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Abstract

Despite the popularity of communities of practice (CoP) in education, there is a paucity of research on teacher preparation programs that are deliberately created to build and sustain CoP to help bilingual pre-service teachers' learning. This qualitative study describes how a community of practice was purposefully developed in a teacher preparation program for bilingual undergraduates in Hawaii. Using multiple forms of qualitative data, such as classroom transcripts, interviews, online discussion posts, and reflection journals, I illustrate how a cohort of pre-service teachers and their instructor created a facilitative and reflective classroom community of practice. Using narrative inquiry and thematic analysis, I identified two overarching contextual conditions that provided a favorable learning environment for student participation: (1) sustained support and rapport within a cohort, and (2) narratives as a process of mutual engagement. Findings suggest teacher educators purposefully create CoP for pre-service teachers around shared narratives in order to foster sustained critical reflections.

Keywords

Communities of Practice, Bilingual Pre-Service Teachers, Teacher Education, Narrative Inquiry, Thematic Analysis

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Despite the popularity of communities of practice (CoP) in education, there is a paucity of research on teacher preparation programs that are deliberately created to build and sustain CoP to help bilingual pre-service teachers' learning. This qualitative study describes how a community of practice was purposefully developed in a teacher preparation program for bilingual undergraduates in Hawaii. Using multiple forms of qualitative data, such as classroom transcripts, interviews, online discussion posts, and reflection journals, I illustrate how a cohort of pre-service teachers and their instructor created a facilitative and reflective classroom community of practice. Using narrative inquiry and thematic analysis, I identified two overarching contextual conditions that provided a favorable learning environment for student participation: (1) sustained support and rapport within a cohort, and (2) narratives as a process of mutual engagement. Findings suggest teacher educators purposefully create CoP for pre-service teachers around shared narratives in order to foster sustained critical reflections. Keywords: Communities of Practice, Bilingual Pre-Service Teachers, Teacher Education, Narrative Inquiry, Thematic Analysis

The concept of communities of practice (CoP) developed by Lave and Wenger (1991) has been widely utilized as a conceptual framework for social theories of learning. Rather than conceiving learning as a cognitive and/or behavioral process, the CoP framework proposes a paradigm shift in learning, one in which social participation is the primary condition. The underlying assumption of communities of practice lies in a reconceptualization of learning beyond the individual (Barton & Tusting, 2005). Although Lave and Wenger developed the CoP model to explain socially situated learning of apprentices in informal settings (e.g., midwives, butchers, and tailors), it has been widely adopted by researchers who focus on formal educational contexts (e.g., Brown, 2007; Cho, 2013; Hodges & Cady, 2013; Lee & Clare, 2013; Morton, 2012; Sim, 2006). In particular, research has demonstrated that the creation of communities of practice enhances collaboration, thereby providing academic and social support for student learning in teacher preparation programs (Au, 2002; Cuddapah & Clayton, 2011; Dinsmore & Wenger, 2006; Levine, 2011; Yang, 2009; Zeichner & Gore, 1990).

In this research project, I aim to provide insight into the qualities of a supportive community of practice in a teacher preparation program that was purposefully designed to create a learning community for bilingual pre-service teachers. I will delineate the characteristics of the communities of practice in the program that resulted in successful student learning, and also discuss the tensions and challenges among members that complicated their participation in the communities of practice. In light of these findings, I will offer some suggestions for utilizing the CoP model for diverse teacher candidates in teacher education programs.

Conceptual Framework

Communities of Practice Defined

A community of practice (CoP) is broadly defined as "a group of people who share an interest in a domain of human endeavor and engage in a process of collective learning that creates bonds between them" (Wenger, 1998, p. 1). CoP defines community not in terms of pre-determined social categories, such as gender, language, race, ethnicity, nationality, or class, but through social interaction and shared goals. Wenger (1998) identified three sources of community coherence: *mutual engagement, a joint enterprise,* and *shared repertoire*.

Mutual engagement concerns negotiated objects of attention and regular interaction with a community of people. This is the basis for the relationships that make the community of practice possible. A joint enterprise refers to a common endeavor in a process in which to accomplish negotiated goals through interaction within a community. Shared repertoire involves a set of routines, words, instruments, or genre by means of which participants express their identity within the community in the course of its existence. Communities of practice have multiple levels and types of participation, in that at any one time members may be central participants in one community, but peripheral participants in another. Even within one community of practice, members can move back and forth between the core and the periphery depending on the social context in which they are situated. It is also worth noting that the idea of community here does not necessarily refer to a sense of harmony, but rather to shared social practices and goals that become differentiated among subgroups (Fuller, 2007). The members moving back and forth from the core, members joining and leaving, and members determining their legitimacy in the communities of practice can all lead to tensions and disharmony.

Wenger (1998) further expanded the construct of communities of practice by considering learning as an experience of identity, which entails both a process and a place. As a consequence, to support learning is not only to facilitate the process of acquiring knowledge and skill, but also to provide a place in which new ways of knowing can be realized in the form of an identity. He argued that learning communities should become "places of identity to the extent they make trajectories possible— that is, to the extent they offer a past and a future that can be experienced as a personal trajectory" (p. 215). By incorporating its members' pasts into its history and by acknowledging members' engagement in the context of a valued future, a community can enhance members' participation and thus learning.

Communities of Practice in Teacher Education

Research has demonstrated that the creation of communities of practice enhances collaboration by providing academic and social support for student learning in teacher preparation programs (Cuddapah & Clayton, 2011; Jimenez-Silva & Olson, 2012; Wray, 2007). For example, Islam (2012) reported that a community of practice in a teacher preparation program provided an opportunity for South African pre-service teachers to share their experiences and perspectives with one another and to contest the dominant perception about rural schools. Goos and Bennison (2008) illustrated that a community of practice allowed secondary math pre-service teachers to define their own professional goals and values. Another example of an educational community of practice can be found in the *Community of Teachers*, a professional development program for pre-service teachers at Indiana University (Barab & Duffy, 2000). In this program, pre-service teachers negotiated goals and meanings of the community as well as the profession while working with 'old timers' (seniors/students with teaching experience) and doing their fieldwork in one school.

Further, they shared their personal narratives that embodied the canonical practices of the community and developed a shared language to describe particular group practices. Overall, the concept of communities of practice can provide insight into the dynamic and complex relationship between learning and identity of pre-service teachers because it suggests that learning is not simply a unidirectional process of appropriation, but a *multidirectional* process that changes over time through both participation and non-participation (Lee & Smagorinsky, 2000).

Critiques of Communities of Practice

Despite its popularity in education (Brown, 2007; Gleeson & Tait, 2012; Lea, 2005; Niesz, 2010), the notion of communities of practice has endured several criticisms. First, as Gee (2004) points out, the idea of "community" can carry connotations of "belonging" and close-knit personal ties among people, which are not necessarily always applicable to workplaces, classrooms, or other sites where the notion has been used. The concept of "community" assumes the notion of people being "members." However, "membership" refers to such different meanings across different types of communities of practice. Moreover, there are many different ways and degrees of being a member in some communities of practice (Gee, 2004).

Second, the later work of Wenger and his colleagues (Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002) applied communities of practice to business management where there is a presumably shared goal for everybody in a company. In this context, apprenticeship can be part of a joint effort between expert and novice for entrepreneurial purposes; the apprentice is expected to participate with a master or an old-timer and then take over a portion of the practice (Leki, 2007). In a similar vein, apprenticeship in education is also based on a relationship between a master (i.e., teacher) and an apprentice (i.e., student). However, in a typical university class for undergraduates (even for graduate students), there is not always apprenticeship going on between instructor and students because the university professor is not part of the school context where the novice teachers will eventually teach.

Another criticism of the construct of communities of practice is that it does not explicitly focus on power relations between members in the larger sociocultural contexts where members are situated (Moore, 2006). The CoP theory appears to take for granted that the novice and the expert share a harmonious relationship devoted to advancing the learners' (in this case teacher candidates') movement from legitimate peripheral participation to full participation (see Eckert & Wenger, 2005, for discussion of non-linear, dynamic, and conflicting relationships in communities of practice). The assumption that the relationship between teacher candidates and their university instructor is positive and collaborative does not reflect the actual nature of the relations that develop, the power differential inherent in any learning situation, or the consequences when relationships between learner and teacher are less than optimal at the personal level (Leki, 2007).

My exploration in this research occurred "*in situ* (at the local level of practice), therefore incorporating the narratives of others, and in this sense is collaborative and hermeneutic" (Byrne-Armstrong, 2000, p. 112). I wanted to ascertain the presence and substance of the critical reflection exhibited by the study participants, both individually and collectively. To this end, personal narratives from all participants were subsequently incorporated into the study. In turn, I discuss narrative inquiry as a way of unpacking the power relations that we often take for granted in making sense of teaching and learning in communities of practice.

Narrative Inquiry

Drawing from Derrida (1976), Denzin (1997) explains why neither the written words nor the performance is ever final or complete to directly capture lived experience of participants. That is, our understanding of a person is mediated by language or other communicative modes and is constantly constructed and re-constructed. Narrative inquiry is useful in disrupting hierarchical binaries of teacher/student, public/private, researcher/researched and theory/practice (Nayak, 2003). Bruner (1986) argues that narrative researchers should not be concerned about whether the account conforms to what others might say about the narrator or whether the account is 'true.' The real purpose of analyzing narratives is to look into the individual's own thoughts and perspectives on his or her actions. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) inform us that the concern involves "the representation of experience, causality, temporality and the difference between the experience of time and the telling of the time, narrative form, and integrity of the whole in a research document, the invitational quality of a research text, its authenticity, adequacy and plausibility" (p. 139). They assert that narratives are the embodiments of subjective, multiple points-of-view, rather than objective, omniscient accounts. They may illuminate the multiplicity of self by raising challenging questions and exploring them from multiple angles, giving legitimacy to subjectivity of an individual's meaning-making process.

However, it is important to note that narratives do not spring merely from the minds of individuals, but are social and cultural creations resulting from contexts where the individual is situated. That is, narrative is a form of social practice in which individuals draw from their experiences to construct certain kinds of self in specific social contexts (Smith & Spakes, 2005; Vitanova, 2005). This means that a narrator, consciously or unconsciously, accommodates his or her narrative to the hearer's perceived social identities in interaction (Yamaguchi, 2005). Wortham (2001) articulates a similar stance about the social constitutive nature of personal narratives.

In sum, personal narratives offer a unique means of examining the tension of shifting identities of language minority student teachers while going through teacher education. They allow students to identify problems, challenges, and frustrations and how these emerge and impact on the present and future. They can "offer a way to impose an imaginary coherence on the experience of dispersal and fragmentation, which is the history of all enforced diasporas" (Hall, 1990, p. 224). The broader interdisciplinary field of narrative studies (Bruner, 1986; Ochs, 1997) views narratives as the primary form of human understanding that provides socially and culturally specific stories, stories that are supplemented by the social practices, texts and other media representations of specific social groups (Gee, 2000). What is of particular importance in this study lies in the awareness that narratives shift power relations between 'the researcher' and 'the researched' and between the teacher and students, granting all research participants agency and voice (Pavlenko, 2007). Although there have been a number of studies on communities of practice in education, there is a paucity of research on teacher preparation programs that are deliberately created to build and sustain CoP to help bilingual pre-service teachers' learning. To this end, my study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1) What conditions facilitate a supportive community of practice in a teacher preparation program for bilingual prospective teachers? and
2) What challenges and tensions do occur in communities of practice?

The Research Context

This article draws from a larger participatory action research project (H. Cho, 2011) in a teacher preparation program to promote heritage language/literacy as well as academic English among bilingual teacher candidates in Hawaii. The *Careers in Language Education and Academic Renewal* (CLEAR) Program was a federally funded undergraduate program designed to provide an opportunity for bilingual undergraduate students to become competent in English and their heritage literacy. From the outset of the program, CLEAR was purposefully designed to institutionalize the practice of building communities of practice through the curriculum and instruction. It was envisioned that such a model would provide a supportive space for reflection and interaction among members not only during their participation in CLEAR, but also throughout their educational career. That is, CoP was one of the conceptual frameworks that underpinned the larger research in which I considered academic learning of bilingual pre-service teachers as situated learning in multiple communities, such as English-speaking and heritage language speaking communities of practice. As an instructor and curriculum developer, I worked with a cohort of five undergraduate students—three Korean (Jisun, Kyungmi and Young), one Chinese (Rose) and one Samoan (Mano) (see Appendix A for student information) over the course of three semesters (see Eckert & Wenger, 2005, for discussion of non-linear, dynamic, and conflicting relationships in communities of practice). Students took a series of my seminars entitled Academic Literacies, Language Materials Development, and Teaching Practicum. They also took both second language education courses and their respective heritage language courses to complete the program requirement.

Prior to the start of data collection, I obtained institutional review board (IRB) approval from the university. While explaining about the goals and procedures of the study to the students, I ensured them their decision (not) to participate would not affect their grades at all. To mitigate the negative impact of researching my own classroom practice, I did not interview students until after all the grading was completed in the final semester. In fact, all students were eager to participate in my research as they considered it as an opportunity to get their voices heard about bilingual students' academic learning in and out of the classroom. They told me that "nobody would listen to my story," "This is the first time a teacher would be interested in what I have to say about the class," and "I appreciate this opportunity to talk to you outside the class." They were willing to contribute to the data collection process, even volunteering to provide their personal journals on their learning experiences at an American university. In addition to face-to-face interactions in the classroom, I strongly encouraged online communication via WebCT (WebCT, as with Blackboard, was a course management system which included discussion boards, announcement, calendar, and live chat) so as to provide an additional space for sharing their experiences in and out of the classroom. The online discussion board in the CLEAR Program was embedded within the curriculum and structure of the weekly seminar. As for online communications in the seminar, students were required to take turns to initiate topics for discussions regarding the readings they did for the weekly seminar and also share their ideas about *doing college* as bilingual undergraduates in general.

They also posted their English practicum and heritage language teaching experiences in community-based schools (Cho, 2014). The assumption behind this requirement was that communal activities, such as weekly reflection posting was vital to build rapport and increase professionalism (Goos & Bennison, 2008). In order to provide structure and ensure that contributions were timely, I established a posting deadline (e.g., Sunday noon) for each discussion topic; however, all topics remained accessible to participants so they could revisit and add to previous discussion posts. I hoped that exposure to a range of diverse viewpoints

would assist them to articulate the assumptions that underpin conceptions of academic learning, reflect on their learning processes, and eventually frame their own epistemologies of bilingual teaching practice. That is, the on-line discussion board was designed as a space in which students' multiple identities were viewed as an integral part of the participation in academic communities of practice. Since I was cautious of getting trapped into taking over the discussion, I consciously waited for students' voices to be heard rather than making postings every day. Further, students worked closely together on various individual and group projects, such as a literacy autobiography, electronic portfolio, and language materials development (see Appendix B for the shared goals and artifacts in the CLEAR seminar series).

Data Collection and Analysis

I collected and analyzed multiple genres of narratives, including literacy autobiographies, electronic portfolios, classroom transcripts, weekly reflections, and verbalized accounts of students' academic lives through interviews (all interviews were recorded and transcribed. As a Korean/English bilingual, I conducted interviews with Mano and Rose in English while interviews with Jisun, Kyungmi, and Young were conducted in Korean. I did not insist on either Korean or English, but all of the three Korean students chose to talk to me in Korean. I translated the interview data from Korean into English. There was a great amount of code-switching, which I consider an important linguistic resource for bilingual speakers with a range of semantic and affective functions and purposes (Pavlenko, 2007). Italicized words or phrases indicate code-switching from Korean to English) I looked into shifting discourses of language minority students in a variety of modes, including academic research papers, interviews, electronic portfolios, and online discussions. This allowed me to examine how these texts moved from classroom settings to academic papers to WebCT discussions to electronic portfolios and look into how these texts differed from one another because of the different modality and contexts. For example, I found a similar theme of 'capitalizing on linguistic and cultural knowledge for identity negotiation' recurrent in the various modes of texts, which began in classroom discussion, moved to WebCT, and then appeared in the electronic portfolios.

The process of data collection and analysis was iterative which involved a constant comparison of data and theory to develop patterns and gain insights (Merriam, 1998). During the process of implementing the curriculum over the three semesters, I made repeated passes through classroom transcripts to help me plan future interaction with students in follow-up discussions. After each taping of a class meeting, I listened to the entire tape immediately while referring to my field notes that I took before and during class. Then, I transcribed the entire tape as soon as I could so I could remember what happened in that particular class in detail.

My initial data analysis of student narratives was thematic (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). I read the classroom transcripts repeatedly and then identified common themes in relation to CoP across them at the end of every week. The iterative process of data analysis allowed me to redefine themes and codes and to focus on subsequent observation in the class. First, I performed line-by-line data analysis throughout and after the data collection was completed. Second, I winnowed the data by creating a text of important categories and themes in relation to CoP trajectories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Then, I further analyzed each participant's narrative by finding emerging codes connecting their academic identity in communities of practice. These codes were then clustered with similar responses to determine prevalence in the data. Once the patterns were established, representative segments of pre-service teachers' weekly online reflection posts and interview data were used to illustrate the presence of

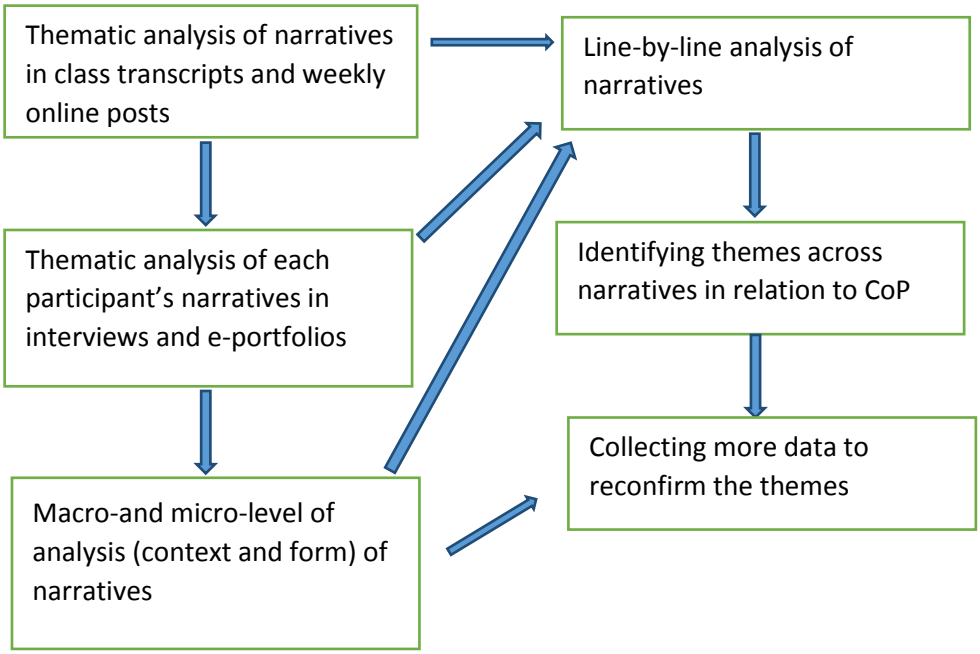
particular beliefs about their learning in multiple communities of practice. The process concluded with an in-depth analysis of each participant.

As Pavlenko (2007) suggests, content analysis is not sufficient in unraveling the complex, hidden, and sometimes contradictory nature of narratives. Both context (macro-level of analysis, including social, cultural, political, economic, and institutional circumstances of narrative production) and form (micro-level of analysis, including language choice such as codeswitching, audience, interactional issues and power relationships) were taken into account in the process of data analysis (See Figure 1).

By paying special attention to the interplay between content, context and form I began to notice patterns of student responses and interactions across the seminars, and coded the data for three domains:

a) evidence of the benefits of a cohort community,
b) evidence of creating a facilitative learning environment in which students actively shared their personal narratives and
c) tensions and challenges in the communities of practice to which they belong.

Figure 1. Data analysis process



Findings and Discussion

The following section is organized around the two overarching contextual conditions that provided a favorable learning environment for student participation:

1) support and rapport within a cohort community, and
2) narratives as a process of mutual engagement.

I will then describe tensions to address the complex issues of participation in communities of practice.

Creating a Cohort Community with Sustained Support and Rapport

One of the explicitly stated goals of CLEAR was to build a community of practice within the program so that participants could explore different ways in which to learn academic discourse in a relatively safe, supportive, and facilitative environment. Forming a cohort was one way of facilitating the process of constructing a community of practice because participants could work together for a sustained period of time and build rapport with one another. A number of studies have emerged that integrate the concept of communities of practice and professional development of pre-service teachers by forming student cohorts (e.g., Seifert & Mandzuk, 2006; Sim, 2006; Wray, 2007) where students are grouped together, along with the same instructor, from the beginning of the professional sequence, through seminars and field work, until graduation. As Dinsmore and Wenger (2006) observed, cohorts can create the "structural opportunity to maximize and create a community minded culture that supports personal, academic and professional growth" (p. 58).

However, cohorts are not necessarily beneficial in that benefits are often social and personal in nature rather than challenging each other in community discussion (Sapon-Shevin & Chandler-Olcott, 2001; Seifert & Mandzuk, 2006; Sim, 2006). That is, cohort members would often put harmony and unity first, believing in the utopian nature of community building. Therefore I was cognizant of the danger in assuming that a cohort would become a community of learning without conflicts, tensions, and problems. However, students readily recognized the value of belonging to the cohort in CLEAR. Sustained support and rapport were the most prominent features among student narratives regarding their experience in the program. The findings provide evidence of students' acknowledging and validating a sense of camaraderie and collegiality as essential components of building a community of practice that led to personal and academic growth. For example, Mano repeatedly mentioned that the seminars offered a space for interaction, reflection and support unlike some of the courses in which he was enrolled. In the following excerpt from an exit interview with Mano, he revealed that CLEAR seminars served as a community of learning wherein he could step back and reflect on what he had learned:

Excerpt 1

> **Hyesun**: Do you have any suggestions for a future program like the CLEAR program?
> **Mano**: It [CLEAR program] was an excellent experience. I was blessed to work with the most motivated people. We built this community of learning—more like family, you know.
> **Hyesun**: Was it because of the small class size?
> **Mano**: It was not only its class size but something that triggers the mindset of "You cannot hold off anything here!"*(laughs)* We established good communication which was one good example of building a community. CLEAR valued individual perspectives and experiences. Our voice was accepted here. To be honest, I was more careful speaking up in other courses, but in the seminars, I was like "Go for broke!" "Speak your mind!"
> **Hyesun:** Really? I am glad to hear that.
> **Mano**: Yeah, it's a support system; we encourage each other to speak up; we make connections between what we learned in other classes and what we'll do in the future as educators through this program. It provided a space for reflection and discussion. It was a once-in-a-life-time opportunity. When I go back to Samoa, I'd like to build a program like this. (Mano, interview)

When asked for suggestions to improve the program, Mano provided an insightful view of CLEAR in a confident and affirming tone. He explicitly acknowledged the learning trajectory, a community in which reflection was encouraged. Mano found himself to feel more comfortable speaking his mind in the CLEAR classroom than other courses. In addition to the small class size, the family-like community in CLEAR allowed him to freely share his thoughts and experiences in class. The mantras "you cannot hold off anything here," "go for broke" and "speak your mind" seemed to result from the class atmosphere in which individual voices, perspectives and experiences were accepted and validated. Here Mano captured the purposes of the program as a support system in which to provide a dialogic space for sustained support and reflection. Note that he highlighted interconnected relationships among the seminar, prior courses, and future classes he would be teaching. As Wenger (1998) would interpret, the seminar community enhanced Mano's learning because it afforded a place for intersecting his past, present, and future trajectories.

His strong sense of belonging to a community of practice is also manifested in his final journal entry:

Excerpt 2

> I am pleased to convey my sincere reflection to this semester's practicum project, which has been a very rewarding experience to me as a prospective educator. Moreover, I am so privileged to report that I am very fortunate to have been working side by side with the most active and supportive cohort colleagues throughout the duration of this semester. We have yet to prove once more that teamwork is the key to success; which was the backbone of this semester's load of course works not only in the classroom but out into the field. I am truly privileged for being a member of this community of learning which has sporadically inspired me a lot to learn, in addition to proving the fact that learning is fun over the past four semesters of my educational journey here. I shall always cherish my participation in the CLEAR program as one of the most treasured experience in my life. Furthermore, when we are dispersed out into the world of teaching, I shall always take my identity of being a member of the CLEAR program, because by just thinking about such experience will immediately empower me to do good things especially in the teaching profession….
>
> [O]ur educational lives are filled with different kinds of challenges, so the aforementioned challenges do not come with a surprise to us as students. However, even though we were caught in some difficult moments of teaching, but we have managed to survive together as a team from the beginning until the end. For one thing, we have tailored together a network of cooperating pre-service teachers who help one another when difficulties surface. (Mano, reflection journal)

Implicit in his narrative in Excerpt 2 lies in the process of building a community of practice in which the learner is subject to interaction, reflection, and collaboration. His metaphors like "team," "community of learning," and "a network of cooperating pre-service teachers" imply his understanding and perception of the nature of the CLEAR seminars as a strong community of practice.

The discourse of learning through affective and collaborative relationships was

apparent in an exit interview with Young who was an initially reticent student in the cohort. She revealed that verbal and non-verbal encouragement and support from her peers contributed to her development into a confident member in the seminar:

Excerpt 3

> **Young**: They all gave me a lot of support and encouragement throughout the seminar series, particularly, Rose. She provided me with a lot of compliments when we ran into each other in the hallway, in a computer lab or at the library. Mano did that, too; he always gave me a positive response to my *presentation* for the class, online discussion posts, and so forth, saying "*Thanks for your posting! I enjoyed it*!" It made me feel good about my work and myself. It got me thinking, "Oh, I am making a good *contribution* to this class." It was so nice to work with the same group of friendly and supportive people throughout the program. (Young, interview)

Explicit in Excerpt 3 is Young's appreciation of support, encouragement, and positive feedback by her peers in the cohort. As Wenger (1998) would argue, the recognition of the self by others in a community of practice to which they belong together can lead individuals to construct positive self-identity. The emotional support that Young was offered by other members induced a greater sense of confidence in how Young participated in the class. Young's narrative attests that the emotional support of friends and colleagues can be crucial in student transformation (Zembylas, 2003). Overall, the CLEAR participants displayed a shared sense of identity and belonging, and shared responsibility as aspiring bilingual educators. The CLEAR community seemed to help students engage in active participation wherein student voices were encouraged and validated through storytelling. This leads to a discussion of another contextual condition that provided supportive learning environment within the seminar—sharing personal narratives as a way of mutual engagement.

Sharing Narratives with Participants

Throughout the class discussions, both face-to-face and online, there were multiple examples that support the use of personal narratives as a medium through which participants co-constructed knowledge and positioned the self in relation to others (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This is one of the processes for mutual engagement proposed by Wenger (1998), "the unfolding of histories of practice" (p. 74). The joint pursuit of an enterprise (i.e., set of goals) creates resources for negotiating meaning, which can be accomplished through heterogeneous, yet shared "ways of doing things" (Wenger, 1998, p. 86). In addition to drawing on CLEAR members' narratives (Rodriguez & Cho, 2011), I frequently invited guest speakers to the classroom so they could share their tacit knowledge, skills and experiences. The guest speakers included an instructor from an undergraduate course in bilingual education, a technology specialist for utilizing multimedia for language teaching, a middle school teacher working with diverse student populations, a language materials publisher for less-commonly-taught languages and a Micronesian language specialist to discuss the language revitalization movement in the Pacific Rim. Students commented in their reflection journals and course evaluations that these guest speakers stimulated their interest in varying topics and enhanced their understanding of a given topic.

Yet, the most compelling evidence of active interaction and reflection was observed with a first-year female graduate student from Korea who was undergoing the similar learning experience as a novice in the same university. Dayoung played a unique role as

someone whose learning trajectory paralleled that of the CLEAR students. Dayoung provided the wealth of insights into the process of academic learning as a site of struggle by sharing her intimate first-person accounts. I invited Dayoung to the seminar not only because she was undergoing academic learning that was akin to that of my students, but also because she was not a typical guest speaker with authoritative knowledge, skills, and expertise. Rather, she was someone with experiential knowledge which is too often viewed as unimportant or irrelevant in the higher education context. Because she was a language minority student who struggled with academic writing, she said she was often considered inadequate for graduate studies by her professors and peers at an English-speaking university. Instead of inviting an English writing instructor as an expert in the field, I decided to invite Dayoung instead to my class as with an intention to "reexamine claims to authority in knowledge production and professional expertise" (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 123). Her experience as a non-native speaker who was encountering challenges in Western academia not only resonated with CLEAR students, but ensured to students that language minority narratives are crucial in understanding participation in academic communities.

My belief was that learners or newcomers should not be positioned as passive recipients of knowledge and skills in a community of practice; rather they should be recognized as co-producers of meaning in the community. For the same reason, I also *performed* my own identity—to teach as a non-native English speaking, international graduate student in education. Whenever possible, I shared my own narratives about challenges, frustrations, and transformations during my participation in academia as a language minority student. Many participation patterns in the class transcripts were not characterized by instructor–student dyadic relations, with the instructor taking the role of expert and the students being the novice. I consciously revealed my own struggle as a graduate student who was not fully socialized into the Western academy as a way to avoid the authority rooted in my role as the instructor. One example of such influence was manifested in the cohort's achievement in making a group presentation at a regional conference on language education:

Excerpt 4

> To tell the truth, when we initially discussed the possibility of giving a presentation on our e-portfolios in a conference at the end of last semester, I felt a little doubtful whether we had sufficient knowledge and background to inform our audience about the subject. The fact that none of our cohort members have made a presentation in a conference in the past doubled my anxiety in giving a talk in public. Based on my experiences going to local and national conferences, I felt I was not qualified to give a conference presentation because only presenters who I have seen were graduate students or professors who had a lot of research and presentation experiences. However, our instructor highly encouraged us to take advantage of this good opportunity and truly believed in our ability and potential. Especially, teacher's story of her first experience giving a presentation at a national conference was very inspiring and motivating; this helped me to encourage and persuade other cohort members to work together to prepare for the presentation. (Jisun, online post, emphasis added)

The conference presentation was a joint enterprise of all CLEAR cohort members: with my encouragement, Jisun took the initiative to submit a proposal to the regional conference. As Jisun wrote, none of the students had experience in a conference presentation

even in their first language. My personal narrative helped Jisun overcome her self-doubt about her qualifications as a conference presenter. Jisun mentioned later again in an exit interview that she was surprised to hear about my lived experience, saying that "even the teacher went through the same challenge." The interwoven and often imperceptible facets of my social positions—of language, gender, race, and ethnicity—had a contingent value that enabled me to foster a unique community of practice and present myself in challenging ways that might not have been possible to other teachers (H. Cho, 2014). Students often mentioned they did not feel marginalized in the classroom in which their knowledge, perspectives, and experience were considered more validated than the theories they learned from the readings. My conscious attempts to foster this kind of power shift from textual authority to experiential knowledge were prevalent throughout the data. Young mentioned how much she appreciated numerous opportunities to contribute to class discussion:

Excerpt 5

> **Hyesun**: Did you feel uncomfortable when I called on you to share your opinions or ideas about the *readings*? I was always worried about that. I didn't want you to feel pressured. I didn't want to *put you on the spot* in class.
> **Young**: No, to be honest, it was better for me that you did so because I had a chance to speak up when it might have been difficult for me to jump in otherwise. I thought you offered me the floor to share my thoughts and experiences. I felt recognized and validated.
> **Hyesun**: Really?
> **Young**: Yeah. The way you did gave me an impression that my contribution to class discussions drawing from my own experiences, perspectives, and challenges was as important as the course readings, like the theories that we were learning. (Young, interview)

In contrast to my concern about making her uncomfortable in front of her peers, Young was grateful that she was given the floor to jump in and share her narratives. Young's remarks reaffirm the potential of a teacher to legitimize learners who tended to be positioned marginally in discussions (Giroux, 1988). In a similar vein, Leki (2007) argues for a teacher's intervention to assert equality of participation by international students (especially in group work) in classroom interactions. Young's knowledge, skills and experience were acknowledged as a valuable resource in the CLEAR classroom. Thus it can be argued that "the ethically grounded use of teachers' authority" (Albright, 2002, p. 294) can lay open students' possibilities through active engagement of dialogic conversations among co-participants in the classroom.

Tensions among Student Participants

Research has shown that many communities of practice in the classroom engage in conflicts, tensions, and challenges among participants (e.g., Harris & Shelswell, 2005). Not surprisingly, tensions did occur among the CLEAR students despite their strong rapport and support for one another. One such instance was evident during their preparation for a group presentation on e-portfolios at a regional conference. Conflicts were observed when it came to assigning roles and responsibilities of each student. To apply for the conference, students faced a daunting challenge of writing an abstract—a task that they had never done before in their academic lives, even in their first language. The tension arose when Jisun found nobody was responding to her ideas about writing their abstract. As the due date for submission was

fast approaching, she felt there was not sufficient time to write collaboratively. She posted her request via WebCT a few times to urge her classmates to post their feedback by a set date:

Excerpt 6

> **Subject: Re: Topic #2 (E-portfolio presentation)**
>
> Hi All,
> To be honest, I am a little frustrated by your lack of participation. Since no one has replied to my question yet, let me modify my question to be more specific. Would you please let me know of your thoughts on advantages and challenges of using e-portfolios for language instruction and for teacher development? What would be the benefits of our presentation to the conference participants?
>
> Thank you, and please post your answers by Friday so that I have some time to work on the abstract. (Your input and thoughts are very important and must be incorporated into the abstract because we are making a presentation together.) (Jisun, online post)

After expressing her frustration at the beginning of her message, Jisun requested thoughts for the abstract by offering specific questions to her peers. By adding a sentence with a parenthesis at the end of her post ("Your input and thoughts are very important and must be incorporated into the abstract because we are making a presentation together."), Jisun reminded everybody that it was a collaborative project. However, despite her effort to elicit responses from her peers, nobody posted a message by the due date she proposed. In a class meeting that followed, she expressed her frustration once again about non-participation of others, saying "I feel like I am the only one who is doing this" (Class transcript). But Young commented that she was "careful not to put step on Jisun's foot" because Jisun was the one who first proposed the idea of a group presentation at a conference. She did not want to overshadow Jisun's work by pushing her ideas into the abstract writing. I provided more guidance with their work on the abstract and allowed students to revise it together during class meetings. Rose also vented her frustrations about the presentation because she was left out with a task of compiling references for a handout:

Excerpt 7

> Well, I don't know what to do. I did not decide what to do, but saying nothing in front of other people at our group presentation would make me feel stupid. I know my pronunciation is not good enough, but still I want to participate in the oral presentation in some way. It's just not right if I would miss out this opportunity. (Class transcript)

Self-conscious about her English pronunciation, she initially agreed to do what she could to reciprocate—providing abundance of web resources regarding e-portfolios. Rose, however, did not settle for her limited role; she eventually negotiated her role with her cohort members in the presentation. She suggested she incorporate her own narrative as a prospective teacher who was technologically challenged yet overcame the fear of new computer technology. Her portion of the presentation was engaging, persuasive, and effective

in part due to her effort to embrace her own struggle with technology. Her voice was clear and her message was articulate. In a sense, she gained "legitimacy by redefining the competence" (Eckert & Wenger, 2005, p. 583) through the negotiation with other members. This finding underscores the tensions inherent in the complex process of negotiating social identities with members even within a supportive and collaborative community of practice.

Complicating Participation in Communities of Practice

Much discussion regarding participation in communities of practice focuses on "a simple and smooth transition from peripheral participation as a novice to full member at the core of the community's endeavor" (Lea, 2005, p. 184). This type of participation does not take the more contested nature of participation into account—that is, participation when a member is excluded from full participation. Jisun's experience in a Korean pedagogy course exemplifies such conflicting nature of participation in different learning communities one belongs to simultaneously. Jisun often compared her participation in the CLEAR seminars to that of her Korean class:

Excerpt 8

> **Jisun**: I feel very tense when I'm in a Korean class with an older Korean professor. In this [CLEAR] seminar, I'm encouraged to *critique* the problems we face in academia. Also here narratives are very much *valued* by the instructor and classmates. We take critical approaches to the issues of *power* inherent in society and in school.
> **Hyesun** Yes, that's what I value—*problematizing practice.*
> **Jisun**: Yeah, but in the Korean class, I'm quiet. *(laughs)* All the classmates are graduate students and they are kind of quiet.
> **Hyesun** Do you think it was because of the age factor?
> **Jisun**: Right. I'm the youngest in the class. They [graduate students] just say to the instructor, "That's right." "That's right." But in my opinion, that's not really right. I want to say something that shows different thoughts, but if I talk a lot, the professor would tell me, "Your opinions are biased, your ideas are not right." I then feel like, "*Oh, my gosh*!" *(laughs loudly)* (Jisun, interview)

Jisun's perceived limitation of her participation in a Korean class where the instructor and her classmates were all Koreans merits attention. Jisun constructed herself as a rather passive participant in the Korean class because of cultural expectations of the instructor and peers. While she recognized that critical approaches to education through narratives were validated and encouraged in the CLEAR classroom, she perceived compliance to the authority of the instructor was more valued in the Korean class. In her opinion, Korean graduate students seemed to please the professor by regurgitating his lecture or by parroting the regime of truth in the literature. It appeared that not only the age factor but the classroom atmosphere in which students were compliant to the teacher's perspectives attributed to her limited participation in the Korean classroom.

In this case, the language used in class, which was Korean, did not apparently restrict her participation. It was the group dynamics amongst students as well as the instructor's expectations of student behavior and participation in the classroom that made her participation remain on the periphery. As Hawkins (2005) argues, cultural capital can be defined differently in different contexts. From Jisun's perspective, the cultural capital in the Korean class community was respect for the instructor and acceptance of his instruction

whereas disrupting the flow of the instruction by questioning the dominant knowledge was disregarded. As Eckert and Wenger (2005) argue, legitimacy in a community of practice "involves not just having access to knowledge necessary for 'getting it right,' but being at the table at which 'what is right' is continually negotiated" (p. 583). Jisun's marginalized positioning in the Korean classroom may be interpreted that her legitimacy was not gained due to her lack of teaching experience in a formal educational setting. Her extensive tutoring experience with a range of Korean as a foreign language (KFL) learners in Hawaii and Korean teaching at a Sunday school might not have the same currency as her classmates' teaching KFL at the university level.

Jisun's participation complicates the notion of legitimate peripheral participation (Wenger, 1998) in the classroom, as the majority of communities of practice studies in second language education have focused on lack of language proficiency as a major obstacle for legitimate peripheral participation (e.g., Cho, 2013; Hawkins, 2005; Morita, 2004; Toohey, 2000). For Jisun, linguistic competence was not an issue to determine her level of participation in the Korean class. On the contrary, interviews with her instructors in English-medium classes indicated that Jisun was considered as one of the most vocal and active participants. It is interesting that she felt marginalized in the class where the instructor and her classmates (seemingly) shared a great deal of social categories with her (e.g., race, ethnicity, first language and culture). Further, sharing narratives was encouraged in CLEAR seminars, but this was not the case in the Korean class.

That is, my expectations of student narratives were closely aligned with Jisun's participation pattern whereas the Korean instructor's expectation of students did not coincide with Jisun's desire to raise her critical consciousness. As a consequence, Jisun chose to remain on the periphery in her Korean class, while still maintaining her own sense of identity as a critical-minded Korean teacher. As the Korean class was not explicitly designed to be a community of practice by the instructor as the CLEAR seminar was, it might not be a fair comparison. Thus the contrasting experience of Jisun in the Korean classes merits further investigation into the complex participation in a community of practice mediated by a constellation of social categories and interactions.

My Reflection as a Teacher Educator

My challenge as a teacher educator involved a negotiation process within myself as instructor because of the subject position of a critical teacher and the new position I wished to take up as a facilitator and respondent (see Freedman, 2006). My dilemma throughout the seminar series stemmed from my concern with how to balance out my roles as a critical teacher/researcher and facilitator. As an instructor, I struggled with issues of control versus freedom in determining how much of the seminar needed to be pre-planned to ensure efficiency and how much needed to be responsive to the emergent dialogue among the students. How to offer my own perspective as a critical teacher educator without imposing my agenda remained a struggle throughout my teaching in the CLEAR seminars. As a facilitator, I listened to students, took notes, provided support and empathy, and asked occasional questions to encourage elaboration. I attempted to provide as much as time and space for students to bring up issues surrounding power relations by themselves.

However, it was sometimes difficult for me to sit back and watch the class discussions take essentialist turns when I felt it was necessary to use a critical lens to the issues at hand. Excerpt 9 represents some of the classroom interactions in which I took over the interaction, not allowing students to voice their concerns and ideas about pedagogical issues situated in their teaching contexts:

Excerpt 9

1. **Hyesun**: How would you incorporate diverse students' backgrounds into your teaching? Any suggestions or ideas?
2. **Students** *(no responses for about one minute)*
3. **Hyesun**: Small group discussions might work. If you break students into a small group, they might feel more comfortable to talk than in front of the whole class. But as Jisun mentioned before, even in a small group, some students are dominant in discussion. How would you get all students involved?
4. **Mano**: In SLS 3XX, the teacher stresses peer work and group work. *[pause]*
5. **Hyesun**: Well, you can assign a different role to each student within a group. In my Korean EFL classes, I incorporated both competition and cooperation. I came up with games that encouraged peer collaboration within a group and promote competition between groups. It was kind of like Jeopardy! Students had so much fun. They were so eager to win the game, because there would be no homework next time if you are the winner, but they also had to work together. Nobody can answer a question twice. They had to take turns, but more advanced students were allowed to help less proficient students in their group to maximize the effect of peer collaboration. Teacher intervention sometimes is needed in group or peer work.
6. **Mano**: It's a must. A must. (Class transcript)

In this class interaction, I initiated a turn in which I tried to elicit pre-service teachers' pedagogical ideas about working with diverse students in terms of language proficiency, culture, and prior content knowledge. However, instead of patiently waiting for students' reaction to my question, I took over the floor while dismissing Mano's observation of peer/group work in one of his courses (turn 5). Noticing that his remark was not accompanied by elaboration, I talked about my experience with mixed-level Korean EFL students, which happened to be merely one example of teaching diverse students regarding language proficiency. To legitimize my teaching stance, I added at the end of my narrative "Teacher intervention is sometimes needed in group or peer work" to which Mano strongly agreed. Even though student resistance is not explicitly voiced here, it might be manifested in the form of silence. My authoritative voice may have silenced some of students' voices in the seminar classroom due in part to my belief that teachers should always take larger sociopolitical issues into account when sharing personal narratives (Lewis, 2001). Instead of imposing one's critical thoughts to students' minds, teachers should allow the multiplicity and complexity of students' internal positions towards or against the authoritative discourses of instruction and curriculum.

However, it is also important to include teacher's voice in co-constructing a community of practice as the teacher can play an important role as a more experienced member/expert on the topic at hand. This was an ongoing struggle for me. In any research when the researcher is in a position of power, the danger exists that participants may become a captive population (Ferguson, Yonge, & Myirck, 2004). My dual role as a teacher and researcher in an evaluation position may have inevitably influenced the way students responded to my interview questions even after the program ended. This type of power struggle among participants was something missing in the discussion of communities of practice originally proposed by Lave and Wenger. Any class demanding self-awareness and

social critique would be likely to generate student resistance (Kramer-Dahl, 2001). Petrone and Bullard (2013) reviewed studies on critical literacy in which student resistance was prevalent when teachers attempted to incorporate critical literacy tasks into curriculum and instruction. My case study (Cho, in press) also illustrated resistance from the Chinese participant, Rose, who was reluctant to discuss the power issues embedded in academic learning as she wanted to avoid conflict and confrontation at all possible. After all, my struggle represents a fundamental challenge for teachers to involve students in engaged pedagogy.

Concluding Remarks

This study shows that sustained supports within a cohort and narratives as mutual engagement were crucial components of learning to optimize the communities of practice framework. In particular, the legitimatization of personal narratives allowed prospective teachers to embrace a broader range of social and academic identities, rather than blindly adopting the dominant discourses in academia. Even if a cohort model cannot be enacted in a given teacher education context, sharing personal narratives can be validated and promoted to facilitate student participation in any given course. Through the telling of stories, participants can contribute to the construction of their own identity in relation to the community and *reciprocally* to the construction of the community of practice to which they belong (Barab & Duffy, 2000). That is, learners or newcomers should not be positioned as passive recipients of knowledge and skills; rather they should be recognized as co-producers of meaning in the community.

This study also demonstrates a powerful role that teacher educators can play in fostering communities of practice and the consequences of their expectations and behaviors in student participation. Whether the expert explicitly validates the novice's knowledge and experience or not can result in making different consequences for learning trajectories of the novice. In my experience with bilingual pre-service teachers, it was my pedagogical approach that mattered the most---to honor them as knowers in a milieu where they are usually positioned as novices or as English language learners who are often viewed as being limited and incompetent. There is an assumption that language minority students are passive and reticent learners that wish to remain silent in classroom discussions (Flowerdew & Miller, 1995; Rodriguez & Cho, 2011). In order to counter such practice, teacher educators must acknowledge and draw on culturally and linguistically diverse teacher candidates' lived experiences and perspectives for curriculum and instruction. On the contrary, findings in this study indicate that second language learners wanted a more participatory classroom community than the traditional teacher-centered classroom. Therefore, I alert teacher educators to the realization that language minority teacher candidates may suffer from prejudices and stereotypes unless a critical and reflective community of practice is purposefully built in which students are openly invited to participate.

Based on the findings, this study argues that the concept of communities of practice can be used as a model resulting in equitable practice in teacher education through building sustained rapport in a cohort and validating personal narratives. The construct has much to offer to those who seek to position their diverse pre-service teachers as knowers and help them develop an imagined community as teachers when they could be in the center rather than the periphery. Although my focus is on bilingual pre-service teachers' participation in communities of practice created in a teacher preparation program in the United States, issues that I raised extend beyond the U.S. and resonate with issues of prospective teachers who are in linguistic minorities amongst their peers in other countries. Of course, communities of practice should not be romanticized as universally positive. At times, the cohort members

experienced conflicts, tensions, and challenges in and outside of the CLEAR seminar classroom. Peripheral participation can be enacted in different ways and choosing to remain on the periphery may be one way to maintain one's own sense of identity.

More research is needed to investigate how bilingual pre-service teachers negotiate their participation in different types of communities of practice in teacher education. The extent to which factors influence the building and sustaining of a community of practice merits attention in teacher education. Further studies could also utilize follow-up interviews with pre-service teachers in order to examine how their experience in communities of practice in a teacher education program has impacted their own teaching practice.

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Appendix A. Demographic Information of Student Participants

Name	Age	Ethnic Identity	L1	L2	L3/L4	Birthplace
Mano	22	Samoan	Samoan	English	N/A	American Samoa
Jisun	23	Korean	Korean	English	Japanese/ German	Korea
Kyungmi	24	Korean	Korean	English	Mandarin	Korea
Young	24	Korean	Korean	English	Japanese	Korea
Rose	56	Chinese	Cantonese	Mandarin	English	Hong Kong

Appendix B. Shared Goals and Artifacts in the Seminar Series

Semester	1st semester	2nd semester	3rd semester
Seminar title	*L2 Academic Literacies*	*Language Materials Development*	*Teaching Practicum*
Stated Goals/Joint enterprises	To examine theoretical and practical issues of L2 academic literacies, drawn on a socially situated practice framework	To develop language materials to use in the teaching of language minority students including heritage language learners; primarily focus on the understanding of the needs of minority learners in the community and create language materials accordingly.	To connect their knowledge of theories, methodologies and practices to teaching experiences.

Major projects and activities /artifacts	• Literacy autobiography • Interviews with instructors and peers • Final research paper in a portfolio format (including topic proposal, annotated bibliography, mid-term draft) • Weekly online posts	• Heritage language materials development (e.g., resources for HL educators and students) • Field trip to a language research center • Technology workshops (e.g., Audacity, Windows Moviemaker) • Critical online reflection journal • Self-evaluation letter to instructor • Weekly online posts	• Class observation • Technology workshops (video recording and editing) • Student teaching • Philosophy of teaching • Resume • Weekly online posts • Electronic teaching portfolios

Author Note

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