

# Korea TESOL Journal

Volume 14, Number 1



Korea Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages



# **Korea TESOL Journal**

**Volume 14, Number 1**



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**Volume 14, Number 1**  
**The Official Journal of**  
**Korea Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages**  
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## About Korea TESOL

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Korea TESOL (KOTESOL; Korea Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) is a professional organization of teachers of English whose main goal is to assist its members in their self-development and to contribute to the improvement of ELT in Korea. Korea TESOL also serves as a network for teachers to connect with others in the ELT community and as a source of information for ELT resource materials and events in Korea and abroad.

Korea TESOL is proud to be an Affiliate of TESOL (TESOL International Association), an international education association of almost 12,000 members with headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia, USA, as well as an Associate of IATEFL (International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language), an international education association of over 4,000 members with headquarters in Canterbury, Kent, UK.

Korea TESOL was established in October 1992, when the Association of English Teachers in Korea (AETK) joined with the Korea Association of Teachers of English (KATE). Korea TESOL is a not-for-profit organization established to promote scholarship, disseminate information, and facilitate cross-cultural understanding among persons associated with the teaching and learning of English in Korea. In pursuing these goals, Korea TESOL seeks to cooperate with other groups having similar concerns.

Korea TESOL is an independent national affiliate of a growing international movement of teachers, closely associated with not only TESOL and IATEFL, but also with PAC (Pan-Asian Consortium of Language Teaching Societies), consisting of JALT (Japan Association for Language Teaching), ThaiTESOL (Thailand TESOL), ETA-ROC (English Teachers Association of the Republic of China/Taiwan), FEELTA (Far Eastern English Language Teachers' Association, Russia), and PALT (Philippine Association for Language Teaching, Inc.). Korea TESOL is also associated with MELTA (Malaysian English Language Teaching Association), TEFLIN (Indonesia), CamTESOL (Cambodia), and ACTA (Australian Council of TESOL Associations), and most recently with ELTAM/Mongolia TESOL, MAAL (Macau), and HAAL (Hong Kong).

The membership of Korea TESOL includes elementary school, middle school, high school, and university-level English teachers as well as teachers-in-training, administrators, researchers, material writers, curriculum developers, and other interested individuals.

Korea TESOL has nine active chapters throughout the nation: Busan-Gyeongnam, Daegu-Gyeongbuk, Daejeon-Chungcheong, Gangwon, Gwangju-Jeonnam, Jeonju-North Jeolla, Seoul, Suwon-Gyeonggi, and Yongin-Gyeonggi, as well as numerous international members. Members of Korea TESOL are from all parts of Korea and many parts of the world, thus providing Korea TESOL members the benefits of a multicultural membership.

Korea TESOL holds an annual international conference, a national conference, workshops, and other professional development events, while its chapters hold monthly workshops, annual conferences, symposia, and networking events. Also organized within Korea TESOL are various SIGs (Special Interest Groups) – Reflective Practice, Social Justice, Christian Teachers, Research, and Multimedia and CALL – which hold their own meetings and events.

Visit <https://koreatesol.org/join-kotesol> for membership information.



## Table of Contents

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### Research Papers

<i>Michael D. Smith</i>	<b>Centre-Periphery Agency Dynamics During Linguistic Imperialism: An Investigation of Korean Perspectives</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>Jeremy Slagoski</i>	<b>The Culture Learning of Sojourning English Teachers</b>	<b>31</b>
<i>Jungyoung Park</i>	<b>Assessing Comprehension Difficulties in Reading Complex Texts: Lexicogrammar Analysis</b>	<b>61</b>
<i>Ke Hyang Lee</i> <i>Raqib Chowdhury</i>	<b>Factors Influencing Native English-Speaking Teachers Professional Practices in South Korean Primary Schools</b>	<b>79</b>
<i>Andrew Garth</i>	<b>Relative Language Proficiencies in the Foreign Language Classroom: Native-Speaking Teachers, Students, and the Mother Tongue</b>	<b>105</b>
<i>Adam V. Agostinelli</i>	<b>Korean EFL College Students in Foreign Contexts: A Second Language Identity Study</b>	<b>123</b>
<i>Daniel Peña</i>	<b>Language Identity in South Korea: A Study on Student Perceptions of Their English Proficiency Within an EFL Context</b>	<b>149</b>
<i>Md. Mahmudul Haque</i>	<b>Metacognition: A Catalyst in Fostering Learner Autonomy for ESL/EFL Learners</b>	<b>181</b>

*Ngo Cong Lem* **Does Exposure to L2 Facebook Pages Impact Your Language Learning? An Examination of the Relation Between Facebook Reading Experience and Foreign Language Development** 203

*Claudia Yun  
Yoohyun Chung* **Use of Literature in ELT Facing the 4th Industrial Revolution: Suggesting Classroom Activities Through SF Novels, *I, Robot* and *Bloodchild* and Other Stories** 229

*Seyyed Hatam Tamimi Sa'd  
Katharine Hazel West  
Fereshte Rajabi* **A Study of Iranian EFL Learners' Compliment Responses: Identifying Elements of Politeness Use and Instruction for the Korean Context** 247

### **Book Reviews**

*Colin Walker* **Engaging Minds: Cultures of Education and Practices of Teaching** 277  
(By Brent Davis, Dennis Sumara, & Rebecca Luce-Kapler)

*Elizabeth Lee* **Assessing English Proficiency for University Study** 283  
(By John Read)

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# Korea TESOL Journal

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The *Korea TESOL Journal* is a peer-reviewed journal, welcoming previously unpublished practical and scholarly articles on topics of significance to individuals concerned with the teaching of English as a foreign language. The Journal focuses on articles that are relevant and applicable to the Korean EFL context. Two issues of the Journal are published annually.

As the Journal is committed to publishing manuscripts that contribute to the application of theory to practice in our profession, submissions reporting relevant research and addressing implications and applications of this research to teaching in the Korean setting are particularly welcomed.

The Journal is also committed to the fostering of scholarship among Korea TESOL members and throughout Korea. As such, classroom-based papers, i.e., articles arising from genuine issues of the English language teaching classroom, are welcomed. In its expanded scope, the Journal aims to support all scholars by welcoming research from early-career researchers to senior academics.

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# **Research Papers**

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# Centre-Periphery Agency Dynamics During Linguistic Imperialism: An Investigation of Korean Perspectives

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**Michael D. Smith**

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This study critically examines the sociolinguistic positionality of the English language, as situated within the Republic of Korea, employing features of Robert Phillipson's Linguistic Imperialism framework. Specifically, the primary investigatory aim of this inquiry is an exploration of local stakeholder perceptions concerning Centre-Periphery agency dynamics during Korean EFL adoption. In addition to the work of Phillipson, the secondary research presented here is grounded heavily in locally produced literature, thereby enabling an analysis that is appreciative of Korean scholarly representation. In doing so, this study intends to answer calls by various Periphery academics for comprehension of nonnative perspectives with reference to the societal impact of global English on distinct language learning milieus. Through a close examination of the conditions presented here, it is determined that local EFL users have recognized English in Korea as being hierarchically rationalized by local elites as necessary to the maintenance of Korean national and transnational advancement. Subsequently, Phillipson's description of English language internalization via ideological mechanisms is shown to be accurate; moreover, on this occasion, directional causality toward Korea-intrinsic EFL hegemony has been established. Nevertheless, it is determined that theories of Western-driven linguistic imperialism fail to account fully for the functional validity of English language dominance in this context, given the absence of stakeholder recognition for Western agency during these processes.

*Keywords:* linguistic imperialism, post-colonial criticism, World Englishes, sociolinguistics, cultural hegemony

## BACKGROUND

Due in part to the marked history of Anglo-American imperialism, the impact of the English language on nonnative-speaking locales has developed into an integral component of a complex sociolinguistic discussion, with various academics (Pennycook, 1994; Canagarajah, 1999) describing the transnational positionality and influence of English as being far from accidental. In particular, concerns regarding the discriminatory sociolinguistic context of global English motivated Robert Phillipson to produce perhaps the most influential critique of the language's international impact, *Linguistic Imperialism* (1992), which presents a multifaceted descriptive model for the status of English within diverse cultural settings. Specifically, Phillipson (1992) describes linguistic imperialism as “the dominance of English asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages” (p. 47).

Phillipson characterizes linguistic imperialism as a ubiquitous threat to nonnative cultures, exemplified by the historical spread and continued dominance of global English. Accordingly, the English “product” is positioned as the nucleus of a sociopolitical system of empire that serves to strengthen the neo-imperialistic interests of “Centrist”<sup>1</sup> (principally, a UK–US inner circle axis) and “Periphery” elites at the expense of the majority of those contained within the dominated Periphery (Phillipson, 1992, pp. 51–52). Specifically, Centrist governments and organizations are described as projecting, both directly and indirectly, economic and cultural authority over outer- and expanding-circle territories. This perpetuates Western-centric agendas and facilitates the dominance of “inner-circle English” within a host of Periphery settings.

The international transmission of English may be viewed as a demonstration of imperialism in contexts where the functional and symbolic prepotency of English is developed and reinforced at the expense of indigenous cultures, due to its role as the international gatekeeper to education, employment, finance, and social mobility (Ferguson, 2006). The apportionment of agency in Periphery adoption of English language learning (ELL) – and, as a consequence, sociolinguistic hierarchy – is thus central to Phillipson's thesis. Specifically, Phillipson (2011, pp. 2–3) views the agency dynamics of linguistic imperialism as

embodying the patterns described in Table 1.

**TABLE 1. Agency Features of Linguistic Imperialism** (Phillipson, 2011)

Pattern of Activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is ideological: beliefs, attitudes, and imagery glorify the dominant language, stigmatize others, and rationalize the linguistic hierarchy.</li> <li>• The dominance is hegemonic; it is internalized and naturalized as being “normal.”</li> <li>• Linguistic imperialism interlocks with a structure of imperialism in culture, education, the media, communication, the economy, politics, and military activities.</li> </ul>

Phillipson (2008a) defines English not as a benign contact language, but an embodiment of the “Anglo-American civilizing mission of the 20th century” (p. 263): a meticulously prepared product that serves to strengthen the disproportionate nature of Centre–Periphery cultural transmission and substantiate English’s position at the apex of a distinct linguistic hierarchy (Phillipson, 2008a). Crucially, global English is identified as supporting Western neocolonial interests by interlocking with asymmetrical systems of economy and power. This is ideologically supported and legitimized by both partisan native speakers and Periphery users via the latter’s sustained consumption and reproduction of Western cultural items. In facilitating this process, globalized Periphery elites are interpreted as assuming the role of *society-specific* Centres, leading Phillipson (1992) to posit that English language hegemony is an invariably inner-circle-originating, yet outwardly radiating, mechanism. It is argued, therefore, that the spread of global English has generated a new order of socioeconomic hierarchization within Periphery locales (Tollefson, 2000). Consequently, an awareness of this process is crucial to the comprehension of Phillipson’s narrative regarding EFL agency.

Specifically, Phillipson (2011) applies Skutnabb-Kangas’ (1988) concept of *linguicism*<sup>2</sup> to describe the methods by which English has been exploited by the (both indigenous and non-indigenous) Centre to perpetuate discriminatory practices between native and nonnative speakers in intercultural settings, and between users and non-users of English within the Periphery. This frame of analysis draws on the writings of Johan Galtung (1971), specifically his theories regarding the structures of imperialism, and the Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci’s (1992) concept of cultural hegemony. In adopting Galtung’s

model, Phillipson highlights English as the principal transmitter of a cross-cultural inequity that encompasses linguistic, social, economic, political, and military features. Gramsci's premise, meanwhile, is notable in its description of the process by which Centrist elites manufacture "consent" within the Periphery, achieving subjugation by ideological mechanisms.

The portrayal of English language spread as a Western-transmitted tool of subjugation has provoked intense reactions from a host of scholars, facilitating an extensive discussion regarding the respective merits and limitations of Phillipson's framework. Nevertheless, due to limitations of space, it is not the intention to provide a comprehensive analysis of Linguistic Imperialism Theory. Rather, this inquiry proposes an examination of stakeholder conceptualizations of Centre-Periphery agentive dynamics during the adoption of English as a foreign language (EFL). Specifically, the circumstances relating to English appropriation within the Republic of Korea (henceforth, Korea) will be evaluated in an effort to contribute a deeper and more critical understanding of the impact of global English.

The environment that surrounds ELL within Korea has changed dramatically in the wake of globalization. While English is neither a designated official language nor critical to the institutional purposes of government, its acquisition has emerged as an integral component of the nation's financial and educational policies, becoming institutionalized on the basis of Korea's rapid development and insertion into the global community. Korea, therefore, is primed for linguistic research that communicates the contextual factors relevant to its locale.

Fundamental to this study is the perception of *stakeholders* concerning the hegemonic structuring of the English language within Korea. Accordingly, a large body of locally produced sociolinguistic research will be consulted, thereby providing this investigation with scholarly representations of ELL conditions that are appreciative of local interests. Collected literature will, in conjunction with Phillipson's (2011) framework, inform the analysis of Korean EFL learner observations toward local English appropriation dynamics. As such, the primary objective of this study is to directly examine the conceptualization of *agency*, specifically with regard to the perceptions of Koreans toward the projection of Western authority and the role of Centrist elites in the hegemonic and ideological construction of Korea's "English fever." It is anticipated that findings will aid in the understanding of local

conceptualizations of causal dynamics with regards to linguistic imperialism, thus satisfying Canagarajah's (1999) demand for comprehension of Periphery perspectives with reference to the societal impact of global English on specific locales.

As noted by Pennycook (1999), the role of English within complex post-colonial settings must be assessed on an individual basis, with macro-level theories regarding Centrist domination via language transmission ultimately proving reductive to the comprehensive understanding of distinct language learning milieus. It is thus crucial that any exploration into linguistic imperialism employ an authentic, non-presumptive policy when preparing, implementing, and analyzing its research methodology. By applying a wide body of locally produced literature to inform the analysis of Korean EFL learner observations, it is anticipated that context-specific dynamics pertaining to the use of English within Korea will be identified, allowing this inquiry to compare its findings to the agentive features of the linguistic imperialism model, and endorse or challenge theoretical assumptions where necessary.

## The “Agency” Response

Responses to Linguistic Imperialism Theory, including those by Davies (1996) and Brutt-Griffler (2009), have routinely taken issue with a number of linguistic imperialism's underlying theoretical assumptions. Notably, Brutt-Griffler (2002) takes semantic issue with Phillipson's use of *imperialism* when describing the spread of English as a direct product of a Centre–Periphery hegemonic transmission, given that Phillipson (1992) asserts “in present-day neo-colonialism, the elites are to a large extent indigenous” (p. 52) and that “the demand for English is articulated by leaders in all parts of the world” (p. 9). Etymologically speaking, imperialism is commonly recognized as the advocacy of empire or, as described by Duiker and Spielvogel (2015), “the policy of extending the rule or authority of an empire or nation over foreign countries” (p. 610). If the agency for English language adoption and, by association, sociolinguistic inequality, lies primarily within the periphery; however, then the precedent that would constitute imperialism is not achieved, potentially shifting focus from the legitimate source of discrimination.

Several scholars originating from post-colonial settings have articulated that it is a misinterpretation of the contextual factors

surrounding ELL that represents Phillipson's major fallacy, however. In particular, Joseph Bisong (1995) has argued that Linguistic Imperialism Theory assumes what it sets out to prove, thereby exemplifying a self-fulfilling prophecy. Specifically, Bisong (1995) takes umbrage with Phillipson's (1992) dominant-dominated dichotomous account of Periphery ELL participation, maintaining that "to interpret such actions as emanating from people who are victims of Centre linguistic imperialism is to bend sociolinguistic evidence to suit a preconceived thesis" (p. 125). It may thus be argued (Davies, 1996) that Linguistic Imperialism Theory is patronizing towards Periphery policymakers and English language users – regarding them as powerless to oppose Centre-driven hegemony and, by association, incapable of independent agency.

Furthermore, Canagarajah (1999) notes that the detached nature of linguistic imperialism's macro-level analytical model impedes it from examining the many complex issues associated with English use within Periphery communities: "In considering how social, economic, governmental, and cultural institutions effect inequality, Phillipson's perspective becomes rather too impersonal and global. What is sorely missed is the individual, the particular" (p. 41). Canagarajah's observation, like those of Bisong before him, highlights two prominent fallacies of the imperialism position: an overgeneralization of the complex realities associated with authentic language learning conditions, and, significantly, a lack of consideration for the Periphery language learner's agency in acquiring English.

## English Language Policy in a Globalized Korea

The expansion of English language education within contemporary Korea is bound inextricably to an acute period of internationalization, beginning in the late 20th century, and must be understood in terms of this wider narrative. Notably, it was at this time that English language teaching (ELT) began to be recognized as a significant component of Korean globalization discourse, typified by President Kim Young-sam's (Kim YS) 1994 *segzehwa* (literally, "globalization") initiative, which attempted a comprehensive, top-down reform of the Korean political, cultural, and social economies (Kim, 2000; Shin, 2010). This specifically targeted the internationalization of foreign language education in an effort to transition Korea toward a human resources-orientated economy

(Shin, 2010).

Accordingly, the Sixth National Curriculum was developed and implemented throughout 1995 and 1996, placing a clear emphasis on English proficiency via progressive interventions, including communicative language learning (Jeon, 2009). Korea's *seggyehwa* drive was augmented further under Kim's successor, Kim Dae-jung (Kim DJ), who, as described by Kim (2000), "forcefully embraced the core concepts of globalization like no other" (p. 84). Specifically, Song (2011a) notes that Kim DJ accelerated the globalized, neoliberal educational policies initiated by his predecessor by implementing further reforms based on philosophies that promoted the image of Koreans as global citizens as evidenced in the ELL principles of the Seventh National Curriculum, introduced by the Korean Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation in 2000, and presented here as Table 2 (as cited in Chang, 2009, p. 88).

**TABLE 2. ELL Principles of the Korean Seventh National Curriculum**

<b>Language Learning Principle</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English education for focusing on student-centeredness.</li> <li>• English education for cultivating communicative competence.</li> <li>• English education for utilizing various activities and tasks.</li> <li>• English education for fostering logical and creative thinking.</li> <li>• English education for functioning effectively as a nation in an era of globalization.</li> </ul>

As observed by Chang (2009), the Seventh National Curriculum conclusively emphasizes the Korean Government's agency in the enhancement of ELL: "If Korea is to function effectively as a nation in the era of globalization, then Korean people must be able to communicate effectively in English" (p. 94). Subsequently, the Korean public has come to acknowledge the transnational status of English and, crucially, observe English language competence as representing significant capital on both cultural and symbolic levels (Shin, 2007).

The positionality of English as a symbol of Korean progression was enriched further in the mid-2000s during the presidency of Lee Myung-bak. Prior to assuming office, Lee communicated his ambition to reform public ELT by implementing an "English Education Roadmap" (Lee, 2010, p. 247). In what proved to be a controversial maneuver, Lee's proposal recommended that all classes nationwide be taught

exclusively in English, with the then government-elect abandoning its strategy within five days after critics rigorously challenged its viability. Nevertheless, Lee's corresponding rhetoric explicitly identified English language attainment as a means of maintaining Korea's competitive edge within an increasingly integrated international community, notably describing the global landscape as a "battlefield" and English as "a key weapon for survival" without which Korea would falter (as cited in Lee, Han, & McKerrow, 2010, p. 338).

The pervasiveness of English acquisition within Korea may thus be viewed through the East Asian Social Darwinist lens of a systematic civic obligation, rather than an independent determination. While Western Social Darwinism facilitated the rationalization and justification of imperialist expansionism by way of "civilizing missions," its East Asian equivalent "not only offered a conceptual framework to explain current national inequalities, but also worked to guide East Asian responses to the aggressive civilizing efforts of the West" (Shin, 2006, pp. 28–29). Subsequently, East Asian Social Darwinism promulgates the notion that a state must first develop national power if its populace is to achieve individual enlightenment (Park, 2005). Shin (2010), therefore, describes the post-globalization ELT policies of the Kim YS, Kim DJ, and Lee governments as reflecting the aspiration of strengthening Korea's international standing and economic competitiveness via the enhancement of local English comprehension levels.

In particular, Lee's strand of fervent discourse unmistakably served to embed a now pervasive ideology, one that emphasizes the necessity for English acquisition if Koreans are to strengthen the nation and, crucially, assume the role of productive and patriotic citizens. Proponents of Linguistic Imperialism Theory may recognize the process of empowerment via the mastery of Western tools as a form of self-perpetuating enslavement (Smith & Kim, 2015, p. 341). Regardless of interpretation, however, it is apparent that the ELT initiatives of multiple Korean Governments have played substantial roles in the circulation of ideologies that serve to strengthen the hegemonic and symbolic capital of English. Local academics (Lee, 2010; Shin, 2010) have subsequently conceptualized Korea's "English fever" as being manufactured and institutionalized by local elites in an effort to maintain a discernibly circular system of power. Specifically, Song (2011b) details the process by which English has been enlisted to reproduce and rationalize Korea's established social hierarchy:

English has been recruited, in the guise of globalization, to exploit the meretricious ideology of merit to the advantage of the privileged classes and the disadvantage of the other classes of the society. English in South Korea cannot be understood fully unless it is recognized that its importance has not been as much engendered by globalization, as it has been resorted to as a subterfuge to conceal where the responsibility for inequality in education lies within the society. (p. 35)

While Song unmistakably apports agency for educational inequality to the established Korean social order, the final sentence of this passage is undoubtedly the most telling. The author describes the process by which the agency behind Korean ELL has been externalized, drawing attention away from the “privileged classes and politicians who fail or refuse to recognize South Korea’s obsession with English” (Song, 2011b, p. 50) and toward globalization. Interestingly, Song (2011b) also describes how, in the centuries preceding Korean transnationalism, the agency for local socio-educational inequality was typically regarded as domestic. The Korean *yangban* (literally, “two groups”) system of governance, for instance, can trace its origins to the tenth century (Oh, 1999).

Members of feudal Korea’s elite caste were expected to typify the neo-Confucian ideal of the learned gentleman, attaining their positions through a rigorous merit system of state examinations. Crucially, however, admittance into the Joseon aristocracy – and thus, elite education – was highly restricted, with “yangban” typically signifying a status designation for members of Korea’s powerful ruling families (Palais, 2014), who sustained their rule via the slave labor of the proletariat. Ultimately, the *yangban* system “negated important aspects of open competition and social mobility based on merit, making the system of recruiting government officials increasingly more arbitrary, manipulative, ascriptive, and corrupt” (Oh, 1999, p. 10).

Korea’s established history of economically driven academic discrimination is significant when evaluating the nation’s current condition. Considering the visible association between economy and education that exists throughout the globe, it is hardly unexpected to discover that ELL has emerged as a significant predictor of Korean socioeconomic status. By way of illustration, an investigation by Kim (2012) found that “seventy percent of students from families earning 5

million won or more a month received private English education in 2010, fully 3.5 times the 20% from those earning less than 1 million won” (p. 3).

In this manner, local academics (Shin, 2010; Song, 2011b) have recognized restricted access to desirable forms of education and employment as transferring away from the isolationist *yangban* class and toward a newly emergent caste of internationalized Korean capitalists. Smith and Kim (2015), for instance, note that “if English is the key to gaining well-paid employment [in Korea], it is predominantly graduates from privileged backgrounds who possess the ability to unlock those doors” (p. 342). Consequently, the ideological refocusing of educational prestige toward ELL – and emergence of “English Fever” – is visibly consistent with Phillipson’s (2011) Neo-Gramscian description of elite-driven cultural hegemony.

Considering the restrictive nature of Korea’s “education fever” (Lee, 2010, p. 253; Shin, 2010, p. 58; Song, 2011b, p. 49) predates the importation of the English language by centuries, one could recognize socially driven educational inequality as historically and culturally ingrained within Korea. In rebutting the agency response to Linguistic Imperialism Theory, Phillipson (2008b) has argued that “individual agency and decision-making reflect a range of [often externally generated] societal forces and ideologies” (p. 34). While this assertion is certainly accurate, perhaps no influence is as integral to individual agency as a millennium of cultural development and conditioning.

## METHOD

### Participants and Ethical Considerations

All 50 primary research participants were 21–23-year-old, tertiary-level EFL learners, categorized as possessing either a “near-native” or “advanced” level of English language communicative competence, as described by the Test of English Proficiency (TEPS)<sup>3</sup> scoring system (Park, 2011). Despite the uniformly high standard of English comprehension, it was decided that research questions would be presented in both the Korean and English languages in an effort to aid participant understanding. Before initiating data collection, both verbal

approval and formal permission to conduct research were obtained from the stakeholders' place of learning. Furthermore, all potential participants received full disclosure, outlining the scope of inquiry; the handling of all submitted data; and the rights of confidentiality, refusal, and the withholding of responses to any given question.

Those who agreed to participate in the study were then instructed to read and complete ethical consent forms, as per standard ethical guidelines. Notwithstanding these measures, it must be conceded that the data collection format employed during primary research presented one major ethical limitation: namely, the present researcher is also an English language lecturer employed at the university in which the learners were enrolled at the time of questioning. In accordance with the principles of ethical beneficence (Bates, 2004), each subject received both written and verbal assurances that the current study remained unconnected from their ongoing education and that non-participation or any and all tendered responses would have no bearing on their future learning.

## **Research Instrument**

This inquiry employed a concurrent mixed-methods questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument. The research device was organized into three statements, with each representing a particular pattern of Phillipson's (2011) description of agency dynamics during linguistic imperialism. The quantitative data collection method employed during primary measures consisted of a 5-point Likert scale (Likert, 1932), used to quantify the strength of stakeholder agreement toward each specific pattern of imperialistic activity. This procedure allowed the inquiry to capitalize on both cognitive and affective attitudinal components, represented by a linear, pre-coded continuum, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Nevertheless, considering the primary aim of this study, it was necessary that the qualitative analysis phase be the central focus of this investigation. In an effort to present a concise range of local perspectives, ten volunteers were presented with a simple text box and instructed to expand upon their questionnaire feedback by communicating their personal experiences dynamically, as situated and embedded within local contexts. It is hoped, therefore, that the amalgamation of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies will enhance the intelligibility, corroborative, and narrative capacities of the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Ideological Forces Drive English Language Adoption

While Tollefson (2007) notes that “ideology” may be used to characterize an array of potentially disparate ELT concepts, he broadly defines the term as “the implicit, usually unconscious assumptions about language and language behavior that fundamentally determine how human beings interpret events” (p. 26). Particularly significant to Phillipson’s (1992) narrative is the legitimization and rationalization of English language dominance, which is imposed and maintained by Centre and Periphery elites via its sustained glorification. As represented by Figure 1, overall agreement accounted for 64% of all responses, indicating that the majority of stakeholders recognize pro-ELL ideologies as affecting Korea. Moreover, neutral responses represented 20% of attained feedback, while 16% of stakeholders disagreed with Statement 1. Subsequently, the qualitative responses contained within Table 3 present several noticeable patterns which act to clarify the respective positions of interviewees.

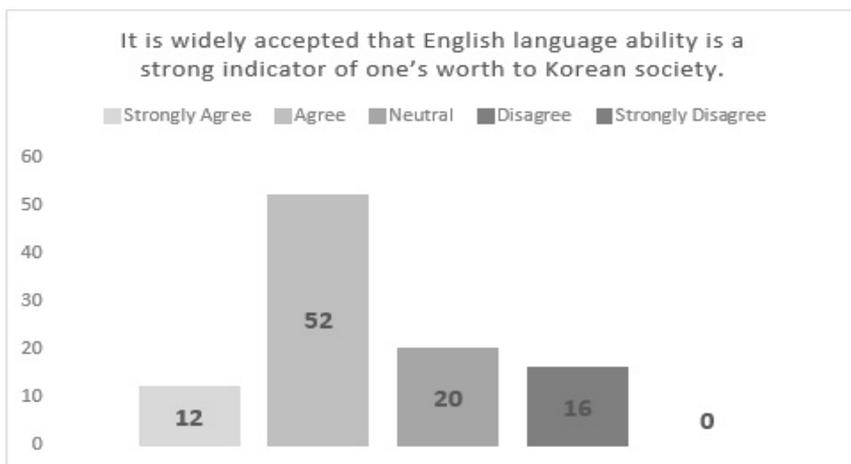


FIGURE 1. Level of Stakeholder Agreement to Statement 1.

Interestingly, responses 1–4 draw attention to the subject of standardized language testing, interpreting a direct association between

demonstrable English comprehension levels and social worth. Most notably, response 2 describes the perceived transformative effect of language accreditation, perhaps revealing the presence of linguicism within Korean ELL dynamics. Response 5, meanwhile, notes the influence of both the Korean Government and globalization on local language learning agency, describing the former as the principal champion of EFL education. Responses 1–5 correspond unmistakably with Phillipson’s (2011) description of language assessment as a form of linguistic commodification. However, while Phillipson identifies this process as predominantly Centre-driven, it should be noted that both the TOEIC<sup>4</sup> and TEPS methods of evaluation are Periphery-derived, originating from Japan and Korea, respectively. At this point, such recognition may suggest that Phillipson’s Neo-Gramscian depiction of sociolinguistic inequality as a product of capitalist-driven hegemonic processes possesses credence.

**TABLE 3. Qualitative Responses to Statement 1**

Response Number	Strength of Agreement	Stakeholder Response
1.	Agree	“English licenses, such as TOEIC and TEPS, and their associated grades, are some of the strongest indicators.”
2.	Strongly Agree	“High scores in TOEIC, TEPS, etc. are really important in this society. They can make normal people into very talented people, especially when getting a job or going to university. English is a very useful tool.”
3.	Agree	“When getting a job, there are requirements for English, like TOEIC. So English ability is one’s worth.”
4.	Agree	“Yes, people often ask about another’s TOEIC/TEPS score.”
5.	Neutral	“Because the Korean Government wants Korea to be a globalized nation, they tell Koreans that they should learn English.”
6.	Agree	“English language ability is now a must.”
7.	Strongly Agree	“Yes, Korean society thinks that English is very important when judging people.”
8.	Agree	“Agree. Learning English is an important factor for Koreans, so English is an indicator of one’s worth.”
9.	Disagree	“One ability does not equal worth.”
10.	Disagree	“English is an indicator of one’s ability to learn, but it is not used when people judge one’s worth.”

Local academics (Kim, 2000; Lee, 2011) have noted that government-driven narratives achieve this process by advocating English as a resource in the enhancement of both individual and societal progression, which, Phillipson (2011) asserts, “leads to English being perceived as prestigious and ‘normal’ ... [resulting in the belief that] the language is universally relevant and usable, and the need for others to learn and use it” (p. 459). By way of illustration, Presidents Kim Young-sam and Kim Dae-jung’s reorganization of the Korean ELL environment presented English comprehension as a fundamental component of Korean global development and modernity. Additionally, President Lee Myung-bak’s symbolic representations of English as a “weapon” and globalization as a “battlefield” (as cited in Lee, Han, & McKerrow, 2010, p. 338) visibly manipulate the Social Darwinist convention of “survival of the fittest” to sustain pro-ELL ideologies (Lee, Han, & McKerrow, 2010, p. 342).

As a result of this process, English language ideologies remain uncontested and are subsequently recycled by the general population. Response 6, for example, describes English comprehension as a “must.” This fixation is represented further by responses 7 and 8, which present a direct ideological link between the linguistic and social capitals by describing the “importance” of English proficiency when assessing an individual’s societal value. Subsequently, it is evident that responses 1-8 endorse Phillipson’s (2011) affirmation that linguistic imperialism is supported ideologically by the societal consumption and reproduction of political, economic, and educational discourses. Conflictingly, however, responses 9 and 10 present a somewhat pragmatic view, interpreting English as an individual *ability* that should remain disassociated from one’s social worth.

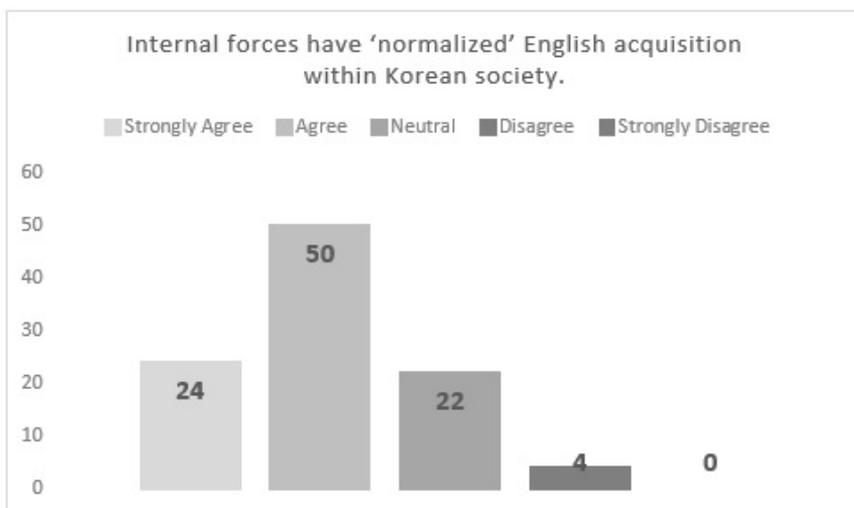
Ultimately, the emergence and continued transmission of *seggyehwa* discourse have been recognized by Korean academics (Jeon, 2009; Song, 2011b) as the primary influence in imparting, from the institutional level to the public, the ideological value of English language adoption. Specifically, Lee (2011) observes that “English language ideology in contemporary South Korea is closely related to the concept of globalization” (p. 124), with post-*seggyehwa* ELL framed typically as a means of enacting a new “cosmopolitan” Korean national identity (Kim, 2000, p. 244) and a critical resource in the maintenance and enhancement of both national competitiveness and global exposure (Kim, 2000; Shin, 2010). Subsequently, it is apparent that Koreans are

compelled to learn English as a means of furthering national objectives. It could be argued, therefore, that many Korean EFL learners do not opt freely to participate in ELL.

## English Language Dominance Is Hegemonically Structured

Phillipson identifies hegemonic dominance via the dissemination (and internalization) of pro-ELL ideologies as featuring significantly in the examinations of structural inequality and the tiers of social hierarchy to which English either provides or withholds access (i.e., linguicism). Consequently, Phillipson (1992) describes ELL norms as being “dictated by the dominant Centre and internalized by those in power in the Periphery” (p. 52). As a result, English language hegemony involves a two-stage process, with local elites gradually assuming the role of the “Centre” due to the shared interests of the two groups. Hegemony may then be achieved by the social manipulation of affected settings, specifically by imposing self-aggrandizing sociolinguistic practices and ideologies until they are ultimately “normalized” by the dominated. In this manner, hegemony “is invariably viewed as non-coercive, involving contestation and adaptation [and] a battle for hearts and minds” (Phillipson, 1997, p. 242) – as illustrated in the previous section. In the case of Korea, Shim (2010) and Song (2011b) interpret the appropriation and promotion of English as a vehicle for local capitalist elites to achieve both individual and national advancement.

Specifically, Song (2011b) views the purpose of local ELL to be a vehicle for the enhancement of “not the new social order, engendered by globalization, but the established social order, [which is] protected and reproduced through the medium of English education” (p. 37), which, Song (2011b) contends, allows “the haves of South Korea ... to hide their agendas and interests behind the façade of the globalizing world, away from the gaze of the have-nots” (p. 50). As noted by Hamel (2006), it is “those who, from *subaltern* [emphasis added] positions and a second language status, [who] help to strengthen the dominant role of a language” (pp. 2255–2256) who can describe best the agentive status of linguistic hegemony. Perceptions towards the motivations of Korean elites in the promotion of EFL are thus fundamental to understanding local ELL dynamics. Subsequently, measurable stakeholder perceptions towards the hegemonic normalization of ELL are represented by Figure 2:



**FIGURE 2. Level of Stakeholder Agreement to Statement 2.**

Overall, stakeholder agreement with Statement 2 accounted for 74% of all replies, with 24% “strongly agreeing” that local forces are responsible for the normalization of ELL within Korean society. Furthermore, while 22% of responses registered neutrality towards the issue, it is worth noting that only 4% of stakeholders disagreed, with 0% “strongly disagreeing.” While it is clear that a sizeable majority of stakeholders concur with this component of Linguistic Imperialism Theory, the relatively high level of nonalignment indicates, perhaps, that this is a complicated issue for a number of surveyed language learners.

By way of illustration, responses 1 and 2 of Table 4 both register their neutrality towards Statement 2, yet interpret local ELL hegemony as a reaction to globalization and external influence. Subsequently, while these responses do not quantitatively agree with the associated statement, their qualitative components align with Phillipson’s (1992) Gatlung-inspired description of Centre–Periphery dynamics and thus allude to imperialism. Significant in response 1 is the specific targeting of globalization and the US as decisive influences on Korea’s internalization of English, thus corroborating Phillipson’s (2011) portrayal of English language hegemony as an (initially) outwardly emanating Western phenomenon.

TABLE 4. Qualitative Responses to Statement 2

Response Number	Strength of Agreement	Stakeholder Response
1.	Neutral	“Globalization and the US are now the most powerful things in society, so I think that external forces have been advocates, too.”
2.	Neutral	“Neutral. I think that internal forces are influenced by external ones because the Korean Government and corporations face the global world.”
3.	Agree	“Many companies want English ability due to globalization.”
4.	Strongly Agree	“In the globalized world, many Korean corporations and communities need to interact with foreign people. So politicians and companies want more people who are fluent than people who aren’t.”
5.	Agree	“I agree. Korea’s economy depends on large companies and large companies demand English ability so that they can participate in the global market.”
6.	Strongly Agree	“Strongly agree. Since globalization, many corporations desire employees who speak English very well.”
7.	Agree	“In Korea, if you want to be a high-class person, then you must learn English. Many corporations and politicians demand a good quality of English due to globalization.”
8.	Agree	“We have to be good at English to be good citizens. I think that comes from politicians; they force us to be like that.”
9.	Agree	“Korea had a hard time in the past, and it was only natural that past governments emphasized English.”

Response 2, meanwhile, interprets “external forces” as influencing hegemony and thus complicit in the manipulation of local EFL adoption. Moreover, the representation of English as a vehicle for “facing” globalization reproduces Yim’s (2007) symbolic description of English as a “tool for Korea to survive in the international community” (p. 37). This response notably channels East Asian Social Darwinist principles to further emphasize the impact of the ideological-reproductive function (Phillipson, 1992) on local EFL conditions. Indeed, the Western influences of globalization and international trade continue to feature significantly in stakeholder representations of ELL normalization, as represented by responses 3–7. Crucially, several accounts suggest the presence of Periphery-intrinsic hegemony by portraying globalized Korean capitalists as the primary adherents of local ELL. Nouns

including “corporations,” “companies,” “politicians,” and “economy” are used to denote the indigenous representatives of EFL hegemony, thereby paralleling Mar-Molinero’s (2006) affirmation that “the agents of imperialism, and therefore many globalization processes, are ... multinational companies, corporations, or political elites” (p. 14).

Moreover, the influence of ideology on the maintenance of English language hegemony is evidenced further by responses 7–9. English acquisition is described variously as a means of enhancing one’s social class (response 7), achieving the status of a “good citizen” (response 8), and the “natural” course of action for Korea to take, given the nation’s historical context (response 9). Noticeable in these reactions is an adherence to the ideological mechanisms described previously and their explicit association with “politicians” and “governments,” thereby channeling hegemonic agency directly toward the Korean political establishment. Responses 2–9, therefore, correspond consistently with Song’s (2011b) depiction of indigenous capitalist elites as agents of Periphery-intrinsic EFL hegemony.

Subsequently, the Korean EFL landscape may, in this instance, be interpreted as an imbalanced intracultural power dynamic, in which local elites systematically exploit ideological mechanisms to maintain English language dominance in an effort to achieve both individual and national aggrandizement. Nevertheless, while stakeholders recognize globalization as an *influence* on this process, the West is, with the possible exception of responses 1 and 2, presented as neither malicious nor consciously imperialistic. Given that Centrist manipulation of the Periphery is a fundamental component of Phillipson’s English language imperialism narrative, however; it is necessary that stakeholder perceptions towards the motivations of the West be explored in greater detail.

### **English Language Dominance Reflects Western-Driven Imperialism**

The characterization of the West as an intentionally manipulative transmitter of linguistic imperialism is unquestionably the most controversial facet of Phillipson’s (1992) narrative. Specifically, Phillipson (2011) views global English as a demonstration of Anglo-American informal empire, a cultural imposition that serves to facilitate a “Western-dominated globalization agenda set by transnational

corporations ... [which, as a consequence,] provides less favorable conditions for education, democratization, cultural and linguistic diversity” (p. 452). In essence, English embodies the asymmetrical symbiosis of the Centre and Periphery, not only with regard to intercultural communication but also the domains of “economic/material systems, structures, and institutions” (Phillipson, 2008a, p. 265), a dynamic that Phillipson (2008a, p. 254) asserts “is central to ... empire 2008a, p. 254).”

As previously noted, problematic with this interpretation is the allocation of agency. Critics of Linguistic Imperialism Theory (Kirkpatrick, 2007) have routinely emphasized that English acquisition is an agentive choice made pragmatically by sovereign states and individual language learners who are influenced by a multitude of political and cultural considerations. Phillipson (2008b), however, views the separation of Centre-driven imperialism and Periphery-intrinsic determinism as a false dichotomy, contending that hegemony involves “some combination of internal motivation and external pressure” (p. 29) and that “neither imposition nor freedom is context-free” (Phillipson, 2011, p. 451). The multicausal nature of agency is, indeed, undeniable. Nevertheless, responses to Statement 2 clearly align with a number of Korean academics, including Lee (2010), Shin (2010), and Song (2011b), in recognizing local EFL hegemony as being instigated from within. Consequently, stakeholder perceptions towards the impact of Centrist forces in the transmission of EFL are represented by Figure 3.

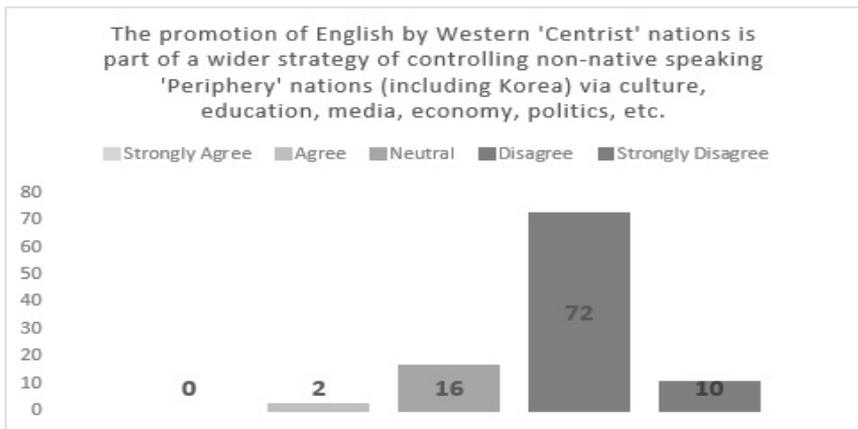


FIGURE 3. Level of Stakeholder Agreement to Statement 3.

Evidently, a substantial majority of the research group registered disagreement with this fundamental component of Linguistic Imperialism Theory. Specifically, 82% of surveyed stakeholders contradicted Phillipson’s (1992) allegation that EFL is influenced inherently by a manipulative Western agenda. Moreover, while 16% of responses were non-committal, only 2% documented their agreement with Statement 3. Quantitatively, then, it is apparent that stakeholders *do not* perceive local EFL as being imposed by external agents, thereby demonstrating consistency with the conclusions of local academics (Lee, 2010; Shin, 2010; Song, 2011b). Nevertheless, responses 1–6 of Table 3 *do* recognize the influence of external forces on Korean EFL dynamics. Responses 1–4, for instance, notably describe the spread of English as a “natural” consequence of globalization. While these responses fail to characterize the Centre as consciously manipulative, proponents of Linguistic Imperialism Theory would nevertheless define these views as embodying Centre–Periphery hegemonic diffusion.

**TABLE 5. Qualitative Responses to Statement 3**

Response Number	Strength of Agreement	Stakeholder Response
1.	Disagree	“I think that English is just a natural effect of globalization.”
2.	Strongly Disagree	“Strongly disagree. It’s an outcome, not a proposal and natural because of globalization.”
3.	Disagree	“No, the spread of English is natural due to globalization.”
4.	Disagree	“I don’t think it’s about control, but English is promoted naturally because of globalization.”
5.	Disagree	“A global language is good for communication. It doesn’t mean that it’s a Western strategy.”
6.	Disagree	“Not to control, but to be more comfortable, to have a better global relationship and to experience other cultures.”
7.	Neutral	“Neutral. As Koreans want to spread Korean and Korean culture via English, other countries will try to do the same.”
8.	Disagree	“It could be, I guess. But they don’t force Koreans to learn English. We study because it is our will and our culture.”
9.	Strongly Disagree	“We learn English because our governments and corporations demand it. If they demand another language, then we will learn that instead.”
10.	Disagree	“Of course this reason could affect us, but developing countries ultimately shape their own future.”

Additionally, while responses 5–7 recognize the functional benefits of English acquisition – most notably with regard to communication, global interdependence, and cultural exchange – Phillipson (2011) has stated that engagement in the modern, globalized world suggests an adherence to a Western-coordinated design. Critics of this position subsequently represent “a defense of the established order, an entrenchment of existing power structures, and ultimately an acceptance of an American-dominated world order and the empire of English” (Phillipson, 2007, p. 382). Responses 5–7, however, illustrate the desire to access (not necessarily L1 English-speaking) foreign cultures and to spread their culture reciprocally via EFL. In such cases, participants employ English to achieve objectives that are not determined by the Centre; thus, theories describing Western dominance via language transmission are, in this instance, inapplicable.

Nevertheless, Phillipson (2009) has argued that the functional position “fails to integrate [language] with issues of identity and power, in effect detaching [it] from politics” (p. 110), a fallacy that, he asserts, may be resolved by adopting his combined Gatlung/Gramsci-inspired interpretation of Centre-projected hegemonic dominance. Davies (1996), however, describes the method as eminently “unfalsifiable”: “[what] if the dominated ... wanted to adopt English and continue to want to keep it? RP’s unfalsifiable answer must be that they don’t, they can’t, they’ve been persuaded against their better interests” (p. 488). Moreover, it is manifestly disingenuous to claim as an absolute certainty that participation in globalization and EFL results in *automatic* subservience to the “forces behind corporate empire” (Phillipson, 2014, p. 1).

Responses 8 and 9, meanwhile, continue to allocate linguistic determinism directly towards local sources. In asserting that Koreans are willing to study English due to a culturally ingrained dedication to academic pursuits, response 8 alludes to education’s position as a vehicle for personal development within neo-Confucian societies (Choi, 2010). If this form of “education fever” is intrinsic to East Asian culture, then surely it must be derived from within the Periphery. Moreover, response 8 absolves Centrist agents of exerting imperialistic pressure by stating that “they [the West] don’t force Koreans to learn English.”

Contrast this with response 9, which describes the “demands” placed on local ELL participants by Korean “governments and corporations.” The forces described in response 9 allude to Korea-centric hegemony and not Centre-projected imperialism. Thus, if Periphery elites consciously

operate linguistic hegemony, then it reinforces the position that local forces may project more agency than the West in the perpetuation of English language dominance, thereby supporting Holborow's (1999) contention that "local ruling classes come to articulate ideologies that operate in their own interests, and are not just the ventriloquists' dummies of their Western masters" (p. 78). As a consequence, the linguistic imperialism position is visibly constrained by its inability to resolve the "more specific and ethnographically sensitive accounts of actual language use" (Park & Wee, 2012, p. 16) within this context.

When considering the points raised here, the conditions surrounding post-*seggyehwa* EFL policy are defined not by imposition but rather a series of deliberate and agentic choices made by a succession of local administrations. In stating that "[the] acceptance of the status of English, and its assumed neutrality, implies uncritical adherence to the dominant world disorder" (p. 38), Phillipson (2008b) has diminished local agency by characterizing Korean policymakers and ELL participants as powerless and passive receivers of linguistic imperialism. It is undoubtable that globalization (and, by association, the activities of the West) has *influenced* the foreign language policies of Periphery nations. Nevertheless, the Korean Government's utilitarian ELT reforms are evidence that expanding-circle settings are, in actuality, capable of making agentic decisions in the accomplishment of their own endeavors (Lee, 2010).

This notion is supported by response 10, which describes Periphery nations as masters of their respective destinies. Regardless of whether or not this perception is entirely accurate for *all* "developing countries"<sup>5</sup> (the world's current geopolitical environment would suggest otherwise), Korean leaders have actively sought to achieve national aggrandizement via the appropriation of English. In such a condition – and notwithstanding Phillipson's (1992) presumptuous and unfalsifiable model of Centre-Periphery hegemonic transmission – theories of linguistic imperialism may not account fully for the position of Korean ELL agency.

## CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS TO THE RESEARCH

In the era of globalization, the pervasive nature of English in Korea

has sparked a debate regarding the sociolinguistic influence of the language that continues to this day (Song, 2011b). On both the formal educational and societal levels, the nature, desirability, and impact of English are key areas of discussion, most notably facilitating an “English divide” within contemporary Korean society (Jeon, 2012). Under the banner of “linguistic imperialism,” many researchers (Tollefson, 1991; Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994) have sought to elaborate the spread of English globally in terms of recent or significantly reinforced structural and cultural inequalities. This investigation, in elaborating the historical and sociological development of English in Korea, has sought to satisfy Kubota (1998) and Canagarajah’s (1999) demands for comprehension of questions on the significance of English that are appreciative of the tension in historical trends of accommodation and resistance within expanding-circle settings.

Considering the aim of this inquiry, it is not the intention to provide predetermined arguments in favor or against any particular position, nor does this investigation lay claim to comprehensiveness. Indeed, given the extensiveness of Phillipson’s (1992, 2011) framework, the analytical depth of this study was actively constrained by limitations of space. In the perspective of Marxian post-colonial criticism, Phillipson has skillfully crafted a complex theory of “economic neoliberalism and empire superimposed onto language” (Block, Gray, & Holborow, 2012, p. 27), drawing much-needed attention to the struggles of Periphery language learners and the requirement for cultural preservation in the process. Subsequently, the acute influence of Linguistic Imperialism Theory on the direction and scope of sociolinguistic research has been profound, and for that, Phillipson must be commended.

Nevertheless, having traced the ideological and sociological mechanisms by which Korean capitalists have reinforced the dominance of English since the nation’s structural self-insertion into contemporary transnationalism, this study has established directional causality toward Korea-intrinsic EFL hegemony. Local stakeholders, therefore, have recognized theories of linguistic imperialism as failing to account fully for the functional veracities of English language dominance within this specific setting. As a consequence, there is a risk that Phillipson’s repeated assertion of Western manipulation may serve to detract from the overall validity of his comprehensive framework. Inaccurate calls of “conspiracy theory,” however, undermine “the more critical problem of dealing with the social, economic, political, and cultural causes and

effects of globalization” (Spolsky, 2004, p. 80).

By way of illustration, both primary and secondary research components of this study have identified the attainment of English within Korea to have been rationalized ideologically as part of the nation’s drive for internationalism. This facilitates the maintenance of regional inequality as it is already structured by limiting to wealthy Koreans “access to education, socio-economic mobility, social status, and political power” (Song, 2011b, p. 42) via the hegemonic institutionalization of the English language. Subsequently, it is determined that the individual structures of local EFL hegemony are compelled variously by societal conditions distinct to the Korean setting: namely, a firm commitment to neo-Confucian beliefs pertaining to education, social advancement, and nation-state; and a pronounced history of socio-educational inequality, represented currently by a conspicuous “English divide.”

The successful resolution of this condition will be a long, arduous, and uncertain process. One thing is assured, however: if change is to be realized, then it must come from within, indexed by adjustments in forms of consciousness toward the importance of EFL in the achievement of transnational objectives and social mobility. On a final note, it must be acknowledged that this investigation is limited by its focus on a concentrated demographic of language learner: namely, high-achieving, third-year university students who are visibly invested in the English language, owing to their uniformly high level of comprehension. As a consequence, it is advisable that any future research into linguistic imperialism situated in the Korean setting broaden the demographic of its research group, perhaps exploring the attitudes of those who are perceived to have not benefited directly from ELL.

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## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> As described by Marshall (1998), “the Centre–Periphery model is a spatial metaphor which describes and attempts to explain the structural relationship between the advanced ‘Centre’ and a less developed ‘Periphery’” (p. 71). In this instance, the Centre denotes inner-circle English L1 nations and, in time, assimilated non-native-speaking elites; the Periphery, meanwhile, describes the majority subaltern populations of outer- and expanding-circle nations.
- <sup>2</sup> *Linguicism* is a term analogous to discriminatory constructs including racism and sexism that describes the ideologies and structures with which sociolinguistic hierarchies are both operated and legitimated and how said hierarchies contribute to imbalanced power distribution.
- <sup>3</sup> Created by Seoul National University’s Language Education Institute in 1992, the TEPS English proficiency test is the primary method of evaluating local English language competence.
- <sup>4</sup> The TOEIC assessment was designed by the U.S.-based Educational Testing Service at the request of Japanese businessman Yasuo Kitaoka (McCrostie, 2010).
- <sup>5</sup> In this instance, the stakeholder’s use of the term “developing countries” is, perhaps, misguided, considering that Korea, a member of the OECD with a relatively high Human Development Index score and GDP per capita, is widely viewed as “developed.”

## The Culture Learning of Sojourning English Language Teachers

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This qualitative study was designed to explore the culture learning of sojourning English language teachers (ELTs) in Japan and South Korea. Qualitative research methods were used to design the study and to collect the data. Using Holliday's Host Culture Complex model (1994) as a theoretical framework, shared patterns in participants' culture learning emerged from their blogs and interviews. The patterns provide evidence supporting culture learning through relationships with various people in different parts of the host culture complex. The strongest pattern revealed that social support from their co-teachers was one of the more beneficial contributions to the sojourners' culture learning. However, these relationships were only found in government-sponsored English language programs, such as the JET Program in Japan and EPIK in South Korea. Another pattern revealed that the increasing social interactions with their significant others (such as a spouse) marked a shift from the culture learning about the national culture towards culture learning in other parts of the host culture complex.

*Keywords:* culture learning, sojourning English language teachers, Korea, Japan

### INTRODUCTION

In Japan and South Korea, there are tens of thousands of foreign English language teachers. According to the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program, there were 4,101 assistant language teachers (2,364 of them from the United States) in elementary and secondary schools in July 2014 (JET Program, 2014). JET assistant language teachers (ALTs) only represent about a quarter of the total number of English teachers in Japan (Richards, 2009), bringing a rough total

estimate to over 16,000 foreign English language teachers in Japan.

In South Korea, the number of foreign English language teachers is reported to be larger than that in Japan, at around 22,000 (Lee, 2010). Less than half (8,520) of these teachers are in Korea's equivalent to the JET Program, the English Program in Korea, also known by its abbreviated form, EPIK (H. Lee, personal communication, June 5, 2011). Evidence of Korea's larger demand for English language teachers (ELTs) can be seen in many ELT recruiting or job posting sites such as Dave's ESL Café ([www.eslcafe.com](http://www.eslcafe.com)) which has three job boards, one for international jobs, one for China, and one for South Korea. For the month of September 2014, the Korean job board (<http://www.eslcafe.com/jobs/korea/>) posted over 300 job openings. Although South Korea has roughly 6,000 more foreign ELTs, it is much smaller in geographical size and population compared to Japan. With at least 38,000 foreign English language teachers in these two countries where English is not the native or official language, it is remarkable that there is not much research on their ability to adjust to their foreign living and teaching environments.

Sojourners are people who “go abroad to achieve a particular purpose and then return to their country of origin. The physical and sociocultural characteristics of the destination influence how the sojourners adapt, giving rise to the terms visited group and host nation or culture” (Bochner, 2006, p. 182). Sojourning ELTs need more attention in research because they represent a large group of ELTs. Although they may not be viewed as professionals by their local counterparts and even themselves, many of their students may view them as international representatives of the ELT profession. Their professional and culture learning processes differ from those ELTs who teach in their own countries. The purpose of this study is to explore how sojourning ELTs learn about their respective host cultures.

## CULTURE LEARNING THEORY

Culture learning theory is a contemporary theory emerging from the more popular concept of culture shock (Zhou, Jundal-Sharpe, Topping, & Todman, 2008) and refers to situations in which “cross-cultural travellers need to learn culturally relevant social skills to survive and

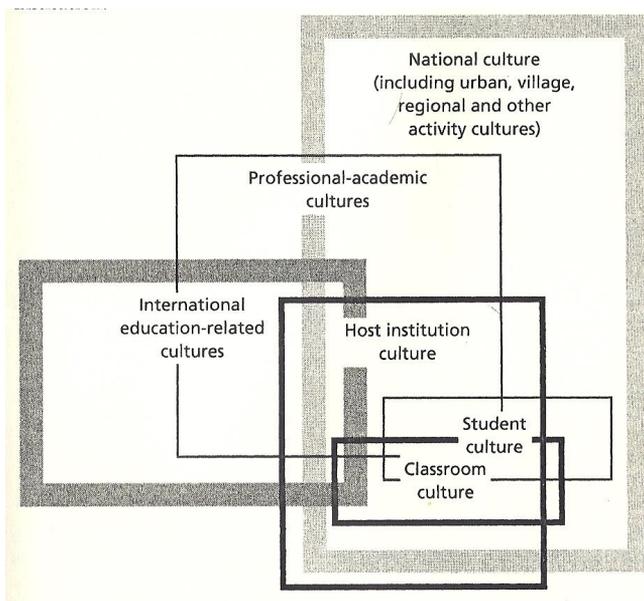
thrive in their new settings” (Furnham, 2010, p. 88). This theory was developed by acculturation researchers as a framework to predict the sociocultural adaptation of sojourners. Sociocultural adaptation refers to a set of skills, one of them being culture learning, that help sojourners live successfully in the home country (Hui, Chen, Leung, & Berry, 2015; Ng, Wang, & Chan, 2017; Wilson, Ward, & Fischer, 2013).

Two populations of sojourners dominate culture learning research: international students and expatriate workers (Bierwiazzonek & Waldzus, 2016; Bochner, 2006; Ting-Toomey, 1999; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Bochner (2006) lists other populations that are gaining attention, such as international civil servants and military personnel, but does not include a category for educators. This study is significant because it calls attention to educators, particularly ELTs, as a large group of sojourning individuals, who may be distinguished from expatriate workers because the social dynamics in education systems often differ from those in business or commercial systems.

Social interaction is considered a key culture learning-related antecedent of adaptation (Wilson, Ward, & Fischer, 2013). In their meta-analysis, Bierwiazzonek and Waldzus (2016) found that social interaction is the least studied antecedent: “Overall, it appears that the expatriate literature recognizes the importance of culture learning for expatriate adjustment, but pays less attention to social learning as one of the aspects of this process” (p. 781). Ng, Wang, and Chan (2017) investigated the moderating role of social support in cross-cultural adaptation and found that higher support from friends from the host culture amplified the beneficial effects of integrating into that host culture. Furthermore, they found that higher support from friends not from the host culture reduced these benefits in the long-term. Lastly, in their study of sojourners’ perceptions of culture shock, Goldstein and Keller (2015) posited that interest in the host culture’s language correlates with the attention to cultural difference, which in turn increases their awareness of culture learning.

Some studies have investigated sojourning ELTs, specifically in the “contact zone” of the classroom where the student and teacher cultures meet (e.g., Barnes & Lock, 2010; Breckenridge & Erling, 2011; Chandler & Kootnikoff, 2002; Chen & Cheng, 2010; Duff & Uchida, 1997; Gingerich, 2004; Johnston, 1999; Johnston, Pawan, & Mayan-Taylor, 2005; Kiernan, 2010; Masgoret, Bernaus, & Gardner, 2000; Rao, 2010; Shi, 2009; Stewart & Miyahara, 2011; Swagler &

Jome, 2005). Several investigated teacher identities (Chen & Cheng, 2010; Duff & Uchida, 1997; Johnston, 1999; Johnston, Pawan, & Mahan-Taylor, 2005; Kiernan, 2010; Stewart & Miyahara, 2011; Swagler & Jome, 2005), which can provide insight to the psychological adaptation of sojourning ELTs, and only three investigated cultural identity (Breckenridge & Erling, 2011; Duff & Uchida, 1997; Johnston, Pawan, & Mahan-Taylor, 2005). However, none of them investigated the sociocultural side of adaptation, which shows how sojourners learn about the host culture and develop cultural competence. Wilson, Ward, and Fischer (2013, p. 903) state that “one of the most reliable means for sojourners ... to acquire, improve, and eventually master cultural competence is through their interactions with host nationals. Contact provides the opportunity for instrumental support ... and opportunities for observational learning.”



**FIGURE 1. Host Culture Complex.** (Holliday, 1994, p. 29)

As seen in Figure 1, Holliday’s Host Culture Complex (1994) is a model that contextualizes the sojourner’s opportunities for observational learning, and it is made up of six interrelated components. The classroom culture represents people and interactions within the

boundaries of a physical classroom. Some rules of the classroom are mandated by the host institution culture, but the rules are also negotiated between the ELT(s) and the learner(s). The student culture represents both the culture that the learners bring to the classroom from their home culture, which Holliday (1994) classifies as the national culture, and the culture that the learners create and co-create with the teacher(s) in the classroom and the host institution.

The host institution culture represents the people, interactions, rules, and regulations of the host institution. A host institution can vary in size from a small independent school to a system of schools. The host institution is responsible for organizing the teachers, the students, and the curriculum. Some host institutions can be solely focused on English language learning whereas others focus on other disciplines in addition to English language learning.

The international education-related cultures are the most abstract part of the Host Culture Complex. Holliday defines them as involving “the wider ethos of what constitutes education, an educational institution, a department, a discipline, a teacher, and so on” (Holliday, 1994, p. 30). For the purposes of this project, international education-related cultures are defined as how English language learning and teaching is prescribed by the governing authorities and perceived by society at large.

Professional-academic cultures are as Holliday states, “the cultures connected with professional peer and reference groups, schools of academic thought and practice, professional approach, etc., generated by professional associations, unions, university departments, publishers, etc.” (1994, p. 29). For the purposes of this project, these cultures are best represented by professional teaching organizations both locally and internationally and by the graduate programs that some participants attended.

The national cultures include the urban, village, regional, and other activity cultures within the national boundaries of Japan and South Korea for this project. It is the definition of this part that Host Culture Complex can be criticized for being too simplistic as culture is defined by national borders. However, Holliday’s definition of culture has evolved since the creation of this model. This study attempts to embrace what Holliday calls in his more recent work the *critical cosmopolitan paradigm*, “in which the notion of ‘culture’ is considered to be a social construction that is manipulated by politics and ideology” (2012, p. 37). Although the primary investigator of this study rejects essentialism and

cultural overgeneralizations, this study has essentialist overtones because the participants may view their students and colleagues as essentialist others.

With culture and culture learning defined, the research question of interest for this paper is as follows:

What variations of culture learning, if any, do the sojourning ELTs share within the framework of the Host Culture Complex?

## METHOD

The Host Culture Complex model (Figure 1) was used to frame the research question and the interview questions concerning the culture learning of sojourning ELTs. Holliday (1994) posited that ELTs should consider the sociocultural contexts of their students and classrooms throughout the world. This model demonstrates that “the classroom is part of a complex of interrelated and overlapping cultures of different dimensions within the host educational environment” (Holliday, 1994, p. 28).

The study is one of qualitative research, which has been traditionally juxtaposed to quantitative research in terms of methodology and philosophical worldviews (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam, 1998). One of the most distinguishing features of qualitative methodology is that the research is conducted in naturalistic settings as opposed to controlled ones. Instead of collecting data through investigating controlled variables in an experiment or through a test, the qualitative researcher collects data through interviewing, observing participants, and collecting documents and artifacts. Qualitative research is more than a common set of methods; it requires a paradigm. The constructivist paradigm is one of the most accepted paradigms in qualitative research, and is the worldview that will be used in this multiple case study. Also known as naturalism and interpretivism, constructivism maintains the logic of induction for its process of research. The logic, ontology, epistemology, and axiology of a constructivist’s worldview dictate the methodology of a qualitative study in that the research actively looks for multiple perspectives from participants through multiple interviews (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

This theoretical lens is often used in qualitative research, and Holliday's Host Culture Complex (1994) was used for this purpose.

## Data Collection

This study consisted of data collected from interviews of five participants and their blog posts written from the start of their sojourn in Japan or South Korea until the time when most interviews were near completion, August 1, 2013. The researcher had no formal or informal relationships with any of the participants prior to the study.

**TABLE 1. Data Collection Timetable for Each Participant**

Participant	Recruited	Blog Data Collected	Interview Data Collected
Phil	May 15, 2013	May 15–22, 2013	June 19–August 13, 2013
Sophie	June 18, 2013	June 18–25, 2013	June 29–July 29, 2013
John	June 21, 2013	June 21–28, 2013	June 24–July 12, 2013
Luke	July 8, 2013	July 8–15, 2013	July 10–September 9, 2013
Dionne	July 23, 2013	July 23–30, 2013	August 4, 2013

Participant recruitment was based on the following blog selection criteria:

- The blog was current, meaning the blogger was still publishing on a regular basis at the time of data collection.
- The blogger described his or her adjustment to Japanese or Korean culture in at least 10% of posts and provided details in depth ranging from the length of the whole post to one paragraph.
- The blogger described in depth and multiple times about his or her experiences teaching English in Japan or South Korea.

When the participants responded to the invitation to participate, I requested their permissions and consent for document analysis and interviews. Once permission was granted, I began to copy-and-paste their public blog data to Microsoft Word documents. Data were collected in three forms: blog data from all participants, Qualtrics interview survey data from all participants except Dionne, whose audio data was recorded from the Adobe Connect Internet videoconference onto Audacity, an

audio recording and playback software program. Dionne was the only participant who chose to be interviewed synchronously via videoconferencing, whereas the rest chose asynchronous interviews via Qualtrics.

**TABLE 2. Participants**

Name	Host Culture	Duration	Host Institution(s)	Students	Home Culture
Phil	Japan	2008–2011	JET Program	High school	US East Coast
Sophie	South Korea	2008–present	3 different <i>hagwon</i>	Young children; adults	US New England
John	Japan	2000–present	JET Program; university	High school; university	Europe
Luke	South Korea	2011–2013	GEPIK	Junior high school	US Midwest
Dionne	South Korea	2011–2014	EPIK; university	Elementary school; university	US Midwest

All interviews were divided into three sessions with the primary purpose of not overwhelming the participants with the amount of questions. Only Dionne agreed to be interviewed in one setting, which was more convenient through Adobe Connect. The others needed a week or two between each session.

## Participants

Of the five participants, two of them taught English in Japan and three taught English in South Korea (Table 2). Of the English teachers in Japan, Phil taught in the JET Program, and John taught in the JET Program but now teaches in a Japanese university. Of the English teachers in Korea, I interviewed both men and women. Sophie taught in two different private English language schools, one for kindergartners and the other for adults. Luke taught in an elementary school for a provincial government English program. Dionne taught elementary students for EPIK and then taught in a private Korean university in the same area. All five of them arrived to their respective countries after obtaining their bachelor’s degrees. Only Sophie and Dionne had full-time

jobs between earning their degrees and teaching English in Korea. They all had full-time jobs as legal residents in their respective countries at the time of the interviews. Participants are presented in the order they consented to participate.

Phil was an ALT for the JET Program from summer 2008 through summer 2011. Phil began blogging about his experiences in Japan at the start of his second year as an ALT, in July 2009. Therefore, the only data that reflects his first-year experiences arose from the interview. Throughout his blog, he made only a few references to his home and family there. The majority of Phil's blog focused on his life in Japan and his reflections of living in Japan and teaching English as an ALT for the JET Program.

Sophie taught in three different *hagwon* (private English language schools) from summer 2008 through summer 2013, when she left to get married with the intention to resume teaching English in Korea in 2014. Sophie began blogging about her sojourning experiences during her job search process in May 2008. Most of her blog focused on her life in Korea and teaching English in the various *hagwon*, especially the first two, where she taught young children. She did not write much about her third *hagwon* experience as she was simultaneously enrolled in an online MA program based in the United States.

John taught English in Japan since the summer of 2000, when he arrived as an ALT for the JET Program. At the time of the interview, he taught English at a university with no intention of leaving Japan in the immediate future. John blogged a few times in 2005 and 2006, but starting August 2009, he began to blog more purposefully, mainly about his English language teaching approaches and professional development.

Luke lived in the same city and taught English in the same school in South Korea from summer 2011 to summer 2013. He blogged nearly every month from the beginning to near the end of his time in Korea. Throughout his blog, he made a few references to his family but much more about his home state and alma mater because he was able to stay connected with other ELTs from there. By the end of summer 2013, Luke made the decision to go back to the United States.

Dionne had taught English in Korea since spring 2011, when she arrived to teach for EPIK at several public schools in a rural part of the country. She then taught English at a university in the same area. She started blogging before she arrived in Korea. Her blog posts were mostly about herself and her interests with a few posts about teaching English.

In her interview, she described her blog as being mostly “lots of pictures, a couple stories, every once in a while a video.” Compared to the other participants’ blogs in this study, hers is unique because the national (Korean) culture is not the central theme; rather, as she described, it is more eclectic.

## **Analysis**

All data (blog and interview transcripts) were analyzed using open and axial coding techniques (Moghaddam, 2006). Blog data were analyzed first as they were immediately collected after each participant consented to be interviewed. Once a participant’s blog was copied and pasted into a Microsoft Word document, I began to open code each blog to identify the posts that addressed the purpose of the research project. All blog posts that did not address the research questions in part or in whole were eliminated from the data pool. Axial coding helped to classify the remaining blogs into three themes: (a) teaching English in Japan or Korea, (b) learning about Japanese or Korean culture, and (c) other (e.g., traveling to other countries for vacation and reviewing video games, local restaurants, and books). Some posts had topics overlapping the first two themes, which made for a more relevant post to the research project.

For each participant, then, there were two sets of blog data in two separate Microsoft Word documents: (a) the total blog data with every post up to August 1, 2013, or when the participant left the country used for open coding, and (b) the abridged blog data with only posts relevant to the research project used for axial coding. Table 3 shows the difference in length between the two sets of blog data for each participant. Dionne’s blog was different from the rest of the participants in that she used a different blogging program (Tumblr) and the majority of her posts were photographs or links to other websites. I only copied and pasted the few posts that contained text she wrote.

The last column on Table 3 indicates the percentage of the blog data with content about teaching English and adjusting to the Host Culture Complex. Sophie’s blog is unusual in that only 9.5% of the blog data was included; however, most of her blog content was not about teaching English in Korea or adjusting to living in Korea. Many of her blog posts were about other countries, such as the United States, Georgia, and Chile. Another content item that took many pages concerned restaurant

and food reviews, mostly in Korea.

**TABLE 3. Blog Data Included**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Number of Pages for Open Coding</b>	<b>Number of Pages for Axial Coding</b>	<b>Percentage Included as Data</b>
Phil	542	172	31.7%
Sophie	1990	190	9.5%
John	250	107	42.8%
Luke	214	167	78%
Dionne	N/A	22	N/A

Interview data analysis began after the axial coding of the blog data was completed. To ease the selective coding process, interview data stored on Qualtrics was downloaded as Microsoft Word documents, one document per interview session per participant, for the searching and scanning process essential to coding and analysis. Dionne's interview data, stored as an audio recording on Audacity, was transcribed by the principal investigator onto a Microsoft Word document. Table 4 shows how the first set of interview data was organized in separate Microsoft Word documents.

**TABLE 4. Interview Data on Separate Microsoft Word Documents**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Session 1</b>	<b>Session 2</b>	<b>Session 3</b>
Phil	2 pages	4 pages	7 pages
Sophie	3 pages	4 pages	8 pages
John	2 pages	6 pages	7 pages
Luke	3 pages	4 pages	8 pages
Dionne	24 pages		

Selective coding (Moghaddam, 2006) was used to integrate the two sets of data (blog and interview) into themes fitting the categories of Host Culture Complex (Holliday, 1994). The first half of selective coding was done by analyzing each participant's data separately, whereas the second half analyzed the data across all participants. Because the Host Culture Complex helped focus the large amount of data, all

interview questions and answers not addressing culture learning specific to the sections in the Complex, mainly from sessions one and two, were discarded from this study. Most of the selective coding from the blog data focused on the second set of axial codes, learning about Japanese and Korean culture.

### **Validity, Reliability, and Ethical Considerations**

To determine validity, I used member checks, which Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) mention as a common strategy to determine validity. Member checking also played a valuable part of the data collection in this study in that I asked my participants via Qualtrics to verify if I had represented them accurately through a summary synthesizing their blog and interview data.

Although one purpose of member checking is a strategy to reduce threats to validity, another purpose is to give participants a chance to reflect and amend their narrative since the original blog posts and their interviews. To strengthen validity, participants were given the option to access the same literature that helped me make certain inferences. In this sense, data analysis was a collaborative effort as each participant gave me feedback after checking the narrative. This collaborative effort in the data analysis and interpretation demonstrates the multiple realities as proposed in the constructivist paradigm.

The concept of triangulation has been in qualitative research for quite a while (Foreman, 1948). Merriam (1998) and Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) describe triangulation as an important strategy to reduce threats to credibility. Creswell and Plano Clark define triangulation as “data drawn from several sources or from several individuals” (p. 211). This study meets this definition in that data was drawn from participants’ blogs and their interviews with the researcher.

Analyzing data from online sources posted by individuals or communities is a relatively recent phenomenon and has received a great deal of attention by various groups concerned about research ethics, thus giving rise to Internet Research Ethics (Buchanan & Ess, 2008; Kozinets, 2010). One of the main concerns relevant to this study is the blurring of public and private space online (Buchanan & Ess, 2008; Rettberg, 2008; Kozinets, 2010) and what constitutes human subjects research. According to Kozinets (2010), the following research criteria is not human subjects research: (a) use of spontaneous conversations in a

publicly accessible venue and (b) analyzing blogs if the researcher does not record the identity of those involved in the blogs' narratives. Although the researcher has adamantly refrained from recording and revealing identities of bloggers and their community members, it is relatively easy for the consumers of this research to identify them through the use of an online search engine.

Another concern is possible harm through the use of publicly accessible blogs. One possibility is that bloggers may have strong feelings about the research use of their stored communications (Buchanan & Ess, 2008; Kozinets, 2010). To prevent such harm, I have requested permission from the blogger before I included any descriptions or reproductions of the blog's content in my data collection. Because I followed up blog data collection with interviews, I sought informed consent from the blogger for both blog and interview data.

A final concern is the anonymity and pseudonymity of bloggers. Some bloggers use pseudonyms to distance their real selves from their audience (Buchanan & Ess, 2008; Rettberg, 2008). There is only a certain degree or amount of the real self that may be portrayed online. This may be a problem for the ethnography, but for grounded theory it is not necessary to reveal the blogger's complete self. Reasons are similar for anonymous bloggers, and I maintained this anonymity throughout the data collection and analysis.

A common trait of bloggers is to create a certain level of fiction or even outright hoaxes to entertain their readership (Rettberg, 2008). Through triangulation, I was able to detect no evidence of fiction or hoax, which demonstrate that the bloggers were familiar with the narrative and identity of the sojourning English language instructor enough. If their blogs were fictitious, then it is not so far removed from the blogger's reality.

One notion of reliability pertains to the consistency of coding the transcribed interviews (Merriam, 1998). To demonstrate this reliability, a third party was invited to code the same transcripts using the same system with the goal of attaining a high degree of intercoder reliability (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

In order to demonstrate how this study can be transferred to other contexts, it is necessary for me to provide rich, thick descriptions of the data as is characteristic of qualitative research (Bogden & Biklen, 2007; Merriam, 1998). Readers and future researchers should be able to determine how closely my participants and contexts match those of their

related interest. Another strategy to promote transferability is using a multisite design, which is inherent in this study in that my participants were teaching in different schools and may be for different purposes. Merriam (1998) states that this strategy can maximize diversity in examples of the culture learning of sojourning English language teachers.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: VARIATIONS OF CULTURE LEARNING**

The results report on the variations of culture learning divided into the following components from the Host Culture Complex: the national culture, the host institution culture, the classroom culture, and the professional-academic culture (Holliday, 1994). The participants did not have enough awareness of the international education-related culture to report on it. The student culture and classroom culture reports are included together.

### **National Culture Learning**

All of the participants in this study reported much about their national culture learning process. Two major patterns emerged across the participants. First, the participants considered learning about the national culture to be their primary concern before and immediately after arriving to the host country. Second, most participants gained most of their social support from a significant other (spouse or partner) who helped them learn more about the national culture.

For all participants, learning about the national culture was more important than learning the other components of the Host Culture Complex because teaching English was not their main personal reason for sojourning. As John states, “[teaching English] was a means to an end,” the end referring to learning about the national culture, Japan in his case. In their interviews, all participants were asked what played a larger factor in their decision to go abroad: to live in Japan or Korea or to teach English there. All of them answered on the side of living in their respective countries.

Most participants learned about their respective host national cultures through interactions with their co-teachers. All but Sophie started their

English language teaching experience in a classroom shared with a local teacher. Phil, for example, found that learning the Japanese language helped him better understand the national culture. When he was asking his colleagues about which first-person pronoun was most appropriate to use, he wrote in his blog:

I also asked one of the English teachers I work with. She's in her mid-twenties, so her perspective should be comparable. She answered similarly. *ぼく* [boku] is usable when trying to be more polite, like when speaking with coworkers or (sometimes) superiors, though you should probably switch to the more formal *わたし* [watashi] or *わたくし* [watakushi] if you're really trying to be polite. *おれ* is indeed more casual and more masculine, but [the teacher] also said it can sound a bit adolescent, like a teenage boy or something. She also said she doesn't care which one her boyfriend uses (I bet he uses *おれ* [ore], though).

This quote is one of several examples in his blog that demonstrates how he learns about the national culture via Japanese language, especially pragmatics.

Luke also learns about Korean culture through their communication styles during a conversation he had with his co-teacher during his first day of teaching at middle school. He shares in his blog:

Co-teacher: Ready for your first class, Luke?

Luke: Yeah, all set.

Co-teacher: Okay. I've got some bad news. Your blood tests came back and the hospital thinks you may have hepatitis. You'll go back in about two hours. Now have fun at class!

Luke: ...

I went back alone this time, with no translator. I don't want to sound all mopey, but I'll take you inside my psyche at this moment, which I would deem a Top 3 in my most stressful times in my life. I am still jet lagged, have just started a new job. I think I may have hepatitis. I don't really know where I am in the city, and the only people who are qualified to tell me what's going on don't speak my language, nor I theirs. Despite all this, part of me was still laughing at how awesome of a situation this was.

This quote provides a glimpse into not only his first exchange with

his co-teacher but also into his adjustment process for his first day. The communication style here was both abrupt and loaded with two stressful events, the first day of teaching and a possible diagnosis of a potentially serious disease. Fortunately for Luke, it turned out that he did not have hepatitis, but a first impression like this may have better prepared him for future communication with his co-teachers.

Dionne's interview differs from Phil and Luke's blog posts in that she reports on learning about the social structure of the national culture during a dinner with her Korean colleagues. In this narrative, she points out a couple of examples of Korean national culture practices. The simpler one and the one that was the most difficult for Dionne to adjust to was eating from a communal plate, touching the same food with one's own chopsticks. The more complex one concerned the hierarchical social structure of Korean culture that is based on Confucianism and is traditionally very rigid. She uses the Korean familial terms of *nuna* (a mistake as this is said by males) and *eonni* (said by females), which means "older sister," as well as *dongsaeng*, which means "younger siblings." In the case of Korean familial relationships, the older sister has the right to tell her younger sister what to do.

At least three times a week, (EPIK school teachers and I) used to go out for dinner. And we were just really active. We'd play volleyball. And after volleyball, we'd go out eating and drinking and *noraebang*. It's just that community aspect – of "This plate's not my plate" – that was really weird to me. It was really hard. Later on in life – it's just that I'm not a newbie anymore because after a while, they start[ed] expecting me to follow the culture. Whereas before I could break [the rules] and get away with it. But I think [after] about a year and a half of being here, I remember, one of my friends – she's younger than me and we were all out with some of our older friends. And the younger person has to listen to the older person. And we had to finish the food, so I told her, "Hey, you have to finish the food because I'm you're *nuna*. And you're *eoni*. Finish it! And she went back to me and told the other ones [who were younger than I, saying], "Oh well, if you are, then we are your *dongsaeng* so you have to do this and this." Oh my gosh, this opened up a can of worms. So that was an adjustment, and now I'm required to follow the rules.

During their first year, the participants' relationships with their

respective co-teachers helped them learn about the national culture. For some participants, this changed as they found their significant other. For Sophie and John, they eventually married their significant other who helped them better understand the national culture.

The structure of Sophie's social life in Korea changed when her relationship began, as she reported in the interview: "After I met my boyfriend, now fiancé, I spent less time clubbing with my co-workers and I quit dance lessons. I started studying Korean more seriously, about eight hours per week on top of work. As I had been to most of the tourist attractions in the city, I spent weekends more with friends or with my boyfriend's family than exploring the city." Her interview supports evidence in the blog that the distinguishing characteristics of her first few months, clubbing with co-workers and dance lessons, were no longer part of her life in Korea.

Sophie's fiancé influenced her decision to stay in Korea to pursue a career in teaching English. She also mentions how her relationship with her fiancé influenced her career decisions. She states, "When I came to Korea, I was interested in teaching English, but I did not expect to make a career out of it. Until I met my fiancé, I planned on spending just one and a half years in Korea before coming back to the States to look for a job in my field of environmental science."

Although Sophie married her fiancé shortly after the data collection was completed, John had been married to his wife for many years. The majority of his time in Japan has been with his Japanese wife and family. Mainly because of this, he calls Japan his home: "This is my home, and also the place I have lived for longest in my life." Perhaps, because he perceives Japan as his home, he may have a different approach to learning about the national culture. When asked about what factors helped him feel better about living and working in Japan, he answered, "Learning the language, getting used to social norms, improving my job situation, [and] having a family." John provided evidence that his wife contributed directly to the latter of these two conditions, when he explained, "My wife was an English teacher before we met, and ten years ago we started a private language school together. We work together on the private language school classes, and I occasionally ask her for help with paperwork written in Japanese at my university job." In this sense, John's wife helped him grow professionally from being an English language teacher to running an English language school.

These examples show how the social interactions with co-teachers and the social support from significant others played a role in the participants' learning of their respective national cultures, thus supporting the literature (Bierwiazzonek & Waldus, 2016; Ng, Wang, & Chan, 2017) that social interactions and social support are beneficial to the culture learning of sojourners. Although all of them arrived to Japan or Korea with English language teaching being the means to the end of learning about the national culture, two of the participants were influenced by their spouses to transform their means, English language teaching, to a new end. Phil and Luke had girlfriends in their respective countries. Phil's relationship with his girlfriend did not influence him to develop professionally, although the relationship influenced his decision to stay in Japan longer. Dionne was the only participant without a significant other during the time frame of this study.

Additionally, Phil's interest in learning the Japanese language and Dionne's use of the Korean language to demonstrate her culture learning support claims that interest in the foreign language increases one's awareness of culture learning (Goldstein & Keller, 2015). Although his first conversations with his co-teachers were in English, Luke immediately noted differences in communication styles suggests that these claims about interest in a foreign language could extend to interest in differences in communication styles.

## **Host Institution Culture Learning**

In addition to the national culture, patterns arose across the participants' culture learning of the three types of host institution cultures: government-sponsored institutions in elementary and secondary schools, higher education institutions, and private institutions. Private language schools vary from small schools to nationally and internationally established private language schools. English is among one of the many academic subjects taught in these schools, but some schools, known as "cram schools," specialize in preparation for standardized English exams. Sophie was the only participant with experience teaching in private institutions that were nationally established in South Korea, with a concentration in Seoul.

The ALTs in this study worked in the JET Program, EPIK, or GEPIK (Gyeonggi-do English Program in Korea), the first two under the auspices of their respective national governments and the latter under the

auspices of the Gyeonggi-do provincial government. Phil, Luke, John, and Dionne worked in these types of institutions, although John and Dionne left to teach in higher education institutions afterwards. These government-sponsored programs in public schools are designed to have sojourning ELTs paired up with local ELTs (Chandler & Kootnikoff, 2002). Therefore, Sophie was the only teacher who did not have the opportunity to teach with a co-teacher from the host country.

A few shared patterns emerged across the participants regarding host institution culture learning. All participants showed that the social interactions with their colleagues were important for learning how to teach, behave, and act according to the schools' rules and social norms. Most participants shared two similar narratives in their blogs and/or interviews regarding these relationships. The first narrative concerns the participants' socialization into the host institution outside the normal school hours, and the second concerns end-of-the-year transitions that some participants did not expect.

In their respective blogs, Phil and Luke provide examples of how teachers are socialized in the host institution through social gatherings. Luke refers to these gatherings as teacher dinners:

The Korean school calendar is pillared with teacher dinners, ceremonies and the occasional free style rap battle (not really). The latest dinner ushered in a new era of alcohol consumption with the teachers. Soju is the lubricant of choice for older men trying make me their sons, younger people make [sic] me their friends, and females of all ages keeping a safe distance away at all times (I kid...maybe). Any inhibition to try speaking English with the whitest [foreigner] they have ever seen is quickly eroded with a few bouts with the bottle. At this dinner, I happily discovered the new math teacher speaks English. Her translation abilities were quickly put to the test, as one older male teacher took a fatherly interest in me, and let flow a stream of slurred Korean. His pace quickening then shortening, pitch rising and falling, it was like seeing a great orator let loose and tell you how he really feels. After two minutes, I was invested. What pearls of wisdom was he slinging my way? What window into his soul, battered yet wizened from years of triumph and failure, has this beer and soju opened? What great insight into the human condition will he set alight within my mind, guided by his many years of experience?

Phil had similar experiences in Japan, which he referred to as *enkai*. Phil dedicated a blog post to this phenomenon, which he described generally:

*Enkai* can be a lot of fun; loosening up with your fellow soldiers in the trench, having a few beers, and hopefully forming a more cohesive bond with the people you see almost every day. While an occasional drinking party with your boss and coworkers can be a good time, for most Japanese people these are not optional, recreational activities. They are after work, but they are obligatory. I've heard from a couple of overworked Japanese that many young people don't like it, but it's just the way it is. Even if you're tired or sick, if your *sempai* (senior worker) invites you go to drinking after work, you go. "But what happens if you don't?" I asked. Apparently you become ostracized and will likely never be invited to another work-related social function. Talk about harsh.

Although Phil may not have attended the specific kind of *enkai* of this fashion for his schools, he gave an explanation earlier in his blog when advising his successor in the JET Program: "Always go out to lunch with your coworkers when invited..."

Similar to Phil's blog posts on *enkai*, Sophie went into detail about *hoesik*, "For Koreans 회식 is a very important part of working life. Every so often, you should go out with your co-workers and your boss and have some food, drinks and fun to get to know each other or to celebrate important events." She wrote this after her first few experiences at her first job.

When she started her second job, the *hoesik* tradition differed greatly. She wrote an extensive blog post on the differences. The following is just one excerpt:

Here at the new school they don't make it easy to back out [of attending *hoesik*]. Everyone goes, and we even dragged a non-drinking Korean co-worker once, even though she begged not to come. We also skip the whole dinner thing and go straight to the bar. Not to say we don't eat of course. Korean [drinking establishments] usually require food is ordered with a drink. And we order copious amounts of fried chicken, sausage, *golbengi* [sic] and the like. Our director leads the drinking and the bosses walk around making sure everyone's glass is topped off. Of course, they don't pour drinks until your glass is empty, so it's not uncommon to hear

“One Shot!” and be expected to finish half a glass of beer so they can pour you the next one.

Most of the blog post described the *hoesik* experience from her second job as an unpleasant one. Although she claimed to enjoy her second job more than her first, she did not like this aspect of the social life that the job seemed to require.

The second narrative concerns the end-of-the-year transitions that Phil and Luke did not expect. Phil, Luke, and John were the only three participants to continue in their government-sponsored position for more than a year, thereby observing the differences between two academic years at the same institution. When Phil discusses his Japanese colleagues, the phenomena that he most often refers to is the year-end shuffling of teachers to and from other schools in the city, prefecture, and country. Phil explains this process in a blog post.

It's that time of year again, and I always find it a bit sad. The way schools (at least high schools) are administered in Japan, teachers are assigned to a school by the Board of Education for a usually undetermined length of time. Depending on a teacher's age, a guess can be made – for example new teachers generally stick around at their first school for 3–5 years, and teachers a few years away from retirement usually won't get moved around very much. Aside from that, though, it seems pretty arbitrary.

Luke shares a similar culture learning narrative in Korea in a blog post titled “The Great Korean Public School Teacher Shuffle.” He describes his first impressions of this phenomenon as such:

Changes are a'comin at school. We have teachers leaving and retiring, and new ones coming in. One of my coteachers will not be coming back, and another will be leaving for another school – all part of The Great Korean Public School Teacher Shuffle. I'm sad to see them go – they were great. Last night, we sent them off in style with a dinner. And by “in style” I mean “soju-soaked” – I'm still feeling the effects. So some teachers made some tearful goodbye speeches, and I sat there with a dopey smile on my face, ignorant of what was being said. I love these dinners, because after a few bouts with soju, I can smoke out the other secret English speakers among the faculty. Most are scared to speak English, you see.

This quote shows that Luke felt the same unhappy emotion for losing his local teachers to the “shuffle” as Phil did.

Although John did not provide narratives of his experiences with these annual transitions, he dedicated one blog post to reflecting on his experience working for the JET Program as both an ALT and a coordinator. His years of experience in both positions show that he learned that some co-teachers “aren’t quite sure what to do with ALTs,” and he suggests that the Japanese Ministry of Education (MEXT) “provide more training and examples of best practices in schools and teachers.” In this same paragraph, he points out that “often the youngest teachers are assigned to be ALT supervisors, whereas in many cases the head of English would be more suitable.” These statements demonstrate John’s deeper understanding, compared to the other participants in this study, of the relationship between ALTs, their co-teachers, and the host institutions.

Only John and Dionne had experiences in higher education institutions. Neither of them provided narratives, such as social obligations in the government-sponsored programs and private institutions. All of these examples provide further evidence of how social interactions benefit culture learning (Bierwiazzonek & Waldus, 2016; Ng, Wang, & Chan, 2017; Wilson, Ward, & Fischer, 2013). Unlike those studies, which investigated international students studying abroad, these findings highlight unique features to English language teachers teaching abroad. Both populations are in educational institutions but in different roles in the classroom.

## **Classroom Culture Learning**

Compared to the national and host institution cultures, participants reported less on learning about the classroom and professional-academic cultures. The classroom culture for ALTs in the JET Program (Phil and John), in EPIK (Dionne), and in GEPIK (Luke) is unique in that most ALTs work with or are subordinate to the local English language teacher in the classroom. Most ALTs are treated like visitors to the classroom who add something extra, like cultural information and pronunciation practice to the local teacher’s English language class. For example, Luke blogged about being the top resource in his office for English language usage and pragmatics: “When the teachers start correcting the short answer section, I’m called up to bat. I’m used as a resource to deem a

deviated response acceptable or not.”

For most participants, the narratives revealed that they were more concerned with learning about the classroom cultures after their first year. The most salient examples were from Sophie, John, and Dionne, who advanced their careers in English language teaching by earning a master’s degree in the field. The majority of John’s blogs are dedicated to his professional development and better understanding of the classroom and student cultures. As for Sophie, in her blog post titled “Becoming a better teacher,” she reflects on her teaching practices in the Korean English language classroom:

There’s still I have a lot to improve on, but I’d like to think I’m a fairly good teacher ... for only teaching for 1.5 years and having no formal training as a teacher. But, obviously, I still have a long way to go. I still consider a class of 10 students too difficult to manage on an average day. I have no idea how teachers with 30 or 40 students handle the class without having an momentous, uncontrollable cacophony of small children all talking at once. I can barely be heard over 10 students, never mind 30. Anyway, I’ll try some of the things mentioned in [an article about English teaching techniques] and see if they give me any better classroom results.

It is important here to remember that Sophie was the only participant in this study without the support or feedback from any co-teachers. The other participants taught in government-sponsored programs that paired them up with co-teachers.

## **Professional-Academic Culture Learning**

The professional-academic cultures are represented by professional teaching organizations at the national levels, such as the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) and the Korea Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (Korea TESOL), and at the international levels, such as the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) International Association. The professional-academic cultures are also represented by the MA-TESOL programs that John, Sophie, and Dionne attended while teaching English in their respective countries. John’s participation in various professional development organizations demonstrates his culture learning in this

component of the Host Culture Complex.

John's blog posts differ considerably from the others in that the majority of his blog posts are about professional development. Most of his professional development posts are about attending and participating in professional English teaching conferences in Japan and East Asia, reviewing English language learning books, reviewing education technology, and reflecting on teaching and learning languages. However, John has not attended conferences outside of East Asia. Since he started blogging regularly about nine years after arriving to Japan, 149 of his total 198 posts (75.3%) have been about professional development. With about three-fourths of his blog dedicated to reflecting on his professional development, one interpretation is that his identity as a professional English language teacher is important enough to share with the public. It also suggests that his professional development is important for him to continue his adjustment to the professional-academic culture in Japan and, to a lesser extent, East Asia.

Of all the participants in this study, John's blog had a different focus, sharing his participation and culture learning in the professional-academic part of the Host Culture Complex (Holliday, 1994). Dionne comes in a distant second as she had earned her master's degree in TESOL after this study's interviews concluded. In addition, she participated in professional development activities hosted by EPIK when she worked for them. Sophie also earned her master's degree in TESOL shortly before Dionne earned hers. Unlike Dionne, Sophie expressed intentions to attend professional English language teaching conferences. Dionne stated that her university provided the professional development she needed for her position in house.

The findings from both of these cultures, classroom and professional-academic, are more aligned with literature from the fields of ELT professional development and teacher education than sociocultural adaptation and culture learning. However, this section shows how the Host Culture Complex (Holliday, 1994) frames the field of TESOL or TEFL as a culture of its own, sharing features with the host culture.

## CONCLUSIONS

This project was a descriptive study exploring the variations of

culture learning of sojourning English language teachers in Japan and South Korea. This study is important because it sheds light on a sociocultural adaptation process unique to sojourning ELTs who must learn more about the host culture than their local or non-sojourning counterparts. Although the Host Culture Complex model (1994) is simplistic because it presents culture as static, it helped contextualize the culture learning patterns of sojourning ELTs. Four of the six components of the complex were used: national culture, host institution culture, classroom culture, and professional-academic culture. The majority of the data showed participants reporting more on their culture learning about the national and host institution cultures, specifically on how their interactions with host nationals helped them learn about those specific components of culture. Considering these interactions, this study supports claims (Bierwiazzonek & Waldzus, 2016; Ng, Wang, & Chan, 2017; Wilson, Ward, & Fischer, 2013) that social interactions with and social support from host nationals are beneficial for sojourners to learn about the host culture. It also supports claims that interest in a foreign language is also beneficial to culture learning (Goldstein & Keller, 2015). All of these previous studies predominantly focused on international students rather than expatriate workers as sojourners, suggesting that sojourning ELTs' culture learning is similar to international students' culture learning. One recommendation for future research is to investigate the extent to which this suggestion may be true. One recommendation for employers and communities of sojourning ELTs is to connect newcomers with host culture learning partners to make the sojourning ELT experience more rewarding.

The study was limited to only five participants with hundreds of pages of blog data and many hours of interview data. The study was also limited in its analysis using one theory out of many acculturation or cultural adjustment theories (Spitzberg & Chagnon, 2009): culture learning. Therefore, one recommendation for future research is to more deeply investigate these patterns using developmental models of intercultural competence, such as King and Baxter Magolda's Intercultural Maturity Model (2005), which breaks down culture learning into three dimensions (cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal) across three stages of the sojourn or Ward and Geeraert's process model of acculturation (2016), which takes into consideration both sociocultural and psychological aspects of adapting to the host culture as well as the sociocultural interactions from both home and host cultures. These

models add extra layers to the Host Culture Complex (Holliday, 1994), which contextualizes the culture learning of sojourning ELTs. Inspired from John's situation, in which he shifted from culture learning to more professional learning or development, another recommendation for future research is to investigate the relationship between culture learning and professional learning.

With many thousands of people teaching English abroad in these recent years, this study demonstrates a need to further explore the culture learning of a specific group of sojourners in addition to international students and international business people. I propose that the more light we can shed on this process, the more we may be able to help sojourning English language teachers and those who work with them.

## THE AUTHOR

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# Assessing Comprehension Difficulties in Reading Complex Texts: Lexicogrammar Analysis

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Current measures of text complexity tend to overestimate the difficulty of informational texts and underestimate that of narrative texts. This is because they rely on such surface-level linguistic features as word length, word frequency, and sentence length. Functionally, however, linguistic features are configured differently across genre and discipline. This paper describes a new approach to assessing text difficulty. The analysis of the lexicogrammatical features of complex texts suggests that text complexity varies across narrative and informational texts, and identifies precise sources of comprehension difficulties in reading individual complex texts, which may potentially enhance linguistically informed literacy pedagogies.

*Keywords:* assessing text difficulty, text complexity, narrative and informational texts, lexicogrammar analysis, reading instruction

## INTRODUCTION

The necessity of reading and writing instruction using complex texts has increasingly been recognized across educational contexts. As informational texts have gained momentum in K–12 literacy education, there has been a greater demand for information on how to teach with complex texts in classrooms. The first and critical step in this regard is understanding what it is about complex texts that makes them challenging for students, above and beyond unfamiliarity with the topic. Unfortunately, existing measures of text complexity, such as the Fry Readability Graph (see Fry, 2002, p. 288) and Lexiles (Smith, Stenner, Horabin, & Smith, 1989) that employ readability formulas, are of limited value to teachers in assessing levels of reading difficulty and in guiding instruction with texts (Fang, 2016). Although those measures provide

overall information about reading levels of texts, a single summative number does not tell teachers what makes complex texts difficult to read. The purpose of this paper is to describe some key linguistic sources of complex texts that have been documented to present challenges to student readers. To this end, I begin with a clarification of two potentially confusing constructs (text complexity and text difficulty), followed by a brief critique of readability formulas. Next, I describe five lexicogrammatical features that have been identified as some of the major linguistic sources of reading difficulties. Finally, I apply these linguistic sources to the assessment of text difficulty and demonstrate how a set of lexicogrammatical features reveals text difficulty more reliably than traditional readability formulas. I argue that the widely used quantitative measures of text complexity offer teachers few insights into how to teach with complex texts and that an understanding of the five lexicogrammatical features helps teachers pinpoint the exact sources of comprehension difficulties in reading complex texts.

## **TEXT COMPLEXITY ≠ TEXT DIFFICULTY**

Recent discussions of text complexity fall short of identifying which factors of complex texts result in comprehension challenges in reading. An underlying assumption in these discussions is that complex texts are always difficult to read. In fact, text complexity by itself is not a problem as text complexity is an inherent property of text (Fang, 2016). This means that a text is complex for particular reasons and purposes, and the complexity is revealed clearly when we look at the functions of grammar in texts. For example, a writer may use a grammatically intricate structure in order to present information with more detailed descriptions, making the logical-semantic links in the text explicit. For this reason, grammatically complex texts can often be clearer and easier to comprehend. By contrast, simple and short texts can be challenging to read because logical-semantic links have often been made implicit.

Text difficulty depends on the reader and the task. For example, a complex text will be less difficult for the reader whose background knowledge is considerable and when the task is to read for enjoyment. The same text will be more difficult for another reader whose background knowledge is limited and when the task requires a detailed

summary or evidence-based critique. Thus, as Cunningham and Mesmer (2014) suggest, the complexity of a text should be an independent variable that is comprised of features inherent to the text, whereas the difficulty of a text should be a variable dependent on the reader and the task associated with that text. The bottom line is that text complexity does not necessarily equate to text difficulty, and clearly, it is text difficulty, not text complexity, that teachers should be most concerned about when teaching students to read in the classroom.

Confusion between text complexity and difficulty tends to be reinforced by currently available measures of text complexity. Readability formulas, in particular, rely on such surface level language features as word length, word frequency, and sentence length. These quantitative measures often lead to an underestimation of the difficulty of dialogue-rich narrative texts. In dialogue, speakers share in the production of discourse and authors sometimes use ellipses in order not to repeat obvious information. The use of ellipses results in shorter sentences, which in turn lowers readability scores. However, ellipses present a potential comprehension challenge to students who may have difficulty following the meaning exchanges between speakers in the text.

A single, summative measure of readability formulas, described as Lexiles (Smith, Stenner, Horabin, & Smith, 1989), is also problematic because it does not inform teachers about which passages of a text are more or less challenging. Within a single chapter of *Pride and Prejudice* (Austen, 1813), random 125-word excerpts of text have Lexile scores ranging from 670 (beginning grade 3) to 1310 (college) (as cited in Hiebert, 2011). Judging by Lexile score alone, a children's book from Dav Pilkey's (1997) *Captain Underpants* (720 Lexile) series is more challenging than John Steinbeck's (1937) novella *Of Mice and Men* (630 Lexile); this is clearly not the case. In response to this paradox, Hiebert (2011) applied two intra-Lexile measures (mean of sentence length and mean of log word frequency) and two others (referential cohesion and an index of words that are predicted to be hard) to assess texts and found that one text has considerably different scores when a multiple quantitative measure – rather than a single, omnibus index – is used. Although such studies of text complexity demonstrate that readability formulas can be misleading and may be of limited utility to teachers, little research on text complexity has pinpointed the sources of comprehension difficulty inherent to complex texts.

Nevertheless, discussion of specific grammatical sources of

comprehension problems is rare in text assessment whereas lexical factors are well recognized. In fact, extensive research on text difficulty has focused on vocabulary and word frequency (e.g., Gamson, Lu, & Eckert, 2013; Hiebert, 2014; Hiebert & Cervetti, 2012). Grammar (i.e., the way words are put together to form sentences) and vocabulary, however, are not separate but should be considered in “the two ends of a single continuum” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). For example, such long phrases as “in the dark of night” are halfway between traditional syntax and lexicon, which indicates the distinction between lexis and grammar is by no means clear-cut. To make meaning, the two components of language work together as one unified resource with “lexis as the most delicate grammar” (p. 267). This concept of lexicogrammar enables us to identify the specific linguistic barriers to reader comprehension of complex texts.

## **LINGUISTIC SOURCES OF TEXT DIFFICULTY: A DESCRIPTION**

The set of lexicogrammatical features found to reveal text difficulty includes pronouns, intricate sentences, specialized vocabulary, nominalizations, and long noun phrases (Fang, 2016). Firstly, pronouns are among the most powerful ways in which textual cohesion can be maintained. They are used in place of nouns to avoid repetition and bind individual semantic units together to form a united text. Pronouns can also be used to replace whole noun phrases, multiple sentences, whole paragraphs, or larger chunks of text. In some texts, there is significant distance between a given pronoun and its referent. In these instances, if referents are not obvious to readers, they may complicate the task of identifying pronoun-to-referent relationships. Such referential ambiguity can also occur when multiple referential possibilities exist for a single pronoun. In narrative texts, for example, with multiple characters and pronouns, there is a potential for confusion, especially when the characters are of the same gender. Unlike listening to the dialogues, when readers have a sound cue to track who or what is being talked about by recognizing a speaker’s voice, story development is based solely on wording. This can be even more challenging for English language learners whose first language uses only gender-neutral pronouns

(e.g., Malay, Finish, Hungarian) or less rigid gender-specific pronouns (e.g., Korean).

Secondly, intricate sentences are sentences that contain multiple logical-semantic links across three or more clauses. Intricate sentences enable writers to show how complex phenomena work together in related sequences (Eggins, 2004; Halliday, 1989). However, when multiple events or ideas are expressed through a string of clauses, sentences become long and intricate. The complex relationships among events presented by intricate sentences may be difficult for students to sort out. As Perera (1982) asserted, what makes an intricate sentence challenging to process is not its length per se but the complex logical-semantic relationships among the clauses of the sentence.

Thirdly, specialized vocabulary plays a significant role in comprehension challenges. Drawing on the research literature (e.g., Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002, 2008), vocabulary is often broken into tiers. Tier 1 words are basic, everyday words. They are familiar to most children and thus present few comprehension challenges. Tier 2 words are high-frequency words used across a variety of content areas. These include commonplace words, such as *product* and *sides*, that take on special meanings in particular disciplines (e.g., mathematics), which might be unfamiliar to students and contribute to comprehension difficulty. Tier 3 words refer to low-frequency, specialized words appearing primarily in specific fields or content areas. Discipline-specific words in Tier 3 are what make texts technical and thus create high levels of comprehension difficulty for students.

Fourthly, nominalization is a key contributor to *abstraction* in texts. Nominalizations are nouns (e.g., *discovery*, *beauty*) derived from verbs (e.g., *discover*) or adjectives (e.g., *beautiful*). They enable writers to synthesize and distill information in a way that contributes to discursive flow. At the same time, however, they are also abstractions that present challenges for reading comprehension because they obscure the processes, qualities, or agency that are transparent in verb or adjectival forms. For example, in “He discovered the new planet. The discovery is significant,” the nominalization “the discovery” repackages the information in the first sentence in a way that is not only abstract but also obscures the person who made the discovery. Interpreting “the discovery” requires that the reader uncover missing information stated in the prior sentence.

Lastly, a long noun phrase is a linguistic device that enables writers

to pack a large number of content words (i.e., nouns, main verbs, adverbs, and adjectives) into individual phrases. In English, nouns can be expanded by adding premodifiers (e.g., adjectives, nouns, numerals) and/or postmodifiers (e.g., embedded clauses, prepositional phrases). In the sentence “The Northerners were stunned at the cruel racial intolerance that existed in the South,” the long noun phrase “the cruel racial intolerance that existed in the South” contains a head (*intolerance*), which is premodified by an article (*the*) and two adjectives (*cruel racial*) and postmodified by an embedded clause (*that existed in the South*). In fact, the use of expanded noun phrases in English academic prose has significantly increased over the past century (Biber & Gray, 2016), which makes text denser. One way to measure the density of information in a text, called *lexical density*, is by counting the number of content words per clause. Halliday and Martin (1993) illustrated that lexical density is typically 2–3 for spontaneous speech and 4–6 for general written texts, but can be 10 or higher for specialized texts in academic disciplines. When lexical density increases, the informational load goes up, and the text becomes more challenging to process. Nonetheless, lexical density presents a distinct set of comprehension problems because it requires readers to cope with heavy informational loads.

In summary, the lexicogrammatical features identified above – pronouns, intricate sentences, specialized vocabulary, nominalizations, and long noun phrases – are some of the major linguistic sources of potential comprehension difficulties for children. Indeed, Fang (2016) suggested that texts with more of these grammatical features are generally more foreign to students and consequently present greater challenges to reading comprehension, especially when a topic is unfamiliar. What teachers need is such explicit information about how to assess text difficulty in order to select appropriate levels of texts.

## APPLYING LEXICOGRAMMAR ANALYSIS IN TEXT DIFFICULTY ASSESSMENT

In this section, I examined three sample texts – two narrative and one informational – to show the power of lexicogrammar analysis to assess text difficulty. The narrative texts are *Captain Underpants* (hereafter *Captain*) and *Of Mice and Men* (hereafter *Mice*), and the

informational text is *The Moon* (Waxman, 2014; hereafter *Moon*). By Lexile score alone, all three texts are at the third- or fourth-grade reading level (720 for *Captain*, 630 for *Mice*, and 630 for *Moon*), which is obviously inaccurate.

The total number of words in the *Captain* text is 455. To control for the total number of words in each sample text, I randomly selected three excerpts containing a similar number of words from the beginning (chapter 2), middle (chapter 4), and the end (chapter 6) of the *Mice* text. The beginning of the book focuses to a large extent on describing the setting, while chapters 4 and 6 contain a substantial amount of dialogue among the characters. The total number of words in each of the three excerpts averages 454. I selected an excerpt containing a similar number of words from *Moon*. Table 1 shows descriptive data for each text analyzed.

**TABLE 1. Descriptive Data for Texts Analyzed**

	<i>Of Mice and Men</i> (Average of the 3 excerpts)	<i>Captain Underpants</i>	<i>The Moon</i>
Lexile Score	630	720	630
Total Words	454	455	458
Total Sentences	46	36	53
Total Clauses	79.6	48	60
Average Sentence Length (in words)	9.9	12.6	8.6

## WHAT THE NUMBERS REVEAL

The lexicogrammatical analysis accurately indicates the level of difficulty in each text as well as the characteristics of the narrative and informational texts. Table 2 shows the total frequency of each linguistic feature in each text. *Mice* has the highest total frequency of the five linguistic features (108.3), with *Captain* (44) and *Moon* (42) trailing far behind. This suggests that *Mice* has a far greater concentration of the five lexicogrammatical features than the other two texts, making it the most challenging of the three texts.

**TABLE 2. Total Frequency of the Lexicogrammatical Sources in Each Text**

	<i>Of Mice and Men</i> (Average of the 3 excerpts)	<i>Captain Underpants</i>	<i>The Moon</i>
Pronouns	73	31	23
Intricate Sentences	24	10	6
Tier 2 and 3 Vocabulary	4.7	0	5
Nominalizations	3.3	0	1
Long Noun Phrases (with 4 or more content words)	3.3	4	7
Total	108.3	44	42

Notably, the differences between *Mice* and *Captain* are mainly associated with pronouns and intricate sentences, each of which contribute to the cohesion and grammatical intricacy of texts. Two lexical dimensions, Tier 2 or 3 vocabulary and nominalizations, are not present in the *Captain* text. The only feature of which *Mice* has a lower frequency than the other two texts is in the long noun phrase category. The *Moon* informational text has the highest frequency of long noun phrases. Taken together, the numbers tell us the characteristics of complexity in narrative texts, that is, cohesion and grammatical intricacy comprise the elements of text difficulty in comprehension of narrative texts whereas lexical density represents the greatest impediment to comprehension of informational texts. These areas should provide solid guidance for pedagogical locus.

### **Cohesion with Pronouns**

In detail, *Mice* contains more than twice as many pronouns (73 pronouns with 14 referents on average) as *Captain* (30 pronouns with 11 referents), inclusive of personal pronouns (e.g., *it*, *he*, *we*), demonstratives (e.g., *this*, *such*, *those*), and relative pronouns (e.g., *who*, *which*, *that*). The difference in pronoun frequency between *Mice* and *Captain* becomes greater in the excerpts from the middle and end parts of the *Mice* text, which contain a total of 87 pronouns with 9 referents and 91 pronouns with 16 referents, respectively. The informational text,

*Moon*, has 23 pronouns with only 4 referents in total.

The middle and end parts of the *Mice* text, which contain greater numbers of pronouns, are particularly heavy with dialogue. Narrative texts often have long dialogue between characters in which interlocutors talk back and forth in short turns. These exchanges of meaning flow rapidly as the text unfolds, with some moving directly to completion, some continuing negotiation, and others making a sudden movement in another direction (Martin, 1992). When we listen to dialogues, we have a sound cue to track who or what is being talked about by recognizing a speaker's voice. In reading, however, because story development is based on wording, students often must pay conscious attention to pronouns and their referents to follow the story. Furthermore, all the main characters in these excerpts of *Mice* are male, and thus the repeated pronouns in the texts, *he*, *his*, *him*, have multiple referential possibilities, which can be challenging for learners.

### **Intricacy with Multiple Clauses in a Sentence**

Intricate sentences occur second-most often in both narrative texts (24 in *Mice* and 10 in *Captain*). This means there are more logical-semantic relations per sentence among clauses that students have to figure out in the *Mice* text than in the *Captain* text. It should be noted that the frequency of intricate sentences comprises the second-greatest difference between the two texts, which suggests that the number of intricate sentences in a given text significantly affects its level of comprehension difficulty. The informational text (*Moon*), by contrast, has the lowest occurrence of intricate sentences (6). A high frequency of intricate sentences indicates that the complexity of a narrative text resides mostly in its intricacy, whereas informational texts feature relatively simple sentence structures.

As presented in Table 3, the highest frequency of intricate sentences (30) is at the end of *Mice*, which is mostly dialogue. Moreover, although the average sentence length of *Mice* (10.5) is shorter than that of *Captain* (12.6), *Mice* contains almost twice as many clauses as *Captain* (79.6 vs. 48). The difference becomes even greater in the excerpts from the middle (84) and end (103) parts of the *Mice* text, both of which contain long dialogues. Narrative texts often have extensive dialogues with short back-and-forth patterns of conversational structure. Despite the often short sentences, these exchanges flow rapidly as the text unfolds,

with some moving directly to completion, some continuing negotiation, and others making sudden movements in other directions (Martin, 1992). This can certainly be challenging for students, who have to follow the dynamic movement of narrative text.

**TABLE 3. Total Frequency of the Intricate Sentences in Each Text**

	<i>Of Mice and Men</i>				<i>Captain Underpants</i>	<i>The Moon</i>
	Beginning	Middle	End	Average		
Clauses	52	84	103	79.6	48	60
Intricate Sentences	16	26	30	24	10	6

### Technicality with Specialized Vocabulary

As expected, the vocabulary level of *Mice* is much higher than that of *Captain*. While the *Mice* text has 10 Tier 2 words (*occupant, vials, dust-laden, scowl, gulped, skinner, frantically, scuttled, woodenly, monotonous*) and four Tier 3 words (*burlap ticking, talcum powder, burlap sack, swamper, graybacks*), *Captain* contains only Tier 1 words. The *Mice* text includes non-common words, including occupational jargon (i.e., *swamper, graybacks*) and antiquated words (e.g., *burlap ticking, talcum powder*). Although these words are not technical or discipline-specific academic vocabulary, in order to comprehend the unfamiliar words, students must understand the particular context of the story setting, which may be unfamiliar.

Technicality fostered by specialized vocabulary is more prevalent in the informational text. A juvenile nonfiction text, *Moon*, consists of Tier 2 (e.g., *rotate, phases, solar system*) and Tier 3 words (e.g., *orbit, axis*). The specialized vocabulary represents the key concepts of the scientific knowledge about the moon and can be poorly understood by students because their meanings are technical and discipline-specific.

### Abstraction with Nominalization

The frequency of nominalization is a primary reason for seeing beyond the level of vocabulary. While *Captain* has no instances of nominalization, the *Mice* text contains a total of 10 nominalizations (i.e., *building, the opening, belongings, playing, anger, the opening,*

*difference, the distance, shouts, emphasis*). These nominalizations are more abstract than the concrete nouns that populate *Mice* (e.g., *walls, windows, nails*) or *Captain* (e.g., *chairs, table, paper*).

The abstraction created by nominalization is better represented in the informational texts as a way of synthesizing and distilling information, which is normally expressed in a clause, into a single noun phrase. In the *Moon* text below, the word *timing* appears to be a commonplace word, but its meaning is neither common nor familiar to students. In fact, the word can be difficult for several reasons. The word *timing* synthesized the detailed information presented in the text. To understand the meaning of *the timing* here, students have to trace back to the abstract information about the moon's rotation and revolution presented in the previous nine sentences.

The Moon is always moving. It follows a path around Earth called an orbit. The Moon takes about 27 days to complete one orbit. The Moon also rotates (ROH-tayts). It spins around like a top. The Moon rotates on its axis (AK-sihs). An axis is an imaginary line that goes through the center of the Moon from top to bottom. The Moon takes about 27 days to rotate once. The Moon rotates and travels its orbit in the same amount of time. This timing makes something interesting happen. It causes the same part of the Moon to always face Earth, even as the Moon spins. So we always see the same side of the Moon.

## Density with Long Noun Phrases

For comparison among the three texts, nominal phrases that consist of four or more content words were counted. The result shows that a long noun phrase is the only feature of which *Mice* (3.3) has a lower frequency than the others, with *Moon* scoring the highest. The following sentences from the informational text *Moon* have simple structures with single clauses but use long noun phrases containing technical or abstract content words: "It follows a path around Earth called an orbit" and "An axis is an imaginary line that goes through the center of the Moon from top to bottom." When multiple expanded nominal phrases are present in a single clause, the clause can be quite dense and difficult to process. For a detailed comparison between the two narrative texts, both of which have comparable frequency of long noun phrases, lexical density scores

were calculated by counting the number of content words per clause. Table 4 below compares lexical density scores of each text.

**TABLE 4. Contrasting Lexical Density in Narrative Texts**

	<i>Of Mice and Men</i>				<i>Captain Underpants</i>
	Beginning	Middle	End	Average	
Content Words	216	186	203	201.6	223
Clauses	52	84	103	79.6	48
Total Lexical Density	4.15	2.21	1.97	2.77	4.64

In the *Mice* text, once the story shifts from the natural setting in chapter 1 to the bunkhouse in chapter 2, the text changes considerably. That is, the beginning of the book allocated a large portion of the text to the description of the setting; its excerpt has similar total lexical density (4.15) to that of *Captain* (4.64). However, chapters 4 and 6 of *Mice* are mainly dialogues between the characters, and the excerpts of each chapter have considerably lower lexical density (2.21 and 1.97). When a text is lexically sparse, it does not necessarily mean that the text is easy for children to comprehend. When reading dialogues in narrative texts, because much conversation is “fragmentary” (Halliday, 1989, p. 87), readers need to be able to uncover contextual clues to digest the whole text, which certainly causes reading difficulty.

## INSTRUCTIONAL IMPLICATIONS

It is clear from the analysis above that text can be complex and difficult in various ways. The assessment using the five linguistic features – *specialized vocabulary*, *intricate sentences*, *pronouns*, *nominalization*, and *long noun phrases* – not only accurately indicates the level of difficulty in each text but also demonstrates that linguistic features are configured differently across genres. Instead of providing a single summative number that disregards text type, the lexicogrammar analysis also showed that different aspects of complexity cause different kinds of difficulty in reading comprehension. That is, complexity in informational texts typically results from technicality, density, and abstraction, whereas complexity in narrative texts that feature large

amounts of dialogue results from their intricacy and cohesion.

The findings suggest that understanding the complexity of dialogue in narrative text, which is often understudied and mischaracterized, deserves serious attention from English teachers. Fundamentally, spoken language contrasts with written language. According to Kress (2003), speech is a linear and sequential order of simple clauses in a chain-like structure, whereas written language is a gradual fusion of several clauses into one syntactic unit. He further explained that spoken language expresses meaning relations lexically, whereas written language does it syntactically. When estimating a text's difficulty, therefore, teachers should take into account the configurations of linguistic features distinct in spoken and written language. The distinction between spoken and written language is succinctly expressed through Halliday's (1989) analogy:

... the complexity in written language as being its density of substance, solid like that of a diamond formed under pressure. By contrast, the complexity of spoken language resides in its intricacy of movement, which is liquid like that of a rapidly running river. (p. 87)

The analysis further demonstrates the significance of grammatical dimensions in assessing text difficulty, an element which is missing in readability formulas. Some texts are grammatically simple, but many are not. English storybooks, for example, often contain extensive colloquial expressions used in everyday social life. The features of this form of language tend to be grammatically different from those that characterize English in school books. For EFL students, especially, who have little opportunity to use English outside of classrooms, colloquial English expressions can be less familiar and often challenging to comprehend. When assessing text difficulty, teachers should be aware of how the grammatical configurations of language units are not always simple but often complex and dynamic; thus, grammar is not a matter of correctness or incorrectness, but rather a matter of recognizing different patterns in the lexicons, syntax, and discourse of the particular genre.

Corpus linguistics pioneer John Sinclair often quoted the aphorism attributed to grammarian E. O. Winter: "Grammar is needed because you cannot say everything at the same time" (Teubert, 2004, p. 73). It is the functions of grammar that allow us to make a number of different meanings by arranging words in a number of different ways. In that

sense, grammar is “the power house of language” that provides the source of energy for meaning-making (Halliday, 1998, p. 2). By creating a variety of linguistic resources, grammar makes meaningful choices available so that we can choose various ways to express different meanings depending on situations, experiences, social roles and relationships, and/or organizations of texts in a particular context.

To strengthen student reading ability, teachers are responsible for selecting texts at an appropriate level and of a type appropriate for their students. Teachers who truly understand how grammar works for meaning-making do not need to rely on the numbers provided from readability formulas. Instead, they can make their own decision in text selection with regards to a range of other elements of their classroom including their students (background knowledge, academic performance, motivation, interests, levels of English), the tasks (summary, critique, enjoyment), and the other components of texts (topic, visual elements such as photos or graphs). According to Fillmore and Snow (2003), a teacher with comprehensive linguistic knowledge can be an *educator* who can assess and select the right kinds of texts or examples, an *evaluator* who can make rational judgements and responses to individual differences in learning, and a *communicator* who can articulate with maximum clarity what students are wondering and confused about. In fact, a number of studies (e.g., Baumert et al., 2010; Binks-Cantrell, Joshi, & Washburn, 2012; Cunningham, Perry, Stanovich, & Stanovich, 2004; Diamond, Maerten-Rivera, Rohrer, & Lee, 2014; Joshi et al., 2009; McCutchen et al., 2002; Phelps & Schilling, 2004; Podhajski, Mather, Nathan, & Sammons, 2009; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 2005) have shown a positive correlation between teacher knowledge and performance on the one hand and student achievement on the other. In short, good language teaching requires explicit knowledge of how to assess the various aspects of complexity and determine sources of difficulty in a variety of different types of text.

This paper describes the linguistic sources of reading difficulty in complex texts in an effort to provide teachers with accurate information about individual texts for the purpose of designing instruction or intervention. Although this study is limited to small sample texts and is exploratory in nature, its findings nonetheless provide ways to support new English teachers. Myhill (2005) argued that young teachers who have relatively little teaching experience may have limited tacit procedural knowledge, which refers to the implicit embodied knowledge

of *how* to teach. Instead, what they have learned from their teacher education and professional development may have generated explicit knowledge for which there is no corresponding tacit knowledge. This recently acquired explicit knowledge may become tacit and embodied in them over time. In the language classroom, teachers' linguistic knowledge is influential in shaping their professional capacity to plan for and respond to learners' language needs (Myhill, Jones, & Watson, 2013). Linguistically informed teachers can pinpoint sources of potential reading challenges and better scaffold student reading. Unless teachers know, students will not learn.

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# Factors Influencing Native English-Speaking Teachers' Professional Practices in South Korean Primary Schools

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In recent years, English language teaching (ELT) in South Korea has experienced significant transformation from a grammar-based to a communicative language curriculum. Commencing in 1995, the Korean government began employing native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) to support Korean English teachers' (non-NESTs) implementation of communicative language teaching (CLT) in Korean public schools. However, the Korean government has recently reduced funding for employment of NESTs in response to their alleged ineffective professional practices. This study takes a qualitative approach to understand factors that influence NESTs' professional practices in Korean primary schools. Semi-structured interviews in English and Korean, respectively, were employed to investigate NESTs' and non-NESTs' views on the topic. Findings of this study indicate that there are a range of factors that negatively influence NESTs' professional practices. This study also investigates the professional development and training needs from the perspective of NESTs and local English teachers regarding young English language learners in South Korean public primary schools.

*Keywords:* Native speakerism, native English-speaking teacher (NEST), communicative language teaching (CLT), English language teaching (ELT)

## INTRODUCTION

The ever-growing need for English language learners (ELLs) to develop communicative competency, coupled with a growing dissatisfaction with “traditional” pedagogical approaches, which often favor formal academic skills (such as reading comprehension and

composition) at the expense of aural-oral skills, has highlighted the need for English education practices to be reformed (see for example, Ahmad & Rao, 2013; Butler, 2011; Choi, 2001; Graddol, 2006; Kirkpatrick & Bui, 2016; Nunan, 2003; Yu, 2001). Communicative competence is now widely perceived as a prerequisite for both individuals and nations to gain a competitive advantage in a cut-throat world where English is the primary means of communication across the globe. Indeed, many countries and regions in Asia have changed English policies and practices shifting from grammar-based to communicative-based curriculums, introducing English as a compulsory subject to primary school students and employing native English-speaking teachers (henceforth, NESTs) at local schools.

Crucially, the increasing need for ELLs to develop communicative competency, coupled with a growing dissatisfaction with traditional pedagogical approaches that emphasize academic skills (such as reading comprehension, vocabulary, and composition) at the expense of aural-oral skills has highlighted the need for professional practices to be reformed.

In scholarly literature, NESTs' professional practices (including their teaching styles, methods and approaches, as well as classroom management strategies) are usually scrutinized in conjunction with their formal qualifications and experience in education (Ahn, Park, & Ono, 1998; Barratt & Kontra, 2000; Choi, 2001; Wang & Lin, 2013). In particular, the predominantly communicative language teaching (CLT) methods that NESTs have employed have faced challenges in terms of implementation. These challenges include a range of contextual factors spanning large class sizes, mixed-level classes, NESTs' limited class time, row-seating arrangements and other classroom logistics, a grammar-based examination format, and limited and "inappropriate" teaching materials and resources (Anderson, 1993; Butler, 2004; Choi, 2001; Nunan, 2003). Teachers' professional practices are inevitably influenced by external<sup>1</sup> (e.g., contextual factors) and internal<sup>2</sup> (e.g., qualification, experience) factors.

This study will explore how these contextual factors, as well as teaching qualifications, can influence NESTs' professional practices in primary schools in South Korea. The following literature will present issues in relation to communicative-focused curriculum and pedagogy in terms of external (in other words, contextual factors) and internal factors (NESTs' qualifications and teaching experiences).

## **Communicative-Focused Curriculum and Pedagogy**

Since the late 1990s, many countries in Asia have shifted from a grammar-based curriculum to a communicative-based curriculum (Chang, 2009; Graddol, 2006; Kirkgöz, 2007; Nunan, 2003; Wongsothorn, Hiranburana, & Chinnawongs, 2002). The CLT approach is not a neatly packaged teaching method; rather, its primary concern is to develop communicative competence as opposed to linguistic competence. CLT approaches were first introduced in Asia in the 1960s and 1970s (Chang, 2009; Wongsothorn, Hiranburana, & Chinnawongs, 2002; Yu, 2001), although it took time to gain widespread attention from governments in Asia (Butler, 2011). CLT approaches gained increasing attention since the 1990s through the reform of English curriculum and pedagogy as the shift from traditional approaches to CLT approaches occurred. While CLT approaches are not immune from criticism due to its lack of grammatical focus (Chowdhury, 2003; Wongsothorn, Hiranburana, & Chinnawongs, 2002), it has achieved a popular status in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts (Anderson, 1993; Chang, 2009; Nunan, 2003), such as in South Korea.

## **Challenges in Implementing CLT Approaches**

Despite the popularity of CLT, there are ongoing debates regarding the applicability and effectiveness of CLT theories and practices in EFL contexts (Ahmad & Rao 2013; Anderson, 1993; Butler, 2011, Chowdhury, 2003; Chowdhury & Ha, 2008). Butler (2011) and Anderson (1993) report that non-NESTs have often expressed their reluctance in using CLT approaches. Many challenges have occurred due to a gap between expected teaching objectives and actual professional practices. For example, a sizable number of studies have also identified contextual challenges when implementing CLT approaches in Asia as mentioned in the Introduction above. The following are two contextual challenges that are identified in this study to explore the role of contextual factors on NESTs' professional practices.

## **Class Sizes and Mixed-Level Classes**

Although a class with less than 20 students is thought to be a

desirable number of students to promote student engagement, interaction, and educational outcomes (Blatchford, Bassett, & Brown, 2011), often large class sizes with 30–60 students are a common challenge in Asian schools. Studies have established that learning outcomes of students can improve in small classes as teachers can provide more individual attention and scaffolding, and facilitate on-task behavior (Blatchford et al., 2011). In particular, primary school ELLs require more linguistic support to build foundational English knowledge in smaller classes. Also, mixed-level classes make it more challenging for teachers to pay attention to and address students' individual needs. As a result, this can seriously impact on students' motivation, which in turn can lead to off-task behavior and compromised or even negative learning outcomes.

### **Seating Arrangements**

Classroom seating arrangements can offer distinct advantages and disadvantages in terms of facilitating pedagogical strategies and classroom management, depending on the nature of classroom tasks and expected classroom behavior of students (Correa, Lara, Pino, & Vera, 2017; Wannarka & Ruhl, 2008). CLT methods generally encourage group/cluster seating for collaborative tasks and verbal interaction (Wannarka & Ruhl, 2008). However, row seating is reported to be a dominant feature in Asian classrooms – a feature that challenges classroom interactions and compromises the core objectives of CLT (Choi, 2001; Correa, Lara, Pino, & Vera, 2017; Jeon, 2009; Rahman & Karim, 2015).

These two examples (class sizes and mixed-level classes, and seating arrangements) have been discussed to present possible challenges for not only implementing CLT but also to understand contextual factors that influence NESTs' professional practices.

### **Employing NESTs in Public Schools in Asia: Benefits and Perceptions**

In recent decades, many countries in Asia have found that the employment of NESTs is one of the most effective ways to improve students' communicative skills in English. The driving force for introducing NESTs is often perceived as non-NESTs' "limitations" in

implementing CLT approaches and dissatisfaction with and decline of students' English performance, despite the considerable effort and financial resources that have been invested in some countries in Asia, including South Korea. Choi (2001) provides suggestions for the restructuring of English programs in South Korea (including a range of suggestions from the perspective of NESTs), while Nunan's (2003) study investigates a range of issues that have impacted on the implementation of a communicative curriculum in China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Vietnam.

Non-NESTs' so-called "limited English proficiency" and methodological skills in CLT often make it difficult for them to modify and/or adapt their pedagogical strategies to enact the communicative-focused curriculum, while they are often reported to continue to teach in their first language with a strong focus on grammar (Árva & Medgyes, 2000; Butler, 2004; Hussain, 2016; Kırkgöz, 2007; Kusumoto, 2008; Li, 1998; Luo, 2007; Nunan, 2003; Ohtani, 2010).

There are at least four government-affiliated programs that employ NESTs at local schools in Asia: the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program in Japan, the English Program in Korea (EPIK), the Native-Speaking English Teacher (NET) Scheme in Hong Kong, and the Foreign English Teachers Recruitment Project (FETRP) in Taiwan. Employing NESTs as English instructors is a widespread practice throughout a range of EFL contexts. The main role of NESTs is to provide "authentic" linguistic and cultural output and input, team-teach with non-NESTs, and share teaching strategies. Liu (2008) observes that NESTs have contributed significantly to students' communicative competence, pronunciation, and cross-cultural awareness, while Carless and Walker (2006) state that NESTs increase students' interest and motivation in class and provide more opportunities for ELLs to be exposed to more authentic English compared to the somewhat stilted textbooks. In addition, Ramirez (2013) notes that NESTs help to promote a learner-centered environment and immersion in communicative contexts. Previous studies outline the advantages of NESTs, including reduced fear of speaking English, improved communicative skills, motivation and interest in speaking English, linguistic authenticity (e.g., pronunciation, wide-range of vocabulary knowledge), improved cross-cultural awareness (Ahn, Park, & Ono, 1998; Luo, 2007; Barratt & Kontra, 2000; Liu, 2008).

## NESTs' Qualifications and Experience in Education

Despite the benefits all these programs have reaped from employing foreign English-speaking teachers, concerns have been reported regarding the recruitment practices of governments in Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Korea as well as the quality of education that they have offered. For example, Wang and Lin (2013) argued that the practice of employing unqualified NESTs has a serious impact on the professionalism of the English language teaching profession and subsequently diminishes the quality of instruction. It has also been reported that NESTs' classroom practices, especially in relation to team teaching, choosing teaching strategies, lesson planning, classroom management, and limited curriculum understanding, have often been ineffective, and these have been linked to their limited or non-qualifications and lack of experience in education (Ahn, Park, & Ono, 1998; Ohtani, 2010; Wang & Lin, 2013).

However, this practice of often employing unqualified and inexperienced NESTs continues due to significant financial challenges to employ properly qualified NESTs (Guo & Beckett, 2012; Jeon & Lee, 2006; Liu, 2008), while Jeon and Lee (2006) note the imbalance between the supply and demand of NESTs due to increasing demand in both public and private sectors. Foley (2007) acknowledges the benefit of non-NESTs due to their bilingual perspectives, but also argues that native speakers can provide an appropriate linguistic model. Consequently, recommendations have been made to enhance the eligibility criteria in the recruitment of NESTs and to provide enhanced NEST training programs, while warnings and doubts have been expressed regarding the employment of unqualified NESTs, which can lead to unexpected and poor learning outcomes (Ahn, Park, & Ono, 1998; Barratt & Kontra, 2000; Choi 2001; Chu & Morrison, 2011; Luo, 2007; Ohtani, 2010; Wang & Lin, 2013). In summary, and quite paradoxically, when it comes to NESTs, CLT methods have faced *additional* challenges because of a range of contextual factors, and this has raised concerns about the rationale for the employment of NESTs in the Asian EFL industry.

## Background and Significance of Study

This study investigates the impact of contextual factors on the nature and quality of NESTs' professional practices in an EFL context. This study attempted to identify possible explanations for NESTs' so-called ineffective professional practices in the current context of budget cuts impacting on the employment of NESTs in South Korea.

This study critically explores the views of both NESTs and non-NESTs about the role of contextual factors in the implementation of CLT methods in South Korea, and NESTs' limited or inadequate qualifications and experience in education in regards to NESTs' professional practices at public primary schools in South Korea. This study aims to explore the following issues:

- The respective views of NESTs and non-NESTs regarding NESTs' formal qualifications and experience in education and how these can influence NESTs' professional practices.
- The respective views of NESTs and non-NESTs regarding contextual factors in the implementation of CLT methods and how these can influence NESTs' professional practices.

## METHODOLOGY AND STUDY DESIGN

An education officer at a Provincial Education Department (PED) in Korea was contacted to recruit participants. The education officer identified five participants who had extensive teaching experience in primary schools in Korea; two NESTs (participant 1 – P1 and participant 2 – P2) and three non-NESTs (participant 3 – P3, participant 4 – P4, and participant 5 – P5). The two cohorts of teachers provided complementary information and are expected to minimize the potential bias coming from a single cohort of teachers. Of the three non-NESTs, two held a teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) certification, while all three of them were qualified primary school English teachers. In the following section, pseudonyms (P1–P5) are assigned to protect participants' anonymity and confidentiality.

Data was collected from NESTs and non-NESTs through in-depth semi-structured interviews using Internet-based VOIP on a one-to-one

basis. For ethical reasons, an education officer was requested to recruit participants, NESTs and non-NESTs, who did not team-teach at the same school and did not know each other.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings of this study are presented in relation to the influence of NESTs' qualifications and experience on their professional practices as well as the influence of contextual factors on their professional practices.

### **Influence of NESTs' Qualifications and Experience on Their Professional Practices**

This study aimed to understand how NESTs' formal qualifications and teaching experience in education influence their professional practices (such as teaching strategies and classroom management) in primary schools in Korea. To achieve this aim, participants were asked to describe whether or how their formal qualifications and experience in education made a difference in teaching. Responses from both NEST and non-NEST participants indicated that NESTs' professional practices are influenced by a range of internal factors including NESTs' formal qualifications and experience in education, personality, motivation, an innate ability to teach children, background teaching experience in Korean contexts, their role in the classroom, and the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the NESTs. Below is a sample of their responses.

It is not simply a matter of qualifications. There are many other factors, qualifications, one's experience, like teaching experience, one's personality ... their mind-set when they came to Korea, if they come here just to make money for a couple of years, if their motivation is just an overseas trip, or to really teach children and feel that it is rewarding. (P3)

I think it [teaching students effectively] takes a level of natural ability with children ... and that's not something you can teach formally [in a teacher training program]. (P1)

P5, who is a specialist English teacher with 12 years' professional experience in South Korean primary schools, explained that teachers' quick, intuitive judgements and reactions are most important as educational theories do not always account for student behavior. Teaching qualifications help prepare teachers for "real" classes by bridging the gap between theory and practice and anticipating and solving possible challenges and problems they face daily. However, teacher-training can have limitations due to a gap between theory and practice, and imitations in formally teaching the personal attributes that can contribute to effective teaching practices. According to the OECD (2009), teacher qualifications cannot guarantee to prepare teachers for all the challenges they may encounter throughout their teaching careers. P2<sup>3</sup> and P1<sup>4</sup> stated that "learning is very different than putting something in practice" and that "natural ability is not something that a teacher training program can teach."

Concerns have been raised that the employment of unqualified NESTs can result in unexpected and poor learning outcomes due to these teachers' lack of experience (Ahn, Park, & Ono, 1998; Barratt & Kontra, 2000; Choi, 2001; Luo, 2007; Wang & Lin, 2013). However, it is beyond the scope of this study to prove any type of causal or co-relation between teacher's formal qualifications and effective teaching for positive learning outcomes because "it is difficult to sort out teacher effects from classroom effects (i.e., the contribution of peers, textbooks, materials, curriculum, classroom environment, and other factors)" (Goe, 2007).

Despite non-NEST participants' acknowledgement that other factors may help explain NESTs' effectiveness and/or ineffectiveness, they seemed to place more emphasis overall on the NESTs' formal teaching qualifications than the NEST participants themselves did. For example, P5 explained, "the prerequisite to be a teacher is knowledge of education theories and NESTs with no teaching qualifications reduce the quality of education." P3<sup>5</sup> similarly stated, "NESTs with qualifications have a better understanding of what they teach, what the learning goal is, and how to teach based on students' level without being told."

In relation to teaching experience, the findings of this study contradictorily indicate that according to non-NEST participants, NESTs' formal qualifications and experience in their own countries might meet limitations in a Korean classroom context. More specifically, P4's (non-NEST) comments indicate that there might be some degree of

difference between NESTs and non-NESTs in relation to their views on teaching strategies and classroom management:

Some NESTs are really good at teaching although they have no teaching qualifications, also, other NESTs with teaching qualifications make me think why they teach in such a way. (P4<sup>b</sup>)

Nowadays when teachers discipline students in Korea, sensitive responses (from parents and society) is expected. Because parents did not complain in the past about teachers' discipline and punishment ... even though NESTs are qualified teachers, the qualification is issued from their country ... so it is possible that their qualification is absolutely irrelevant to the Korean education system ... so, it is not possible for NESTs, although they are qualified teachers, to discipline and punish students as Korean teachers do. (P4)

Different views on teaching and learning can be associated with individual ideologies in education and/or indeed different ideologies in education between two different cultures. Individual teachers can have their own ideology about teaching and learning based on their own training, past experiences, theoretical perspectives, personality, and linguistic background of NESTs and non-NESTs (Árva & Medgyes, 2000; Jeon, 2009; Qi, 2016; Yu, 2001). Based on this, it is inevitable for NESTs and non-NESTs to hold different views regarding teaching and learning.

Previous studies have problematized different views on teaching and learning between Western culture and Asian culture in relation to the roles of teachers and students in a class, teaching and learning strategies and methods, as well as what is perceived as acceptable and unacceptable classroom behavior (Anderson, 1993; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Flowerdew & Miller, 1995; Harumi, 1999; Harumi, 2010; Kirkgöz, 2007; Luo, 2007; Yu, 2001). Every teaching context is different and unique since each context reflects its own curriculum and school culture. Curriculum in a given country reflects the dominant ideology and the present needs of the country in terms of teaching objectives, teaching plans, teaching strategies, classroom management, and discipline. Thus, it is quite possible that NESTs' teaching experience and understanding of education in the host country might be more relevant than their

previous experience in their home countries.

Another factor that appeared to influence NESTs' professional practices was their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In the context of South Korea, obviously NESTs do not share either the same L1 or culture with their students. Accordingly, their classroom management skills can often be less effective than those of their non-NEST counterparts:

Due to the communication barrier, there are safety issues.... Or there is a limitation to understand, kind of, the subtle feeling of students ... because it (Korean) is not their (NESTs) mother tongue. (P5)

When students cause problems or behave very rudely or misbehave, NESTs cannot correct students' subtle verbal abuse due to subtle nuances and behavior. (P4)

Managing students' classroom behavior while communicating in a foreign language – that students have a low level of proficiency in – can present many challenges for both students and teachers. As a result, even in English classes, non-NESTs use their L1 (Korean) to manage and discipline students. There are studies that investigate how non-NESTs deploy code-switching from English to their L1 to manage students during English classes (Jingxia, 2010). This presents significant challenges for NESTs in terms of managing the classroom behavior of their students.

Furthermore, the different cultural backgrounds of NESTs and their students is another obstacle for NESTs to manage and discipline student behavior. This is reflected by P4's comment above regarding "sensitive" responses from parents and society in relation to a teacher's discipline and punishment in Korea. Her belief, that NESTs' formal qualifications and teaching experience in their own country is irrelevant to the Korean context, reflects a significant challenge in resolving this issue.

Classroom discipline is a sensitive and delicate issue because it is difficult to separate culture from discipline, and vice versa. People from different cultures can have different perceptions about acceptable and unacceptable classroom behavior (Anderson, 1993; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Flowerdew & Miller, 1995; Harumi, 1999; Harumi, 2010; Kirkgöz, 2007; Yu, 2001). Disciplining strategies and processes can also differ greatly depending on cultures (e.g., the social and cultural acceptance of

corporal punishment in some education systems), and a school and/or an individual teacher (e.g., school-level and classroom-level policies and rules). In Korea, corporal punishment has been banned since 2010. However, P1 commented that she has recently worked at schools where corporal punishment continues, something she clearly expressed her disagreement with.

Responses from participants also revealed that while NESTs have their own disciplining system in place, their system can be very limited. P2 used negative punishment to encourage desired behavior. He said that he “let students know they cannot do activities or games he has prepared if there is a behavioral problem.” P1’s discipline strategy, on the other hand, was based on positive reinforcement. She uses “candy or stickers” when students do a good job or speak English to her. Both sets of participants (NESTs and non-NESTs) reported that they were able to reach a consensus in which “non-NESTs are responsible for discipline because they are the main teacher.” P2 also noted that non-NESTs have “the authority to deal with students’ behavioral problems” much more than NESTs, again due to cultural reasons.

Responses from participants indicate that other factors can also influence NESTs’ professional practices. Other factors that emerged during the interviews were the role of a mentor teacher and NESTs’ perceived role as “a fun teacher,” and the nature of CLT-focused English classes. P5 (non-NEST) emphasized the role of a mentor teacher in relation to improving NESTs’ professional practices, and explained,

If a mentor teacher discusses a class with NESTs, their teaching improves a lot, but, if a mentor teacher neglects them, their teaching can hardly improve further, so a mentor teacher’s role is crucial.

Managing student’s behavior can be challenging for NESTs. P1 commented that “students’ attitudes towards NESTs and non-NESTs is very different because non-NESTs can be angry at students and punish students while NESTs cannot.” As mentioned above, all the participants in this study agreed that only non-NESTs had the unwritten and assumed authority of and responsibility for maintaining classroom discipline. In addition, both NEST and non-NEST participants indicated that NESTs prepare and do “games and physical activities in a class.” For example, P1 explained,

Lots of kids like think ... I am really fun ... so sometimes it's a little hard to convince them to respect me ... their time with Korean English teachers is study time and usually time with native English teacher is a little more fun time ... the native teacher will have to come up with an activity or game ... a lot of times foreign teachers just say we are game monkeys, we just play games and have fun and dance around.

P1 indicated her perceived role as “a fun teacher” influenced the effectiveness of her classroom management. Students’ disrespectful and irresponsible behavior towards NESTs has been identified as an issue in previous studies. For example, Ahn, Park, and Ono (1998) found that students often did not take NESTs “seriously” as they chatted with classmates, refused to study, moved around, and so on, and their attitudes challenged NESTs to manage and discipline disruptive behavior on their own. Choi’s (2001) study similarly found that students were not responsive and were disrespectful towards NESTs’ classes due to a lack of relevance to English assessment results at schools.

Furthermore, it appeared that the communicative nature of CLT-focused classes itself can also influence NESTs’ professional practices:

Children get excited once NESTs play games ... once children are excited, they do not follow the rules of the game ... children by nature want to play the game as soon as possible. So, this part is challenging when NESTs teach the class. (P5)

If you have groups of four or five it's a lot easier to get off the topic than one on one. (P1)

The nature of collaborative work can turn the class into a “disorderly” one as these responses clearly indicate. Generally, communicative-focused classes can be “noisier” than other classes. According to de Almeida Soares (2007), the noise produced by students in collaborative work is perceived as a desirable, motivated, and attentive behavior where learning takes place. However, the noise from students can be either in English or their mother tongue. In such situations, NESTs can experience some degree of difficulty in determining whether the noise is an “off the topic” chatting or a discussion about a given

task, especially when it is done in Korean. Even when NESTs are able to make “sound judgements,” they can face challenges in responding to students’ challenging behavior due to their linguistic and cultural backgrounds and their roles in a class as a “fun teacher.” Based on these findings, NESTs’ qualifications and experience in education were seen to be partially responsible for NESTs’ professional practices. Other factors such as personality, motivation, an innate ability to teach children, background teaching experience in Korean contexts, NESTs role as a fun teacher, the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of NESTs, and the role of mentor teachers are also seen to influence the professional practices of NESTs. These final points were unexpected findings of the study and are discussed further in the study and again briefly at the end of this article.

### **Influence of Contextual Factors on NESTs’ Professional Practices**

This section explores how contextual factors influenced NESTs’ professional practices in public primary schools in Korea. Generally, contextual factors identified in previous studies (references provided below) are discussed in conjunction with CLT methodologies in Asian classroom contexts, including Korea. At the same time, the professional practices of NESTs are discussed in conjunction with their formal qualifications and experience in education (Barratt & Kontra, 2000; Wang & Lin, 2013). This paper investigates two chosen factors (seating arrangements, and large and mixed-level classes) to understand if, or to what extent, contextual factors influence NESTs’ professional practices at primary schools. As will be illustrated, the findings of this study indicate that these two contextual factors *negatively* influenced NESTs’ professional practices.

#### **Seating Arrangements and Maneuverability**

Integrating CLT as a pedagogical-methodological strategy involves utilizing strategies which incorporate learner-centered tasks, task-based learning, verbal interaction, and collaboration. Accordingly, group/cluster seating arrangements are more preferable. P5 recognized that “English is a subject we teach and learn through conversation,” while P2 noted that row seating arrangements are “teacher-centered.” The predominance of row seating arrangements has been reported as a concern when implementing CLT methods in Asia (Correa, Lara, Pino, & Vera, 2017;

Jeon, 2009; Rahman & Karim, 2015). According to the findings of this study, group/cluster seating helps NESTs' classroom management in terms of the flow of activities and time management in the preparation and arrangement of group tasks.

Both the NESTs and the non-NESTs stated their preference for group/cluster seating arrangements due to advantages in terms of the flow of activities and time management:

It is really convenient to make a conversation once students see their classmates face to face (in cluster seating) ... when teachers explain and carry, there is no need to explain (to arrange the groups), save time ... learner-centered classes is to run the class pivoting around students' activities. (P4)

Children participate in games as a group and demand a lot of communication, so, if students are sitting in a row, we have to keep changing desks and chairs. The time (to rearrange desks and chairs) is unnecessary and wastes time. (P5)

P1 also mentioned that group seating with tables makes it easier for the teacher to move around in the classroom. She notes that "it feels a little more maneuverable around the classroom."

Despite the benefit of cluster/group seating arrangements, it was found that the nature of CLT methods also often tend to increase disruptive, off-task, and disorderly behavior.

If you have groups of four or five it's a lot easier to get off the topic than one on one. (P1)

Children get excited once NESTs play games ... once children are excited, they do not follow rules of the game, children by nature want to play the game as soon as possible. So, this part is challenging when NESTs teach the class. (P5)

The nature of collaborative work can quite easily turn the class into a "disorderly" class as the responses above indicate. Generally, communicative-focused classes can be "noisier" than other classes, although, as noted above, noise can indeed be a desirable by-product in communicative classes. The noise produced by students in collaborative work is therefore perceived as a sign of motivated and attentive behavior

where learning takes place (de Almeida Soares, 2007). However, in the current scenario, the noise from students can also be either in English or their mother tongue. NESTs can therefore experience some degree of difficulty in determining whether the noise is off the topic chatting or a discussion about a task. Even when NESTs are able to make sound judgements, they can face challenges in responding to students' challenging behavior immediately, appropriately, and effectively due to their linguistic and cultural backgrounds and their perceived roles in a class as a "fun teacher."

### **Large Class Sizes and Mixed-Level Classes**

One of the unavoidable challenges of large classes is that, generally speaking, students have a wide range of language proficiency levels – every class is heterogeneous to a certain degree. Large class sizes and mixed-level classes increase demands on teachers due to the sizeable gap in the four macro-skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening), personalities, and learning styles of ELLs.

As indicated earlier, and according to Bahanshal (2013), there is no consensus on what constitutes a "large" class and a "small" class. Blatchford et al. (2011) state that less than 20 students can be regarded (in general classes) as the "optimal" class size to impact on students' engagement, classroom interaction, and educational outcomes. Large class sizes, especially with mixed-level classes, are generally seen as challenging in terms of instruction and management (Blatchford et al., 2011; Smith & Warburton, 1997), although it is not always unmanageable and also offers certain benefits – for example students' interaction with a variety of other students, especially the More Knowledgeable Other (Vygotsky, 1978). Bahanshal (2013) acknowledges that large class sizes and mixed-level classes can be an impediment for efficient English teaching and learning from the teacher's perspective and that teachers are more likely to "lose control" over the class. Almost all countries in Asia, including South Korea, have large classes, which hinder the integration of CLT methods (Choi, 2001; Hamid, 2010; Kirkgöz, 2007; Quintero Corzo & Ramírez Contreras, 2011; OECD, 2012; Yu, 2001).

The findings of this study indicate that large and mixed-level classes challenge NESTs in terms of classroom management, especially as NESTs' classes are expected to have a communicative focus. According to the participants in this study, class sizes are typically around 30

students with a wide range of English proficiency levels among students. The participants appeared to be well aware of the disadvantages of large and mixed-level classes in terms of individual learning support, student engagement and motivation, and lesson planning and teaching. The NEST participants in this study experienced challenges due to large class sizes and mixed-level classes. For example, as P2 explained,

With 20 or close to 30 students in a classroom ... I'll stay with that student [with a low-level of English] for a few minutes to try to get them started [to work on worksheets]. But I have to check with other students, too.... If they do not want to do it, I give them a chance, they keep their head on the desk, or they don't look at me, or other things; I cannot spend too much time on them. I have to go to other students, too. (P2)

I have students who speak almost fluently because they had opportunities to live abroad. But in the same class, I have students who don't know the ABCs ... [they] are just so far behind they feel like they'll never catch up so they don't pay attention on class. (P1)

Responses from participants in this study clearly reflect Smith and Warburton's (1997) concerns that class size has an impact on teacher's teaching styles and methods. This study does not explore NESTs' specific teaching styles and methods in depth. However, it appeared that NESTs faced challenges in preparing lesson plans and teaching effectively due to their students' wide range of English proficiency levels:

So it can be really daunting to find a middle ground where everyone can contribute and everyone can participate without either extreme getting bored. (P1)

NESTs' professional practices cannot be seen as effective if they cannot help students to improve communicative skills. Smith and Warburton (1997) explain that large class sizes and mixed-level classes make it more challenging for teachers to support student academic and emotional needs. Effective teaching involves supporting students' diverse needs while also creating a caring and supportive environment to achieve teaching goals. It would be difficult for NESTs to teach effectively when class sizes are large and, at the same time, when there are significant

gaps in students' proficiency levels, as this presents a serious challenge when preparing and running lessons.

The level of participation and engagement in foreign language classroom settings is related to students' English proficiency levels and teaching at an appropriately challenging level for all students. Boredom, low motivation levels, and disengagement can impact on students' behavior. Accordingly, large class sizes and mixed-level classes tend to reduce teaching time and demand more classroom management (Blatchford et al., 2011; Smith & Warburton, 1997) as there will be distractions that demand a response and intervention from the teacher. Thus, large class sizes and mixed-level classes can be practically challenging in terms of NESTs' classroom management.

Therefore, at least generally, small classes are regarded as preferable for integrating CLT methodologies (Ahn, Park, & Ono, 1998; Choi, 2001; OECD, 2012; Yu, 2001). However, the NEST and the non-NEST participants in this study did not prefer a class size that was *too* small. Indeed, two NEST participants described challenges in very small classes in terms of communicative-focused teaching and classroom management:

A few classes with just eight students in them or fewer... But it's harder to do some of the group work, games, and things. (P1)

I've done a class with three students before. And sometimes those were a lot harder if one student, you know, doesn't want to do anything or gets angry; it pretty much affects the whole class. (P2)

Based on these responses above, it is evident that both large class sizes and mixed-level classes or classes that are too small can have certain challenges in terms of teaching and classroom management in different ways.

Interestingly, responses from participants indicate that there was little difference between the NEST and the non-NEST participants in terms of their preferred class sizes. P1 stated "it is doable between 10 and 15, and more than 15 challenges to get more individual interaction." P2 echoed similar views saying that "between 10 and 20 – anywhere in between them" is ideal for him. However, it should be noted that the preferred class-sizes of non-NEST participants' were slightly larger than their NEST counterparts. P3's (non-NEST) preferred class size was "16 students, maximum up to 28 students" while P4's (non-NEST) was "a

minimum of 16, up to between 24 and 26.” This difference might reflect the specific functions of non-NESTs and NESTs in South Korean public schools. In other words, it is generally both expected and accepted that non-NESTs are ultimately responsible for students’ academic success and overall classroom management, whereas non-NESTs are responsible for implementing a CLT-based curriculum to engage learners with games and teaching, and learning strategies that promote relationship-building and students’ confidence when interacting with native English speakers. This most likely reflects comments by all participants regarding the expectation that NESTs are not responsible for classroom management and student discipline.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study explored internal (e.g., formal teaching qualifications and experience) and external factors (e.g., contextual factors such as row-seating and class size) to investigate if and how these can influence NESTs’ professional practices in South Korean public primary schools. Teachers’ professional practices are inevitably influenced by a range of internal and external factors. The responses from participants in this study provide empirical evidence to support the view that NESTs’ formal qualifications and experience partially influence their professional practices. Contextual factors also have a partial influence on NESTs’ professional practices as illustrated above.

Regarding NESTs’ formal qualifications and experience in teaching, the findings of this study suggest that a range of factors influence their professional practices, including NESTs’ qualifications and experiences in education, teaching experience in the host country, personality, motivation, their innate ability to teach, the degree that their linguistic and cultural backgrounds differ from those of their students, and their role as a “fun teacher” (who plays games and is not responsible for maintaining discipline). However, the non-NEST participants placed more emphasis on qualifications than the NEST participants did.

Regarding the influence of contextual factors on NESTs’ professional practices, this paper presented only two contextual factors due to space limitations: row-seating arrangements, and large class sizes and mixed-level classes. The findings indicated that group/cluster seating

supports NESTs' classroom management (e.g., saving time, learner-centered classes, flow of group activities). However, such seating arrangements were also found to be a challenge for classroom behavior management as the nature of CLT methods (student-centered, classroom interaction, task-based learning) tended to increase the likelihood of disruptive, off-task, and disorderly behavior, especially during pair and group activities and games. The role of NESTs as a "fun teacher" with no involvement in student discipline had a negative impact on their classroom behavior management abilities as it made it difficult to gain "respect" from students. Furthermore, NESTs' cultural and linguistic backgrounds – which differ from those of their students – provide significant challenges when managing classroom behavior.

In relation to large class sizes and mixed-level classes, both NESTs interviewed for this study found it challenging to navigate around the complexities of the practicalities of teaching in South Korean EFL classrooms and to attend to students' individual learning needs due to the wide range of English proficiency levels in a class of 30 students. The level of challenge is either too easy for high-level students or too difficult for low-level students, which in turn decreases motivation and engagement while at the same time increasing challenging behavior. Furthermore, these findings suggest that limited contact time between NESTs and ELLs is a further challenge for NESTs to understand individual student' needs and offer differentiated learning opportunities for the students.

### **“Unexpected” Findings**

According to the non-NEST participants, NEST's formal qualifications and experience in their own country have limited relevance to the South Korean context. The findings in this study suggest that NESTs' teaching experiences in Korea may be more beneficial due to the different curriculum between NESTs' home countries and the host country where they are employed. In other words, a qualified and experienced teacher from an English-speaking country who is employed as a NEST may *still* require formal training and professional development in order to adapt their professional practices to the South Korean context. This is due to the fact that the curriculum can differ due to the different educational ideologies, traditions, and needs at any given time. Accordingly, NESTs' experience in their own country as a learner

and a teacher can be different from their experience in the host country in terms of the different education systems and structure, syllabus, learning goals, and forms of assessment as well as teaching strategies.

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## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> External factors in this study refer to contextual factors that have been identified as challenges in implementing CLT approaches (e.g., large classes, row-seating arrangements, grammar-focused examination formats).
- <sup>2</sup> Internal factors in this study refer to teachers' personal characteristics (e.g., personality and qualifications).
- <sup>3</sup> P2 is a NEST from the USA and holds a Bachelor's degree in Science and Sociology. He has six years' professional experience working at public schools in South Korea. He also holds a 'Teaching English as a Foreign Language' certification.
- <sup>4</sup> P1 is a NEST from the USA with a Bachelor's degree in History and Sociology. She has four year's professional experience at public schools in South Korea. She also holds a 'Teaching English as a Foreign Language' certification.
- <sup>5</sup> P3 is a qualified primary teacher as well as a specialist English teacher (non-NEST). It is not known how many years of professional experience she possesses.
- <sup>6</sup> P4 is a qualified primary school teacher and holds post-graduate qualifications in English education for primary school students. She has 12 years' professional experience in South Korean primary schools.
- <sup>7</sup> Negative punishment describes a certain desired item is removed after the undesired behavior occurs in order to encouraged the desired behavior.
- <sup>8</sup> It is not clear who mentor teachers are and what role they play to support NESTs.



# Relative Language Proficiencies in the Foreign Language Classroom: Native-Speaking Teachers, Students, and the Mother Tongue

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This study investigated how relative language proficiencies, the difference between native-speaking teachers' proficiency in the students' mother tongue, and their students' proficiency in the second language affect the students' attitudes toward native-speaking teacher use of the students' mother tongue. Seventy-two university students participated in this study by completing a survey concerning their attitudes towards mother-tongue use by native-speaking teachers of varying mother-tongue proficiencies. The results indicated the students did not consider teacher linguistic superiority as a precondition for teacher use of the mother tongue. The results also indicated the more superior the native-speaking teacher was, the more receptive the students were to native-speaking teacher use of the students' mother tongue. The results also indicated that students, regardless of their L2 ability, were in a general consensus regarding most-preferred and least-preferred mother-tongue uses.

*Keywords:* mother tongue, language proficiency, native-speaking English teacher, foreign language teaching practices

## INTRODUCTION

Native-speaking teachers (NST) of foreign languages (FL) exist in large numbers all over the world. In many cases, these NSTs are teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL), although there are NSTs of a wide assortment of foreign languages. NSTs of a FL typically come from a nation where the language is the mother tongue (MT) and teach in a foreign country where students are native in Chinese, Spanish, Korean, or any other language. Since the NSTs teach and live in this

foreign country, the NSTs invariably learn the students' MT (sMT) to varying degrees. While use of the sMT by NSTs or non-native-speaking teachers has been traditionally viewed as inadvisable since it would deprive students of target language (TL) exposure, recent research indicating myriad benefits by including sMT use suggests NSTs and non-native-speaking teachers alike utilize this resource in the foreign language classroom.

However, acknowledgement of the value in sMT use should not be interpreted as a complete and unconditional approval. Teachers, as language teaching professionals who know their specific learning dynamics best, should determine selective, systematic, and judicious policies in order to use the sMT optimally (Butzkamm, 2003; McMillan & Rivers, 2011). When determining the appropriate amount and functions of sMT use in the FL classroom, the students' linguistic abilities and the teacher's linguistic abilities are factors to consider. Hall and Cook (2012) mention that FL teachers' beliefs about sMT use are "most consistently affected by learners' abilities" (p. 295). Indeed, the presumptive notion is that lower-level learners use sMT in greater amounts and more frequently and also request more sMT use from the teacher than more advanced learners (Cole, 1998). In terms of the teacher's ability, non-native-speaking teachers (NNSTs) should be distinguished from NSTs. Research into NNSTs, who share a MT with their students and would have varying degrees of proficiency in the second language (L2), reports that NNSTs' beliefs about their L2 abilities are a determining factor in L2 use (Hall & Cook, 2012). The NNSTs' sMT abilities, given it is their MT, are presumably not a factor, but their ability in the L2 is. The reverse would be true for NSTs: The teacher has a native ability in the students' L2 (the teacher's MT) and some varying ability in the sMT. Just as the students' varying abilities in the L2 help to determine classroom L2 use, NSTs' varying abilities in the sMT may help to determine classroom sMT use.

If both of these aforementioned factors of sMT use – the students' L2 faculties and the NST's faculties in the sMT – represent linguistic proficiency, the students' L2 proficiency could be juxtaposed alongside the NST's proficiency in the sMT, and a relative language proficiency (RLP) emerges. A RLP would indicate the students' level of proficiency in their L2 compared to the NST. To date, no research has examined the interaction of RLP with NST sMT use. Literature exists (Atkinson, 1993) that suggests significant NST relative language superiority should be a

condition for NST sMT use, yet no research has investigated the notion. Considering the large numbers of NSTs who teach in foreign settings and have varying proficiencies in the sMT, a greater understanding of RLP and its effects on sMT use would help to inform NSTs of best classroom practices and administrators of how to best assign NSTs of different sMT abilities to different level classes.

This research is organized as follows. First, the literature review will provide a brief overview of the history of sMT use in the classroom and also review the theory and previous studies related to teacher proficiency, student L2 proficiency, and the use of the sMT. Next, the current study section will explain the design for this research. The results and discussion section contains the findings of the study and situates them alongside the theory and previous research. The conclusion will summarize the findings and discuss the implications.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Mother Tongue in the Classroom: History, Effects, and Uses

The current view on incorporating the sMT in the classroom is one of value. However, this has not always been the case. From the late 19th century, the Reform Movement promoted sMT monolingual teaching, and it quickly became an “unchallenged assumption” (Hall & Cook, 2012, p. 275). A number of factors contributed to the removal of the sMT and helped to make a monolingual L2 classroom. Some of the first supporters of the students’ second language monolingual movement were academics near the turn of the 20th century that opposed the Grammar Translation Method in favor of emphasizing spoken language and fluency. With the prevailing acceptance of the Grammar Translation Method now broken, the Berlitz (or Direct) Method furthered the break from a bilingual classroom. The Berlitz Method, by rule, immersed the students in the L2, and banned any student use of the sMT in the classroom or the students’ review materials. With this policy, the Berlitz schools flourished in the beginning of the 20th century, creating 200 schools by 1914 and becoming a model for similar language learning institutions (Hall & Cook, 2012).

By the 1970s, using the sMT in the language classroom was widely

discouraged. The beginning of this phenomenon corresponds neatly with the introduction of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the 1970s, which emphasized communication through interaction in the TL (Savignon, 2000). While this did not explicitly endorse monolingualism, not addressing the use of the sMT may have unwittingly contributed “to the perception that L1 use is incompatible with a communicative approach” (McMillan & Rivers, 2011, p. 253). Certainly, CLT’s pedagogical basis of L2 interaction was bolstered by Krashen (1985) who further advocated for the expulsion of the sMT on pedagogical grounds. Citing the relationship between comprehensible input and proficiency, he claimed that languages are most effectively learned when learners are exposed to a plethora of comprehensible input in the L2. He further shifted the blame to sMT use by claiming that situations where one “can continue to use his first language and uses the second language very little” (p. 14) are impeding comprehensible input. Since its introduction, CLT has flourished and “has now become the only teaching method that many teachers have experienced” (Cook, 2008, p. 248).

However, sMT use has recently made a comeback. In light of research and literature citing its benefits since end of the 20th century, sMT use in the classroom has become viewed in a more positive light. The research can be categorized into three sorts: teaching-related benefits, cognitive benefits, and affective benefits. In terms of teaching-related benefits, sMT use can increase student comprehension (Hall & Cook, 2012) allow for the class to speed up (Macaro, 2005), provide a linguistic foundation which can assist in L2 learning (Butzkamm, 2003), allow teachers to use richer materials (Butzkamm, 2003) and may even be beneficial in vocabulary retention (Zhao & Macaro, 2014). Cognitively speaking, sMT use may reduce working memory constraints, consolidate meaning in long term memory, and clarify the syntactic functions of lexical items (Kern, 1994). Finally, the documented affective benefits of utilizing the sMT include a reduction foreign language-related anxiety (Rolin-Ianziti & Varshney, 2008), an improvement in the class atmosphere (Canagarajah, 1999; De la Campa & Nassaji, 2009), improved student attitudes toward the L2 (Schweers, 1999), and may even increase the students’ motivation (Schweers, 1999).

Although a variety of advantages for sMT use has been proposed, language teachers have not been given the green light to use the sMT in an unlimited, inconsistent, or haphazard fashion. Indeed, sMT use is now viewed as an important language teaching tool if used

“systematically, selectively, and in judicious doses” (Butzkamm, 2003, p. 36). One interpretation of this is an English-mainly classroom that “promotes achievable goals for the majority of the learners without denying access to the L1” (Rivers, 2011, p. 40). One measuring stick for keeping the class “mainly” in the target language could be the amount of student sMT use. Macaro (2005), in mentioning his previous studies (Macaro, 2001; Macaro & Mutton, 2002), provides preliminary evidence that as long as the teacher does not surpass the threshold of 10–15% of sMT, there is no increase in sMT use in whole-class interaction. In regards to systematic use of the sMT, Butzkamm and Caldwell (2009) argue for a disciplined rather than a chaotic deployment of the sMT (as cited in Hall & Cook, 2012). Policies regulating the sMT in both amount and purpose can help to maintain the primacy of the TL, thus ensuring enough TL input is being provided.

Since teachers are advised to be systematic in their deployment of the sMT, research has been conducted investigating the different functions or uses of the sMT in an FL classroom. De la Campa and Nassaji (2009) documented the functions of teacher sMT use in two FL classes over a semester and produced a detailed list of 15 different functions for code switching. These functions included L1–L2 contrast, evaluation, personal comments, translation, comprehension checks, administrative issues, and humor. Littlewood and Yu (2011) categorized the different functions into classifications and sorted them into framework goals, core goals, and social goals. Framework goals manage the classroom, core goals help to teach the TL, and social goals help to establish constructive social relationships between the teacher and the students.

## **Student L2 Levels, NST sMT Levels, and Relative Proficiencies**

Among the list of factors to consider when determining appropriate sMT use is student L2 proficiency (Jadallah & Hasan, 2010). Cole (1998) expresses support for the presumptive notion that lower-level learners use sMT more and request more sMT from the teacher than more advanced learners suggesting that the “L1 may be used from introductory to upper-intermediate levels on a decreasing scale” (p. 14). Studies into this notion have provided mixed results. Prodromou (2002) examined the relationship between student L2 proficiency levels and student reported approval of sMT use through a survey of 300 Greek

participants. After categorizing the students into three different L2 levels (beginner, intermediate, or advanced), the students completed a survey concerning sMT use in the classroom. In general, the more advanced the students were, the less they supported teacher use of sMT in the classroom. When Nazary (2008) replicated Prodromou's study at an Iranian University, Nazary found very different results. The advanced students consistently approved of teacher sMT use at similar levels to the elementary-level students; intermediate-level students approved of sMT use the least.

As mentioned, the proficiency level of the sMT is one condition when determining NST use of the sMT. Butzkamm and Caldwell (2009) advocate for teachers who can speak "effectively" in the sMT (as cited in Hall & Cook, 2012). A rough idea of what "effectively" means could be extrapolated from De la Campa and Nassaji's (2009) aforementioned list of uses. Although the exact minimal language proficiency required to perform these language tasks is debatable, considering the complexity of those language tasks, a relatively strong command of the sMT would be required. However, little research has been performed investigating NSTs of varying sMT levels. In one study, Green and Bae (2013) surveyed 64 Korean university students, 32 of which experienced a semester of a native English-speaking teacher's (NEST) English class including Korean and 32 of which experienced the same class without any Korean, about NESTs' use of Korean in English class. One research question was whether students would be more welcome to NESTs who commanded advanced fluency in sMT. Overall, students slightly disagreed with the Likert-style statement "My native-English instructor should not use Korean in my English class unless she or he is fluent in Korean." Students who experienced a class including 5–10% in the sMT used by a NST "with some proficiency in the Korean language" responded with an average of 2.81 (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree), while the control group who experienced no sMT responded with an average of 2.69. These data would suggest a marginal disagreement with the notion that NSTs need to be fluent in order to use the language.

If the students' L2 ability is juxtaposed with a NST's sMT ability, a relative language proficiency emerges – how superior or inferior the teachers' command of the sMT is to the students' command of the L2. Atkinson (1993) claims that a NST should not use the sMT in the classroom unless the NST is "substantially" more skilled in the sMT than the students are in the L2. Although the exact definition of

substantial is vague, the implications of this claim are clear: teachers whose sMT proficiency is inferior or similar to the students' L2 proficiencies should not use the sMT in class. Furthermore, this would mean teachers of very advanced students should not use the sMT in the classroom since one cannot be substantially more skilled than someone who is already very advanced. However, no research exists substantiating or rejecting this claim.

## CURRENT STUDY

Existing research into NST sMT use in the FL classroom has not considered relative proficiencies between NST sMT proficiency and student L2 proficiency. This research attempted to fill in these research gaps. The current research investigated the following:

- (1) How do relative proficiencies between students' L2 abilities and NSTs' sMT abilities affect students' general acceptance of NST use of the sMT?
- (2) Which specific uses of the sMT are preferred by students of different relative proficiencies?

## Research Design

Seventy-two (72) university students from two universities near Seoul, South Korea, were the participants of this study. The participant data is displayed in Table 1. The participants completed a survey regarding NST use of the sMT. The biographical information section of the survey requested the participant's age, gender, TOIEC score, and their perceived proficiency in their L2: English. The students were asked to evaluate themselves on a scale of 1 = beginner, 2 = beginner/intermediate, 3 = intermediate, 4 = intermediate/advanced, 5 = advanced, 6 = highly advanced, and 7 = native. This information served as the baseline when determining relative language proficiencies.

**TABLE 1. Participant Profile**

School		Average Age (Years)	Gender		L2 Proficiency Level				
A % (n)	B % (n)		Male % (n)	Female % (n)	Begin. % (n)	Begin.- Inter. % (n)	Inter. % (n)	Inter.- Adv. % (n)	Adv. % (n)
52.8 (38)	47.2 (34)	20.6	61 (44)	39 (28)	13.8 (10)	43 (31)	25 (18)	9.7 (7)	8.3 (6)

*Note.* Begin. = Beginner, Begin.-Inter. = Beginner-Intermediate, Inter. = Intermediate, Inter.-Adv. = Intermediate-Advanced, Adv. = Advanced

The survey was comprised of three sections in addition to the biographical section. These sections asked for students' attitudes regarding NESTs of varying Korean levels using Korean (the sMT) in class). One section was about NESTs with an intermediate level of sMT proficiency. (Considering the accepted language tasks, an intermediate proficiency was considered the minimally acceptable proficiency.) Another section was concerning NESTs with an advanced level of the sMT. The third section was concerning NESTs who had a native control of the sMT (native bilinguals). These three sections asked about the benefits of a NEST using Korean for seven different class tasks (explaining grammar, explaining or translating vocabulary, explaining complicated contents, explaining the syllabus, explaining the directions for activities, explaining assignments or the test, and chatting with the students before or after class). These questions covered a variety of different functions and included functions from each category by Littlewood and Yu (2011). Each section had the same seven Likert-scale items (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). The only difference between these three sections was the sMT level of the NEST: intermediate, advanced, and native. Since each survey included three identical sections, differing only in the NEST ability in the sMT, each participant yielded three separate entries: (a) the learner's level paired with an NST who has an intermediate proficiency in the sMT, (b) the learner's level paired with an NST who has an advanced proficiency in the sMT, and (c) the learner's level paired with an NST who has a native-level proficiency in the sMT. Since the NSTs' sMT proficiencies were defined in reference to the level categories in the students' biographical section, it was possible for a relative language proficiency to be calculated. The relative language proficiency was calculated by

subtracting the students' self-reported second language proficiency score in the biographical section of the survey from the associated sMT proficiency score of the NST in the three different sections (intermediate = 3, advanced = 5, native = 7). For example, in the case of a student who self-reported as a beginner (1), their entries would be categorized as a relative language proficiency of 2 in the case of an intermediate (3) NST ( $3 - 1 = 2$ ), 4 for an advanced (5) NST ( $5 - 1 = 4$ ), and 6 for a native (7) NST ( $7 - 1 = 6$ ). In the case of an intermediate-advanced student (4), their entries would be categorized as a relative language proficiency of -1 for intermediate (3) NST ( $3 - 4 = -1$ ), 1 for advanced (5) NST ( $5 - 4 = 1$ ), and 3 for native (7) NST ( $7 - 4 = 3$ ). Relative proficiencies of identical values were then grouped together to create relative proficiency groups (RPG). There were nine different RPGs, ranging from RPG -2, where the students are relatively most proficient, to RPG 6, where the NST is relatively most proficient. A lower RPG number indicates greater student linguistic superiority and a higher one indicates greater NST linguistic superiority. The RPG 0 indicates NST-student linguistic parity. Table 2 shows the number of cases in each RPG.

**TABLE 2. Number of Entries in Each Relative Language Proficiency Group**

Relative Proficiency Groups (NST's Proficiency – Student's Proficiency)								
-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
(Maximal Student Linguistic Superiority)		(Student-NST Linguistic Parity)						(Maximal NST Linguistic Superiority)
6	7	24	38	34	40	28	33	10

After the students' entries were categorized into the appropriate RPG, Likert-scale scores were calculated for each entry by aggregating the seven items. This created a profile of each entry's general attitude towards the NST sMT use. Considering that the Likert items were structured using a 7-point system with 1 representing an answer of "strongly disagreeing," 4 representing a "neutral" response, and 7 symbolizing a "strongly agree" response, a Likert-scale response of 28 ( $7 \times 4$ ) was considered the threshold of significant. Likert-scale scores below 28 signified a degree of general disapproval towards NST sMT use, while Likert-scale scores in excess of 28 indicated a degree of

general receptiveness towards NST sMT use. Then averages for these Likert-scale scores in each RPG were calculated. This enabled the different RPGs to be compared. In order to determine which uses were most well received within each RPG, the averages for each Likert-scale score in each RPG were calculated. These averages were also ranked to determine student preferences.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Relative Proficiencies

Figure 1 displays how students of varying proficiency groups generally accepted sMT use by a NST. Concerning the relative proficiency group labelling, a negative number indicates student L2 superiority. Zero indicates student-teacher linguistic parity. A positive number indicates teacher sMT superiority. The greater the distance from zero in either a positive or negative direction indicates greater relative superiority. Table 3 displays an item-by-item average of the Likert statements regarding sMT uses in terms of the different relative proficiency groups.

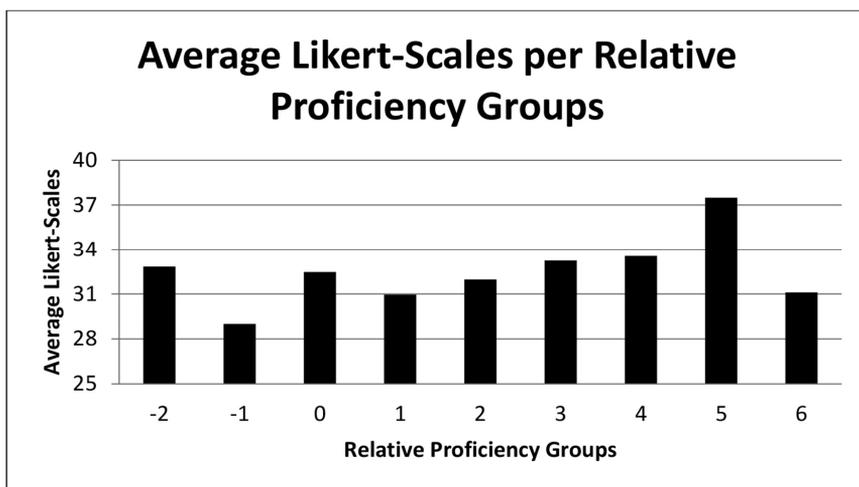


FIGURE 1. Relative Language Proficiencies and sMT Teacher Likert-Scale Score.

**TABLE 3. Average Student Responses to Classroom Uses of the sMT by Relative Proficiency Groups**

Relative Proficiency groups (T ability - S ability)	Explain Grammar	Explain or Translate Vocabulary	Explain complicated contents	Explain the syllabus	Explain the directions for activities	Explain assignments or the test	Chat with students before or after class
-2	4.3	4.5	5.8	4.5	4.3	4.8	4.5
-1	4.3	4.0	4.6	3.9	4.0	3.9	4.4
0	4.7	4.6	5.1	4.3	4.3	4.9	4.6
1	4.3	4.4	4.5	4.4	4.2	4.4	4.6
2	4.6	4.6	4.9	4.3	4.4	4.9	4.4
3	4.6	4.6	4.9	4.6	4.5	4.6	4.7
4	4.8	4.8	5.1	4.5	4.8	5.0	4.6
5	5.2	5.2	5.4	5.1	5.0	5.3	5.2
6	4.7	4.5	4.7	4.0	4.4	4.8	4.0

The results of the Likert-scale scores range from a minimum of 29 in RPG -1 to a maximum of 37.5 in RPG 5. Each relative proficiency group yielded a score above 28. Considering the survey was comprised of seven Likert-style items with 4 representing a neutral response, a response score in excess of 28 would represent a categorically general “positive” disposition towards NST use of the sMT. Thus, the Likert-scale findings indicate that students range from largely neutral (in RPG -1) to moderately receptive (RPG 5) to the idea of a NST using the sMT regardless of the relative proficiency. A strong disapproval of NST sMT use was not indicated by the scores. This is true even in the findings of RPG -2 and RPG -1, where the students are linguistically superior, and in RPG 0, where the students and NST were equally proficient. In all three of these RPGs, the teacher is objectively not substantially superior to the students, yet each group returned a score that was above 28. As noted previously, Atkinson (1993) claimed a NST must be substantially better in the sMT than the students are in the L2 in order to use the sMT in class. This claim is not substantiated by the findings in this study. These data suggest that NSTs should not strictly forbid themselves from using the sMT purely because their sMT competency is not significantly better than their students’ L2 competency. The data suggest teacher relative language superiority is not

a condition for teacher sMT use in the students' minds.

When examining the results on an item-by-item basis (see Table 3), the previously stated findings of at least slightly positive attitudes continued. In the case of RPG -2, RPG -1, and RPG 0, the averages for each survey item rarely went below 4, the neutral response. The RPG -1 returned averages in two categories precisely at the neutral response (4) and two categories slightly below the neutral response. The survey items that returned precisely neutral averages were for both explaining or translating vocabulary and explaining the directions for activities. The survey item statements that returned averages below 4 were for explaining the syllabus and explaining assignments or the test. Interestingly, the RPG -2, which consisted of cases where the students were even more linguistically superior, did not have similar findings. Indeed, the RPG -2 saw a higher average in "explain complicated contents" than any other RPG. The other survey item averages for RPG -2 rarely approached the neutral benchmark of 4. This was true for RPG 0 as well. Considering these data, the item-by-item analysis of different sMT uses also does not substantiate Atkinson's (1993) condition for sMT use by NSTs.

When examining the Likert-scale scores in Figure 1 or the average item responses in Table 3, a general trend emerges: the higher the RPG, the higher the average. While not linear or universally increasing, five successive RPGs increased in average values while there were only three instances of higher RPGs decreasing in value. Two of these higher RPGs involved in decreases in averages, "-2" and "6", were the extreme RPGs and consisted of relatively small sample sizes, 6 entries and 10 entries, respectively. Perhaps the relatively small sample size skewed the results away from following the trend created by the RPGs with greater numbers of entries. When turning to the specific survey items, of the RPGs 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, four of the items saw their averages consistently increase as the relative proficiency increased. For example, RPG 1 returned an average of 4.3 regarding the explanation of grammar, while groups 2, 3, 4, and 5 returned averages of 4.6, 4.6, 4.8, and 5.2. Similar patterns of also existed in the case of using the sMT to explain or translate vocabulary, explain complicated contents, and explain the directions for activities. Relative proficiency, defined as the difference between the teacher's and students' proficiency, is inextricably connected to the students' proficiency levels. Hence, these RPG results from this research can be juxtaposed alongside the theory of student L2

proficiency and teachers' sMT use. Thus, these results could be seen to generally corroborate the notion that the lower the student's proficiency level is, the more appropriate sMT use is. Therefore, these data reflect the findings in Prodromou's (2002) research that showed a negative relationship between learner level and attitudes towards sMT use: higher levels showed less acceptance.

The lowest RPG, RPG -2, has a score significantly higher than the next higher RPG. While skepticism of this RPG's validity may be warranted due to its small sample size, another interpretation of the increase in responses found in the RPG -2 may be a confirmation of the uptick in advanced students' approval of sMT use found in Nazary's (2008) study involving Iranian participants. Nazary found that advanced students usually accepted teacher use of the sMT more than intermediate students, and sometimes even more than beginner-level students. Nazary speculated that the uptick may have been due to advanced students comprehending "the importance of MT functions for enhancing both language fluency and accuracy" (p. 148). Perhaps the categorization of the current study, where participants were organized into nine different relative proficiencies rather than the three categories in Nazary's or Prodromou's (2002) studies, provides a variation possible to corroborate elements of both studies – Prodromou's general trend and Nazary's uptick with more advanced learners.

## **Native Speaking Teacher sMT Uses**

A ranking of the survey item averages across each RPG yields some general trends of students' preference regarding NST sMT use. The ranking is displayed in Table 4.

The survey item titled "Explain complicated contents" returned the highest average in seven of the nine RPGs and was the second-highest ranking item in the other two RPGs. Indeed, the average ranking of this item was 1.22. Regardless of RPG, students expressed a relative openness to explanations of complicated contents in their MT. These results comport with Schweers (1999), who found 88% of surveyed students (regardless of level) thought sMT use was appropriate to "explain difficult concepts." In Schweers' study, that use of the sMT was the clear number-one preference for the students; the next most accepted category only garnered 23% of the students' acceptance. "To explain assignments or the test" was another use strongly supported by the students, with an

average rank of 2.44. This finding concurs with Burden (2001), who found that 50% of Japanese students approved of NST sMT use to talk about tests, making this category one of the more well-received uses.

**TABLE 4. Rank of Survey Item Averages Related to Classroom Uses of the sMT by NSTs**

Relative Proficiency groups (T ability - S ability)	Explain Grammar	Explain or Translate Vocabulary	Explain complicated contents	Explain the syllabus	Explain the directions for activities	Explain assignments or the test	Chat with students before or after class
-2	6	3	1	3	6	2	3
-1	3	4	1	6	4	6	2
0	3	4	1	6	6	2	4
1	6	3	2	3	7	3	1
2	3	3	1	7	5	1	5
3	3	3	1	3	7	3	2
4	3	3	1	7	3	2	6
5	3	3	1	6	7	2	3
6	2	4	2	6	5	1	6
Average	3.56	3.33	1.22	5.22	5.56	2.44	3.56

Conversely, the students did not express a relative embrace of “explaining the syllabus” and “explaining the directions for activities” in the sMT. These findings also agree with the Japanese university preferences presented in Burden (2001). In Burden’s study, explaining class rules and explaining the reason for doing an activity were accepted uses of the sMT by only 25% and 24%, respectively, of the surveyed students, making these two some of the least desired uses of the sMT.

## CONCLUSIONS

The findings presented here suggest that native-speaking teachers of at least an intermediate level in the students’ L2 do not need to limit their use of the sMT to only classrooms where their sMT ability is superior to their students’ L2 ability. This is an important finding for

native-speaking teachers who are able to determine their own sMT use policies. While native-speaking teachers should be cognizant that students who are relatively superior in the L2 are less supportive of the practice, they are at least slightly welcoming of the practice. Native-speaking teachers should not feel the need to completely reject the sMT, which may deny the teacher of a valuable teaching resource that is accepted by the students.

The findings also suggest that students are more welcoming to NST sMT use by more linguistically superior NSTs. This finding has implications for the institutions employing native-speaking teachers. First of all, NST learning of their students' MT should be encouraged, or at the very least, not discouraged. In this vein, continuing education classes for the NSTs to develop their abilities in the students' MT may yield benefits in the classroom. Furthermore, this finding also has implications for coordinators who are placing NSTs of varying sMT levels with classrooms of various L2 levels. If a coordinator could match NSTs and students to create classes of higher relative proficiencies, the students may be more receptive to NST sMT use.

The findings also suggest that explaining "complicated contents" and "assignments or the test" are the most welcome NST sMT uses, regardless of relative proficiency, while explaining "the syllabus" and "the directions for activities" are commonly the least well-received uses of the sMT by NSTs. Since judicious and optimal sMT use is the goal, NSTs should be aware of which sMT uses are more accepted by the students than other uses. While student preferences do not dictate pedagogical benefit, and should not be the only consideration when determining sMT use policies, it is one valuable consideration.

Like all research, this study includes limitations. As previously noted, the sample sizes in RPGs -2, -1, and 6 were relatively small. Larger sample sizes would have provided more robust data. Another related limitation was the lack of any students considering themselves "highly advanced." The existence of such participants would have expanded the range of relative proficiencies. Another limitation of this study was the limited age range and participant profile. All participants were young adult university students. Perhaps older or younger participants have different preconceptions regarding NST sMT use. Lastly, all participants were Korean. Perceptions for language learning conditions may be informed culturally and thus may manifest themselves differently in different cultures.

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## **Korean EFL College Students in Foreign Contexts: A Second Language Identity Study**

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Sociolinguistic research has yet to comprehensively address changes in the second language identity (L2I) of English as a foreign language students (EFL) that take place as a result of traveling abroad and experiencing English in authentic circumstances. First, this pilot study provides an outline of L2I and proposes a framework for evaluating L2I in foreign contexts. Second, the narratives and reports of Korean EFL college students, who visited various countries as a school requirement, are examined using the proposed L2I model to determine how their experiences and interactions while abroad affected their L2Is. It was determined that the proposed L2I framework is an effective tool for identifying factors that may impact the L2I of language students in foreign contexts. The student reports showed that there were speculative changes in L2I as a result of specific interactions with members of the host countries. It was concluded that this research has pedagogical implications for future students in this specific educational institution as well as for any other institution where there are stakeholders invested in foreign language study and travel, work, or study abroad programs. It is suggested that follow-up research focus on specific experiences that may facilitate the renegotiation of student L2I in comparable contexts.

*Keywords:* EFL, L2 identity, abroad, Korean

### **INTRODUCTION**

Travel to foreign countries is often portrayed as a transformative experience because of its power to broaden an individual's worldview as a result of being immersed in a foreign environment and a foreign language. By taking a closer look at language learners who find themselves in foreign contexts from a sociolinguistic standpoint, the

intricacies and complexity of the situation are brought to light and the misrepresentation of this oversimplified conception becomes apparent. As a result, this observation has given rise to the exploration of the complex relationship between the individual language learner, the target language (TL), and the foreign context.

This study attempts to shed light on how the second language identity (L2I) of English as a foreign language (EFL) students is affected by being exposed to English in authentic international contexts. In this paper, L2I will be viewed as Benson, Barkhuizen, Bodycott, and Brown's (2013) provisional definition of the term, which describes it as "any aspect of a person's identity that is connected to their knowledge or use of a second language" (pp. 174). In order to gain perspective into this situation, existing theory and research related to language learning, identity, and foreign contexts were used as the foundation for the creation and proposal of a holistic framework that evaluates the L2I of language students in foreign contexts. The foundational theory used is drawn from Bonny Norton's work with identity and language learning (Norton, 2000, 2012; Norton Peirce, 1995), David Block's (2007) perceptions of language-mediated identity, and Benson et al.'s (2013) notion of second language identity. Furthermore, the proposed framework was applied to interpret qualitative data obtained from Korean college EFL students at a military service academy, who traveled to various countries as a school requirement, in order to ascertain (a) the functionality of the proposed L2I model and (b) how the L2I of the students were affected as a result of international travel.

## BACKGROUND

With the rise of globalization, international education programs, specifically study abroad programs which send their students to foreign contexts for anywhere between one week and two years, have continued to gain popularity. The growth of such programs has attracted significant attention from the applied linguistics community since the 1980s and has sparked the continual development of formal research dedicated to exploring language-related outcomes and phenomenon in this field (Freed, 1995; Kinginger, 2009, 2013). While international experience has been an integral component and a long-established practice across many

educational institutions, there still remains relatively little focus on how students who travel abroad for non-language-focused educational ventures are affected socially and linguistically by being immersed in various international contexts. This is why it is helpful to draw upon study abroad research for deeper insights. While the EFL students in this study had specialized reasons for traveling abroad (i.e., naval training exercises) and were fundamentally different than study abroad students from “normal” universities, they did share some important comparable characteristics. Namely, both groups are generally comprised of young adults (ages 18–22), they are usually full-time college students, they experience immersion in a foreign culture, and most importantly within the scope of this paper, they are EFL students at their respective educational institutions and will be exposed to, or interact in, English as a lingua franca or with native speakers in foreign contexts. These similarities comprise the rationale for utilizing research from the study abroad context within this study.

As research vis-à-vis second language acquisition in international study programs came into its own as an established area of interest, other applied linguists were concurrently working to develop a sociolinguistic theory that explains how an individual’s identity and language learning process are connected by incorporating theory from the social sciences of psychology, sociology, and economics (Norton, 2000, 2012; Norton Peirce, 1995; Pavlenko, 2002). Although language learning in the study abroad context and identity theory were not significantly connected during their development, as it turned out, identity issues had already been a reoccurring theme and an area of study within study-abroad SLA-related research, but primarily only in relation to how different identity markers (namely, race, gender, and nationality) may affect second language-gains within the study abroad context (see Kinginger, 2009, for an overview). While this research is important in its role to help ensure more linguistically successful trips abroad, it is clear that there is more to the picture than the binary relationships between an identity marker and the acquisition of specific speech acts and general language proficiency, which is why these two areas of study eventually merged.

An interesting product of the language learning and identity body of research, predominantly established by Norton (1995), has been the rise in popularity of the convoluted yet intriguing concept of “second language identity” (L2I). L2I has been a reoccurring term within the

literature, although to date it still lacks clear constructs or unequivocal meaning. Once the fields of study-abroad SLA research and language identity theory intersected, and gave rise to a new sub-field of applied linguistics, the term L2I started to gain popularity within this body of literature (Benson et al., 2013; Block, 2007; Sato, 2014). Consequently, some have called for the development of a structured framework for analyzing the relationship between the study abroad context and L2I (Benson et al. 2013; Block, 2007). Moreover, in Benson et al.'s (2013) exploratory study of Chinese students studying abroad in English-speaking countries, their main aim concerned the search for insight into potentially appropriate constructs for L2I in the study abroad setting. Besides proposing three tentative constructs for L2I, they concluded that “the construct of second language identity can be a useful lens through which we might examine and draw together study abroad outcomes” (p. 190). This conclusion can be viewed as motivation to explore L2I further within foreign contexts. It is possible that L2I's more frequent employment has been due to its potential to provide a more holistic explanation of the relationship between learner identity, target language (TL), and context.

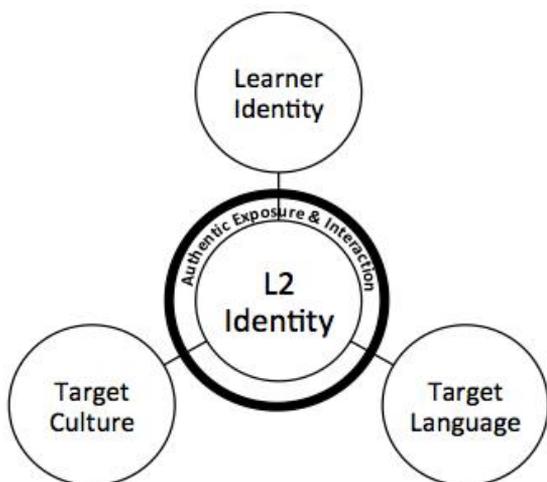
Within the L2I field, a poststructuralist approach is the most commonly employed because of the complex, ambiguous, and ever-changing nature of both the individual language learner and their context. Ideally, a researcher applying a poststructuralist perspective can account for the individualistic nature of each trip abroad by utilizing a well-planned and thorough mixed-methods approach with a heavy focus on qualitative data collection methods in the forms of various types of learner narratives and observations. This perspective is valuable, especially for the research at hand, because it emphasizes “L2 users as agents whose multiple identities are dynamic and fluid” (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000, p. 283) and provides a “more context-sensitive way of theorizing social impact on L2 learning and use” (p. 295). However, despite these positive aspects, there are noteworthy problems with narrative analysis within the poststructuralist framework (Block, 2010). Namely, data collected from written and spoken learner accounts are simply vast, complex, and unorganized, making the task of analyzing the data very unclear and difficult. Furthermore, Pavlenko (2007) compounds the difficulties that researchers face by identifying several other problematic areas. Specifically, these areas include “the lack of theoretical premise, which makes it unclear where conceptual categories

come from and how they relate to each other [and] the lack of established procedure for matching instances to categories” (Pavlenko, 2007, p. 166). These inadequacies of the data collection methods used within identity research also apply to the related developing field of L2I research, which is where one of the foci of this research becomes relevant.

A main objective of this paper is to propose a framework of L2I in foreign contexts as a reference to those interested in researching this topic in authentic settings. Within the literature, the thorough theoretical accounts of language learning and identity, while comprehensive, are dense and neither clearly come to any consensus of what exactly constitutes L2I nor provide a practical model or explanation for narrative data analysis within this field. Presently, in order for a L2I researcher to evaluate the narrative accounts of language learners, they must undertake extensive research in an ambiguous and a developing field of study. Hopefully, the proposed framework will help researchers and practitioners on the ground level to explore the relationship between language, culture, identity, and context without being deterred from the field because of its current state of complexity. As the body of research continues to grow, it is hoped that this framework will serve as a step towards a more comprehensive intuitive tool for practitioners to utilize to identify and evaluate potential sources of L2I influence on their students, while also being able to more easily reference and understand the existing underlying theory. It is also hoped that the results from this study will contribute to the advancement of this body of research.

## **Theoretical Framework**

In response to the calls for conclusive constructs for L2I (Benson et al., 2013) and the exploration of L2I-related occurrences of language students in foreign contexts (Benson et al., 2013; Block, 2009; Norton, 2012), and to determine a comprehensive theoretical description of the relationship between the language learner and identity (Norton Peirce, 1995), the following framework has been created and is being suggested as a holistic viewpoint on the relationship between L2I, identity, language, culture, and the foreign context (see Figure 1).



**FIGURE 1. Second Language Identity in the Foreign Context.**

As improvements in data analysis within the field of L2I research in foreign contexts is one of the aims of this study, the framework used in this study could potentially comprise its own paper. However, this section will be used to provide an overview of the framework and the basic components of its constructs and where they were derived from.

### **Second Language Identity**

L2I, within the scope of this paper, can be broadly viewed as Benson, et al.'s (2013) provisional definition, which maintains that L2I consists of “any aspect of a person’s identity that is connected to their knowledge or use of a second language” (p. 174). It should be noted that identity and L2I can also be viewed as inherently intertwined, but within this paper they are presented as separate interconnected entities in order to better visualize their components and isolate the manners in which they can relate to one another. Furthermore, since there is no consensus yet as to what exactly constitutes L2I in the literature, the constructs of L2I employed in this model are meant to be viewed as a tentative definition based primarily in the theory of principal researchers in the areas of language learning and identity and L2I in the study abroad setting (see Figure 2).



**FIGURE 2. Second Language Identity.** (L2 Ability as suggested by Benson et al., 2013; Investment derived from Norton Peirce, 1995)

The components that comprise L2I within this framework consist of *investment* and *L2 ability* (constructs of the L2I framework are hitherto written in italics). Norton Peirce’s (1995) notion of *investment* entails the “socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language, and their...desire to learn and practice it” (p. 10). Although this term has not gained much attention in the field, this concept has been chosen as a component of the model over similar ones (namely that of Dörnyei and Ushioda’s [2009] concept of L2 motivation) because of its explicit relationship to identity. The idea of *investment* is also a suitable foundation on which to build the concept of L2I because of its ability to incorporate the diverse interconnected aspects of L2-related phenomena within the learner. That is to say that *investment* is multi-dimensional in that it encompasses learner *perceptions* of the TL and their *power relationship* with the TL (“relationship of learners to the target language”), as well as TL-related *motivation* (“desire to learn and practice [the target language]”) of the language learner, all of which are fundamental to understanding L2I (Peirce, 1995, p. 17). These aspects of *investment*, referred hitherto as *perceptions*, *power relationship*, and *motivation*, are at the core of L2I and should be viewed as interconnected components that are constantly being influenced by the

other constructs and in turn renegotiated. Specifically, when conceptualizing the notion of *power relationship* between the individual and speakers of the TL, it is essential to refer to David Block’s (2007) description of “Power and Recognition,” which notes that “identity is neither contained solely inside the individual nor does it depend exclusively on how others define the individual. Rather, one needs to consider both self-generated subject positionings as well as subject positionings that are imposed on individuals by others” (Block, p. 31).

In addition to *investment*, the remaining component of L2I consists simply of *L2 ability*. Since L2I is being defined in this paper as any aspect of one’s identity that is connected to the knowledge of a second language, then inherently, overall L2 ability falls into this category. A comparable variation of this component of L2I has also been employed by Benson et al. (2013) who used the term “identity-related L2 proficiency,” within their model, Dimensions of Second Language Identity (Benson et al., 2013, p. 7).

### Learner Identity

Ethnic identity	shared history, descent, belief systems, practices, language and religion, all associated with a cultural group
Racial identity	biological/genetic make-up, i.e. racial phenotype.
National identity	shared history, descent, belief systems, practices, language and religion associated with a nation state
Migrant identity	Ways of living in a new country, on a scale ranging from classic immigrant to transmigrant
Gender identity	nature of conformity to socially constructed notions of femininities and masculinities, as well as orientations to sexuality and sexual activity
Social Class identity	income level, occupation, education and symbolic behaviour
Language identity	relationship between one’s sense of self and different means of communication, understood in terms of language, a dialect or sociolect, as well as multimodality.

**FIGURE 3. Individual/Collective Identity Types.** (Block, 2009, p. 49)

The identity construct in the model is meant to denote and encompass the participant's identity, exclusive of their L2I. The components of this construct are synonymous with those found in Block's (2007) book section entitled Identity in a Nutshell (pp. 31–51), which is comprised of an overview of what he deems to be the most commonly studied perspectives of identity in the social sciences and specifically the applied linguistics field. The identity types described include *ethnic identity*, *racial identity*, *national identity*, *migrant identity*, *gender identity*, *social class identity*, and *language identity*, and are meant to be viewed as socially constructed aspects of an individual's identity as ascribed by others and embodied by the individual. For a quick reference, here is a neat overview of these constructs:

Within the scope of this paper, this list is especially useful because of its incorporation of what is termed *migrant identity*. Exclusive of *migrant identity*, each of the identity types presented can be representative of any individual within any context. As this study is concerned with the L2I of a specific type of migrant group (*midshipmen* / EFL students), this part of the identity construct is suitable for distinguishing these individuals from other migrant groups (i.e., economic migrants, refugees, full-time international students, etc.) and evaluating representative data specific to these language learners.

### **Authentic Exposure and Interaction**

The component of the model that is meant to encompass the foreign context is labeled “Authentic Exposure and Interaction.” This facet can be viewed as the various settings within the larger foreign context that serve as the platforms that facilitate the TL-mediated encounters and experiences that potentially affect the L2I. As Kinginger (2009) mentions, “language learning in study abroad [foreign contexts, for the study at hand] is extremely complex, requiring researchers to choose between a large array of potential foci” (p. 207). So, with this in mind, “Authentic Exposure and Interaction” is meant to encompass all of the different environments and situations language students are exposed to while abroad.

## Target Culture and Target Language

Naturally, each of these plays a central role in how L2I is negotiated and altered, regardless of setting. While these two constructs are separated within the framework in order to identify sources of L2I influence more easily, it should be noted that they are fundamentally related and constantly affect one another. The definition of the term *culture* in this paper is meant to be synonymous with Kramsch's (1998, p. 127) notion that culture is "the membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and a common system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, and acting" (as cited in Nunan & Choi, 2010, p. 3). The broad categories which comprise the *Target Culture* (TC; see Figure 4) component of the framework are derived from this definition and consist of the sub-constructs *perceptions*, *beliefs*, and *practices*. It should be noted that these sub-constructs are not to be viewed as definitive characteristics representative of every member of the TC, but rather from a critical standpoint, always considering the individualistic nature of human beings and that "as individuals we belong simultaneously to multiple cultures and sub-cultures" (Nunan & Choi, 2010, p. 3).

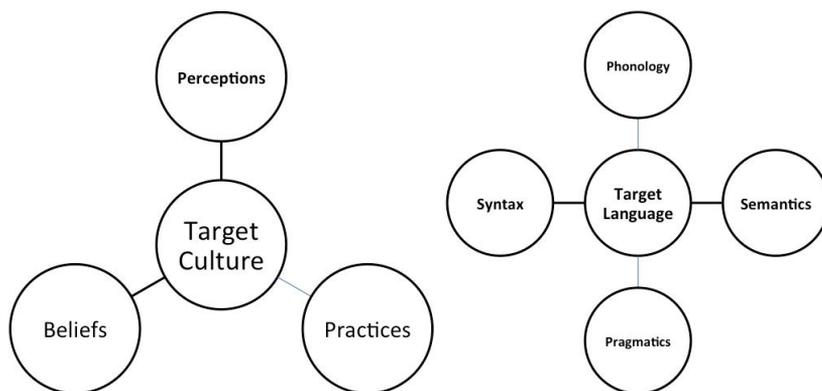


FIGURE 4. Target Culture and Target Language. (Adapted from Kramsch, 1998)

The pieces that comprise *Target Language* (see Figure 4) consist of all the characteristics of the TL being studied, which include the *phonology*, *syntax*, *semantics*, and *pragmatics* of the language. These broad categories are meant to serve as a reference for practitioners to

identify any language-related sources of influence on L2L.

## CONTEXT

The Republic of Korea Naval Academy is a four-year college located in Jinhae, South Korea. Admissions are competitive in that admitted students, or *midshipmen*, must score within the top one-tenth percentile on the Korean College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT / 수능) and pass a series of interviews, one of which is conducted in English (Park, 2016). The institution gives high priority to English as a foreign language, which manifests itself in the form of required courses for the entire student body regardless of major. These courses include English Conversation, General English, and English Linguistics. In addition to these courses, students must achieve a set English proficiency score on the Test of English Proficiency (TEPS) if they are to continue with their education (TEPS is an English proficiency assessment popular among military-service institutions in South Korea. Educational institutions and employers also use the results from this test to evaluate English proficiency.). Students can choose between nine different majors, each of which contains various concentrations to choose from. The midshipmen's time at the Academy all culminates in cruise training, where students spend their last semester on a warship traveling to different ports around the globe. The participants of this study stopped in Japan, Russia, the United States (Guam and Hawaii), Tahiti, New Zealand, Australia, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam.

These students' experiences on cruise training are unique and differ greatly from those of traditional study abroad or international students in a variety of ways. Namely, their reason for being abroad is highly specialized, as the time they spend in each host country is very short (about three days), and they do not attend formal classes. During cruise training, the students must use English with native speakers or as a lingua franca with members of various host nations if they wish to communicate. Many of their English-mediated interactions are organized, in the form of reception dinners with members of the host nation, and they do not participate in formal English education while abroad. However, their time abroad provides them with various opportunities to employ their English skills, which they have been acquiring in school

since at least the third grade of elementary school, to communicate with individuals from various countries. While English language acquisition is not an objective of cruise training, it is understood and emphasized that their language ability is an integral skill to draw upon when the situations arise.

Cruise training provides a valuable and unique research opportunity for those interested in sociolinguistics. The students are exposed to a variety of different contexts and must interact with members of many different countries. It serves as a chance to look beyond formal instruction and standardized assessments in the learner's home environment. For most of the students, it is their first time using their English abilities pragmatically in real-life situations outside of the EFL classroom.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Objectives**

The all-encompassing aim of this study is to evaluate the effect, if any, that traveling to different countries as part of a school requirement has on the L2I of these EFL university students. It is hoped that the findings can be used to build the body of research concerned with the relationship between L2I and foreign contexts. It is also anticipated that the insight gathered from the data collected will have beneficial pedagogical implications for future EFL students who are invested in foreign travel. Accordingly, the primary aims of this pilot case study are two-fold and consist of the following objectives:

1. To propose and apply a framework for evaluating and identifying potential sources of L2I influence in foreign contexts.
2. To utilize this framework to investigate how the L2Is of midshipmen are affected by being exposed to English in authentic international contexts during cruise training.

### **Participants**

The participants were twelve of the seniors at the Republic of Korea

Naval Academy who participated in cruise training. They represented six different majors and had TOEIC scores ranging from 750 to 950 prior to cruise training. Academically, these students were unique from their counterparts who attended “normal” universities because of the specialized curriculum at the academy, which includes a variety of nautical- and military-focused coursework. Professionally, they will differ because they will all have identical jobs upon graduation (that of a naval officer). Additionally, the participants were long-time EFL learners who have limited or no experience abroad.

## Data Collection

A post-structuralist approach was utilized in the methodology of this research. The rationale for applying this perspective was for its potential to account for the ambiguous individualistic nature of each trip abroad and the complexity of the different contexts.

Student narratives were collected using questionnaires and interviews in order to collect the qualitative data used in this study (see Appendix for the complete questionnaire). Twelve midshipmen filled out the questionnaire voluntarily, and three of these same students were interviewed about their experiences abroad. In the interviews, students were asked to elaborate on their answers to the questionnaire in order to collect supplemental narrative content. Each interview lasted about 15 minutes and salient portions (as decided by the author) were transcribed on the spot in note form by the author. Ideally, a larger sample would have been interviewed; however, resources did not permit this. The interviewees were not chosen randomly. Two of these students were in positions of power during their time abroad and the other had previously expressed a high level of English conversation interest and ability. The rationale for choosing these three students was in the hope that their positions of power and expressed interest in English conversation would facilitate thoughtful and varied accounts of their English-related experiences abroad.

The questionnaire was written in both Korean and English to ensure student understanding and was administered one month after the students returned from cruise training. All responses were responded to in English. The questionnaire contained background questions (e.g., student major, TOEIC score, etc.), but mainly consisted of eleven questions that were separated into two sections (“before cruise training” and “after

cruise training”), and was designed to identify phenomena related to English language usage and effects on L2I while abroad.

## **Data Analysis**

The L2I in Foreign Contexts theoretical framework functions as an analytical framework as each of its constructs and sub-constructs can be used to identify and categorize the L2I-related qualitative data gleaned from narratives. In this study, the narrative data from the questionnaire and interview responses were categorized into each of the outer constructs (identity, target culture, and target language). Then, the most salient accounts where L2I may have been effectively renegotiated were analyzed further by evaluating their relationship, if any, to the other outer constructs and then to the sub-constructs of L2I.

## **FINDINGS**

### **General Results**

In Benson et al.’s (2013) L2I study of Chinese students studying English in various English-speaking countries, it was found that some of the students may have experienced “a shift from second language ‘learner’ to ‘user’ identities ... because they were at a stage where they had been studying English for many years without ever having used it to any great extent for spoken communication” (p. 190). While this study was conducted in a different context (that of study abroad), it seems that some of the midshipmen experienced a comparable change in L2I from being exposed to English in authentic foreign contexts as opposed to the domestic EFL classroom.

As anticipated, all of the students engaged in some form of English conversation while abroad. It was revealed that all but two of the students experienced a change in perception about the importance of English as a result of their time abroad. Eight out of the twelve students had a more positive perception of English as a result of cruise training. The students who had a positive change in perceptions cited reasons such as English’s importance for their careers and its usefulness in “communication with diverse people” for this change.

The data also provided insight into the role of L2 ability. Three of the midshipmen explicitly stated that their experiences abroad led to the realization that their English ability was not proficient enough to participate in English-mediated conversations the way they wanted to. Each of these students also expressed their motivation to “study English harder” in order to have better conversations in the future. Finally, four students expressed the notion that their time abroad confirmed their predetermined stance that English is essential to communicate in the international community. It was also found that there was no noticeable relationship between English ability (as judged by TOEIC scores) and the students’ experiences abroad.

## **L2I-Related Results**

“Every time we speak, we are negotiating and renegotiating our sense of self in relation to the larger social world, and reorganizing that relationship across time and space.” (Norton, 2010, p. 350). With this notion of identity-shift as a result of specific speech acts in mind, one of the questions incorporated in the questionnaire in hopes of eliciting instances where specific interactions with members of the host country may influence L2I was “What is your most memorable interaction in English from cruise training?” This question elicited the richest L2I-related responses. The following are four noteworthy cases where L2I may have been effectively renegotiated as the result of English-mediated interaction in different foreign contexts (each will be elaborated upon in the Discussion section).

### **Relationship between *national identity and the target culture***

This account comes from a midshipman who was traveling by taxi while in Australia. After asking where the student was from, the taxi driver remarked upon the sensitive political climate in the student’s home country at the time (this was in reference to the South Korean presidential scandal that coincided with cruise training during the fall semester of 2016) and proceeded to comment that the South Korean president was “too strange!” The student expressed their feelings about this interaction afterwards by saying, “I’m sad because our country’s fame fell down. It was not comfortable.”

**Relationship between *perceptions and the target culture***

One account of a midshipman interacting with Singaporeans provides an example of how an individual's preconceived notions of what a native speaker of the TL should sound like can lead to a change in their L2I. This student commented that they were surprised that their interlocutors were from Singapore because they spoke with a Chinese accent that was difficult to understand.

**Relationship between *social identity and power relationships***

A more positive example of when L2I may be impacted as the result of one interaction in the TL can be seen in the case of a midshipman in a restaurant in Hawaii, USA. As the midshipman was wearing their dress uniform while touring the city, a woman came to their table to express her gratitude for their military service. The midshipman noted feeling "proud" about this comment and cited it as the most memorable English-mediated interaction they had while abroad.

**Relationship between *L2 ability and the target language***

One account that provided insight into how English-mediated interactions in authentic scenarios may lead to conclusions about *pragmatics* was when a student remarked that EFL students "don't have to sincerely take care of using grammar or word order [when speaking English to foreigners]".

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Concerning the Framework**

Firstly, the findings of this study suggest that the methodology implemented, specifically the proposed framework, proved to be effective in collecting, identifying, and analyzing prospective L2I-related data. The answers and narratives provided by the participants were also helpful in understanding the complexity and challenges of researching L2I in foreign contexts. It quickly became apparent that even though this framework was helpful for identifying and categorizing relationships between its different components, the magnitude of the potential relationships that come into play during each account still makes for an

overwhelming amount of information to navigate through. The utopian idea of creating a holistic design for this field of research may be realized someday, but today is not yet that day. Although this framework may serve to holistically comprise the basic aspects of L2I (as provisionally defined), it still falls short in its ability to identify other aspects that certainly come into play within this context (i.e., personality traits such as confidence). Currently, the idea that “language learning in study abroad contexts [and foreign contexts in general] is extremely complex, requiring researchers to choose from a broad array of potential foci” (Kinginger, 2009, p. 207) may still ring true, but hopefully the framework used in this study is a step towards a clearer outlook on this scenario.

### **Concerning the L2I of the Midshipmen**

Secondly, the results of this study provided insight into how the L2I of some of the midshipmen may have been influenced by cruise training. While some of these results were more convincing than others, it must be noted that when evaluating something as theoretical as L2I it is difficult to make any conclusive statements about how exactly it is affected. As this is the case, many of the insights into L2I, as derived from the evaluation of specific accounts, are not meant to be presented as conclusive findings, but simply as insights and hypotheses. The following deductions are extrapolations on the findings from the four salient interactions found in the L2I-related results section of the Findings. They explore the potential consequences of English-mediated interactions in relation to L2I.

#### **Relationship between *national identity and the target culture***

The idea that language and attitudes are inseparable and the notion that “on-going social, economic, and political changes affect these constellations, modifying identity options offered to individuals...” (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, p. 1) offers valuable insight into the relationship between identity and language and is especially relevant when evaluating the case of the midshipman and the taxi driver. This interaction exemplifies how L2I can potentially be renegotiated due to the relationship between the learner’s *social and national identities* and the *perceptions* of an interlocutor from the TC. While it is not known how the rest of the interaction in the taxi played out, it can be concluded

that the student felt awkward and disappointed about this interaction. This feeling was also most likely augmented because of the fact that Korean military personnel were not at liberty to express their own personal opinions about this political situation at the time. Interactions like these can effectively alter an individual's L2I and partially dictate how they interact in future conversations. It is possible that this experience had an effect on the student's L2I in terms of *investment* and more specifically in terms of *perception* and *motivation*. This negative interaction with a member of the TC could potentially cause a change in *perception* about the TC as a whole and lead to a decreased *motivation* to converse with interlocutors from that TC in the future.

Overall, this account exemplifies how the *national identity* of the student and the *perceptions* of a member of the TC may have had an impact on the learner's L2I in terms of their *investment* in the TL.

#### **Relationship between *perceptions and the target language***

This experience that the student had when interacting with individuals from Singapore exemplifies how a student's L2I can be directly influenced by being exposed to a different variation of the TL in an authentic context. For further insight into the situation, it became pertinent to refer to Norton Peirce's (1995) *investment* framework, which includes the "socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language [i.e., perceptions]" (p. 17). In this case, this student's socially constructed relationship with English was heavily influenced by the popular Korean perception that native or proficient English speakers have an American or British accent.

This account demonstrates how the *investment* of the learner, in terms of *perception* of the TL, may have been renegotiated to encompass a more broad view of what it means to be a proficient English speaker because of this exposure to a different variety of "world Englishes."

#### **Relationship between *social identity and power relationships***

When evaluating the interaction experienced by the midshipman in the restaurant in Hawaii, it is necessary to reference the *power relationships* construct of L2I, which emphasizes that "one needs to consider both self-generated subject positionings as well as subject positionings that are imposed on individuals by others" (Block, 2007, p. 31). In this case, the midshipman's *social identity* (or *subject position* in Block's terminology) effectively changed upon entering the foreign

context due to the *perceptions* of members of the TC about the said *social identity*. In other words, in the student's home country of South Korea, their *social identity* of an armed service member is not perceived as magnanimously as it is in the U.S. To fully appreciate this occurrence, it should be understood that in South Korea all adult males serve for a mandatory two-year period in the armed forces and seeing uniformed soldiers in public is commonplace and is rarely the cause for excitement or public displays of gratitude. In contrast, in the United States, the opposite is not uncommon.

Although this account does not elaborate on this experience, there are some inferences to make about how L2I may have been renegotiated as a result of it. Firstly, this type of positive interaction is likely to have a positive influence on the individual's *perceptions* of the TC and speakers of the *target language*. Secondly, it is probable that the individual recognized that their *power relationship* with members of the TC was markedly different than the one they experience at home. One can postulate that these renegotiations of *perceptions* and *power relationships* may also influence their *motivation* to engage in more conversations with members of the TC in the future. While there is no way of knowing exactly how this interaction altered the manner of this particular midshipman's language usage in future interactions, it can be inferred that they were more aware of their *social identity* within this foreign context, and thus perhaps more socially and linguistically comfortable when interacting with locals as a result.

This interaction provides an example of how *power relationships* can shift as a result of an individual's *social identity* being perceived differently by members of the TC.

### **Relationship between L2 ability and the target language**

The observation that the midshipman made about not having to employ correct grammar when using English while abroad highlights a stark contrast between their domestic and international English experiences. Within the EFL setting, this student's *L2 ability* was typically heavily marked for proficiency in grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension skills; communicative competence was rarely emphasized and often overlooked in both the classroom and during formal assessment. Once this student entered the foreign context and realized that certain grammatical features were not necessary in order to be communicatively competent with their interlocutors, they degraded its

importance in favor of a more *pragmatic* approach to speaking.

Within the framework, this occurrence displays how *perceptions* of *L2 ability* are altered after leaving the EFL setting and experiencing *authentic exposure* and *interaction* in a foreign context.

## Limitations

A key limitation to this portion of the study was that many of the accounts selected for evaluation were not as comprehensive as they ideally could be. Although they all provided thought-provoking examples of instances that may impact L2I, only a small portion of the students' experiences were recorded due to limited data collection methods. These accounts were also collected weeks after these interactions actually occurred, so the student recollections of these interactions may not have been as detailed as they may have been if they were recorded sooner.

## Implications

### Research Implications

As displayed in the findings, it can be seen how the L2I in the Foreign Context framework can be utilized to analyze qualitative data collected from student narratives. While only a select few aspects of the constructs were employed within the results, it can be inferred as to how the various other aspects can be utilized by researchers to identify and explain L2I-related phenomena in foreign contexts.

Another key implication of this study is that it adds to the developing body of research concerning the relationship between language learner, identity, and foreign contexts. This research plays a role in the following call for the further investigation of this relationship:

There needs to be a broadening of what identity means and the range of subject positions explored in research ... more could be done on these all-important perspectives on identity and how they play out in study abroad contexts. But most crucially, there simply needs to be more studies, and more involving different nationality combinations as regards to sending and receiving countries. (Block, 2007, p. 222)

While the students at this institution are not study abroad students,

this study and any follow-up studies in this institution may offer a wide range of valuable insights into phenomena related to different subject positions and “different nationality combinations” because of the multitude of foreign contexts the students are exposed to during cruise training. Furthermore, in Sato’s (2014) review of L2I literature, she notes the lack of substantial attention to students’ perceptions of using language as a foreigner while abroad. It is believed that this study effectively takes the stance of valuing and investigating learner perceptions while abroad and enhances the scope of this body of research.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

While the main aim of this paper was to evaluate the effects that traveling abroad had on the L2I of the midshipmen, the findings also have useful pedagogical implications. This research can potentially be used to improve the English program in this institution (or comparable institutions) by better preparing students for what to expect socially and linguistically during their time abroad. English instructors and administrators can tailor course content to focus on the relevant speech acts necessary for navigating the situations faced by former students. Future students will benefit from this instruction because they can be assured that the course content has pragmatic value.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Considering the resources invested by both students and educational institutions to participate in international travel, research that might help improve these experiences in academic or social capacities could prove valuable. The value of L2I research is not only instrumental to the success of these international sojourns, but also invaluable pedagogically. Educators and administrators can use results from L2I studies to gain perspective and insights about the language education of their students. Additionally, it is hoped that further qualitative research concerning L2I in foreign settings will allow future researchers to incorporate more sound research methodology and continue to advance this developing field.

One aim of this paper was to propose a framework of L2I in foreign contexts as a reference to those interested in researching this topic. Besides providing an overview and visualization of the various aspects of

this environment, it also attempted to bridge the gap between theory and practitioners on the ground level in this field. For those invested in this research, it can serve as a more intuitive tool to connect the various data gathered from student narratives to the existing literature. Furthermore, upon evaluating the constructs of this framework, one can conceive how a potential future research direction could entail its alteration as a means to evaluate other groups of migrants (e.g., international students, economic immigrants, refugees) in any foreign context.

The ultimate goal for this study was to contribute to the creation of an accepted model for evaluating and explaining L2I in different contexts that can be intuitively applied to any learner in any context by practitioners in the field. It is hoped that eventually this framework can function within the field of sociolinguistics, just as Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs does within the field of psychology or as Krashen's (1981) theory of Second Language Acquisition is utilized in the field of applied linguistics, or just as any other countless number of widely accepted frameworks and models utilized in the social sciences.

## THE AUTHOR

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## APPENDIX

### English During Cruise Training Questionnaire

#### General Information

What is your major? (전공)	
What is your class rank? (등급)	
What is your TOEIC score?	
Do you consider yourself a good English speaker? (자신이 영어를 잘 하는 편이라고 생각하십니까?)	

*Before cruise training:* (완성된 문장이 아니어도 괜찮습니다.)

1. Had you been abroad before cruise training? (Circle) 순항 훈련전에 외국에서 체류한 적이 있습니까?	Yes / No  <i>If yes, where/why?</i>
2. Had you ever spoken to foreigners in English outside of school before cruise training? 순항 훈련전 학교외의 환경에서 외국인들과 대화를 해 본 적이 있습니까?	Yes / No  <i>If yes, where? why?</i>
3. How did you feel about English before cruise training? (Circle) 순항 훈련전 영어에 대한 이미지는?	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Negative      Neutral      Positive  <i>Why?</i>

*After cruise training:* (완성된 문장이 아니어도 괜찮습니다.)

<p>4. Overall, how do you feel about your experience? (Circle)                  순항 훈련에 대한 전체적인 견해는 부정직입니까 긍정적입니까?</p>	<p>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10                  Negative      Neutral      Positive   <i>Why?</i></p>
<p>5. Did you study, hear, or use English on the ship? (Circle)</p>	<p>Yes / No   <i>If yes, when?</i></p>
<p>6. Did you use English for work or official purposes?</p>	<p>Yes / No   <i>If yes, where? when?</i></p>
<p>7. Did you use English for social reasons?                  일상생활에서 영어를 사용해 본 적이 있습니까? (학과활동 외)</p>	<p>Yes / No   <i>If yes,when?</i></p>
<p>8. Did you speak to any native English speakers?                  영어 원어민과 말해 본 적이 있습니까?</p> <p>Did you speak to any non-native English speakers in English?                  영어 원어민이 아닌 사람과 영어로 말해 본 적이 있습니까?                  예) “네. 저는 중국인과 영어로 말해 본 적이 있습니다.”</p> <p>Did you notice any difference between the two?                  영어 원어민과 그렇지 않은 사람과 영어를 사용할 때 무엇이 다른지 알 수 있습니까?</p>	<p>Yes / No  <i>If yes, who? Where</i> _____</p> <p>Yes / No  <i>If yes, who? Where?</i> _____</p> <p>Yes / No  <i>If yes, how?</i> _____</p>

<p>9. What is your most memorable interaction in English from cruise training?          순항 훈련중 영어와 관련하여 인상 깊었던 에피소드가 있습니까?          - Who were you talking to?          - Where were you?          - What did you talk about?          - How did you feel?</p>	
<p>10. Do you think that cruise training changed the way you feel about English? How?          순항훈련이 영어에 대한 이미지를 바꿔 놓았습니까? 왜 그랬다고 생각하십니까?</p>	
<p>11. How did you feel about English after cruise training?          순항 훈련후 영어에 대한 이미지는 어땠습니까?</p>	<p>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10          Negative      Neutral      Positive</p>

# Language Identity in South Korea: A Study on Student Perceptions of Their English Proficiency Within an EFL Context

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This study was conducted in order to demonstrate the validity of language identity research in EFL contexts through quantitative research in the South Korean EFL context. A questionnaire was administered to 101 South Korean university students actively enrolled in a required university English course. Specific attention was given to verification of the existence of a language identity and its extent, the investigation of possible differences in learner language identity changes between students that have spent time studying English abroad and those that have not, and an exploration as to the possible impact of student perceptions of their own English proficiency on language identity and its extent. Six constructs for measuring self-identity change were adopted from Gao, Jia, and Zhou (2015). Results indicated that student perceptions of their English proficiency did have an impact on negative self-confidence with beginner-level proficiency students demonstrating the highest level of negative self-confidence change.

## INTRODUCTION

Most language identity research has taken place in English as a second language (ESL) contexts where English is an official language (Huang, 2013; Vasilopoulos, 2015). It is believed that ESL contexts provide higher levels of target-culture exposure, which validates self-identity while, in turn, making self-identity research in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts irrelevant (Gao, Zhao, Cheng, & Zhou, 2007). The argument that authentic language identity change exclusively takes place in ESL contexts is not only limited but also fails to consider the uniqueness and influential power of each individual EFL context.

The topic of identity has generated a wealth of research in the fields

of language education, social sciences, second language acquisition (SLA), and applied linguistics (Huang, 2013; Norton, 2013). Due to the number of fields interested in identity research, it is important to define what is meant by “identity.” Hall (1996) defines identity as a stable core self while Gao, Li, and Li (2002, p. 95) offer an equally simple definition of “who one is.” Identity has also shown to be of a dynamic and contradictory nature, often manifesting itself differently in multiple contexts (Block, 2006, 2007; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). However, Eastern scholars view identity as a sense of “being” or “becoming” as opposed to constructed, changing, or multiple (Phan, 2008, p. 64).

Rather than developing independently, identity is believed to be constructed through a coactive relationship with its context. Lave and Wenger (1991) have noted the importance of the social context in their theory of situated learning and conceptualize identity as relations between people, and their place and participation in communities of practice. Wu (2011) notes the inseparable relationship between the way we view ourselves and the social context, and argues that it is this mixture that constitutes identity while Norton (2013, p. 4) views identity as “the way a person understands his or her relationship to the world.”

Weedon (1997, p. 32) identifies the crucial role language plays in the construction of our sense of selves and uses the term “subjectivity” to include thoughts, emotions, sense of self, and ways of understanding one’s relationship to the world. Several studies have also shown the complex and multifaceted nature of identity while rejecting simplistic notions (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Leung, Harris, & Rampton, 1997; Morgan, 1997; Schecter & Bayley, 1997). The topic of identity has been cemented as a relevant and important research field and the *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education* attests to the fact (Norton, 2013).

## **Language Identity in the Chinese EFL Context**

Language identity research in the Chinese EFL context has provided strong arguments for expanding similar research into other EFL environments. The studies cited below provide various findings that relate to the present study.

Gao et al. (2002) explored the relationship between English language learning (ELL) and college students’ self-identity construction in a Chinese EFL context. An important finding was the crucial role the immediate learning context of the EFL classroom plays in the formation

of self-identity. Their findings concerning the important influence the immediate learning context exerts on the formation of self-identity is paramount to this present study due to the EFL classroom being where South Korean university students are most exposed to the English language.

A four-year longitudinal study on EFL learning and self-identity development conducted by Li, Gao, and Qian (2004) found that positive self-confidence change was the leading change among the participants while subtractive change started low and increased steadily. Additive, productive, and split changes (see Appendix for definition of constructs) experienced marked increases especially in the fourth year, which indicates that L2 identity research in EFL settings deserves more attention.

Gao, Cheng, Zhao, and Zhou's (2005) quantitative study on self-identity change showed that the Chinese EFL context did exert an influence on the learner's identities with self-confidence being the most prominent change. Rather than viewing self-confidence as a factor that influences language learning, the study viewed self-confidence as an outcome of English learning. The study also found that student's values and communication styles also experienced some productive and additive changes. These findings are important because they demonstrate the existence of a language identity among students within an EFL context and also observe a degree of change within the area of self-confidence. I believe similar results concerning self-confidence might be obtained within a Korean EFL context.

Gao et al. (2007) found that self-confidence change was the most notable self-identity change with the second highest score being zero change, which measures the absence of self-identity changes. This is important because it corroborates the findings of the Gao et al. (2005) study regarding self-confidence change as the prominent self-identity change. Furthermore, the study notes that productive change and additive change also underwent changes. Productive change relates to productive bilingualism and the positively reinforcing relationship between target language and that of the native language. Additive change relates to additive bilingualism and the co-existence of two sets of languages with each specified for particular contexts. Therefore, not only was self-confidence change the most prominent language identity change, but students also exhibited a level of positive reinforcement between both, the target language and the native language, and changes concerning

another language (English in this case) for specific contexts.

Another relevant study is Gao, Jia, and Zhou's (2015) four-year longitudinal study on EFL learning and self-identity development. The study found that positive self-confidence change was most prominent throughout the four years. Also, subtractive change started low and steadily increased while additive change, productive change, and split change increased in the fourth years as well. Split change attempts to measure the struggle between the languages and cultures, and the identity conflict that the learner may experience. Gao et al. concluded that within the environment of globalization, the capital value of English as a global language has been greatly increased and the possession of such capital means identity change, even in an EFL context.

### **Additive and Subtractive Bilingualism**

According to Hakuta, Ferdman, and Diaz (1987), Lambert's additive and subtractive bilingualism was an attempt to account for conflicting findings concerning the effects of bilingualism. Additive bilingualism takes place when a learner is able to acquire or "add" a second language while not losing any of the abilities of the first language and can be seen in situations where children of the dominant ethnolinguistic group in a society learn a minority language at school (Hakuta et al., 1987). One example of an additive bilingualism situation would be South Korean students learning English in school in South Korea. Another example of additive bilingualism would be where a language minority group's first language is maintained and heavily promoted in school, though socially subordinate (Hakuta et al., 1987).

Subtractive bilingualism, on the other hand, represents situations in which "a shift in direction of the second language" takes place (Hakuta et al., 1987, p. 301) at the expense of the first language resulting in a linguistic subtraction. The case of English and indigenous languages such as Inuttitut in Arctic Quebec may be the clearest example of subtractive bilingualism where the power of English simply pushes the child's heritage language aside and gradually replaces the heritage language (Wright, Taylor, & Macarthur, 2000).

Gao et al. (2005) highlight that not only does additive and subtractive bilingualism influence language but they argue that language identity changes as well. They note that additive bilingualism allows for the maintenance of the native language and cultural identity *and* the

acquisition of the target language and target cultural identity, while replacement of language and cultural identity are the consequence in subtractive bilingualism (Gao et al., 2005). Therefore, additive and subtractive bilingualism can be used as a means of measuring the extent that an immediate language context can influence a learner's language and language identity.

Drawing from Fromm's (1948) general social psychological concept of "productive orientation," Gao (2002) proposed "productive bilingualism" as an alternative to additive and subtractive bilingualism. When productive bilingualism takes place, competence in native and target languages and cultures are strengthened through a knowledge of each other (Bianco, Orton, & Gao, 2009). Productive bilingualism, therefore, *produces* a greater appreciation and understanding of the target culture and vice versa through the reinforcing command between the target language and that of the native language (Gao et al., 2005).

## Criticism of Research

Language identity research is not without its critics. Weiguo Qu (2005, p. 93) argues that the term "identity" lacks a clear definition as it is not a self-evident notion as assumed in the research. He suggests that a set of traits that define "identity" must first be established before valid identity research can take place. However, Qu's (2005) concept of identity aligns more with a structuralist view of identity that attempts to impose parameters on identity while failing to recognize the dynamic and contradictory nature of identity.

Another argument is that a linear cause-and-effect relationship between language learning and identity change has yet to be established (Qu, 2005). It is not entirely clear whether identity changes among the students can be exclusively attributed to English language learning since other sources are not ruled out (Qu, 2005). A structuralist approach assumes that there exists a linear cause-and-effect relationship in language learning. It cannot be proven that certain identity changes are exclusively attributable to language learning, and it is natural that identity change is associated with other factors (Gao, 2007). The lack of evidence showing an exclusive cause-and-effect relationship does not necessarily rule out the need to explore such complicated phenomena (Gao, 2007).

## Current Research

Most studies on identity have taken place in ESL contexts in Western countries where English is an official language (Huang, 2013; Vasilopoulos, 2015), making studies in EFL context quite limited in comparison. Possible reasons for this is that ESL contexts provide an abundance of target-culture exposure, which authenticates self-identity change, and secondly, self-identity change in EFL contexts are simply irrelevant (Gao et al., 2007). However, Norton and Toohey (2011) rightly argue that learner experiences in ESL contexts may not represent identity, and neither may L2 usage in localized contexts where English is not the native language. It is unjust to lessen the quality or validity of self-identity change simply because it takes place in an EFL context.

With reference to Korean English learners, Park (2012) posits that the infrequency of English use in real life in an English as a lingua franca context does not signal a lack of construction in their self-concept. Language learning is a mixture of one's own culture, target language culture, and behavioral norms that act upon the learner's self-identity (Gao et al., 2005). Thus, one could reasonably argue that each immediate context will delimit a language learning environment that will influence the language learner's self-identity.

## South Korea Context

Language identity research in South Korea is still in its infancy considering the limited amount of language identity research in this particular context. Nevertheless, the few studies within this context are relevant and insightful.

Park (2012) conducted a study on Korean English learners' identity in light of the three levels of self. The three levels of self consist of a "personal self" at the individual level, a "relational self" at the interpersonal level, and a "collective self" correspondent to social identity at the group level (Brewer & Gardner, as cited in Park, 2012, p. 235). The study found that Korean learners' interactive behavior tends to be governed by Korean sociocultural power relationships between Koreans, which heavily influences Korean learner's identity options. The identity option struggle, simply put, is the choice between being identified as a members of the target language/culture or being identified

as a figure appreciated by the Korean socioculture on the basis of empowerment. Thus, Park (2012) supports the argument that English as a lingua franca learner's identity should be examined through social practices within their sociocultural context.

Vasilopoulos (2015) conducted a qualitative study that also focused on L2 identity construction and how day-to-day use of English shapes self and social identity. The study found that despite the prevalence of English in the local context, opportunities for English use within the local context are still limited. Furthermore, native-like English speech among ethnic Koreans is discouraged, which pressures bilinguals to conceal their L2 identities. This suggests that additive change is more salient due to the necessity of choosing identities based on the context as opposed to the mutual fortification of both languages in productive change.

### **Purpose of this Study**

There are two particular consistencies that emerge from the above-cited studies. The first is that self-identity research in EFL contexts is valid and merits more research attention with regards to language identity change, and the second is that positive self-confidence change was consistently the most prominent change (Gao et al., 2002; Gao et al., 2007; Gao et al., 2015; Li et al., 2004). These two concepts were paramount in shaping the course of the present research project.

Considering the limited research concerning language identity in EFL contexts and using current language identity research in a Chinese EFL context as a guide, conducting a similar study within a South Korean EFL context would provide insight into South Korean student's perception of self-identity change and further validate the relevance of self-identity research in EFL contexts.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Questions**

As previously mentioned, research on self-identity change in EFL contexts is quite limited in comparison to research in ESL contexts, as

self-identity change in EFL contexts is looked upon as simply irrelevant (Gao et al., 2007). However, the results of Gao et al. (2005) and Gao et al. (2015) demonstrate that self-identity research in EFL contexts is valid and relevant.

Language is more than an instrument for communication as it consists of distinct cultural and behavioral facets whose interaction influences a learner's identity (Gao et al., 2005). It is reasoned that this concept will hold true within the EFL context of South Korea due to the early introduction of English language studies in public education. Therefore, I hypothesize that South Korean university students will have developed, to an extent, a language identity due to exposure to English at an early age within the public education system. The findings should support the premise that self-identity research in EFL contexts is valid and more in depth studies should be conducted in various EFL contexts. The research questions at the center of this study are:

1. Have South Korean English learners developed a language identity and, if so, to what extent?
2. Do learners' language identity changes differ between students that have studied English abroad and those that have not?
3. Is there an impact from student perceptions of their own English proficiency on language identity and, if so, to what extent?

## **The Participants**

The participants of this study were 101 South Korean university students comprised of 72 males and 29 females between 18 and 21 years of age, ranging from first- to fourth-year in their university program. The students were actively enrolled in an English course that was a core curriculum requirement for the department of Liberal Arts at a university in central South Korea. The course was taught by teachers from Canada, England, and the United States and was designed to develop speaking, reading, and listening skills as well as their overall communicative competence. Participants were taken from three classes taught by different instructors with an average class size of approximately 34 students. Student majors and proficiency levels were mixed throughout the three classes. The majority of the participants had approximately ten years of English education in the public school system as students begin

their English education in elementary school. Students were studying different majors of which none were English-related.

## Research Instrument Design

In order to assess the existence of a language identity and its extent, a questionnaire on identity change was adapted from Gao et al. (2015) and administered. The questionnaire consisted of two parts or sections. Part one of the survey consisted of thirty-three statements which were adapted to a six-point Likert scale ranging from 1, “strongly disagree,” to 6, “strongly agree.” A six-point scale was favored over the very common five-point scale in an attempt to lower ambiguity, as research shows that Asian students tend to choose the midpoint on a five-point scale more than students from other cultures (Chen, Lee, & Stevenson, 1995). Part two, the background section, was comprised of three questions relating to gender, studying abroad and a self-assessment of their English proficiency.

The questionnaire was translated into Korean and back-translated into English by two Korean colleagues in order to verify the equivalence of the texts as suggested by Dornyei (2010). Upon reviewing and discussing the texts, two modifications were made. The first modification involved statement 54 in the original questionnaire administered by Gao et al. (2015). The statement reads: “Since I began learning English, I have become more and more uncomfortable with such Chinese hospitality as insisting on putting more food on others’ plates at the dinner table.” My Korean colleagues and I agreed that this statement would not adequately reflect Korean culture and thus chose not to include it in the questionnaire.

The second modification was also an omission of statement 61 which states: “Upon hearing someone say to me, ‘You look so beautiful/handsome today’ in English, I always respond ‘Thank you,’ but if someone praises me in Chinese, I will respond in a Chinese way, ‘No, no, I’m not that beautiful.’” My colleagues and I could not reach a consensus as to the validity of this statement within Korean culture, and it was therefore decided to remove the statement from the questionnaire. Despite the omission of the above-mentioned statements, the modifications did not significantly affect the data analysis.

Due to the importance of the wording of the items in the questionnaire, it is crucial that a preliminary analysis be carried out in

order to determine the validity of the project (Bell, 2005; Dornyei, 2010). Thus, a small pilot study was administered prior to the main study to 38 students that were enrolled in the same course as those who participated in the main study. None of the students that participated in the pilot study were involved in the main study. The purpose of the pilot study was to ensure that the instructions were clear, to eliminate any ambiguity in the wording, to verify that each item was providing useful and relevant information, and to gauge the amount of time necessary for completing the questionnaire. The pilot study revealed minor changes that were necessary and made accordingly. Changes included modifying the layout of the questionnaire so that each page had a six-point Likert scale at the top and changing specific words in the Korean translation of the statements. The largest change revealed by the pilot study was the need of a background section for the independent variables.

A second pilot test was administered to a different group of students also enrolled in the same course as those who participated in the main study. The group of 28 students, none of which participated in the main study, received the revised copy of the questionnaire that included the layout changes, Korean word changes, and the inclusion of the background section. No changes were required and the questionnaire completion time was not affected by the new background section.

## **The Procedure**

The main study was conducted over two days with a total of three different classes in the summer semester of 2016. Students were informed about the nature of the study and that they were not obligated to participate in the study. The instructions were read out loud to the class with an emphasis on the importance of providing their honest opinions and that the questionnaire was not a test. Students were encouraged to ask questions with regards to any misunderstandings they had and they were then thanked for their willing participation in the study.

In order to identify and measure changes in self-identity, the following seven dependent variables were adopted from Gao et al. (2005) and Gao et al. (2015): positive self-confidence change, negative self-confidence change, subtractive change, additive change, productive change, split change, and zero change (see Appendix for a full description of each dependent variable). Once again considering the

constraints assigned to this research project, it was decided that limiting the background information section to two variables would allow for more comprehensible correlations to be established.

The first independent variable is whether students experienced any amount of time studying English abroad as the experience of studying outside of the Korean EFL context may have an impact on said student's language identity. The second independent variable is student perceptions of their own English proficiency and how it may affect their language identity. Context and language proficiency do have an impact on language identity (Gardner, 1985), and it would be interesting to compare the language identities of students that have and have not studied English abroad and how their self-perceived proficiency affects their language identity. The Appendix provides a brief explanation of each of the seven dependent variables and the statements that were used in this study.

## FINDINGS

### Reliability

**TABLE 1. Internal Consistency for Each Construct**

Subscale	Cronbach's Alpha
Self-Confidence Change (Positive)	.801
Self-Confidence Change (Negative)	.834
Subtractive Change	.727
Additive Change	.393
Productive Change	.687
Split Change	.668
Zero Change	.669

When using multi-item scales to measure a construct, one must ensure that the scales are reliable. One of the most important aspects of reliability is the internal consistency of the scale, which refers to how well the items come together to measure the same construct (Pallant, 2010). Therefore, the first stage of analysis involved ascertaining the

reliability of the items used for measuring each construct that were adopted from Gao et al. (2015). This was done by measuring the internal consistency of the items in each of the seven constructs by using Cronbach’s alpha (see Table 1).

The results for most of the scales ranged between .668 and .834, which is within the acceptable range with the exception of additive change at .393. Ideally, Cronbach’s alpha coefficient should be above .7 with coefficients in the .8 range being preferable (Pallant, 2010). However, it should be noted that Cronbach’s alpha values are sensitive to the number of items in the scale and with less than ten items in a scale, it is common to find Cronbach values as low as .5 in some cases (Pallant, 2010). Notwithstanding, the additive change scale still falls below the .5 range for short item scales with a .393 value. Briggs and Cheek (as cited in Pallant, 2010) suggest using the mean inter-item correlation for the items and recommend an optimal inter-item correlation range of .2 to .4.

**TABLE 2. Mean Inter-item Correlation Matrix for Additive Change Scale**

	Additive Change Statement 2	Additive Change Statement 17	Additive Change Statement 21	Additive Change Statement 29
Additive change Statement 2	1.000	.106	.100	.239
Additive change Statement 17	.106	1.000	.108	.287
Additive change Statement 21	.100	.108	1.000	.018
Additive change Statement 29	.239	.287	.018	1.000

Table 2 illustrates the results of the of the inter-item correlation matrix for the scale of additive change. Four out of the twelve values narrowly came within Briggs and Cheek’s (as cited in Pallant, 2010) acceptable mean inter-item correlation range of .2 to .4. Furthermore, the Cronbach alpha coefficient of internal consistency was far below the accepted .7 value. Due to the above reasons, it was decided that the additive change scale was unreliable and was not included in the findings.

## Existence of a Language Identity

The first research question intends to establish the existence of a language identity and its extent among university students in South Korea. Six constructs for measuring self-change were adapted to the local Korean context from Gao et al. (2015) and also used for measuring self-identity change among Korean university students. The six constructs are positive self-confidence change, negative self-confidence change, subtractive change, productive change, split change, and zero change. A higher mean score indicates a higher level of agreement as the Likert scale scores a 1 as “strongly disagree” and a 6 as “strongly agree.” Table 3 lists the average mean scores for each of the six dependent variables.

**TABLE 3. Average Mean Score for All Students**

Constructs	Mean Score	Std. Dev.	Sig. Values
Self-Confidence Change (Positive)	4.19	.913	.095
Self-Confidence Change (Negative)	3.75	1.08	.092
Zero Change	3.53	.891	.926
Productive Change	2.97	.853	.318
Split Change	2.22	.793	.068
Subtractive Change	2.05	.801	.010

The average mean score for all 101 participants surveyed shows that positive self-confidence change, negative self-confidence change, and zero change exhibited a certain level of change. The first variable and most notable change is positive self-confidence with an average mean score of 4.19. The second highest average mean score is negative self-confidence change at 3.78 followed by zero change with a 3.53 average mean score. Such average mean scores merit a more in depth look at each of the three constructs and should allow for a better understanding as to what particular areas are most influenced.

Due to the limitations of this study, only the constructs that demonstrated a positive degree of change will be further discussed in the next sections. The constructs to be discussed are positive self-confidence

change, negative self-confidence change, and zero change (no change in self-identity since learning English). The following sections present observations of the data and are in no way definitive due to the lack of statistically significant differences between all of the constructs. Therefore, a tentative interpretation of the observations is warranted.

### Self-Confidence Change

**TABLE 4. Frequency Distribution of Positive Self-Confidence Change**

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Standard deviation	Mean
11. Whenever I overcome a new difficulty in English learning, I find myself becoming a better self.	3.9%	5.9%	16.7%	40.2%	22.5%	9.8%	1.24	3.98
15. I feel proud of myself when I finish writing an email message in English to my satisfaction.	2.9%	4.9%	7.8%	35.3%	32.4%	16.7%	1.17	4.39
18. My self-confidence keeps growing along with the improvement of my English language competence.	4.9%	1.0%	4.9%	38.2%	38.2%	12.7%	1.12	4.42
20. The more fluently I can speak in English, the better I feel about myself.	2.9%	1%	3.9%	28.4%	44.1%	19.6%	1.05	4.68
22. I get higher scores in English exams, which make me feel more confident in interacting with my classmates.	14.7%	11.8%	15.7%	31.4%	19.6%	6.9%	1.48	3.5
<b>Average Mean Score</b>								<b>4.19</b>

Positive self-confidence change measures the positive change in one's perception of one's own competence. The direction of self-confidence change can be positive, negative, or zero change. This construct aims to measure the extent of positive change. Table 4 summarizes the frequency distribution and standard deviation for the positive self-confidence change construct. The numbers next to each statement correspond with the item numbers on the questionnaire.

An examination of the frequency distribution and mean scores of student responses to the five items measuring positive self-confidence change show that students have a relatively high level of self-confidence with the majority of the responses falling within the "slightly agree" and "agree" categories. The mean scores for the construct ranged from 3.5 to 4.68 with an average mean score of 4.19, indicating that the majority of the responses fared within the positive end of the scale. Standard deviation measured within acceptable standards of  $\pm 2$  with scores of 1.05 and 1.48, which suggests homogeneity of variance among participants as far as the rating of the items.

Students seem to exhibit reasonably high levels of positive self-confidence change in connection with overcoming English learning challenges, improvement in language competence, and fluency. Item 20 received the highest mean score of 4.68, which can suggest that student self-perceived fluency has a relatively strong impact on their self-confidence. In contrast, item 22 had a more uniform distribution throughout the categories when compared to the other four statements, with a mean score of 3.5 and the highest "strongly disagree" score of 14.7%. There are several possibilities for this outcome, with the first being that students may feel that high scores on English exams do not translate into confidence. The second may be that while high scores on English exams do increase confidence in oneself, they do not necessarily increase confidence in interacting with classmates. Finally, students may not feel that high scores on English exams have any bearing on language competence and fluency, which can also translate into a lack of interaction among classmates.

Negative self-confidence change measures the negative change in one's perception of one's own competence. It seeks to measure self-confidence change in a negative direction as opposed to a positive direction or no change at all. Table 5 below summarizes frequency distribution and standard deviation for the negative self-confidence change construct.

The frequency distribution and mean scores of student responses to the five items measuring negative self-confidence change show that students do experience negative self-confidence change when investing in English learning and experiencing little improvement. This is evident in that 46.1% of the participants agreed with item 1 with a mean score of 4.53. Similarly, item 6 had the second highest “agree” percentage with 32.4% and a mean of 4.00. The data seems to indicate that students feel most discouraged when the return on their language investment is not reflected in their level of progress.

**TABLE 5. Frequency Distribution of Negative Self-Confidence Change**

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Standard deviation	Mean
1. I feel no confidence in myself when I invest much in English learning but make little progress.	1.0%	7.8%	4.9%	21.6%	46.1%	17.6%	1.22	4.53
6. I am very frustrated as I have hardly improved my competence in writing despite all the efforts I have made.	2.9%	11.8%	13.7%	26.5%	32.4%	10.8%	1.40	4.00
8. Poor listening comprehension has made me feel inferior to others when I try to communicate with others in English.	9.8%	16.7%	21.6%	29.4%	11.8%	9.8%	1.45	3.43
12. I would have doubt about my competence whenever I have setbacks in English learning.	3.9%	10.8%	24.5%	29.4%	22.5%	7.8%	1.29	3.76
25. I find myself inferior to other classmates because of my poor command of English.	25.5%	14.7%	16.7%	24.5%	11.8%	6.9%	1.58	3.02
<b>Average Mean Score</b>								<b>3.78</b>

Items 8 and 12 each had 29.4% of the participants “slightly agree” and the second highest percentages for “slightly disagree,” which could suggest that feelings of inferiority due to poor listening skills and doubts about one’s competence because of setbacks do not affect negative self-confidence change as much as a justification of time invested. Interestingly, 25.5% of the students strongly disagreed with item 25, which had the lowest mean score at 3.02 and highest standard deviation 1.58. It seems that the idea of “inferiority because of a lack of ability” created a divide among the participants as the 24.5%, the second highest percentage, slightly agreed in experiencing a level of inferiority due to a poor command of English.

### **Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) vs. Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA)**

Upon consideration of the dependent and independent variables related to each question, two potentially suitable analyses may be used: Analysis of variance (ANOVA) and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). A one-way ANOVA can be used analyze the impact of one independent variable (studying abroad) on a dependent variable (six language identity constructs), which means more than one ANOVA must be conducted. Conducting an ANOVA for each independent variable, although relatively simple, increases the risk of Type 1 errors, which give the impression that a statistical significance has been reached when it actually has not. The MANOVA, on the other hand, has at least two advantages over ANOVA. First, it controls or adjusts for this increased risk of a Type 1 error, and second, it increases the chance of discovering changes by measuring several dependent variables instead of only one (Pallant, 2010; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2012).

In order to investigate the impact of student perceptions of their own English proficiency and studying English abroad on language identity, a two-way between-groups MANOVA was conducted using student perceptions of their own proficiency as the first independent variable and whether students studied English abroad as the second independent variable (see Table 7). The dependent variables were the six language identity constructs. Preliminary assumption testing was conducted to check for normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance with no violations recorded.

There was a statistically significant difference in the self-perceived English proficiency variable,  $F(1, 304) = 1.86, p = .010$ ; Wilks' Lambda = .621, partial eta squared = .112. In order to reduce the chance of a Type 1 error, which is finding a false significant result, Pallant (2010) suggests setting a higher alpha level by applying the Bonferroni adjustment. The Bonferroni adjustment is simply dividing the original alpha level of .05 by the number of analyses one intends on conducting. Thus, dividing .05 by 6 (because there are six dependent variables) creates a new Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .008. A closer examination of the six dependent variables shows that there was one statistically significant difference that falls below the new alpha level of .008 between self-perceived English proficiency (independent variable) and negative self-confidence change (see Table 7), which will be further discussed below. The partial eta squared, which represents the strength of the effect was .240. This represents 24% of the variance in negative self-confidence scores explained by self-perceived English proficiency.

Table 6 shows the results of the two-way MANOVA with the average mean scores and standard deviation for each of the five proficiency levels (beginner to upper intermediate) for students that have not studied English abroad and those that have studied English abroad. The average mean score and standard deviation for each construct is in the far right column.

### **Positive, Negative, and Zero Self-Confidence Change and Studying English Abroad**

Positive self-confidence change had a mean score of 4.16 for non-abroad students and 4.29 for abroad students (see Table 6). Although this statistic did not reach statistical significance, observation of the data suggests that studying English abroad was a more influential factor on abroad student's positive self-confidence. However, this observation should be interpreted tentatively since this statistic did not reach statistical significance and the number of abroad students was slightly less than 17% of all students surveyed.

Interestingly, the negative self-confidence change construct is the only statistic that does achieve statistical significance based on the MANOVA with a significant value of  $p = .000$ . However, the statistical significance is among self-perceived English proficiency (independent

variable of research question 3) and not for studying English abroad. Albeit, mean scores for negative self-confidence change for non-abroad students was higher at 3.85 than 3.24 for abroad students. A consideration of the data could indicate that non-abroad students felt a greater loss of confidence than abroad students overall. It would seem that the limited opportunities to use the target language in an EFL context coupled with a lack of significant improvement in proficiency might translate into a more negative perception by non-abroad students of self-confidence. Nevertheless, statistical significance was not achieved for the studying abroad (independent variable) and the negative self-confidence construct, and therefore a tentative interpretation of the results is merited.

The zero change construct also failed to reach statistical significance according to the MANOVA. The data shows that non-abroad students had an average mean score of 3.63 for the zero change construct while abroad students had an average mean score of 3.2. These numbers seem to indicate that non-abroad students feel that they have changed less than abroad students since learning English and suggests that learning context is the heart of this difference between the two groups.

**TABLE 6. Average Mean Score of Student Perceptions of Language Proficiency of Non-Abroad and Abroad Students**

Constructs		Proficiency Levels					Avg. Mean Score	
		Beginner	Post-beginner	Lower Interm.	Interm.	Upper Interm.		
Students that <i>have not</i> studied English abroad	<b>Self-Confidence Change (Positive)</b>	Mean	4.01	4.68	4.04	3.97	3.6	4.16
		Std. Dev.	.917	.555	.868	.871	.	.851
	<b>Self-Confidence Change (Negative)</b>	Mean	4.6	3.97	3.7	3.08	2	3.85
		Std. Dev.	.947	1.09	.888	.839	.	1.08
	<b>Subtractive Change</b>	Mean	2.02	2.33	1.78	2.26	2	2.07
		Std. Dev.	.602	.936	.781	.941	.	.825
	<b>Productive Change</b>	Mean	2.9	3.23	2.95	2.63	2.2	2.93
		Std. Dev.	.537	.883	.703	1.06	.	.808

Students that <i>have</i> studied English abroad	<b>Split Change</b>	Mean	2.53	2.26	2	2.23	2.8	2.25
		Std. Dev.	.781	.88	.724	.813	.	.805
	<b>Zero Change</b>	Mean	3.6	3.62	3.59	3.76	3.2	3.63
		Std. Dev.	.931	.767	.756	.897	.	.821
	<b>Self-Confidence Change (Positive)</b>	Mean	.	5.4	4.28	4.12	5	4.29
		Std. Dev.	.	.	1.88	.905	.	1.21
	<b>Self-Confidence Change (Negative)</b>	Mean	.	3.6	3.96	2.86	3.2	3.24
		Std. Dev.	.	.	.554	1.05	.	.981
	<b>Subtractive Change</b>	Mean	.	1.75	1.75	1.9	2	1.92
		Std. Dev.	.	.	.77	.603	.	.689
	<b>Productive Change</b>	Mean	.	3.4	2.92	3	4.6	3.09
		Std. Dev.	.	.	1.33	.952	.	1.05
	<b>Split Change</b>	Mean	.	1.6	2.4	1.88	3	2.08
		Std. Dev.	.	.	1.02	.551	.	.748
<b>Zero Change</b>	Mean	.	2.6	3.6	3.12	2.6	3.2	
	Std. Dev.	.	.	1.34	.895	.	1	

Note. Interm. = Intermediate

**TABLE 7. Significant Values for Between-Subjects Test**

Constructs	Abroad Variable Sig. Value	English Proficiency Sig. Value	Abroad and English Proficiency Sig. Value
Self-Confidence Change (Positive)	.138	.403	.764
Self-Confidence Change (Negative)	.623	.000	.659
Subtractive Change	.857	.548	.507
Productive Change	.068	.570	.293
Split Change	.777	.274	.416
Zero Change	.167	.750	.600

## Self-Perceived Proficiency and Language Identity

To better understand the findings, Table 8 presents the number of students in every proficiency category. It also separates the students into non-abroad and abroad student categories while providing the percentages that make up each proficiency level.

**TABLE 8. Student Proficiency for Non-Abroad and Abroad Students**

Proficiency Level	Non-abroad Student Number	Non-abroad Percentage	Abroad Student Number	Abroad Percentage
Beginner	22	21.8%	0	0%
Post-beginner	20	19.8%	1	0.9%
Lower-Intermediate	24	23.8%	5	4.9%
Intermediate	17	16.8%	10	9.9%
Upper-Intermediate	1	0.9%	1	0.9%
Total	84	83.1%	17	16.6%

One of the first things that stands out from Table 8 is that, of the 17 participants that studied English abroad, none felt that their English was at the beginner level. This suggests that students felt their proficiency improve based on their experiences abroad. There are however many other factors that may have contributed to the feeling of an increase in proficiency for abroad students. Such specific factors are beyond the scope of this study; nonetheless, abroad students felt their English proficiency was higher based on the above data.

## Negative Self-Confidence Change and Self-Perceived Proficiency

The negative self-confidence change construct is the only statistic that does achieve statistical significance (see Table 7), thus verifying an impact between self-perceived proficiency and language identity, specifically, negative self-confidence. To identify the extent of the impact will require a further analysis of the dependent variable that demonstrated a statistically significant difference.

When a statistically significant result is attained and an independent variable has more than three levels, it is necessary to conduct follow-up

univariate analyses to identify where the significant differences lie (Pallant, 2010). Therefore, a one-way ANOVA was conducted on the dependent variables that had significant values (negative self-confidence change in this case) to explore the impact of self-perceived proficiency on negative self-confidence change. The statistical significance for all proficiency levels was ( $F [4, 96] = 8, p = .000$ ). Furthermore, the partial eta squared value was .294 which would constitute a medium effect size according to Cohen (as cited in Pallant, 2010, p. 295).

Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the beginner proficiency level ( $M = 4.60, SD = .947; p = .000$ ) was significantly different from the post-beginner proficiency level ( $M = 3.95, SD = 1.07; p = .006$ ) and the intermediate proficiency level ( $M = 3, SD = .911; p = .006$ ). The upper-intermediate and lower-intermediate proficiency levels did not differ significantly from beginner, post-beginner, and intermediate proficiency levels.

The group reporting the highest negative self-confidence mean score is the beginner proficiency level at 4.6, followed by the post-beginner proficiency level at 3.97 and finally, intermediate proficiency level at 3.08. Referring back to Table 6 and comparing both groups (non-abroad and abroad students), negative self-confidence change for non-abroad beginner proficiency level students was the highest at 4.6 but steadily decreased as student proficiency improved. This seems to indicate that as students within an EFL context improve in proficiency, their negative perception of their self-confidence decreases. This could potentially be due to students' better understanding the role of English as a means of communication rather than the measure of one's ability.

## **Zero Change and Self-Perceived Proficiency**

The zero change construct is where the most notable difference between groups takes place. Although not statistically significant, it is worth observing that non-abroad student average mean scores are higher than abroad students (see Table 6), which could mean that many non-abroad students feel they have not changed since learning English. Abroad student's lower average mean scores may suggest that they acknowledge a certain level of change. This data brings attention to a shortcoming of the EFL context as the limited amount of classroom exposure to English language and culture is not enough to have students feel that they are changing. However, the limited size (less than 17%)

of the students that studied English abroad and reported their self-perception of English (less than 1% in some cases, see Table 8) does not adequately represent the whole population.

## RESULTS

### Positive, Negative, and Zero Self-Identity Change

Korean English learners have not developed a language identity, based on the absence of statistically significant differences. Nonetheless, observations made from the findings of this study appear to show that positive self-confidence change registered the highest mean score among the six language identity constructs, which is in line with other recent studies into language identity in other EFL contexts (Gao et al., 2002; Li et al., 2004; Gao et al., 2005; Gao et al., 2007; Gao et al., 2015).

Students exhibited reasonably high levels of positive self-confidence change in connection with overcoming English learning challenges, improvement in language competence, and fluency. This also seems to support the claim by Gao et al. (2005) that self-confidence should be viewed as an *outcome* of English learning rather than viewing self-confidence as a factor that influences language learning. Since opportunities to practice English are quite limited, performance, competence and fluency become a strong influence on student's positive self-confidence.

Negative self-confidence change had the second-highest average mean score. Similarly, Gao et al. (2015) also recorded an increase in negative self-confidence change among Chinese first-year university students. The present study shows that students felt most discouraged when the return on their language investment was not reflected in their level of progress. This reveals the negative aspect of associating competence and fluency in English with self-confidence. Due to the South Korean EFL context, it would seem that students have bound, to an extent, their self-confidence (be it positive or negative) to perceptions of their own English competence. When students feel they are performing well, positive self-confidence may run high, but when performance is perceived to be subpar, then negative self-confidence may be higher. This is supported by the Gao et al. (2015) four-year

longitudinal study of university students in China, which noted a significant decrease in positive self-confidence and an increase in negative self-confidence in the freshman year, after which, both positive and negative self-confidence changes remained stable until graduation.

The third and final notable average mean score was that of the zero change construct. This finding aligns with the Gao et al. (2007) study that found zero change to be the second-highest ranking construct. Approximately half of the students that participated in this present study believe they do not experience change in spite of possessing a good command of English, while the other half believes that one can change as a person because of their English ability. One explanation could be what Park (2012) argues is the identity option struggle between being identified as members of the target language/culture and being identified as a figure appreciated by the Korean socioculture. This would suggest that the students that believe they do not experience change in spite of possessing a good command of English might actually wish to be more associated with the native Korean identity as opposed to being identified with target-language culture, while the other half of students seem to embrace, to an extent, being identified with the target-language culture.

### **Studying English Abroad and Language Identity**

The following section will discuss the findings relating to the second research question: Do learners' language identity changes differ between students that have studied English abroad and those that have not? Positive self-confidence change, negative self-confidence change, and zero change will be discussed in light of studying abroad followed by other observations.

Due to a lack of statistically significant differences among both groups, the study found that learner language identity changes do not differ between non-abroad and abroad students. Nonetheless, an observation of the positive self-confidence change construct did identify a difference between students that studied English abroad and those that did not. Abroad students demonstrated a higher average mean score than non-abroad students, which would indicate a difference in how abroad and non-abroad students measure their positive self-confidence. However, these findings are unsubstantiated, based on the lack of statistical significance.

An observation of the negative self-confidence construct also

measured a notable level of change between abroad and non-abroad students. Non-abroad students reported a higher level of negative self-confidence than abroad students. A possible explanation might be that non-abroad students are more critical of themselves when investing in the language in an EFL context yet not becoming more proficient. Though not achieving statistical significance, an observation of the difference in mean scores between the two groups seems to suggest that the learning context does play an influential role in students' perceptions of negative self-confidence. It is possible that due to the limitations of the Korean EFL context, student negotiation of self is coerced by an instrumental view of language (Gómez Lobatón, 2012) and, as a result, non-abroad students might feel more negatively impacted by the lack of development.

The zero change construct, though not statistically significant, also reported a difference between the two groups. In their own study, Gao et al. (2007) found that, after self-confidence change, zero change was the second-highest scoring construct, which emphasizes the instrumental nature of learning in EFL contexts and the shortage of target culture exposure. Non-abroad Korean student's language identity is developing within the Korean EFL context and is surrounded by native Korean language and Korean culture. Being that the EFL classroom is where the majority of the English exposure takes place, non-abroad students do not feel that they have changed much since learning English as social interaction takes place in native Korean. In contrast, abroad students were exposed to a greater amount of target language and culture, which in turn, affected change in their language identity. Having been immersed in the target language and culture in and out of the classroom may have afforded abroad students more learning experiences that influenced their language identity – experiences that are scarce in an EFL context.

### **Other Observations**

One more notable, non-statistically significant, difference emerges when comparing the two groups: the appearance of productive change among abroad students. Abroad students had an average mean score of 3.09 while non-abroad students' score was at 2.93 (see Table 6). The difference is relatively small, but it does indicate that abroad students experienced productive change, which is in line with the findings of

other studies (Gao et al., 2005; Gao et al., 2015; Li et al., 2004). In productive change, target language and native language positively reinforce each other, thereby producing a mutually beneficial relationship. Non-abroad students appear to not feel much of a reinforcing relationship between the target and native languages. I believe that, once again, the limited exposure to English of the EFL context accounts for such a view among non-abroad students as the ratio of target language to native language is quite disproportionate.

### Self-Perceived Proficiency and Language Identity

The final research question is “Is there an impact from student perceptions of their own English proficiency on language identity and, if so, to what extent?” The following section will solely discuss the negative self-confidence construct and how it is impacted by self-perceived proficiency, as it is the only construct that demonstrated a level of statistical significance.

### Negative Self-Confidence Change and Self-Perceived Proficiency

Negative self-confidence change is the only construct to have achieved statistical significance and, as such, ascertained the existence of a relationship between self-perceived proficiency and negative self-confidence, in particular. Post-hoc comparisons found that the significant difference occurred between beginner, post-beginner, and intermediate proficiency levels. Table 9 compares the average mean scores of non-abroad and abroad students among the three proficiency levels (beginner, post-beginner, and intermediate) that reached statistical difference.

**TABLE 9. Negative Self-Confidence Change Among Language Proficiencies for Non-abroad and Abroad Students**

Proficiency Level	Non-abroad Student		Abroad Student	
	Average Mean Score	Std. Dev.	Average Mean Score	Std. Dev.
Beginner	4.60	.947	.	.
Post-beginner	3.97	1.09	3.60	.
Intermediate	3.08	.839	2.86	1.05

The greatest difference took place within the beginner proficiency level as none of the abroad students felt that their English proficiency level fell into the beginner category. This finding seems to emphasize the difference in contexts. Gao et al. (2015) note that students within an L2 context perceive the increased capital value of English as a global language, and therefore, in my opinion, it is the possession of such capital in the form of English proficiency that becomes the measure for every student. Hence, a lack of improvement in English proficiency within an EFL context, despite having invested much time and effort, translates into higher negative self-confidence change.

These findings concerning negative self-confidence may prove helpful in understanding some of the limitations of the EFL context and how they can directly impact language learning. Through an understanding of language learner's identity within the sociocultural context of the EFL classroom (Park, 2012), instructors can develop materials to also incorporate the surrounding context rather than imposing a teacher familiar strategy that is entirely alien to the students of that particular context. Furthermore, an instructor's awareness of language identity in EFL contexts can aid them in helping students negotiate realistic language learning expectations.

## CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study expanded language identity research within the South Korean EFL context while furthering the argument for future language identity research in EFL contexts. This study revealed that South Korean university students did not exhibit language identity change. However, observations of the findings did support other results of other studies. A review of the literature emphasizes that identity is negotiated between the way we view ourselves and one's interaction with the social context (Gao et al., 2005; Norton 2013; Park, 2012; Wu, 2011). Thus, further investigation of possible differences in learner language identity between abroad and non-abroad students showed a difference among positive self-confidence change, negative self-confidence change, and zero change, though not statistically significant.

Upon exploring whether student English proficiency perceptions have an impact on language identity, the study revealed that an impact did

indeed exist. This is the most important finding as it was the only item to achieve a statistically significant difference. The extent of the impact was among the beginner, post-beginner, and intermediate proficiency levels and the negative self-confidence change construct. This finding seems to highlight a key difference between the EFL and ESL contexts in that beginner non-abroad students reported greater negative self-confidence than abroad students. Furthermore, as students perceived improvement in their English proficiency, negative self-confidence change also steadily decreased.

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## APPENDIX

### Description of Dependent Variables

Variable	Description
1. Positive Self-Confidence Change	Positive change in the perception of one's own competence. "Whenever I overcome a new difficulty in English learning, I find myself becoming a better self"; "I feel proud of myself when I finish writing an email message in English to my satisfaction"; "My self-confidence keeps growing along with the improvement of my English language competence"; "The more fluently I can speak in English, the better I feel about myself"; "I get higher scores in English exams, which make me feel more confident in interacting with my classmates."
2. Negative Self-Confidence Change	Negative change in the perception of one's own competence. "I feel no confidence in myself when I invest much in English learning but make little progress"; "I am very frustrated as I have hardly improved my competence in writing despite all the efforts I have made"; "Poor listening comprehension has made me feel inferior to others when I try to communicate with others in English"; "I would have doubt about my competence whenever I have setbacks in English learning"; "I find myself inferior to other classmates because of my poor command of English."
3. Subtractive Change	The native language and native cultural identity are replaced by the target language and target cultural identity. "I have found myself somewhat Westernized in thinking and behavior after I started learning English"; "I began to reject some of the Korean traditions after I started learning English"; "I often forget how to write Korean characters as I am immersed in English learning"; "I have become uncomfortable with some of the Korean traditions after I started learning English."
4. Additive Change	The co-existence of two sets of languages, behavioral patterns and values, each specified for particular contexts. "I enjoy the authentic English when I watch the English movies, just as I enjoy the authentic Korean when I watch the Korean ones"; "Whenever there is a controversial issue, I tend to go along with the Korean teachers, but argue with the foreign teachers"; "In writing personal statements for education abroad or socializing with foreign friends, I tend to value independence, while interacting with my parents or relatives, I prefer depending on each other"; "I can switch between English and Korean according to the needs of the context as if I have an automatic switch there."

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5. Productive Change	<p>The command of the target language and that of the native language positively reinforce each other.</p> <p>“English learning has allowed me to reflect upon the Korean language and tradition that I have always been taken for granted”; “The more I learned to appreciate English literature and arts, the more I am interested in the Korean literature and arts”; “My interest in learning other languages has grown since I started learning English”; “The improvement in my language skills in English has enhanced my appreciation for Korean”; “Learning English has enabled me to be more considerate and better able to communicate with others.”</p>
6. Split Change	<p>The struggle between the languages and cultures gives rise to identity conflict.</p> <p>“I often find myself torn between conflicting values since I started learning English”; “Sometimes I am confused whether I should be more of an individual or of a member of the collective as a result of my English learning”; “When eating out with foreign friends, I tend to wonder if I should pay the bill or go Dutch with them”; “When switching between English and Korean ways of behavior, I feel I am being torn in half”; “I tend to use some English words when I speak Korean, which makes me feel rather weird.”</p>
7. Zero Change	<p>The absence of self-identity changes.</p> <p>“It’s impossible for me to become a different person simply because I have learned to have a good command of English”; “Even if I can express myself in English, I am still what I used to be”; “Nothing has changed in myself since I started learning English”; “English learning has hardly any impact on me except for the improvement of language skills”; “It is so boring to talk about changes brought about by English learning. These statements are meaningless to me.”</p>

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## Metacognition: A Catalyst in Fostering Learner Autonomy for ESL/EFL Learners

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Learner autonomy and metacognition are well-established concepts in the domain of teaching and learning of a second or a foreign language, in general, and in the ever-increasing field of English language teaching (ELT), in particular. The key constructs of learner autonomy and metacognition, coined by Henri Holec (1980s) and John Flavell (1979), respectively, have individually drawn attention to the research. While the close relation of learner autonomy and metacognition has been acknowledged, their relationship and impact on teaching and learning a second or foreign language have not received as much attention as they deserve. This review article explores how the role of metacognition in fostering learner autonomy for ESL/EFL learners is examined in existing literature and concludes with implications for learner autonomy and metacognition for English learning in the Korean context. It also indicates the need of further research in order to gain comprehensive understanding of these two concepts in the domain of ESL/EFL.

*Keywords:* learner autonomy, metacognition, ESL/EFL learners

### INTRODUCTION

In the present linguistic world scenario, English enjoys the status of being one of the most widely spoken lingua franca in the world. Quite reasonably, universities incorporate English as “one of the major subjects” or “the language of instruction” (Yahya, 2012). Hasman (2000) mentions that “over 1.4 billion people live in countries where English has official [sic] status” (as cited in Yahya, 2012, p. 119). Moreover, “public schools and universities often require their students to demonstrate this [type] of competency in FL [foreign language] coursework prior to graduation” (Ganschow, Myer, & Roeger, 1989;

Ganschow & Sparks, 1987; as cited in Ganschow, Sparks, & Javosky, 1998, p. 248), which can be beneficial since exposure to certain aspects of the etymology of the language can help students in a variety of ways. For example, awareness of word roots (e.g., Latin and Greek) can help students gain “a deeper appreciation of the history and structure of the English language” (Archibald, Roy, Harmel, et al., 2006, p. 4), which can serve as a valuable learning resource.

For teachers, having this understanding of the English language offers students efficient teaching approaches and effective study strategies. For instructors conducting action research or sharing pedagogical practices in academic forums; this is of supreme importance as the result is the sharing of innovative language teaching ideas and strategies. One such area under discussion in educational forums is learner autonomy. Teachers need not only teach learners the linguistic skills they need but also the study strategies and the autonomy they need as language learners and for their lifelong needs. One of these essential skills is autonomy, not only in the classroom. According to Little (1991), learner autonomy is a buzzword that remains a current theme in the teaching and learning of English over the last few decades. Similarly, metacognition is another “promising new area of investigation” (Flavell, 1979, p. 906) and remains one of the “most dynamically and actively researched cognitive process(s) in areas of current developmental, instructional, and educational psychology” (Tobias et al., as cited in Mahdavi, 2014). The role of metacognition in achieving learner autonomy has been endorsed in the research literature (Anderson, 2008, as cited in Mahdavi, 2014; and in Gama, 2005; Goh, 1997; Guo, 2012; Harris, 2003; Paris & Winograd, 1990). While it is taken for granted that learner autonomy is required for successful language learning, this paper endeavors to explore the crucial role played by metacognition in fostering learner autonomy. Here, I will try to focus on learner autonomy and metacognition in connection with language learning with references to the existing literature and then the role of metacognition in enhancing learner autonomy in ESL/EFL contexts. The paper concludes with implications of how metacognition can enhance learner autonomy for ESL/EFL learners in different educational landscapes.

## LEARNER AUTONOMY

Learner autonomy is a much-heard-about issue in teaching and learning in the current EFL and ESL contexts. Since its coinage by Henri Holec in the 1970s, learner autonomy has been an ever-increasing field of attention. Therefore, learner autonomy has received a lot of attention from researchers in recent studies of English language teaching (Barfield & Brown, 2007; Benson, 2001, 2007; Burkert & Schwienhorst, 2008; Dam, 1995; Dickinson, 1987; Holec, 1981, 1988; Lamb & Reinders, 2006, 2007; Little, 1991, 2007, 2009; Murphy, 2008; Palfreyman & Smith, 2003; Smith, 2000). Accordingly, a number of definitions abound in the learner autonomy research literature (Benson & Voller, 1997; Dam, 1995; Deci & Flaste, 1996; Dickinson, 1987; Holec, 1981; Little, 2007; Littlewood, 1999; Nunan, 1995; Scharle & Szabo, 2000).

Holec (1981) defines the term “autonomy” as the ability to take charge of one's own learning whereas Dickinson (1987) defines it as the situation where the learner takes entire responsibility for his learning decisions as well as their implementation. Little (1991) elaborated the scope of learner autonomy by highlighting its essential components and emphasized the learner's ability to detach, reflect critically, make decisions, and take action independently. Benson and Voller (1997, p. 2) combine both the situation and the capacity in which the application of learner autonomy should be used:

1. For a *situation* in which learners study entirely on their own
2. For a set of *skills* which can be learned and applied in self-directed learning
3. For an inborn *capacity* which is suppressed by institutional education
4. For the exercise of *learners' responsibility* for their own learning
5. For the *right* of learners to determine the direction of their own learning

Little (2007) notes the shift of emphasis and indicates that learner autonomy is now a matter of learners doing things for themselves, implying that learners do not have to learn necessarily on their own. It means that teachers can participate in the process of learners gaining autonomy. Thanasoulas (2000) has appropriately addressed the issue by

considering “learner autonomy” as an umbrella term, which includes holistic efforts of learners, instructors, and institutions. It is true that learners should take the main responsibility of their learning, but teachers and institutions should extend support and cooperation to learners for them to gain autonomy. This is why it is noteworthy that learner autonomy should in no way be interpreted as “teacher-less learning” as teachers can play effective roles in helping learners achieve learner autonomy (see Sheerin, 1997).

It can be said that learner autonomy creates an opportunity for learners to actively engage in the learning process and to generate ideas rather than just respond to various stimuli. Being autonomous, learners establish a sense of ownership in their learning, and when they themselves decide on the goals and learning materials, they transform *objective, universal knowledge* into *subjective, individual knowledge* and experience learning reality, which they themselves construct and dominate (Holec, 1981). But again, learner autonomy does not happen automatically, nor is it an inborn attribute as Holec (1981) confirms, learner autonomy “must be acquired either by ‘natural’ means or (as most often happens) by formal learning, i.e., in a systematic, deliberate way” (p. 3). Conversely, the American psychologist, Deci (1996), believes that autonomy is one of three basic needs that we must satisfy if we are to achieve a sense of self-fulfillment. Moreover, he defines autonomy as being “fully willing to do what [we] are doing and embrace the activity with a sense of interest and commitment” (as cited in Little, 2007, p. 17).

In summary, learner autonomy help learners understand the goals of their learning program and take responsibility of their own learning by planning their learning objectives, monitoring the progress of their learning activities, and finally evaluating the effectiveness of their efforts (see Sultana, 2017). So, learner autonomy can also be considered as an attitude to learning, and as autonomous learners are motivated and reflective in nature, their learning is quite reasonably efficient and effective.

## **Learner Autonomy and Language Learning**

Much research has been conducted to explore the relation between learner autonomy and language learning (Barfield & Brown, 2007; Benson, 2001, 2007; Burkert & Schwienhorst, 2008; Dam, 1995;

Dickinson, 1987; Holec, 1981, 1988; Lamb & Reinders, 2006, 2007; Little, 1991, 2007, 2009; Murphy, 2008; Palfreyman & Smith, 2003; Smith, 2000), and the positive role of learner autonomy in the successful learning of language is also reported (Ablard & Lipschultz, 1998; Corno & Mandinach, 1983; Dafei, 2007; Zhang & Li, 2004). Little (2010) has mentioned a number of researchers, who have explored the role of learner autonomy in teaching different languages such as the teaching of English in a Danish middle school (Dam, 1995; Thomsen, 2000, 2003; Thomsen & Gabrielsen, 1991), of English and French in Norwegian secondary schools (Aase, Fenner, Little, & Trebbi, 2000), of French, German, Spanish, Italian, and Irish as extracurricular subjects at Trinity College Dublin (Little & Ushioda, 1998), of English as a second language in Irish primary and post-primary schools (Simpson, 2003, Little & Simpson, 2004), and of English as a second language to adult immigrants to Ireland (Little, Ridley, & Ushioda, 2002; Little, 2009).

In reference to the particular case of the Korean educational context, Lee (2008) points out that collectivism is at the heart of Korean culture and that it “presupposes interdependence and communalism” (p. 105), the consequence of which is to foster reliance on others. However, she shows that learner autonomy is “a universal trait that can be tailored to specific needs of a specific culture” (pp. 105–106) and that it is possible to promote learner autonomy inside and outside of the classroom through various activities. Equally, Finch (2004b) demonstrates how Korean university students have developed effective and autonomous learning by using self-reflective journals. He also states that “awareness of the learning process, when discussed in an ongoing manner (as lesson content) and reinforced by individual reflection, leads to positive modification of the affective factors which drive learning, and hence promotes effective, autonomous learning” (p. 399).

In essence, learners’ sense of autonomy makes them confident in the process of language learning. When learners are made to make decisions about their own learning, they become more engaged and motivated in learning. Smith (2008) notes that learners preserve both the power and right to choose what they learn. It is also evident from the research that if learners are involved in deciding on learning materials and activities, it helps them to foster learner autonomy (Benson, 2001, as cited in Balcikanli, 2010; Fenner & Newby, 2000; Nunan, 1999; Ryan, 1997). As a matter of fact, autonomy has a direct impact on language proficiency, evidence of which is provided in the research of Tanyeli and Kuter

(2013), who mention that there is a link between the development of learner autonomy and the growth of target language proficiency.

Little (2007) discusses the role of learner autonomy in relation to second and foreign language learning. He reports on three interacting principles that contribute to the success in second and foreign language learning: learner involvement, learner reflection, and target language use. He believes that it is most important for teachers to identify those areas where learners can make decisions and to be quick to handover the control of learning to learners as soon as they are able to take over. He also emphasizes that autonomy in language learning and language use should be considered as two sides of the same coin.

Learner autonomy is the center of language teaching theory and practice, and language learner autonomy should be considered an essential reality that language learners should look forward to. Success in language learning mostly depends on the extent to which learners are autonomous in their efforts of learning because autonomy entails the basics of successful language learning requirements such as motivation, self-reflection, selection of learning materials, monitoring and evaluating of learning progress, and most importantly, taking charge of learning.

## **METACOGNITION**

“Metacognition” was coined by John Flavell in the 1970s, and defined by Flavell (1979) as cognition about cognitive phenomena. In other words, metacognition refers to knowledge about and regulation of one’s cognitive activities in learning processes (Brown, 1978; Flavell, 1979). But it also is popularly known as “thinking about thinking.” In the context of learning, metacognition is the knowledge about and regulation of the cognitive processes during learning and thus can be referred to as “learning about learning” as well.

In his groundbreaking work, Flavell (1979) presents a model of cognitive monitoring in which he identifies four classes of metacognitive phenomena that act and interact among themselves: metacognitive knowledge, metacognitive experiences, goals (tasks), and actions (or strategies). Metacognitive knowledge is knowledge of the world that we store as cognitive creatures whereas metacognitive experiences refer to the cognitive or affective experiences that we gather during any

intellectual undertaking. Goals (or tasks) simply indicate the purposes of a cognitive enterprise, and actions (or strategies) are the means by which those cognitive goals are achieved.

However, Anderson (2002) divides metacognition into five primary components in his model of metacognition. He states that metacognition is the combination of diverse “attended thinking and reflective processes” and involves (a) preparing and planning for learning, (b) selecting and using learning strategies, (c) monitoring strategy use, (d) orchestrating various strategies, and (e) evaluating strategy use and learning.

Definitions of metacognition have been proliferated over the years (see Veenman, van Hout-Wolters, & Afflerbach, 2006, p. 6). As Goh (2014) has aptly pointed out, metacognition is a psychological construct and hard to fit into any unanimously approved definition. Researchers have categorized metacognitive components to serve their own research purposes such as “awareness of one’s own thinking, awareness of the content of one’s conceptions, an active monitoring of one’s cognitive processes, an attempt to regulate one’s cognitive processes in relationship to further learning, and an application of a set of heuristics as an effective device for helping people organize their methods of attack on problems in general” (Hennessey, 1999, as cited in Lai, 2011, p. 5). However, experts in the field agree with two major components of metacognition: metacognitive knowledge and experiences or regulation.

So metacognition is higher-order thinking that requires learners to employ “active control over their cognitive processes [while] engaged in learning” (Livingston, 2003, p. 2) and provides learners with the opportunity to monitor their cognitive processes and thus improve their learning by sorting out what to do and when to do it. In fact, it is not overstated when Schraw and Moshman (1995) emphasize the importance of metacognitive theorizing among school students so that they can improve their performance as well as understand their learning state in terms of performance and can grow as efficient learners. What is more, learners can possibly transfer their metacognitive skills in order to make wise and thoughtful decisions in life.

## **Metacognition and Language Teaching**

Some claim that metacognition is “the real key to learning” (Alvarez, 2010, p. 71) and “a powerful predictor of learning” (Cambridge International Exams, 2015). Kuhn and Dean (2004) report

that metacognition is “what enables a student who has been taught a particular strategy in a particular problem context to retrieve and deploy that strategy in a similar but new context” (as cited in Lai, 2011, p. 5); whereas Flavell (1979) agrees with the research conclusion that metacognition deeply impacts language aspects such as oral communication of information, oral persuasion, oral comprehension, reading comprehension, writing and language acquisition.

In his seminal article, Anderson (2002) establishes the decisive role of metacognition in second language teaching and learning. He points out that it is important that second language teachers should guide learners to understand what happens during the language learning process rather than just focus students’ entire attention on learning the language itself. His argument is that the understanding and controlling of cognitive process is one of the most essential skills that learners should develop because learners with strong metacognitive skills are more empowered second language learners.

Naznean (2010) shows the close link between metacognition and successful language learning. She emphasizes that the combination of various metacognitive strategies is an essential component of second language learning. She even goes to the extent of considering the teaching of metacognitive skills as a vital part of instructional time for a second language teacher and introduces three important factors that are to be considered in enhancing metacognition for learners: learners’ self-awareness, uncovering details of learners’ language acquisition, and the stages of preparation and planning for effective learning.

Admittedly, metacognition has a direct impact on cognitive enterprises such as learning language, and the role of metacognition in language learning would be “to select, evaluate, revise, and abandon cognitive tasks, goals, and strategies in light of their relationship with one another and with [learners’] own abilities and interests with respect to [language learning efforts]” (Flavell, 1979, p. 908). Equally, metacognition can be indicative of language proficiency: “successful and unsuccessful language writers could be distinguished by their metacognitive knowledge in each of three domains: (a) knowledge one holds about oneself as a cognitive processor, (b) task knowledge, and (c) strategy knowledge” (as cited in Wu, 2008, p. 87).

According to Goh (1997), metacognition has a direct impact on the learning process and even the outcome of learning. She finds in her study on Chinese students that those who are metacognitively aware are

more successful in English language listening. She also suggests that there is a link between metacognition and learner autonomy, and comments that being metacognitively aware of the various aspects of second language listening might pave the way to becoming more autonomous listeners.

Whereas Mordell (2016) has conducted research on implementing metacognitive strategies training with Korean adult learners of English and found a positive relation between metacognition and English language proficiency. While he points out that “Korean learners lack communicative fluency in English” (p. 135), he emphasizes the introduction of a metacognitive strategy-training program in the English classroom. As a matter of fact, he proposes that Korean learners of English should be introduced with metacognitive and other learning strategies at the earlier stages in order to accelerate their English proficiency. However, Korean English teachers need to play a pivotal role in this regard as Park (1997) declares that in Korea, “teachers do not teach English learning strategies in the classroom, resulting in the fact that Korean students are accustomed to only taking knowledge from their teacher” (p. 212).

It can be said that “going meta” is profitable for language learning and the good news is that we can teach metacognition (see Borkowski, Carr, & Pressely, 1987; Bransford, Sherwood, Vye, & Rieser, 1986; Cromley, 2000; Cross & Paris, 1988; Daley, 2002; Dignath, Buettner, & Langfeldt, 2008; Garner, 1990; Haller, Child, & Walberg, 1988; Hennessey, 1999; Hofer & Yu, 2003; Israel, 2007, as cited in Mahdavi, 2014, p. 532; Kramarski & Mevarech, 2003, as cited in Lai, 2011, p. 20; Kuhn, Shaw, & Felton, 1997; Schunk, 1990; Sperling, Howard, Staley, & Dubois, 2004). Not only that, Papaleontiou-Louca (2003) emphasizes that “metacognition, like everything else, undoubtedly develops with practice” (as cited in Mahdavi, 2014, p. 533).

More importantly, it is agreed that successful language learners use more metacognitive strategies than less successful learners and the relation between language proficiency and learning (metacognitive) strategy use shows a correlational relationship (Brown, 2000; Oxford, 1990, as cited in Paul, 2012; Reid, 1987, 1995, as cited in Ahmed, 2014).

Accordingly, there is no denying that metacognition and language learning are tied together. While metacognition enhances the process of language learning, learners who employ metacognition turn out to be better at language learning.

## Metacognition and Learners' Autonomy

Metacognition plays a crucial role in enhancing learner autonomy if we are to take learners' psychological state into consideration. Benson (2007) encapsulates the idea that the capacity to manage one's own learning depends upon certain underlying psychological capacities (p. 23). So, metacognition can be considered a building block of learner autonomy since autonomous learners display great engagement in planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning. Moreover, Alvarez (2010) confirms that autonomy is part of the palpable results students control at the end of the metacognition process (p. 73). As a matter of fact, metacognition in the form of conscious reflection initiates "the growth and exercise of autonomy in formal learning" (Little, 2010, p. 28).

In her research findings, Ismael (2015) reports that metacognition creates the foundation of learner autonomy. She argues that the premise of language success demands two important mental processes: (a) becoming self-conscious about what to do, where to go, or how to undertake the proper action to improve one's learning and (b) becoming independent, self-reliant, and accountable for one's own learning.

As the learner is the locus of learner autonomy, the focus on the learner's cognitive pattern is crucial. In line with this understanding, metacognition of learners should be given much attention in fostering learner autonomy. Yaylı (2010) points out in her research on reading strategies that metacognitive awareness is used more frequently by proficient readers than less proficient readers while such awareness enhances reading comprehension and leads to becoming an autonomous learner. She emphasizes that metacognition provides learners with control over their own learning process, and this is why metacognitive learners can become more successful readers (i.e., by regulating their comprehension and employing required strategies as appropriate). As metacognitive readers do not have to depend on the teacher, they become autonomous in their reading activities.

Metacognitive learners are aware of their learning process; they also know what they are supposed to do when their goals are not achieved. They find alternative strategies when they discover that a particular strategy is not working for them as Nisbet and Shucksmith (1986) postulate that learners grow perceptions of learning strategies in their ways of learning enterprise and these perceptions greatly influence their

selection of strategies. This is how metacognitive learners gradually become autonomous in their learning

## **Exploiting Metacognition for Achieving Learner Autonomy for ESL/EFL Learners**

As it is the learners who are to ultimately play an active role for the learning to take place, and thus the significance of learner autonomy becomes established. Similarly, as Mackey (1965) points out that good teaching may not guarantee good learning, eventually learners have to take responsibility of their learning; therefore, metacognitive strategies may bridge the gap. The incorporation of metacognition is a particularly effective way, considering its impact in initiating and enhancing learner autonomy. Now in the current context of ELT, the role of metacognition in fostering learner autonomy could be debated when we are to consider the facts that learners are the direct recipients of ESL/EFL instructions, that they the ultimate product of an English language program, and that learner-centeredness is the focus of current ELT practices. As a matter of fact, research in this field (see Ismael, 2015) clearly identifies metacognition to be the foundation for autonomous language learning. Jacobs and Paris (1987) describe metacognition as “the conscious self-awareness of one’s own knowledge of task, topic, and thinking, and the conscious self-management (executive control) of the related cognitive process” (as cited in Ozturk, 2017, p. 135). Therefore, when ESL/EFL learners apply metacognitive practices, they become aware of their own language learning process and take the required initiatives to move forward, which consequently leads them to the path of autonomy.

It is true that autonomy in English language learning is to come through the holistic efforts of learners, instructors, and institution, but the entire process starts faltering if learners are not ready for being autonomous. In line with this understanding, ESL/EFL learners are to be internally prepared to benefit from external sources. Metacognition lends weight to the possibility of becoming autonomous in learning English as the learners follow the reflective pattern of planning, monitoring, and evaluation. Metacognition also helps them identify the progress of their learning and thus manage to be independent. As a matter of fact, in order to achieve autonomy in their English learning process, ESL/EFL learners may follow Anderson’s (2008) model of metacognition in

language learning, which integrates five components: (a) preparing and planning for learning, (b) selecting and using strategies, (c) monitoring learning, (d) orchestrating strategies, and (e) evaluating learning. The good thing is that when the English language learners are autonomous, they are, more often than not, users of metacognition. Equally, the lack of inclination towards autonomy might be responsible for not employing metacognition as Cubukcu (2009) pointed out that “students with ... low autonomous inclination employ less metacognitive strategies” (p. 62). So ESL/EFL learners’ autonomy reciprocates their ability to use metacognition.

Again, when a learner knows the what-to-do-when of metacognitive strategy, he/she becomes more autonomous. It so happens that English language learners know what they are supposed to do when they encounter any difficulties in learning the language. Employing their metacognitive knowledge and strategies, they come up with effective ways of handling their English learning difficulties and thus move forward to more autonomy. What is more, success in handling each learning difficulty provides them with confidence for future challenges. They build a repository of English learning experience and resort to it when needed. This creates a systematic pathway of successful language learning, which could be attributed as the defining characteristics of autonomous language learner.

However, metacognition is not the “panacea” for all ESL/EFL problems. So when researchers take the view that metacognition “has the potential to be seen as a kind of panacea for most learning problems learners may encounter through germination of strategies empowering them to manage their own learning and find answers by themselves” (Madhavi, 2014, p. 533), it only establishes the high possibilities of metacognition to solve their English language learning problems. It also implies that improving a learner’s metacognitive practices may compensate for any cognitive limitations they have (Cambridge 2015) as Veenman, Wilhelm, and Beishuizen (2004) points out that “whenever learners are confronted with a highly difficult or unfamiliar task, only metacognitive skill contributes to the initial learning process” (p. 104).

## IMPLICATIONS

While the notion of learner autonomy emerged to the Western educational landscape, the origin of the concept being in alignment with the social, political and cultural structure of the west, Lamb (2008) appropriately identified the historic context of learner autonomy with the observation that “autonomous learning has been considered as more appropriate in Western educational contexts rather than in Asian contexts” (as cited in Sakai & Takagi, 2009, p. 299). So, the implementation of learner autonomy poses practical challenges, especially when we consider Eastern learners’ “same traditional beliefs of relational hierarchy in the classrooms, where the roles of teachers and learners are rooted deeply in people’s thinking” and Asian countries’ teacher-centered education systems with the wide utilization of traditional teaching methods (Sakai & Takagi, 2009, p. 319).

However, this does not mean that the incorporation of learner autonomy is not possible in the Asian educational context. In fact, research shows a positive response of Asian EFL learners and a considerable impact on learning in the Little (1991) response to some teachers’ beliefs that view the Asian educational system to be “so all-powerful and inflexible that autonomous learning can never happen” (p. 40) and categorized them as teachers’ misconceptions about syllabus, examinations, and learning materials. As a matter of fact, Nguyen (2012) concluded in her experimental studies on learner autonomy that “students’ ability to behave autonomously depends on their teacher who is responsible to create an autonomous learning culture” (p. 320). Although it is natural for Asian students to think that teachers should manage the class by taking care of the choice of textbooks, learning methods, pace of the lesson, relevant issues of assignments and the assessment process, Sakai, Chu, Takagi, and Lee (2008) rightly pointed out that “the students in East Asia tended to express a strong belief that their teachers should have the responsibility of class management. This also explains why subjects felt reluctance to take a role in classroom management” (as cited in Sakai, Takagi, & Chu, 2010, p. 22). As such preoccupations may come in the way of developing learner autonomy, it is the teachers who can possibly pave the way by encouraging students to be involved in their class management.

Now in regard to the particular case of the Korean context, it might

appear that promoting learner autonomy is very challenging since Korea and other East Asian countries (as mentioned earlier) are often referred to as collectivist societies in contrast to an individualistic society such as the United States (Kashima, Y., Kim, U., Gelfand, M. J., Yamaguchi, S., Choi, S-C., & Kim, Y, 1995; Rhee, Uleman, & Lee, 1996, as cited in Lee, 2008). More importantly, strong respect for authority and the social relations between teacher and learner are the characteristics of Korean culture, and Ho and Crookall (1995) identify them to be “almost diametrically opposed to autonomy” (p. 240). Similarly, Korean students are “more familiar and comfortable with the teachers taking charge of their learning” (Lee, 2005), so informing students of the purpose behind and the importance of their taking responsibility in the learning process is essential.

Yet again, researchers (e.g., Finch, 2004a; Lee, 2005; Sakai, Chu, Takagi, & Lee, 2008; Sakai, Takagi, & Chu, 2010) have shown that it is possible to foster learner autonomy in Korea and other East Asian countries. For example, Sakai, Chu, Takagi, and Lee (2008) mentioned that metacognitive strategies such as scaffolding can be used to develop autonomy for East Asian learners. They proposed a framework for the whole semester: Teachers should discuss the goals of the class with their students and show them some textbooks that might be used in the classroom. Then, the teacher would ask students to select one of them and justify their reasons. In the meantime, students would get to know the pace of their teachers, and the teacher would let the students ponder whether it is the right pace for them to improve their learning. To know if the textbook is helping to improve their students’ English proficiency, the teacher might check student progress in the middle of the semester, while at the end of the semester, students would evaluate the textbook to see if it has improved their ability to reflect on their studies.

The above discussion appears to demonstrate a solution to cope with the unique challenge of developing learner autonomy in Asian and East Asian ESL/EFL classrooms that could be reached through total activation of learner metacognition. There are multiple studies available in research literature to support this view. Wenden (1999) endorses the importance of metacognitive awareness and claims that the true meaning of learner autonomy encompasses student reflection on their learning and the ability to realize opportunities for effective learning. There is a direct link between metacognition and learner autonomy as discussed in the preceding section. What is more, “this introspective ability

[metacognition] is important because it produces the powerful knowledge that enables students to control their learning [learner autonomy] by demonstrating a conscious application of cognitive strategies” (Joseph, 2003, p. 151).

Learning English as second or foreign language may pose extra challenges over learning in general. Much research concerned with this issue in different linguistic contexts is available. For example, Khan (2011) has identified particular challenges for Saudi students in learning English as a foreign language: “Arab learners of English encounter [particular] problems in both speaking and writing” (p. 71). Now, it is evident that learners of English need to follow proven learning theories while applying pragmatic strategies in order to cope with challenges and bring about success. Reviewing existing literature on learner autonomy confirms that successful learners are autonomous. It can therefore be concluded that the concept of learner autonomy should be greatly exploited for the greatest success in language learning.

Metacognition, as discussed above, accelerates the process of autonomy in learning. In regard to autonomy for ESL/EFL learners, the scope of learner autonomy should be allowed to be wide in the learning environment at both the institutional and individual level. In addition, metacognition (especially, metacognitive knowledge, metacognitive awareness, and metacognitive strategies) should be fostered as metacognition plays a catalytic role in triggering autonomy in learning. To portray the metacognitive components on the canvas of learner autonomy in the ELT landscape, the crucial role of instructors would be to both teach and model metacognitive strategy use in ESL/EFL classrooms while institutions should provide materials in the ESL/EFL syllabi that provide the opportunity for using metacognitive knowledge and strategies with the objective of achieving learner autonomy in perspective. Equally, learners of ESL/EFL need to increase their metacognitive knowledge and to employ metacognitive strategies in the context of English language learning. When learners are able to appropriate “when” and “how” to employ metacognitive strategies, they will gain success in learning the language. However, one has to keep in mind that being autonomous through metacognition is a long and tedious process in which the learner should consciously monitor the entire learning process and have cognizance of their own learning trajectory. Now, although there is a plethora of research conducted in identifying the effective role of metacognition in enhancing English language skills

such as reading, listening, writing, and speaking, the studies that focus on the impact of metacognition as a whole for English language learners have yet to receive the required attention. There is also a need for further research (especially experimental) on the impact of metacognition in developing learner autonomy so that we can precisely determine in what particular ways metacognition can enhance learning for ESL/EFL learners.

## CONCLUSIONS

This review is far from comprehensive in exhausting the research on the two psychological constructs of metacognition and learner autonomy in that it merely provides a brief summary and offers the reader a new perspective. Undoubtedly, pieces are missing. However, since the main focus of the paper is to show the importance of metacognition in English language learner autonomy, only relevant aspects of metacognition and learner autonomy have been touched upon. The great demand of ESL/EFL in the current world educational landscape, as indicated in the introduction, justifies the relentless efforts of both learners and practitioners in the field to seek better and more effective ways of dealing with English language learning. Particularly, the significance and priority of learner autonomy in the current ELT trend of learner-centeredness, with the advent of virtual learning, are felt more than ever before. Learner autonomy is a natural fit in the Western educational environment.

On the other hand, establishing learner autonomy in the Asian and East Asian contexts appears to be challenging, given the sociocultural circumstance, but not impossible. As it is obvious that the mastery of English language requires great personal effort along with institutional supports, there is a need for a comprehensive approach in teaching and learning ESL/EFL that accommodates best teaching and learning practices in the institution as well as ensuring success for learners both at the institution and afterwards. It seems that learner autonomy brightens this hope. Learner autonomy is at the heart of learner-centeredness in the teaching and learning of English, and perhaps this is the reason why the current trend of ELT research exhibits such a focus on learner autonomy. Moreover, metacognition could play a catalytic role

in fostering learner autonomy for the ESL/EFL learner as metacognition is the proven expediter of learner autonomy.

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## **Does Exposure to L2 Facebook Pages Impact Language Learning? An Examination of the Relation Between Facebook Reading Experience and Foreign Language Development**

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As the most popular social networking site in the world, Facebook has sparked great interest from researchers to examine its educational affordances. While Facebook is oftentimes employed as a technology tool to facilitate language-classroom communication and collaboration, the current study examined the potential utilization of Facebook pages as a source of English reading input. A Facebook recognition test was developed utilizing the checklist-with-foils logic proposed by Stanovich and West (1989) to serve as an indicator of English-as-a-foreign-language learners' English reading experience on Facebook. Vietnamese undergraduate students were administered the Facebook Page Recognition Test, consisting of real and fake names of English Facebook pages, and a vocabulary size test. Their reading comprehension scores were also collected. Bivariate correlation and linear regression analyses were performed to examine the effect of L2 reading experience on Facebook on the learners' reading abilities. The findings indicated that the amount of English reading on Facebook could significantly explain the differences in vocabulary and reading comprehension achievements among the participants. The results suggest the potential use of Facebook pages as a source of reading input for language learners. Pedagogical implications are discussed.

*Keywords:* social networking site, Facebook, reading comprehension, vocabulary learning, Facebook Page Recognition Test

## INTRODUCTION

Being the world's most popular social networking site (SNS) in the world, Facebook has sparked great interest from educational researchers. The number of studies investigating the educational impact of this social networking site has increased exponentially in recent years (Manca & Ranieri, 2016). More users have continued to join the network of Facebook due to its convenience, usefulness, and enjoyment affordances (Chuang, Lin, Chang, & Kaewmeesri, 2017).

Facebook, an excellent example of Web 2.0 technology, enables users to create content, as well as interact and comment on their peers' work (Walker & White, 2013). Facebook users are also the content contributors (e.g., posting status, sharing information, uploading photos and videos). Liaw (2017) emphasized the significance of online English websites as a great source of English as a second language (L2) reading input, as it features various text genres. Facebook, the most popular social networking site, offers its users reading content via an enormous number of continuously updated Facebook pages.

In regards to language education, Facebook is considered a powerful tool in foreign language learning and teaching. It is an excellent platform, not only for formal learning, but also for informal language learning (Wang & Chen, 2013). More than 70% of the participants in the study by Kabilan, Ahmad, and Abidin (2010) reported that they could enhance their language skills through practicing their reading and writing skills on the social networking site. They also believed Facebook enhanced their attitude, motivation, and confidence in learning English. Specifically, the English text available on Facebook motivated them to read more often and acquire more English vocabulary, thus improving their reading comprehension skills.

A perusal of previous studies revealed that past research mainly examined Facebook as a communication and collaboration tool (Bahati, 2015; Çevik, Çelik, & Haslaman, 2014; Magro et al., 2013; Nalbone et al., 2016; Roblyer et al., 2010). Little research has been done to examine the educational affordance of Facebook pages as a source of L2 reading input. More research is, therefore, needed to provide insights into the impact of L2 learning experiences on Facebook users' language skills (Kabilan, Ahmad, & Abidin, 2010; Kabilan & Zahar, 2016). While there has been abundant research on the educational potential of Facebook,

arguments for the SNS's use in education are primarily based on theories (Loan, 2012). Moreover, previous researchers have provided mixed support on whether to encourage the use of Facebook in education. The lack of empirical studies that explored the potential educational use of Facebook (Junco, 2012), particularly in foreign language teaching, has motivated the author to conduct this study. The present study was conducted to examine the effect of reading English Facebook pages on the EFL (English as a foreign language) learners' vocabulary size and reading comprehension ability. This study was undertaken with the expectation that it would provide valuable empirically backed evidence for the use of Facebook in language learning and teaching practice.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Educational Affordances of Facebook

With respect to the educational affordances of Facebook, it has been found to benefit learners in myriad ways, including enhanced classroom interaction, academic performance, and learning engagement (Chugh & Ruhi, 2017). Regarding foreign language education, Facebook can be a powerful communication tool that exerts a positive impact on language learners (Aydin, 2012). Examples include promoting online EFL writing (Buga, Capenaeta, Chirasnel, & Popa, 2014; Saeed & Ghazali, 2017), language learning autonomy (Rios, 2015), intercultural communication (Ozdemir, 2017), peer feedback (Akbari, Simons, Pilot, & Naderi, 2017), and motivation (Akbari, Naderi, Simons, & Pilot, 2016).

Akyildiz and Argan (2012) conducted a study to examine the purposes of using Facebook among 1,300 Turkish undergraduate students and found that 93.8% of the participants had used Facebook for at least two years. Various purposes of usage were reported, including browsing for information, connecting with people, and engaging in educational activities. However, the educational affordances of the social networking site have only been partially addressed in previous research (Manca & Ranieri, 2016).

Kim, Sohn, and Choi (2011), motivated by the explosive growth of social networking site use among Korean students, carried out a study to compare the SNS use motives between Korean and American learners.

Participants included 589 undergraduate students from different universities in the U.S. and Korea. They were administered a questionnaire whose questions were adapted from previous literature inquiring into different aspects of their SNS use, for instance, amount of time spent, usage purposes, and attitudes towards the social networking sites. The findings suggest that Korean students shared with their American counterparts a variety of SNS usage purposes, including seeking friends, social support, entertainment, information, and convenience. In addition to obtaining social support as the most prominent SNS usage motive, the participants were reported as relying on social networking sites for their useful source of information. Korean undergraduates also tended to have deeper involvement and commitment to their SNS use. Although significant results were procured, the researchers also pointed out the potentially insufficient accuracy of their self-reported instruments as a drawback in estimating the participants' amount of SNS use.

In foreign language education, the technological advantages of Facebook have been popularly employed to enhance students' foreign language skills. One of the reasons for the adoption of Facebook in language learning is that it provides authentic input and opportunities for communication (Kabilan, Ahmad, & Abidin, 2010). For instance, Kabilan and Zahar (2016) investigated how Facebook content could facilitate EFL learners' vocabulary acquisition. The participants were 33 Malaysian college students who attended an English course in which Facebook was used as the main learning platform. The study adopted an experimental design with a pretest and posttest assessing the students' vocabulary knowledge and use. The English learners were required to engage in assignments and activities posted on a Facebook page that included text, links, and videos. The results showed that the participants were able to improve their vocabulary significantly through reading the posts and watching videos on the Facebook page. Kabilan and Zahar (2016) also argued for the incidental acquisition of vocabulary through reading Facebook pages on the grounds of previous research on how multimedia input assisted lexical acquisition. Indeed, Mohsen and Balakumar (2011) reviewed 18 empirical studies published in international refereed journals that examined the effect of using multimedia gloss on L2 vocabulary acquisition. The reviewed studies confirmed the hypothesis that multimedia (i.e., using a combination of text, pictures, videos, etc.) was highly effective in facilitating L2

vocabulary acquisition compared to traditional reading with only one type of annotation or without any.

Facebook was also used to enhance the language learners' intercultural competence. Jin (2015) utilized Facebook as an effective social networking channel to assist Korean EFL learners' development of their intercultural communication ability. Thirty-two (32) Korean university learners at a university in Korea and 20 American students were involved in the study. A Facebook group was created comprising both the Korean and American students. The study was split into three stages. In the first phase, the participants were asked to read intercultural topics posted in the group and discuss them with other group members. In the second period, they could choose their own cultural topics to discuss together. In the last stage, each Korean student was assigned a U.S. partner to conduct an ethnographic interview via the Facebook platform about intercultural issues. After the study, the Korean participants were found to have improved their intercultural competence. The educational use of Facebook was corroborated with the study's findings as it facilitated intercultural interactions as well as improving communication competence across cultures. Finally, the author emphasized the beneficial use of Facebook in a Korean EFL context. The social networking site created an environment for learning about the culture of the target language, English, as well as opportunities for practicing meaningful cross-cultural communication.

Besides adult learners, children also benefit from learning English on Facebook. Wang and Chen (2013) recruited 60 elementary children for an informal English learning course delivered via the Facebook platform. The students were divided into treatment and control groups. While there was an experimental group that studied with the assistance of Facebook, the control group studied in a traditional classroom. The findings indicated that the children in the Facebook-conditioned group outperformed their control group peers and had a more positive attitude towards their new learning experience on the social networking site.

Facebook was also found to have enhanced language learners' learning achievement and motivation. Akbari, Pilot, and Simons (2015) conducted an experimental study to examine the effect of Facebook use on two groups of graduate students. The treatment group learned English and interacted together in a Facebook group, whereas the control group met in person to discuss the course content. The results showed that the experimental group learners significantly outperformed those in the

control group. The former also achieved higher levels of learning motivation in regard to senses of relatedness, learning autonomy, and competence.

A comprehensive literature review by Manca and Ranieri (2016) pointed out that previous researchers primarily argued for the implementation of Facebook in classrooms on a theoretical basis, that is, based on learners' attitudes and general perceptions towards the SNS, rather than on providing empirical evidence of the participants' academic improvement. Hence, more research is warranted to investigate the educational affordances of Facebook through corroboration with empirical evidence.

On the whole, as more and more people continue joining the social networking site, the potential of Facebook is enormous and needs to be further explored so as to inform the language educators and curriculum designers of its educational potentials.

## **Free Recreational Reading and the Development of Reading Abilities**

Researchers have consistently confirmed a positive link between the amount of pleasure reading experience, lexical knowledge, and reading comprehension ability. For example, Cunningham and Stanovich (1991) studied how out-of-school reading experience was associated with children's verbal fluency and vocabulary. The participants were administered a vocabulary test, a verbal fluency test, a book Title Recognition Test (TRT), and a general cognitive ability test. The TRT functioned as a diagnostic test that estimated the participants' free reading volume. It included a checklist of both real and fake book titles mixed together randomly. The participants were asked to check only the titles of the books they read. The TRT was scored by subtracting the number of incorrect choices from the number of correct choices. This is known as checklist-with-foils logic, originally devised for recognition tests by Stanovich and West (1989). The findings indicated that the book reading experience could significantly predict the children's verbal fluency and vocabulary, even after controlling for their age and general cognitive ability. In the same vein, Zhang, Georgiou, Xu, Liu, Li, and Shu (2017) examined how book reading experience impacted the children's breadth and depth of lexical knowledge. Participants were 147

third-graders in a kindergarten in China. The children and their parents took different types of reading experience indicators (e.g., book title recognition tests – a checklist including both real and fake book titles, a reading-habit diary, and a survey). After controlling for confounding factors (i.e., their nonverbal IQ, age, and parents' socioeconomic status), the amount of reading experience could still significantly account for the breadth and depth of the participants' lexical knowledge.

Cipielewski and Stanovich (1992) attempted to predict children's reading comprehension growth from third to fifth grade through designing a longitudinal study. They designed an Author Recognition Test and a Title Recognition Test. While the former included real and fake book author names, the latter comprised real and fake book titles. The two tests were also scored by subtracting the total number of incorrect names checked from the total number of correct names checked. A hierarchical linear regression was employed, controlling for the effect of the third-grade reading achievement and loading the two recognition tests into the model as predictors of the children's reading comprehension achievement in their fifth grade. The results supported the hypothesis that free reading experience was an independent contributor to the participants' reading growth through a course of three years. In a meta-analysis study by Mol and Bus (2011), they reviewed 99 studies that investigated the effect of free reading experience on reading skills. The results corroborated the causal reciprocal relationships between the amount of free reading and the development of reading abilities. To elaborate, the moderate relation between the two aforementioned variables suggested that higher-ability readers tended to read more, thus improving their reading abilities (Mol & Bus, 2011). Moreover, both high- and low-achieving readers could benefit from the book reading experience.

The positive effect of non-school recreational reading on language learners has been attested in different educational contexts, both in Western countries (e.g., the U.S., Canada, and the U.K.) and in Asian contexts (e.g., Taiwan and Korea). To examine the impact of free reading experience on foreign language skill development, Ko and Hey-Jung (2004) recruited 140 sixth-grade EFL students in Korea for their study. The children were assigned to experimental and control groups. While the control group had two forty-five-minute English sessions with a regular textbook, the students in the experimental group were allowed to read books of their own selection in the second session

of their English class. The intervention lasted for sixteen weeks. The results showed that children in the experimental group improved their vocabulary, reading, spelling, and sentence writing more than the control group. In addition, they also had a more positive attitude and higher confidence in reading and writing practice.

In short, the amount of recreational reading experience has been consistently found to associate with the development of learners' vocabulary and reading comprehension. The more an individual is exposed to reading text, the better their reading ability becomes.

## **Research Questions**

The current study was carried out to investigate the effect of reading English text on Facebook on EFL learners' lexical size and reading comprehension ability. Specifically, a new recognition test was developed using Facebook pages as its items to estimate the EFL learners' L2 reading experience on Facebook.

The research questions of the study are as follows:

1. Can English reading experience on Facebook predict Vietnamese EFL learners' vocabulary size?
2. Can English reading experience on Facebook predict Vietnamese EFL learners' reading comprehension ability?

## **METHOD**

### **Participants**

The participants were 97 undergraduate EFL students (10 males, 87 females) at a university in Vietnam, majoring in English. Their average age was around 21 years old. The participants usually started learning English as a foreign language (EFL) when they were in their sixth grade and had been learning English for approximately nine years. They came from various regions in Vietnam and had mixed levels of English proficiency. Due to the "traditional" way of language teaching in Vietnam, which primarily emphasizes grammatical structures and exercises, most of the participants did not have much free reading in English until they entered the first year of their undergraduate program.

## Instruments

### Facebook Page Recognition Test (FPRT)

Measuring the amount of reading experience has, however, proved to be a challenging task. Using self-report measures (e.g., reading-habit questionnaires and diaries) might be vulnerable to social bias as participants oftentimes tend to provide socially desirable answers when recalling their reading amount (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1991; Zhang et al., 2017). Acknowledging the shortcoming of self-report measures, Stanovich and West (1989) introduced a new method for estimating individual differences in reading amount: a recognition test. They developed a checklist instrument called the Author Recognition Test. Specifically, the Author Recognition Test included a list of book authors and non-authors (foils, which were randomly interspersed). The test had a short administration time and required a low-cognitive load, as the participants only needed to check the authors' names they recognized (Stanovich & West, 1989). Scoring for the recognition test was calculated by subtracting the proportion of fake names checked from the proportion of correct names chosen. This practice of estimating a proxy amount of reading experience using a checklist of real and foil names is commonly referred to as the "checklist-with-foils" logic (see also Stanovich & West, 1989).

As reading habits are culturally specific (Stainthorp, 1997), that is, people from different cultures and contexts vary in their reading habits and materials, researchers in previous studies were encouraged to create their own version of recognition tests to capture their students' reading experience. For instance, Stainthorp (1997) argued that the Title Recognition Test (i.e., a checklist involving real and fake book titles) developed by Cunningham and Stanovich (1991) was more suitable for examining reading habits in North America, and it was necessary to develop a new recognition test for U.K. participants. She then developed a Children's Author Recognition Test – UK (CART-UK). Three follow-up minor studies indicated that the U.K. version of the Author Recognition Test outperformed its comparable version developed for North America children. Stainthorp concluded that the recognition test could be employed as an objective measure of a person's reading experience, and it was culturally sensitive. By the same token, Chen and Fang (2016) developed Chinese versions of the Author Recognition Test and Title Recognition Test to evaluate the effect of print exposure on

Taiwanese children. Both of the aforementioned instruments significantly predicted the Taiwanese fifth-graders' vocabulary and reading comprehension abilities. In summary, the checklist-with-foils recognition test was widely employed and appraised by previous researchers as "the purest and best measure of print exposure to date" (McBride-Chang et al., 1993, p. 237) and "an excellent addition" to traditional instruments in examining reading behaviors (Stainthorp, 1997, p. 150).

In the current study, a checklist instrument was developed by the author to estimate EFL learners' English reading amount on Facebook, that is, the Facebook Page Recognition Test (FPRT). Similar to recognition tests widely used in previous studies (e.g., Acheson, Wells, & MacDonald, 2008; Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992; Martin-Chang & Gould, 2008; Zhang et al., 2017), the FPRT included a combined list of real and fake names of Facebook pages that were randomly mixed together.

The process of designing the Facebook Page Recognition Test (FPRT) involved several steps with the guidance of previous studies. Firstly, to collect the most popular English Facebook pages, a survey was carried out with 78 undergraduate Vietnamese EFL students, asking them to write down their top ten English Facebook pages that they most frequently read. This is because the recognition test should include names of the reading sources that participants commonly read. Cipielewski and Stanovich (1992) collected the most popular names of children book authors and book titles to create their Author Recognition Test and Title Recognition Test. The second step was to examine the gathered Facebook pages to ensure they had adequate text content. This is important in that unlike book reading practice, where children tend to read linearly for a long duration of time, online reading on Facebook commonly occurs in a non-linear, more superficial manner (Loan, 2012). As a result, choosing the English Facebook pages that offered adequate reading input is of great significance. Those collected Facebook pages that primarily posted videos and pictures were not included as real names in the FPRT. The scrupulous selection process resulted in 33 English Facebook pages featuring a variety of reading topics (e.g., news, self-help information, and educational pages), as suggested by Stanovich and Cunningham (1992), to capture a wide range of participants' reading experience (see Appendix). Another 17 foils or fake names of Facebook pages were created by the author and then randomly interspersed with the real names in order to create a 50-item Facebook Page Recognition

Test. The scoring method for the FPRT was similar to the scoring procedure for the recognition tests in prior studies, that is, taking the total number of correct choices and subtracting the total number of foils checked (e.g., Goldman & Manis, 2013; Stanovich & West, 1989; Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992; Zhang et al., 2017).

With respect to the method of examining the reliability of the recognition test, previous researchers tended to have different approaches. Although Cronbach's  $\alpha$  and split-half reliability were usually used to examine the reliability of the recognition test (e.g., Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992; Martin-Chang & Gould, 2008; Stanovich & West, 1989), the employment of Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was also argued to be appropriate for binary data (i.e., questions containing only two options) (Raykov, Dimitrov, & Asparouhov, 2010). Indeed, the participants' decision to make a guess, though having little to do with the recognition test reliability, may reduce the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value of the test. As observed by the author, some participants were anxious about scoring low on the FPRT and thus made more guesses (i.e., incorrect choices). This issue suggests that it is insufficient and may be even inappropriate to judge the reliability of a recognition test solely based on Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value as argued by Raykov, Dimitrov, and Asparouhov (2010) mentioned above.

Alternative methods for examining the reliability of the recognition test employed in prior research included examining the test-retest reliability (e.g., Zhang et al., 2017), inspecting whether the recognition test could differentiate between good and poor readers (e.g., Stainthorp, 1997) or comparing its statistical power to that of other self-report measures (e.g., Acheson, Wells, & MacDonald, 2008). The validity and reliability of the FPRT in this study will be examined in light of its predictive power of the participants' vocabulary and reading comprehension.

### **Vocabulary Size Test**

The vocabulary size test employed in the present research was a shorter version of the original vocabulary size test by Nation and Beglar (2007), which included 40 multiple-choice questions. The test aimed to measure the EFL learners' decontextualized vocabulary (Nation, 2006). Due to the mixed level of the EFL participants, the author chose the bilingual version (English-Vietnamese) of the aforementioned test by Le Thi Cam Nguyen and Nation (2011) to ensure the students'

understanding of the four options to the question. The lexical measurement tool has high reliability, which was reported in Beglar's (2010) study for the monolingual version (Rasch model reliability > 0.96), and in Le Thi Cam Nguyen and Nation's (2011) study for the bilingual version (English–Vietnamese).

### **Standardized Reading Comprehension**

The reading comprehension scores of the participants were collected from the institution's database. The standardized reading comprehension test was the summative test to qualify for the course, the highest level of academic reading-skill training based on the institution's curriculum. The allowed time for the test was 90 minutes, and the maximum score was 5 points (0.2 points for each question).

After reading a given academic text (around 800 words), examinees needed to utilize different reading skills to accomplish five components of the test. In the first section, test-takers needed to match provided headings with the text paragraphs. The second part necessitated students to answer five multiple-choice questions about the summary and specific details in the aforesaid reading text. While the fourth component required learners to rewrite two sentences extracted from the reading text, the test-takers needed to write a short summary of the reading text (100–120 words) in the final section. The possible explanation for the written part of the test is that the tertiary institution adopted an integrative reading-writing teaching approach to develop the students' L2 literacy skills.

The final reading test was developed by at least three English lecturers with more than fifteen years of combined teaching experience. The grading rubrics were thoroughly discussed among the examiners to ensure consistency in the grading process. The reading assessment test was employed as the official test of the department and was improved continually over the years, attesting to it possessing the necessary validity and reliability.

### **Data Analysis**

The analysis of the study was carried out with SPSS software version 22.0. The descriptive statistics of three variables in the study, (i.e., the FPRT, the vocabulary, and reading achievement scores) were first examined and then their correlations with one another were inspected. Simple linear regression analysis was subsequently performed

by loading the FPRT as an independent variable and the participants' reading abilities (i.e., vocabulary and reading comprehension scores) as dependent variables. Assumptions for regression analysis were investigated using SPSS software. A scatterplot result showed that there was a positive linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables, and no significant outliers were detected. The standardized residual scatterplot of the data, plotting standardized residuals (y-axis) versus predicted standardized values (x-axis), also indicated that the data met the assumption of homoscedasticity, and its residuals were relatively normally distributed. The first simple linear regression was performed by employing the FPRT as an independent variable to predict the vocabulary size test scores as the dependent variable. Likewise, the next linear regression analysis was to examine the predictability of the FPRT on the participants' reading comprehension ability.

## RESULTS

### Descriptive Statistics and Pearson's Correlations

Descriptive analysis was performed to provide a general overview of the study variables, including the participants' proxy exposure to English Facebook pages and their reading abilities. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the FPRT, vocabulary, and reading comprehension scores.

**TABLE 1. Descriptive Statistics of the FPRT, Vocabulary, and Reading Comprehension Scores**

Variables	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max
FPRT	97	5.30	3.51	0.0	14.0
Vocabulary	97	18.60	6.61	4.0	34
Reading Comprehension	97	2.89	0.69	1.40	4.70

*Note.* FPRT = Facebook Page Recognition Test.

Subsequently, Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to investigate the interplay among the three aforementioned variables. As can be seen from Table 2, the FPRT was significantly associated with the EFL students' vocabulary size,  $r(95) = 0.36, p < 0.01$ , and their reading

comprehension ability,  $r(95) = 0.24, p < 0.05$ . The findings are in line with most of the previous studies in examining the effect of free reading experience on the learners' vocabulary and reading comprehension skills (e.g., Cunningham & Stanovich, 1991; Zhang et al., 2017). In addition, the lexical scores were moderately correlated with the reading comprehension ability of the EFL learners,  $r(95) = 0.24, p < 0.01$ .

**TABLE 2. Correlations Between FPRT, Vocabulary, and Reading Comprehension ( $N = 97$ )**

Variables	FPRT	Vocabulary	Reading Comprehension
FPRT	—		
Vocabulary	0.36**	—	
Reading Comprehension	0.24*	0.48**	—

Note. FPRT = Facebook Page Recognition Test; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

### Predicting EFL Learners' Vocabulary Size and Reading Comprehension Achievement

To further investigate the effect of the L2 reading on Facebook on the participants' reading-related abilities, two simple linear regression analyses were carried out. The results of the linear regression analyses on the employment of the FPRT as the predictor of vocabulary and reading comprehension achievements are shown in Table 3. In the first regression analysis, the FPRT was entered as an independent variable and vocabulary scores as the dependent variable. In other words, the analysis employed the FPRT as a predictor of the EFL learners' vocabulary size scores. The results showed that the FPRT could significantly explain 12.9% variance of the participants' vocabulary test performance ( $\beta = 0.36, p < 0.01$ ).

**TABLE 3. FPRT Predicting EFL Learners' Vocabulary Size and Reading Comprehension**

Predictor	$R^2$	$B$	$SE$	$\beta$	$t$	$F$
<b>Vocabulary Size</b>						
FPRT	0.129	0.677	0.18	0.36	3.758	14.121**
<b>Reading Comprehension</b>						
FPRT	0.057	0.047	0.20	0.238	2.392	5.720*

With respect to the second regression analysis, reading comprehension achievement was loaded in the equation as a dependent variable, which replaced the vocabulary variable. The FPRT was still employed as an independent variable (i.e., the predictor). The statistical results showed that the FPRT again significantly accounted for 5.7% variance in the participants' academic reading comprehension ability ( $\beta = 0.24, p < 0.05$ ). Overall, the exposure to English Facebook pages significantly contributed to the individual differences in reading-related skills among the Vietnamese EFL learners. The results are resonant with many previous studies on the effect of free reading experience on lexical and reading skills (e.g., Martin-Chang & Gould, 2008; Stanovich & Cunningham, 1992). For example, Grant, Wilson, and Gottardo (2007) investigated how the amount of recreational reading experience impacted learners with and without reading disabilities. Thirty (30) college students were recruited for the purpose of the study. Their reading comprehension ability was measured with a standardized reading comprehension test under timed and untimed conditions. The participants were also administered several measures to serve as indicators of their reading experience (i.e., an author recognition test, a magazine recognition test, and a reading-habit survey). The findings indicated that free reading experience was a potent predictor of the participants' vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension in both timed and untimed conditions.

## DISCUSSION

The research was conducted to examine whether the amount of L2 reading on Facebook pages could explain the individual differences in reading abilities among the Vietnamese college students. The statistical results indicated that the FPRT was positively correlated with both vocabulary size and reading proficiency as well as being the significant predictors of the EFL learners' reading abilities.

The empirical findings of the current study contribute to the research literature both in terms of theoretical knowledge and methodology. Regarding the theoretical aspect, while prior research primarily examined Facebook for its technological aspects, that is, for communication and as an online learning management system (e.g., Bahati, 2015; Karal, Kokoc

& Cakir, 2017), the current study, to the author's knowledge, is the first to investigate Facebook as a source of L2 reading input backed by empirical evidence. Although whether reading English Facebook pages has a causal relationship with the development of EFL learners' reading abilities is still inconclusive in this research, the findings are certainly suggestive of the potential benefits of exposure to English text on Facebook pages. Indeed, as indicated in the result section, the EFL learners who read more English on Facebook tended to have a larger vocabulary size and better academic reading achievement. Further regression analyses further confirmed L2 recreational reading on Facebook pages to be a significant predictor of the EFL learners' lexical and reading comprehension achievements.

Regarding the research methodology, the author's self-developed recognition test was also the first recognition test designed to estimate L2 reading experience on the Internet, that is, on Facebook. This implies that checklist-with-foils logic proposed by Stanovich and West (1989) in measuring print exposure (i.e., print-based reading experience) can be extended to the online reading environment. Specifically, the Facebook Page Recognition Test significantly accounted for the variance in both lexical and reading comprehension ability of the EFL learners. This is no trivial finding, as checklist recognition tests have been mainly employed to estimate the learners' print-based reading experience. In contrast, the current study successfully extended the utilization of checklist measures to the online reading environment.

Utilizing self-report measures (e.g., diaries and reading-habit questionnaires) to measure the learners' reading experience can be problematic due to its possible social bias (Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992; Stanovich & West, 1989), that is, people tend to overestimate their reading volume. In this research, the FPRT proved to be an objective and reliable checklist measure to address the learners' exposure to L2 online Facebook text. It should, however, be noted that, as with other recognition tests employed in prior studies, the FPRT only serves to indicate a proxy of individual differences in the reading volume instead of measuring an absolute reading amount in the case of self-report instruments (Chen & Fang, 2016; Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992; Zhang et al, 2017).

The study's results are indicative of the educational affordance of English Facebook pages to facilitate learners' L2 reading development and reading autonomy. Indeed, the majority of English Facebook pages

collected for the FPRT (see Appendix) were for the students' personal self-learning and personal reading interest, rather than for schoolwork. Specifically, popularly reported Facebook pages fell into the categories of entertainment, food, and news. This is certainly indicative of the fact that the social networking site can create a friendly English reading environment that caters to the various reading interests of the EFL learners.

Particularly noteworthy is the fact that the participants' informal free English reading on Facebook is positively associated with their formal, academic reading proficiency. With reference to pedagogical implications, language teachers and educators should not underestimate the power of informal education (i.e., out-of-school reading for recreational purposes). The findings added empirical evidence substantiating the claims in previous studies that free voluntary reading can enhance favorable literacy development (e.g., Krashen, 2004; Lee, 2007, 2015; Mason, 2006). For instance, according to Krashen (2004), recreational reading positively impacts the readers' reading development in myriad ways, involving enhancing background knowledge, vocabulary knowledge, reading, spelling, writing, and motivation.

The results in this study may also hold the potential of reconciling an on-going argument regarding whether informational text genre and the nature of online reading are facilitative for reading skill development. In previous research, only the fiction-genre reading habit was found to associate with reading achievement, whereas informational-text reading on the Internet was not (e.g., Spear-Swerling, Brucker, & Alfano, 2010). Concern for the nature of online reading was also raised by Loan (2012) who found that online readers were inclined to skim, scan, and read non-consequentially and in a shallow manner. The findings in this study, nonetheless, argue for the positive effect of L2 Facebook reading of informational text on EFL learners' reading development.

Facebook can provide EFL learners with interesting reading sources through its enormous quantity of English Facebook pages. Language teachers can certainly make use of this valuable source of L2 reading input to benefit their classroom practice. For instance, using reading text from Facebook pages can increase the authenticity of language lesson materials. This is because the English Facebook pages are not originally designed for language teaching purposes. They are real-life reading input, providing a variety of news and information for public readers around the world. Recreational reading on social networking sites has been

found to help enhance students' language learning motivation (Kabilan, Ahmad, & Abidin, 2010). Also, by encouraging students to share what they read or learn from Facebook pages, learners' reading autonomy can be further promoted and their linguistic abilities enhanced.

The findings in the present study are also meaningful and highly likely to be applicable to other language learning contexts where learners popularly use social networking sites. Take South Korea's language learning context, for example. Facebook has started to gain momentum in popularity in South Korea as an increasing number of Koreans have started to use SNSs for its global connection and flexible adaptation to different mobile platforms (Ghedin, 2013). By 2016, Facebook has become the most popular social networking site platform in South Korea (eMarketer, 2016). Similar to other countries in Asia, such as Malaysia or Vietnam, grammar-translation used to be a popular teaching method in language classrooms in South Korea (Garton, 2014). In an effort to improve the English competence of Korean students, language teachers have been encouraged to adopt the communicative language teaching approach and utilize technology to enhance the learners' English learning experience (Garton, 2014). Additionally, a lack of learning motivation and interest in learning English is a common problem among Asian EFL learners, including Korean EFL learners (Niederhauser, 2012; O'Donnell, 2006). As indicated in previous studies, the use of authentic materials in the language classroom can help to arouse learners' interest and learning motivation (Al Azri & Al-Rashdi, 2014). Therefore, utilizing Facebook page resources in class and encouraging more recreational reading outside classrooms can assist language learners in enhancing linguistic skill and having more favorable language learning experiences.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In a nutshell, the current research provides empirical evidence supporting the educational affordance of Facebook pages being a valuable source of L2 reading input. By employing the checklist-with-foils logic (Stanovich and West, 1989), the author developed a Facebook Page Recognition Test to measure the EFL learners' proxy of L2 reading amount on the social networking site. The advantage of environmental factors (i.e., exposure to English text on Facebook) for

reading skill development was supported in the study. The amount of English reading on Facebook was correlated with the participants' reading abilities and also a predictor of their lexical knowledge and reading comprehension.

Several limitations of the current study can be mentioned. Firstly, participants could have read many other English Facebook pages that were not included in the FPRT. Hence, more items should be included in the FPRT to capture a wider range of the participants' reading experience, thus improving the validity and reliability of the test. Secondly, the foil-checking rate was unexpectedly higher in the present study compared to previous studies that employed the recognition test (e.g., Stanovich and Cunningham, 1992), where participants only checked a few foils. This could have attenuated the statistical power of the FPRT. More careful instructions should, therefore, be provided to restrain the study participants from making guesses when completing the recognition test. Further research investigating the consequences of Facebook reading could include designing checklist measures that are identical with the FPRT. Despite the aforementioned limitations, rigorous effort has been made in the study to provide valuable empirical research evidence for the educational use of Facebook as well as pedagogical suggestions to utilize the social networking site to enhance students' learning motivation and linguistic competence.

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## APPENDIX

### Facebook Page Recognition Test (FPRT)

Below is a list of English Facebook pages. Please check only the names of the Facebook pages that you liked. Even if you know the name of the Facebook page but you did not like it, please do not check, either.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> American English at State  | 26. <input type="checkbox"/> Book Desire                    |
| 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Know Cooking               | 27. <input type="checkbox"/> IELTS Simon                    |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> English Essays             | 28. <input type="checkbox"/> The New York Times             |
| 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Moonlight Institute        | 29. <input type="checkbox"/> IELTS Crack                    |
| 5. <input type="checkbox"/> BBC Learning English       | 30. <input type="checkbox"/> Disney                         |
| 6. <input type="checkbox"/> Tu tin hoc tot IELTS       | 31. <input type="checkbox"/> Awesome me                     |
| 7. <input type="checkbox"/> VOA Learning English       | 32. <input type="checkbox"/> Barack Obama                   |
| 8. <input type="checkbox"/> Science for Us             | 33. <input type="checkbox"/> Koreaboo                       |
| 9. <input type="checkbox"/> National Geographic        | 34. <input type="checkbox"/> The Dodo                       |
| 10. <input type="checkbox"/> BBC News                  | 35. <input type="checkbox"/> English for Your Good          |
| 11. <input type="checkbox"/> English News for Learners | 36. <input type="checkbox"/> ABC News                       |
| 12. <input type="checkbox"/> Discovery                 | 37. <input type="checkbox"/> Poem Reading                   |
| 13. <input type="checkbox"/> Sarcasm                   | 38. <input type="checkbox"/> LearnEnglish – British Council |
| 14. <input type="checkbox"/> Rainbow News              | 39. <input type="checkbox"/> TED                            |
| 15. <input type="checkbox"/> 5-Minute Crafts           | 40. <input type="checkbox"/> IELTSPpractice.com             |
| 16. <input type="checkbox"/> Learn English with Daniel | 41. <input type="checkbox"/> Business Insider               |
| 17. <input type="checkbox"/> Cambridge English         | 42. <input type="checkbox"/> Tasty                          |
| 18. <input type="checkbox"/> CNN                       | 43. <input type="checkbox"/> Tell me more about success     |
| 19. <input type="checkbox"/> Animal in Nature          | 44. <input type="checkbox"/> Learn English                  |
| 20. <input type="checkbox"/> Dibly                     | 45. <input type="checkbox"/> English+                       |
| 21. <input type="checkbox"/> 9GAG                      | 46. <input type="checkbox"/> MTV                            |
| 22. <input type="checkbox"/> Real Pet Lovers           | 47. <input type="checkbox"/> Food Network                   |
| 23. <input type="checkbox"/> Humans of New York        | 48. <input type="checkbox"/> BrainyQuote                    |
| 24. <input type="checkbox"/> California Times          | 49. <input type="checkbox"/> Good Thoughts for Life         |
| 25. <input type="checkbox"/> CNN International         | 50. <input type="checkbox"/> Bill Gates                     |



# Use of Literature in ELT Facing the 4th Industrial Revolution: Suggesting Classroom Activities Through SF Novels, *I, Robot* and *Bloodchild* and Other Stories

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The fourth industrial revolution is now drastically affecting professions because many jobs are being and will be replaced by robots and artificial intelligence. This change has a huge influence on education. Traditional disciplines, the so-called disciplines of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, have been core knowledge to lead our society, but society in the 21st century seeks people with not just professional knowledge but also soft skills like creativity, critical thinking, and empathy. Futurologists name the abstract qualities the 6Cs: creativity, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, computational thinking, and curiosity, which are necessary to apply new theories and thoughts across disciplines. As the ultimate goal of liberal arts education is to cultivate a “free thinker,” it helps students to be lifelong learners, make thoughtful choices, and commit themselves to cultural understanding. This study suggests that in paying attention to liberal arts education, literature can develop the required abstract qualities. As it is known to be a beneficial tool for engaging learners in creative problem-solving, this study attempts to find that the use of literature develops the six abstract qualities – creativity, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, computational thinking, and curiosity – not just in language classrooms but also in interdisciplinary courses with science and other practical majors.

*Keywords:* 4th industrial revolution, abstract skills, use of literature, interdisciplinary, English language teaching

## INTRODUCTION

### Technology and Liberal Arts Education in the 21st Century

Nowadays, the concept of the fourth industrial revolution is affecting almost every field, and education is facing many issues in preparation for the upcoming change. New technologies, like self-driving cars and the Internet of Things, are already disrupting our jobs and life. Ultimately, robots and artificial intelligence will replace many professional fields such as education, finance, and medicine, and many elementary school students today will have jobs that do not currently exist. There is no doubt that this will affect the careers of college graduates at present and in the near future. Many experts in education have suggested that students will have to develop not only professional and technical knowledge (the so-called hard skills) but also soft skills like creativity and critical thinking, which are necessary to apply new theories and thoughts across disciplines. In the world that awaits our students, they need a different perspective in order to have a different view of the data. In other words, they will have to apply creativity and critical thinking that are different from the repetitive, predictable tasks that machines are great at.

Other than creativity, another soft skill in demand is collaboration. Future job markets will need workers to be creative and collaborative. For this, college graduates need open minds and rich, diverse educational experiences. Which disciplines will train students to develop and improve such skills? The answer is a liberal arts education. Steve Jobs, the late CEO of Apple, famously declared that “it is the marriage of technology with the liberal arts and humanities that is the secret to leading change” (Cave, 2017, para. 3). Liberal arts education puts its emphasis on creating well-rounded graduates and expanding students’ abilities to think through various challenges, contradictions, and tensions by design. In short, the fundamental goal of education is to cultivate a “free thinker.” It helps students to be lifelong learners, make thoughtful choices, and commit themselves to cultural understanding. Also, with a student-centered focus, liberal arts courses engage students with a wide variety of learning experiences, thereby preparing them for their future.

### **Traditional Academic Disciplines and Literature**

Many scholars in education and futurology still focus attention on traditional academic disciplines such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics – the so-called STEM disciplines – but have been emphasizing the importance of abstract skills such as creativity and

problem-solving. They have indicated that these skills are critical to become a leader in the new job market because it is the original human quality that makes human beings different from machines. The soft skills are called the “6Cs”: creativity, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, computational thinking, and curiosity. They are already well known to be crucial for learners’ development, and despite their importance, it is never easy to teach them. To develop the 6Cs at educational institutions, experts emphasize more interdisciplinary teaching that reduces the distance between science and liberal arts. Many science and engineering institutions are now seeking STEAM, in which “A” for “art” is added to the traditional disciplines of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). A report from the Brookings Institution, a think tank in the United States, has indicated that “students in liberal arts programs have the extensive skills when effectively paired with technologies” (Araya & Lamb, 2018, p. 3). In fact, the fusion of literature and practical studies is not cutting-edge anymore; for example, the University of Richmond offers the course Victorian Literature for Accounting Students by pairing accounting and literature classes. The course contains a harmonious combination of literature reading and business ethics (Hyole & Gruner, 2013). By analyzing instances from books, students practice their ethical reasoning and apply it to contemporary cases. Michaelson (2016) argues that novels “shape social attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, and even make life more worth living” (p. 10). This kind of combination course delivers students a valuable opportunity to nurture their thinking and other soft skills as well as cultivate their view of the world. In Korea, K-MOOC, which was originally launched in 2015, planned to add over 160 courses in engineering, the humanities, and Korean literature during 2017. This attention to liberal arts education can apply literature to other fields of study. In other words, English literature may be able to play a crucial role in the disciplines of STEAM, and it could possibly be a beneficial tool to engage learners in creative problem-solving and critical thinking, which are key qualities required in future industries. Therefore, this study attempts to show that the use of literature can develop the six abstract qualities – creativity, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, computational thinking, and curiosity – not just in language classrooms but in interdisciplinary courses including science and other practical majors. In addition, this study suggests several activity tasks that can be used in the real classroom by using two different novels.

## The 6Cs and Literature

As mentioned above, the key qualities that our students will need to achieve are the 6Cs: creativity, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, computational thinking, and curiosity. Literature, one of the areas of study in liberal arts and humanities, can provide valuable material to nurture these skills. Many researchers have advocated for the use of literature by emphasizing its major functions, which they have in common with the six soft skills (e.g., Lazar, 1993; Maley, 1989; Collie & Slater, 1990). Developing them along with language acquisition is a major benefit of using literature in language classrooms.

### Creativity and Curiosity

The first pair of the six abstract qualities through which literature can enrich students is creativity and curiosity. Literary texts can provide learners with chances for personal involvement (Collie & Slater, 1990; Lazar, 1993; Maley, 1989). Once students read a literary text, they focus their attention to find out what happens by unfolding the plot and gradually feeling close to some of the characters and share their emotional responses. The process of unraveling the plot itself not only motivates students to read but also help stimulates their imagination. A literary text – usually a novel or drama – mirrors daily life, which is universal, and thus, despite different cultural backgrounds, students are able to relate to its ideas, events, and other aspects of the story to their own lives with less difficulty. This enables students more easily to identify themselves with characters from the story and compare either ideas or incidents with their own. These kinds of thought practice help enhance one's curiosity and further creativity, and thus using literature is beneficial to encourage students to become an active learner towards what they are facing.

### Communication and Collaboration

Another pair of core skills needed to be successful in the 21st century is communication and collaboration. Michael Osborne (2017), futurologist and professor of machine learning at Oxford University, indicates that both sharing emotions and emphasizing others will be helpful to become a successful future worker. He predicts an uptick in jobs such as nostalgists and robot counselors that combine creativity with social emotion intelligence (EQ), which is earned through interaction

with others. Literature generates many useful ways of engaging students in social skills. It not only creates oral and written communication but asks for collaboration. According to Lazar (1993), literary texts often “promote activities where students need to share their feelings and opinions, such as discussion and group work, because they are very rich in multiple levels of meaning” (p. 17). Maley (1989) also pinpointed literature’s suggestive power and ambiguity, which creates interactive discussions. This opinion-sharing and discussion can lead to spontaneous student-centered learning, and other activities like role play and creative writing also help develop the skills of communication and collaboration (Collie & Slater, 1990). The process of sharing thoughts with others develops communication skills by effectively expressing oneself orally and/or in writing. Additionally, discussions to get a group to agree and achieve a final goal give students an opportunity to become better at collaboration.

### **Critical and Computational Thinking**

The last pair of abstract qualities is critical and computational thinking, which are closely related to the logical thinking that literature can generate. One advantage of using literature is to enrich cultural understanding (Collie & Slater, 1990; Lazar, 1993; Maley, 1989). Students can discover how the characters in literary backgrounds see the world, which provides the students with great experiences about various cultures and different kinds of people. This understanding by relating the culture to the students’ own lives not only allows them to gain valuable experience about a different culture but also encourages them to treat the cultures critically by way of accepting, reinforcing, questioning, and evaluating by stages. This process naturally produces a close link with the two thinking abilities and thereby develop problem-solving skills. Eventually, it educates students to be a “whole person” (Lazar, 1993, p. 19), which is the ultimate goal of creating an ideal worker for the 21st century.

## **METHOD**

The materials used in this study were collections of science fiction short stories. First, since they are less difficult than full-length novels,

they engage readers because “the world of short stories and novels both mirrors and illuminates human lives” (Sage, 1987, p. 43). Also, the genre of science fiction can motivate readers to get involved in discussions on many contemporary issues because they are considered the stories of change and the future in science and technological developments, which are related to the social and political movements of the 20th and 21st centuries (Kim, Yun, & Chung, 2016). This genre enables students to get involved in critical reading, thought-provoking discussions, and self-expression. There is no doubt that the whole procedure affects students’ development of the 6Cs.

## Participants

The present study administered the intervention to a class of 12 first-year students at a local university in South Korea who took the course entitled “General English.” The course was designed to develop critical reading and thinking that are considered fundamental to study any major. In the first week of the semester, a TOEIC exam was conducted to measure the students’ level of English proficiency. Most of the students in the class achieved scores ranging from 600 to 750. Their level of listening and reading proficiency was mostly intermediate, and through an oral survey, the students were found to have the most interest in fantasy and science fiction stories.

## Materials

*I, Robot* and *Bloodchild and Other Stories* are collections of science-fiction short stories. As each story can be read separately, teachers can select several stories suitable for the level of their students. In particular, *I, Robot* as a whole delivers one single theme of the interaction of humans, robots, and morality, and thus students can discover a fictional history of robotics and the position of humans in regards to technology development. Meanwhile, *Bloodchild and Other Stories* focuses on the relationship between humans and other types of beings, the so-called “alien.” Asimov’s *I, Robot* deals with a future society in relation to humans and technology, whereas Butler’s *Bloodchild and Other Stories* considers probable relations between human beings and extraterrestrial life. Butler’s novel should be helpful

reading material to guide students to think about post-humanism, which can develop multiple aspects of issues concerning humans and non-humans. Both books suggest one example of an upcoming, new society and motivate thought-provoking questions about situations the students may face in the future.

## Procedure

The classes were based on a lesson plan of a 75-minute class that was devised to use a literary text in an EFL classroom (see Appendix). This lesson is to encourage learners to respond to the text and express themselves in their own words. One lesson consists of two major activities. In every class, the students were asked to read assigned stories before the class. The first main activity was responding to the assigned story. The students talked about their likes and dislikes with anything related to the story and discussed their own questions about it. Followed by this text response, students shared their opinions based on worksheets. Both the text response and the worksheet discussion not only helped students understand the story more clearly, but also encouraged them to interpret the text in diverse ways. After the two main activities for thought-provoking practice, students were given a short writing assignment, where they responded to one of the discussion questions from the worksheets. One of the biggest benefits of using literature in EFL classrooms is to encourage learners to see things or situations critically, empathize with characters of their choice, and produce creative writing in their own words. Several short stories from both *I, Robot* and *Bloodchild and Other Stories* were selected, and some ideas of writing assignments and discussion activities are suggested below (see Worksheets A–F).

### *I, Robot!*

The story “Runaround” first features the famous Three Laws of Robotics, a fundamental idea affecting many of the other science fiction stories later on in the book. This story allows students to interpret Asimov’s ideas about robots and the relations between humans and machines, which further gives shape to their own thoughts about robots and/or machines that they will be working with in the future by dealing with the issues at hand.

<b>Runaround</b>
1. This story first features the Three Laws of Robotics. What are they and how much do you agree on each of them? (Kim et al., 2016, p. 21)
2. The robot in this story faces a dilemma of the Three Laws of Robotics. What made it difficult to obey the laws? And what did Powell do to resolve the problem? If you were him, how would you solve the case?
3. <i>Discussion question:</i> Concerning the Three Laws of Robotics, what do you think are their blind spots or weak points? What would you like to add or delete? (Kim et al., 2016, p. 21)

**FIGURE 1. Worksheet A – “Runaround,” the Second Story of *I, Robot*.**

In Worksheet B (Figure 2), teachers can change Question 3 to a group discussion after the book is read. The question can be rephrased to “Are the robots alive?” After all, all the robots in every story seem to have a personality, and it may make them seem more alive. Students may be able to consider a boundary line between humans and robots, whether this line is certain or not, and moreover, they can evolve the idea from that point into a question such as “What is humanity?”

<b>Liar!</b>
1. Summarize the text in 2–3 sentences. What is it about? What happens? (Kim et al., p. 18)
2. Respond to the book in some way, in 4–5 sentences.  (Example) How did you like it? Why? What did it make you think about? What experiences or memories did it remind you of? What comments do you have? (Kim et al., p. 18)
3. <i>Discussion question:</i> Susan Calvin, a storyteller of the frame story, contributes to a robot’s insanity, so do you think she should be charged with some crime for that?

**FIGURE 2. Worksheet B – “Liar!” the Fifth Story of *I, Robot*.**

Worksheets C and D (Figures 3 and 4) propose activities for after reading the entire book. As in the separate story activities suggested

earlier, it is advised that the tasks be done either individually or in pairs, followed by group discussions to share ideas, and then written assignments at the end. One idea is to compare two stories of the students' choice or the teacher's. Since the book has nine different short stories, students can practice comparison and contrast of different stories to analyze their major characters, the backgrounds, the ideology, and the ideas about science and humanities.

<b>Compare and Contrast</b>		
1. Choose two of your favorite stories and collect details of the categories that you create on your own.		
Category	Story 1	Story 2
Robot		
Main character		
2. Discuss their similar and different points. Similarities: Differences:		

**FIGURE 3. Worksheet C – Compare and Contrast of Two Stories.**

Starting with character study, Worksheet D (Figure 4) introduces discussion questions that give rise to students' responses to the whole book and train their thinking in regards to its theme, the writer's intension, the relationship between humans and robots, and many other responses on ethics and technology. This kind of discussion helps train learners to think from other points of view and produce their own ideas in a well-structured manner.

<b>Discussion Questions</b>	
1.	Each story introduces one new robot and a couple of human characters who go forward with time. Draw a chart of a robot and character pair in each different time frame. (Example) Year 1998 – Robbie (simple nursemaid) and Gloria

2. Human characters in this book show different responses to robots. How do you react to the robots in these stories? Who do you emphasize with the most and why?
3. You may have read other stories or watched TV dramas or movies about robots (or androids or other types of artificial intelligence). How do Asimov's robots differ from the robots in other stories? Or do you find any similarities between Asimov's robots and others?
4. What do you think of Susan Calvin as being the frame narrator? Why do you think the interviewer let readers know that she died at the end? Does that affect your response to this book?
5. Do you think that people are afraid of technology and robots today? If you were Asimov, what technology would you write about to show readers that people should not be afraid?

FIGURE 4. Worksheet D – Discussion Questions of the Book *I, Robot*.

### ***Bloodchild and Other Stories***

Octavia E. Butler says that the short story “Bloodchild” is a love story between different species. The following activities (Figures 5 and 6) allow students to grasp the idea of post-humanism, which helps widen their view of “difference” and grasp the idea of working with artificial intelligence and other living beings in a future society.

- Bloodchild**
1. What should Terran do for paying rent?
  2. What caused Qui to be changed and how does it affect Gan? If you are one of this story's characters, whom would you like to be and why?
  3. Explain the process of Tlic's reproduction.
  4. Gan is the protagonist of the story. Relate him with the other characters under the theme of the story.
  5. *Discussion question:*  
Explain the relationship between Tlic and Terran in this story. Referring to Gan's final decision, how do you interpret the relationship between Gan and T'gatoi? For example, what do you think of Gan's thoughts towards T'gatoi?

FIGURE 5. Worksheet E – “Bloodchild,” the First Story of *Bloodchild and Other Stories*.

The story “Amnesty” is inspired by “Lee Wen Ho’s Case,” which has influenced literary texts such as the drama *The Legacy Codes* (2001), written by Cherylene Lee; the play *Yellow Face* (2007), directed by David Henry Hwang; and the film *Ray Arthur Wang* released in 2010. Reading “Amnesty” helps students understand and sympathize with the true story, “Lee Wen Ho’s Case.” The first activity (see Figure 6) asks students to outline the main event surrounding Noah by rethinking its storyline and then checking how well the students understand the story. This story is about aliens who invaded the earth and deals with how two different species live together. As the story stresses the importance of communication and the way it is efficiently used, it could encourage students to use their 6C skills and remind them of their importance in the era of the fourth industrial revolution.

<b>Amnesty</b>	
1.	Write down the major incidents that Noah faced in chronological order. (Example) Noah, 11 years old: Abducted by aliens
2.	This story is based on a big scandal involving Lee Wen Ho. Compare this story with Lee Wen Ho’s case. What points make the two stories similar and different?  Similarities: Differences:
3.	Noah makes two important decisions concerning her life in the society. If you were her, what decisions would you make in each situation? Discuss your decisions with your group members.

**FIGURE 6. Worksheet F – “Amnesty,” the Sixth Story of *Bloodchild* and *Other Stories*.**

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Feedback on Texts and Its Writing Assignments

Of the two books covered during the course, students were asked to select any book or books that they would want to keep or change for the same course in the future. Almost two-thirds of the students chose

both books to keep, commenting that the reason was because the stories were fun and interesting to them. Particularly, they showed much interest in identifying themselves with the characters and defending their favorite characters when questioned by other students. This process develops students' critical and creative thinking as well as empathy. Also, many of the students expressed fascination with the description of a future society, which encourages students to imagine the upcoming society that they will face in the future.

A number of students mentioned that reading literary texts is helpful to improve their vocabulary and writing, although they still find the reading challenging. However, many students still did not like some of the stories from the two books due to their length. About a third of the students wanted shorter stories so as to complete reading in a relatively short time. Considering the feedback on the written assignments, most students considered writing assignments as challenging, but they showed positive reactions, commenting that writing the text response was a fresh and new experience of freely expressing their ideas, with no single answer being the "correct" answer.

### **Effect of Group Activities**

Most students felt that group activities were helpful to respond to the texts. They were in favor of group activities because they thought the activities helped them to understand the text more clearly and to complete their writing assignments. Many students commented that it was enjoyable to discuss their ideas about science fiction stories because they are their favorite genre. They said it was a good opportunity to start reading books in English. Additionally, and more importantly, the students became more flexible towards accepting different ways of thinking while the course proceeded. Most of them responded positively to others' diverse interpretations of certain situations. In addition to identifying with a character through reading, the students spontaneously learned to empathize with others by opening themselves to diverse ways of thinking.

### **Thinking Progress Through Reading and Writing Assignments**

Students were asked about their progress in thinking skills with

regards to reading and writing. Many students believed that reading is helpful to develop their thinking process, particularly with critical interpretation, creative ideas, and empathy. In Table 1, six students remarked that reading texts helped their thinking process, whereas four of them selected writing in the same category. Two of them thought both reading and writing helped develop their thinking skills. It is apparent that most students believed that the practice of both reading a text and writing about it improved their thinking process. In line with their thinking progress, the students also indicated that their actual writing performance gradually improved in fluency, which was found to be an additional benefit of using literary texts in the classroom.

**TABLE 1. Improvement in Thinking Process and Writing Through Assignments**

Progress	Assignment	Number of Students
Thinking Process	Reading	6
	Writing	4
	Both Reading and Writing	2

## Overall Feedback on the Course

Although many students believed that the texts were slightly beyond their proficiency level, their feedback on the course was favorable. Most of the students enjoyed the combination of short-story reading and discussion. They said that reading an English short story for every individual class was a challenging but valuable experience to train their way of thinking and writing. Compared with their concerns about English proficiency, many students indicated that the course does not need any prerequisites, with seven students expressing such an opinion. In contrast, three students deemed a prerequisite to be necessary for the following reasons: lack of vocabulary proficiency and writing skills.

Regarding the learning that they achieved from the course, ten students rated it “very good” and “good.” The rest rated it as “adequate” or “outstanding.” In addition, almost all of the students were satisfied with the science fiction course of reading and discussion on the society of the future. It is considered that the selected books covering robots and aliens interested the young students and motivated them to keep reading.

This provides the students with certain background knowledge to express their ideas on the reading and its related issues. Such interest and motivation are believed to enable students to exert efforts in completing the target assignments, although they felt somewhat frustrated with the challenging materials. This study assumes that the whole process of using literature makes it possible to improve the students' critical and creative thinking skills as well as collaborative and communicative skills.

## CONCLUSIONS

The present study takes into consideration the role of literature in the era of the fourth industrial revolution. In the time when this industrial revolution requires the harmonious combination of a liberal arts education and a STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education is emphasized to prepare students well for their future. Since most jobs are expected to be replaced by robotic machines, we have both doubt and curiosity as to any limitations of artificial intelligence. If artificial intelligence can transcend human's intelligence, how can humans prove their worth of being in the new era? This question gives rise to designing interdisciplinary courses that can nurture the six soft skills: creativity, critical thinking, communication, computational thinking, collaboration, and curiosity.

As future jobs ask for well-rounded individuals with creativity and emotional intelligence, this study suggests using literary text to create an interdisciplinary course. According to Lazar (1993), "Literature itself has been greatly enriched by recent developments in the field of critical theory ... it is to find ways of using literature which will help learners to achieve their main purpose for being in the classroom" (p. xiii). Literature prompts students to be active in thinking. Every literary text is different and provides abundant authentic resources for teaching and learning. The task for teachers is thus to draw on the range of insights available, and then to develop an approach appropriate and relevant to their students. Students need to have knowledge in liberal arts to adapt to the new era, and this will help students to be well-qualified and confident for their future jobs.

This study suggests several activities that focus on developing the 6C skills. A course using literary texts draws connections between two

different disciplines, and also it deepens the understanding of each field of study at the same time. The activities designed in this study are useful for other majors such as engineering and economics. Different kinds of fusion courses help broaden students' soft skills and lead them to be individuals who can be successful leaders in the society of the fourth industrial revolution. Furthermore, these suggested activities are applicable to any resource, such as combining written materials (e.g., short stories, graphic novels) with media clips (e.g., movies, TV dramas). This combination will not just motivate but encourage students to actively become involved in discussion and thought-provoking questions, eventually developing their thinking skills. In a classroom, an individual teacher has a role of guide and facilitator. It is the teacher that guides students to boost their ability, and it helps develop their soft skills. Internationally well-known Korean enterprises have already announced that they are eager to recruit employees who are qualified for positions in preparation of the fourth industrial revolution. Such successful candidates can be produced through interdisciplinary courses with literature, which is a beneficial medium to foster creativity and problem-solving.

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## APPENDIX

### Lesson Plan: A 75-Minute Course Using Literary Text

<b>Material</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Textbook – A short story</li> <li>➤ Handouts – Worksheet</li> </ul>		
<b>Aims</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To understand the story</li> <li>➤ To make thought-provoking discussion</li> <li>➤ To do a writing task chosen from the Worksheet</li> </ul>		
<b>Language Skills</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Listening: listening to T and Ss' talk</li> <li>➤ Reading: reading questions on Worksheet and skim-reading to find the answers</li> <li>➤ Writing: doing a writing (e.g., opinion writing, compare and contrast, creative writing)</li> </ul>		
<b>Work Previously Completed</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ss have read the assigned story.</li> <li>➤ Ss have learned skim-reading to find gist information from a text.</li> <li>➤ Ss have learned how to respond to a story.</li> <li>➤ Ss have learned how to plan writing.</li> <li>➤ Ss have learned how to do paragraph writing on each target question.</li> </ul>		
<b>Intended Learning Outcomes</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ss will practice skim-reading to find target information from a text.</li> <li>➤ Ss will practice considering things and people in diverse aspects.</li> <li>➤ Ss will practice organizing their ideas to do writing tasks.</li> <li>➤ Ss will practice expressing themselves in writing in their own words.</li> </ul>		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Set Up</b>	<b>Procedure</b>
5 min	T–Ss	<u>Lead-In</u> Ss share their feelings on the assigned story and then T delivers some background for the assigned story.
10 min	T–Ss	<u>Pre-Activity</u> Ss study a list of key words/expressions and discuss the theme of the story.
20 min	Ss–Ss	<u>Main Activity 1</u> In groups of three or four, Ss respond to the story in regards to the following questions:

25 min	Ss-Ss	<p>(1) What do you like and dislike about the story/character /background, etc.?</p> <p>(2) Which part of the story would you like to change and why?</p> <p>(3) How would you like to change the part in Question (2)?</p> <p>(4) Who do you identify with the most? Choose one episode and discuss what you would do if you were the character in the situations he or she encounters?</p> <p>(5) Are there any questions to make to any character or the writer?</p> <p>T monitors each group and helps them if necessary.</p> <p><u>Main Activity 2</u></p> <p>In groups, Ss discuss their opinions on questions in Worksheet. (Worksheets on each story are shown below.)</p> <p>T monitors the class and helps them if necessary.</p>
5 min	T-Ss	<p>T summarizes Ss' major errors and mistakes in expressions and sentence structure and corrects them.</p>
5 min	T-Ss	<p><u>Post-Activity</u></p> <p>T asks Ss to read the next story and informs them of writing assignment for the assigned story, which is the discussion question on each worksheet or one of the questions from the list.</p>

## **A Study of Iranian EFL Learners' Compliment Responses: Identifying Elements of Politeness Use and Instruction for the Korean Context**

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The current study set out to assess the sociopragmatic appropriacy of compliment response (CR) knowledge of Iranian learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) through data elicited by means of a written discourse completion task (DCT). The participants were comprised of 29 university students, aged 19–28, who were randomly selected and asked to respond to compliments received from either equal-status (=P) or higher-status (–P) interlocutors. Subsequently, Yu's (2004) coding scheme of CRs and previous research on politeness were used with the aim of coding and analyzing the participants' CRs as well as assessing their appropriacy in terms of (im)politeness in the intended sociocultural context. The results demonstrated a strong tendency among the participants to accept, rather than decline or question, compliments. The findings also suggest that the participants were reliant on both negative and positive politeness in unequal-status interactions (i.e., –P) and on positive politeness in equal-status situations (i.e., =P) by utilizing various strategies and linguistic devices to achieve sociopragmatic appropriacy. Furthermore, the participants proved to be relatively aware of the significance of the role of interlocutors' power and social status in harmonizing interaction. However, the responses also included features that might be interpreted as partly inappropriate, particularly for interacting with higher-status interlocutors. This is interpreted as indicative of a need for instructional intervention in the pragmatics of CRs.

*Keywords:* compliment response, EFL learners, pragmatic competence, politeness

## (INTERLANGUAGE) PRAGMATICS, POLITENESS, AND SPEECH ACTS

Language use is a highly complex phenomenon, particularly once applied to social contexts. To communicate successfully with the speakers of a language, students learning that language as a second language (henceforth, L2) are required to know not only the “right” vocabulary, grammar, and structures but to whom, how, and when to apply these linguistic components. This simple statement obtains increased importance once speakers from a variety of cultures and linguistic backgrounds are involved in interaction with one another. Additionally, language learners need to realize when it is appropriate to keep silent as well as when to speak in L2.

Pragmatics, simply put, refers to the study of language as used by speakers in social context. Levinson (1997, p. 1) defines pragmatics as “the study of the relation of signs to interpreters.” Another similar definition of pragmatics is as follows:

The study of language from the point of view of the users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction, and the effects their use of language has on the other participants in an act of communication. (Crystal, 2008, p. 379)

It should be clear from the above definitions of pragmatics that by “constraints,” are meant the limiting factors that guide interaction in certain directions. One such constraint is the power (P) that interlocutors have due to a variety of factors such as wealth, knowledge, age, sex, and so forth (see, for example, Brown & Gilman, 1960). As a result, in order to use language appropriately in a social context, an individual needs to possess thorough knowledge of the role that each interlocutor plays in that particular context. For instance, in an interaction between two people of unequal status, as perhaps in the case of a professor and a student, each interlocutor, and in this case most probably the student, must have a good understanding of the other’s social roles. Thanks to his/her academic position, knowledge, and other factors, the professor will most probably, though not necessarily so in all contexts, have more power than the student.

The term “sociolinguistic competence” (Canale & Swain, 1980, as cited in Littlewood, 2011, p. 546) is utilized to refer to the ability to use language appropriately in social milieu. To do so, speakers are required to be cognizant of the social situation in which they interact, the role that each speaker plays, and the purposes for which the interaction occurs. It is obvious that the performance of speech acts such as apologizing, refusing, complimenting and responding to compliments, etc., differs from language to language and culture to culture, rendering intercultural competence a vital necessity in this regard.

Interlanguage pragmatics (henceforth, ILP) refers to “the acquisition, comprehension, and production of contextually appropriate language by foreign or second language learners” (Schauer, 2009, p. 2). Taguchi (2012) states that ILP “focuses on second language learners’ knowledge, use, and development in performance of sociocultural functions in context” (p. 1). To investigate learners’ ILP knowledge, researchers have sought to examine learners’ production of a variety of speech acts. The present study falls in the area of ILP research as it seeks to scrutinize the extent to which language learners’ production of compliment responses (CRs) is sociopragmatically appropriate. This brings the discussion to what constitutes politeness versus impoliteness. The commonplace understanding of politeness is that it is the equivalent of good manners, courtesy, and respect. Notwithstanding, researchers have proposed different views of politeness and its respective conceptualizations, considering it to be a substantially important concept in the realm of pragmatics. Four perspectives on politeness are the following:

1. *The conversational-contract view*: This view conceives of speakers as interacting under a conversational contract that stipulates how they are required to communicate successfully. The speakers’ breach of this contract will result in impoliteness (Fraser & Nolan, 1981).
2. *The conversational-maxim view*: This view hinges upon Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle (CP) and his maxims of conversation, namely quantity, quality, manner, and relevance.
3. *The social-norm view*: This view entails speakers’ common sense understanding of what it means to be polite in various parts of the world (Fraser, 1990).
4. *The face-saving view*: Proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), this view is based upon the notion of “face,” (i.e., the person’s

public self-image). Face is assumed to comprise two types of wants: the want to be approved of by others and the want to have one's thoughts and actions unhindered by other individuals. Fulfilling these two wants involves notions of "positive face" and "negative face," respectively. Interlocutors are required to preserve each other's face during interaction. Otherwise, they will in all probability sound impolite and rude.

Brown and Levinson (1987) formulated their Politeness Theory based on the highly significant notion of "face," introducing five politeness superstrategies, which are, in turn, made up of various sub-strategies:

1. *Bald on-record politeness strategies*: Strategies that do not employ any redress or mitigation or that do not include any attempt to reduce the threat of face-threatening acts (FTAs) to the addressee's face fall in this category.
2. *Positive politeness strategies*: Strategies preserving the addressee's positive face such as the use of the politeness markers like *please* and solidarity/in-group markers such as *honey* and *dear*, for example, "Thank you, darling."
3. *Negative politeness strategies*: Strategies appealing to and maintaining the addressee's negative face, for instance, "Thank you indeed, Sir."
4. *Off-record politeness strategies*: These constitute the least direct politeness strategies and include, for instance, giving hints and making illusions: "It's cold in here" (meaning that you should close the door!).
5. *Do not do FTA*: When interlocutors, out of fear of offending the addressee, do not perform a speech act at all, they actually use the strategy of "do not do FTA."

Researchers often stress that a lack of mastery over cross-cultural differences in speech acts can result in cross-cultural pragmatic failure and miscommunication. For instance, Ahar and Eslami-Rasekh (2011), Holmes and Brown (1987), Chick (1996), Nelson, Al-Batal, and Echols (1996), amongst others, have demonstrated the possibility of L2 learners' pragmatic failure in the cross-cultural realization of compliments as well as responses to compliments. Therefore, the present study set out to assess the extent to which Iranian EFL learners are able to perform

interlanguage responses to compliments appropriately and politely. The impetus for carrying out the study originated in the fact that, unlike compliments, CRs have not been the subject of rigorous research attention in the context of relevant research into politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and speech acts (e.g., Yu, 2004).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Researching various aspects of interlanguage has been popular with applied linguistic researchers for decades with speech acts remaining a significant area of theorizing. The review of the literature on the speech act of complimenting brings about two strands of research with one strand focusing on compliments and the other concerned with how compliments are responded to (i.e., CRs). Research studies that have focused on compliments include, but are not limited to, Wolfson (1981), Johnson (1992), Olshtain (1993), Nelson, Al-Batal, and Echols (1996), Nelson, El Bakary, and Al Batal (1996), Golato (2002), Yu (2003, 2004), Al-Khateeb (2009), Jucker, (2009), Tang and Zhang (2009), Chen and Yang (2010), Ahar and Eslami-Rasekh (2011), Cheng (2011), Rees-Miller (2011), and Mustapha (2012).

For decades, researchers have stressed CR knowledge and behavior as part of ILP development (Golato, 2002, 2005). Researchers have highlighted the difficulties in producing appropriate compliments cross-culturally and the concomitant pragmatic failure and miscommunication (see Holmes & Brown, 1987). Comparative studies of CRs as exhibited in various cultures also abound. For instance, Nelson, Al-Batal, and Echols's (1996) study indicated that "acceptance" and "rejection" were the most and least frequent strategies in both Egyptian Arabic and American English. In an early study, Wolfson (1981) examined the cross-cultural differences observed in the encoding of compliments in various cultures. Wolfson's cross-cultural perspective led her to an important and interesting conclusion: "Speech acts differ cross-culturally not only in the way they are realized but also in their distribution, their frequency of occurrence, and in the functions they serve" (p. 123). Taking a cross-cultural perspective, Han (1992) investigated Korean females' responses to compliments in both Korean and English interactions in an attempt to find examples of pragmatic transfer. Although sharp

differences were found between the types of CRs used in Korean and English, the study provided little evidence for such transfer. The most common CRs were, in order of frequency, “reject,” “deflect or avoid” and “accept” in Korean and “accept” and “reject” in English. In another comprehensive review of the literature on compliments and CRs in Eastern and Western languages and cultures, Chen (2010) concludes that, among other things, factors such as the relationship between the complimenter and complimentee and their genders are of considerable significance in the way a compliment is paid or responded to.

Finally, in the Iranian context, Ahar and Eslami-Rasekh’s (2011) study attempted to focus on the effect of the interlocutors’ social status and the size of the imposition on the compliments used. The results of their study demonstrated that these two factors led to oversensitivity among Iranian EFL learners, which in turn resulted in pragmatic failure. Furkó and Dudás (2012) also compared male and female Hungarian students’ production of CRs. Their study suggested that while both genders favored agreement strategies in CRs, females were more conservative in producing such formulas. Exposure to a community with native speakers of English as the dominant group has been the focus of attention of some researchers. For example, Motaghi-Tabari and de Beuzeville’s (2012) comparative study revealed that Iranians residing in Australia produced different CRs from those residing in Iran, a finding that the researchers attributed to the effect of exposure to the norms of a new speech community. They also found that both Iranians and Australians prefer to agree to a compliment rather than reject or question it, perhaps with the purpose of keeping the interaction going.

Despite the fact that numerous coding schemes of CRs have been proposed thus far (e.g., Herbert, 1986; Yu, 2004), the present study took Yu’s (2004) classification of CR strategies as its axis of analysis for the gathered data. Yu’s classification is comprised of six mutually exclusive strategies with some strategies including sub-strategies. The six main CR strategies are as follows:

1. *Acceptance Strategies*: Yu (2004) perceives these as strategies that indicate the complimentee’s recognition of a remark as a compliment.  
Examples: “Thank you”; “Yeah, I know that”; “I’m so happy you liked it.”
2. *Amendment Strategies*: These refer to strategies that mitigate the

complimentary force. In other words, they *amend* the threatening force of a compliment.

Examples: “But you’re doing a great job as well”; “It really wasn’t THAT good!”; “It’s always like that”; “Really?”; “You helped me a lot too.”

3. *Non-acceptance Strategies*: According to Yu (2004), speakers who reject, call into question, or downplay a compliment are said to be using such strategies.

Examples: “No, that’s not true”; “Come on!”; “Are you pulling my leg?!”

4. *Face Relationship-Related Response Strategies*: Strategies that do not seem to fall under the rubric of the strategies mentioned above are categorized as face relationship-related response strategies. Yu stated that these strategies deal with the compliment within the interaction, not with the propositional content of the compliment.

Example: “Yeah, but isn’t that what you’re supposed to do?”

5. *Combination Strategies*: Using more than one CR strategy results in combination strategies.

Example: “Yeah, thank you, but I’m not sure.”

6. *No acknowledgment*: A last strategy can be for speakers choosing to not respond to a compliment at all.

CR behavior remains one of the relatively underexamined aspects of learner interlanguage in EFL contexts in spite of the numerous studies mentioned above. This relative lack of research is reflected by Held’s (2005) comment that “only in the most recent linguistic developments has the compliment, as a theoretically defined speech-act type, been recognized as having central significance and thus forming a clearly delimited area of research within politeness linguistics” (p. 153). Schauer (2009) points out that, in spite of the increased importance of pragmatic production and comprehension in successful communication, teachers still measure students’ linguistic abilities in terms of the traditional four skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. This is indicative of teachers’ obsession with students’ skills and their negligence of sociolinguistic abilities. Researchers have pointed out that CRs can turn out to be potential sources of intercultural miscommunication (e.g., Chick, 1996). Therefore, it is hoped that the findings of this study will have implications for understanding learners’ ILP development while

raising our understanding of learners' pragmatic production ability in CR behavior. Comparing these results with those gained from native speakers is likely to produce insights as to the areas in which the pragmatic productions of native versus nonnative speakers of English converge or diverge. Therefore, areas of difficulty facing Iranian EFL learners, as well as those of ease, will be most evident. Obviously, gone are the days when pragmatic competence was viewed as the sheer production and comprehension of speech acts (see Taguchi, 2012). In consideration of the above, the present study aimed at finding answers to the following research questions:

1. What are Iranian EFL learners' most and least frequent CRs?
2. Does gender make a statistically significant difference in Iranian EFL learners' use of CR strategies?
3. What politeness strategies and markers do Iranian EFL learners utilize to demonstrate the sociocultural appropriacy of their CRs?
4. How sociopragmatically appropriate are Iranian EFL learners' CRs?

## **METHOD**

### **Participants**

The participants of the study consisted of 29 Iranian university students who majored in English language and literature at Urmia University, Iran. They were within the age range of 19 to 28 years, comprised of 16 males and 13 females, and were senior-year BA and freshman-year MA students. The participants were randomly selected from among the students of English in the Department of English at Urmia University and comprised two ethnic groups: Kurdish and Turkish. They were studying English as a foreign language (EFL) during the 2016–17 academic year. Furthermore, the participants came from relatively similar socio-economic backgrounds, and they all spoke Turkish as either their native or second language. They were informed about the purposes of the study in person prior to filling out the discourse completion task (DCT).

## Instruments

Data for this study were collected by means of a written discourse completion task (DCT), which was adapted from Yu (2004). Researchers have stressed the inherent advantages in using DCTs in conducting research on pragmatic-related phenomena (see Kasper & Dahl, 1991). Necessary modifications were made in some of the situations presented in the DCT to make it more appropriate and familiar to the Iranian culture and context. These changes were also checked by two assistant professors at Urmia University who were experts in the field of applied linguistics for further validity issues. The DCT comprised eight situations: In four of the situations (Situations 1, 3, 5, and 7), the participants were the recipients of compliments from higher-status interlocutors (e.g., a university professor complimenting his/her student on the essay that the student wrote), while in the four other situations (Situations 2, 4, 6, and 8), they received compliments from equal-status interlocutors (e.g., a student complimenting a classmate on his/her good performance on a project). Therefore, for better comparability, an equal number of DCT scenarios were assigned to each power status; that is to say, four scenarios for unequal-status interactions and four others for equal-status interactions. The situations described academic settings for greater familiarity to the participants. Furthermore, the relationship between the interlocutors in the former case (i.e., unequal-status interlocutors) was shown using  $-P$  and in the latter using  $=P$  (i.e., equal-status interlocutors). Table 1 offers details for better illustration of the structure of the DCT's situations.

**TABLE 1. Description of the DCT Situations**

No.	Situation	Power	Description
1	Student's essay	$-P$	Speaker < Hearer
2	Class presentation	$=P$	Speaker = Hearer
3	Exam postponement	$-P$	Speaker < Hearer
4	Academic seminar	$=P$	Speaker = Hearer
5	Classroom project	$-P$	Speaker < Hearer
6	School conference	$=P$	Speaker = Hearer
7	PowerPoint presentation	$-P$	Speaker < Hearer
8	Proposal outline	$=P$	Speaker = Hearer

*Note.*  $-P$ : speaker (addresser) is lower than hearer (addressee);  $=P$ : speaker (addresser) and hearer (addressee) are equal.

## Procedure and Data Analysis

The present study is descriptive, bearing features of both qualitative and quantitative research. It aimed at describing the CR knowledge of Iranian EFL learners from the perspective of politeness and sociopragmatic appropriacy. The researchers contacted the participants in person in order to gather the data and then distributed the DCTs among them. They were asked to pen responses they would most probably offer in everyday interactions. Once collected, the data were first coded according to Yu's (2004) coding scheme of CRs, which consisted of six mutually exclusive strategies (see text above). Afterwards, the data were examined quantitatively by providing the frequency counts of each CR. Furthermore, chi-square analysis was used to check if males and females differed significantly in using CRs. Next, the data were analyzed qualitatively in light of previous research, particularly based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) work on politeness. The corpus of CRs was, as a result, examined at the level of CR utterances and in terms of the broader social setting, taking into particular account the interlocutors' relative power (P). It is noteworthy that this study was intended to be primarily qualitative as research into the pragmatic aspects of language learning and ILP tends to be qualitative. However, wherever appropriate, quantitative data were also provided for a better and more complete analysis of the data. This phase consisted of comparing the overall frequencies with which each CR strategy had been used in addition to a comparison between males' and females' use of each CR strategy.

## CR Corpus and Intercoder Reliability

The whole corpus consisted of 230 CR tokens with each CR token consisting of a whole response, whether one sentence or more. Coding CRs inevitably involves some subjectivity on the part of the coder. Weber (1990, p. 12) stated that "to make valid inferences from the text, it is important that the classification procedure be reliable in the sense of being consistent: different people should code the same text in the same way." Therefore, to account for the intercoder reliability of the coding process, another expert who was trained in CR coding according to Yu's (2004) coding scheme coded 20% (i.e., 46 CRs) of the CR corpus. The intercoder reliability was found to be 87%, which is

considered good enough to allow the codification process to proceed (Mackey & Gass, 2005). In other words, the researcher and the other CR coder agreed on the coding of 87% of the CRs and disagreed upon only 13% of the CRs they coded (see Table 2). Afterwards, as part of the process of intercoder reliability measurement, the differences in the remaining 13% of disputes were negotiated and the tokens were frequently discussed until the differences in the coders' points of view were resolved.

**TABLE 2. CR Intercoder Reliability**

		Coder 1	Coder 2
Coder 1	Pearson Correlation	1	.87
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	<i>N</i>	46	46
Coder 2	Pearson Correlation	.87	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	<i>N</i>	46	46

## RESULTS

The current study aimed at describing the extent to which Iranian university EFL learners' responses to compliments are socioculturally appropriate; that is to say, how polite these responses are and if not appropriately polite, what factors account for their inappropriacy and impoliteness. Therefore, the study set out to identify the elements of politeness and impoliteness in Iranian EFL learners' CR knowledge. In this section, examples of CRs are provided and qualitatively analyzed in terms of sociopragmatic appropriacy and in light of the previous research on compliments. To begin with, the overall frequency counts of each CR strategy and those across gender are given in Figures 1 and 2, respectively, prior to analyzing the CRs qualitatively. These two figures address the first research question.

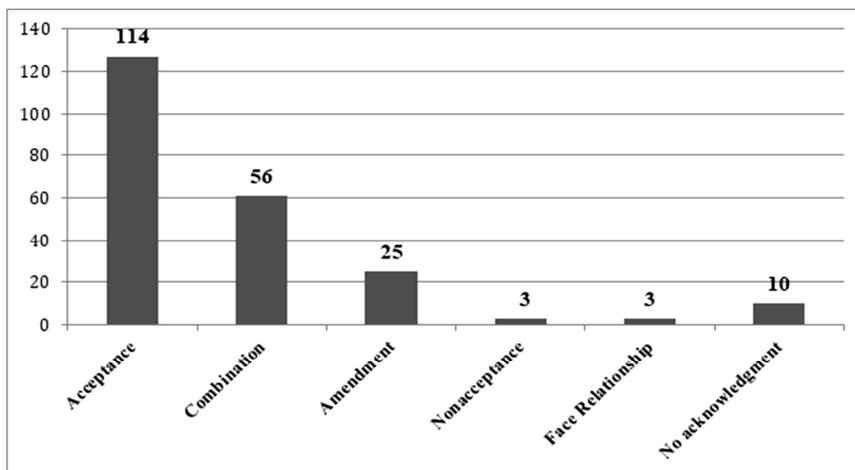


FIGURE 1. Overall CR Strategy Use.

Figure 1 shows that overall the participants used the six strategies 229 times, with “acceptance” strategies being most frequent (127) and “face relationship” being least frequent (3). With regard to gender, males used these six strategies more than females (126 versus 103, see Figure 2). Furthermore, it can be seen that both genders’ most-frequently used strategies are acceptance, combination, and amendment. Figure 2 displays the results of CR strategy use for the gender groups.

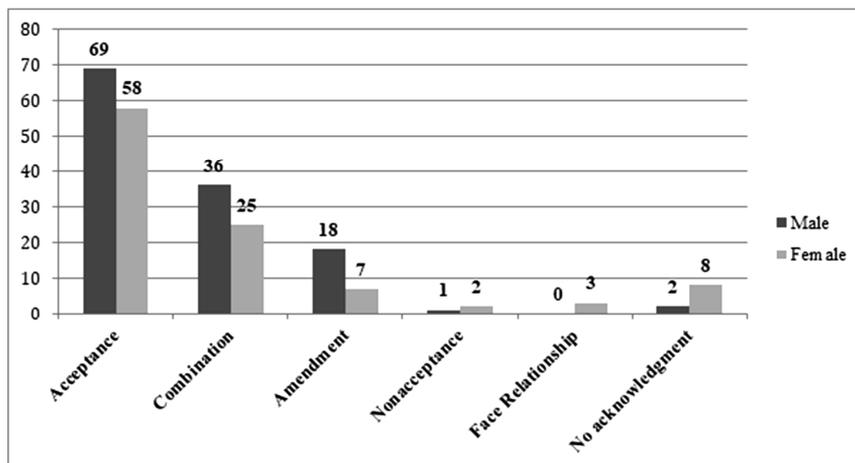


FIGURE 2. CR Strategy Use Across Gender.

With regard to gender, as can be seen in Figure 2, males used these six strategies more than females (126 versus 103). Furthermore, it can be seen that for both genders, the most-frequently used CR strategies are acceptance, combination, and amendment. On the other hand, the least-frequently employed strategies are no acknowledgement, non-acceptance, and face relationship. Table 3 displays the results of chi-square analysis conducted in order to examine if there is any significant difference between males and females in their use of CRs. This table is an attempt to answer the second research question.

**TABLE 3. Chi-square Analysis of CR Strategy Use Across Gender**

	Value	df	Sig.
Chi-square	2.310	1	.129

Note.  $p < .05$  Critical values: 3.841

According to Table 3, there is no significant difference between males and females in the use of CRs,  $\chi^2(1, 229) = 2.310, p = .129$ .

The CR behavior of the participants is discussed qualitatively in the next section, where their potential strong points as well as the weaknesses of the CR semantic formulas are highlighted. This section also elucidates the linguistic features, devices, and strategies that were found to have contributed to the (in)appropriateness of the CR semantic formulas. It therefore attempts to answer the second research question.

### CR Strategy Use: Frequency and Type

Figure 1 demonstrates that the order in which the participants used CR strategies is as follows: acceptance > combination > amendment > non-acceptance > face relationship > no acknowledgment.

With respect to gender, the order of CR strategy use differed slightly. The order was found to be as follows for females: acceptance > combination > no acknowledgment > amendment > face relationship > non-acceptance. For males, the order was: acceptance > combination > amendment > no acknowledgment > non-acceptance.

It is seen that the order of CR strategy use for both males and females is the same in the first two sets of strategies and the highest level of difference lies in the order of use of amendment, face relationship, and non-acceptance, which also constituted the least-

frequently used CR strategies. These results support previous research on CRs. In line with Motaghi-Tabari and de Beuzeville (2012) and Furkó and Dudás (2012), the findings indicate that accepting compliments is a common CR strategy among Iranian EFL learners.

However, in terms of gender, the findings are not in line with Han (1992) in that while females' most common CR strategy in the current study was "accept," Han's Korean female participants rejected CRs in English. On the other hand, Han also elicited responses to compliments from the participants in Korean and found that "accept" was their most frequent strategy, a finding which is in keeping with our findings.

## Politeness Markers in CR Behavior

This section presents the most common politeness markers that the participants used while responding to compliments.

### Intensification of CRs

One recurrent politeness strategy in the present study to strengthen CR semantic formulas was the use of what have been termed "intensifiers" or "boosters" in the literature (Watts, 2003). Intensifiers include such terms as *very*, *certainly*, and *so*, which are added to CRs like "Thank you" to increase their force. Consider the following examples:

- (1) *It's really kind of you.* (Male speaker; Sit. #4; =P; S=H)
- (2) *I'm so glad about that.* (Female speaker; Sit. #8; -P; S<H)
- (3) *It's kind of you. I owe to you so much.* (Female speaker; -P; Sit .#5; S<H)
- (4) *Thank you. You are very clever, of course.* (Male speaker; Sit. #8; =P; S=H)
- (5) *Thank you so much, Sir. I promise to study very well.* (Male speaker; -P; Sit #3; S<H)

According to Watts (2003), intensifiers are used with the express purpose of "enhancing the force of the illocution in some way" (p. 169). In the same vein, the intensification of the above CRs might be discussed in light of the participants' wish to augment and strengthen the sincerity of their responses by lengthening them. In fact, as Sokol (1997, as cited in Wierzbicka, 1999, p. 255) rightly made clear, "Compliments

are often treated with suspicion,” and the participants’ reliance on intensifiers in CRs can be taken as evidence of their tendency to use intensifiers as politeness markers to denote sociolinguistic appropriateness. These findings are in line with other similar research results that have demonstrated that intensification is a common feature of compliments in American English (Cohen, 1996).

### Use of Honorifics

Honorifics constitute linguistic devices and expressions such as *Sir*, *Ma’am*, and *Professor*, which, according to Brown and Levinson (1987), appeal to the hearer/complimentee’s negative face and serve the purpose of giving deference and respect to them. These were the next-most-frequent politeness strategies used by the participants, though those listed are not an exhaustive list.

- (6) *Thank you, Sir.* (Male speaker; Sit #5; -P; S<H)
- (7) *Thank you very much, Professor. I promise to study hard.* (Female speaker; Sit #3; -P; S<H)
- (8) *My pleasure, Professor.* (Male speaker; Sit #7; -P; S<H)
- (9) *You’re totally welcome, Sir/Ma’am.* (Male speaker; Sit #7; -P; S<H)

### Lack of Knowledge and Metaphorical Usage

Another politeness strategy that was employed in responding to compliments was to show one’s being at a loss for words, so to speak, to thank the complimenter. Bear in mind that knowledge indicates power (remember the old saying “Knowledge is power”!). Therefore, by admitting one’s lack of knowledge, the speakers can be conceived as having followed the purpose of elevating the hearer’s knowledge and therefore his/her power. Also, it must be stressed that the following CRs have not been used literally but metaphorically to denote an intention not stated in the CR. Consider the following CRs:

- (10) *I don’t know how to thank you.* (Female speaker; Sit. #3; -P; S<H)
- (11) [I smile and say] *Thank you very much; I don’t know how to be thankful to you.* (Female speaker; Sit #3.; -P; S<H)

It can be seen that, in the above CRs, in both of the above

examples, the complimenter and complimentees are in an unequal situation, with the complimenter being higher in status than the complimentee.

### Combination of Strategies

CR 12 was provided by a male student to his professor for the professor's consent to postpone giving an exam following the student's request:

- (12) *Thank you very much, Sir. I'll do my best.* (Male speaker; Sit. #3; -P; S<H)

CR12 is sociolinguistically appropriate in some respects: first, and as indicated by the underlined parts, the CR has been intensified by *very*; next, it constitutes a promise (i.e., doing one's best on the exam) on the part of the complimenter (i.e., the student) which can be construed as the complimentee's attempt to make up for the complimenter's compliance with his request (i.e., postponing the exam). According to Brown and Levinson (1987), promising is a positive politeness substrategy. Similarly, Ogiermann (2009) also posited that promises preserve the hearer's positive face, needs, and wants. Finally, the honorific *Sir* has been used to give deference and respect to the complimenter. Giving deference is a substrategy of negative politeness. In the same vein, the analysis of the CRs gave credence to the fact that two of the principal politeness markers that the participants utilized were intensifiers and honorifics. It was also found that these were employed simultaneously, that is to say, in the same CR. Consider the following CRs for instance:

- (13) *Thank you, Sir.* (Male speaker; Sit. #1; -P; S<H)  
(14) *Oh thanks. That's very nice of you.* (Male speaker; Sit. #2; -P; S=H)  
(15) *I'm so happy you liked it. Thank you.* (Female speaker; Sit. #5; -P; S<H)  
(16) *Thanks a million, my dear teacher. I won't let you down.* (Female speaker; Sit. #3; -P; S<H)

Unlike the above CRs, the following CR, given by the same student to a professor, might not be found very appropriate:

- (17) *You have got to be kidding! Wow, how fascinating I hear that!*  
(Male speaker; Sit. #5; -P; S<H)

CR 17 was produced in a situation in which the student responds to a compliment provided by a university professor. The CR sounds too acquiescent to be paid by a lower-status person (i.e., student) to a higher-status one (i.e., professor). In fact, such a CR would be more appropriate between two equal-status interlocutors.

It is clear that using combination strategies results in lengthened CR semantic formulas. Longer sequences of interaction will, in turn, result in increased appropriacy of the CRs by dint of the fact that longer responses are preferable to shorter ones that might be interpreted as terse and consequently rude. For instance, Willis (2003) noted that “in English there is a broad generalization that longer is politer” (p. 19), viewing the length of a semantic formula as a politeness marker in English. Furthermore, Willis explicates the longer-is-politer generalization by stating that “Please, would you mind opening the door?” is most probably politer than “Open the door” (pp. 19–20). On these grounds, then, some of the above CRs such as CRs 3 and 4 can be construed as appropriate on the basis of their length.

### Use of In-Group Markers

In-group markers were another feature that characterized the CRs. These refer to those linguistic devices that are directed to the hearer’s positive face, serving the purpose of enhancing solidarity and increasing in-group membership of individuals (Watts, 2003). In-group markers are utilized in the following CRs:

- (18) *Thank you, dear.* (Female speaker; Sit. #6; =P; S=H)  
(19) *Thanks a lot, dear. That’s very kind of you. I hope so.* (Female speaker; Sit. #8; =P; S=H)  
(20) *Thank you, friend.* (Male speaker; Sit. #4; =P; S=H)  
(21) *Thank you for your attention, dear classmate.* (Male speaker; Sit. #8; =P; S=H)  
(22) *Thanks, dude.* (Male speaker; Sit. #2; =P; S=H)

Following Watts (2003), it is hypothesized that in-group markers fall under the rubric of positive politeness in which the aim is to reduce the social distance between interlocutors and therefore improve solidarity.

The analysis of the CRs in this section indicates that these markers were often used in equal-status interactions such as Situations 2, 4, and 6. This finding can be evidence that Iranian EFL learners are sociopragmatically cognizant of the function of these markers in establishing solidarity with individuals of their own social status rather than with those of higher status. According to Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015), compliments that indicate appreciation are the most frequent means of expressing positive politeness which is, in turn, employed to express solidarity and decreased social distance (Brown & Levinson, 1987). On the other hand, the analysis of the previously mentioned CRs demonstrates that the participants' reliance on negative politeness strategies through the use of honorifics and giving deference is suggestive of their pragmatic awareness of the appropriacy of using these strategies with higher-status interlocutors.

#### **Agreement vs. Disagreement**

A common observation was that most often the participants accepted a compliment from higher-status persons while they often questioned, if not declined, compliments received from equal-status persons. The following responses offered by the same participant exemplify this finding:

(23) *Most welcome. That's what I learned from you.* (Male speaker; Sit. #1; -P; S<H)

(24) *Are you kidding me?* (Male speaker; Sit. #2; =P; S=H)

As the participants are responding to compliments received from higher-status interlocutors, the comment provided in CR 23 and the response in CR 24 might be interpreted as the lower-status speakers' attempt to preserve a higher-status person's face. These CRs can be taken as evidence to support the assumption that the participants are already, and probably universally, aware of the pragmatic norms of interaction in producing CRs. As can be seen in the above responses, the second CR would have been, in all probability, viewed as impolite by the professor had he/she been accosted by it. The use of acceptance strategies, mostly encoded through "Thank you" to show agreement, might also be interpreted in light of Leech's (1983) Agreement Maxim, one of the maxims of the Politeness Principle, which states: "(a) Minimise disagreement between self and other; (b) maximise agreement

between self and other” (Watts, 2003, p. 67). The results showed that the participants frequently encoded acceptance strategies in the formulaic expression “Thank you,” a finding that is said to characterize American English, as well (Cohen, 1996). It is expected that these similarities in usage will lead to increasing pragmatic comprehension and successful cross-cultural communication. However, this strategy was occasionally accompanied by the declining of the compliment in equal-status exchanges:

- (25) *Thank you, but it wasn't that good. Come on!* (Male speaker; Sit. #8; =P; S=H)

In CR 25, the speaker declines, though only partially, the compliment on a class proposal outline received from a classmate (i.e., from an equal-status interlocutor). This can be viewed as a politeness strategy as it can be thought of as an attempt on the part of the speaker to sound humble and not reject a compliment completely. This theorizing is based on the observation that the speaker has first accepted the compliment by thanking the complimenter and then attempts to decline it. Such a conclusion is most probable since it is highly common among Iranians to express humbleness by declining compliments when responding to them. If this conclusion, which is tentative for now, turns out to be supported by further evidence, then this finding can be easily taken as evidence of pragmatic transfer of L1 cultural norms among the participants.

### Other Strategies

In addition to the above strategies, the participants utilized a number of other strategies to indicate the appropriacy of the CR semantic formulas. To set an example, CRs like the ones in CR 26 and 27 commonly incorporate what have been called “pause fillers” in the scholarly literature (e.g., Beebe, Tahakashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990):

- (26) *Oh thanks. I'm happy you think so.* (Male speaker; Sit. #4; =P; S=H)  
(27) *Oh thanks. That's very nice of you.* (Male speaker; Sit. #2; =P; S=H)

Pause fillers make apologetic behavior sound more sincere and

honest (Bataineh & Bataineh, 2006). Therefore, CRs 26 and 27 can be said to be appropriate on the basis of the sincerity and honesty that has been gained through pause fillers.

### **Impoliteness of Compliment Responses**

This section presents a sample of CRs that were found to be sociopragmatically inappropriate on further pragmatic analysis. For instance, the following CRs do not include any of the politeness markers and strategies that characterized the above CRs.

(28) *Thank you.* (Male speaker; Sit. #5; -P; S<H)

(29) *So are you.* (Male speaker; Sit. #6; =P; S=H)

(30) *Thank you.* (Male speaker; Sit. #1; -P; S<H)

(31) *Thanks.* (Female speaker; Sit. #6; =P; S=H)

The common feature of the above CRs is their relative shortness, which is likely to give the CRs a sense of terseness and brevity. Willis' (2003) longer-is-politer generalization can be extended to the analysis of these CRs, implying that they are likely to be conceived as impolite or simply inappropriate due to their shortness. This is the case particularly with interactions that involve higher-status interlocutors. A further reason has to do with the fact that many of the above CRs lack any mitigation or linguistic devices to redress their inherent threatening force. For example, politeness markers like honorifics, intensifiers, and in-group markers have not been utilized in the above CRs. To set an example, CRs 28 and 30 have been produced in response to a professor's compliments on a student's essay and project that the professor perceives as successful. Such responses may be more sociopragmatically appropriate in response to compliments received from equal-status interlocutors and not from higher-status ones.

Apart from the shortness of the CR semantic formulas, another feature that was found to be likely in the broader sociocultural context to result in miscommunication was the disagreement as contained in the following example:

(32) *Are you kidding me?* (Male speaker; Sit. #2; =P; S=H)

In intercultural communication, the above CR, if left on its own with no elaboration, is likely to result in misunderstanding or even resentment

and communication breakdown. Al-Khateeb (2009) reported on a case of a Korean woman who rejected a compliment she received from an American and caused confusion and embarrassment.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The present study falls in the category of interlanguage research. It examined one aspect of the interlanguage profile of Iranian EFL learners, CR behavior, in terms of how sociopragmatically polite it is. Reliance on negative politeness strategies in unequal-status interactions and on positive politeness strategies in equal-status interactions was the first conspicuous result of the study. The results demonstrated that negative politeness was achieved by means of honorifics, intensifiers, agreement with a CR (i.e., accepting rather than declining it) while positive politeness was obtained mainly by the use of in-group markers. The study also revealed that, in their CRs, the participants were able to use a variety of politeness devices, expressions, strategies, and markers to convey sociolinguistic appropriacy. In sum, the findings are suggestive of the participants' cognizance of the role of the interlocutors' power and social status as major driving forces of interaction. The huge reliance in the participants' CRs on some specific strategies might be indicative of the formulaic nature of this particular speech act. The formulaic aspects of compliments have already been highlighted in the literature (e.g., Holmes & Brown, 1987). There seems to be little difficulty extending this finding to CRs, as well, although further research is required to confirm such a claim. Another issue is that while accepting a compliment might be deemed as a universal strategy widely used in most cultures to deal with a compliment (see e.g., Aijuan, 2010; Furkó & Dudás, 2012; Morales, 2012; Motaghi-Tabari & Beuzeville, 2012; Sadeghi & Zarei, 2013; Shamsabadi & Eslami Rasekh, 2014, to name but a few), the results of this study produced differing results, too. For instance, while females tended to accept and males to comment on a compliment, the females in the present study offered no acknowledgment or used combination strategies, as well. These differences are slight, however, and may not question or influence the major findings of the study.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The results of the study have clear implications to inform practice. In practical terms, it is suggested that language teachers are expected to expose their learners to the appropriate ways of expressing thanks, accepting compliments, or if necessary, declining them. Teachers can be a very significant source of language input for their learners as highlighted by research done by Lyster (2007), who, interestingly enough, demonstrated that the presence of some politeness strategies in learners' production could be attributed to the teachers' use of those politeness markers. What is more, the marked tendency of the participants to use a very limited number of CR strategies might be indicative of their limited pragmatic repertoire. In fact, since accepting a compliment by extending thanks to the complimenter, coupled with another strategy, mainly questioning the compliment, is the first strategy to which Iranian EFL learners are exposed at school during the first years of English learning, then it might be argued that the participants have carried their initial pragmatic learning to their later pragmatic production. Therefore, teachers, materials developers, and curriculum designers need to expose learners to new ways of responding to compliments, and subsequently enhance their pragmatic repertoire. Indeed, an enhanced pragmatic ability will result in increased pragmatic production that is less subject to pragmatic failure. Schauer (2009) views the significance of including pragmatics-oriented skills and practices in the pedagogical contents as greater in EFL contexts, compared to ESL contexts, due to the fact that "learners and teachers do not normally experience the consequences of pragmatic infelicities as frequently as learners and teachers in the ESL context" (p. 201). To improve language learners' pragmatic productive abilities, Schauer suggests pragmatic instruction, the incorporation of pragmatic content in textbooks and classrooms, and the introduction of teacher training courses with some focus on pragmatics.

## LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The present study was faced with a number of limitations. The first limitation concerns the sample of the study, which was relatively small. Further research with larger sample sizes is encouraged. Another limitation has to do with the instrumentation of the study. Although DCT is the most frequently used instrument to collect interlanguage research data, the data collection tools and instruments are diverse, including role-plays and oral DCTs. Data gathered through other measures are likely to enhance our understanding of the fledgling interlanguage of EFL learners. In fact, the use of DCTs provides info about students' pragmatic competence, not about their language use. From the type of instrument used, we can conclude that the participants know which strategies to use to respond to compliments. The DCT gives time for students to think and select a strategy.

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## APPENDIX

### Discourse Completion Test (DCT)

Please read all the situations below carefully and write down the possible form of response you would use for each compliment in such natural settings.

Gender: Male  Female  Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Mother tongue: \_\_\_\_\_

**Situation 1:** A male professor returns your essay to you and he says, “Great job.”

You would say:

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**Situation 2:** You have given a presentation in the class. After class, one of your friends says, “Your presentation was great.”

You would say:

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**Situation 3:** You are not ready for the exam. You ask your professor to postpone the exam and she says, “I’ll postpone it just because you are a good student.”

You would say:

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**Situation 4:** You and a friend of yours attend an academic seminar. After that, he says to you, “I liked the questions you asked in the seminar.”

You would say:

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**Situation 5:** You accomplish a classroom project successfully. Later, the professor says, “Your project was the best one in the university.”

You would say:

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**Situation 6:** You are coordinating a school conference with a classmate. She says to you, “Wow, you are really handling things very well.”

You would say:

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**Situation 7:** A professor asks you to do a PowerPoint presentation for him. Later, he says, “Thank you. It was great.”

You would say:

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**Situation 8:** After you present your proposal outline in class, a classmate says to you, “I think you will really do a great job. I really enjoyed your presentation.”

You would say:

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## **Book Reviews**

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# Engaging Minds: Cultures of Education and Practices of Teaching

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*Brent Davis, Dennis Sumara, and Rebecca Luce-Kapler*

*New York, NY: Routledge, 2015.*

*Pages: 264. (ISBN 13: 978-1138905412)*

**Reviewed by Colin Walker**

## INTRODUCTION

On the surface, the concept of teaching seems simple. In digging a little deeper, however, an array of synonyms has been used to describe the phenomena. For some, teaching involves acts of guiding, facilitating, inspiring, coaching, or showing the ropes. For others, teaching is associated with giving a lecture, cramming, or drilling and repetition. These are some of the synonyms that serve as an entry point for discussion on a very practical question: How to teach? Co-authored by a trio of Canadian professors, *Engaging Minds: Cultures of Education and Practices of Teaching* answers this question by reflecting on how teaching has been conceptualized since the advent of the modern public school. In doing so, they aim for their readership to critically reflect on their own classroom practice. Paying careful attention to history and context, the authors identify four pivotal moments summarized below.

## SUMMARY

### **Moment 1: Standardized Education**

“Standardized education,” the first moment, came to be in the 1600s and 1700s as a response to cultural convulsions of industrialization, urbanization, and imperialism. In this context, public education was

situated in an era of colonialism and capitalism driven by models of positivist thinking, rationalism, and objectivism. Not unlike working on the factory line, descriptions of this type of teaching include behavioral objectives, drilling, management, explaining, remediation, and standardized exams. The authors explain, “The task of the professional educator is framed by responsibilities for planning, measuring, and reporting in an outcomes-driven, evaluation-heavy, and accountability-laden culture of command-and-control teaching” (p. 12)

### **Moment 2: Authentic Education**

By the 1800s, researchers began to break away from the statistics-driven construct of the “normal child,” directing their attention instead to similarities and idiosyncrasies among learners. Moment 2, what the authors call “authentic education,” encompasses the human sciences with an emphasis on personalized engagement, developmental stages, and personalized learning aligned with individual curiosities and goals. Examples of knowledge include constructivism, coherence theories, schema theory, and progressivism. By way of example, “it was suggested that language is not a collection of labels but an evolving ecosystem. It gains its coherence from the interconnections among words, the way they are woven together” (p. 72). In authentic education, teaching focuses less on product-based outcomes and more on the process of guiding and facilitating each learner’s unique abilities.

### **Moment 3: Democratic Citizenship Education**

Beginning in the early 1800s and culminating in the civil rights movements of the 1960s, Moment 3: Democratic Citizenship Education centers on the notion that schools contribute to (or at least perpetuate) injustice and inequality. Whereas Moment 2 focused on the needs of the individual learner, knowledge and learning in Moment 3 is framed as social constructions that are incomplete and biased. Democratic citizenship education, considers diversity as a necessary component as a part of a grander collective. As an example, Wikipedia allows anonymous and uncredentialed authors to publish online. Although its relationship with academia is sometimes fraught, it has outperformed Microsoft’s Encarta and other encyclopedia projects that follow the

traditional rules of publishing.

#### **Moment 4: Systemic Sustainability Education**

Out of step with the mechanization-focused, industrialized society, Moment 4: Systemic Sustainability Education encompasses a range of discourses that look at how schools are embracing complexity, one that can accommodate an information-based, more ecologically minded society. Knowledge and learning revolve around complexity systems such as nonlinear dynamics (mathematics), dissipative structures (chemistry), and autopoietic systems (biology). These systems “can never be reduced to their parts because they are always caught up with other systems in a dance of change. They are spontaneous, have levels of unpredictability, are irreducible, are context-dependent, and are vibrantly sufficient” (p. 181). Teaching revolves around helping students develop an awareness of self, others, and humanity.

### **EVALUATION**

It should be noted that none of the authors come from a second/foreign language teaching background, which might explain why there are few references to ELT. Despite this, this book is a wonderful resource for educators seeking a deeper understanding on how teaching has evolved over the past three hundred years. Each of the four units includes a one-page abstract listing the moment’s history and context, beliefs on knowledge and learning, and conceptualizations of teaching. Using vocabulary as a lens to understand why certain teaching practices and beliefs are so resistant to change, the authors’ objective is to invite the reader to critically reflect on the synonyms presented in this book in relation to his/her own teaching context. In the first Moments, I found this easy to do. As one who has resided in Korea since 2008, the authors’ description of standardized education is representative of ELT in Korea. For example, it is not uncommon for students to sit through hours of lecture to memorize content in preparation for standardized exams. In *Authentic Education*, there are no specific examples of ELT, yet the chapter’s theoretical mentions of guiding and facilitating as opposed to drilling and repeating seems representative of ELT’s

departure from traditional methods to more communicative-based teaching methods that gained widespread popularity beginning in the 1970s (e.g., see Candlin, 1987).

In the latter half of the book, however, I am less certain that content introduced in Moment 3 (e.g., sociocultural theory, participatory theory, and critical theory) and Moment 4 (e.g., sustainability education, ecoliteracy, and complexity education) will be as relatable for ELT educators in Korea. As Breen (2004) observes, “Education reform has always been on the cards, but there is still much conservatism. The fact is, though, that the current system fails to meet the needs of modern Korea because it does not train people to think in a sufficiently rational and legalistic way” (p. 27). Yet, at the same time, this assertion can be challenged by recent events happening outside of the classroom. For example, the recent impeachment of President Geunhye Park is consistent with the ideas presented in Moment 3: Democratic Citizenship Education. Similarly, the rising rate of youth unemployment (e.g., see Kim, 2017) continues to be a source of criticism of Korea’s education system (e.g., see Koo, 2014). Whether these tensions could be the inspiration(s) for a more democratic, sustainable model of education remains to be seen.

## THE REVIEWER

**Colin Walker** is a PhD student at the University of Calgary’s Werklund School of Education. His PhD project is reviewing the policies of recruitment, orientation, and certification of international medical graduates (IMGs), physicians who received their medical training outside of Canada. He serves as chair of the KOTESOL Research Committee and is the managing editor of *KOTESOL Proceedings 2017*. In his ten years of ELT experience, he has taught and published on topics that include debate, storytelling, motivation, and anxiety. Email: colin.walker@ucalgary.ca // Web: walkercolin.com

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## Assessing English Proficiency for University Study

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*John Read*

*Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.*

*Pages: 270. (ISBN 978-0-230-28516-3 hardback, 978-1-349-33028-7 softcover)*

**Reviewed by Elizabeth Lee**

### INTRODUCTION

In this book, *Assessing English Proficiency for University Study*, Read discusses issues that many language test developers face when they design and use placement tests, also known as post-entry language assessments (PELA). PELAs are language assessments that are used to determine whether incoming students need additional language support such as placing students into particular ESL/EFL courses. As such, this book is intended for test developers and higher education administrators who have a strong interest in developing and administering quality language assessments. An overview of the purpose and types of placement tests that are used in English-medium universities are presented in the first four chapters. The discussion moves on to factors contributing to quality placement test development and use. The book concludes with the importance of validating placement tests. Because the purposes for using PELAs vary from institution to institution, Read maintains that test validation is critical to the development and maintenance of useful and meaningful language assessments.

### SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

The first four chapters discuss placement testing and how placement tests are used in a select few university contexts. In chapter 1, Read

describes that the rise of international students and immigrant children entering English-medium universities has led to an increasing interest and use in placement tests. In the next two chapters, the development and use of two different placement tests are presented: The University of Melbourne's Diagnostic English Language Assessment (DELA) and the Diagnostic English Language Needs Assessment (DELNA) developed by the University of Auckland. The significance of financial and social support in implementing quality placement tests is emphasized in these chapters. Read then moves the discussion to the use of PELAs in South Africa, Canada, Hong Kong, and the United States. It is clear that the purposes and means of evaluating students' language skills or abilities vary among these institutions.

From chapters 5 to 9, Read discusses factors contributing to quality PELA design and use. Chapter 5 deals with the practicality of implementing placement tests. For example, a well-designed PELA allows stakeholders to be confident in their decision-making, ensuring that students who need ESL/EFL support are placed into appropriate writing and speaking courses. On the other hand, a poorly-developed PELA may unintentionally place students into courses that are either too easy or too difficult for them, which may lower their morale to succeed in their coursework.

To bring about useful and positive consequences for test-takers and test-users, it is important to establish a clear construct definition. A construct definition identifies the types of skills or abilities that a test intends to measure. In chapters 6 and 7, Read introduces different construct definitions that test developers have considered when developing placement tests: academic language competency (e.g., grammar and vocabulary knowledge), academic language proficiency (e.g., performance on reading, listening, speaking, and writing tasks), and academic literacies (e.g., being able to read and write, visually and/or electronically). The author notes that an appropriate construct definition of placement test would include both academic language proficiency and competency.

In chapter 8, a comparison between diagnostic assessments and PELA is made, stating that placement tests evaluate learners' performances holistically whereas diagnostic tests evaluate them analytically. Here, he argues that the difference is not always clear-cut since many placement tests attempt to evaluate learners' communicative language abilities analytically. Chapter 9 addresses the different

approaches one can use to design a PELA. Overall, the latter half of the book touches on aspects of test development that are crucial for constructing useful placement tests.

In the final chapter, Read presents his validation argument for the DELNA, using Knoch and Elder's argument-based approach to validating tests. To briefly explain, Knoch and Elder's model is a validation framework that is specifically intended for evaluating PELAs. The model consists of several chain-like inferences in which test developers must gather strong evidence to back claims made within each inference. Ultimately, the goal is to make an argument that learners' performances on a given test reflects some ability that they would actually demonstrate in a real-life situation. For example, a test-taker's performance on a written PELA exam is a reflection of the test-taker's actual writing ability in an academic situation. Using Knoch and Elder's framework, Read demonstrates that DELNA has sufficient backing for many of the stated inferences. Although the process of validating a test is time-consuming and challenging, Read argues that validation matters: "Any assessment should meet professional standards of quality and should produce meaningful measures of the students' academic language ability, so that advisors, administrators, and teaching staff ... can make informed decisions about enchainning the language skills of the students who need it" (p. 198).

## DISCUSSION AND EVALUATION

I recommend *Assessing English Proficiency for University Study* for anyone who is involved in developing or using placement tests in higher education settings. If one requires a more thorough background knowledge of PELA, reading the first four chapters is highly suggested. However, one drawback was found in chapter 4 where Read outlines the specific qualities that ensure PELA's success in addressing students' language needs. Read does not offer any alternatives for those who lack the necessary funding and equipment to develop placement tests. Perhaps, it would have been helpful if Read had included a list of initial planning questions (Bachman & Palmer, 2010) that could prompt test developers and users to consider alternative resources.

As readers approach the latter half of the book, some basic

knowledge of language testing is needed to fully appreciate Read's discussion of test development and use, and his validation argument for DELNA. It would have been helpful if Read had expanded his views on diagnostic information and provided more general recommendations for developing PELAs and validating these types of assessment. For example, in chapter 8, when Read recommends the inclusion of a detailed analysis of students' performances on PELAs, he does not specify what and how much diagnostic information is sufficient for placement purposes. Without providing any concrete examples or suggestions, it is unclear how test developers and users should go about designing a test that produces both scores and diagnostic information.

In chapter 9 and 10, where Read discusses assessment methods and validation, it would have been helpful had he dedicated more time explicating practical methods that are used to assess test-takers in large-scale placement settings and refine some of the technical terms that are involved in describing the validation process. Since Read does not provide specific examples of test formatting, inexperienced test developers may need to refer to other sources (e.g., Carr, 2011) to become familiar with language testing methods. Finally, any practitioner who is not strongly acquainted with validation may find Knoch and Elder's approach to validity too abstract and possibly overwhelming. Again, turning to other literature that deals more closely with validation is required if one plans on conducting a validation study on a placement test.

Given that the focus of this book explores PELAs, a general discussion of how PELAs affect the academic lives of particular L1 speakers such as Korean learners of English is not addressed. This is not to say that the book does not offer relevant information in a Korean EFL context. As mentioned above, locally developed PELAs are used globally in many English programs. Read highlights the importance of developing well-validated, post-entry language assessments that provide diagnostic information about students' academic literacy. He further states that effective PELAs fit within the educational and social contexts of the institution. Considering that many post-secondary Korean institutions employ PELAs in addition to other language proficiency tests to assess learners' English proficiency, this book would be of use to test developers or users who are concerned with developing not only well-validated PELAs but also providing resources and support to incoming students.

To conclude, Read's book has moved the discussion on placement testing in a positive direction. Among other things, one very impressive aspect of this book is the author's use of the argument-based approach to validating DELNA. Language researchers can appreciate Read's efforts to make a validity argument for the use of DELNA. Again, when perusing Read's book, some technical knowledge related to testing is required to fully appreciate the text. Nevertheless, a great deal of knowledge about placement testing is gained, making *Assessing English Proficiency for University Study* a valuable addition to the placement testing literature.

## THE REVIEWER

**Elizabeth Lee** is a third-year PhD student at Iowa State University (USA). Her research interests include language testing and assessment, particularly concerning L2 reading. Email: edl@iastate.edu

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