

Negotiating Multiple Identities Through eTandem Learning Experiences

Se Jeong Yang¹ and Youngjoo Yi²

Abstract

Much of eTandem research has investigated either linguistic or cross-cultural aspects of second language (L2) learning, but relatively little is known about issues of identity construction in an eTandem context. Situating the study within theories and research of language learner identity, we examined ways in which two adult L2 learners (a Korean adult learning L2 English and a Korean-American adult learning L2 Korean) negotiated multiple identities and practiced their L2 through eTandem learning in an extracurricular setting. Our findings reveal that the participants developed a partnership based on reciprocity and membership within the eTandem community, which contributed to their identity construction and L2 learning. These findings shed light on the affordances of eTandem as a meaningful and productive L2 learning environment and suggest a further examination of the relationship between L2 learners' identity construction and eTandem learning.

KEYWORDS: IDENTITY; eTANDEM; PARTNERSHIP; EXTRACURRICULAR CONTEXT

Introduction

Considering the importance of social interaction in second language (L2) learning (Lee, 2009; Norton, 2000; Schenker, 2012), electronic tandem (eTandem) can provide a meaningful learning space for L2 learners. eTandem is online “language learning when two learners of different native languages

Affiliations

¹The Ohio State University.
email: sejeongy0@gmail.com

²The Ohio State University.
email: yi.57@osu.edu

work together to help each other learn the other language” (Cziko, 2004, p. 25). eTandem learning offers an interactive environment for L2 learners to be linked with speakers of the target language. This format of language learning has been shown to be effective for L2 learning because authentic interaction and corrective feedback often take place in an eTandem context (Kabata & Edasawa, 2011; Ware & O’Dowd, 2008). These benefits of eTandem learning seem to result from a dyadic partnership in which each group of language learners (e.g., native Korean- and native English-speaking adults) teaches their L1 to the other group. As such, all the participants in an eTandem context play roles as “experts” of their L1 and “novices” of their L2. In this study, the term “novice” refers to language learners who are at any stage of learning and do not consider themselves experts. In particular, for language learners who cannot attend L2 classes, eTandem can be a powerful alternative for L2 acquisition through interacting with target-language speakers via online networks. In the process of eTandem learning, these learners can establish an extracurricular learning environment where L2 learning may very well take place.

Given the dyadic partnership in an eTandem context, L2 learners often negotiate their multiple roles, which may affect their identity construction. Many researchers, especially from a social view of learning, have argued that language learning and identity construction are mutually constituted (Gee, 2003; Norton, 2000). Norton (2000), one of the pioneering researchers on issues of identity in applied linguistics, defines identity as a “reference [to] how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how the relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (p. 5). From this perspective, L2 learning is seen as a way of positioning oneself within a larger context (e.g., society). Similarly, Atkinson (2001) argues that “real learning is always a process of becoming” (p. 115). Based on these perspectives, in the current study, a language-learner identity refers to how a language learner conceptualizes herself or himself in relation to others during the process of learning languages. In order to examine ways in which adult L2 learners negotiate identities through an eTandem learning experience, this qualitative research addresses the following research questions: “Does an eTandem learning experience influence L2 learners’ negotiation of identities?” “If so, to what extent and how?,” and “To what extent does L2 learners’ participation in eTandem learning influence their L2 learning?” By answering these questions, we aim to provide a rich description of the nature of L2 learners’ identity construction through an online language-learning experience and enhance our understanding of the affordances of eTandem as a language-learning environment, especially as a productive extracurricular learning environment. The current study is part of a larger study in which eight pairs of adult L2 learners were examined; however, this

study focuses on only two adult L2 learners (a Korean adult learning English and a Korean-American adult learning Korean as their L2).

eTandem Learning for L2 Learners

Reciprocity is one of eTandem's principles and a significant concept in our research. It refers to "the dependence and mutual support of the partners" (Brammerts, 1996, p. 11). All the participants in eTandem learning teach their L1 to and learn their L2 from their partners. In this process of teaching and learning, participants in eTandem are likely to increase their language awareness for both L1 and L2 (Appel, 1999; Chung, Graves, Wesche, & Barfurth, 2005; O'Rourke, 2007). In this respect, Appel (1999) found that teaching an L1 proved to be as beneficial as learning an L2. Participants in her study (native English- and native Spanish-speaking adults) showed the development of linguistic and metalinguistic awareness through eTandem learning. At the same time, positive effects of eTandem learning on L2 learners' cultural knowledge have also been reported (Lee, 2009; Müller-Hartmann, 2000; O'Dowd, 2005; Ware & Kramersch, 2005). For instance, a study of American students learning Spanish and Spanish students learning English (Lee, 2009) revealed that blogging and podcasting enhanced the students' cross-cultural communication and awareness. In particular, writing their own blogs as well as reading and responding to cross-cultural partners' blogs enabled them to think about their own culture and promote critical thinking about topics that they discussed. More recently, Cappellini (2016) analyzed a reciprocal relationship in a French–Chinese teletandem study, which used videoconferencing, in terms of participants' positioning as experts of their L1 and novices of their L2. The study also explored the pattern of scaffolding occurring between the two partners in relation to a topic. The study showed that participants, most of the time, played the role of experts when their own culture was discussed. At the same time, participants who positioned themselves as experts provided scaffolding for partners positioned as novices. Reciprocity of tandem learning offered both partners opportunities for playing both roles.

This structure of a reciprocal relationship between partners can also lead L2 learners to develop new insights into their identities as L2 learners. For example, Chung et al. (2005) found that adolescent Korean English language learners (ELLs) in Canada felt comfortable learning an L2 when interacting with English speakers learning the Korean language through online chatting. In this study, most ELLs at first felt frustrated because of their lack of English skills, which prevented them from actively participating in class activities. As time went by, these ELLs gained confidence in their L2 skills through exchanging linguistic knowledge and sharing emotions with the learners of the Korean language. In other words, ELLs had opportunities to teach the

Korean language and culture to the English speakers learning Korean and, in turn, the ELLs learned English from English speakers. This reciprocal relationship allowed ELLs to be aware of themselves not only as English language learners, but as *experts* of the Korean language and further helped them gain confidence in the L2.

In addition to a partnership based on reciprocity, participants in an eTandem learning context can develop a sense of community among themselves as was the case in a study by Donaldson and Kötter (1999). The study was established in a multiuser, object-oriented environment (MOO), connecting German learners with English learners in an eTandem context. Through interacting with target language speakers in a MOO, adult German and American learners developed a growing sense of community and a strong commitment to the learning process within the community. In this process, they also seemed to develop a sense of “membership,” which motivated them to actively engage in online activities and L2 learning.

L2 Learners’ Negotiation of Identities in Online Contexts

The current study is grounded in a social constructionist view of language learning and identity that guided our exploration into L2 learners’ identity construction through an eTandem learning process. According to the social constructionist perspective, identity is neither the product of the individual mind nor socially determined, but rather socially and culturally constructed and situated (Ivanič, 1998; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). Further, identity construction is a dynamic and discursive process in that individuals continuously engage in presenting, representing, and performing who they are in relation to others and in revising their sense of self while interacting and observing how others position themselves. The social constructionist view offers a useful lens for interpreting the multilayered and dynamic nature of identity construction (Maybin, 2000). There are many empirical studies showing that identity is negotiated and constructed in the process of interacting with others, especially in online contexts. Many L2 studies indeed have found that language learners (re)negotiate their identities through literacy practices using L1 and/or L2 in online contexts (Black, 2006; Klimanova & Dembovskaya, 2013; Lam, 2004; Pasfield-Neofitou, 2011; Thorne & Black, 2011; Yi, 2009).

Lam’s (2004) study provides insights into the complexities of L2 learners’ identity construction in online contexts. Investigating two Chinese ELLs’ language practices in a bilingual Hong Kong chat room, Lam showed that virtual social spaces mediated by computer technology were welcoming venues for identity construction for ELLs. The two Chinese ELLs and their friends in the chat room developed and acquired a mixed code of English and romanized Cantonese (that is, words in Cantonese were transliterated phonetically into

the English alphabet) in order to construct their relationship with other Chinese young people around the world. This language variety “served to create a collective ethnic identity” for these English-Chinese bilinguals, which further assisted them in constructing a new identity as bilingual Chinese emigrants (p. 45). This new identity helped them use English confidently. Echoing Lam’s findings, Yi (2009) explored literacy practices that two Korean-American adolescents had experienced and how their online literacy practices served them while negotiating their identities. The findings show that these two adolescents actively participated in online literacy practices, such as creating an online community and communicating with multiple people who were living in Korea and in the USA via instant messaging in their L1 and L2. Participants’ online activities overall helped them establish transnational identities. For example, instant messaging allowed them to maintain their sense of being transnational, and the online community they established functioned as a “safe space” to share their identities with other Korean-Americans (Yi, 2009, p. 117).

Similar to these studies, there have been studies exploring identity construction through exchanging instant messages (Thorne, 2000), engaging in a social networking site (Klimanova & Dembovskaia, 2013), and participating in an online fan fiction site (Black, 2006). Collectively, these L2 online studies have shown that L2 learners negotiate multiple, shifting, and sometimes conflicting identities through L2 learning experiences in online contexts. Building upon these previous studies, this research as part of a larger study focuses on how a Korean adult learning L2 English and a Korean-American adult learning L2 Korean negotiated their identities in an eTandem context in an extra-curricular setting.

Method

Participants and Setting

This eTandem study was part of the larger qualitative study in which eight pairs of adult L2 learners (aged 21 to 45) participated over a period of nine months. In the larger study, two groups of L2 learners, that is, (a) Korean adults learning the English language (English language learners, ELLs) and (b) Korean-American adults learning Korean as a heritage language (Korean heritage learners, KHLs), were examined. All the participants had varying degrees of proficiency in both Korean and English. Participants were paired up by the first author based on their self-rated target language proficiency and personal interests as reported in pre-questionnaires and initial individual face-to-face interviews. This research focuses on two participants, an ELL and a KHL, whom we named Won and Kristine respectively (pseudonyms). Won and Kristine did not constitute an eTandem pair, but we chose them because

each participant clearly demonstrated the negotiation of multiple identities through eTandem learning.

Data Collection and Analysis

In the larger study, data were collected from multiple sources, such as questionnaires, face-to-face and online interviews, emails and online chats between partners, blog posts, reflective diaries, informal conversations, and field notes. All the data were collected based on participant observations using ethnographic methods (Glesne, 1999).

More specifically, each participant in the larger study filled out a pre-questionnaire on their L2 language proficiency and personal interests and had a follow-up face-to-face interview, which helped the researchers form eight pairs. Once participants were paired up, participants introduced themselves to their partners via email. Then they received instructional emails about the procedure of four weekly tasks from the first author. From that point on, participants were asked to engage in four different tasks on a given topic each week over the period of ten weeks. Weekly topics, which were identified based on the results from participants' pre-questionnaires, included L2 learning experience, food, movies, the Korean Wave,¹ memories from schools, Korea's reunification, English fever in Korea, immigration, travel, and online friends. For example, when they had the discussion about the topic of travel, the participants were asked to write their experiences about the places they had visited and wanted to recommend to their friends.

In terms of four weekly tasks, participants wrote one blog post in their personal blog in their L2 and commented on their partner's blog post in their L1. After sharing their personal blogs, each pair chatted online via Google Chat about a weekly topic in one language for half of each chat session and in the other language for the remaining time, totaling at least half an hour. Then, the participants posted their thoughts and commented on others' posts about weekly topics anytime during the week in their preferred language on the group discussion board, called "eT" by the participants. This group discussion task is important in the current research because it allowed all group members to interact with one another, which may have given them new insights into the topics discussed. Finally, upon completing these three weekly tasks, participants sent the first author the fourth task, a reflective diary with a minimum of 200 words in either an L1 or L2, paying attention to their growing linguistic or cultural knowledge and their language exchange experience.

In addition to the data from participants' weekly tasks described above, the first author conducted online interviews every two weeks with each participant using Google Chat in order to check the status of weekly tasks and clarify

the meaning of some of the participants' writing. All the interviews were conducted bilingually, and interviews conducted in Korean were translated into English and are indicated with *italics* in this paper (all the translations were double-checked by both authors, who are Korean-English biliterate). Toward the end of the study, each participant completed a post-questionnaire in which participants expressed their opinions about their eTandem experiences and had a final face-to-face interview. To increase the validity of our research, we conducted a member check in which the researchers' preliminary interpretations about the data were reviewed by the participants. Moreover, informal communication between partners, and between participants and the first author, were collected. Some online posts on participants' social networking sites were also gathered to identify their language practices in those online spaces. Throughout the study, the first author recorded field notes.

Drawing on inductive qualitative data analysis, all the data were analyzed as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) and Seidman (2006). Data analysis began at the onset of the study, because each stage of the study relied on the preceding results of the data. Since most data were from online communications, we could easily retrieve the data, which had already been transcribed without our needing to listen to audio files and writing them down. We also retrieved automatically generated online interview data except for the interview data conducted in Korean. For the face-to-face interview data, the first author transcribed the data. She initially organized excerpts from the interview transcripts, online posts, and field notes into categories and searched for "connecting threads and patterns among the excerpts within those categories and for connections between the various categories that might be called themes" (Seidman, 2006, p. 124). For more focused coding and analysis, the first author reread the data and tried to understand connections and built interpretive categories and themes. At that point, both authors further discussed the categories and themes and made modifications. From the data analysis, several themes emerged, including development of partnerships, (re)negotiation of self-perceptions as deficient L2 learners, constant shifting of roles both as novice and expert, a growing sense of community membership, and negotiation of meaning. The overall process of data analysis was dialogic in that emerging categories and patterns continued to be identified while being reorganized and recategorized as we moved between steps.

Findings

To better understand L2 learners' identity construction and their L2 learning in an eTandem context, we present two cases of learners: (a) an ELL, named

Won, who played multiple roles as a novice and expert in negotiating his identities and (b) a KHL, named Kristine, who became more connected to her Korean heritage and eventually claimed her Korean heritage identity through interaction with the eTandem community members.

Won's Negotiation of Identities through Teaching and Learning Languages

Won was a first-year doctoral student majoring in City and Regional Planning and had lived in the United States only for eight months at the beginning of the study. He was born, raised, and had all his former schooling in South Korea. He reported that he had never liked the English language and had not made any serious effort to learn it. Not surprisingly, Won's greatest challenge as a doctoral student in the United States was to use English for academic and personal purposes, especially to communicate with native English speakers. Won's struggle with English was obvious from the very beginning of this research as he wrote in his first diary entry, "*now, my English is like a wobbly desk which has uneven legs...*" (19 April 2015).

One of the most significant findings about Won is that he negotiated his identities through teaching his L1 to and learning his L2 from his eTandem partner, David, who was a native English speaker. In other words, while teaching and learning languages in the eTandem community, Won played both the role of a Korean language expert and the role of an English language novice. His shifts between multiple roles seem to contribute to the negotiation of his L2 learner identity. The most salient incident that demonstrates ways in which Won negotiated his roles and identities occurred during the tenth online chat with David. Won encountered a moment when he had to explain the Korean verb, *눈치보다* (*nunchiboda*) which roughly means being sensitive to the feelings of others, especially when a person already has a sense that his or her specific behavior may upset others. In this online chat, Won tried to find an equivalent English verb for *nunchiboda* and learn the English word for it from David. Interestingly, Won and David engaged in meaning-making without knowing that there is no English verb for *nunchiboda*:

Excerpt 1.

1. Won: Can you tell me how to talk [*nunchiboda*] in English?
2. David: *눈치보다* (*nunchiboda*)~ You feel bad for doing something [because] someone else doesn't like you to do. That's pretty complicated
3. Won: no no it is little different [f]rom that situation. hm someone don't like that I do something

4. David: You feel uncomfortable for doing what another person doesn't want you to do?
5. Won: so I have to ask to her or his opinion
6. David: Maybe that?
7. Won: but to question is not easy because she or he cannot allow to do it will not allow to do it? you got it? So it is not feeling it is action
8. David: Umm I don't quite understand that
9. Won: hm if u want to hang out with your friend but you have something to do before hanging out
10. David: You are watching the reaction of the other person?
11. Won: So you cannot go out but u want So u can ask to our mother but u know that it can be not allowed
[After reading David's above message] Ah yes it is close hm it is very interesting haha
There is no expression in USA, Cool

(online chat, 3 July 2015)

By asking “Can you tell me how to talk [*nunchiboda*] in English?” (line 1), Won positioned himself as an ELL. But, upon David's answer to his question, he immediately pointed out that David's English translation was not accurate by saying that “no no it is little different from that situation” (line 3). Here, Won quickly shifted his position from a novice ELL to an expert of the Korean language while trying to clarify the meaning of *nunchiboda*. Won then gave another example of a situation where *nunchiboda* can be used, such as paying attention to how a mother would react upon her child's request to hang out with a friend (line 9). After taking several turns with David, he seemed to employ his ELL identity by saying, “There is no expression in USA, Cool.” What is notable here is that though he positioned himself as an ELL, he moved away from his previous perception of himself as a “speech-impaired person” (personal blog, 15 April 2015). Through this chat, he realized that his difficulty with explaining *nunchiboda* was not because he was a deficient ELL, but because “*nunchiboda* does not exist in English” (diary, 5 July 2015). Importantly, this online exchange shows that Won constantly shifted his roles in relation to his partner, and he moved away from his perspective of himself as a deficient ELL in this process of shifting roles.

Though we described ways in which Won negotiated his roles as a novice and expert above, he further (re)negotiated his expert position while teaching Korean to David. One significant “a-ha” moment occurred to Won when he had a difficult time explaining to David a Korean grammar rule for topic markers (*eun* and *neun*) and subject markers (*yi* and *ga*). These four markers differ from one another, and the distinction of these markers is one of the most difficult grammar rules for learners of the Korean language. The following online chat demonstrates how Won (re)negotiated his expert position:

Excerpt 2.

1. Won: *Aren't [you having] difficulties [in dealing with] eun neun yi ga?? (Subject and topic markers in the Korean language)*
2. David: *eun/neun/yi/ga*
3. Won: *Sometimes, I also think about which is correct* ㅎㅎ².
4. David: *Yes, I don't know how they are different* ㄷㄷ³
5. Won: *I learned when I was young but now and just based on my intuition* ㅎㅎ
6. David: *[Always], aren't they difficult to explain? [Several lines dealing with the difficulties of distinguishing between the four markers are omitted here.]*
7. Won: *They are extremely difficult* ㅎㅎ *80% of Korean users may not know*

(online chat, 1 May 2015)

In this chat, Won seemed to demonstrate his ownership of the Korean language by using the phrase, “my intuition” (line 5); however, at the same time, he admitted that he “also” has to think about the correct usage of subject markers, which challenged his claim to be a Korean expert (line 3). Yet, his last sentence, “80% of Korean users may not know” (line 9), implied that he tried to justify his confusion and confirm his position as an expert again. Here, Won seemed to negotiate his Korean expert identity. This moment suggests that the notion of being an expert can be shifting and negotiable as it faces varied contexts.

While teaching Korean to and learning English from his partner, Won reflected upon his status as a native Korean expert and English language learner as seen in the online interview:

Excerpt 3.

[Through teaching the Korean language] I realized that native speakers of any language sometimes have a hard time being accurate in grammar rules. Then, how much more difficult would it be to L2 learners? Therefore, as an English language learner, I felt that my struggle is somewhat natural and expected.

(online interview, 29 April 2015)

At the end of the study, Won noted that although he still made mistakes and struggled to communicate in English, he became much more comfortable interacting with native English speakers, which once was the greatest challenge for Won. Perhaps, this improvement could be meaningful and significant to Won in terms of learning English. In addition, Won initially described his English as a “wobbly desk” and considered himself a deficient and anxious ELL. Yet, his interaction with David and other members enabled him to realize that learning an L2 can be a challenge to any L2 learner (e.g., ELLs and KHLs). Upon such a realization, Won seemed to begin repositioning himself as an ELL who is not deficient, but has experienced a natural process of learning an L2. Clearly, Won’s identities as a novice and expert are socially constructed and negotiated, especially through his interaction with his partner, David. Indeed, his identities seemed to be nuanced, complex, and evolving through eTandem learning.

Kristine’s Claiming her Heritage Identity through eTandem Learning

Kristine, a US-born Korean-American, had rarely spoken in Korean with her family and friends, and her exposure to Korean was rather limited. Upon meeting many Korean-Americans and international students from Korea in her college, she became interested in learning Korean and later attended a Korean community school where the first author taught for several years. Even though Kristine was motivated to learn Korean, she did not practice it outside of school, and her Korean proficiency, especially in writing, was low at the time of the study.

Kristine’s eTandem experience was similar to Won’s in several ways. Kristine was initially self-conscious about making mistakes in Korean and losing face by saying, “I was very nervous the first time because I did not want [my partner] to laugh at my Korean” (online interview, 25 April 2015); however, shortly after she felt “more comfortable with [her] Korean” (diary, 25 April 2015) and “less afraid to say things wrong” (diary, 5 May 2015). In addition, while teaching English to her eTandem partner, she reflected on her own L1

knowledge, and her expert status was slightly challenged, which was reflected in her diary, “I realized—English is hard! I don’t even understand some English grammar rules! So how can I correct someone when I often don’t know why something sounds wrong” (25 April 2015). This realization of her lack of L1 grammatical metaknowledge and her careful observations of other KHLs’ online posts prompted her to reconsider what is more valuable to L2 learners: “being accurate” versus “being expressive,” as discussed in the last interview that was transcribed according to the transcript protocol suggested by McLellan, MacQueen, and Neidig (2003):

Excerpt 4.

I was more self-conscious to my Korean...[but it] does not have to be perfect...looking at others’ Korean...even when I saw Sara’s Korean...her Korean is very different from other Korean-Koreans’ I think, but she puts [her writing] out there, she tried to express her ideas [in Korean] and she did not care...[whether] that is exactly right or wrong.

(face-to-face interview, 19 October 2015)

At the beginning of the study, Kristine stated that she only used the correct Korean phrases that she knew for sure in her online writing. However, the realization that she “does not have to be perfect” encouraged her to experiment with Korean phrases with less anxiety and subsequently helped her become a more confident L2 learner. In addition, the number of Korean phrases in her online writing increased over the course of the study.

What makes Kristine’s story distinct from Won’s is that Kristine felt more connected to her Korean heritage and eventually claimed herself as Korean through eTandem learning. As she was engaged more in learning Korean, her relationship with Korean people changed. For instance, she became more connected to her parents and spoke more Korean with them: “I am speaking a lot more Korean to my parents right now ... it feels good!” (online interview, 25 April 2015). In fact, she shared this change with the entire community by posting, “learning Korean has made me appreciate our parents more, and respect them for learning a second language” (group discussion, 6 June 2015).

In addition to her deeper understanding of her immigrant parents, interacting with Koreans in the eTandem community enabled her to demystify some stereotypes of Koreans and enrich her perspectives on Koreans. In this process, she eventually identified herself as Korean as follows:

Excerpt 5.

I guess I assumed certain personality traits were common to all Koreans. But I realized Koreans are all different. There is no "Korean personality trait"...I felt I did not carry these traits, which I assumed would make me Korean...But I realized they are all different. So I guess this [participation in eTandem learning] was a positive experience, because it made me feel like it is not so hard to identify myself as Korean as I thought. I think I feared being rejected by Koreans for not being "Korean" enough. But I realized there is no such thing like this...I felt accepted by this Korean community and it helped me to be accepted [sic]...my Korean heritage as well.

(online interview, 19 June 2015)

Her use of the phrases "feared being rejected" and "felt accepted" is notable here as that signals her struggle with the negotiation of her Korean heritage identity. Also, the use of the adverb "enough" shows her perception that Korean people have specific "trait[s]" that she felt she lacked. Because of this perception, Kristine appears to feel she was disqualified from being Korean. However, she seemed to overcome her fear of rejection by Koreans and affiliate herself more with the Korean community through eTandem learning. Importantly, she seemed to increase her confidence in accepting her Korean heritage.

In the same interview, Kristine more explicitly stated that eTandem learning enabled her to be more connected to her Korean heritage:

Excerpt 6.

[The eTandem learning experience] has connected me with my Korean heritage in a meaningful and fun way. This was something I always wanted, but I could not experience until now. What my parents could not do—teaching me Korean and showing me Korean things—I learned from this project. I really appreciate this experience for that reason.

(Online interview, 19 June 2015)

Here we see some uniqueness about Kristine's story. Kristine, as a child of immigrants, wanted to be proud of her Korean heritage. She wrote: "I can never feel comfortable saying I am proud to be an American. Is this wrong? Should I feel pride? I don't know. I am proud of my Korean heritage ... but I do not feel like I am fully Korean" (30 May 2015, group discussion). The English dominant society including English-only schools did not provide her with enough support to practice her heritage language and her *Koreanness*, by which we mean her subjectivity that can develop through practicing her Korean language and culture. This eTandem community offered opportunities to be connected to her heritage that neither her parents nor her schools had done. Most importantly, Kristine has continued to practice her heritage language even after this research was completed. As she explained in the final interview, she has used the Korean language as much as possible in her verbal communication with her parents and in written formats in her social networking sites (e.g., Facebook). As we write this article, Kristine and another participant from the larger study have created and maintained a blog which is similar to our eTandem community in order to practice their Korean. In the following section, we situate these findings within the field of L2 research and pedagogy.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigated ways in which L2 learners negotiated and performed their roles and identities, and practiced their L2 through eTandem learning in an extracurricular context. Our findings reveal that L2 learners seem to have developed bonds of partnership and of membership within the eTandem community, which contributed to their identity construction and L2 learning. In particular, L2 learners' teaching their L1, which helped establish a partnership, appears especially beneficial to the L2 learners with respect to the negotiation of L2 learner identity. This finding resonates with what Chung and her colleagues (2005) discovered in their eTandem research. English-language learners in their study gained confidence in their L2 competence and possibly developed more confident learner identities through their teaching experience in a Korean school. One of their ELL participants excitedly reported, "The best experience about Korean school for me was that I gained my *confidence* as a good student. I can share what I have with English-speaking students. I was able to *find space* for myself" (Chung, 2005, p. 132) (emphasis added). In our research, a partnership of teaching and learning from one another enabled participants to understand and accept their own struggles as L2 learners in a natural process and to learn their L2 *outside* of an institutional setting, that is, extramurally.

In addition to the value of a partnership in eTandem learning, a growing sense of community membership was found to contribute to our participants' negotiating identities and L2 learning, which is especially clear in Kristine's case. While sharing thoughts about given topics and establishing ongoing connections in the eTandem community, participants seemed to develop a strong sense of membership and feel this eTandem community as a "safe space" (Yi, 2009, p. 117) where they were able to negotiate, perform, or contest multiple identities. In particular, Kristine became more confident at claiming her Korean heritage with the support of community members. Donaldson and Kötter's (1999) study, though it did not explore the aspect of identity negotiation, found that adult German and American learners both developed a growing sense of membership and became more committed to the learning process within the virtual community. Their study certainly showed the importance of community membership in eTandem learning in that participants were motivated to actively engage in online activities and L2 learning while establishing and maintaining their online community.

This study contributes to advancing L2 research in several ways. First, it attempts to extend the boundary of eTandem research by exploring an under examined area of inquiry, that is, issues of identity construction. eTandem research has collectively deepened the understanding of linguistic and cultural aspects of L2 learning, and this investigation into L2 learners' identity construction extends that knowledge. Second, our findings suggest that examining eTandem practices is especially compelling for identity-theory building because such findings from eTandem contexts, where all the participants play both roles as expert and novice and invest multiple identities across those roles, make an important contribution with regard to the conceptualization of identities in "multiple and contradictory" ways (McCarthy & Moje, 2002).

It is important to note that, in spite of the possibilities for language learning and identity construction that the current eTandem study provides, this study was situated within a specially designed context with a small number of participants. The results of this study were not intended to be generalizable to all eTandem environments, but they are clearly transferable to some extracurricular contexts. In fact, the study suggests the need for more extracurricular eTandem research to increase our understanding of learners' identity construction in eTandem learning contexts.

Building upon the findings, we would like to point out some significant implications for instructional practices for online, hybrid, and traditional language learners. First, we suggest educators include both group discussion and dyadic partnership in their eTandem projects. That way, participants in eTandem learning can share their stories with the entire community members, which helps broaden their perspectives about issues and interrogate the

learners' preconceptions of target-language speakers. Second, we suggest that educators create online learning communities to serve adult L2 learners, especially those who are in out-of-school contexts. If online spaces using blogs or other social network systems are set up for linking these learners to target-language speakers, L2 learners who are in extracurricular learning contexts can exchange their languages and learn cultural knowledge. Otherwise, these learners may experience lack of interaction with other learners and may not have enough linguistic feedback and emotional support, which are important for L2 learning. Our study showed the possibilities of an alternative learning form for adult L2 learners who find it difficult to attend L2 classes regularly, overcoming spatial and temporal barriers and supporting collaborative learning as a community. We hope that educators can gain some ideas and implications from our study for designing appropriate tasks or activities which can positively lead to establishing a supportive reciprocal relationship and a strong sense of community membership for learners who are in out-of-school contexts.

Notes

1. The Korean Wave refers to the increasing popularity of Korean popular culture around the world.
2. ㅎㅎ is a Korean Internet language and comes from 하하 (haha) that is an example of onomatopoeia, which represents a sound of laughter in Korean.
- 3.ㅠㅠ is a Korean Internet language, which represents a sense of sadness.

About the Authors

Se Jeong Yang is a PhD candidate in the Department of Teaching and Learning at the Ohio State University. Her research interests lie in the areas of CALL, intercultural competence, and learner identity. Her work on eTandem learning aspires to promote the development of L2 skills and intercultural knowledge.

Youngjoo Yi is an associate professor in foreign and second language education at the Ohio State University. Her major research interest is multilingual students' learning of multiple literacies and identity construction.

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