is a growing research interest in language teachers' professional identity. Nevertheless, unlike studies involving the identity of native and non-native English-speaking teachers, few studies analyzed Gyopo English teachers' identity despite a sizeable body of Gyopo teachers in the Korean educational context. Using post-structural perspectives of identity, this case study analyzed the identities of a Gyopo instructor as an English teacher and how such identities were reflected in classroom practice. Data were collected through interviews, classroom observations, and self-reflective reports written by the participant. Findings reveal that the participant constructed multiple professional identities as a teacher with previous language learning experiences, a bridge-builder, a multitasker, and a teacher who is not a native English speaker but an American, and a replaceable person. While experiencing identity conflicts, she constantly negotiated and renegotiated her multiple, contradictory identities to position herself more favorably. Based on these findings, the present study offers pedagogical suggestions.

Key words: Gyopo teacher, language teacher identity, teacher professional identity

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1. INTRODUCTION

The notion of identity is complex since it involves various elements, such as personal life history, beliefs, experiences, and sociocultural landscapes surrounding an individual. An individual has multiple identities (Weedon, 1997), which are constantly negotiated and reconstructed in social contexts where s/he is situated (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). According to Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004), identity is "a dynamic and shifting nexus of multiple subject positions, or identity options" (p. 35). Similarly, Jackson (2016) views identity as "multifaceted, dynamic, relational, and sometimes contradictory" (p. 116).

Researchers have paid increasing attention to teacher identity as a research topic in consideration of its importance in the educational process (Barkhuizen, 2016; Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). Beijaard et al. (2004) stated that teacher's professional identity involves "a complex and dynamic equilibrium where self-image is balanced with a variety of roles teachers feel that they have to play" (p. 113). To put it another way, a teacher's professional identity is affected by both internal factors such as the teacher's emotional status and external factors including work environment (Flores & Day, 2006; Golombek & Johnson, 2004).

In particular, in the field of language education, language teachers' professional identity is considered a critical component in language teaching and learning as it strongly affects how language teaching is played out. Examining teachers' identities and perspectives allows an investigation of teachers' pedagogical and curricular decisions because the identities which teachers embody in their classroom influence how and what they teach. Against this background, more recently, language teacher's identity has emerged as a significant issue worth exploring (Barkhuizen, 2016; Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005), and due to this recent focus, multiple aspects of language teachers' identities have been aptly revealed across contexts, for example, in English as a Second Language (ESL) context (e.g., Choi, 2009; Chong, 2011; Park, 2012; Tang, 1997; Trent, 2011; Trent & DeCoursey, 2011) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context (e.g., Hays, 2009; H. Kim, 2013; S. Kim, 2011, 2012, 2017; Ko & Kim, 2021; H. Lee, 2010; Liu & Xu, 2011; Masoumpanah & Zarei, 2014; Tsui, 2007; Xu, 2013). Findings of these studies have contributed to an understanding of common and unique features of language teachers' identities in different contexts to a great extent; to date, however, the majority of those previous studies have investigated the identity issue through the lens of native English speaker versus non-native English speaker dichotomy, while classifying English teachers into a Native English-Speaking Teacher (NEST) (e.g., Howard, 2019; S. Kim, 2012, 2017; Ko & Kim, 2021) or a Non-Native English-Speaking Teacher (NNEST) (e.g., Choe, 2008, ; Liu & Xu, 2011) and exploring professional identities of either NESTs or NNESTs.

In this research paradigm, identities of a particular group of English teachers, that is, *Gyopo* teachers have not received enough attention although they constitute a significant body of English teaching professionals in Korea. The term 'Gyopo' is an umbrella term to refer to ethnic Koreans with foreign citizenships, including Korean-Americans, Korean-Australians, and Korean-Canadians. According to Jang (2017), recruiting foreign professors for English education has become a noticeable trend at Korean tertiary level institutions as they attempt to internationalize as a response to globalization, and along with the rising number of foreign professors comes a growing number of Gyopo teachers in Korea. In addition, as Cho (2012) mentions, the Overseas Korean Act (OKA) in 1999 caused an increase in the number of Gyopos who returned to South Korea, especially to teach English in Korea. Such influx of Gyopo English teachers can be partly explained by the Korean government policy that has consistently treated English as a language of social and economic power for economic growth and national prosperity.

As regards professional identity, Gyopo teachers, who do not exactly fall within the dichotomy of NEST and NNEST (Karas, 2015), may possess unique identities based on their life histories and experiences. For example, it is likely that Gyopo teachers have more complex identities compared to their monolingual counterparts due to their experiences with at least two different languages and cultures. By investigating Gyopo teachers' identity, which has been neglected in identity research to date, the present study can expand knowledge on language teachers' professional identity. Furthermore, exploring a Gyopo teacher's identity being situated in the Korean English educational context where so-called English fever (Park, 2009) prevails will contribute to illuminating how significantly and uniquely contextual factors affect the process of teacher identity construction and reconstruction.

Against this background, the present study aims to examine one Gyopo English teacher's identities and how her identities are enacted in her EFL classroom. This study focuses on one female Gyopo teacher in her early 40s, who was teaching English at a university in a metropolitan city in Korea, under the framework of post-structural approaches towards identity. The following research question frames this qualitative inquiry: How does a Gyopo teacher teaching in Korea perceive herself as a teacher of English and what identities does she hold?

In order to achieve the research objective, the present study involves multiple data sources including interviews, classroom observations, and self-reflective journals, unlike many previous qualitative studies based on interview data only. Drawing from various data sets allows for triangulation and thereby ensures representativeness and trustworthiness of its findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and in that aspect, this study can make methodological contribution to research on language teacher identity as well.

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1. Language Teachers' Professional Identity

According to Varghese et al. (2005), identity is "not fixed, stable, unitary, and internally coherent phenomenon but is multiple, shifting, and in conflict" (p. 22). As claimed by MacLure (1993), identity is not something that people have; rather, it is something they use "to justify, explain and make sense of themselves in relation to other people, and to the contexts in which they operate" (p. 312). Similarly, Norton (2013) defined identity as "the way a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (p. 4). Such view of identity is known as the post-structural approach to identity (Weedon, 1997). From this view, teachers' professional identity cannot be separated from the context in which it is enacted. It is constructed through participation in valued activities of the community of practice (Wenger, 1998), and continuously negotiated in the process of interacting with others in the community including colleagues, students, and, more broadly, institutional, social, cultural, and political forces (Block, 2017). In addition, a teacher's professional identity which consists of multiple sub-identities may conflict or align with each other (Barkhuizen, 2016; Cooper & Olson, 1996). In language learning and teaching, language teachers' professional identity plays an important role as it has a direct influence on their pedagogical practices which can, in turn, affect language learners' learning outcomes.

According to Beijaard et al. (2004), identity formation is "a process of practical knowledge-building characterized by an ongoing integration of what is individually and collectively seen as relevant to teaching" (p. 123). Many of the studies of language teacher identity have revealed that not only internal factors but also external factors influence the construction of teachers' professional identity. Tsui (2007), for example, examined one Chinese EFL teacher's professional identity formation through a lens of Wenger's notions of identity construction. The findings showed that the teacher's identity formation was highly complex; the teacher struggled during the process of identity construction due to not only internal factors including his previous English learning experience, but also external factors such as social and institutional forces. The author also emphasized the importance of participation in the process of identity formation as teachers can be given "legitimacy of access to practice and opportunities for developing professional competence and having their competence recognized" (p. 678). In an ESL context, Pavlenko (2003) examined how pre-service and in-service ESL teachers imagine their linguistic and professional memberships through linguistic autobiographies. In the study, the teachers reimagined themselves as a

multicompetent bilingual which prevented them from having a negative self-image and led them to view themselves in a positive way.

In sum, previous studies of teacher professional identity revealed that the identity is something that is not fixed; rather it is multiple, shifting, and in conflict (Varghese et al., 2005). Moreover, it is heavily influenced by the context which a teacher is located in.

2.2. Native Speaker vs. Non-Native Speaker Dichotomy

The dichotomy between a Native Speaker (NS) and a Non-Native Speaker (NNS) still continues to persist (Ellis, 2016; Kubota & Fujimoto, 2013). According to J. Lee (2005), a NS of a language is an individual who has the following six characteristics:

1. Acquired the language in early childhood and maintains the use of the language
2. Has an intuitive knowledge of the language
3. Is able to produce fluent and spontaneous discourse
4. Is able to communicate within different social settings (communicatively competent)
5. Identifies with or is identified by a language community
6. Is freed from a foreign accent.

On the other hand, a NNS may be capable of having all of the above characteristics of native speakers except for the one on early childhood acquisition. However, many scholars, for example, Rampton (1990) and Medgyes (1994), have suggested that the use of the terms, NS and NNS, is problematic because it is not easy to set clear boundaries between them. In addition, as Bolton (2006) suggested, NSs and NNSs of English are often classified based on their race instead of linguistic competence. Also, the NS/NNS binary distinction may place teachers who have learned English as a second or foreign language in a subordinate position and lead to discriminations against them. In line with this view, Cook (1999) pointed out that the characteristic regarding early childhood acquisition can be problematic since even highly proficient users of a language who have acquired the language after early childhood would not be considered an NS on that basis. Ellis (2016) indicated that NNSs are likely to be defined by their perceived deficiencies in language abilities rather than by their multilingualism (as cited in Asadi, Moody, & Padrón, 2020).

The NS vs. NNS dichotomy is extended to NEST vs. NNEST distinction. Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999) claimed that the focus should be on "the multi-dimensionality and expertise rather than on nativeness or authenticity" (p. 142) while highlighting an important role of teacher's knowledge, skills, training, experience, and personality in successful teaching. Similarly, Ellis (2016) claimed that a language teacher's previous language

learning experience is a more important component which contributes to the teacher's identity and professional beliefs compared to his/her native or non-native status.

However, the NS vs. NNS dichotomy and also NEST vs. NNEST dichotomy are still pervasive in the field of English education (Ellis, 2016; Kubota & Fujimoto, 2013). Accordingly, due to the dominant native-speakerism defined as "an established belief that 'native-speaker' teachers represent a 'Western culture' from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology" (Holliday, 2005, p. 6), there is still an overwhelming preference for NESTs in the field of English language teaching (ELT) worldwide while NNESTs tend to experience varying levels of discrimination in, for example, job employment. Hodgson (2014) pointed out that "Paikeday declared that the native speaker was dead, yet its ghost still continues to haunt the journals, conferences and classrooms of our profession worldwide almost three decades after his eulogistic pronunciation" (p. 113). As Higgins (2016) pointed out, although concepts such as English as lingua franca and World Englishes have been around since 1960s, and despite the fact that many scholars in the field are well aware that other factors such as knowledge and previous language learning experience of a language teacher are more closely related to his or her professional identity compared to whether he or she is a native or not, NESTs, especially those who are from the Inner Circle countries, are still preferred to NNESTs.

There has been a growing number of studies on language teachers' professional identity that were conducted in EFL contexts. S. Kim (2017), for example, explored how four NESTs working at a Korean university negotiated their conflicting identities and constructed their teacher professional identities. The data was collected through a set of interviews and classroom observations. The findings of the research revealed that the NESTs developed multiple identities of an English educator, a collaborative volunteer, a non-tenured instructor, and a cultural and linguistic outsider. Their participation in professional practices was shaped by who they were and who they imagined themselves to be. She observed that the NESTs gained a legitimate recognition through their participation in the present and imagined community of competent teachers.

Likewise, a number of studies have been carried out on NNESTs' identity in EFL contexts. Ahmad, Latada, Shah, and Wahab (2017) investigated the factors affecting the professional identity of NNESTs at a university in Saudi Arabia. The data were collected quantitatively through survey. The findings from the research showed that the NNESTs' professional identities were influenced by a number of personal, professional, social and pedagogical factors such as the NNS status, interactions with other EFL teachers, and their imagined identities. Similarly, Zhang (2017) explored how two Chinese EFL teachers constructed their professional identity as NNESTs. The findings also showed that there can be some advantages of being NNESTs in terms of their professional identity due to their understanding of Chinese language and culture. More recently, Lomi and Mbato (2020)

examined the struggles faced by three novice NNESTs working in various institutional settings in Indonesia and the way they coped with the struggles with regard to their development of professional identity. The findings of the study revealed that the NNESTs were influenced by both internal (e.g., emotion, ability to teach, etc.) and external factors (e.g., the relationships with their colleagues) which led to the struggles. In a Korean context, Choe (2008) examined how four NNESTs working in a Korean university negotiated their non-native identities and struggled with their status as a NNEST. Interviews and personal conversations were used as main data sources for the study. Although the participants were at an advanced level of English proficiency, they perceived themselves as second-rate teachers and felt inferior to NESTs due to their lack of native-like competence, pronunciation, intuition, and knowledge on the target culture. They also had faced discrimination against their non-native status in the TESOL. The NNESTs tried to overcome the difficulties by getting rid of their negative self-image and reconstruct positive images on the basis of their linguistic and cultural experiences abroad.

2.3. Gyopo Teachers

As mentioned earlier, in this study, Gyopo is defined as an ethnic Korean with foreign citizenship. Gyopo is a Korean word generally referring to ethnic Koreans living overseas (Lo & Kim, 2012). More specifically, Gyopo is a person who has migrated from Korea on a temporary or permanent basis or a descendant of an emigrant. Based on the definition, it can be inferred that a Gyopo group can have a wide range of variation in terms of their first language and also second language competence. According to Son's (2013) categorization of Gyopo, first generation Koreans are those who were born in Korea and have immigrated to another country as an adult while second generation Koreans are those who were born and raised in another country. To the former, Korean is the native language while to the latter, English is the native language. Cheng (2018) described an additional category, 1.5-generation, which is between first and second generations: 1.5-generation Koreans are those who were born in Korea but immigrated to another country with their immigrant parents.

Worth noting in relation to Gyopo is that race prejudice or discrimination is still rampant in the field of English language teaching due to the ideology of native-speakerism (Holliday, 2005). Caucasians are preferred and often paid more regardless of their abilities and knowledge (Cho, 2012), and as suggested by Jenks (2017), there is a tacit racial hierarchy in the ELT profession which places non-Caucasian teachers in a marginalized position. Therefore, although Gyopo teachers have not only the ability to speak English fluently but also the understanding of both languages and cultures, they face reverse discrimination, especially in the job market (Jang, 2020). According to Ruecker and Ives (2015), for example, on one website, Asknow.ca, the following statement appeared: "It is difficult for non-

Caucasian people to find employment teaching in Korea. There is an image that most schools have in their head of who they want to hire" (p. 12). Similarly, a job posting on a Korean job board stated that recruiters only want Americans, Canadians, the British, Australians, New Zealanders Irish as English teachers, but not Gyopo, Asian, or Black (Park, 2019).

This social phenomenon places Gyopo teachers at a disadvantaged status in a recruitment process regardless of their language proficiency or teaching expertise. Even Gyopo teachers who perceive themselves as native speakers of English may not be considered as NESTs by others and may experience discrimination due to their appearance. Therefore, Gyopo teachers often struggle between their assigned identities, which can be described as the identities imposed upon them by others, and claimed identities, which can be defined as the identities they claim for themselves.

Although Gyopo teachers form a sizeable body of ELT professionals and are uniquely situated in context, their professional identities received attention in only a few studies. Javier (2016), for instance, investigated two NESTs, one who is Canadian of Hong Kong descent and the other who is American of Mexican descent. Their identities were discriminated and questioned by others including students and parents due to the expectation that a native speaker teacher should be white. In Kubota and Fujimoto's (2013) study, one Japanese American teacher working in a Japanese context was treated as Japanese rather than American by others because of his appearance. The teacher experienced exclusion from native speakers in a professional context. The authors explained that there was a hierarchy of races in which Caucasian teachers were preferred over people of other races. The authors concluded that "racial and linguistic self-identities can conflict with perceived or imposed identities in a devastation way" (p. 204). To our knowledge, only one study was conducted in Korea by Y. Kim (2013), who explored professional identity of one Korean American teacher. The Gyopo teacher, who rarely knew Korean, showed multiple and sometimes conflicting professional identities. She perceived herself as an American and hoped to be treated by others as such by constantly trying to prove that she was a member of the community; however, she was marginalized and discriminated because of her race.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participant

One 1.5-generation Korean-American Gyopo teacher, Nicole, who was teaching English at a Korean university, participated in the present study. She was 43 years old at the time of the study and had been married to a Korean man since 2010 with one child. Nicole entered a doctoral program in English Education in 2019, and at the time of the study, she was in her

fourth semester of the program. She had been working at the university as an English lecturer for ten years and she had more than a total of 15 years of working experiences as an EFL teacher including her tutoring experiences.

Nicole was born in Korea and moved to the U.S. in 1997 when she was 18 years old with her family and became an American citizen in 2005. After she completed her Bachelor's degree in Child Development and Multiple Subjects, she came back to Korea and started working as an English teacher at a private English academy. She then took a role as a teacher trainer at the same academy, through which she came to learn more about how to develop curricula and lesson plans. While she was studying for her master's degree in TESOL, Nicole was hired in the position of a native English-speaking instructor at a Korean university. At first, she was hired to work for the general education program, but, about one year later, she was transferred to the English department after being recognized for her excellent teaching abilities and hard-working attitudes.

In both programs, Nicole mainly taught general English courses and conversation courses, but sometimes she had an opportunity to teach content-based courses such as *Teaching English to Young Learners*. Despite her status as a native English-speaking professor at school, Nicole often times felt uncomfortable to claim herself as such because she had learned English after puberty and she had a foreign accent. She also felt she was being more and more Koreanized due to her long residence and marriage life in Korea.

We had known Nicole for more than two years at the time of the study. The first author was enrolled in the same Ph. D. program as Nicole and had a lot in common with her as Gyopo teachers living in Korea. As a result, Nicole and the first author could establish a close friendship with each other, and the first author finally became able to take a closer look into Nicole's professional and personal lives. For the present study, after Nicole was explained about the purpose of the study and data collection methods, the first author asked her if she would participate in the study, and Nicole agreed to be involved in the present study as a participant.

3.2. Data Collection

As suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), multiple sources of information can help ensure trustworthiness and generate a rich description of a phenomenon under study in qualitative research, and accordingly the present study used multiple data sources drawn from different sources and at different times. Data collection involved four instruments: (1) four primary semi-structured interviews, (2) 10 short complementary interviews, (3) four class observations, and (4) two self-reflective reports written by the participant.

The first author of this paper conducted semi-structured interviews with the participant four times, each lasting between one and two hours, between April and June of 2021. During

the primary interviews, the interview questions (see Appendix) were used as a guide to provide general direction to her stories. These questions were developed based on Davey's (2013) framework of teacher's professional identity, which consists of five dimensions including doing, becoming, being, belonging, and knowing. They were designed to delve into the participant's professional, academic, and linguistic backgrounds, her professional identity related to her personal, social, and professional lives, and her future professional expectations.

Besides, short complementary interviews were conducted ten times, each lasting 10 to 30 minutes, when we felt it necessary to collect more information or to clarify our confusion, or when the participant wanted to elaborate further. In total, all the interviews – both semi-structured and short complementary interviews – took approximately 12 hours. Due to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews were conducted via Zoom, which is one of the most popular video communication platforms, or by phone. All the interviews were conducted in Korean, which was the language of choice of the interviewee.

Observations of Nicole's general English classes were made four times. The course mainly aimed to develop students' English communication skills. In each class, there were 17 to 18 students. All first-year students were required to take the course regardless of their major, and the class comprised of students of varied English proficiency levels. The classes observed were carried out online, and all four classroom observations also took place via online. All the classes which were chosen to be observed were also video recorded, and each observation took one to two hours. During the observations, we paid more attention to the specific episodes or moments which seemed to be related to teacher's professional identity and field notes were taken.

Additionally, the participant wrote down two self-reflected diaries to share her stories and thoughts further after the interviews and gave them to us. After she looked back on the interviews, she recorded the things that she wanted to clarify or which she forgot to mention during the interviews in regard to teacher professional identity. The first story was about her experiences as an English learner and her role model as a language teacher, while the second story was regarding the advantages and disadvantages she had encountered as a Gyopo teacher in Korea.

3.3. Data Analysis

We analyzed multiple data sets, using the method of a constant comparison analysis created by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Rationale behind selecting this analytical approach is supported by Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007), who argue that a constant comparison analysis is most appropriate when a researcher collects multiple data from different sources and at different times and tries to identify underlying themes presented in the entire dataset.

Specifically, our constant comparison analysis was composed of three stages: phase one (interview and self-reflective journal coding), phase two (classroom discourse analysis), and phrase three (member checking). It should be noted that as interview data constituted the main, largest part of the entire dataset, we turned largely to the interview data for gaining insights into the participant's identity, and the other data sets were triangulated with the interview data. In the first phase of data analysis, following grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), we coded the interview and self-reflective journal data to identify recurrent, salient themes related to the research question. While reading through those data repeatedly, we segmented the data into smaller meaningful units related to identity and labeled them with codes. This initial coding stage generated eight codes. Next, after two more rounds of coding and discussions between the researchers, we synthesized the eight initial codes, resulting in five major themes.

In the second phrase, we analyzed the classroom observation data with a particular focus on classroom discourse. As the focus of this study is to understand how a Gyopo teacher perceives herself professionally and how it translates into her classroom practices, we paid special attention to the teacher's comments on her as a teacher and also the ways that her professional identity is pedagogically or interactionally enacted in class while analyzing classroom discourse. More specifically, while watching the recorded data, we selected parts for discourse analysis which are related to the five 'identity' themes identified in the first analysis phase, and then closely analyzed the classroom discourse data in relation to those themes. We then chose quotes from the interviews or interactional episodes from the classroom data which seemed more representative of each theme identified. In the first two phases of data analysis, as suggested by Denzin (1978), we attempted to triangulate different data sets with each other in order to ensure the representativeness of themes across the entire data set and eventually the trustworthiness of research findings.

Finally, in the third phase, after data analysis was complete, we showed the results of data analysis to the participant, Nicole, for member checking (Merriam, 1998) and asked if the themes or arguments are accurately describing her identities. Nicole confirmed the results, showing her agreement on the findings and interpretations. Like triangulation of data, this member checking process also contributed to ensuring the trustworthiness of the findings.

4. FINDINGS

This section illustrates Nicole's salient, multiple identities identified through data analysis. Each identity theme occurred across the multiple data sets, particularly the interview data drawn at many different times and in different places. Nicole, as an EFL Gyopo teacher,

showed the following identities which were sometimes aligned but sometimes in conflict with each other.

4.1. "I Was Once a Language Learner Myself"

As mentioned in the earlier section, Nicole was born and raised in South Korea and she emigrated to the U.S. at the age of 18. Since she had her own experiences as a former English learner, she had a deeper understanding of foreign language learning and use. In addition, as she was familiar with her students' cultural and linguistic background, she was able to understand their language learning difficulties including rhetoric and linguistic challenges. She was also well aware of the highs and lows of their foreign language learning process. Regarding this, she mentioned:

> The benefit of me having Korean background is that I know that my students are shy and have feelings of anxiety when speaking in English. I know it is hard for them to speak up and volunteer when it comes to speaking a foreign language. So I try to help them by creating a 'safe' class environment for them. (interview, 04/06/2021)

After she thought back on her experiences with English learning, Nicole said that she knew from her experience that it is not easy to go through the difficulties alone. Since her parents were not able to help her with English learning, and neither did others, she had to stand on her own. She described why she felt empathy for her students in the following excerpt:

> When I was a language learner myself, I really did not have anyone to help me, but things are different for my students because they have me. I want them to go through the difficulties with me when I am still around them. They need to be ready to stand on their own because there will be no one around them to provide help once they graduate from university. (interview, 04/10/2021)

Nicole's identity as a former English language learner was often manifested in the classroom observation data as well. In the class, she frequently provided emotional support for her students and made a signal that she was caring about them by empathizing with the students' frustrations and consistently monitoring their understanding. In addition, with the help of the insights gained from her past language learning experiences, she used language teaching methods which she regarded as effective and helpful, for example, repetition and

recast. The following excerpt shows how she used recast to implicitly offer corrections to student errors:

> Nicole: Did you guys have lunch? What was your lunch menu? Maybe, I can ask Chan. Chan, what was your lunch menu?
> Chan: (3 seconds)
> Nicole: Did you have lunch, Chan?
> Chan: No, I pass the lunch.
> Nicole: Oh, you SKIPPED your lunch. Why?
> Chan: Because… the English presentation skills class.
> Nicole: Oh, okay. I understand. I SKIPPED my lunch too. I was busy and I am hungry. When Yuna was talking about 'Tonkatsu', I was really hungry.
> (class interaction, 03/16/2021)

In the excerpt above, when a student made a mistake by saying "I pass the lunch," Nicole recast the student's error and offered the correct form while saying the form loudly and repeatedly.

Also, based on a lesson about the importance of 'trying out a language in an anxiety-reduced environment' that she had gained from her previous learning experiences, Nicole incorporated many pair and group works where students could freely work on their own. She frequently encouraged her students to participate in those activities more actively without worrying too much about being wrong. In the following excerpt, Nicole emphasized the importance of producing output in language learning and went further to highlight that making mistakes while producing the target form is not a big deal.

> Nicole: You have to talk a lot, not just listening. Okay? And remember, for the participation points, you need to be proactive, okay? So you need to talk a lot, answer a lot, and guys, don't worry about being right or wrong, okay? It does not really matter. You have to talk if you want to learn a language. That's what we need, okay? Practice!
> (class interaction, 03/24/2021)

Moreover, she frequently made positive comments to enhance her students' motivation. She tried to create a positive classroom environment by making the students feel comfortable, being reminded of her previous foreign language anxiety. The following excerpt from classroom interaction data shows her effort to reduce her students' anxiety:

> Nicole: Ask "what time do you usually get up?"

Cherin: Dahee. What time do you usually get up?

Dahee: ((smiling)) I usually get up at 8 am.

Nicole: Did you see Dahee smiling when Chaerin called Dahee's name prior
          to asking a question? You know, Dahee showed a big smile. Yeah.
          Look at her smile! That makes people comfortable. Okay. That makes
          both the person who asks the question and the person who answers the
          question feel really good. Okay? It creates a positive classroom
          atmosphere. So Dahee, thank you for your big smile. Everyone,
          SMILE!
          And ask the question to each other. Dahee, you answered. Right?

Dahee: yes.

Nicole: Now call Yeajin and ask the question.

Dahee: ((smiling)) Yeajin, what time do you usually get up?

Yeajin: ((smiling)) I usually get up at 8am.

Nicole: ((smiling)) Okay. Good! Now Yeajin is smiling too. Now, Yeajin, call
          Soyoung.

                                                  (class interaction, 03/19/2021)

Nicole said that she often received positive comments from students for being a caring and thoughtful teacher. She described how her students described and perceived her as follows:

> My students told me that they often felt left behind in the classes taught by foreign professors because the professors moved on to the next topic even though they did not understand. They said that Gyopo teachers are a lot more caring, supportive, and considerate compared to NESTs, and have a better understanding of them. (interview, 05/27/2021)

4.2. "I Am a Bridge-Builder"

Nicole identified herself as a linguistic and cultural mediator who brought the Korean faculty members and English-speaking foreign faculty members together. She pointed out that her bilingual and bicultural experiences helped her gain an understanding of both Korean and English-speaking foreigner groups which, in turn, enabled her to position herself as "a bridge-builder" in her own words. In the interview she said:

> I step in whenever there are communication breakdowns, or difficult or potentially problematic situations between Korean professors and foreign

professor due to their cultural differences. I work as a kind of mediator between the two groups. When Korean professors in the English department want to convey a message or say something to foreign professors but it does not work out well, then I step in. I have good relationships with both Korean professors and foreign professors so I consistently do the job as a sort of a bridge-builder. (interview, 04/10/2021)

As shown in the excerpt above, Nicole liaised between the Korean professor group and the foreign professor group and acted as a link between the two groups. She did this job not only orally but also in written form. Since all the administration-related communication and official documents from school are in Korean only, Nicole often had to translate documents for the foreign professors. In the following excerpt, she mentioned:

I often explain school official documents to the foreign professors or translate the documents written in Korean into English and send them to the foreign professors via email. In the past, my administrative duties including my role as a translator are much more than my teaching-related duties, but now I try to balance between the administrative duties and my other duties, and focus more on my teaching job, which I think is my top priority. (interview, 04/10/21)

Besides, Nicole as a bicultural person sometimes served as a bridge builder in terms of culture. For example, she helped many foreign professors who were relatively new to the Korean practices to understand a Korean culture of doing things quickly. Koreans, in general, tend to do things very speedily. Working as a bridge between two cultures, Nicole once asked one of the foreign professors, on behalf of the school, to get the job done within a day. As a response, the foreign professor said, "You are so Korean. We foreigners don't work that way." Nicole tried to iron out the differences between the two groups and to find a satisfactory compromise between the two different work styles.

4.3. "I Wear Many Hats"

As a Gyopo teacher who was bilingual and bicultural, Nicole could more easily break away from a marginalized position as an outsider, which S. Kim (2017) reported as a common identity that many NESTs had and build more close relationships with Korean faculty members. She described how she was able to do this by saying:

Because I am a fluent speaker of Korean even among the Gyopo teachers, I have good relationships with Korean professors. Even though I have a position

as a native English-speaking professor, I was able to get rid of the image of an outsider. (interview, 05/11/2021)

Nicole also mentioned that unlike other foreign teachers she was involved in many administrative duties. She explained how she was able to strengthen her position within the university as follows:

Other Gyopo teachers who are not fluent in Korean still find themselves in an outsider position and sometimes complain about being marginalized. But they seemed not to want to be involved in administrative work. They pretend they do not speak Korean at all because there is a tacit awareness among foreign teachers that if you know how to speak Korean, you will get extensive administrative work. Unlike them, I do the work willingly. (interview, 05/25/2021)

As illustrated in the excerpts above, Nicole's involvement in administrative work enabled her to move from a marginalized position to a valuable community member and to acquire a position in the English department. As mentioned earlier, she used to belong to a general education program but was transferred to the English department after being recognized for her hard-working attitudes. The following two excerpts show how her bilingual competence allowed her to gain these opportunities and placed her in an advantageous position:

I am a Gyopo professor who can use both languages freely, not dominant in one of my languages. So I am capable of being a member of both Korean and English-speaking communities and have much more opportunities than any other foreign professors. (interview, 05/03/2021)

At school, Gyopo teachers have much more work to do when compared to other foreign professors because we can speak both English and Korean. Being able to speak Korean qualified me to carry out coordinating roles at school. Unlike other foreign professor who are in the same job position as me as a native English-speaking professor, I can participate in faculty meetings. This is one of the benefits of being a bilingual professor. (interview, 05/03/2021)

In addition to her duties in regard to administration, Nicole performed many other roles at school as a result of her bilingualism and biculturalism. She was well aware of the benefits that a bilingual speaker could have. Because she was able to speak both Korean and English

well, it was easier for her to be involved in the community and she was able to actively participate in community practices. Nicole described her extra roles as follows:

> My job is more than just teaching. I do many jobs including attending conferences, participating in committee, departmental, and faculty meetings or events, assisting with students' recruitment including teaching them how to write a good resume and attending a job fair with my students, mentoring and advising students, and more. I even accompanied my students during a short-term study visit to abroad. (interview, 04/10/2021)

4.4. "I May Not Be a Native, But I Am American"

Nicole had multiple and seemingly conflicting identities. She possessed positive identities as illustrated in her active participation in school work, but, at the same time, she was struggling from negative identities because she was a Gyopo teacher. She said, "I experience conflicts between my different identities repetitively throughout the day" (interview, 06/04/2021). Such identity conflicts arose primarily from a discrepancy between her official status as a NEST at the university and her own awareness that she did not completely fit into the NEST category based on her appearance and language learning experiences. Throughout the duration of data collection, Nicole consistently struggled where to position herself between two languages and cultures. On the self-reflective journal, she wrote that, "Thankfully, I am accepted by both Korean-speaking and English-speaking communities and able to take benefits of both communities. However, I am neither a native English speaker nor a Korean speaker. I am somewhere in-between" (self-reflective journal, 05/20/2021). Her conflicting identities were also illustrated in the following excerpt:

> I want to be seen as a native English speaker because I am more of a work-oriented person and I tend to focus more on my work life than my private life. Since I work as a native English-speaking teacher at school, I want to be seen as a native English speaker. My job will be at risk if I speak Korean to my students. But I always feel like I can't be a "true" native English speaker. So although I am non-native, I need to continue to have native-like fluency, knowledge, and mind. But again, I'm not 100% Korean either, so I am lost between the two worlds. (interview, 06/03/2021)

Nicole said that her being a Korean American may be the source of the conflicts between others' expectations for a foreign professor and her own self-image. She mentioned in the interview that the Korean society seemed to consider only white and Western-looking native

speakers the ideal teachers of the language, and the thought that she did not meet the criteria made her uncomfortable. She said that she did not feel secure about her position as a native English-speaking professor. Regarding this, Nicole mentioned:

> It would not be matter if I am in other English teacher positions. But because I'm positioned as a foreign professor at a university, there is a decrease in self-confidence that comes from the thought that I'm not white and I'm not a native. Usually, when we talk about native English speakers in our society, the image that comes to mind is a white man with blonde hair and blue eyes, so I feel uncomfortable about not matching the ideal image of native speakers in Korea. (interview, 05/11/2021)

Nicole also shared her experience of being discriminated against her race as a foreign professor in the following excerpt from the interview data:

> When I participated in a school event as a native English-speaking professor, the president of my university did not see me as a native English-speaking professor. He asked me, "Where are the "real" native teachers with big noses?" I felt discriminated against because of my race. This experience led me to ask myself, "You are non-native. Then why do you teach students as a native English-speaking teacher?" (interview, 06/04/2021)

While struggling from such identity conflicts, Nicole started to position herself in a new way. Instead of defining herself as either a NEST or a NNEST, she decided to focus on her citizenship as an American. She labeled herself as an American teacher. Nicole showed her pride as American by mentioning that employers prefer American teachers over teachers of other English-speaking countries. She said, "In Korea, having an American background has many benefits. Korean professors respect me because I am a U.S. citizen. So although I may be considered a NNEST, I feel confident as an American" (interview, 06/03/2021).

4.5. "I Am a Replaceable One"

Although she was quite actively involved in various types of school work, Nicole often felt herself marginalized in the university. During the course of multiple interviews, she showed her conflicting identities. She sometimes positioned herself as a teacher with Korean background who has an opportunity for increased participation at school compared to other foreign professors, but some other times, she positioned herself as similar to other foreign teachers because she thought that she as a Gyopo English teacher had limited opportunities

in terms of future career advancement. She described her feelings about her conflicting identities in the following excerpt:

> In our school, native English-speaking professors are only considered instructors, so you may feel like an outsider. I tried to break away from that outsider feeling by staying actively engaged at work. Nevertheless, I still feel like an outsider because I am not a full professor and just a lecturer. (interview, 05/06/2021)

Nicole had a negative identity as an instructor who could be replaced at any time in the university context where a Ph. D. degree and research expertise are highly valued. What worried her the most is her non-tenure track, contract-based position, which made her feel unstable and unsustainable. The following excerpt shows her anxiety about job insecurity:

> The status of being a foreign professor doesn't make me a part of the main group. Foreign professors are mostly just instructors. I've learned through the years that foreign professors can be hired and fired at any time, and I can be the first one to be replaced because I am a Gyopo with Korean looking face. So if I don't keep that in mind, I can be blindsided by unexpected situations. And since I am in the position of a foreign professor even though my first language is not English, I feel unsettled and anxious. I always try to remember that. Otherwise, it will be very sad. (interview, 06/03/2021)

As reflected in the excerpt above, Nicole was concerned that because of her Gyopo status, she might be replaced more easily than *genuine* white looking NESTs with English as their native language. In order to promote her job security, she then decided to pursue her Ph. D degree with a hope that she could be eligible for a tenure track professor position.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

There have been many studies exploring teacher professional identity, both NESTs' and NNESTs' professional identities (e.g., Choe, 2008; Choi, 2009; Chong, 2011; S. Kim, 2011, 2012, 2017; Ko & Kim, 2021; Park, 2012; Tsui, 2007). However, few studies have been carried out to date to understand Gyopo teachers' professional identity despite a sizeable body of Gyopo English teachers in the Korean context. To address this gap, the present study was conducted to examine what identities a Gyopo instructor held as an English teacher teaching at a university and how her identities were reflected in her classroom practices.

In line with the post-structural approach to identity (Weedon, 1997), this study showed that Nicole had multiple professional identities. She perceived herself as a teacher with previous language learning experiences, a bridge-builder, a multiplayer, a teacher who is not a native English speaker but an American, and a replaceable person. To be more specific, Nicole, who emigrated to the U.S. at the age of 18, positioned herself as a person who went through language learning process and, as a result, could better understand her students' difficulties in language learning while offering appropriate assistance to the students. Nicole regarded her own language learning experiences as one of the most valuable assets that she possessed as a language teacher. The fact that Nicole was sharing experiences and struggles of English language learning with the students helped her to create a positive self-image as a language teacher in her. This finding is in line with Ko and Kim's (2021) study, which reported that a NEST constructed her identity as a role model in foreign language learning due to her previous language learning experiences.

Nicole's positive identity went beyond her teaching or relationships with her students to the relationships with her colleagues and the university. In the process, Nicole's bilingual and bicultural competence played a significant role. Due to her bilingual ability, Nicole negotiated her identity as a bridge builder who played a crucial role in facilitating communication between the Korean-speaking community and the English-speaking community in the university. Moreover, Nicole gained an access to more opportunities to be actively involved in school administration and carry out multiple roles at school, which, in turn, helped to position her more favorably within the university. This may be influenced by the Korean educational context which expects more obligations (e.g., handling administrative works, being able to speak Korean, etc.) from Gyopo teachers than the other foreign teachers (Gray, 2017). Unlike many NESTs who felt themselves outsiders in the Korean university context (S. Kim, 2017), Nicole did not perceive herself that way; instead, she constructed her identity as a legitimate member of the community to some extent.

At the same time, however, Nicole saw her negative identity playing out as well. In the context where native-speakerism (Holliday, 2006) pervades and, in particular, white Caucasian NESTs are preferred (H. Kim, 2013) compared with Gyopo teachers, Nicole often felt herself weak and vulnerable. This negative feeling was exacerbated when she was struck by an apprehension that she might have less linguistic and cultural competence than other NESTs. Besides, although she had many opportunities for administrative roles, Nicole was aware that she was not regarded as a core member at work because of her non-tenure track position. She thought her position was unsustainable and replaceable.

Presence of multiple identities, either positive or negative, relates to another significant finding of this study that Nicole's identity is indeed "a site of struggle" (Norton, 1997, p. 411). The status of a Gyopo English teacher, who had bilingual and bicultural competence, positioned her favorably sometimes and less favorably some other times. Nicole thus

constantly negotiated her positive and negative identities, which were in conflict with each other, and took on different identities according to the context in which she was situated. This is in line with M. Kim (2016), who argues that "social relationships or contexts have a crucial impact on how individuals are constructed and construct themselves" (p. 5).

Significantly, Nicole's identity conflicts can be understood in view of the NEST vs. NNEST dichotomy. Nicole did not fully identify herself as a NEST because of her appearance and life history, but at the same time, she did not perceive herself as a NNEST as well. She was aware that she did not fit into either group but was placed somewhere in between a NEST and a NNEST. She thus frequently experienced identity conflicts and tried to reach an optimal balance between the two statuses. This finding is in line with Faez's (2011) study which reported that numerous teachers experience difficulty identifying with either group. Although Nicole did not align herself with either a NEST or a NNEST, the dichotomy was constantly lingering with her. It implies that the NEST vs. NNEST dichotomy still exerts a tremendous power over English teachers across the world though the dichotomy has been severely challenged in the current era of World Englishes as it cannot adequately describe the diverse identities and resources that teachers possess (Cook, 1999; Higgins, 2016; Hodgson, 2014; Pakir, 1999). Furthermore, a unique scenario of Korea where the trichotomy, not the dichotomy, prevails can account for Nicole's identity construction and negotiation more appropriately. In Korea, English teachers are classified into three categories based on their citizenship and native speaker status – local Korean NNESTs, NESTs, and Gyopo teachers – and the group membership usually affects their hiring process, salaries, classes to teach, and other roles at the institution. (Karas, 2015). Gyopo teachers are often perceived as inauthentic English speakers who uses a non-native variety and do not have enough linguistic and cultural knowledge (Cho, 2012) irrespective of their genuine English proficiency and citizenship. Recognizing such categorization and social evaluations of the three categories, Nicole as a Gyopo teacher became sensitive to limitations of the externally assigned identity. While struggling, she then sought to position herself favorably by using different layers of her identity most appropriate to the context. Working in Korea where NESTs from the Inner Circle countries, particularly America, are most preferred, she finally decided to rely on her U.S citizenship, which has social power, for claiming her positive identity. Nicole eventually defined herself as an *American* teacher. If situated in other contexts with different social, cultural landscapes, Nicole might have claimed her identity differently. This can confirm an argument that contextual factors heavily affect the creation and recreation of a person's identity (Weedon, 1997).

Another important finding is that Nicole exercised her agency to negotiate her identity more favorably. Above all, as mentioned earlier, Nicole was heavily involved in administration and other school works with the help of her bilingual, bicultural competence. This enabled her to identify herself as a valuable member of the department and the

university. In line with Benson's (2017) claim about the relationship between agency and identity, Nicole's identity was partly shaped by the exercise of her agency in response to contextual conditions.

All in all, the present study contributes to expanding the knowledge base of language teacher identity by illuminating multiple layers of a Gyopo teacher's professional identity. Findings of this study are meaningful considering the fact that this group of teachers, who have not received due attention in research, are unique and difficult to be identified with either a NEST or a NNEST group, and they possess diverse identities and linguistic repertoires. It should be noted that Nicole cannot represent all Gyopo teachers due to a wide range of variation among Gyopo teachers and her own unique experiences; nonetheless, considering some commonalities that Gyopo teachers share, this case study can serve as a window through which to look into Gyopo teachers' professional identity to some extent.

Based on the findings of this study, some pedagogical implications can be drawn. First, there is a need to treat Gyopo teachers as important assets of English education. In particular, Gyopo teachers who immigrated into an English-speaking country at a later stage of their life and gradually acquired English have the potential to serve as role models in language learning for students. Policy makers can design policies to invite more Gyopo teachers to Korea for various English programs and make the best use of their experiences as resources for language education. Furthermore, institutions with Gyopo English teachers can come up with ways to value and use the Gyopo teachers' bilingual and bicultural competence whenever necessary. With their unique strengths, Gyopo teachers have the potential to contribute to their institutions and can accordingly claim their positive identity as an insider, not an outsider, of the institution. This resonates with Barkhuizen's (2016) claim that "being part of the community will generate a sense of belonging, which enhances participation and performance" (p. 7). Second, it might be helpful to encourage Gyopo teachers to participate in professional meetings, such as academic forums, conferences, symposiums, seminars and workshops, and let their voice heard. When it happens, Gyopo English teachers, who deserve attention as an important group of English teaching professionals, will attract increasing attention from researchers, institutions, and education policy makers. This will then allow for various attempts to make the best and most appropriate use of Gyopo teachers. In addition, interacting with other Gyopo teachers in those professional settings will help them to feel a sense of membership and get pedagogical and emotional support from each other.

Finally, we would like to offer some suggestions for future research on Gyopo teachers' identity. First, the current study is a single case study, and it is necessary to further investigate more Gyopo teachers' professional identity. Considering the fact that identity construction and reconstruction is heavily influenced by personal, social, and institutional contexts surrounding an individual, exploring multiple Gyopo teachers' identity with diverse backgrounds in various teaching contexts will reveal significant dimensions of identity from

different perspectives. Second, there is a need for studies examining Gyopo teachers' identity construction and transformation over time. This type of study will show more vividly how Gyopo teachers negotiate and renegotiate their identity while going through identity transformation process. Third, future studies can collect more diverse types of data, including interviews with Gyopo teachers' students and colleagues. This way, researchers will be in a better position to triangulate their data and make more balanced, trustworthy claims about Gyopo English teachers' professional identity. Finally, the present study used the post-structural approach toward identity, which is the most commonly used theoretical framework in the current research on identity, but future studies can attempt to examine Gyopo teachers' identity from a perspective of the social identity theory by Tajfel (1974). This theory, which explains identity in relation to social group membership, may have a larger explanatory power for Gyopo teachers' identities with reference to group membership, such as NEST, NNEST, and Gyopo groups.

Applicable level: Tertiary

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APPENDIX

Sample Interview Questions

I. Background Questionnaire

A. Demographic information
1. Where did you grow up?
2. How long have you lived in English-speaking countries?
3. How long have you lived in Korea?

B. Language and professional background
1. What languages do you speak?
2. How would you describe your proficiency level in each language?
3. How many years/at what academic level did you study to qualify as a teacher of EFL?
4. In what kind of institution or program do/did you teach?
5. What level(s) do you teach and/or have you taught?
6. What kind of courses do you teach and/or have you taught?
7. Have you ever received any language teacher training? (If so, please list them)
8. Does your institution or program monitor or evaluate language instructors?

II. Based on methodological framework for investigating professional identity

A. Doing
  1. Can you tell me about your job as a native speaking English teacher?
  2. Can you describe your roles and responsibilities at work?
  3. What do you prioritize at work?
  4. Can you tell me about classroom activities, lesson plans, and interactions in class?
  5. What are your roles at work?

B. Becoming
  1. Can you describe about your previous teaching jobs?
  2. What has motivated you to be a native English-speaking teacher?
  3. What are your goals in relation to professional development?
  4. What do you think accounts for your success as a language teacher?
  5. Do you have any memorable learning experience?
  6. What made you become a language teacher?

C. Being
  1. Can you describe your personal qualities?
  2. What are your values as a language teacher?
  3. What makes you happy at work?
  4. What makes you annoyed at work?
  5. What kind of person are you? What do you like?

D. Belonging
  1. Do you feel a sense of belonging in the workplace?
  2. In which group do you feel that you are most belonged to?
  3. Do you consider yourself as a NEST?
  4. Do you consider yourself as a NNEST?
  5. How are your relationships with fellow teachers?

E. Knowing
  1. What are your qualifications as a language teacher?
  2. What subjects do you teach?
  3. What is your area of specialty?
  4. What do you think English education is? Why do you think this way?