

**자^ㅅ쌈 [SSAM] I AM:
AN (AUTO)ETHNOGRAPHIC EXPLORATION OF NOVICE EFL TEACHERS'
IMAGINED AND ENACTED TEACHER IDENTITIES IN SOUTH KOREA**

By

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ABSTRACT

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While it is not uncommon for teachers to adopt initial teacher identities (Xu, 2012) based, at least partially, on the ways in which they were taught (Lortie, 1975; Tsui, 2007), novice teachers often experience identity-disrupting moments when their imagined identities (Barkhuizen, 2016; Xu, 2012) formed as pre-service teachers do not align with the lived realities of their classrooms (e.g., Li, 2016; Said, 2014). In his theorization of Communities of Practice, Wenger (1998) argued that identities are negotiated at the intersection of the individual and the social world (Nasir & Cooks, 2009); this intersection for teachers is often characterized by the dissonance teachers feel between who they perceive themselves to be and who they think they need to become to be teachers.

This dissertation project, entitled 쌤 [ssam]¹ *I am*, is an (auto)ethnographic and longitudinal case study of novice teacher identity negotiations in which I partnered with 10 first-time English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers in South Korea, asking (1) *How do first-time teachers come to identify as teachers?*, and (2) *How can a teacher's community support them in the process of negotiating this identity?*. Over the course of this study, participating teachers performed a number of different identities, included imagined and enacted teacher identities as well as teacher-researcher and teacher-author identities. Across the three phases of the

¹ 쌤 [ssam], meaning teacher, is an informal term used by many South Korean primary and secondary school students to indicate a closeness with and affection for their classroom teachers.

dissertation study, participating teachers and I generated data in myriad forms, including one-on-one interviews; small-group conversations among participating teachers; monthly reflections on a shared blog; observational field notes generated as participants taught in their EFL classrooms; and teaching artifacts in the form of student work, lesson plans, written reflections, etc.

Following a three-piece dissertation model, the first two articles of this dissertation take the form of ethnographic case studies, a research method that recognizes the messy complexity of human experience (Erickson, 1986) and allows the researcher to construct cases to story these lived experiences (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). Article 1, entitled “*I teach, but I’m no teacher*”: *Identity Negotiations of a Sojourning EFL Teacher in South Korea*, explored the dissonance caused when an imagined teacher identity fell apart. Article 2, entitled *Here ghost nothing: A Novice EFL Teacher’s Letter to the Ghosts that Haunt Them*, used Derrida’s (1994, 2002) theories of hauntology and hospitality as a theoretical lens to explore the ways in which another novice EFL teacher engaged with their insecurities and self-doubts, asking: *What do these feelings have to teach me?* Article 3—coauthored with five participating teachers from the larger study—borrowed from collaborative autoethnographic (Chang, 2013; Chang, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez, 2013) and self-study (Barak, 2015; Samaras, 2010) methodologies to demonstrate the power of community in the negotiation of one’s teacher identity. In *Collaborative Negotiations of Teacher Identity: A Study of Self in Six Voices*, we join a medley of scholars (e.g., Barak, 2015; Hamiloglu, 2014; Sarasa & Porta, 2018) to stress the positive impact of shared reflection in navigating the development of a teacher identity. The identities performed in this dissertation—those of imagined, enacted, and socially negotiated teacher identities as well as emerging teacher-researcher identities—suggest the power of validation that comes from hearing “You are not alone” and call for a community of support approach to teacher education.

To the woman who loved me more fiercely, more deeply, more proudly than words can express,
Alice Marie Kennedy
1922 - 2015

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It takes a village. It is an adage often associated with childrearing, but it is also an apt expression for doctoral education. I would not be where I am today without the unconditional support of a great number of folks for whom I owe the biggest “thank you.” Dr. Carrie Symons—my yoda—thank you for being my advisor, mentor, and confidant. You are the scholar whom I hope to become: caring and compassionate, critical and curious. Thank you, Carrie!

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groups over the years—Yue Bian, Jessica Landgraf, Rae Oviatt, Krista Surratt, Adam Grimm, Christina Ponzio, Ashley Moore, Erin Bronstein, Heather Reichmuth, Rebekah Gordon, Mingzhu Deng, Kasun Gajasinghemliyanage, and Reyila Hadeer—who gave me the feedback I needed to continue writing and the confidence to share my work with the field, I thank you.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
PROLOGUE	1
Historical Context	3
South Korean and U.S. Binational Commission	4
Theoretical Background	4
Research Methods	6
Participating Teachers	7
Data Sources	10
Dissertation Articles	12
ARTICLE 1	14
“I teach, but I’m no teacher”:	
Identity Negotiations of a Sojourning EFL Teacher in South Korea	14
Introduction	14
Conceptual Framework	16
Novice Teacher Identity Negotiation	17
Novice Teacher Attrition	18
Methods	19
Ethnographic Case Study Design	19
Meet David	20
Data Generation	20
One-on-One Interviews	21
Small Group Discussions	22
Reflective Blog Posts	23
Data Analysis	23
Findings	24
Teaching as an Act of Service and Opportunity to Learn	24
Am I qualified?	25
Am I making a difference?	26
“I teach, but I’m no teacher”	27
I teach	27
But I’m no teacher	28
Discussion	29
Conclusion	31
Epilogue	31
ARTICLE 2	34
Here Ghost Nothing: A Novice EFL Teacher’s Letter to the Ghosts that Haunt Them	34
Reading Lesley’s Letter	34

Meeting Lesley Teacher	36
Setting the Stage	38
Hauntology	38
G/hosts/pitality	39
Naming Lesley's Ghosts	40
Meeting Lesley's Ghosts	43
Ghost: You are an unnecessary distraction, not an asset.	43
Ghost: You are complicit in imperialistic, colonizing acts.	45
Ghost: You are unqualified, uncertified. You are not (good) enough.	46
Ghost: You are temporary, uninvested.	48
Practicing Hospitality	50
Learning from Lesley and their Ghosts	52
Ghosts Within	53
Speaking to Ghosts	55
ARTICLE 3	57
Collaborative Negotiations of Teacher Identity: A Study of Self in Six Voices	57
Prologue	57
Introduction	58
Social Negotiation of Teacher Identity	58
Method	60
The Authors	62
Collaborative Negotiations	64
How do we describe ourselves as teachers?	64
What is our role in the classroom and/or school?	65
What are the challenges of working within the South Korean education system?	66
Knowing the challenges, where does that leave us?	68
Discussion	69
In Closing	72
EPILOGUE	74
Storying Teacher Identity Negotiation	74
Beyond Imagined and Enacted Teacher Identities	77
Expected Teacher Identity	77
Nostalgic Teacher Identity	78
Implication: Beyond Communities of Practice	80
A(n emerging) Researcher Identity	84
Confession: It is all an act	85
Lesson Learned: I am not a superhero, and that is okay	87
Lesson Learned: Vulnerabilities	88
APPENDICES	90
APPENDIX A: Interview Protocols	91
APPENDIX B: Classroom Observation Protocol	97
APPENDIX C: Reflective Blog Posts	98
APPENDIX D: Article 1 Codebook	101

APPENDIX E: Article 2 Codebook	103
APPENDIX F: A Letter to Future Ocheon High School Teachers	108
REFERENCES	110

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Methods of Data Generation	11
Table 2. Data Collection Summary	22
Table 3. Phase II Monthly Reflection Prompts	98
Table 4. Article 1 Themes, Codes, and Data Exemplars	101
Table 5. Article 2 Themes, Codes, and Data Exemplars	103

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Binational Commission's Teacher Preparation Program	5
Figure 2. Timeline of Participating Teachers' Identities	6
Figure 3. Overview of Data Generation with Lesley	41

PROLOGUE

I came across a book a few years ago about one woman's journey to become bilingual.

She described her experience in this way:

I'm constantly hunting for words. I would describe the process like this: every day I go into the woods carrying a basket. I find words all around: on the trees, in the bushes, on the ground (in reality: on the street, during conversations, while I read). I gather as many as possible. But it's never enough; I have an insatiable appetite. (Lahiri, 2016, p. 47)

I, too, have been on a similar hunt. I have searched for the words to tell the story of what it is to teach in South Korea as a sojourning American with little to no prior teaching experience, to bring the triumphs and challenges, realizations and worries, to life within the pages of my dissertation. I have scoured the academic forest for language that explains the identity work one is expected to do during their sojourn. I have stood at the base of giant sycamores—scholars whose works have been influential for so many—and I have stumbled upon recent dissertations and theses—seedlings of those emerging scholars just putting down roots, all the while, walking alongside novice teachers and teacher researchers in this wood as we learn the language of the forest together.

I am a qualitative researcher who uses approaches such as (auto)ethnography, narrative, and case study to represent individuals' lived experiences and identity negotiations; I am a storyteller. Lewis (2011), asking why, in the research world, storytelling—a fundamental way of understanding the lived world—is not more common, wrote “Story is central to human understanding—it makes life livable, because without a story, there is no identity, no self, no other” (p. 505). It is through the recollection and sharing of stories that one elicits their potential for making meaning of their lived experiences. And for novice teachers, storytelling creates space to negotiate who they are and/or who they want to become, for as Palmer (2007) explained:

As we listen to each other's stories, we are often reflecting silently on our own identity and integrity as teachers. When person A speaks, I realize that the method that works for him would not work for me, for it is not grounded in who I am. But as I listen to person B, I realize that the method she uses is one I would like to learn, for it feels integral to my nature. (p. 152)

Qualitative researchers have answered Lewis's (2011) call to engage in storytelling in a variety of ways. He (2003) recounted their dissertation experience using storied vignettes. Haddix, McArthur, Muhammad, Price-Dennis, and Sealey-Ruiz (2016) wrote of Black women English educators' experiences as a conversation at the kitchen table. Inspired by these storytellers and others, I have played with genre throughout my dissertation, including (1) storied vignettes created by blending interview transcripts, field notes, and memos with my memories of other sensory details; (2) creative writing pieces penned by me and another participating teachers, and (3) a dialogue in five voices—a key piece to the third article which invited participating teachers to join me in the research process as co-authors.

I am committed to research that is collaborative and community oriented. In Korean, the importance of care and compassion is communicated through a single word: 정 [jeong]. Without an exact equivalent in the English language, 정 [jeong] has often been described as the love and connection formed within a community; when 정 [jeong] is shared among individuals, it evokes shared feelings of empathy and compassion. My methodology as a researcher is one of 정 [jeong]. I sought to build a caring and open community of novice teachers and novice teacher-researchers, where we could learn to be open and vulnerable, to trust one another. As bell hooks (2000) wrote, "Honesty and openness is always the foundation of insightful dialogue." The following articles were made possible only because of the 정 [jeong] we shared as a research community. The articles that follow—each in their own way—speak to this bond.

Historical Context

Following the collapse of the class system at the end of World War II, English language education came to be seen in South Korea as one of the most powerful means for achieving upward social mobility and economic prosperity (Park, 2009; Seth, 2002). In fact, English language education in South Korea has become one of the highest grossing industries in the nation (Kang, 2012). The national curriculum requires the teaching of the English language beginning in the third year of primary school; children attend English-mediated afterschool academies and summer camps often from the age of three, and parents work hard to send their children on international study experiences in Anglophone countries (Seth, 2002).

Given the highly competitive nature of English language education in South Korea today, many K-12 schools hire English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers from Anglophone countries to teach conversational English classes. Since the end of the Korean War in the mid-1950's and, in some cases, in collaboration with the U.S. government, the South Korean government has established several English language teaching programs for recruiting, training, and supporting EFL teachers in short-term teaching placements in primary and secondary schools around South Korea. However, in keeping with global trends of the field, most of these teachers are new to the profession, coming into the EFL classroom with little to no prior teaching experience. Thus, it is the institutions' responsibility to provide intensive teacher preparation programming for all incoming teachers prior to placing them in their assigned schools. Each institution has traditionally taken a different approach when designing teacher preparation program curriculum and making instructional decisions; however, the primary objective is the same: prepare novice EFL teachers to be effective in their future South Korean classroom(s).

South Korean and U.S. Binational Commission

This dissertation study followed 10 novice EFL teachers as they participated in a six-week intensive teacher preparation program in South Korea in the summer of 2017 and subsequently taught in primary or secondary schools for a period of one to two years. The institution hosting the preparation program and sponsoring the teachers' work visas is a binational commission jointly run by the South Korean and United States governments with a long-standing reputation for successfully recruiting, training, and supporting American EFL teachers in South Korea. In the summer of 2017, they offered a six-week teacher preparation program for an approximately 70-person cohort of first-time EFL teachers. This program was designed to support teachers in three ways: in adjusting to South Korean culture, in learning the Korean language, and in becoming primary and secondary EFL teachers.

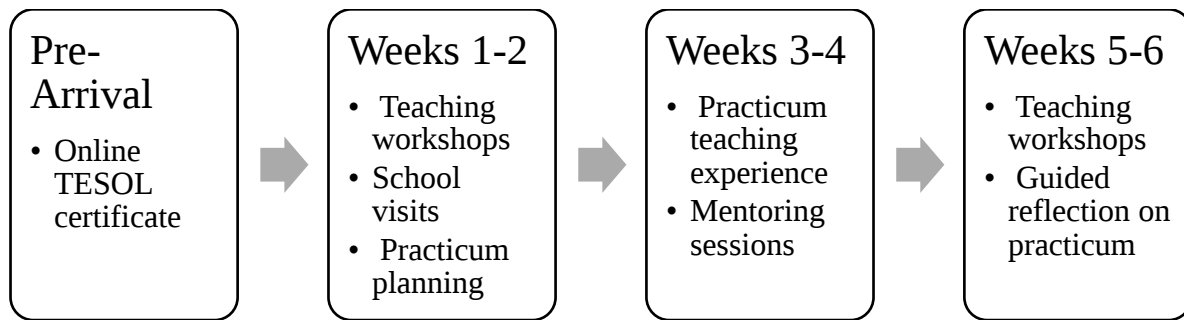
Under the umbrella of teacher preparation, the binational commission's program provided a variety of opportunities and experiences to support teacher learning, including an online Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) certificate; a series of 12 teaching workshops; a practicum teaching experience within a two-week English camp for upper elementary, middle, and high school Korean youth; site visits to area schools, and one-on-one mentoring with EFL teachers in their first three years of teaching in South Korea. While no two days of the teacher preparation program were the same, Figure 1 provides a general overview of the program ran in the summer of 2017.

Theoretical Background

This dissertation takes a longitudinal and (auto)ethnographic case study approach to exploring first-time EFL teacher identity negotiation knowing that research has shown novice teachers' identities undergo constant (re)negotiation during the first few years (e.g., Liu & Xu,

Figure 1.

Binational Commission's Teacher Preparation Program



2011; Sutherland, Howard, & Markauskaite, 2010; Xu, 2012). Describing teacher identity as malleable, Li (2016) argued that the shaping and reshaping of teacher identity is affected by both contextual (e.g., school environment) and intellectual (e.g., teaching philosophy) factors. And while it is not uncommon for teachers to adopt initial teacher identities based, at least partially, on the ways in which they were taught (Lortie, 1975; Tsui, 2007), Xu (2012) noted considerable differences in novice teachers' imagined identities at the beginning of their teaching careers as compared to their practiced identities three years later. What explains these differences? Teacher education researchers have noted that novice teachers often experience identity-disrupting moments when their imagined identities (Barkhuizen, 2016; Xu, 2012) formed as pre-service teachers do not align with the lived realities of their classrooms (Said, 2014).

In his theorization of Communities of Practice, Wenger (1998) argued that identities are negotiated at the intersection of the individual and the social world (Nasir & Cooks, 2009); this intersection for teachers is often characterized by the dissonance teachers feel between who they perceive themselves to be and who they think they need to become to be teachers. In an effort to support novice teachers during this period of transition, Akkerman and Meijer (2011) advocated for allowing space for teachers to engage in reflective dialogue about their expectations and

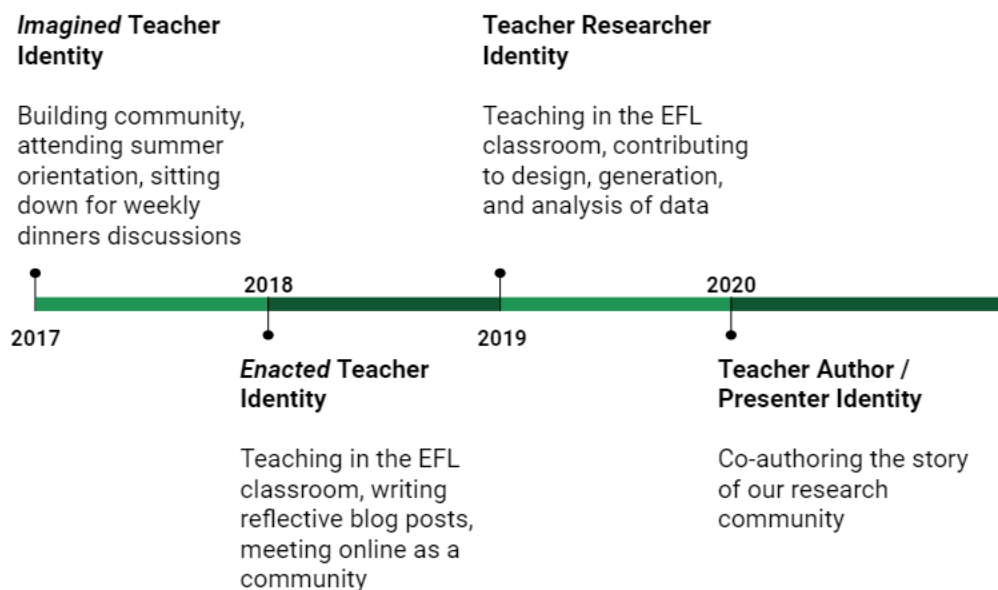
experiences as a way of grappling with their emerging teacher identities. In recent studies, these reflective dialogues have taken the form of guided reflections (Hamiloglu, 2014), reflexive personal commentaries (Barkhuizen, 2016), collaborative autoethnography (Chang, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez, 2013), and the narrative story-ing of experiences (Said, 2014; Sarasa & Porta, 2018).

Research Methods

This dissertation is grounded in a larger longitudinal ethnographic study, one in which I partner with 10 first-time EFL teachers to answer the questions: (1) *How do first-time teachers come to identify as teachers?*, and (2) *How can a teacher's community support them in the process of negotiating this identity?* Over the course of this study, participating teachers performed a number of different identities. Figure 2 maps their imagined and enacted teacher identities as well as their teacher-researcher and teacher-author identities over time to provide readers with a visual representation of participating teachers' evolving role in the study.

Figure 2.

Timeline of Participating Teachers' Identities



It may also be helpful to think of the project as a series of three phases. Phase I occurred in the summer of 2017 and explored 10 participating teachers' imagined teacher identities during the six-week teacher preparation program. Phase II focused on the same 10 teachers' (re)negotiation of an enacted identity during their first year of teaching, the binational commission's 2017-2018 program year. In the final phase, Phase III, five of the participating teachers opted to join me in the writing of a collaborative autoethnography during their second year of teaching, the commission's 2018-2019 program year. This phase has spilled into the 2019-2020 academic year as we continue working to publish and present this collaborative piece.

Following a three-piece dissertation model, the first two articles of this dissertation take the form of ethnographic case studies, a research method that recognizes the messy complexity of human experience (Erickson, 1986) and allows the researcher to construct cases to story lived experiences (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). In the third piece of the dissertation, five participating teachers joined me in the analytic and writing process. Together we drew on collaborative autoethnographic and self-study research methods to promote deeper learning about self and other as well as support community building and power-sharing among research-participants (Chang, 2013). As Chang et al. (2013) explained about the benefits of meaning-making through collaborative autoethnographic research projects:

When the group works together, individual voice is closely examined in community. Others' questioning and probing add unique depth to personal interrogation. The researchers can then retreat to embark on individual meaning-making—practicing their piece. Individual meaning-making is again followed by group meaning-making, which is negotiated among participants. (p. 24)

Each article will be introduced in more detail at the end of this prologue.

Participating Teachers

The dissertation launched in the summer of 2017 with 10 pre-service EFL teachers. All of the participants were American citizens in their mid-twenties who had relocated to South Korea

to teach EFL for the first time. They represented different races and ethnicities, different geographic regions of the U.S., and a range of socioeconomic statuses. With only a few exceptions, the extent of participants' prior teaching experience was limited to informal tutoring in either high school or university, and all 10 participants identified as first-time teachers.

To talk about all 10 teachers' emerging professional identities in a single paper—even one as expansive as a dissertation—would privilege breadth over depth. Driven by a desire to dive deep into the data, write with thick description (Geertz, 1973), and strive for a nuanced understanding of teacher identity (re)negotiation over time, I have chosen to foreground the experiences and identities of only a few in this dissertation. However, I introduce all of the participating teachers here in order to recognize and honor the time and energy each teacher invested in the study.

Other than Gina² and Katherine's shared love of languages, their backgrounds could not be more different. Gina was born to Chinese parents and raised outside of the U.S., living in Germany, Hong Kong, and Singapore. She spoke five languages: English, Mandarin, Spanish, Japanese, and Korean to varying degrees, and it was her love of languages that led her to apply to the binational commission's teaching program, explaining that she was hoping "to make more kids fall in love with learning languages." Katherine grew up in a neighborhood with a large Korean American population in the American South. Katherine—whose family is of European descent—grew up eating Korean food, listening to K-Pop, and playing with Korean friends. But it was not until she entered university that Katherine began to formally study the Korean language, majoring in psychology and minoring in both English and Korean. Katherine had never lived away from home, let alone traveled outside of the United States until she arrived in

² Unless otherwise stated, all names are pseudonyms.

South Korea for the teacher preparation program. Gina and Katherine were initially placed at sister schools in one of South Korea's southernmost provinces: Gina at the middle school; Katherine at the high school.

Ariel and Susan were both placed at middle schools on opposite sides of the same South Korean city, but their experiences in their schools could not have been more different. Ariel, the oldest of four daughters, was comfortable in her role as a big sister, so when she was placed at an all-girls middle school, she could not have been more excited. Staying for two years, Ariel worked to learn the Korean language and incorporate it into her teaching, a practice that her school encouraged. Susan, a Korean American woman from the American Northeast, was raised in a bilingual (Korean and English) home. She came into the program hoping to be able to use her bilingualism in her classroom. However, school administrators asked that Susan hide her Korean language skills, following a strict English-only approach. Susan left teaching after only one year, having never revealed to her students the extent of her Korean language abilities.

Brian and David were similar in many ways. While David had been born in South Korea, he was later adopted by a family in the U.S., and he and Brian were both raised in the American Midwest. Each attended large state schools and chose to major in the math and sciences with hopes of teaching in the future. Brian and David were placed in high schools in the same western province of South Korea. While David taught in South Korea for only one year before returning to the U.S. to begin a graduate degree in mathematics, Brian stayed at his co-ed high school for two years.

Of the seven teachers in the dissertation study who opted to stay in South Korea for a second year, Maribel and Hazel had the biggest transition to make from their first to second year of teaching. Maribel, who was a first-generation graduate of both high school and college in her

family, split her time in the first year across two elementary schools. In the second year, Maribel accepted an instructor position at a rural university. There was an equally stark contrast between placements for Hazel, who was born and raised in a large city in the heart of the American South. She found herself placed in one of South Korea's smallest communities in her first year, with less than 50 elementary school students across Grades 3-6. In her second year, Hazel relocated to a nearby city and accepted a placement at an all-boys high school with more than 1,000 students.

Anya and Lesley decided to sojourn in South Korea as EFL teachers after first teaching in the U.S. For Anya, her prior teaching experience came through her time in the AmeriCorps program. With hopes of joining the foreign service in the future, Anya double majored in international relations and history with a focus on Asia; she also studied the Korean language for a number of years. After teaching at a co-ed high school in a rural community in one of South Korea's southernmost provinces, she returned to the U.S. to pursue a master's degree. Lesley, however, came into the program having just completed their master's degree in TESOL. As a former coach for high school and university softball and former substitute teacher in Virginia public schools, Lesley was accustomed to mentoring and encouraging youth, and they were excited to begin their teaching career by immersing themselves in an unfamiliar culture and language. With hopes of teaching the English language in the U.S. in the future, Lesley thought this immersive experience would build empathy and understanding for their future students' lived realities. Lesley is still teaching in South Korea, now three years since this study began.

Data Sources

Across the three phases of the dissertation study, participating teachers and I generated data in myriad forms (see Table 1). Four of these data forms were used throughout all three phases of the project, including (1) individual interviews, (2) small-group conversations among

participating teachers, (3) observational field notes generated as participants taught in their EFL classrooms, and (4) classroom teaching artifacts in the form of student work, lesson plans, etc. Phase II added a fifth source of data: the writing of monthly reflections on a shared blog, and, in Phase III, we generated a collection of individual and collaborative autoethnographic writings in addition to the other five forms of data. Appendices A and B provide the protocols for the six one-on-one interviews and classroom observations, respectively. The monthly reflection prompts from Phase II are provided in Table 3 (see Appendix C).

Table 1. Methods of Data Generation

Data Form	Project Phase	Data Description
One-on-One Interviews	Phases I, II, and III	Teachers were interviewed (1 hour) at the beginning and end of Phase I and again as a part of each school visit during Phases II and III (twice-yearly).
Small Group Discussions	Phases I, II, and III	Teachers participated in weekly small-group discussions (1.5 hours per week) during Phase I and twice-yearly virtual group meetings (1.5 hours each) in Phase II and monthly virtual group meetings (1.5 hours each) in Phase III.
Classroom Teaching Observations	Phases I, II, and III	Participants' practice lessons were observed (1 hour per teacher) during Phase I. Classroom observations were then conducted twice-yearly (1-3 hour(s) per participant) for two years.
Digital Artifacts	Phases I, II, and III	Teachers' submitted self-selected artifacts (e.g., lesson plans, student work, etc.) after each visit.
Monthly Reflections	Phases II and III	Monthly reflections on a shared blog were collected (10 per teacher per year).
Autoethnographic Writing	Phase III	Drafts of teachers' (collaborative) autoethnographic writings were collected.

Dissertation Articles

This dissertation is presented in a three-article format, where each piece is unique in its intended audience, theoretical and methodological framing, and focal participants. The story begins with David and his process of negotiating a teacher identity during his one, and—spoiler alert—only, year teaching in South Korea. Article 1, entitled “*I teach, but I’m no teacher*”: *Identity Negotiations of a Sojourning EFL Teacher in South Korea*, draws on Sachs (2005) definition of teacher identity to unpack David’s distinction between the verb *to teach* and the noun *teacher*. Knowing that novice teachers, like David, choose to leave the profession in droves each year (Day & Gu, 2010; Ewing & Smith, 2003), this ethnographic case study (Dyson & Genishi, 2009; Erickson, 1986) offers a “story to leave by” (Schaefer, Downey, & Clandinin, 2014, p. 10), that is rooted in teacher identity literature and the dissonance caused when imagined teacher identities (Xu, 2012) fall apart.

Article 2 examines the insecurities and self-doubts of a novice EFL teacher by asking: *What haunts them?* Using Derrida’s (1994, 2002) theories of hauntology and hospitality as a theoretical lens, this piece, entitled *Here Ghost Nothing: A Novice EFL Teacher’s Letter to the Ghosts that Haunt Them*, opens with a firsthand account of Lesley’s first two years of teaching, written as a letter addressed to a perceived presence in their classroom. Hauntology names Lesley’s ghosts: those of distraction, imperialism, (in)capability, and (non)permanence, but it is hospitality that points to the specters’ influence on Lesley’s enacted teacher identity (Li, 2016). Rather than choosing to ignore their ghosts and bury their feelings of insecurity, Lesley engaged with the ghosts’ accusations, asking: *What do you have to teach me?* This lean-in approach to teacher identity (re)negotiation may serve as a model for teacher educators looking to foster resiliency among novice teachers.

The third article borrows from collaborative autoethnographic (Chang, 2013; Chang et al., 2013) and self-study (Barak, 2015; Samaras, 2010) methodologies to demonstrate the power of community in the negotiation of one's teacher identity. *Collaborative Negotiations of Teacher Identity: A Study of Self in Six Voices* is a paper co-authored alongside five participating teachers from the larger study: Clarke, Janet, Isabel, Nathan, and Taylor.³ This article grapples with what it has meant for us to insert ourselves into the South Korean education system with little to no training and to claim the identity of teacher. As a collective, we speak to the beneficial and stimulating process of chronicling a shared, collaborative study of selves. This article serves as our endorsement of such a process; together we join a medley of scholars (e.g., Barak, 2015; Hamiloglu, 2014; Sarasa & Porta, 2018) to stress the positive impact of shared reflection in navigating the development of a teacher identity.

By returning to the overarching questions that have guided the study, questions of how one comes to identify as a teacher, and how one's community can support them in this process, the epilogue closes the dissertation with a reflective discussion of lessons learned. While Article 3 speaks to a TESOL teacher education audience specifically, as a whole, the dissertation aims to address teacher education more broadly. The identities performed in this study—those of participants' imagined and enacted teacher identities as well as emerging researcher identities for both participating teachers and myself—suggest the power of communities of support in this work, the validation and corroboration that comes from hearing “You are not alone; I see you; I hear you.”

³ In Article 3, all authors have chosen to publish under their real names.

ARTICLE 1

“I teach, but I’m no teacher”: Identity Negotiations of a Sojourning EFL Teacher in South Korea

Introduction

It was just an ordinary day in June 2018. David (pseudonym) and I, as part of my dissertation research into English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher identity negotiations, were in the middle of an interview—our fourth in the last year—when he stopped. But I do not mean “stopped” in that he paused to clear his throat, search for the right word, or simply organize his thoughts. No. He stopped. Sat back in his chair. Crossed his arms. Shifted in his seat a few times. And—what felt most significant—broke eye contact.

David was in the final month of his first year of teaching at a rural, all-boys high school in one of the western-most provinces of South Korea. As one of 10 first-time EFL teachers in the research project, David and I had few secrets—or so I thought—about the work. He knew I was writing a dissertation about the ongoing negotiations first-time teachers experience when deciding what kind of teachers they wanted to be. I had shared with participants the plans for data generation and analysis. I had even shared with them preliminary findings about their negotiations of imagined teacher identities (Barkhuizen, 2016; Xu, 2012) in the summer of 2017—a precursory project leading into the dissertation (for me) and the first year of teaching (for them). It never, in all that time, occurred to me that David could be holding tight to a secret, one that, if shared, David feared could derail the entire project.

The question I posed was intended to be an innocuous one; David, and every other teacher in the project, had answered the question numerous times before: *What are three words you would use to describe yourself as a teacher?* David began to respond with words that he had

used before, *approachable* being the first to come to his mind. But that was when things went awry. This is the story⁴ of David and the moment when he stopped the interview.

“David, are you okay?” I ask, sensing the change. The lost eye contact. The crossed arms. He had withdrawn, pulled away.

“I don’t think I can answer your questions,” he says at a volume best described as a hair above a whisper.

Questions. With an ‘s’? Had I heard him correctly? Was this the moment that explains that line in every consent form ever written: ‘Participants can choose to withdraw at any time?’

“David, do you want to stop?” I ask.

“I didn’t answer your question...the one about finding a word,” he offers in response.

He didn’t answer my question. Not the one about three words to describe himself but also not this most recent one about stopping the interview. I decide to keep that observation to myself. “No, that’s okay. Talking through it and trying out different words, even if you ultimately reject them, I think, is really helpful.”

“Yeah? I just worry about you.”

Wait. What? He’s worried about me? “What do you mean, David?”

“Your whole study is on identity as a teacher, right, and...” He pauses, trying to decide just how much he wants to say. “Laura, I teach, but I’m no teacher. So...” And then he laughs. It’s his nervous laugh. The laugh I hear as I play back the recordings from some of our earliest conversations. It’s a laugh I’ve come to know well over the course of our year together.

“It’s okay, David! Don’t worry about me.”

⁴ I use a narrative writing approach to recount my conversation with David as a way of including not only our shared dialogue taken directly from the transcript but my internal dialogue—captured by memos written in the hours and days following the interview—as well (He, 2003).

“I didn’t just ruin your dissertation?” he asks, lifting his eyes ever so slightly.

There. We’re making eye contact again. “No,” I say, smiling, “definitely not.”

Our conversation that summer day and the reflective writing that I have done since led me to this article, a discussion of David’s—to use his word—‘conflicted’ process of negotiating a teacher identity within a South Korean EFL classroom. This is the story of an individual who wanted not to be named 쌤 [Ssam; teacher].⁵

Conceptual Framework

This article is situated at the intersection of teacher attrition and teacher identity. Attrition statistics are staggering with 25-40% of novice teachers leaving the teaching profession within their first five years (Day & Gu, 2010; Ewing & Smith, 2003). Some researchers frame teacher attrition as a question of beginning teachers’ identity shifts. Flores and Day’s (2006) study on novice teachers’ experiences and identity showed that participants began to live a story of “strategic compliance” (p. 229), a kind of cover story that allowed novice teachers to conform to their school landscapes without creating social tensions. The dilemma that these strategic compliance stories created though was more than a shifting of a teacher’s role; it was a (re)shaping of the individual’s identity as a teacher. Schaefer (2013) further explained the emotional toil these shifts create, “When the realities of teaching become apparent to beginning teachers the conflict between their ideal stories and their lived stories may result in them becoming isolated and frustrated” (p. 269) and ultimately, like David, choosing to leave the profession.

⁵ 쌤 [ssam], meaning teacher, is an informal term used by many South Korean primary and secondary school students to indicate a closeness with and affection for their classroom teachers.

Novice Teacher Identity Negotiation

The definition of and methods for studying teacher identity vary widely within the literature (e.g., Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Hsieh, 2015; Yuan & Lee, 2016). However, much of the growing body of research examining teacher identity shares three fundamental beliefs. First, identities are shaped, reshaped, and adapted with great complexity through a process of interpretation and reinterpretation of experiences (Li, 2016; Liu & Xu, 2011; SØreide, 2006; Sutherland, Howard, & Markauskaite, 2010). Second, teacher identities are negotiated between an individual and their understanding of the contexts within which they either will be or are working (Anspal, Eisenschmidt, & Löfström, 2012; Hsieh, 2015). Third, identity involves human agency, or experiences wherein an individual has at least some choice in their professional activities (Anspal et al., 2012; Nichols, Schutz, Rodgers, & Bilica, 2017; SØreide, 2006).

Sachs (2005) emphasizes the reciprocal nature of identity as an individual's on-going negotiation between experiences and the meaning-making of those experiences, conceptualizing teacher identity as an individual's negotiation of (1) how to be, (2) how to act, and (3) how to understand one's role and responsibilities as a teacher.

With first-time teachers, research has demonstrated that novice teachers often experience identity-disrupting moments when their *imagined identities* (Barkhuizen, 2016; Xu, 2012) formed as pre-service teachers do not align with their *enacted identities* renegotiated within the lived realities of their classrooms (Li, 2016; Said, 2014). Knowing that it is not uncommon for teachers to adopt imagined teacher identities based, at least partially, on the ways in which they were taught (Lortie, 1975), context plays a large role in explaining the perceived disconnect between teachers' imagined and enacted identities (Li, 2016; Tsui, 2007). In fact, educational

context knowledge is one of seven knowledge bases Shulman (1986, 1987) identified as necessary for teachers; the other knowledges include those of content, curriculum, and the learners to name a few.

Describing teacher identity as malleable, Li (2016) noted that identities—specifically referencing the enacted identities of novice English language teachers—are affected by both contextual (e.g., school environment, culture, education policies, etc.) and intellectual (e.g., teaching philosophies) factors, which begs the question: What happens when novice teachers are unable to (re)negotiate and enact a teacher identity that aligns with these factors? Sadly, Trent’s (2016, 2017) work with EFL teachers in Hong Kong suggests that novice teachers who do not have the space and support to problematize the identity positions they perceive to be available to them and (re)negotiate teacher identities accordingly ultimately leave the K-12 classroom.

Novice Teacher Attrition

There is a growing body of literature suggesting that to more fully understand teachers and teaching, one needs to investigate the ways in which teachers negotiate their professional identities (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005). Pearce and Morrison (2011) note that these identity negotiations are part of a discursive process, taking place as a result of interactions with others and developing as part of a narrative of the self. Le Cornu (2013) extends this point, arguing that sustainable, mutually sustaining relationships play a role in novice teacher resiliency.

A number of studies have noted the role teacher identity negotiation plays in teacher attrition (e.g., Carmel & Badash, 2018; Howard, 2019; Schaefer, 2013). Schaefer, Downey, and Clandinin (2014), for example, argued that teachers’ reasons for leaving the profession, their ‘stories to leave by’, often represent a cover story, “an easy and acceptable alibi” (p. 23), that

rationalizes their departure in terms of upward mobility, parenting, or further education. According to Schaefer et al. (2014), “these cover stories seem easier and safer to tell than stories of struggle [...] of guilt, and or regret” (pp. 24-25). Nevertheless, exploring such stories is crucial to developing a more complex and nuanced understanding of teacher attrition, a phenomenon complicated by the on-going deprofessionalization of teaching (Chamberlin, Wragg, Haynes, & Wragg, 2002; Macdonald, 1999; Milner, 2013).

In the summer of 2017, a group of sojourning⁶ Americans, including David, relocated to South Korea to teach EFL in K-12 schools. This study is a one-year ethnographic case study of David’s experiences negotiating an identity as 쌤 [Ssam; teacher] throughout his first, and ultimately, last year of teaching. Asking: *In what ways, and for what reasons, was David reluctant to identify as a teacher?*, David’s “story to leave by” (Schaefer et al., 2014) speaks to (1) the conflict between his imagined-teacher self and the realities of teaching within the South Korean education system and (2) David’s concern over the deprofessionalization of teaching.

Methods

Ethnographic Case Study Design

This ethnographic case study of David’s experiences comes out of a larger, two-phase project in which I partnered with 10 first-time EFL teachers. Phase I—completed in Summer 2017—explored participants’ imagined teacher identities during an intensive six-week teacher preparation program hosted by a South Korean and U.S. binational education commission. Then in Phase II—completed during participants’ 2017-2018 grant year—I explored the ways in which

⁶ Sojourners are individuals 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).

participants were refining and enacting their teacher identities by following the same 10 EFL teachers throughout their first year of teaching.

Ethnographic research studies everyday life (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 2011); in this study, it is David's lived experiences in the summer preparation program and his EFL classroom that I sought to understand. By adopting an ethnographic case study approach, one that recognizes the messy complexity of human experience (Erickson, 1986) and allows me to construct cases to story those experiences (Dyson & Genishi, 2005), I am able to represent David's identity negotiations throughout his first year of teaching.

Meet David

David applied to the binational commission's teaching program during his final year of undergraduate studies at a large state university in the American Midwest. As a math major, David had initially toyed with the idea of becoming a math teacher but changed his mind after having a negative experience in a practicum placement during his sophomore year. Three years later, David was ready to try again, hoping "to make a positive change in the world through teaching." Since David was adopted from South Korea when he was two months old, he was excited to have been assigned to an all-boys high school in a community not too far from the city of his birth.

Data Generation

In Korean culture, 정 [jeong], a word without an exact equivalent in the English language, has often been described as the love and connection formed within a community; when 정 [jeong] is shared among individuals, it evokes shared feelings of empathy and compassion. My role as a researcher was motivated by a desire to share 정 [jeong] with the participating teachers. As bell hooks (2000) wrote, "honesty and openness is always the foundation of insightful

dialogue.” By working as a group to build a caring and open community, we—the participating teachers and I—learned to be vulnerable and open, to trust one another.

In this study, I drew inspiration from the myriad dialogic methods used in teacher identity research (e.g., Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Liu & Xu, 2011) as well as methods designed to feature participants’ voices (e.g., Ellis, Kiesinger, & Tillmann-Healy, 1997; Motha, 2009). From small-group dinner conversations based on interactive interviewing techniques (Ellis et al., 1997) to reflective writing on a shared blog (Li, 2016), the methods I used throughout the study were made possible because of the 정 [jeong] shared across our community. Asking participating teachers to share their experiences and expectations, for example, required participants, as Motha (2009) noted, to “take themselves through a reflective process and make deliberate choices” (p. 108) about how to represent themselves and their emerging identities. During his time as a sojourning teacher, David and I generated a variety of data, including interviews; small-group conversations among David and other participating teachers; classroom observations as David taught in his EFL classroom; multiple classroom teaching artifacts in the form of student work, lesson plans, etc.; and monthly reflections on a shared blog (see Table 2). Data for this paper drew heavily on David’s interviews and small group conversations regarding teaching as well as his monthly written reflections.

One-on-One Interviews. All interviews were semi-structured in nature and recorded using a digital audio recording device. Initial interviews focused on participants’ education backgrounds, motivations for teaching, and imagined teaching contexts. Subsequent interviews were scheduled to accompany classroom observations and invited participants to respond to a series of recurring questions, such as *What are three words that you would use to describe*

yourself as a teacher?, reflect on the lesson(s) taught that day, and speak to their (emerging) enacted identities.

Table 2. Data Collection Summary

Data Form	Project Phase	Data Description
One-on-One Interviews	Phases I and II	David was interviewed (1 hour) at the beginning and end of Phase I and again as a part of each school visit during Phase II (4 interviews).
Small Group Discussions	Phases I and II	David participated in weekly small-group discussions (1.5 hours per week) throughout Phase I as well as one virtual group meeting each semester (1.5 hours each) in Phase II.
Classroom Teaching Observations	Phases I and II	David's practice lesson was observed (1 hour) during Phase I. Classroom observations were then conducted at the end both of semesters (2 hours each) during Phase II.
Digital Artifacts	Phases I and II	David's self-selected artifacts (e.g., lesson plans, handouts, student work, etc.) from observed classes were collected.
Reflective Blog Posts	Phase II	David wrote monthly reflections on a shared blog based on prompts written by me and other participating teachers.

Small Group Discussions. Small-group discussions were jointly constructed and modeled after interactive interviewing techniques (Ellis et al., 1997), which bring small groups of people together to discuss a topic with which each participant has had personal experience. As Palmer (2007) explains of his own teacher identity negotiation process:

As we listen to each other's stories, we are often reflecting silently on our own identity and integrity as teachers. [...] We have created a conversation that works like a navigator's triangulations, allowing us to locate ourselves more precisely on teaching's inner terrain by noting the position of others. (p. 152)

By meeting together regularly in small groups and reflecting openly about their experiences as teachers, participants were able to form a community of practice and support one another's ongoing identity negotiations within the community (Kennedy, in press, b; Wenger, 1998).

Reflective Blog Posts. Throughout their first year of teaching, participating teachers and I worked together to create a blog where they could post about their experiences as well as read and respond to each other's stories. This space allowed participants to continue sharing their triumphs and struggles (Said, 2014), ask for advice from the group (Sarasa & Porta, 2018), and further support one another asynchronously.

Data Analysis

The analytic process occurred in three separate yet iterative stages: data preparation, coding, and member checking. When preparing the data, all audio recordings of David's individual interviews and small-group meetings were transcribed verbatim, and a data inventory was created in order to organize the more than 100 digital documents generated over the course of the year.

Taking an inductive coding approach, I engaged in values coding, in which I attempted to name David's underlying beliefs, attitudes, and values; and versus coding, by looking for moments of seeming contradiction or comparison in his responses (Saldaña, 2016). I made a second pass through the data using an apriori coding scheme based on Sachs' (2005) definition of teacher identity: *how to be*, *how to act*, and *how to understand one's role as a teacher*. For example, mentions of specific teaching practices were flagged as *how to act*, and comments regarding one's teaching philosophy were labeled as *how to understand one's role*. This deductive approach sought to flag moments when David was naming the roles and responsibilities of a teacher, regardless of whether or not he saw himself taking on those roles successfully. Table 4 provides the codebook with some of the most common and salient codes as well as accompanying excerpts from the data. (see Appendix D).

Findings

Sachs' framework considers the negotiation—a conversation, either internal or external, across expectations, assumptions, and beliefs—of how to be a teacher, how to act as a teacher, and how to understand the roles and responsibilities of a teacher. In understanding David's negotiations of his teacher identity, it is important to tackle Sachs' considerations in reverse order because, for David, his identity negotiations began with his understanding of the role and responsibilities, which was then followed by a process of determining how to enact who he would be as a teacher and his ultimate questioning of what it *means* to be a teacher. I begin by exploring what David understood to be an EFL teacher's role and responsibilities, an understanding rooted, for David, in the notions of humility and service. Then I return to the moment when the interview stopped, the moment when David made the explicit distinction between the verb *to teach* and the noun *teacher*, stating "I teach, but I'm no teacher." I share the ways in which and reasons why David embraced the actions of teaching yet hesitated to identify as 쌤 [Ssam; teacher].

Teaching as an Act of Service and Opportunity to Learn

David's imagined teacher identity at the beginning of his sojourn was rooted in his understanding of his role as an EFL teacher to be that of a humble servant. This theme of humility was an important one for David. He explained that a teacher needs to be humble—acknowledging that students are experts in their own right—and open to learning from and with their students. When asked to describe his teacher self, David responded:

My saying it is kind of an oxymoron, but humble. Like saying you're humble is also kind of like not being humble, but...instead of trying to show the stuff that I know, I look for more things that I can learn. And in my role as a teacher, I think you can learn a lot from your students. Instead of like always thinking about how obviously you're the teacher...

seeing how you're learning from your students. It's definitely how I would kind of want to go about my teaching here. (August 2017)

Taking the stance of a learner was a recurring theme for David; at our group dinners that summer, he was often heard reminding everyone that “you can learn a lot from your students.” And in our final dinner together before the school year began, when asked what he had learned about himself so far as a teacher, David shared:

I've definitely become a lot more conscious over these last couple of weeks about acclimating to a new culture while also learning about how to be a teacher...I think is a great way to start off. And also just realizing that those two things aren't separate, being a teacher in different countries is very different than what it is being in the U.S.

David recognized that teaching in South Korea was as much about learning to teach as it was about understanding the South Korean [education] culture. This led David to wonder (1) if he was qualified to be teaching in South Korea, and (2) if he would be able to make a difference in the lives of his students.

Am I qualified? In his first blog post after the school year began, David opened with the comment, “Being a teacher is easy, said no one ever.” I asked David once why he felt that he was struggling to find his footing as an EFL teacher. David responded with “speaking the language and being able to write well doesn't necessarily mean you know exactly how to teach it, I guess.” He also recognized the difference between learning English as a first- versus second-language, worrying, for example, that he may not be familiar enough with specific grammar rules:

For me, I just know it [grammar], right? But then there's these very precise grammatical rules or guidelines that you should know...but since I've just absorbed the language throughout my life, it's kind of hard to pinpoint the exact situations of using it.

For this reason, David indicated that he either needed to “study up on [his] grammar” or leave the grammar lessons to his Korean colleagues, saying, “I think grammar is taught more effectively in their English class than the native speaker class.” The distinction David was

making here between the two types of classes is important. In the high school where David worked, and in most K-12 schools throughout South Korea, the “native speaker”—to use David’s terminology—sees each student just once a week; however, students have additional English language classes two or three other times each week taught by Korean teachers. David saw these classes as students’ English classes and his as something other/else.

Am I making a difference? Despite not feeling qualified to teach, stating at dinner one night in the summer of 2017, “I don’t know whether or not it’s an ethical thing for us to be teaching English here,” David wanted to make a difference in the lives of his students. Recounting the advice he received from the director of the binational commission at the beginning of the school year, David shared “I think [the director] put it really nicely when she’s like ‘oh, it’s the small differences that you can make’ [...] just getting quiet students to raise their hand. When she said that, I definitely resonate with that.” David wanted to encourage his students; he wanted to help students who were hesitant to speak English to grow in their confidence, to raise their hands. He hoped to be able to connect with them over shared interests:

Maybe I’m not like super crazy about teaching grammar in general, but I’m hoping that things I am interested in...that I can bring those into the classroom, and maybe those align with some of the things the students are interested in (July 2017).

And, as David reflected on his first month of teaching, he wrote in a blog post that getting verbal affirmation from two students who enjoyed a particular lesson “really brightened up [his] day.”

David’s imagined teacher identity centered around his students; he understood his role as that of a learner, asking how he could connect with students and learn from them. He recognized that although English was his first language, the teaching of grammar, for example, was perhaps best left to his Korean colleagues who had been trained to teach the nuanced grammar rules. Knowing that even his imagined-teacher-self questioned David’s qualifications, it should come

as no surprise that while David was able to enact an identity that aligned closely with his hopes of being of service through teaching, he struggled with what it meant for him to identify as a teacher.

“I teach, but I’m no teacher”

The day David and I sat down for our final interview together he shared that he was concerned about “ruining” the study because he did not identify as a teacher. Memorably, he explained, “I teach, but I’m no teacher.” This distinction between the verb *to teach* and the noun *teacher* is one that, when I returned to David’s other interviews, blog posts, and small group conversations, I discovered David made consistently, albeit subtly, throughout the school year.

I teach. In keeping with his imagined teacher identity, David worked hard to connect with students and support them in their learning throughout the year. He knew which classes tended to have lower energy and looked for ways to engage more with these students. He also considered creating opportunities to interact with students outside of the once-a-week lessons, sharing in a monthly blog post:

I think it’s just as important for us to interact with our students in the hallways and whenever we bump into them outside of school as it is in the classroom. It provides a chance for us to practice in a much more casual environment. (April 2018)

In an earlier post, David also mentioned a plan of “hosting a language table every Thursday at the school cafeteria.” In his final post of the year, David wrote as a way of explaining the benefits of these opportunities for himself and his students:

One thing that I can do that no other teacher in my school can do is speak English natively. I’ve quickly noticed that there are many advantages of students practicing speaking English with me. They can learn authentic and practical use of vocabulary. They can learn more about my culture through the language. And they can learn English in a new and potentially more exciting way. (June 2018)

David recognized the contributions that he was able to make; from teaching vocabulary to American culture and everything in between, David saw that his presence in the school created

exciting opportunities for students. And, yet, David was quick to remind me that these actions—teaching lessons, hosting lunch discussions, facilitating casual conversations with students in passing, etc.—did not make him a teacher.

But I’m no teacher. David’s reluctance to identify as a teacher seemed to stem from his lack of credentials. Noting, “I wouldn’t associate the word 선생님 [songsaengnim]⁷ or teacher with me, which sounds weird. But, yeah. It was a gift basically because I am a native English-speaker,” David worried that to claim the title *teacher* would disrespect the hard work his Korean colleagues had done to earn the same title. David posted on his blog in May 2018:

I am not a certified teacher. My 150-hour TESOL online course pales in comparison to the amount of preparation and licensure tests that certified teachers complete.

And in small group conversations during his year of teaching in South Korea, David recounted moments when others mistook his presence in the school, ascribing him an identity other than teacher. The first was when a coworker misidentified David as a student, scolding him for being out of uniform and late to class, and the second, David shared, “there were a few moments last year where the students would be too loud or goof-off too much during class because they didn’t see me as an authority figure but rather as a friend” (January 2018). These instances where coworkers and students did not see David as a teacher but rather as either a student or a friend—in both cases, as a high school student—were difficult for David. When another teacher in the larger project asked, in response to David’s May blog post, how he felt about these moments, David wrote back, “I am not going to lie to myself and say that I am a certified, professional teacher. But I still believe that my class is useful for students!” This was David’s motto; he may not have felt qualified, but he understood that he could still make a difference. He taught.

⁷ 선생님 [songsaengnim] is the more formal way of referring to a teacher.

Discussion

This article uses the lived experiences of David's one-year sojourn to South Korea to demonstrate the ways in which and reasons for his reluctance to identify as a teacher. David came into the binational commission's program wanting to make a difference in the lives of his students. His imagined teacher identity was as much about being a learner as it was about being a teacher. But what was it that David felt he needed to learn? As David wondered if he was qualified to teach or if he was merely gifted with the title of teacher because his home language happened to be English, he touched on three teacher knowledge categories (Schulman, 1987): the knowledges of content, curriculum, and educational context.

Even before he began teaching, David noted the differences between speaking and teaching a language and learning English as a first and second language; he worried that he may lack the content knowledge to teach English as a foreign language. He also suggested that the English language curriculum best be taught within students' English classes—the classes taught by David's Korean colleagues—and not in their other class (i.e., David's class). In terms of educational context knowledge, David understood, as Li (2016) argued, learning to teach was a process contextually bound to a specific culture, environment, and set of education policies. He needed to learn to teach within South Korea and their education system.

David knew what he did not know: the curriculum, the education context, the content knowledge. And while he imagined an initial teacher identity as a teacher-learner and worked to enact this identity in his classroom, he resisted identifying as a teacher. The distinction between the act of teaching and that of being a teacher was important for David. He spoke often of working to improve his lessons, to connect with students over shared interests, and to create additional learning opportunities for students outside of the classroom. He saw a purpose for his

presence in the school, and, yet, it was not a teacher's presence. David could not reconcile his imagined identity with the realities of the profession. He wanted to be a learner, not the teacher. He worked to gain the various knowledges of teaching (Shulman, 1987), but did not feel qualified to claim the title until he did so. Unlike the EFL teachers in Howard's (2019) study of professional identity negotiation in South Korea, who identified as authentic teachers despite feeling treated as expendable by their Korean colleagues, David was his own greatest critic. The titles of 쌤 [Ssam] and 선생님 [songsaengnim] felt like a gift—undeserved and thus unwanted.

As a field, we know that novice teachers experience identity-disrupting moments throughout their first year(s) of teaching (Said, 2014; Xu, 2012), and that these periods of (re)negotiation can, and often, lead to novice teacher attrition (Howard, 2019). David is no exception; after one year of teaching EFL in South Korea, he left the K-12 classroom and returned home, no longer planning to pursue a degree in education. Tens of thousands of EFL teachers are employed in South Korea each year (Seol, 2012); how many of these individuals see themselves as teachers and view teaching as a long-term career? I do not know the answer to this question, but I know what we, as a field, know: novice teachers choose to leave the K-12 classroom in droves (Day & Gu, 2010; Ewing & Smith, 2003). We must, therefore, ask ourselves what can be done to foster resiliency among first-time teachers.

If, in fact, identity negotiation is a discursive process (Pearce & Morrison, 2011) in which relationships are a key factor in sustaining novice teachers' resiliency (Le Cornu, 2013), then why was the community of practice we built during the research project (Kennedy, in press, b) not enough to support and sustain David? The critical message from this study is that novice teachers confront significant challenges during their first year(s) of teaching; their capacity to (re)negotiate—either internally or externally—teacher identities that align with the realities of

the specific education context is one of these challenges. David's imagined identity as a humble learner only served to highlight the knowledges that he understood to be lacking. David's participation in the community of practice supported him in the actions of teaching; he brought and borrowed ideas from the group for further engaging (with) students; he reflected on and learned from his teaching. The community of practice even supported David in defining the role and responsibilities of an EFL teacher. Yet, the community could not help David with the third component of Sachs' framework: how to be a teacher. This sense of being was rooted in David's understanding of teaching as a profession, one that called for knowledges he did not think he possessed/simply did not have (yet).

Conclusion

David's story has highlighted the crucial role of teacher identity negotiation in both resiliency and attrition. His year-long sojourn to South Korea to teach English as a foreign language was a second chance at making a career of teaching. And while he wondered whether he was qualified to be in the position, David wanted to make a difference in the lives of his students. The moments when David received validation from colleagues and students affirmed his role; David was doing the work of a teacher and doing it well in the eyes of his school. However, these words of affirmation could not quiet the voice inside that told David he was an imposter, a poser. In his eyes, he may have taught, but he was not a teacher.

Epilogue

"BUT I'M NOT A TEACHER!"

Even holding the phone at arm's length, I can hear him clear as day. I don't think he means to yell, and he certainly isn't yelling at me. "It's the situation," I remind myself. "Don't take it personally, Laura." I take a breath and wait for David to do the same.

It's July 2018, and David has only been back in the U.S. for a few days. He is home with his family, and, once the jetlag passes, he will begin preparing for grad school. He's decided to pursue a master's degree in mathematics at a school in the Pacific Northwest.

"David, what exactly did the letter say?" I ask when I realize that he, too, has paused.

"Hold on a sec."

Although I know the letter came through e-mail, I imagine him smoothing out a piece of paper previously smashed by his fist out of frustration. I reach for a pen and paper and wait.

David takes a deep breath and begins to read: "'Dear David', blah blah blah. Oh, here we go:

'We are pleased to offer you a half-time graduate assistantship teaching within our mathematics department for the 2018-2019 academic year. Given your prior teaching experiences, we are confident that this position will be an ideal match for you.'"

David sighs, and I finish jotting down the wording of the letter on my notepad. I wait. I know what's coming. I still remember our last conversation just one month ago. The words that he had held in, kept to himself, until that day. For how long was he thinking them before he dared say the words out loud? Say them to me? "I teach, but I'm no teacher." Those six words. The distinction he made. Those words have haunted me these last few weeks, and I anticipate that they will continue to do so as I read, work, and write through this study. I wonder if David feels haunted by them as well?

"I can't accept this position, Laura." Hearing my name pulls me back to the present.

"But I also can't turn it down. I need a job; grad school is expensive. I get that, but why does it have to be this one? They're expecting a teacher, but I'm not one. What do I do, Laura?"

"What do you want to do, David?"

Silence. I can feel the silence spread itself between us. I'm about to say something, to check that he is still on the other end of the line. And then he speaks. Just four words. Quiet. Resigned.

"I guess I'll teach."

ARTICLE 2

Here Ghost Nothing: A Novice EFL Teacher's Letter to the Ghosts that Haunt Them

"In one aspect, yes, I believe in ghosts, but we create them. We haunt ourselves."

— Laurie Halse Anderson, *Wintergirls*

Take a moment. Think back to your first year or two of teaching. Remember the emotions you experienced: the excitement, worry, desire, and maybe even regret. A novice teacher's first few years in the classroom are a rollercoaster of emotions as they work to define (and refine) the art of teaching and learning. Through this article, I invite you to sit alongside Lesley (pseudonym)—a sojourning American and novice English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher in South Korea—on this rollercoaster; feel their hopes and frustrations; trace their expectations and resolutions across their first two years of teaching in an EFL classroom. The ride begins with Lesley's own account of their experiences, penned as a letter written midway through their second year of teaching and addressed to a perceived presence in their EFL classroom.

Reading Lesley's Letter⁸

To that space

between me and my students,

It's funny, trying to write to you im not even sure i can call you by name (i realized i;m not even sure you have a name). Because quite honestly for the longest time i wasnt even sure exactly what you were or from where you came. Through my time here you've worn so many different faces and ive gotten glimpses of you in so many different ways.

~~*the awkward moments of mistranslations*~~
the frustrations of misunderstanding.
the silence of blank stares.

⁸ The letter has been presented in its original form in order to respect Lesley's creative license.

The unspoken assumption that the 원어민⁹ never stays.

Each time i wasn't exactly sure it was you, but the icy feeling you bring is always the same. It can leave me frozen on even my most confident days. And the shadow you cast is far-reaching. It blankets every part of me it touches in shame.

I'd squint, rub my eyes, and shake it off as if you were merely an apparition.

I know ~~my~~ our students" i'd tell myself.

We're close

My presence here matters

This is an important position

But then you'd be there - i'd catch a glimpse of you for just a second out of the corner of my eye and i'd spend the rest of the day seeing nothing but traces of you. Trying to analyze all of my actions. Futilely attempting to understand what the fuck I'm even doing and more importantly why.

Your presence leaves me feeling followed and like quicksand you drag me down.

"Fight" i tell myself

Learn their names

Show your support

Give them love

Make them see

But with each reappearance i sink deeper down until I'm swallowed. All alone. Its just me.

You trap me in a place of watching.

I watch

Their real lives

With their real teachers

And you remind me that its something I can only ever view. Because at the end of the day, and perhaps rightly so.

Just be their native teacher is what im supposed to/all i can do

So i guess what i'm really writing, is a thank you.

For forcing me to know my place, be humble, and never expect more than what I've earned or deserve.

⁹ 원어민 [foreign teacher; pronounced wah-nah-mean]

*After all, I don't speak their native language,
I'm not Korean,
hell im not even a certified teacher.
So to expect our relationship to fit this selfish little fantasy takes a lot of nerve.*

For reminding me that my job here is one that is complicit in a lot of stuff that's a really complicated fucked up mess.

*Somewhat imperialistic.
Anachronistic.
And in many cases my demands only adding to our students' level of stress.*

And for most importantly teaching me to remember to move my ego to the back, and my students to the front.

*Trust is a gift not given to everyone.
Not all doors should be opened.
Play the role they need, not the one i want.*

At first your presence drove me crazy, and i'll admit it still fucking does. But i've also learned to appreciate the value and lesson it brings and the power it has to make me better than who i was. Plus all the ways it's forced me to stay driven.

*Stay driven.
be respectful, listen and learn, take it all in,
Try my best, be present, be passionate, be consistent.
And above all else, be endlessly grateful for and appreciate
This insane honor I've been given.*

So the next time i see you i'll probably still roll my eyes and think to myself "damn is this really some shit that i cannot get rid of?" but know, I don't really mean it. You're welcome here. So see you soon.

- from [Lesley] Teacher, With love.

Meeting Lesley Teacher

Lesley, whose preferred pronouns are *they*, *them*, and *their*, holds a master's degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) as well as bachelor's degrees in Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies and Media Studies. As a former coach for high school and university softball teams, they are accustomed to mentoring and encouraging youth. After graduate school, Lesley decided to teach English in South Korea for one or two years, noting that

the experience of being immersed in an unfamiliar cultural and language would help them better relate to their students when Lesley returned to the U.S. to teach English as a second language. Lesley came to South Korea in the summer of 2017 as part of a nearly 70-person cohort of first-time EFL teachers sponsored by a South Korean and U.S. binational commission, which placed Lesley at a rural boarding school for high school students.

This paper is borne out of a larger project into novice EFL teachers' identity negotiations in South Korea. Lesley was one of ten first-time EFL teachers participating in the study. Throughout a six-week intensive orientation program hosted by the binational commission in the summer of 2017 and Lesley's subsequent first two years of teaching, we—Lesley and I—met frequently in person and online to talk about their experiences, successes, and struggles.

I chose to take a longitudinal and ethnographic case study approach to the study knowing that research has shown language teachers' identities undergo constant (re)negotiation during the first few years (e.g., Liu & Xu, 2011; Sutherland, Howard, & Markauskaite, 2010; Xu, 2012). Describing teacher identity as malleable, Li (2016) argued that the shaping and reshaping of teacher identity is affected by both contextual (e.g., school environment) and intellectual (e.g., teaching philosophy) factors. And while it is not uncommon for teachers to adopt initial teacher identities based, at least partially, on the ways in which they were taught (Lortie, 1975; Tsui, 2007), Xu (2012) noted considerable differences in novice teachers' imagined identities at the beginning of their teaching careers as compared to their practiced identities three years later.

By the second year of the study, Lesley and the other participating teachers had formed a community of practice (Kennedy, *in press, b*; Wenger, 1998) and were supporting one another in their ongoing teacher identity negotiations, an opportunity that proved to be an invaluable one for Lesley. As they explained, "being forced to be introspective on [their] experiences" had been,

for them, one of the most helpful aspects of the project. Lesley stated, “Personally, for me, values can be so abstracted, right? And so it's really cool to have people say ‘this is what they are’ and very intentionally [...] ‘this is how I'm going to build them in my classroom” (August 2017). One way the teachers worked to articulate their emerging teacher identities was by generating creative writing pieces (e.g., found poems, short stories) in addition to the blog posts.

In January of 2019, the creative writing task was to write a letter. Everyone was invited to choose an audience and a focus that made sense for them. Some wrote to their students; others wrote to their past or future selves. But not Lesley, who instead wrote a letter addressed to the space they felt between themselves and their students, a space with no name but many faces. One that cast shadows of doubt and sent icy chills down Lesley’s spine. Drawing on Derrida’s (1994; 2002) theories of hauntology and hospitality suggests a way of understanding this space and its power over Lesley in their negotiation of a teacher identity.

Setting the Stage

Hauntology

By centering this space between who you perceive yourself to be and who you feel you need to become as a novice teacher, a void is present (Barkhuizen, 2016; Said, 2014; Xu, 2012); but, as Appelbaum (2009) noted, the void is a presence as “presence [becomes] a matter of identity” (as cited in Hodkinson, 2019, p. 2). Acknowledging this space as a presence in the lives of novice teachers begs the question how does one navigate the space and communicate with the presence?

Hauntology—a pun on ‘ontology’ and ‘haunting’—is a critical, imaginative, and playful place to begin thinking differently about the ethical and relational work of finding oneself (Davis, 2005; Fitzpatrick, 2016; Ruitenberg, 2009). Hauntology offers an ethics based on

responsibility towards that which cannot be said to fully exist yet influences our everyday lives nonetheless (Henriksen, 2016). Like a ghost, such a presence is neither here nor gone, of the past nor the future. In other words, they haunt. Ghosts are unsettling; they conjure feelings of discomfort and wariness. And yet, according to Derrida (1994), the ghost is a figure of ambiguity, difference, undecidability and multiplicity; it is not to be made away with but welcomed, if for no other reason, to understand its presence.

Hauntology, with its central concepts of hospitality, justice, and responsibility, revolves around an openness towards the ghosts (Applebaum, 2009; Derrida, 1994; Henriksen, 2016). They reside “in our dreams, our language, our ideas, our habits, and rituals, our books and paintings. The [...] ghosts will not settle down until we receive them” (Ruitenberg, 2009, p. 297). The question, of course, then is: *How does one come to terms with these ghosts?* This question poses a problem for educators, who, according to Derrida (1994), “as theoreticians or witnesses, spectators, observers, and intellectuals, scholars believe that *looking* is sufficient” (p. 11, emphasis added). Identifying one’s ghosts is not enough; one must speak to the specters.

G/hosti/pitality

This need to speak with, to engage, the ghosts that haunt us lays the foundation for Derrida’s theory of hospitality, which Ruitenberg (2009) described as “the ability to receive the stranger who comes knocking at one’s door when one least expects it, when one is not prepared, and when one knows the hospitality one can extend will not be enough” (p. 302). Derrida (2002) writes of this stranger as the absolute unknown other and notes that giving to them involves a risk, for one does not know whether and how one’s home might be changed by the guest’s presence. This is precisely the ethical demand of hospitality, a demand that far exceeds the social niceties of everyday hospitality and calls into question the positional difference between host and

guest. Derrida (1999) wrote, “It is thus necessary, beyond all perception, to receive the other while running the risk, a risk that is always troubling” (p. 111). Ruitenberg (2009) refers to this practice of extending hospitality to ghostly guests as g/hosts-pitality.

According to Ruitenberg, “the ghost/guest must be addressed somehow, invited in and engaged by the host, even though the ghost’s name may be unknown, and the effects of inviting it in unforeseeable” (p. 303), writing:

In the duty to extend hospitality to others from the past, to welcome the ghosts, I may be confronted with feelings of inadequacy and frustration. [...] When have I given the ghosts their due? The answer, predictably, is “never,” but I have to act nevertheless. The feeling of inadequacy and uncertainty, of an indebtedness that can never be fully settled, is the best antidote to the hubris of those who believe that the present owes mothering, and that stones and vaults can keep ghosts at bay. (p 306)

Showing hospitality to one’s ghosts and grappling with feelings of inadequacy and uncertainty are ongoing because hauntings are not merely repetitive. Encounters are contingent on the context of the summoning and the history of the particular ghost; these encounters have a spiral effect, each time offering something new (Holloway & Kneale, 2008).

The purpose of this article is to (1) call attention to the ways in which novice teachers are haunted by feelings of inadequacy and uncertainty and (2) frame the identity work of negotiating an enacted teacher identity as—at least in part—a practice of offering hospitality to one’s ghosts. Lesley’s letter to the presence perceived in their EFL classroom inspired this piece. For this reason, I have chosen to open each section that follows with excerpts from Lesley’s letter.

Naming Lesley’s Ghosts

It’s funny, trying to write to you im not even sure i can call you by name (i realized i;m not even sure you have a name). Because quite honestly for the longest time i wasnt even sure exactly what you were or from where you came. Through my time here you’ve worn so many different faces and ive gotten glimpses of you in so many different ways.

Ethnographic case study—an approach that recognizes the messy complexity of human experience (Erickson, 1986)—allows the researcher to construct cases to story the lived experiences of everyday life (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). In this study, it is Lesley’s ongoing negotiations of a teacher identity throughout their first two years of teaching that I have sought to understand. During our two years working together in the larger research study, Lesley and I generated a series of semi-structured interviews, small-group discussions with the other novice EFL teachers, monthly written reflections, classroom observations, and other artifacts, including creative pieces such as the letter shared at the opening of this article (see Figure 3).

Figure 3.

Overview of Data Generation with Lesley

Summer 2017	Year 1 of Teaching (2017-2018)	Year 2 of Teaching (2018-2019)
Focus: Imagined Teacher Identity Data Sources: 2 Interviews 5 Small group meetings 1 Classroom observation	Focus: Enacted Teacher Identity Data Sources: 2 Interviews 2 Small group meetings 2 Classroom observations 10 Blog entries	Focus: Socially Negotiated Teacher Identity Data Sources: 2 Interviews 6 Small group meetings 2 Classroom observations 6 Creative writing pieces

Given the longitudinal design of the larger project, the first interviews and reflections were already two-years old when I began writing about Lesley’s experiences. For that reason, before diving into data analysis, I sat with and within Lesley’s words—both spoken and written—for months. I read and listened to Lesley’s words, reflected on and wrote memos about

Lesley's stories of success, hesitation, and self-doubt. Reading chronologically across the data, I noticed Lesley returning time and again to one essential question: *What am I doing here?* It is this question that Lesley and their colleagues participating in the larger study decided to speak to in their letters in January 2019. While some teachers wrote to describe their teaching responsibilities to family and friends in the U.S. or to encourage and support the students in their EFL classrooms, Lesley wrote, at least in the beginning, to vent their frustration. Lesley spoke to the presence in the classroom, the space that kept Lesley apart from their students.

Data analysis began with this letter. After weeks of reading and memo-writing, I sat—with pens and post-it notes in hand—with Lesley's letter. Following a close reading approach, an analytic practice that investigates a short piece of text and seeks to appreciate various aspects of the text, such as the author's choice of word, form, tone, and imagery (Brummett, 2018; Kelly, 2013), and guided by Derrida's theory of hauntology, it became clear that Lesley was naming four specters, each challenging Lesley's teacher identity in their own unique way: (1) You, Lesley, are an unnecessary distraction, not an asset, (2) You are complicit in imperialistic, colonizing acts, (3) You are unqualified, uncertified, and (4) You are temporary, uninvested.

Framing each ghost as a theme, I then returned to the one-on-one interviews and small group meetings that were generated across the first two years of Lesley's teaching career to engage in deductive, thematic, and, whenever possible, *in vivo* coding (Bazeley, 2013; Saldaña, 2016), which generated 32 codes across the four themes, including, for example, *survival*, *advocacy*, *collective endeavor*, *giving a shit*, *here for 'funsies'*, and *paralysis by analysis*. The codebook is provided in Table 5 (see Appendix E).

While coding the interview data, I noticed multiple instances where Lesley was not only naming their ghosts; they were also pushing back against the accusations and giving themselves

grace. Coupled with Lesley's framing of the letter as a thank you note, I realized that a fifth theme was needed: Hospitality. Once I completed thematic coding of each ghost, I then recoded the letter and interviews for this additional theme. Hospitality, as a theme, generated an additional three codes: *grace*, *fitting in*, and *validation*.

The findings that follow are presented in two separate but related sections. First, I introduce each ghost using excerpts from Lesley's letter as well as quotes and vignettes Lesley shared during interviews and small group conversations. Then the focus turns to hospitality and the ways in which Lesley joined in conversation with and learned to embrace their ghosts.

Meeting Lesley's Ghosts

Ghost: You are an unnecessary distraction, not an asset.

*I know ~~my~~ our students" i'd tell myself.
We're close
My presence here matters
This is an important position*

But then you'd be there - i'd catch a glimpse of you for just a second out of the corner of my eye and i'd spend the rest of the day seeing nothing but traces of you. Trying to analyze all of my actions. Futilely attempting to understand what the fuck I'm even doing and more importantly why.

Before Lesley began teaching at the co-ed boarding school, they imagined their position in the school in a supplemental, supporting way. Lesley explained it by saying:

My job is to [...] supplement the learning that [the students are] doing with their Korean English teachers.¹⁰ We're very much a supplement to that, which is a blessing, I think, because they will be doing heavy brain work other places, and I can just kind of help them activate that (August 2017).

¹⁰ In most South Korean K-12 schools, students have English classes between three and four times per week; however, sojourning teachers, like Lesley, teach just one of these sessions. Students' remaining English classes are taught by Korean English teachers.

Lesley walked into the school—one of the best in the country—on Day 1 excited to help students, to use Lesley’s word, “activate” the English vocabulary and grammar they were learning. However, when I sat down with Lesley just four months later, Lesley shared feeling as though they had “no idea what [they’re; Lesley is] doing. And [they’re] wasting everyone’s time.” Recognizing that their students were just a year or two away from taking the university entrance exam,¹¹ Lesley worried that conversational English—a subject not assessed on the exam—was not, and even should not, be a priority for their students, saying “I don’t want to feel like I’m taking away from that. I don’t think I have the right.” During an interview in Lesley’s second year of teaching, Lesley recounted the following exchange with one of their more withdrawn students:

One time he turned in one of his papers, and he didn’t even answer the question. He just said, “I feel sorry for my English teacher because I am always studying, and I never listen. But I’m focusing on the [university entrance exam]. Sorry teacher.” I was like “Oh my god!” (November 2018)

When I asked Lesley how they responded, Lesley explained that they wrote him back, acknowledging how hard the student was working and wishing him luck on the test.

Knowing that, in the eyes of some students, Lesley’s class did not serve a purpose—at least not when it came to the university entrance exam—Lesley wondered if they had anything of value to offer their students. In December 2017—near the end of Lesley’s first semester of teaching—I observed a series of back-to-back classes where students were given time to prepare for their upcoming speaking tests. After noticing a handful of students in each class appear instead to be reviewing notes for a science class, I asked Lesley, as part of an interview later that

¹¹ In South Korea, the 수능 [Suneung] is the annual university entrance exam in South Korea. It functions as a national graduation test addressing content from a range of subject areas. A student’s score on the test determines, not only the universities to which they are eligible to apply, but also the areas of study they are able to pursue. Notably, while English listening and reading are on the test, conversational English—the class Lesley is asked to teach—is not.

day, about students who chose to disengage during class in order to work on other subjects.

Lesley explained:

If I've said we're gonna work on this now, and I walk over to a table and someone is working on math or chemistry instead, I ask them, like, "Oh, what are you doing?" Like, "Explain to me what you're working on." or "Why are you working on this? Do you have a test coming up?" because then at least they're speaking English. (December 2017)

Lesley's approach was one of compromise; their students needed to prepare for the university entrance exam. Lesley knew that this was their students' reality. Ultimately, though, Lesley wanted to add value to students' lives, and "because [Lesley] didn't think [they were] doing it through students' language acquisition or anything to help with their school record," Lesley decided to focus on supporting students in other ways, specifically in ways defined by students' own learning goals.

Ghost: You are complicit in imperialistic, colonizing acts.

For reminding me that my job here is one that is complicit in a lot of stuff that's a really complicated fucked up mess.

*Somewhat imperialistic.
Anachronistic.*

As Lesley explained during an interview in August 2017, Lesley chose to foreground students' motivations for learning English and teach the language in a way that felt important for their students because the alternative—teaching English simply because of "how closely it's tied to [their] students' future success"—felt "very imperialistic in many ways." Lesley explained their approach this way:

If this [university entrance exam] is important to you, and you know that you need it to have a good job, then let me prepare you for that. [...] I can't sit here and tell you that you shouldn't be concerned about that because that's very much your reality. So if your choice is 'I want to focus on English to prepare for this test and to get a job and go to a great school', then you're right. (August 2017)

But for students who were motivated to learn English for reasons other than its tie to students' future academic and career success, which Lesley described as the "toxic part of language colonialism," Lesley shared, "I'm all about that. If you realize that and you're pissed off at that, and you want to be able to use English for something else, then I'm about that too" (August 2017).

Language learning, Lesley believed, should be an act of self-advocacy rather than imperialism, stating, "I'm really big on like agency and self-advocacy and things like that. I saw in a very cool way that language can be used for that kind of thing" (June 2017), and so Lesley sought to empower students and teach in a way that aligned with students' goals and motivations. This desire to empower students to be advocates and agents of their own learning was a key piece of Lesley's imagined identity (Xu, 2012) as an EFL teacher; it was also a piece of herself that wrestled with another ghost, a specter that told Lesley they were not (good) enough.

Ghost: You are unqualified, uncertified. You are not (good) enough.

*After all, I don't speak their native language,
I'm not Korean,
hell im not even a certified teacher.*

Beyond the ghosts of distraction and complicity comes a third ghost, a ghost of qualification. Lesley wanted more than anything to be understood as someone who cared deeply about their work and their students. When asked in the initial interview what their greatest fear was about the year ahead, Lesley shared that "I want to contribute, and I don't just want to kind of be someone that they [the other teachers] feel like they have to babysit or like worry about" (June 2017). Lesley continued, saying:

I'm worried that I'm not going to be able to keep [...] myself afloat. Like I don't mind doggie paddle. I don't mind treading water and trying to get by, but it's always that fear

that like your legs are going to give out and you're going to sink, right? You're just gonna start drowning and so...being able to kind of like calm that voice and not listen to that voice in the back of my head. That's one of my worries.

Lesley's fear of needing their hand held or to be rescued stemmed from their perceived lack of preparation as an EFL teacher. At the end of their first year of teaching, we revisited this conversation of fear and Lesley's concern over having to be babysat in the classroom. They responded "I need more training. I need more training. I need more training." (June 2018). In another interview, Lesley explained it to me this way:

At the end of the day, I'm not qualified to teach here. I'm like...you know...on paper, objectively, none of us, regardless of if you have a teaching degree in the U.S. or not, none of us are qualified to teach here. None of us are certified Korean teachers...like by Korean teaching standards, none of us are teachers. (December 2017)

Lesley held a master's degree in TESOL, and yet did not think of themselves as qualified to teach because they had not been trained within the South Korean education system; this feeling of inadequacy is in keeping with other EFL teachers, even some participating in the same binational program as Lesley, and their hesitations to identify as teachers (Carmel & Badash, 2018; Howard, 2019; Kennedy, Article 1).

Although Lesley did not position themselves as qualified to be working as an EFL teacher, Lesley often, during interviews or small group gatherings, recounted moments when their students positioned them as the expert and the uncomfortable situations this ascribed identity as expert caused for both Lesley and their Korean colleagues. In one instance, Lesley shared:

It's this weird dynamic where they [students] feel that in given situations I have the power to trump them [Korean English teachers], simply because I am the native speaker, even though I have way less teaching experience. (June 2018)

When asked for an example, Lesley offered a recent encounter between themselves and two students who came to Lesley asking for help with a multiple-choice question regarding English grammar. After Lesley helped students determine which of the five options was the most

grammatically correct response to the question, one student's response was essentially "I knew it wasn't the other one; Teacher [name] was wrong." It was then that Lesley realized the origin of the question. Their Korean colleague had given a grammar quiz the day before, and Lesley's students were challenging their grades by asking Lesley—the English-speaking expert in the students' eyes—to prove them right. Lesley explained the impacts of moments like this on their colleagues, saying:

Even though I am not a credentialed teacher in this country, because of the fact that I am a native speaker, in some situations, they [Korean colleagues] recognize that, to the students, it might seem like I have more know-how, more seniority, more whatever because I am simply a native English speaker. And I think that complicates things. (June 2018)

The complications Lesley was referring to revolved around issues of experience. At the time of this interview, Lesley was finishing their first year of teaching. They were still wrestling with feelings of inadequacy and inexperience. Having students position Lesley as more qualified than their colleagues who had been formally trained and certified as English teachers and who had been teaching for three, four, even as many as eleven years, made Lesley uncomfortable. Like other sojourning EFL teachers (Kennedy, Article 1), Lesley did not see their identity as a native English speaker as enough, especially given that their fourth ghost challenged Lesley's permanency and investment in teaching.

Ghost: You are temporary, uninvested.

The unspoken assumption that the 원어민¹² never stays.

Sojourning EFL teachers, such as Lesley, are often assumed—by staff and students—to be temporary because of English language teaching (ELT) program policies. The South Korean

¹² 원어민 [foreign teacher; pronounced *wah-na-mean*]

and U.S. binational commission—the ELT program that brought Lesley to teach in South Korea—limits the number of years a sojourning EFL teacher is allowed to stay to just three years. When the third year is up, if a teacher wishes to remain in the country and continue teaching, they must do so through another program or negotiate a private contract with their school directly. For a teacher wishing to remain at their school, neither of these options is promising. The first route, applying to a different ELT program, is not an option because K-12 schools are not allowed to double-dip, receiving an EFL teacher through more than one program at a time. The second route, although possible, is also unlikely because to hire an EFL teacher on a private contract is to sever ties, albeit temporarily, with the commission. When the EFL teacher leaves the school in years to come, it is harder to rebuild the relationship the school once shared with the commission.

At the end of August 2017, Lesley and I sat down for an interview. In one week’s time, they would be teaching in their schools. I asked Lesley what it would take to feel successful in their first month of teaching. Lesley responded:

My first month is not a success if I feel still very much of this stranger in the space. [...] I don't want them to not miss the former teacher, but I want them to feel like I'm someone that's excited about joining their community.

Lesley wanted to be a part of the school’s community; they wanted to build relationships with the students and staff. And in a conversation at the end of their first semester, Lesley shared that they had been working hard to prove their commitment. Speaking about their relationship with one Korean colleague in particular, Lesley stated, “I think he knows that I want to teach. I think more or less he sees me like that now” (December 2017).

Throughout the two years that I followed Lesley’s negotiations of a teacher identity, our conversations frequently cycled back to a question of Lesley’s investment in their students’ well-

being as “opposed to just this random short-term foreigner that’s here for funsies” (December 2017). And when asked what message Lesley would want to communicate to prospective sojourning EFL teachers, Lesley shared, “The key here is just you have to give a shit. You can’t teach here if you don’t” (May 2019). Then, recognizing that, while Lesley wanted to make a career of teaching EFL, many of their sojourning colleagues did not, Lesley continued:

Like, this might be a gap year for you, this might be an opportunity to learn Korean and go to K-pop concerts and all that, that is fine. But when you are in that classroom, you better look like the only thing you care about is teaching.

Lesley knew coming into the boarding school in August 2017 that the position would be temporary, but that did not mean Lesley could not and would not be invested in their students’ education. It was a challenge they had to contend with every day; as Lesley wrote in their letter:

*Stay driven.
be respectful, listen and learn, take it all in,
Try my best, be present, be passionate, be consistent.
And above all else, be endlessly grateful for and appreciate
This insane honor I’ve been given.*

Lesley learned these lessons of respect, passion, consistency, and others by speaking to their ghosts, an act of g/hosti/pitality (Ruitenberg, 2009).

Practicing Hospitality

At first your presence drove me crazy, and i’ll admit it still fucking does. But i’ve also learned to appreciate the value and lesson it brings and the power it has to make me better than who i was.

Lesley encountered their ghosts of distraction, imperialism, (in)capability, and (non)permanence time and again, with evidence of one or more of these specters in each interview, small group discussion, and written reflection generated across the two-year study. Lesley practiced hospitality during these encounters in three ways: by surrounding themselves with a community of support, by engaging in reflective and creative writing, and by giving themselves

the grace to be imperfect. Their participation in the larger research project was their first attempt at hospitality. When asked in our final interview why Lesley had decided to participate in the study, they shared:

I think there's so many things I wouldn't have unpacked, so many things I wouldn't have worked through. I think there's so many revelations that I had in our conversations. And listening to other people talk about it [teaching], like wow, this is helping. This is making me a better teacher. [...] Even when I wasn't able to write the blogs, talking about it was so helpful. I think just seeing how it [the small group conversations] was having a positive effect is what kept me in it. (May 2019)

Lesley knew teaching would challenge them, and they chose to surround themselves with a supportive, thoughtful community of novice teachers who were experiencing similar challenges. This community functioned as a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) and provided Lesley and the other participating teachers with material, relational, and ideational resources to support their ongoing identity negotiations (Kennedy, in press, b). Their community, like others that have been described in the literature (e.g., Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Barkhuizen, 2016; Sarasa & Porta, 2018), allowed for reflective dialogue about their expectations and experiences in the EFL classroom as a way of grappling with their emerging teacher identities.

Second, Lesley leaned into conversations with their ghosts through reflective and creative writing. In the first year of the study, Lesley asked not to write monthly reflections because they worried that they would be too hard on themselves and focus only on their struggles. They were not ready to converse with their insecurities alone. However, by the second year, Lesley was ready. They had a year of teaching under their belt; they had been *talking about* their ghosts with the other teachers participating in the study. Now it was time for Lesley to *talk to* their ghosts through creative and reflective writing. The letter that opened this article was just one example of the pieces Lesley produced that year.

The third way Lesley was able to practice hospitality with their ghosts was through the giving of themselves grace. Just as the letter opened with bouts of frustration and slowly evolved into the realization that Lesley was, in fact, writing a thank you note, the ways in which Lesley spoke of these ghosts in our conversations changed as well. In our final interview, I asked Lesley if they had been doing anything differently in the Spring 2019 semester. Lesley shared that the biggest change was in their mindset, explaining that they were working on “Giving [themselves] some grace, being nicer to [themselves], like knowing that this isn't going to go perfect but it's getting better” (May 2019).

Lesley went on to share that they still wondered if they were capable, qualified, invested, and/or committed enough, but that in this fourth semester, they had begun to find their place in the school, stating, “It’s a nice feeling. I don't have that worry, at least not as often anymore, about what the hell am I doing here. It’s nice to feel like I actually have a place within the school.” Feeling more confident in themselves as a teacher, Lesley even elicited student feedback at the end of Fall 2018 semester about their teaching, something Lesley had purposefully not done during their first year of teaching out of fear of what students might say. Lesley shared that students wrote about how Lesley was “giving them energy in a space where a lot of them don’t have any energy. So that was very...very validating” (November 2018). In fact, by the time we spoke in November 2018, Lesley was already planning to remain at the school for a third year.

Learning from Lesley and their Ghosts

So the next time i see you i'll probably still roll my eyes and think to myself “damn is this really some shit that i cannot get rid of?” but know, I don't really mean it. You're welcome here.

Ghosts Within

Lesley's letter to the presence they felt in their EFL classroom calls attention to the ways in which novice teachers, like Lesley, are often haunted by feelings of inadequacy and uncertainty (Howard, 2019; Trent, 2017). Lesley's ghosts made them question their capability to listen to, learn from, and impact the lives of students. Lesley worried they were complicit in an imperialistic act by teaching EFL in South Korea; Lesley questioned if students' time was well spent in their EFL classroom when the system told students to focus on the university entrance exam instead; Lesley struggled to prove their investment in the lives of their students when everyone—students, staff, and parents—knew they would not be a permanent presence in the school. Returning to the quote that opened this article, in her novel *Wintergirls*, Anderson (2009) wrote, "In one aspect, yes, I believe in ghosts, but we create them. We haunt ourselves." The presence in Lesley's classroom—the shadow they saw out the corner of their eye, the icy feeling down their back—these ghosts came from within: insecurities personified as specters lurking in the shadows of Lesley's mind.

Given their critical and playful approach, Derrida's theories of hauntology (1994, 1999) and hospitality (2002) pair well with Lesley's creative writing piece; together they tell the story of Lesley's ethical and relational work of finding themselves and (re)defining an enacted teacher identity (Li, 2016) within the South Korean education system. In his writing of the risks of hospitality, Derrida spoke of the specter, the stranger welcomed within, as an unknown force with the ability to affect change on its host (Ruitenberg, 2009). Hauntology offers a theoretical lens for personifying the space Lesley felt between themselves and their students as ghosts; those of distraction, imperialism, (in)capability, and (non)permanence, but it is hospitality that points to the specters' influence on Lesley's enacted identity. The presence in Lesley's classroom—the

space they address in their letter—was the dissonance Lesley perceived between their imagined identity and the realities of the South Korean education system, the tension, for example, between investment and (non)permanence.

Lesley did not choose to ignore their ghosts, to shake their feelings of insecurity and self-doubt. Rather, Lesley worked to engage with the ghosts' accusations, asking: *What do you have to teach me?* It wasn't easy. In fact, Lesley described their efforts to articulate their role in the school this way:

The position itself is too...ambiguous...transient...nebulous...in flux... like whatever weird theory-ish word you want to use. I don't know. It's just a lot. And the more you try to strangle it down, it just keeps morphing under your hand. It is like punching a balloon...like a water balloon. (June 2018)

By engaging in conversation with their ghosts and wrestling with their feelings of inadequacy and insecurity, Lesley found resolution. In the letter, Lesley explained that they had learned to "Play the role they [students] need, not the one i want". This is how Lesley made peace with their second ghost, the ghost of complicity, for example. Lesley initially worried that they were contributing to a colonizing, imperialistic act by teaching English overseas, but, over time, Lesley decided that while they may not have been able to be the teacher that they imagined themselves to be, they didn't have to be the teacher the system wanted either. Instead Lesley chose to be the teacher their students wanted; if they wanted to learn English to do well on their university entrance exam, then so be it. But if they wanted to learn English for reasons other than the test, then Lesley would support them in this goal too. By defining their teacher identity through a student-oriented lens, Lesley found their place in the school and came to appreciate the ghosts' presence in their classroom, their push to (re)negotiate what it meant for Lesley to be a teacher in their particular context (Li, 2016). The dialogue between Lesley and their ghosts is one from which we, as teachers and teacher educators, can learn.

Speaking to Ghosts

The hospitality Lesley showed their specters can serve as a model for other first-time teachers and their mentors. Research has demonstrated that negotiating an enacted teacher identity can be challenging for novice teachers because they must reconcile their imagined selves with the realities of the new classroom, school system, and perhaps even education culture (Li, 2016; Liu & Xu, 2011; Sutherland et al., 2010). First-time teachers are wrestling with who they're expected to be and who they choose to be (Howard, 2019; Trent, 2017). For Lesley, this was a choice of whether or not to buy into an image of the EFL teacher in South Korea as an unqualified, "here-for-funsies", colonizing distraction.

Everyone—parents, students, colleagues, administrators, even the media—has opinions about what it means to be a teacher, and rarely does everyone agree. For a first-time teacher, this din can be deafening. However, Lesley's case suggests that one cannot simply drown out the noise; one must lean into it. Engage with it. As Lesley and I drew our final interview to a close that day in May 2019, I asked Lesley if they identified as a teacher—a question that I had never thought to ask until another participating teacher explained in a similar interview that while he taught, he did not identify as a teacher (Kennedy, Article 1). Lesley responded, "I think, had you asked me that my first year, I probably wouldn't have said yes. But I think I've grown into seeing how I can make an impact, seeing where I fit in, seeing the relationships grow."

Lesley may still share their classroom with the ghosts of doubt and insecurity, but Lesley has also learned from listening to these specters. They have learned to lean into the struggle, the discomfort and self-doubt. They have learned that they didn't have to be perfect, for as Lesley explained, "that wasn't the point." Lesley's letter personifies their struggles in enacting a teacher identity that felt authentic to who they are and what they value as a teacher while also aligning

with the realities of the South Korean education system as a presence in their classroom. This struggle is one that many, if not all, first-time teachers can relate to. It is part of the rollercoaster that all novice teachers experience as they work to find themselves as teachers. This article asks what if the field of teacher education were to frame teacher identity negotiation as an invitation to converse with one's ghosts, and so I ask my reader: *What haunts you, and what do your ghosts have to teach you?*

ARTICLE 3

Collaborative Negotiations of Teacher Identity: A Study of Self in Six Voices¹³

Prologue

“I think my teacher persona will be authentically encouraging and attentive. I like giving high fives; I like telling people ‘Good job!’,” Taylor, one of six pre-service EFL teachers seated around the table, shares as the waitress delivers the first bowls of 죽 [juk; rice porridge].

“That’s how I was as a coach. It was a small way of showing my players—and soon my students—that I care about them. I try to see each and every one of them.”

Isabel, nodding along as Taylor spoke, asks for the audio recorder—a talking stick of sorts for our weekly dinner discussion group. Nathan, who is sitting next to Taylor, takes the recorder. “Careful; don’t drop it in the 죽 [juk],” he calls out as he playfully tosses it to Isabel, who is sitting across the table and two seats to his left.

“Taylor,” Isabel replies after expertly catching the recorder with a single hand—a move that is met with a round of applause—“I really think that that’s your personality in everyday life. I mean, it’s who you are not just as a coach, but as a person. We’ve only known you for however many weeks.” Pausing briefly, she asks the group, “How long have we been here now?”

“You landed in South Korea three weeks ago yesterday,” Laura replies.

“For three weeks that’s the Taylor that I’ve seen day in and day out. You see us, and you care about building relationships with us. It’s who you are,” Isabel offers.

A smile spreads across Taylor’s face. “Thank you! I appreciate that.”

¹³ Clarque Brown, Janet Hernandez, Isabel Moua, Nathan Stables, and Taylor M. Williams co-authored Article 3.

Introduction

This vignette—a single moment borrowed from our more than twenty-five hours of recorded small-group conversations generated over a two-year period—represents our [the research team]¹⁴ on-going commitment to supporting one another both personally and professionally as we—Clarque, Janet, Isabel, Nathan, and Taylor—adapted to living in South Korea and teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) for the first time. We came to South Korea in the summer of 2017 as part of a 70-person cohort of EFL teachers from the U.S.; each of us self-identified as first-time teachers back then. After a six-week, intensive teacher orientation program that first summer, we began a two-year teaching placement in K-16 South Korean classrooms. The summer program was designed to support our cohort in three ways: adjusting to South Korean culture, learning the Korean language, and becoming comfortable and confident in our roles as EFL teachers. It was at this summer program that we first met Laura. As a former EFL teacher in South Korea, Laura was back; this time she came as an emerging researcher in teacher education. Asking us to share our teaching experiences and expectations through interviews and small group conversations, Laura invited us to, as Motha (2009) noted, “take [ourselves] through a reflective process and make deliberate choices” (p. 108) about how to represent ourselves and our emerging teacher identities. Together, we spent the next two years critically reflecting on our teacher identities through a collaborative research process.

Social Negotiation of Teacher Identity

Teacher education researchers have noted that novice EFL teachers often experience identity-disrupting moments when their *imagined identities* (Xu, 2012) formed as pre-service

¹⁴ The use of *we*, *us*, or *our* refers to just the authors who identified as first-time teachers (Clarque, Janet, Isabel, Nathan, and Taylor) unless it is followed by the qualifying note [the research team], in which case the *we*, *us*, or *our* also includes Laura.

teachers do not align with the lived realities of their classrooms (Said, 2014). In his theorization of Communities of Practice, Wenger (1998) argued that identities are negotiated at the intersection of the individual and the social world (Nasir & Cooks, 2009); this intersection for teachers is often characterized by the dissonance teachers feel between who they perceive themselves to be and who they think they need to become to be a teacher.

In an effort to support novice teachers during this period of transition from pre-service to classroom teacher, Akkerman and Meijer (2011) advocate for allowing teachers space to engage in reflective dialogue about their expectations and experiences as a way of grappling with their emerging teacher identities. These reflective dialogues could take the form of guided reflections (Hamiloglu, 2014), reflexive personal commentaries (Barkhuizen, 2016), or the narrative story-ing of experiences (Said, 2014; Sarasa & Porta, 2018). Collaborative autoethnography (Chang, 2013; Chang, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez, 2013) and collective self-studies (Barak, 2015; Samaras, 2010) are other approaches used to better understand the complex social negotiations of identity taking place tacitly as teachers engage in everyday conversations about their teaching and learning. In collaborative autoethnography—or what Coia and Taylor (2009) call “co/autoethnography”—dialogue and conversation are recognized as vital to understanding oneself and one’s practice.

Sojourners are individuals 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). In this study, I [Laura]—a former EFL teacher in South Korea and current doctoral candidate in teacher education—partnered with Clarque, Janet, Isabel, Nathan, and Taylor, self-identifying first-time teachers and sojourning Americans teaching in

South Korea for two years. Together we [the research team] explored what it means to be an EFL teacher in South Korea today. Guided by collaborative autoethnography (Chang, 2013; Chang et al., 2013) and collective self-study (Davey & Ham, 2009; Gallagher, Griffin, Ciuffetelli Parker, Kitchen, & Figg, 2011; Lighthall, 2004) and inspired by the creative form of Haddix, McArthur, Muhammad, Price-Dennis, & Sealey-Ruiz's (2016) provocateur piece "At the Kitchen Table", this paper re-creates moments from our final research team meeting, a conversation that looked back on our two years together as EFL teachers and emerging teacher researchers to speak across our respective experiences, triumphs, and challenges as teachers in South Korea. We [the research team] discuss what it has meant for us to insert ourselves into the South Korean education system with little to no training as educators and to claim the identity of teacher. In doing so, we [the research team] touch upon a series of questions: (1) How do we describe ourselves as teachers?, (2) What is our role in the classroom and/or school?, (3) What are some of the challenges of working within the South Korean education system?, and (4) Knowing the challenges, where does that leave us?

Method

We [the research team] were drawn to self-studying research methods because collaboration is one of its defining characteristics (Lighthall, 2004). Through collaboration, members of self-study communities of practice (Kitchen & Ciuffetelli Parker, 2009) assume, "a pedagogical responsibility to continuously monitor [their] progress; to check for discrepancies between [their] ideals and [their] practice" (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 839). Self-study's focus on the critical examination of one's own practice guided our approach to both data generation and analysis.

However, knowing that our role as EFL teachers and emerging teacher researchers exist within a specific cultural context (i.e., the South Korean education system), we also drew upon (collaborative) autoethnographic traditions in the design of our work. Autoethnography—a methodology which traditionally has been tied to either autobiography or ethnography (Ellis, 2004)—is perhaps better understood as “ethnographic in its methodological orientation, cultural in its interpretive orientation, and autobiographical in its content orientation” (Chang, 2008, p. 48). Collaborative autoethnography is—according to Chang et al. (2013)—“a qualitative research method in which researchers work in community to collect their autobiographical materials and to analyze and interpret their data collectively to gain a meaningful understanding of sociocultural phenomena” (pp. 23-24). Not only does collaborative autoethnographic writing promote deeper learning about self and others, it also supports community building and power-sharing among co-researchers (Chang et al., 2013), two key aspects of our shared methodology.

Inspired by bell hooks (2000) who wrote that “honesty and openness is always the foundation of insightful dialogue”, we [the research team] worked to build a caring and open community of educators. Drawing on the myriad dialogic methods of teacher identity research (e.g., Liu & Xu, 2011; Tsui, 2007) as well as methods designed to feature participants’ voices (e.g., Motha, 2009), we generated data in the form of (1) small-group conversations modeled after interactive interviewing techniques (Ellis, Kiesinger, & Tillmann-Healy, 1997), and (2) written reflections on a shared blog (Li, 2016). In keeping with autoethnographic research methods, we used writing as an analytic tool (Chang, 2013; Ellis, 2004), following an iterative writing process. As Canagarajah (2013) explained about the writing of his own professional identity negotiations, “the very act of composing this narrative enabled [us] to further explore some of [our] hidden feelings, forgotten motivations, and suppressed emotions” (p. 261).

In the sections that follow, we [the research team] highlight our group's dialogic exchanges as we—Clarque, Janet, Isabel, Nathan, and Taylor—attempted to negotiate for ourselves and one another what it meant for each of us to be teaching English in South Korea. Laura's role in this particular conversation was that of an observer;¹⁵ she chose for her voice to be purposefully absent so that our ideas, questions, and opinions could take center stage as we worked to articulate our emerging identities for ourselves. Each section includes a brief introduction and summary narrative that contextualizes the conversation; the dialogue is based on a conversation—our last online meeting as a research team—held in May 2019. The meeting was recorded and transcribed verbatim, producing a transcript of more than 9,000 words. The excerpts included in this paper were, at times, abbreviated for our readers' sake. Before we dive in, though, we pause, ever-so-briefly, to introduce ourselves.

The Authors

Clarque fell in love with teaching during a summer experience in China, and subsequently chose to focus on human development and learning for the remainder of her undergraduate career. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in psychology, she embarked on a two-year teaching journey in South Korea. Clarque taught at a rural elementary school, and then a large urban high school, and was deeply impacted by her students and coworkers, and the complex experience of being a foreign English teacher. She is now pursuing a master's degree in education at a U.S. institution, always holding her experience as a classroom teacher as a valuable source of knowledge and inspiration for her studies.

¹⁵ I [Laura] made the decision to switch off both my microphone and video feed during this particular virtual meeting after noticing that turn-taking in our previous meeting had been more Laura-centric with the group waiting for me to ask questions or guide the conversation in a particular direction. Our [the research team] hope was that by decentering my voice in this meeting, we could disrupting the power imbalance of the previous session and restore more equitable power-sharing practices necessary for doing collaborative autoethnographic work (Hernandez, Chang, & Ngunjiri, 2017; Lapadat, 2017)

Janet, an English and Spanish double major in college, is not only a first-generation graduate of both high school and college; she is also a first-generation American. While participating in this study, Janet taught in an elementary school and a rural university. She currently teaches English at one of South Korea's provincial education institutes. Janet plans to pursue a degree in International Education Development and work for a non-profit when she returns to the U.S.

After completing a bachelor's degree in international studies focused on East Asia, **Isabel** decided to teach English in South Korea to help students wishing to use English to achieve their dreams. During her own K-16 education, Isabel attended 10 different schools. Lessons from teachers at these schools combined with her own ideas of what it meant to be a "teacher" are what informed her two successful years teaching at an all-girls' middle school in 충청북도 [Chungcheongbukdo], one of South Korea's nine provinces.

Originally from Chicago, **Nathan** pursued becoming an EFL teacher in South Korea to test his adaptive limits, learn a new language, and grow his creativity and interpersonal skills. After studying integrative biology and curating various research experiences throughout university, teaching at a co-ed public high school in 충청북도 [Chungcheongbukdo] allowed him to acquire a unique perspective on international education and explore many other facets of his identity and personality.

Taylor obtained a master's degree in TESOL after substitute teaching in their hometown of northern Virginia for a year. Realizing the immense need for dedicated English language teachers, Taylor chose to begin their teaching career in South Korea to gain exposure to World Englishes, collect diverse teaching strategies, and gain insight into the experience of cultural immersion with the hope that all of these experiences would help them better serve their future

students. During their time in South Korea, they spent three years teaching at a co-Ed public advanced boarding high school.

Collaborative Negotiations

How do we describe ourselves as teachers?

Throughout the two-year research project, we participated in one-on-one interviews with Laura six times. Each interview included a combination of new and recurring questions. *What three words would you use to describe yourself as a teacher* was a question Laura asked us every time. By returning to the same question each interview, we were often able to recall our previous answers and compare/contrast them to generate new insights about how our teacher identities were evolving over time.

Taylor Should we follow tradition? Should we each give three words that we think describe what it is to be a teacher in Korea? I'd be interested to hear what you guys would say?

Janet I don't think it's possible. Not for me, anyway.

Nathan I have one word. When Laura asked us how to describe English teaching in Korea, the first word that came to mind was "phenomenon." I say phenomenon because I think English education here is so specific and so specifically different than it is in other countries. It's kind of a phenomenon everywhere and it allows people who speak English to travel and to work anywhere they want really. But then you're applying to this specific context of South Korean education, a system that struggles in some interesting ways that not a lot of people outside of Korea get to see.

Taylor It's kind of like we're the sand that fills in the cracks and that might look different in a lot of different ways, right? I look at it as a position of humility and service. I try to feel that way because it keeps me from getting bogged down by the fact that this teaching context might have problems and the kids might be stressed. Or there are cultural differences—like educational differences—I might have, but then I can say, "Who can I serve, and how can I serve them given this context?"

Clarque I resonate with that a lot, Taylor. I think I'm really lucky to be at a school

where they [school administrators] are very progressive in their understanding of my role. On one hand, there's only so much power that I have, and they know that they can't really increase that. But my co-teachers understand my role as part of their overall English education program, and I really appreciate that. But it's kind of a lot of pressure. I feel like I'm always failing because I only have so much time with them. I wish that I was more efficient and more experienced, and I wish I knew how to really use that time and maximize it.

In describing ourselves as teachers, we had to first understand the specific school in which we were placed as well as our role, and often its limits, within our particular teaching context. After two years of trials and tribulations we have come to realize—to accept and even embrace—that EFL teachers, in a way, are sand between the cracks. We work to provide support for students in myriad ways both inside and outside of our EFL classroom, navigating an English language educational system in South Korea that is still trying to find itself. For some of us this means offering language camps during the winter and summer breaks, hosting lunch or afterschool language clubs, tutoring students who need additional support, etc.

What is our role in the classroom and/or school?

The teacher orientation program in the summer of 2017 was meant to build our confidence as EFL teachers, but it was also designed to inform us of what our roles in the schools would be. Despite all the preparation and lengthy orientation sessions, coming into our roles as EFL teachers involved intimately getting to know the things that made our respective schools unique and learning how to best accommodate our specific environment.

Isabel	I feel like we're in a really unique position. Like what Nathan was saying about just being able to grow up speaking English and just being able to travel the world teaching it. I think what I've learned during the last two years now being an EFL teacher is that every school utilizes their foreign English teachers differently. I feel like it's really unique. There are certain roles that you're set in, but there are all of these little spaces—little nooks and crannies—that you're able to fill too.
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- Taylor You know how I talked about my sensing a space between me and my students last time? I'm kind of making peace with it because that space is one that I'm not supposed to fill. I'm not that particular puzzle piece for my students, but someone else is. That's a lot of different metaphors all at the same time—sand, puzzle pieces—but it boils down to me just being a small part of some bigger system.
- Clarque Yeah. I'm starting to accept that even if I'm not like as amazing and noteworthy as a teacher as I wish I could be and as I imagined I would be when I came here, I do think that I have a meaningful role in the school.
- Isabel Agreed. I used to be really jealous, to be honest, of the way that my students interacted with other teachers; they could just talk to them more freely. And it was just disheartening. I love these kids, but if I think about it, I only see them once a week, so how well do I actually know them?
- Taylor I think it's really interesting what you said about time. Time spent does make a difference. There's always the assumption that the native English teacher is going to leave. They're a non-permanent presence. It's why I don't want to leave because I have the opportunity to not be that, to be consistent for a change. For me, though, I always come back to the power and authority that we're given in our classrooms, and it can also be exhausting if you don't feel like you deserve it. It can lift you up or it can be a heavy burden of guilt and shame. Teaching English abroad is so imperialistic and fucked up. I'm being given all of this privilege and authority, when I probably couldn't even pass the English teacher's test.

Unlike permanent members of the school system—South Korean students and teachers—we had ill-defined roles. There was no one list of responsibilities for an EFL teacher, and it was something we had to grapple with in addition to the various expectations and perceptions accompanying our jobs in our respective teaching environments.

What are the challenges of working within the South Korean education system?

Teaching EFL in South Korea presents its own challenges and framework, factors that we gradually came to understand over time. This includes understanding the 수능 [Suneung; the South Korean university entrance exam] and its intense and highly specific English format and the way it affects the entirety of the English curriculum.

- Nathan Yeah, and to add on, there's the 수능 [Suneung]. Our students' lives revolve around the exam, and yet, at least with my school, the administration does not want me to do anything even remotely related to it. We have to make English accessible to our students in a way that kind of goes against the 수능 [Suneung] even though that's their number one priority. How am I supposed to tell my students that their most important test is maybe not going to help them actually grow with the language?
- Clarque Going back to Nathan's original point, one thing that has really evolved for me since I've been here is just my understanding of how nuanced the education issues are. I've worked in two different schools now, and I have not met a single Korean teacher along the way who's like, "Oh, yeah. The university entrance exam is great." I think that most Korean teachers do the best that they can in a system where the reality is that even if the 수능 [Suneung] is wack, it's still necessary for their students to advance in life. And so what I see all the time is just teachers really busting their asses to be there for their students and to teach them to these tests so that they can succeed, but also do whatever they can to provide support outside of that.
- Isabel I agree, Clarque. The Korean teachers absolutely know this system is messed up. The teachers at my school have really been trying to do a lot more activity-based learning; we've been doing all these workshops and trainings on interactive activities for retention, but based on our students' test scores, it looks like we might have to go back to some rote memorization. They're falling behind the national average. I'm curious about all this testing from your perspective, Janet. You see them after the test. What do they focus on in college when the 수능 [Suneung] is over?
- Janet Yeah. University culture is definitely more relaxed. I agree with Taylor, though, when she said that we are the sand in the cracks. I teach my classes; I do what's being asked of me, but I also do more: like a language exchange with students after class for pilots who are going to study abroad in Texas next year. If they want help, even if it's outside the curriculum, I'll be here for them.

Four semesters of teaching in South Korean schools illuminated an array of challenges that we learned to deal with, each in our own ways. These included the high-stress environment and competition leading up to the 수능 [Suneung], the lack of power and input for foreign teachers, and putting too much emphasis on test scores as an indicator of student growth and learning.

Knowing the challenges, where does that leave us?

Despite the adversity we faced when teaching EFL and the fact that the reality of teaching wasn't always as glamorous as our expectations, we found ways to make a positive impact at our schools and in the lives of our students.

- Nathan I'm the same way, Janet. What I have realized is that there is so much more to our teaching beyond class time. When I think of the sand metaphor, I think of all the other time I have in the day when I can have an impact on the students, and I feel like that's where I make my best impact. Teachers at my school have always told me that they think I'm such a great teacher because I spend a lot of time talking to students and really getting to know them. I make an effort.
- Taylor It's a system of cheat codes and olive branches, right? Like "I'm sorry the system is kind of a hot mess, and I'm going to go above and beyond and try to support you in any way I can to make up for it." In my master's program, we read this piece that has always stuck with me: when you're working in a system that's oppressive or doesn't empower students, then your job as the teacher is to give them the cheat codes, right, to tell them how they can game the system. And that's how I see it in our classrooms. We're never going to get rid of the exam, so what little cheats, tricks, tips, and supportive bits of knowledge can I give to our students to help support them?
- Clarque I feel like, for me, these two years have been just a period of personal and professional growth. I realize now that a part of me will always be a teacher. More than ever before, I claim that identity. And not because I feel qualified but because I've seen myself face that decision of: Am I going to push my own agenda and be who I thought I was coming here to be? Or am I going to, like you said, Taylor, shut up and listen and fill in where they—the students—have space for me? It's been a difficult two years, but it's been really encouraging for me to see in myself when I consistently chose to serve my students however I could and put away my own ego. And then I look back at that decision, and I'm realizing like, "Oh, I'm a teacher. I'm a real teacher...on some level."
- Janet For me, I honestly still don't know. And I think that's why I want to stay one more year. I feel like I've just been sent to two completely opposite spectrums: from an elementary school last year to a university this year. I really still don't know who I am or what I'm doing. But there are still days when I'm more sure than others. Yesterday, for example, a student who has been struggling to find her place at the University told me that I give her the courage and confidence to continue. It lifted my spirits, and I'm

starting to see that we're all doing something good for someone, even if we can't always recognize it in the moment.

Isabel If the question is what does it mean to be an EFL teacher in South Korea, I think the answer is that it's a wild card. The schools are not really sure what they're getting, and you're not really sure who you're going to be.

Taylor Agreed. And because our role is so loosely defined, because it's so liminal and ethereal, I can only speak to what it's meant to me. I can tell you what I did with that unknown, this absence of clarity, of guidance, of rules or regulations. I stepped into that space and saw it as a position for me to humble myself and make myself of use where I was wanted, where I was needed, and into the spaces that I was invited into, right. Don't get me wrong, it was difficult, and overwhelming, and stressful, and saddening, and enraging, and so many different things. But that was the only way that I could make sense of it. That's where I found my purpose.

One way in which the process of writing a collaborative autoethnography impacted our individual discovery and acceptance of our teacher identities was in the open discussion of our experiences at our schools. Saying the words out loud helped us each realize that no matter how different our roles as teachers were, no matter how different our responsibilities were, we were all important in our own way and we had all discovered ways to positively impact the lives of our students.

Discussion

Communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) in education settings create opportunities for meaningful discussion among teachers (Luguetti, Aranda, Enriquez, & Oliver, 2019), which in turn facilitate the negotiation of emerging teacher identities (Barkhuizen, 2016; Xu, 2012). Our two-year collaborative study, building from social negotiation literature (e.g., Nasir & Cooks, 2009; Sarasa & Porta, 2018), has demonstrated that similar opportunities can also be created in spaces outside of the traditional teacher education classroom, such as gathering around a dinner table (Kennedy, in press, b) and/or meeting online. Establishing communities of practice among novice teachers provides space for members to (re)imagine their possible teacher selves (Goos &

Bennison, 2008; Tavakoli, 2015). Reflecting on the benefits of socially negotiating one's identity, Singh (2001) wrote:

[A]n increasingly intimate and trusting context makes it possible to reveal more of ourselves and to probe deeper into another's feelings and thoughts; where listening to and asking questions about another's plight lead to greater understanding of one's own; and where the examination and comparison of experience offer new insight into [one another's] lives. (as cited in Ellis, 2004, p. 66)

With the support of our research community, Clarque, Janet, Isabel, Nathan, and Taylor were able to grapple with difficult questions about their roles in their respective schools, the challenges of navigating the South Korean education system for students and themselves, and even possible ways of persevering despite these challenges in order to support their students.

The conversation represented above is just one of many instances when we came together as a research community to negotiate, listen, support, and make meaning of their experiences; looking across the entire study, we [the research team] recorded more than 25 hours of similar negotiations. As Chang et al. (2013) explained about the benefits of meaning-making through collaborative autoethnographic research projects:

When the group works together, individual voice is closely examined in community. Others' questioning and probing add unique depth to personal interrogation. The researchers can then retreat to embark on individual meaning-making—practicing their piece. Individual meaning-making is again followed by group meaning-making, which is negotiated among participants. (p. 24)

Note the cyclical nature of this approach; teacher identity is an inherently personal, yet fluid, construct (Pennington & Richards, 2016). Our community, thus, was not about reaching consensus on a singular, static identity of teacher, but instead about providing a space for members to consider, interrogate, and articulate who they were and, if it was different, who they wanted to become as EFL teachers. We [the research team] met as a community approximately once a month, and in the time between meetings, we documented our experiences in other ways.

We maintained a shared blog; we engaged in creative writing pieces (e.g., poems, letters, etc.); we wrote lesson plans and reflections. All of this took time. A lot of time.

This conversation was recorded in May 2019; our community had been working together for nearly two years. Thus our routines had been well established and are evident in the transcript; Taylor, for example, opened our conversation with the question of three words: *what three words would you use to describe yourself as a teacher?* A question that, through its familiar nature, signified membership in our community. From there the conversation and individual member's participation ebbed and flowed, members listened and expanded on each other's ideas, often referring to ideas brought up at the beginning of the meeting. In this particular conversation, Nathan's opening comment about the phenomenon—to use his word—of teaching in South Korea was one referenced by both Clarke and Isabel later in the conversation. At one point, Taylor even referenced a prior meeting and how they had been feeling distant, removed even, from their students' lives.

Time to process, listen, and explore; this was what our community provided. It reads like dominoes in the transcript. When Clarke shared that she was not feeling “as amazing and noteworthy as a teacher as [she] wished [she] could be and as [she] imagined [she] would be,” she struck a chord with Isabel, who was quick to agree, adding on, “I used to be really jealous, to be honest, of the way that my students interacted with other teachers [...], but if I think about, I only see them once a week, so how well do I actually know them?” Taylor was the next domino; reacting to Isabel's note about time, they raised the issue of turnover among EFL teachers. Taylor shared that one reason for staying a third year at the school was because, “Time spent does make a difference. There's always the assumption that the native English teacher is going to leave. [...] I have the opportunity to not be that, to be consistent for a change.”

Negotiating one's teacher identity is not an easy process; it's neither linear nor uniform (Li 2016; Sachs, 2005; SØreide, 2006). Our [the research team] work has shown this to be true, but, more importantly, it has also demonstrated the power of community in the negotiation process (Nasir & Cooks, 2009). If given the structure, space, and time to engage in the social negotiation of teacher identities, novice teachers can lean into their feelings of insecurity and self-doubt and wrestle with the difficult questions of their roles and responsibilities in an unfamiliar education context all the while knowing that their community is there—acting as a proverbial safety net—ready to support and encourage as necessary. As a field, teacher education has the opportunity to model, foster, and even facilitate these communities by making explicit time and space for teacher identity negotiations. There is strength in numbers. The words “me too” hold incredible power; they offer validation and corroboration. They tell the novice teacher “You are not alone; I see you; I hear you.”

In Closing

More than two years have passed since our cohort of EFL teachers touched down in South Korea, and our teacher identities have ebbed and flowed with successes and failures like a rollercoaster. Some of us are still teaching in South Korea and some have since returned to the U.S. to pursue various roles within the sphere of education or have moved on to pursue work in other fields. Regardless of where we are now or end up ten or twenty years down the road, we will always be teachers, especially to the students who stuck with us for two or more years.

Even now, for those of us who are removed from the stress and daily teaching duties in a South Korean EFL classroom, defining and describing our teaching identities is not a straightforward task. The disconnect between our pre-service expectations of teaching English in South Korean schools and the lived reality of our classroom experiences are now being impacted

by a third factor, a retrospective history and nostalgia for our tenure at these schools, a *nostalgic teacher identity* of sorts that we were not expecting to encounter.

Our teacher identities formed gradually and in the face of many obstacles. However, through this iterative autoethnographic process of self-reflection and discussion, we have been able to come to terms with our teaching identities. We have been able to live through the let-downs of previously unrealistic expectations and take pride in the moments when and spaces where we made positive impacts in the lives and education of our students. We [the research team] cannot speak to a singular, shared teacher identity; our time in this collaborative study of self has demonstrated the unique and nuanced experiences we have each had. But, as a collective, what we are able to speak to is the beneficial and stimulating process of chronicling a shared autoethnography. Through monthly reflections and discussions about our roles as teachers in South Korea, we took ownership of our emerging teaching identities in ways that we would not have been able to do on our own. As Palmer (2007) explains:

As we listen to each other's stories, we are often reflecting silently on our own identity and integrity as teachers. When person A speaks, I realize that the method that works for him would not work for me, for it is not grounded in who I am. But as I listen to person B, I realize that the method she uses is one I would like to learn, for it feels integral to my nature. (p. 152)

Our endorsement of such a process is just six voices among a medley (e.g., Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Barak, 2015; Hamiloglu, 2014; Sarasa & Porta, 2018) that stress the positive impact of shared reflection in navigating the development of a teacher identity. While you may or may not have been able to see connections between our journey to identify as teachers and your own, we [the research team] encourage you to reflect with intention and in collaboration on your own experiences for it is in those moments of conversation that lessons are learned and identities are articulated.

EPILOGUE

Kierkegaard argued that while we can only live our lives moving forward, we can only understand them looking backwards (as cited in Hayler, 2012, p. 1). This dissertation, whose roots I can trace at least as far back as the fall of my second year at Michigan State University and the readings from the course *Language Identity and Ideology in Multilingual Settings*, represents not only the lived experiences and professional identity negotiations of participating teachers, but mine as well. I open this epilogue by ever-so-briefly recapping the dissertation articles. From there I return to the literature introduced in the prologue to discuss what I have learned about teacher identity negotiation throughout this dissertation and what it has to offer the field of teacher education. I then close the dissertation by turning the spotlight on me. Taking an autoethnographic approach, I offer my reader a glimpse into my own journey of learning to identify as a(n emerging) researcher.

Storying Teacher Identity Negotiation

Every one-on-one interview included the question of three words to describe yourself as a teacher; it was a question that the participating teachers knew to expect by the third interview and would often reference in our small group meetings. It is a question that even found its way into each of the three articles presented in the dissertation. During my final visit to Hazel's school in the summer of 2019, she asked if I could describe my dissertation in just three words. It was a question that I could not answer at the time, but now, having storied David and Lesley's experiences and written alongside Clarque, Janet, Isabel, Nathan, and Taylor in Article 3, my answer is this: the dissertation is a collection of first-time teachers' stories of *attrition*, *resiliency*, and *community*.

In the prologue, I opened the dissertation by asking how first-time teachers come to identify as teachers. Research has demonstrated time and again that first-time teachers' identities are malleable (e.g., Li, 2016; Liu & Xu, 2011; Sutherland et al., 2010), and while many novice teachers adopt initial teacher identities based, at least somewhat, on the ways in which they were taught (Lortie, 1975; Tsui, 2007), these initial or imagined identities often clash with the realities of the classroom (Said, 2014) and are thus (re)negotiated to better align with contextual factors (Li, 2016).

In this dissertation, I have highlighted participating teachers' ongoing negotiations of teacher identity across their first year(s) of teaching. Articles 1 and 2 focused on just two participating teachers, David and Lesley, respectively. While David was able to recognize the positive impact his teaching was having on students, he chose to leave the profession after only one year. During his time in South Korea, David worked to gain the various knowledges of teaching (Shulman, 1987), but did not feel qualified to claim the title until he did so; for David, the title of 쌤 [Ssam; teacher] felt like a gift—undeserved and thus unwanted. David's story highlighted the crucial role of teacher identity negotiation in both teacher resiliency and attrition. His year-long sojourn to South Korea to teach English as a foreign language (EFL) was a second chance at making a career of teaching, and yet David could not quiet the voice—dare I say *the ghost*—inside that told him he was an imposter. In his eyes, he may have taught, but he was not a teacher.

Like David, Lesley wrestled with feelings of self-doubt and insecurity as a novice teacher. Framing these emotions as ghosts, I drew on hauntology (Derrida, 1994) to offer a theoretical lens for personifying the space Lesley felt between themselves and their students, but it was hospitality (Derrida, 2002) that allowed me to explain the specters' influence on Lesley's

enacted identity. In the end, Lesley may still—nearly three years later—share their classroom with the ghosts of doubt and insecurity, but Lesley also learned from listening to and engaging with these specters. They learned to lean into the uneasiness and embrace their imperfections. This article asked what if the field of teacher education were to frame teacher identity negotiation as an invitation to converse with one's ghosts, to ask: *What haunts you, and what do your ghosts have to teach you?*

Article 3 invited participating teachers to join me in the writing of a collaborative autoethnography (Chang et al., 2013; Hernandez et al., 2017)—an opportunity for my coauthors to story their own experiences of socially negotiating teacher identities. By sharing one such moment from our May 2019 research meeting, we argued that if given the structure, space, and time to engage in the social negotiation of teacher identities, novice teachers can lean into their feelings of insecurity and self-doubt and wrestle with the difficult work of learning their roles and responsibilities, all the while knowing that their community is there—acting as a proverbial safety net—ready to support and encourage them as necessary.

Our community, which was formed through weekly dinner conversations in the summer of 2017 (Kennedy, in press, b) and later sustained online, was a source of support for the teachers. Inspired by scholars who foster community and feature participants' voices (e.g., Coia & Taylor, 2009; Ellis et al., 1997; Motha, 2009; Palmer, 2007), our conversations provided a space where the teachers could come together to share, compare, and ask questions of one another as they worked to negotiate who they could and should be as EFL teachers in South Korea. The dissertation was framed around imagined (Xu, 2012) and enacted (Tsui, 2007) teacher identities; however, when I look across the teachers' identity work over the last few years, I cannot help but notice two additional teacher identities at play.

Beyond Imagined and Enacted Teacher Identities

When I began this study in the summer of 2017, I thought of teacher identity negotiation in a linear way: pre-service teachers form imagined teacher identities (Barkhuizen, 2016; Xu, 2012) based on their experiences as students (Lortie, 1975), understandings and assumptions of the education system, etc. Then as pre-service teachers transition into classroom teachers, they renegotiate enacted teacher identities (Li, 2016; Tsui, 2007) that more closely align with the realities of their particular school, district, and community. Simple, right? Not quite. The teachers participating in the study were working to articulate their imagined and enacted teacher identities, yes, but they were also wrestling with several other teacher identities throughout the project; namely those of *expected* and *nostalgic* teacher identities.

Expected Teacher Identity

Lesley's letter in Article 2 grappled with the temporary nature of EFL teaching positions in South Korea. For the teachers in this study, the binational commission sponsoring their work visas set a three-year cap on their appointments, which, over time, has created a high turnover rate among EFL teachers in South Korea. For Gina and Katherine, for instance, they were the 19th and 21st EFL teachers in as many years at their respective schools. In fact, when Katherine chose to remain at her school for a second year, it was the first time in the school's 21-year partnership with the binational commission that an EFL teacher opted to extend their contract. This high rate of turnover in EFL teachers each year introduces a third teacher identity into the mix: an expected teacher identity ascribed by the teachers, administrators, students, and even parents at the school to which the new EFL teachers have been assigned, a teacher identity based on the values, commitments, routines of the former EFL educator(s).

This expected identity is one that I know well. In fact, in the winter of 2019 when my co-authors and I were writing letters as part of our ongoing collaborative autoethnography, I chose to write mine to future EFL teachers assigned to Ocheon High School (OHS), the school where I taught for three years, writing:

For all their [the staff and students'] admirable qualities, there is one common flaw that I feel the need to warn you about. Here at OHS, they love to tell their ghost stories...

No, the school is not actually haunted, but I suspect that it feels like that at times. In my day, the ghost went by the name of Mariah. Her presence could be felt in every nook and cranny of the school. Her handwriting was quite literally on the walls—in the form of bulletin boards, artwork, and the like. Her name was on everyone's lips:

*Mariah taught her classes like this.
Do it, you know, how Mariah did it.
You should try it Mariah's way.*

[...] It's the nature of our job, I suppose. We are haunted by the teachers who came before us, and then we inadvertently find ourselves haunting those who come after we are gone.

My letter goes on to encourage the teacher(s) to push against this expected identity, to take these “ghost stories”—comments and suggestions from members of the school community based on the way I and other previous EFL educators taught—with a grain of salt (see Appendix F for the full letter). Every first-time teacher has a Mariah, a former teacher with whom they are compared. These comparisons may come from students, colleagues, or mentors, but sometimes they come from within. Just as Lesley felt haunted by doubts and insecurities based on their understanding of their role within the South Korean education system, Lesley and many of the other participating teachers had to come to terms with the ghosts of past EFL teachers, the expected teacher identity ascribed by members of the school community.

Nostalgic Teacher Identity

The other teacher identity at play in this dissertation is one that flew below my radar until only recently. In fact, it was Nathan—one of my co-authors in Article 3—who brought it to my

attention. It was January 2020, and we—Clarque, Janet, Isabel, Nathan, Taylor, and I—were rushing to finish a full draft of Article 3 ahead of a conference deadline, when Nathan emailed the group to let everyone know he had drafted a possible conclusion to the manuscript. In it Nathan wrote:

Even now, for those of us who are removed from the stress and daily teaching duties in a South Korean EFL classroom, defining and describing our teaching identities is not a straightforward task. The disconnect between our pre-service expectations of teaching English in South Korean schools and the lived reality of our classroom experiences are now being impacted by a third factor, a retrospective history and nostalgia for our tenure at these schools, a *nostalgic teacher identity* of sorts that we were not expecting to encounter. (Kennedy et al., Article 3, pp. 72-73, emphasis in original)

Nostalgic teacher identity. It is an identity that once named cannot go unnoticed. Taylor and Janet were still teaching in South Korea at the time, but not the rest of us. Nathan, Clarque, Isabel, and I had moved onto other things. For some it was graduate school; others found themselves working in education administration; three of us were on the job market, looking for the next step in our careers. We were writing about our experiences as EFL teachers without actually being EFL teachers. Our lens was no longer an enacted identity. It was something different.

Nostalgic teacher identity is one rooted in memory. Nathan first noticed it in the fall of 2018 while we were in the beginning stages of writing the collaborative autoethnography. In a small group meeting, he mentioned having gone back to reread his monthly blog posts written one year earlier during his first month of teaching, explaining, “I don’t remember it being that hard...adjusting, you know. I don’t remember it, but clearly that’s how it was. I had a lot to say about it at the time” (Nathan, October 2018). The dissonance between what Nathan *remembers* about his time teaching in South Korea and “how it was” is nostalgic teacher identity. Knowing that one’s identity is shaped, reshaped, and adapted with great complexity through a process of

interpretation and reinterpretation of experiences (Pennington & Richards, 2016; SØreide, 2006; Sutherland et al., 2010), it should come as no surprise that these reinterpretations of one's teacher identity continues even after leaving the classroom.

Implication: Beyond Communities of Practice

The second question I posed in the prologue asked about how one's community could support them in the teacher identity negotiation process. Documenting and storying the lived experiences of first-time EFL teachers, and, more specifically, amplifying their voices through the writing of a collaborative autoethnography are significant in their own right, given that longitudinal first-person stories of teacher identity negotiation are still rare in the field. However what I have learned from participants' experiences (re)negotiating their professional identities also has important implications for the research and practice of teacher education. In this section, I discuss an important implication of this dissertation for the field of teacher education (TE): how teacher educators should foster communities of support that acknowledge and speak to the vulnerability of being a beginning teacher.

It has been nearly one month since I sat before my committee to defend my dissertation, and I am still wrestling with one particular question from a committee member: *Would you say that your research community failed to adequately support David?* To borrow a phrase from Schaefer et al. (2014), David's "story to leave by" was one of an insurmountable identity crisis; he saw himself as a student of teaching, wanting to learn the art of teaching from his colleagues, but he did not yet identify as a teacher. His story to leave by was one that David did not share with his fellow participating teachers or me until the end of the year. David explained his reasoning three times in as many weeks: "I teach, but I'm no teacher." It was in his final interview, final blog post, and final small group meeting, all generated within a three-week

period, that David let us see the extent of his imposter syndrome. To my surprise, David's—shall we say—confession in the final weeks of the teachers' first year sparked a conversation that continued throughout the entire next year of the research study; evidence of this ongoing dialogue can even be seen at the end of the conversation detailed in Article 3, where, for example, Janet shared that she was still not sure whether or not she was a teacher after two years of teaching EFL in South Korea. The question my committee posed was an uncomfortable one for me to answer. Did we, or more pointedly *I*, fail him?

To answer this question it is important to dig further into two of the most salient underlying themes across this dissertation: vulnerability and community. From imposter syndrome to insecurity and self-doubt, each article highlights the emotional work of teacher identity negotiation and the importance of leaning into the difficult emotions involved in learning to teach; collectively the articles call for communities of support for first-time teachers. Note I intentionally do not refer to these communities as those of practice here, for I have come to understand that while our research community may have functioned like a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) in some ways (see Kennedy, in press, b), it was also more than that.

Communities of Practice (CoP) operate under an apprenticeship model where new members exist on the periphery and as they are mentored into the profession, they are slowly pulled closer and closer into the center of the community through a sort of centripetal force that comes with experience, guidance, and acceptance (Goos & Bennison, 2007; Luguetti et al., 2019; Wenger, 1998). First-time teachers enrolled in TE programs across the U.S. already feel the pull of this centripetal force; they are paired with mentor teachers in a series of field experiences; they have scaffolded experiences of working with students one-on-one, in small groups, and eventually whole group instruction; and their course work often promotes reflective practices to

support first-time teachers in recognizing their strengths and growth opportunities. Many traditional TE programs can thus be understood as communities of practice.

Our community of support (CoS) was something different. If a CoP utilizes centripetal force, then a CoS recognizes and delves into discussion of a *centrifugal force*. Stay with me here; I know you did not expect to be reading about physics in an EFL teacher identity dissertation. The difference between the centripetal force of a CoP and the centrifugal force of a CoS is merely a matter of perspective. If you are observing a community from the outside—say developing a teacher preparation program or reading a dissertation about first-time teachers—you see an inward, centripetal force acting upon the novice teachers to draw them into the heart of the community. However, if you are a first-time teacher existing on the periphery, what you experience is an apparent centrifugal force, or resistance, pushing you away from the center.¹⁶ For the teachers participating in the dissertation, they felt this resistance when, for example, their imagined identities did not align with the schools' expected identities. It was a force that haunted Lesley and ultimately led to David's exit.

Our CoS met the teachers where they were, often on the edge of the EFL teaching community. While we did not use the metaphor of centripetal vs. centrifugal force, our conversations and reflective writing focused more often than not on the emotional work of learning the profession, on the voices inside their head telling them they were not [good, prepared, invested, etc.] enough to be teachers. It was a force that caught the teachers and me by surprise. The message from the binational commission and the K-12 school administrators and mentor teachers was one of welcome and encouragement; from their perspective the system was

¹⁶ As another example of these forces, picture yourself driving a car. As you rush to complete a left turn on a yellow light, a passerby on the sidewalk sees the car turn left, but what you feel inside the car is a pull to the right. The passerby sees the effect of centripetal force. As the driver, however, you *feel* a centrifugal force.

designed to draw first-time teachers into their community. And still every one of the ten teachers participating in this dissertation study spoke of the resistance they experienced when working to identify as a teacher, the force pushing them away from the profession.

As teacher educators, we must remember to see the world through novice teachers' eyes. When designing TE programs and in particular, field experiences, we must consider not only the ways in which we are mentoring first-time teachers into the profession, drawing them into our community; we must also attend to the emotional work of identifying as a teacher. The longitudinal nature of this dissertation and others like it (e.g., Trent, 2016; Xu, 2012) demonstrate that feelings of self-doubt and insecurity affect first-time teachers for years; thus communities of support must extend beyond the limits of a teacher preparation program. Teacher attrition statistics are staggering with 25-40% of novice teachers leaving the teaching profession within their first five years (Day & Gu, 2010; Ewing & Smith, 2003). Like David, how many of these teachers succumbed to the dissonance of identities, the voice of imposter syndrome?

Did I fail David? Yes, I believe I did. My position as a former EFL teacher, current teacher educator, and emerging teacher researcher played a role in how I saw our community. I ascribed teacher identities onto each participant without ever asking if they self-identified as teachers. My privilege as a member of the CoP came with a sort of immunity to the centrifugal force the teachers were experiencing until David spoke of its power over him. It took David's exit to open my eyes to the emotional work of withstanding the outward force: the din of voices telling him he was not enough. As I write this epilogue, I ask myself how many "Davids" could persist in teaching if supported by communities designed not solely on the practices of teaching, but also on the difficult emotions of learning to teach?

A(n Emerging) Researcher Identity

When the study began, I told participating teachers that if I was going to ask them to speak to their experiences and expectations, to share, not just privately, but also among a small group of their peers, their successes and (perceived) failures, it was only fair for me to do the same. Trust is a two-way street; the 정 [jeong] we shared as a community made it possible for us all to be open and honest with one another. And, yet, in the dissertation articles shared above, I maintained focus on the participating teachers and their stories. Their voices rang through, while mine, at times, was quiet. Having told stories of the participating teachers' ongoing professional identity work, it is now time to tell my own. To do this, I borrow heavily from an autoethnography that I first began writing in the spring of 2018 while in the midst of Phase II of the larger study. It is a piece that explores the vulnerabilities and self-doubt inherent in being a first-time researcher (Kennedy, in press, a).

Autoethnographies often reveal multiple and, at times, conflicting layers of consciousness in an effort to understand aspects of one's life lived within a context (Hamilton, Smith, & Worthington, 2008; Sambrook, 2015), however they are not written without a certain level of risk to the researcher. As Hayler (2012) explains:

In some ways the blank page is perfect as it is: uncomplicated, unchallenging, and uncontroversial. Once you make your mark and begin to tell a tale of who you are, things can seem to both open up and narrow down at the same time. You play your hand, reveal yourself and begin that story in one way or another. (p. 3)

I write this reflection as a way of making sense of difficult experiences—ones that I did not anticipate, ones that caused me to question myself and my preparedness as a researcher. While there were certainly many small triumphs along the way, I write this epilogue not to play back a highlight reel, but instead to help me understand and make sense of the myriad difficult emotions that I experienced as a first-time researcher in hopes of better navigating them in the future.

Confession: It is all an act

Before beginning my practicum, I took three research courses at Michigan State University. I had written and defended my proposal. I was ready, right? To a certain degree, yes, I was ready. I had received approval from the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), drafted interview protocols and consent forms, secured lodging, airline tickets, and funding; logistically, I was ready. But was I ready to be a researcher, to introduce myself and be known as a researcher? Would I feel comfortable and confident in this new role? No.

Research Memo:¹⁷ Day 3

Am I really ready to do this level of research? This project is already—three days in—bigger than I ever imagined. Will the data really be rich enough to draw conclusions? What if I'm just playing the part of researcher without actually being one?

Research Memo: Day 26

Some of the participants were joking over dinner. "Laura, what if you did all this work and find nothing?" Funny, except not. What if that's the case? What if nothing of interest comes of all this work? How will I know? And...then what do I do?

I have never understood why people talk about the voice in one's head that second guesses decisions and doubts one's abilities as "little". Mine is not a little voice. It is shrill; it is deafening; it is constant. Throughout the practicum, and even into the larger dissertation, I wrote memos that recorded, questioned, and worried over every detail. I was afraid I had spent years building a very carefully crafted house of cards, and with one misstep, everything would come crumbling down. From bonding with participants, to facilitating discussions over dinner, to keeping up with transcription, to asking the 'right' questions in an interview, I worried about it

¹⁷ All memos were written during Phase I of the dissertation study. They date back to my time with participating teachers in their six-week teacher preparation program in the summer of 2017.

all. However, what I saw as weakness—a compulsive confessing of potentially fatal flaws—as a researcher, Peshkin (2000) saw as an asset, writing, “To be forthcoming and honest about how we work as researchers is to develop a reflective awareness that, I believe, contributes to enhancing the quality of our interpretive acts” (p. 9).

Self-doubt is just one of the myriad threats novice researchers encounter in the field (Bell, 1998; emerald & Carpenter, 2015); however, it is at the root of many researchers’ sense of vulnerability. Feelings of being out of one’s depth (Dunn, 1991; Velardo & Elliott, 2018), worries of being unable to meet (un)realistic standards of quality and rigor (McAlpine, Jazvac-Martek, & Hopwood, 2009), and anxiety over the thought of having to publicly defend one’s ideas throughout the dissertation process (Hall & Burns, 2009) all stem from doctoral students’ feelings of researcher-self-doubt.

Bell (1998) encouraged all researchers to accept self-doubt as a natural part of the process, writing:

The researcher is fallible and vulnerable within the research context. Of course, we can try to cover up this vulnerability with the garb of our profession, but this instantly diminishes us as experiential creatures sharing the understanding of our existence with others. (p. 184)

Yet, acceptance is easier said than done. While I appreciate the push Peshkin, Bell, and many others are making to reframe researchers’ self-doubts as assets, when my doubts seeped into all aspects of the research process, running the gamut from interviews to relationships to analysis, it was difficult to welcome them with open arms and an open mind. I may have acted like a researcher, but I believe it was just that: an act. Acting as a researcher while doubting my every move and juggling often uncomfortable and complicated relationships with members of the binational commission’s teacher preparation program coordinator team was emotionally draining, and the constant drain began to take its toll.

Lesson Learned: I am not a superhero, and that is okay.

I am not a superhero, and while you might think that goes without saying, it did not stop me from trying to be one. I believed an ethnographer's my job was to become a member of participants' community by fully and continuously immersing myself in the culture (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). But at what point does a researcher who is fully immersed in her study finally succumb to the ebbing tide, lose sight of the shore, and drown?

Research Memo: Day 9

I am starting to realize how out of balance my life is as a researcher. Every day is filled with endless hours of transcribing, reading, taking fieldnotes, and connecting with the PSTs. I'm worried that I am dropping the ball in other aspects of my professional and personal life in order to be a good researcher. I haven't checked my work email in four days even though I am supposed to be coauthoring a piece with two colleagues, submitting conference proposals, and who knows what else. I'm not sleeping as much as I should, and I haven't talked to my family in at least a week.

Do all (ethnographic) researchers struggle in this way? How do I know that I am not missing some crucial data opportunity or identity-changing revelation if I step away from the program (even for an evening) to catch my breath?

Looking back on the practicum and dissertation experience, and even further back to my courses leading up to the study, what I've come to understand is that while I was well-versed in the need for and ways of minimizing risk for the participating teachers, no one told me that I too would be at risk (Kumar & Cavallaro, 2018; Velardo & Elliott, 2018). I was working increasingly longer days, losing sleep, and not taking breaks all out of this irrational fear that felt all-too-rational at the time; if I did not spend every waking minute with my participants, I was not a "good" researcher. But what is a good researcher? Was my sleep-deprived, emotionally-exhausted self a better researcher simply because I spent more time with my participants?

~~Probably not.~~ *Of course not!*

Data collection was an emotionally draining experience for me, but I am not alone in this. Nutov and Hazzan (2011)—a doctoral candidate and their dissertation chair, respectively—decided to take this question head on. Writing about the *emotional labor* of doing qualitative research, Nutov and Hazzan (2011) identified five forms of emotional labor doctoral students experience while engaged in doctoral studies: (1) selecting a topic, (2) choosing a research paradigm, and maintaining relationships with (3) one’s supervisor, (4) colleagues and fellow doctoral students, and (5) non-academic relationships. My labor focused mostly—at least during data collection—on maintaining relationships. Ultimately, I chose to sacrifice practicing self-care in order to labor harder at those relationships, a phenomenon that Kumar and Cavallaro (2018) note as an all-too-common occurrence among doctoral students and novice researchers.

Lesson Learned: Vulnerabilities

My negotiations of a(n emerging) researcher identity were necessary, but, at times, painful. Since that first summer nearly four years ago, I have extended the practicum into a two-year dissertation study, and I will soon be stepping into the role of assistant professor and Director of Field Experiences for Northern Michigan University’s School of Education, Leadership, and Public Service. I am comforted knowing that this look back at my most vulnerable moments will only ease the journey forward, for as Brown (2012) once wrote:

Vulnerability is not weakness, and the uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure we face every day are not optional. Our only choice is a question of engagement. Our willingness to own and engage with our vulnerability determines the depth of our courage and the clarity of our purpose: the level to which we protect ourselves from being vulnerable is a measure of our fear and disconnection. (p. 2)

I shared this story to engage in conversation with my vulnerability, to acknowledge it, but to also look beyond it, to look towards the horizon and ask myself: *What lies ahead?* So there you have

it, Reader. The dissertation research experience, for me, as well as participating teachers, was one of uncertainty, self-doubt, and insecurity, for we are all haunted.

Leaning into these emotions, I am happy to report that I have emerged on the other side a more confident researcher, and while I do not doubt that there will be many more uphill battles as I continue on this path, I am learning to trust the process, to practice a bit of hospitality (Derrida, 2002). In closing, I am choosing to end this epilogue—and the dissertation really—with the final memo written during Phase I of the study.

Research Memo: Day 40

As I write this last memo, I'm sitting at the Incheon airport waiting for my flight to board.

I am thinking back on what stands out to me about this summer. I am thinking of the 12 teachers who welcomed me into their conversations. I wonder how their first year of teaching, first year of living in South Korea, first year (for some) of living away from home will go. I worry because so many of them say they are not ready. Their doubts and insecurities are ones that I understand all too well.

Adam put it this way, "I'm a baby bird whose mother is about to shove his ass out this nest." When another participant (I forget who) asked what will happen next, Adam said, "Oh, I'll fall for sure, but I think I'll land on my feet. And, hey, if I can't fly right away, at least I can walk, right?"

I can't think of a better way to summarize my experiences as a baby researcher this summer. It wasn't easy, and I didn't fly, but I found a way...

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Interview Protocols

Interview #1: Pre-Arrival

Welcome! Thank you for making time to meet with me and sharing a little bit about your background and motivations for teaching in Korea. We will talk for about 45 minutes today one-on-one. In addition to today's initial interview and a final interview during the last week of the program, our group will meet once a week for dinner discussions. And you will also see me sitting in on all of your teaching workshops. Before we begin, I want to remind you that this interview is being audio recorded and transcribed; however, your privacy will be protected. I am going to ask you to choose a pseudonym for yourself at the end of this interview; I will use this pseudonym when transcribing, naming files, etc. The recordings and transcriptions will remain confidential at all times. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Section 1: Background and Motivations

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself.
 - Age, race, hometown, etc.
 - Education background (school, major, etc.)
2. Why did you decide to teach English in Korea?
 - Motivations for applying to the binational commission?
 - Motivation for applying to Korea, specifically?
 - Goals for the year?
 - Are you hoping to be placed in secondary or elementary school? Why?
3. Describe your experiences with language learning.
 - What languages you speak
 - When and where you learned them
4. Describe your experiences, if any, with teaching. (e.g., tutoring, volunteering, etc.)

Section 2: Teacher Identity

5. What kind of teacher do you want to be?
 - Can you give me three words to describe yourself as a teacher?
 - Is there a metaphor or analogy that you can think of to describe your approach to teaching? Tell me why you chose this particular metaphor.
6. When you think about the year of teaching ahead, is there anything that worries you?
7. What do you think will be your primary roles and responsibilities as an English teacher this coming year?

Section 3: Wrap Up

8. What pseudonym would you like me to use for you?
9. Since we will be going out to dinner once a week, I am wondering if you have any dietary restrictions that you would like me to know about?
10. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me today?
11. Is there anything you would like to know about me?

Thank you very much for talking with me today. I will see you in Korea on July 9th.

Interview #2: Final Week of Teacher Prep Program

Section 1: Experiences in the Program

1. Tell me about your experiences in the program this summer.
 - Aspects that were the most helpful for you
 - What more the program could have done to prepare you for teaching
 - Biggest take-aways from the program
2. Tell me about your FEP experience specifically.
 - How do you think the lesson went? What feedback did you receive?
 - If you could teach the same lesson with the same students again, what would you do differently? Why?
 - While watching the other ETA teacher their lesson, what is one thing that they did that you could see yourself using in your classroom someday? What about their teaching impressed you?

Section 2: Teaching Vision

3. Tell me about how you are envisioning your first month at the school.
4. Tell me about how you are envisioning the year ahead.
 - Your teaching goals (and learning goals)
 - Learning goals for your students
5. If I were to visit your classroom on a random day, what would I see when I walked into your classroom?
 - What would you be doing?
 - What would the students be doing?
 - How would the room be arranged?

Section 3: Teacher Identity Revisited

6. At the beginning of the summer, I asked you what you thought would be your primary roles and responsibilities as an English teacher this year. Let's revisit that. How would you explain your roles and responsibilities as an ETA at your school to someone back home?
7. At the beginning of the summer, I also asked you to share three words to describe yourself as a teacher. You listed [read words from the transcript]. Do these words still represent you as a teacher?
 - If so, tell me why.
 - If no, which three words would be more accurate? Tell me why you chose them.

Section 4: Wrap Up

8. What do you see yourself doing after this year is over? What's next for you?
9. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me?

Thank you very much for talking with me this summer!

Interview #3: End of 1st Semester, Year 1

Section 1: Catching Up

1. Tell me about your experiences as a teacher this fall.
2. Is teaching what you expected it to be? Why or why not?
3. Tell me about some of the highlights: moments of highs and lows.

Section 2: Classroom Observation

4. Can you tell me a little bit of background information about the class that I observed today?
 - a. Age range, grade level, proficiency level, etc.
 - b. What were your goals for students in the class?
 - c. What have the students been studying previously?
 - d. Why did you ask me to observe this particular lesson?
5. Talk me through the lesson.
 - a. What aspects of the lesson were you pleased with? Displeased with? Explain.
 - b. How is this lesson (or aspects of it) representative of your typical teaching self?
 - c. If you could do the lesson again, what (if anything) would you change? Why?

Section 3: Guided Reflection

6. Let's go back to the monthly reflections for September, October, and November. For each one, I'd like you to reread your post. We'll do this as a think aloud, so either as you are reading or after you finish, share what you are thinking, feeling, remembering, etc.
 - a. Let's start with September.
 - b. Great! Let's move on to October.
 - c. Okay. November's the last one.

Section 4: Teaching and Teacher Identity

7. What are some of the routines of your classroom? Why did you choose those routines?
8. Tell me about a typical lesson in your classroom.
 - a. What are you doing?
 - b. What are your students doing?
9. What are 3 words you would use to describe yourself as a teacher this semester?

Section 5: Wrap Up

10. Now that we are near the end of your first semester, how have you grown as a teacher? What, if anything, is different? What explains those differences?
11. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me today?

Thank you very much for talking with me today.

Interview #4: End of Year 1

Section 1: Catching Up

1. How has your year been going?
2. What were some of your highs and lows throughout the year?
3. What are three words that you would use to describe yourself as a teacher? Tell me about why you chose these words.

Section 2: Roles and Responsibilities Card Sort

This next activity is a card sort. On these five cards, I have written words or phrases to describe possible ETA roles and responsibilities, but I'm also giving you two blank cards in case there are others that come to mind for you. I'd like you to arrange them in a way that represents your understanding of your roles and responsibilities as an ETA at three different moments in time: prior to coming to South Korea, at the end of orientation, and now.

4. (If words were added): Which words or phrases did you choose to add to the mix?
5. (For each of the three moments in time): Talk to me about how you've chosen to arrange the cards.

Section 3: Identity Card Sort

Next, we are going to do a similar card sorting activity. Here are five blank cards. On each card please write a word or short phrase to describe your following identities:

- Racial or ethnic identity
- Gender identity
- Language/linguistic identity
- Age identity
- (free choice)

I'm going to ask you to arrange the cards in a way that represents your experiences within three different moments. In each moment, which identities were most/least noticeable?

6. When interacting with your students
7. When interacting with English teachers at your school
8. When interacting with teachers of other subjects at your school

Talk to me about how you've chosen to arrange the cards.

Section 4: Wrap Up

9. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me today?
10. When the grant year ends next month, what's next for you?
 - a. (If they are leaving): What lessons or skills are you taking with you?
 - b. (If they are staying): What lessons or skills are you taking with you?
 - c. (If they are staying): What goals do you have for next year?

Thank you so much for talking with me today and for letting me follow you and your journey this year!

Interview #5: End of 1st Semester, Year 2

Section 1: Catching Up

1. Tell me about your experiences as a teacher this fall.
 - a. What have you and your students been studying?
 - b. What have been some of the highs and lows?
2. Has teaching this fall been what you expected it to be? Why or why not?

Section 2: Classroom Observation

3. Can you tell me a little bit about the class that I observed (or will observe) today?
 - a. Age range, grade level, proficiency level, etc.
 - b. What were (are) your goals for students in the class?
 - c. What have the students been studying previously?
4. Talk me through the lesson.
 - a. What aspects of the lesson were you pleased with? Displeased with? Explain.
 - b. How is this lesson (or aspects of it) representative of your typical teaching self?
 - c. How is this lesson (or aspects of it) representative of the type of teacher you strive to be?
 - d. If you could do the lesson again, what (if anything) would you change? Why?

Section 3: Teaching and Teacher Identity

5. What are some of the routines of your classroom? Why did you choose those routines?
6. Tell me about a typical lesson in your classroom.
 - a. What are you doing?
 - b. What are your kids doing?
7. How do you think your students would describe you as a teacher?
 - a. Is it how you would describe yourself?
 - b. What are three words that you would use to describe yourself as a teacher? Tell me about why you chose these words.
8. How have you grown as a teacher?
 - a. What, if anything, is different from last year?
 - b. What explains those differences?

Section 4: Wrap Up

9. What are your plans for the holiday break?
10. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me today?

Thank you very much for talking with me today.

Interview #6: End of Year 2

Section 1: Catching Up

1. How has your year been going?
2. What were some of your highs and lows throughout the year?
3. What are three words that you would use to describe yourself as a teacher? Tell me about why you chose these words.

Section 2: Classroom Observation

4. Can you tell me a little bit about the class that I observed (or will observe) today?
 - d. Age range, grade level, proficiency level, etc.
 - e. What were (are) your goals for students in the class?
 - f. What have the students been studying previously?
5. Talk me through the lesson.
 - e. What aspects of the lesson were you pleased with? Displeased with? Explain.
 - f. How is this lesson (or aspects of it) representative of your typical teaching self?
 - g. How is this lesson (or aspects of it) representative of the type of teacher you strive to be?
 - h. If you could do the lesson again, what (if anything) would you change? Why?

Section 3: Teaching and Teacher Identity

6. What are some of the routines of your classroom? Why did you choose those routines?
7. Tell me about a typical lesson in your classroom.
 - a. What are you doing?
 - b. What are your kids doing?
8. How have you grown as a teacher?
 - a. Think back to before you started teaching in South Korea. What were you expecting?
 - b. How do those expectations compare to your actual teaching context?
 - c. If you were able to talk to the cohort of ETAs, what advice would you give them about teaching? Why?

Section 4: Wrap Up

9. When the grant year ends next month, what's next for you?
 - a. (If they are leaving): What lessons or skills are you taking with you?
 - b. (If they are staying): What goals do you have for next year?
10. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me today?

Thank you so much for talking with me today and for letting me follow you and your journey this year!

APPENDIX B

Classroom Observation Protocol

Topic: _____ Date: _____
ETA: _____ Time: _____
School: _____ Class: _____

Context for the lesson (e.g., grade level, textbook, co-teacher, etc.):

Classroom arrangement (e.g., seating arrangements, technology, wall décor, etc.)

Lesson Overview:

Time	Teacher's Moves	Student's Moves	Notes/Questions

Teacher's Debrief:

APPENDIX C

Reflective Blog Posts

Table 3. Phase II Monthly Reflection Prompts

Month	Prompt
September 2017	Many of you talked about the importance of building relationships with your students and coworkers during your first month at school. How has it been going? What have you done to build those relationships both with students and with your colleagues? What triumphs have you had? What, if any, resistance have you experienced?
October 2017	Of all the lessons you've taught so far, whether that's four, forty, or anywhere in between, which lesson are you most proud of? Describe the lesson (or even better: share a hyperlink to a Google Doc of the lesson plan) and tell us why it's your favorite one so far. In what ways is it a good representation of who you are as a teacher?
November 2017	To what extent is your teacher persona (or teaching style, if you would prefer) tailored to your specific teaching placement? So, for example, if I were responding to this prompt, I would think about how teaching at a rural, co-ed high school with students who were on a more so vocational track affected how I taught.
January 2018	Whether you create your own or borrow ones that you find on the internet, post a series of memes (at least 3) that represent how you felt about your role as an English teacher at various times during the fall semester. When you post the memes, add brief explanations or vignettes to accompany each of them. Have fun!
February 2018	The winter break is a good time to reflect on the fall semester—your first as an English language teacher. What are some of the lessons you've learned since the start of the grant year?
March 2018	It's the beginning of a new year for you and your students. What rules and routines are you working to establish in your classroom? Why did you choose these particular rules and routines?
April 2018	Over the course of the year, I've asked you to think about who you are as a teacher. This question has taken a variety of forms. In some cases, for example, I have asked for adjectives to describe you as a teacher; in others, I've asked you to talk about your values and how you will enact them in the classroom. However, for this month, I'm going to ask you to think about who are NOT as a teacher. Are there adjectives that you would not want someone to use when describing you as a teacher? Tell us about the teacher who you are not and why?

Table 3 (Cont'd)

May 2018	This month I invite you to think about the ways in which you have felt your position as an ETA being questioned this year. For example, some critics have argued that ETAs are not certified teachers and thus not qualified to be teaching. Others have said that conversational English is not assessed on South Korea's university entrance exam, so it's not important. There are also critics who argue that teaching English is a colonizing act. These are just three examples; there are others. For this month's reflection, choose one moral qualm, and tell us how you are feeling about it now having been an ETA for nearly one year. NOTE: Please don't feel that you have to limit yourself to the three examples listed above. Feel free to share another one that has not already been mentioned. Also note that the critic does not have to be an external one; it is okay to speak to your innermost critic as well.
June 2018	As you all near the end of your (first) grant year, I invite you to write one final reflection. This month's topic is your choice; write about whatever is most on your mind (within the realm of teaching, of course). You can reflect on your favorite lessons/units from your classroom, the ways in which you've grown professionally, the relationships you've formed with some students and those you continue to struggle forming with others. But these are just suggestions. Feel free to take this month's reflection in any direction that feels right for you.
September 2018	In what ways is your teaching context the same or different this year? And, in what ways are you, as a teacher, the same or different this year?
October 2018	This month's reflection topic is one that you all answered about this same time last year; it asks you to reflect on your favorite lesson so far this year. Consider the following questions: 1. What is your favorite lesson that you have taught this fall? Describe it briefly. 2. Why does this one stand out among the rest? Is it because of how your students reacted/performed/participated/etc., or was it memorable for another reason? 3. If you could have done one thing differently in the lesson, what would it have been? Why?
November 2018	Who comes to mind when you think about the "ideal" teacher? Is it a former teacher from your childhood, for example, or a college professor who inspired you? Or maybe it's a character you've seen portrayed in a movie or TV series. Who is this person/character, and what about the way they teach speaks to you? In what ways, if any, do you try to emulate them?

Table 3 (Cont'd)

January / February 2019	This year, there is only one prompt for the break. I am asking you to write a letter to a person/people of your choice. In the letter, reflect on your experiences teaching. Some examples of what this letter could look like include (but are not limited to): 1. A letter to your future self, noting the moments, experiences, emotions, etc. that you hope to remember when reflecting back on your time as an ETA 2. A letter to the next ETA at your school, highlighting the things you wish you had known when you were first starting out. 3. A letter to a student (or group of students).
March 2019	Once again, it's the beginning of a new academic year for your students. What goals do you have you and your students this semester? What do you hope to learn as a teacher? What do you hope your students will learn?
April 2019	You have been asked on numerous occasions now to provide three words that describe you as a teacher. This month, I invite you to pose this question to your students. You can ask a small group of students who you have worked most closely with; or you can ask an entire class or even multiple classes. Then share some of the results and your reflection on those results as your monthly reflection. For example, what were the most common words used by your students? What, if any, words surprised you? Etc.
May 2019	By now, you have read and provided feedback for the teachers writing into the collaborative autoethnography. Thank you for taking the time to do so! With this month's reflection, I invite you to share the ways in which you were responding to their piece. For example, what about the piece resonated with you? What about the piece challenged/pushed your thinking? And/or in what ways were you able to connect with the piece?
June 2019	As you all near the end of your second year of teaching, I invite you to write one final reflection. This month's topic is your choice; write about whatever is most on your mind (within the realm of teaching, of course). Feel free to take this month's reflection in any direction that feels right for you.

APPENDIX D

Article 1 Codebook

Table 4. Article 1 Themes, Codes, and Data Exemplars

Theme	Code	Data Exemplar
Am I qualified?	Native speaker vs. Teacher	I think grammar is taught more effectively in their English class than the native speaker class. (Phase II, September reflection)
	Knowing vs. Teaching	Speaking the language and being able to write well doesn't necessarily mean you know how to teach it, I guess. (Phase I, Interview 1)
	L1 vs. L2 learning	For me, I just know it, right? But then there's these very precise grammatical rules or guidelines that you should know...but since I've just absorbed the language throughout my life, it's kind of hard to pin point the exact situations of using it...I need to study up on my grammar before I become an English teacher. (Phase I, Interview 1)
Am I making a difference? (How to understand)	Receiving student affirmation	Getting verbal affirmation that they enjoyed my lesson from two students. That is two out of 367 students, but hearing "good lesson" from those two students really brightened up my day. (Phase II, September reflection)
	Aligning with students' interests	Maybe I'm not like super crazy about teaching grammar in general, but I'm hoping that things I am interested in...that I can bring those into the classroom, and maybe those align with some of the things the students are interested in. (Phase I, Dinner #3)
	Making an impact	I think [the director] put it really nicely when she's like 'oh, the small differences that you can make' cause...there's definitely tests to see how levels are changing or how much their English is improving, but just in the getting quiet students to raise their hand. When she said that, I definitely resonate with that. (Phase I, Interview 2)
"I teach" (How to act)	Brainstorming solutions	I've been brainstorming ways I can try to reach out to some of my more low-energy classes. I'm planning on hosting a language table every Thursday at the school cafeteria. (Phase II, September reflection)

Table 4 (Cont'd)

“I’m no teacher” (How to be)	Being approachable	I think it’s just as important for us to interact with our students in the hallways and whenever we bump into them outside of school as it is in the classroom. It provides a chance for us to practice in a much more casual environment. (Phase II, April reflection)
	Remaining humble	Like saying you’re humble is also kind of like not being humble, but...instead of trying to show the stuff that I know, I look for more things that I can learn. And in my role as a teacher, I think you can learn a lot from your students. Instead of like always thinking about how obviously you're the teacher... seeing how you're learning from your students. It’s definitely how I would kind of want to go about my teaching here. (Phase I, Interview 2)
	Feeling disingenuous	Though I like things like soccer, it was obvious that my fervor for sports was disingenuous. I didn’t want to be the fake-soccer-loving teacher (Phase II, November reflection)
	Friend vs. Authority	There were a few moments last year where the students would be too loud or goof-off too much during class because they didn’t see me as an authority figure but rather as a friend...I’m preparing myself to make the distinction more clear this next semester. (Phase II, January reflection)
	Useful, but not certified	So I am not going to lie to myself and say that I am a certified, professional teacher. But I still believe that my class is useful for students! (Phase II, May reflection)
	Gifted vs. Earned	I wouldn’t associate the word 선생님 or teacher with me, which sounds weird. But, yeah. It was a gift basically because I am a native English-speaker. (Phase II, Interview 2)
	Persona vs. Personality	So, I think, normally my personality just in daily life is rather like kind of quiet and, I don’t know, very introverted type of person. But then like whenever... I’m working with kids at summer camp or something, I turn the know up a lot or like, I don’t know. I act really crazy or just have a lot of energy, but one of my worries is if I’m going to be able to have that every single day. (Phase I, Dinner #3).

APPENDIX E

Article 2 Codebook

Table 5. Article 2 Themes, Codes, and Data Exemplars

Theme	Code	Example Excerpt from Interview
Unimportant, a distraction	Adding value	To see those comments saying that I am always really encouraging, and I have energy and I give them energy, was really good. I was, "Okay, I'm giving you something useful." That was has been one of my consistent concerns, value added. Am I adding value? What value am I adding to these student's life? Because I didn't think I was doing it through their language acquisition. Or anything to help their school record. (November 2018)
	School expectations	I don't know how much work my co-teachers are expecting me to get out of them. I like I have no idea what my co-teachers are think my role is. Whatsoever. Like don't know what they think my class is actually for. (December 2017)
	University entrance exam	one time, he turned in one of his papers and he didn't even answer the question, but he just said, "I feel sorry for my English teacher because I am always studying, and I never listen. But I'm focusing on the CSAT. Sorry teacher." "I was like, oh my God!" So I just wrote him back, "Hey, it's okay, I appreciate you apology. I know you are working hard. Good luck on your test." (November 2018)
	Beyond the test	I just want them to realize that English is more than just this test because I feel like that, to me, is the toxic part of language colonialism. (August 2017)
	Open doors	When I've been given opportunities at using languages to open up those doors that I'm interested in, that's better. So that's kind of my hope for them. (August 2017)
	Supplement	My job is to...supplement the learning that they're doing with their Korean English teachers. We're very much a supplement to that, which is a blessing, I think, because they will be doing heavy brain work other places, and I can just kind of help them activate that. (August 2017)

Table 5 (Cont'd)

Temporary, uninvested	Waste of time	I don't think my class serves a purpose. I don't think I'm really giving them anything. I don't know what I'm doing, like can you help me. (June 2018)
	At least they're speaking English	if I've said we're gonna work on this now and I walk over to a table and someone is working on math or chemistry instead, I ask them, like, "Oh what are you doing? Like, explain to me what you're working on. Why are you working on this? Do you have a test coming up?" Because like then at least they're speaking English. (December 2017)
	In flux	the position itself is too...ambiguous...transient...nebulous...in flux... like whatever weird theory-ish word you want to use, I don't know it's just it's a lot. And the more you try to strangle it down, right, it just keeps morphing under your hand. It is like punching a balloon...like a water balloon. (June 2018)
	Stranger	My first month is not a success if I feel still very much of this stranger in the space. (August 2017)
	Missing previous teacher	I think that's not going to happen if they are still like 'who are you? where's [the previous] teacher?' So it doesn't matter if I have the most bangin' lesson plans that are going to teach them millions of new vocab words and complex sentence structures if they don't know why I'm sitting in their classroom and want me to leave. (August 2017)
	Here for funsies	I think he knows that I want to teach...I think more so he like sees me like that now, as opposed to just like this random short-term foreigner that's here for just for like, funsies. (December 2017)
	Give a shit	The key here is just, you have to give a shit. You can't teach here if you don't. (May 2019)
	Honor what we had	"Hey I'm leaving and the best thing you can do to honor what we had is to give this person a fair shot." (May 2019)

Table 5 (Cont'd)

	Reverence	Like part of me wants to warn them, to not let this get to you. No matter how many stories you might hear, I failed just as much, I struggled just as much, I wasn't this God-like thing that they...I might be turned into when I leave. (May 2019)
Unqualified, lacking	Collective endeavor	I feel like that can be hard. Teaching is such a collective endeavor that you just...you need help from people around you. (June 2017)
	Babysit	I just don't feel like I'm contributing, like I want to contribute, and I don't just want to kind of be someone that they feel like they have to babysit or like worry about. (June 2017)
	Survival	I'm worried that I'm not going to be able to keep like...to keep myself afloat. Like I don't mind doggie paddle. I don't mind treading water and trying to get by, but it's that always that feat that like your legs are going to give out and you're going to sink, right? You're just gonna start drowning and so...being able to kind of like calm that voice and not listen to that voice in the back of my head. That's one of my worries. (June 2017)
	Native language	teaching isn't easy, and then trying to teach a language when you don't speak the native language it's not an easy task. (June 2017)
	Ill-prepared	Like I need more training, I need more training, I need more training. (June 2018)
	Imperfection	that's where being a new teacher, not knowing the strategies...the tough thing about being a teacher and feeling like you are imperfect (November 2018)
	Unqualified	I'm like "you know, on paper, objectively, none of us regardless if you have a teaching degree or like, none of us are qualified to teach here. None of us are certified Korean teachers, like by Korean teaching standards, none of us are teachers. (December 2017)
	Student performance = Teacher merit	are you prepared for this? Like I just like, oh my gosh, I just want you to, I don't want you to feel like you were about to screw this up majorly. And, um, because to me that is a sign that like, I didn't do enough work to help you feel prepared for this. (June 2018)

Table 5 (Cont'd)

	Paralysis by analysis	I feel like it's in some ways due to my lack of like preparation, it's my, and now it's due to my paralysis by analysis to put in preparing, right. That I don't feel like I can put one of these together until my back's against the wall 45 minutes before class starts because I've just like funneling through so many ideas and not settling on one and not confident enough on one. (June 2018)
	Teacher, but not	when I read the paper, I was just like wow, this is really good! And I know...I honestly have no idea who you are. Just like kind of reconciling that. That was a really weird moment for me to be like, I see these kids.... I spend all this time teaching them, and like but how well do I really know them? ... the role that I play is that of a teacher, but not a teacher. ... this is really weird place to be. (November 2018)
Complicit in colonizing acts	Language colonialism	I just want them to realize that English is more than just this test because I feel like that, to me, is the toxic part of language colonialism. (August 2017)
	Imperialistic	the biggest manifestation of that very imperialistic aspect of it is how closely it's tied to my students' future success. That's bogus! (August 2017)
	You tell me	Don't let me tell you that you shouldn't be using that to focus on that because that's your reality. I can't sit here and tell you that you shouldn't be concerned about that because that's very much your reality, so if your choice is 'I want to focus on English to prepare for this test and to get a job and go to a great school', then you're right. The game is rigged, and I'm going to help you cheat it. I'm all about that. But if you realize that and you're like, pissed off at that and you want to be able to use English for something else, then I'm about that too.' (August 2017)
	Agency or Advocacy	I'm really big on like agency and self-advocacy and things like that. I saw like in a very cool way that language can be used for that kind of thing. (June 2017)
Hospitality	Validation	I think I am. I think, yeah, I'm a teacher. I think, I think a big part of that comes from, I feel a lot of validation from my coworkers. (May 2019)

Table 5 (Cont'd)

Fitting in

I've found my, I've finally settled into my cracks, it feels like. Um, which is a nice feeling. I don't have that worry that, not as big anymore, like what the hell am I doing here? Where do I...so, that's nice to feel like you actually have a place within the school, which is why I don't want to leave. I want to stay again. Cause I'm in it now, I can move within it and grow within that space. (May 2019)

Grace

Giving myself, maybe like some grace, treating myself with grace, maybe that's not the right word, but like, being nicer to myself, like knowing that okay, this isn't going to go perfect but it's getting better. (May 2019)

APPENDIX F

A Letter to Future Ocheon High School Teachers

To the teacher(s) after me,

If you're reading this letter, it means that you've been assigned to teach at Ocheon High School (OHS) for the upcoming grant year. Welcome! There are so many things to love about the people here. The teachers, students, community: they are all truly incredible! While I would love to tell you about each and every one of them, I think it is best for you to meet the people and discover their warmth and welcoming spirits in your own time.

For all their admirable qualities, there is one common flaw that I feel the need to warn you about. Here at OHS, they love to tell their ghost stories...

No, the school is not actually haunted, but I suspect that it feels like that at times. In my day, the ghost went by the name of Mariah. Her presence could be felt in every nook and cranny of the school. Her handwriting was quite literally on the walls—in the form of bulletin boards, artwork, and the like. Her name was on everyone's lips:

Mariah taught her classes like this.

Do it, you know, how Mariah did it.

You should try it Mariah's way.

For the entire first semester, one homeroom referred to my class on Wednesday mornings as “Mariah's class” on their weekly schedule—a nearly 3-foot-tall bulletin board posted just inside the door to their classroom. Mariah haunted my every move for a good portion of that first year.

It's the nature of our job, I suppose. We are haunted by the teachers who came before us, and then we inadvertently find ourselves haunting those who come after we are gone.

We know that this is the case, and we take steps to avoid it from happening. And, yet, our ghosts persist. Case in point: before I left, I made a list of places within the building where my name or image appeared: my cabinet in the main teacher's office, my laptop borrowed from the tech office, the photo hanging over the students' main entrance, the framed photo of me and my host family on the vice principal's desk. My face and name were everywhere, and not surprisingly so; I dedicated three years of my life to OHS after all. But this was 2011, and Kate would be arriving in two months.

My presence haunted Kate; I know it was not an easy year for her. The teachers and students continued to tell their ghost stories throughout that year, and the next year when Kathy arrived, and Gina the year after that. It's now 2019. It's been eight years since I left OHS, and yet, I fear that you will still feel my presence in the school. For that, I am sorry.

I encourage you to make YOUR presence known. Teach the way you want to teach. Build relationships with the staff, students, and community that are yours and yours alone. When asked, "Do you know Laura? She was a teacher here too." Just say "No, she was gone long before I arrived in Korea." That...and...maybe avoid the students' entrance for awhile. I hear my ghost can still be seen hanging out above the door. ;)

Welcome to Ocheon High School, a school that wholly and lovingly embraces its ghosts and ghost stories, perhaps without realizing their effect on the teachers who come after. I wish you a very successful year or two or three and an even longer haunting of OHS in the years to come.

Sincerely,

Laura Kennedy

English Language Teacher, 2008-2011

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