

Professional Identity Tensions in Korean EFL Student Teachers: A Reflective Journal Analysis

Meerbek Kudaibergenov

Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Korea

Kilryoung Lee

Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Korea

The present study was carried out in response to the lack of investigation into professional identity tensions of EFL student teachers. The study capitalizes on a corpus of 139 reflective journal entries written by 20 Korean EFL student teachers and analyzes the corpus with a specialist analytics program, Leximancer 4.5. It reveals five professional identity tensions that seem to revolve around maintaining a dual identity (e.g., student vs. professional, L2 learner vs. L2 teacher, etc.), thereby underscoring the complex and conflicting nature of EFL teacher candidates' identities. The findings go some way towards contributing to the existing knowledge of tensions experienced by Korean EFL student teachers in their professional identity development and help us better understand what support should be provided to them by teacher education programs.

Keywords: Korean EFL student teachers, professional identity, professional identity tensions, reflective journals

Introduction

Over the last few decades, there has been a considerable body of research in applied linguistics focused on language teacher identity (Canh, 2013; Choi, 2007; Johnston, 1999; Morgan, 2004; Pavlenko, 2003; Varghese, 2000; etc.). The topic gained so much attention that investigation has been vast: from conceptualization (e.g., Beijaard et al., 2004) to theorization (e.g., Varghese et al., 2005) and to formation of teacher professional identity (e.g., Zacharias, 2010). However, despite the vastness of research, what still seems to be under-investigated is the issue of professional identity tensions experienced by EFL student teachers. As such teachers experience “unique challenges in negotiating the conflicts and tensions in their dual identities” (Lim, 2011, p. 969), they often go through numerous difficulties before and when embarking on the teaching profession. Understanding and being alert to these tensions would provide them with a better frame of reference regarding how to function confidently in their contexts. Moreover, it would help better understand the support these teachers need from their teacher education programs.

It is against this lacking investigation that we conducted this exploratory study. Its guiding question is what tensions EFL student teachers encounter in their professional identity development. As professional identity development often involves an interplay between the personal and professional aspects of becoming and being a teacher (Olsen, 2008, 2010), we follow Pillen et al. (2013) in defining these tensions as “internal struggles between how a teacher sees him/herself as a person and as a professional”

(p. 87). The study capitalizes on a corpus of 139 reflective journal entries written by 20 EFL student teachers and analyses of this corpus with an unsupervised specialist analytics program Leximancer 4.5, known for the stability, reproducibility, and correlative validity it provides (Smith & Humphreys, 2006).

Theoretical Framework

Teacher, Identity, Learning

A significant body of research in the field of applied linguistics contributed to the emergence of theoretical conceptions regarding identity of language teachers. These theories have allowed researchers to investigate different aspects of teacher identity and provided a deeper understanding of identity development.

One important theoretical perspective on teacher identity is Tajfel's social identity theory (1978) which stems primarily from psychology. According to this theory, a significant factor in the development of one's identity is their membership in relevant communities. That is, social, cultural, and political contexts can play a great role in one's identity formation. For example, Johnson's (1992) study, which draws on this theory, clearly views identity to be multiple and related to social group membership. Observing the life of a non-native speaker teacher, the author reports on the conflicts between the teacher's claimed identity and assigned identity and shows how that identity is re-valued through her membership in an M.A. TESOL program. The advantage of social identity theory is that it explains why identity can be multiple and constantly changing. It gives birth to propositions that view language teacher identity as being multiple, shifting, and in conflict as well as being strongly related to a professional community. However, what seems to be important about this theory is that, when it comes to multiple identities, it requires us to specify what these identities are; and similarly, when talking about identities in terms of social contexts, we should clarify which social groups these are (Varghese et al., 2005).

Another important theoretical view in language teacher identity is Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of situated learning. This theory suggests that learning takes place within authentic activity, context, and culture through involvement in a community of practice which embodies certain beliefs and behaviors to be learned. Thus, learning is a contextual social phenomenon and is achieved through social interaction and collaboration. In terms of learning about teaching, teacher education programs and institutions can provide student teachers with access to *legitimate peripheral participation*, a process in which novices become experienced members and eventually old-timers of their community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and thus help them learn about teaching and form their identities. Therefore, learning results from social interaction and entails identity development. Varghese's (2000) ethnographic study on professional identity of bilingual teachers in the United States viewed learning to be located in co-participation in an activity where learning is not a cognitive acquisition of knowledge, but rather a process of acquiring an identity; that is, learning constructs identity. Thus, the theory of situated learning is useful in understanding the emergence and development of language teacher identity in settings provided by teacher education programs and institutions.

Given the definition of professional identity tensions as internal struggles resulting from negotiating one's self-images as a person and as a professional, we believe that social identity theory and situated learning theory should be used together to examine these tensions in EFL student teachers. This is because, when juxtaposed, they allow us to think about identity as multiple and in conflict as supported by social identity theory on the one hand, and to conceptualize teacher development programs as settings providing access to legitimate peripheral participation as suggested by the notion of situated learning on the other hand. With Feyerabend (1988) and Varghese et al. (2005), we argue for the importance of multiple theories because only in this way can we hope to gain a fuller picture of an immensely complex phenomenon such as professional identity tensions in EFL student teachers.

Teacher Professional Identity and Tensions

Given the emergence of teacher professional identity as a separate field of research in the recent decades (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999), researchers in the field seem to differ in conceptualizing teacher identity in the first place. For example, Goodson and Cole (1994), consider teachers as “persons and professionals whose lives and work are influenced and made meaningful by factors and conditions inside and outside the classroom and school” (p. 88). Volkmann and Anderson (1998) emphasize personal and social dimensions of teacher identity insisting that it is a balance between professional self-images and the many roles the teacher feels they should play in their contexts. However, despite the differing views on teacher identity, it is clear that it involves an interplay between *person* and *context* (Beijaard et al., 2004).

Teacher professional identity development (TPID) is commonly viewed as an active, ongoing process that involves identification and (re)interpretations of teachers’ self-images, prior learning and teaching experiences, beliefs, attitudes as well as social and professional contexts (Hong, 2010; Glodjo, 2017; Olsen, 2008, 2010; Tsui, 2007). Thus, TPID highlights the idea that becoming and being a teacher is a perpetuating process often seen as lifelong learning (Day, 1999). It is the answer to the questions “Who am I at the moment?” and “Who do I want to become?” (Beijaard et al., 2004). As for the issue of what is essential to TPID, Grossman (1990) argues for the importance of teacher education programs in the identity formation of beginning teachers. Olsen (2008) argues for the acknowledgment of teachers’ personal stance or beliefs, suggesting that when there is a conflict between personal beliefs about teaching and the beliefs promoted by preservice education, personal beliefs tend to be stronger. In an EFL context, Lim (2011) emphasizes the importance of knowledge base and prior learning and teaching practices in the formation of professional identity of Korean student teachers.

When it comes to professional identity tensions, though, it becomes somewhat difficult to arrive at a list of tensions conceptualized specifically from a teacher identity perspective. Pillen et al. (2013), for example, review extensive literature in the field of teaching education, nursing education as well as education in social work and make a list of 13 tensions encountered by beginning nurses and social workers and suggest that they can be seen as those experienced by beginning teachers as well, essentially because these groups of workers represent social professions and thus all serve the community. The authors further conducted semi-structured interviews with 24 beginning teachers to examine the extent to which the 13 tensions applied to them. This eliminated four of the 13 tensions while contributing, again, four newly formulated ones. The final list of tensions were then classified into the following three themes by the researchers.

The first theme, *the changing role from being a student to becoming a teacher*, involves tensions regarding how one feels about ‘transitioning’ from being a student to being a teacher. For example, a tension may arise when one feels treated like a peer while wanting to take responsibility as a teacher (Pillen et al., 2013). The second theme, *conflicts between desired and actual support given to students*, comprises tensions that have to do with whether these teachers are able to provide the necessary support to their students. For example, Fuller, Bown, and Veenman (as cited in Pillen et al., 2013) suggest that one may find it difficult to maintain an emotional distance with their students. The third theme, *conflicting conceptions of learning to teach*, includes tensions regarding the differences beginning teachers and others in the community of practice may have in learning to teach. For example, some tension may occur if a beginning teacher feels dependent on a mentor (colleague/supervisor) while wanting to go one’s own way in teaching (Pillen et al., 2013).

Thus, teachers’ professional identity tensions are a matter of “finding a balance” between personal attitudes and desires, on the one hand, and professional aspects of becoming and being a teacher, on the other (Alsup, 2006). Although the related literature does provide some account on such tensions in beginning teachers, there seems to be a lack of work into tensions experienced specifically by EFL student teachers. Our literature review did not reveal any such work, although we do not claim the exhaustiveness of our review. The present investigation, therefore, makes an attempt to address this gap

by taking an exploratory approach to identifying such tensions in an EFL context.

We thus aim to understand professional identity tensions in EFL student teachers and inform teacher education programs. Supporting student teachers in coping with such tensions is of vital concern for teacher education institutions (Hanna et al., 2019) because if these tensions are not properly handled, they can lead to feelings of insecurity and exhaustion (Pillen et al., 2013), lack of enthusiasm for learning and profession (Güngör, 2017; Smith, Anderson, & Blanch, 2016), and even to high risks of study-delay and dropout from training (Hanna et al., 2019; Hong, 2010). Moreover, understanding these tensions is of great importance for student teachers as well because it would help them better understand their self-images and negotiate their weaknesses, thereby contributing towards their self-awareness within their communities.

Methods

Participants

The study was based on reflective journals of twenty EFL student teachers (15 female and 5 male, aged between 25 and 35) matriculated into an M.A. TESOL program at a graduate school in Seoul, Korea. They had a teaching experience of two years on average in private sectors. While they were attending the graduate school, most of them were also teaching at private institutions or tutoring. Five of them were planning to apply for a Ph.D. after getting their master's degree.

The M.A. TESOL program offers a semester-long teacher preparation course in which the students were placed in a private middle school in Seoul, Korea, to practice and analyze their teaching. The reflective journals were written in the course of this field-based program as they taught English to small groups of students, ranging from two to four, on a weekly basis. Although the participants did not have to follow a specific curriculum, they were asked to carefully plan each class and keep a journal to reflect on their teaching experiences and feelings associated with balancing their personal and professional lives. The journals were submitted to the program supervisor (a Ph.D. level professional), a co-researcher for the present study.

Data Collection

As the affiliated university has not yet established an institutional Ethics Committee, formal institutional procedures were replaced by an ethical process which involved consultation with a PhD level professional on research ethics. The consultation was followed by an attempt to obtain informed consent from research participants. We sent out individual emails to the participants of the field-based teacher preparation program requesting consent to analyze their reflective journals. Initially, the total number of participants was twenty-one; however, one refused to give their consent, which resulted in having access to the journals of the remaining twenty. The twenty journals, each containing five to seven entries on average, made up 139 entries used in the analysis.

A major obstacle, however, appeared to be the language variation in the journals. Due to the nature of the journals (authors expressed their thoughts and feelings), the participants were allowed to compose their entries in the language they were most comfortable with. This resulted in having ten entries written in English, and of the remaining 129, over half in Korean and the rest in Korean and English mixed. Therefore, it was necessary to translate the non-English portion into English and undertake a member check (also known as respondent validation) procedure to maintain internal validity. It is worthy of note, however, that the translation validation procedure was performed by a group of six participants as the remaining group were not available. In the member check, the translation was reviewed for adequacy and, as a result, was reported to have a good relevance to the intended meaning of the original text. After having taken these steps, we compiled a corpus to be analyzed for professional identity tensions. The corpus had the characteristics presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Characteristics of Corpus Analyzed

Semester	N of participants	N of journal entries	N of words
Spring 2014	4	27	9095
Spring 2015	6	51	13391
Spring 2016	4	29	5777
Spring 2017	6	32	11609
Average	5	34.75	9968
Total	20	139	39872

As presented in Table 1, the number of entries as well as the number of words per semester varied due to the reflective nature of the journals. As a result, a total of 139 journal entries over four semesters were collected, translated and validated, with an average of 34.75 journal entries per semester. The total number of words for four semesters was 39,872 and the average per semester, 9,968. This data set was analyzed using Leximancer 4.5.

Leximancer

The qualitative textual data were analyzed with a specialist analytics software Leximancer 4.5. An attempt was made to gain a rich insight into professional identity tensions described in the reflective journals.

Leximancer is a computer-assisted program that examines text for frequency and co-occurrence of concepts. It deals with natural language text data in electronic format and uses statistics-based algorithms that draw on the Bayesian approach to prediction in order to identify core concepts and their relationships. By extracting a semantic pattern from a text, it provides a visual output in which the identified concepts are grouped into themes. The simplified model of semantic pattern extraction is presented in Figure 1.

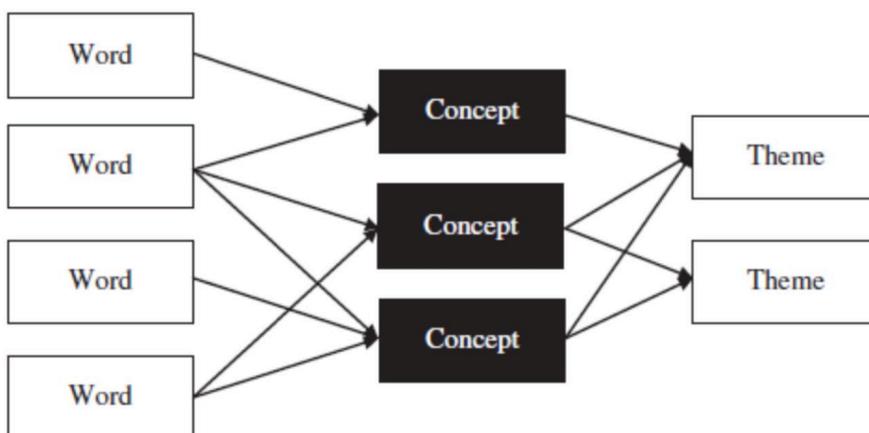


Figure 1. Simplified model of semantic pattern extraction in Leximancer (Crofts & Bisman, 2010).

As illustrated, Leximancer identifies collections of words that tend to be used together in the text creating lexical concepts. Then, the concepts which are semantically connected with one another are grouped by proximity into clusters or themes. The concepts that do not belong to any existing theme create their own themes. In either case, the name of the theme is determined by the most prominent concept in that group.

We chose to utilize Leximancer as a research tool for a few reasons. First, it enabled us to take an exploratory approach, automatically creating a list of concepts from the text (Cretchley et al., 2010). Secondly, reliability was an important concern and Leximancer's automated procedures are thought to provide reliable results. For example, other qualitative text analyzing programs such as Nvivo, for

instance, require the researcher to generate a coding scheme and rules to process data and are thus researcher driven (Cretchley et al., 2010; Dann, 2010). Leximancer, on the other hand, performs the process of coding by itself thereby avoiding coder bias and providing a higher level of reliability. In this regard, Smith and Humphreys (2006, p. 269) state “Leximancer is implemented as a commercial-quality program which is easily used and has been evaluated for stability, reproducibility, and correlative validity”. Thirdly, the software generates an interactive visual concept map and statistical output that can help efficiently gain insights into the data (Cretchley et al., 2010). Graphical format displays concepts and the strength of association between them, providing a conceptual overview of the semantic structure of the data. Additionally, the visual concept map offers five important sources of information about the text, such as the main concepts, the relative frequency of concepts, the co-occurrence of concepts, the centrality of concepts, and similarity of the contexts in which concepts occur or conceptual clustering (Leximancer User Guide, 2018).

Procedures

The reflective journals were uploaded to Leximancer. By default, the context unit was set at a two-sentence block segment. Due to the high automaticity of the instrument, manual intervention was minimized. However, some intervention was made to the list of concepts generated automatically. For example, such function words as ‘due’ and ‘during’ were removed from the list of concepts for having little/no lexical meaning. It was also necessary to merge singular and plural forms as well as synonyms to provide consistency; thus, such terms as ‘class’ and ‘classes’ were merged into a single ‘class’, ‘student’ and ‘students’ into a single ‘students’, and synonyms like ‘study’ and ‘learn’ were merged into ‘study’. This procedure resulted in the final list of 21 most important concepts which were further used in the generation of a concept map (see Figure 2) where they were arranged based on the strength of association to one another.

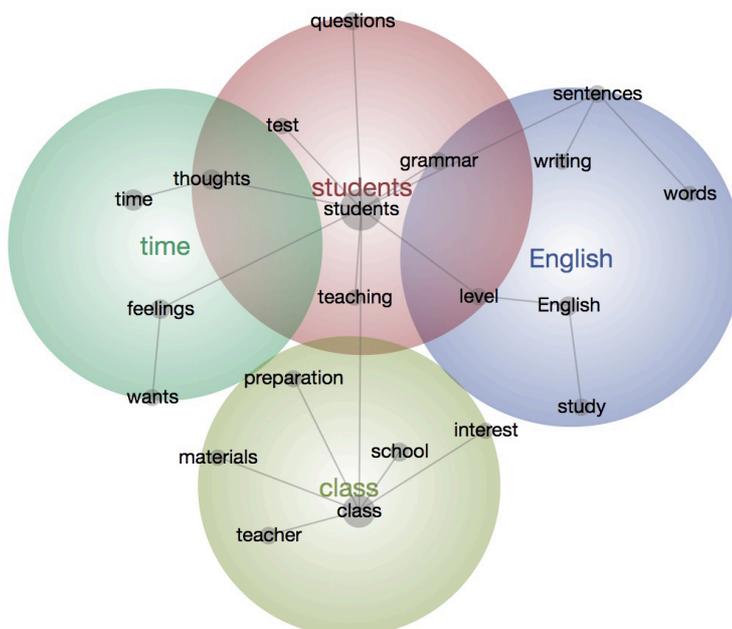


Figure 2. Concept map of reflective journals.

We further tried to draw conclusions about the professional identity tensions of the participants by interpreting the Leximancer output. First, the concept map was viewed for initial inspection and the themes on the map were studied for the areas of overlapping. Also, the concepts within the themes were inspected for their central and relative positioning. Second, we extracted text segments representing the contextual relationship of the centrum with each of its related concepts. This segment extraction procedure was performed with all the four themes and resulted in 885 extracted segments (see Table 2).

TABLE 2
Number of Segments Containing Centrum and a Related Concept

Theme	Centrum	Related concept	Count
Students	students	thoughts	160
	students	questions	101
	students	level	76
	students	grammar	69
	students	test	54
	students	teaching	39
Class	class	school	83
	class	teacher	56
	class	preparation	46
	class	materials	36
	class	interest	27
Time	time	thoughts	34
	time	feelings	33
	time	wants	9
English	English	level	20
	English	writing	16
	English	study	15
	English	words	11
		Total	885

Table 2 shows that, within the theme *students*, for instance, 160 text segments were extracted representing the contexts in which centrum ‘students’ co-occurred with a related concept ‘thoughts’, 39 segments where ‘students’ co-occurred with ‘teaching’, etc. Further, these text segments were marked as referring or not referring to an internal struggle balancing personal and professional aspects of a participant’s life. That is, not only were we looking for a duality of identity in the extracts (e.g., L2 learner vs. L2 teacher; student vs. professional), but also the two identities had to be in conflict, as it can be the case according to Tajfel’s social identity theory (1978). Thus, of the 885 extracted segments, 117 were marked as such and sorted into five distinct groups, each representing an internal struggle balancing two identities; namely, student vs. professional (N = 35), L2 learner vs. L2 teacher (N = 25), novice vs. professional (N = 22), teacher vs. person (N = 18), and teacher vs. volunteer (N = 17). Based on the ideas shared by segments within each group, we were able to formulate professional identity tensions. Figure 3 illustrates the procedure of formulating a tension based on text segments marked as referring to ‘student vs. professional’ struggle.

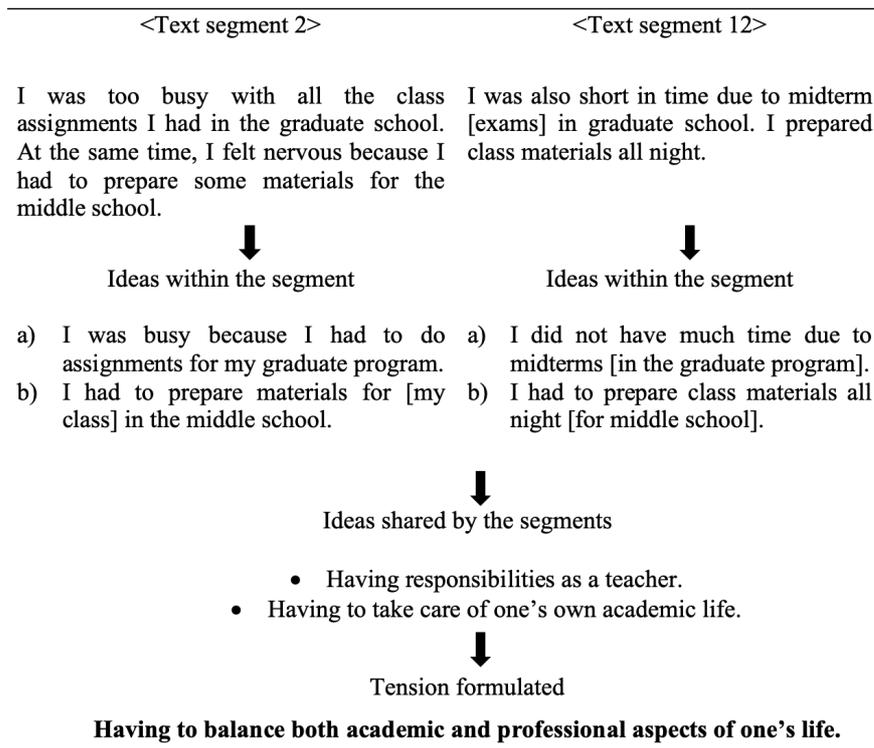


Figure 3. Tension formulation procedure: an example.

Findings and Discussion

Review of the relevant text segments and the procedures undertaken to formulate professional identity tensions (see Figure 3) enabled us to arrive at the following five tensions.

- Having to balance both academic and professional aspects of one's life (student vs. professional);
- Feeling incompetent of subject matter versus being expected to demonstrate expert knowledge (L2 learner vs. L2 teacher);
- Feeling dependent on other teachers regarding what and how to teach (novice vs. professional).
- Experiencing difficulties negotiating willingness to get one's learners to study and feeling empathy for them (teacher vs. person);
- Conflicts between one's willingness to be treated as a teacher versus being treated otherwise (teacher vs. volunteer).

The most frequently mentioned tension appeared to be *having to balance both academic and professional aspects of one's life*. 35 text segments suggested that our study participants had an internal struggle negotiating their roles as students on the one hand, and as professionals on the other. As students, they had to dedicate time and effort to academic work such as completing assignments and taking tests while, as teachers, they had to plan, prepare and deliver lessons, not to mention other responsibilities. Maintaining these two aspects of their life seems to have caused a tension captured in the following extracts.

I was too busy with all the class assignments I had in the graduate school. At the same time, I felt nervous because I had to prepare some materials for the middle school.

I was also short in time due to midterm [exams] in graduate school. I prepared class materials all night.

As suggested by the extracts, the pressure to write academic papers and prepare for exams in their graduate school appeared to be distracting from focusing on work-related tasks, and vice-versa. It is therefore reasonable to consider the importance of redesigning the curriculum in such a fashion in which practicum and academic responsibilities do not interfere with one another so that student teachers can fully focus on their teaching practices.

Another tension, *feeling incompetent of subject matter versus being expected to demonstrate expert knowledge*, was recognized in 25 text segments. These segments suggested that our study participants often failed to answer questions about the subject-matter encountered in their classroom and felt embarrassed due to their lack of knowledge and confidence. Consider the following text segments.

Lack of grammar knowledge and I was so embarrassed. I could only provide answers to basic grammar questions due to my lack of knowledge in grammar.

I chose to face an unexpected question from a student since I wanted to solve his doubts all together. But as the question was something I wasn't familiar with, I kept thinking whether I was telling him the right thing.

Clearly, subject knowledge/linguistic competence is crucial for language teachers (Li, 2017) in that it provides them with intellectual tools to function effectively as a teacher. It seems that EFL student teachers experience a professional development need that largely has to do with their own language improvement. Therefore, teacher preparation and development programs in countries situated in the expanding circle (Kachru, 1992) like Korea, for example, should consider more efficient ways of addressing this need. This is especially urgent given the importance of knowledge base in TPID of Korean student teachers (Lim, 2011) as well as in-service EFL teachers working in Japan and Korea (Igawa, 2008).

Feeling dependent on other teachers regarding what and how to teach was mentioned in 22 text segments and comes in line with what Pillen et al. (2013) frame as feeling dependent on a mentor (colleague/supervisor) versus wanting to go one's own way in teaching. In the present study, the student teachers felt inexperienced and often referred to their colleagues for advice regarding what and how to teach. It is clear from the segments below that student teachers want to function confidently as a professional, however, often need advice from more experienced teachers in their community of practice.

I am not sure about how to approach my students as they are very unpredictable. But the teacher who works there is very kind and I try to stick to her advice, she must have more teaching experience than me in the end.

As my previous class was not a big success, I asked another teacher to sit in my class and help me understand what I am doing wrong. He didn't say anything bad, so I felt okay afterwards.

As suggested by the notion of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991), novices become experienced members of a community of practice through co-participation and collaboration in an authentic activity. Therefore, it is important that student teachers benefit from exposure to ongoing activities that promote their confidence as a teacher. Hence, teacher education programs should provide access to activities and contexts for student teachers to learn about teaching.

Finally, *experiencing difficulties negotiating willingness to get one's learners to study and feeling empathy for them* is another recurring tension. 18 text segments suggested that the student teachers had difficulty balancing their self as a teacher and self as a person. The participants reflected that it was

challenging for them to get their learners to study while actually wanting to let them go. Given the excessive stress Korean schoolers experience from schoolwork (Park & Kim, 2018), it becomes clear why the student teachers felt empathy for their learners. The following extracts are useful in understanding this tension.

I realized that they [learners] were not involved and decided to remind them that they are in an English class and that they should study. However, deep inside I wanted to let them go because I knew you can't make someone do something against their will.

I tried to help them learn English and they said that they had no interest to study as they were tired. This made me feel empathetic toward them, but I had to teach anyway.

It is clear that the study participants, as teachers, had to engage their students in studying despite that, as persons, they felt a great deal of empathy for them. Given their teaching role, they had to find ways to encourage their learners to study despite the unwillingness they displayed.

Finally, the tension *conflicts between one's willingness to be treated as a teacher versus being treated otherwise* was encountered in 17 segments. Our participants shared that, despite the nature of their interaction with students (part of their teacher preparation program), they wanted to be treated as 'real' teachers, however, were not perceived as such. What is significant about this tension is that it best emphasizes the multiplicity and conflicting nature of identity, as it would be supported by social identity theory. This is captured in the following extracts.

I was a bit sad as I felt that I was not accepted the way I wanted. I still have the feeling that I was just a volunteer or something for a short time.

I wanted them to at least thank my effort as a teacher, but I was sad since they didn't. But I still had a wonderful time with highly participating middle school students and it was also a time for me to look back on myself.

A similar tension is found in Pillen et al. (2013) who introduce a tension that has to do with feeling treated like a student/peer versus wanting to take responsibility as a teacher. In their study, Alex (a beginning teacher) is reported to have felt that he was treated like a student and wanted to stand up for himself so that he could be treated seriously. Our study, too, suggests that the student teachers engaged in the field-based teacher preparation program wanted to be acknowledged as "real" teachers; however, often felt that they did not get this recognition.

These results provide useful implications both for student teachers and teacher educators. One useful implication is that understanding EFL student teachers' professional identity tensions is useful for teacher educators in providing adequate support to their students. More specifically, the tensions formulated in this study suggest that student teachers experience a professional development need that has to do with what Leinhardt and Smith (1984, as cited in Good & Brophy, 1987) call *subject-matter knowledge* and *action-system knowledge*. While the former refers to knowledge needed to teach content, the latter refers to knowledge about teaching and learning in general, regardless of the content. It is, therefore, possible to suggest that teacher educators have to be well informed of these issues and take relevant measures to help their students address them effectively. As posited by situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991), communities of practice have an essential role in the acquisition of beliefs and behaviors by novices within those communities. Similarly, teacher education programs should provide settings and activities promoting student teachers' knowledge base both in terms of subject-matter and action-system. Thus, it is quite reasonable to argue for the importance of professional identity tensions in curriculum development. As these tensions are best revealed in systematic reflection, curricular specifications could greatly benefit from careful analysis of student teachers' reflective journals.

Another important implication is that EFL student teachers should be aware of their professional identity tensions. This could be achieved through engagement in continuous reflection of their experiences as well as in group discussions with other teachers. Such practices could help them better understand themselves within their contexts and stay aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Given the duality of and conflicts in their identities, it is especially important to reflect and negotiate how they see themselves as a person and as a professional. This will help them develop better strategies to deal with their internal challenges and thus make them function more confidently.

Conclusion

Returning to the research question regarding EFL student teacher's professional identity tensions, the results of this exploratory study suggest five tensions associated with complex internal struggles these individuals experience as they engage in teaching. By and large, these tensions seem to speak about the dual and conflicting nature of EFL student teachers' identity. As students and professionals, L2 learners and L2 teachers, novices and professionals, teachers and persons, teachers and volunteers, they seem to have difficulties functioning confidently in their contexts. We therefore would like to invite teacher educators, policy makers and student teachers to pay close attention to these challenges that are an inevitable part of the professional identity formation process. Failure to recognize and incorporate them into teacher education amounts to failure to fulfil the basic duty of teacher education programs, i.e., helping student teachers to learn to teach.

The study is subject to a few limitations. First of all, it is based on EFL student teachers' reflective journals written in the course of a field-based teacher education program. It is a semester-long program in which student teachers taught a class of two to four students once a week. Both the class size and the frequency of lessons may be questioned for representativeness of classroom teaching. The class size was limited due to constraints of the teacher education program offered by the affiliated graduate school, and the frequency of lessons was limited to once a week essentially because the field-based program was offered as a regular 3-credit course, meaning that the participants still had to attend other courses to fulfil their M.A. coursework requirement. However, it should be noted that teacher education programs in Korea do not typically offer practicums in which student teachers are engaged in a larger class size or more frequent teaching. In fact, it is common for pre-service education to be limited to coursework where students are exposed to teaching through demo classes with their peers and other activities meant to provide some exposure to teaching. Therefore, in examining identity tensions in student teachers in the Korean context, the affiliated graduate school seemed to offer the most relevant setting despite the constraints it had.

Another limitation is that far more tensions could be found than those formulated within the present study if different methods of research are used. For example, interviews could provide extra insight into professional identity tensions as these tensions have to do with feelings, emotions, and beliefs. However, given the fact that reflective journals have gained considerable importance in research in teacher education for their usefulness in investigating thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of pre-service teachers (e.g., Dunlap, 2006; Lee, 2018; Phelps, 2005), the position we hold is that our analysis yielded useful insights into professional identity tensions and that further investigation utilizing methods other than, or in combination with, reflective journal analysis should allow for a deeper understanding of these tensions.

Although it would be difficult to draw generalizations from the present study of a comparatively small scale with a rather innovative design, it would be useful to consider these findings as they go some way towards contributing to the existing knowledge of tensions teacher candidates experience in their professional identity development and help us better understand what support should be provided to them by teacher education programs. Further work into professional identity tensions of EFL student teachers of a bigger scale and with a more intricate design may also affirm these observations.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our gratitude to the study participants for their valuable contribution to this work. Without their participation, this study would not have been possible. Additionally, we would like to thank the *Editors of the Journal of Asia TEFL* and the two anonymous reviewers for their feedback and encouragement. This work was supported by Hankuk University of Foreign Studies Research Fund of 2020.

The Authors

Meerbek Kudaibergenov (corresponding author) is currently studying for his Ph.D. in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) at the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul, Korea. His research interests cover teacher education, teacher identity, and second language acquisition.

Department of TESOL
Hankuk University of Foreign Studies
107, Imun-ro, Dongdaemun-gu,
Seoul, 130-791, Korea
Tel: +82-2-2173-2063
Email: kudaibergenov@hufs.ac.kr

Kilryoung Lee is a professor at the department of English Education of Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul, South Korea. He is a former President of Applied Linguistics Association of Korea and currently a board member of AsiaTEFL. His research interests include teacher education, listening, speaking and classroom interaction.

Department of English Education
Hankuk University of Foreign Studies
107, Imun-ro, Dongdaemun-gu,
Seoul, 130-791, Korea
Tel: +82-2-2173-3048
Email: klee@hufs.ac.kr

References

- Alsop, J. (2006). *Teacher identity discourses: Negotiating personal and professional spaces*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Beijaard, D., Meijer, P. C., & Verloop, N. (2004). Reconsidering research on teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 20*(2), 107-128.
- Canh, L. V. (2013). Native-English-speaking teachers' construction of professional identity in an EFL context: A case of Vietnam. *The Journal of Asia TEFL, 10*(1), 1-23.
- Choi, S. J. (2007). *The experiences of non-native English speaking teachers and their professional identity constructions in an ESL context* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Illinois: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
- Connelly, F. M., Clandinin, D. J., & Applebaum, S. D. (1999). *Shaping a professional identity: Stories of educational practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Cretchley, J., Gallois, C., Chenery, H., & Smith, A. (2010). Conversations between carers and people with schizophrenia: A qualitative analysis using Leximancer. *Qualitative Health Research, 20*(12), 1611-1628.

- Crofts, K., & Bisman, J. (2010). Interrogating accountability. *Qualitative Research in Accounting and Management*, 7(2), 180-207.
- Dann, S. (2010). Redefining social marketing with contemporary commercial marketing definitions. *Journal of Business Research*, 63(2), 147-153.
- Day, C. (1999). *Developing teachers: The challenges of lifelong learning*. London: Falmer Press.
- Dunlap, J. C. (2006). Using guided reflective journaling activities to capture students' changing perceptions. *Techtrends: Linking Research & Practice to Improve Learning*, 50(6), 20-26.
- Feyerabend, P. (1988). *Against method* (Rev. ed.). London: Verso.
- Glodjo, T. (2017). Deconstructing social class identity and teacher privilege in the second language classroom. *TESOL Journal*, 8, 342-366.
- Good, T., & Brophy, J. (1987). *Looking in classrooms* (4th ed.). New York: Harper & Row.
- Goodson, I. F., & Cole, A. L. (1994). Exploring the teacher's professional knowledge: Constructing identity and community. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 21(1), 85-105.
- Grossman, P. L. (1990). *The making of a teacher: Teacher knowledge and teacher education*. New York: Teachers College Press, Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Güngör, F. (2017). The tensions between EFL teacher identities and INSET in the Turkish context. *PROFILE Issues in Teachers Professional Development*, 19, 13-27.
- Hanna, F., Oostdam, R., Severiens, S. E., & Zijlstra, B. J. H. (2019). Primary student teachers' professional identity tensions: The construction and psychometric quality of the professional identity scale. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 61, 21-33.
- Hong, J. Y. (2010). Pre-service and beginning teachers' professional identity and its relation to dropping out of the profession. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(8), 1530-1543.
- Igawa, K. (2008). Professional development needs of EFL teachers practicing in Japan and Korea. *Shitennoji University Bulletin*, 45, 431-455.
- Johnson, K. E. (1992). Learning to teach: Instructional actions and decisions of preservice ESL teachers. *TESOL Quarterly*, 26(3), 507-535.
- Johnston, B. (1999). The expatriate teacher as postmodern paladin. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 34(2), 255-280.
- Kachru, B. (1992). *The other tongue: English across cultures*. University of Illinois Press.
- Lave, L., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Lee, S. C. (2018). Pre-service teachers' progressive reflective practices using weekly journals in an action research project. *The Journal of Asia TEFL*, 15(1), 242-249.
- Leximancer User Guide. (2018). Retrieved from <http://doc.leximancer.com/doc/LeximancerManual.pdf>
- Li, G. (2017). Preparing culturally and linguistically competent teachers for English as an international language education. *TESOL Journal*, 8, 250-276.
- Lim, H. W. (2011). Concept maps of Korean EFL student teachers' autobiographical reflections on their professional identity formation. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(6), 969-981.
- Morgan, B. (2004). Teacher identity as pedagogy: Towards a field-internal conceptualisation in bilingual and second language education. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 7(2 & 3), 172-188.
- Olsen, B. (2008). *Teaching what they learn, learning what they live*. New York: Routledge.
- Olsen, B. (2010). *Teaching for success*. New York: Routledge.
- Park, S. H., & Kim, Y. (2018). Ways of coping with excessive academic stress among Korean adolescents during leisure time. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 13(1). doi: 10.1080/17482631.2018.1505397
- Pavlenko, A. (2003). "I never knew I was a bilingual": Reimagining teacher identities in TESOL. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 2(4), 251-268.
- Phelps, R. (2005). The potential of reflective journals in studying complexity 'in action'. *Complicity: An International Journal of Complexity and Education*, 2(1), 37-54.

- Pillen, M. T., Den Brok, P. J., & Beijaard, D. (2013). Profiles and change in beginning teachers' professional identity tensions. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 34*, 86-97.
- Smith, A., & Humphreys, M. (2006). Evaluation of unsupervised semantic mapping of natural language with Leximancer concept mapping. *Behavior Research Methods, 38*(2), 262-279.
- Smith, L. A., Anderson, V., & Blanch, K. (2016). Five beginning teachers' reflections on enacting New Zealand's national standards. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 54*, 107-116.
- Tajfel, H. (1978). *Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations*. London: Academic Press.
- Tsui, A. B. M. (2007). Complexities of identity formation: A narrative inquiry of an EFL teacher. *TESOL Quarterly, 41*(4), 657-680.
- Varghese, M. (2000). *Bilingual teachers-in-the-making: Advocates, classroom teachers, and transients* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.
- Varghese, M., Morgan, B., Johnston, B., & Johnson, K. A. (2005). Theorizing language teacher identity: Three perspectives and beyond. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education, 4*(1), 21-44.
- Volkman, M. J., & Anderson, M. A. (1998). Creating professional identity: Dilemmas and metaphors of a first-year chemistry teacher. *Science Education, 82*(3), 293-310.
- Zacharias, N. T. (2010). The teacher identity construction of 12 Asian NNES teachers in TESOL graduate programs. *The Journal of Asia TEFL, 7*(2), 177-197.