

## ABSTRACT

Title of Document: UNSILENCING THE SILENCED:  
THE JOURNEYS OF FIVE EAST ASIAN WOMEN  
WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. TESOL TEACHER  
EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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The study focused on five East Asian women matriculated in U.S. TESOL teacher education programs. Han Nah Jung, Liu Li, Xia Wang, Yu Ri Koh, and Shu-Ming Fung recounted journeying through their educational experiences in their native countries as well as in the United States. The purposes of this study were to (1) deepen and enrich our understanding of the women's diverse educational journeys, (2) uncover the ideological nature of the lives of these women who may have become marginalized due to the issues of race, gender, and language, (3) look at their experiences as juxtaposed to my own as a person with both insider and outsider perspectives, and (4) use the women's narratives to make recommendations for improving TESOL teacher education programs.

This study explored the lived experiences of five East Asian women, utilizing a past-present-future timeline (e.g., *Looking Back*, *Reflecting On*, and *Thinking Forward*), grounded in critical and feminist perspectives, to examine how those experiences shaped their identities in different learning and teaching communities. This was accomplished through the utilization of electronic reflective autobiographical questions, electronic educational journal entries, in-depth interviews, and informal/formal conversations.

The analysis of their narratives, as grounded in critical and feminist perspectives, revealed the interconnectedness between language, race, gender, and social class which were all deeply embedded in their educational journeys. Specifically, the women, despite being from primarily privileged backgrounds, experienced varying degrees of marginalization within their TESOL programs as a result of issues pertaining to language, gender, and race. However, their pre-service and/or volunteer teaching experiences served to heighten their identities as burgeoning English (Korean) language teachers.

Findings from the studies such as this should serve to begin dialogues around renewing and reconceptualizing better TESOL curricula and teacher education programs and provide some momentum for instituting improvements in these TESOL programs over the coming years.

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PROGRAMS

By

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## Dedication

*Han Nah Jung*

*Liu Li*

*Xia Wang*

*Yu Ri Koh*

*Shu-Ming Fung*

For sharing their intimate stories

And

*My Mother, Jong Im Park, and My Grandmother, Yoon Sun Yea,*

For all their support and dedication to my education

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Much of the quality of this dissertation I owe to my dissertation committee members:

I am eternally grateful to Dr. Bruce Van Sledright for chairing my study and for supporting me in my growth as a scholar. For the past two years, he has frequently made himself available to help me navigate through the difficult realm of qualitative research.

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Dr. Francine Hultgren has introduced me to phenomenological inquiry and for that I am forever thankful. She helped me to look inward at my own journey as a non-

native English-speaking (NNES) professional and imparted on me the necessity of engaging in such an endeavor before commencing the study of these five East Asian women.

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I extend my appreciation to Dr. Peter Afflerbach in helping me expand my scholarship into the areas of literacy and reading education for TESOL teachers and English language learners.

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## **Chapter 1: SITUATING THE STUDY**

### **Foreground of the Study: The Five East Asian Women**

Han Nah<sup>1</sup>: [English] was my minor, and it is really important language in Korea. ...And then, the second one is that my children are bilingual, so I am always thinking about how I can teach them both Korean and English at the same time. Then, it led me to start learning English education, TESOL, kind of teaching language.

Liu: I am interested in learning the English language. The longer I study this language I feel I take more responsibility to introduce this beautiful language to as many people as possible [in China]. Therefore, I entered the TESOL program to learn how to teach it effectively.

Xia: Instead of being a classroom teacher and affecting a class of students, I'd like to improve English teaching and learning in China by developing more effective and engaging teaching materials.

Yu Ri: I have been interested in studying about English education since when I was a college student in Korea. I was especially interested in teaching English to kids.

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<sup>1</sup> All names of individuals and institutions in this study are pseudonyms.

Shu-Ming: I came into TESOL because I knew I was a terrible tutor of English [in Taiwan]. I enjoyed tutoring/teaching English, but I did not know how to do it effectively.

I begin this chapter with the above excerpts because, without these women's life history narratives, this study would not have been possible. The excerpts were in response to my query, *what brought you into a Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) program?* The women's responses largely illuminated their desire to belong to a professional community in becoming ESL/EFL/bilingual specialists. For Han Nah, she wanted to be in a community where she could live out her gendered identity as a mother, providing instructions to her children bilingually while also staking a claim to a professional teaching identity that would involve teaching an important language in Korea. In the cases of Liu, Yu Ri, and Shu-Ming, they wanted to be a part of a professional teaching community by being a language and cultural broker, teaching children, and being an effective pedagogue, respectively. On the other hand, Xia wanted to reach a broader audience by positioning herself within a professional community where she could design authentic and effective teaching materials for teachers. Each woman had a clear understanding of what this new community could provide for them in the English language learning and teaching enterprise. This new community would help them define their identities vis-à-vis the fields of English as a Second Language (ESL), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and bilingual education. This study was about the identity constructions and negotiations of five East Asian women navigating through their educational journeys. It was also about my desire to better understand my own positionalities as an

immigrant NNES, an ESL/EFL teacher, and a teacher educator navigating the U.S. academic discourse. In what follows, I briefly introduce these women whose diverse stories are central to this study.

*Han Nah Jung*

In October of 2004, I met Han Nah through one of my colleagues. Although she was resistant to doing electronic journal entries as a part of my data collection, her interest in my focus on women's issues drew her into the study. Her research background in Turkish women's issues provided her with the rationale to participate. I was more than thrilled to have someone like Han Nah in my study. This stemmed from the fact that she would not only bring a wealth of gendered research experience into my study but would also bring her gendered experiences as a wife and a mother.

Han Nah Jung, a native of South Korea, was born in 1970 in a suburb near Seoul. She graduated from one of Korea's leading universities in 1992 where she majored in Turkish and Islamic Women's studies. She also did short term studies in Turkey, England, and the United States (1992-1994) before getting married in 1995. Her husband's desire to obtain a higher education brought Han Nah to New York in 1996. She began taking intensive English as a Second Language (ESL) classes until she became pregnant and had to be homebound due to child care considerations. When her husband completed his Master's degree program and his visa status changed to full-time international employee, Han Nah's visa status changed as well.

In 2001, Han Nah's G4 visa allowed her to establish a working status in the United States. This opened up many possibilities for Han Nah, including teaching the Korean language at an institution of higher education and at a private language

institute, and beginning her TESOL program. Han Nah stated that as long as her husband held his position at his current international organization, she said she would be content to remain in the United States, and pursue her Ph.D., and start up a bilingual school for Korean-American children in the United States.

*Liu Li*

In September, 2003, I first came into contact with Liu through a mutual academic acquaintance. In the beginning of our interactions, she seemed to exude a reserved personality, but was very much willing to share with me things that have been bothering her on a variety of topics. These included her program, her classes, and her personal life as a married woman pursuing higher education in the United States while her husband was home in China. My desire to understand her educational experiences in China and in the United States led me to invite her into my study and our conversations began in October of 2004.

In 1978, Liu Li was born in a suburb of Beijing, a town called Datong in China. Two months after having taken her marital vows in July of 2003 and after having wrestled with the U.S. visa system, she landed in the United States to embark on her TESOL Master's degree program. This required that she leave her husband behind to attend to his self-owned business in China. Initially, she was planning to pursue her Ph.D in the United States after completing her Master's program in TESOL, but had decided to put that on hold and return to China to be with her husband and family upon completion of her Master's in TESOL program in December of 2005.



Xia Wang

Xia made feelings of linguistic powerlessness evident during one of our initial encounters in September, 2003 that was set up through one of our mutual colleagues. Although I had not yet begun the study at that time, I became interested in Xia and wanted to know more about her views and what made her feel so powerless. In December 2004, after I began the data collection, she reiterated those words of feeling powerless due to her lack of English language proficiency. She linked it to her status as a temporary resident in the United States.

Xia, single and a native of China, was born in Beijing in 1979. She had been immersed in the Chinese educational system from 1985 until she began her Master's in European studies in Germany in 2002. When she was admitted into the school in Germany, she was also given a full fellowship to begin a Master's in TESOL program at Pacific University in the United States. Xia's desire to be with her boyfriend pushed her away from Pacific University and into commencing her program in Germany; as a result, she deferred her fellowship opportunity at Pacific University until September 2003. At the time of my study (2004-2005), she was finishing up her Master's in TESOL at Pacific University. Even though she was not planning to teach in a pre-K-12 English as a Second Language (ESL) context, she had decided to take the TESOL certification licensure track in order to better understand the public school system in the United States. Hence, during the spring of 2005, she completed her student teaching as a partial requirement for her Master's in TESOL K-12 certification track.

Yu Ri Koh

In October 2004, I met Yu Ri for the first time through one of my academic acquaintances. Her youth, liveliness, and willingness to participate in my study were more than desirable. She was very humble in stating that she did not know whether she could truly contribute to the study. I reassured her in saying that her experiences in a TESOL program would add much to my study.

Yu Ri Koh was born in Seoul, Korea in 1980. During her middle school years, she had had the opportunity to come to the United States for one year (1992-1993) because her father was given a student fellowship at one of the universities in New York. While studying English in New York as a middle school student, she became enamored with the idea of learning English as a tool for communication as opposed to studying it to pass exams in Korea. Yu Ri's stay in New York provided her with an initial opening into the world of English-language learning. She graduated from Ko Rya foreign language high school in 1999 with the hopes of entering one of the leading universities for women in Korea. Unfortunately, her dreams were shattered when she did not make the cut-off score for the leading women's university in Korea; thus she entered her second choice in 1999, Yeo Ja University located in a suburb of Seoul.

Since Yeo Ja University was not her first choice, she felt like a failure for having to study at this university. At the same time, she also desired to improve her English language skills and improve her understanding of world events. As a result, she decided to embark on an international transfer. She transferred from Yeo Ja University in Korea to Atlantic University in the United States with a junior standing

in an undergraduate program in International Relations in 2001. Hoping to further improve her English language skills, in addition to wanting to know more about the English language teaching enterprise, she entered a Master's in TESOL program at Atlantic University in 2003 directly from her undergraduate experience. She chose Atlantic University due to her familiarity with the campus and the TESOL program since she had transferred to Atlantic University with a junior standing as an undergraduate.

*Shu-Ming Fung*

I initially hesitated to include her in my study due to her lengthy residence in the United States compared to the other participants. However, her self-identification as a non-native English-speaker (NNES) and her multitudes of complex identities made her an ideal candidate for the study. Her identities became more complex as she began to teach English and learn more about TESOL pedagogy. Her claiming dual identities as a native and non-native English-speaker became evident in one of our early interviews in terms of how she saw herself in relation to the English language learning and teaching enterprise.

Shu-Ming Fung was born in 1970 in Taipei, Taiwan. She immigrated to this country with her family at the age of 13 in 1983 and began her education in the United States as an 8<sup>th</sup> grader. At the time of this study, spanning the 2004-2005 academic year, she was finishing up her Master's in TESOL program at Atlantic University. Shu-Ming entered a college in the Mid-Atlantic region as a government politics major in 1988 and she was employed for ten years (1991-2001) in a government printing company. During her third visit to Taiwan in 2001, her extended family members there encouraged her to tutor adults and children in English as a way to gain some

cultural experience and economic viability. From 2001 to 2003, she tutored in Taiwan. She felt the need to improve her methods of teaching English and desired to find a credible teacher education program to pursue this course of action. After researching on the Internet for different programs in both the United States and in England, she found the Atlantic University TESOL program located in the Mid-Atlantic region.

In spring 2003, she commenced her Master's in TESOL program upon returning from the two-year tutoring venture in Taiwan. As her TESOL program began in 2003, Shu-Ming began a volunteer teaching job in adult ESL program in a nearby local county. Specifically, she taught survival English and citizenship classes to newly arrived immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers from all over the world, but predominantly from Southeast Asian and African countries. She saw herself as a linguistic and cultural resource for her students.

Table 1 highlights the demographics of the five women. Specifically, it outlines their personal information, length of studies in their U.S. TESOL programs, English language and study abroad exposure, teaching in native and U.S. contexts, and their future imagined possibilities upon completion of their TESOL programs. These specifics outlined in Table 1 are further explicated in their past-present-future life history timelines in Chapters 3 through 7.

Table 1. Background on Participants

<b>Pseudo. Y.O.B. Ethnicity Marital St. Institution Program Length of TESOL Prog.</b>	<b>English Language &amp; Study Abroad Exposure while residing in their native context</b>	<b>Teaching in Native and U.S. Contexts</b>	<b>Future Possibilities and/or Plans Post-TESOL</b>
<p><b>Hannah Jung</b> 1970 Korean Married w/ Children</p> <p>Atlantic Univ. (Teaching U)</p> <p>TESOL Certificate Prog</p> <p>9/02 to 5/05</p>	<p>EFL (Grades 3-18) Master's in Turkish lang &amp; Islamic women's studies and minored in English lang.</p> <p>Study abroad in U.S., England, and Turkey (during college &amp; grad) while she was in Korea</p> <p>Intensive ESL program in New York</p>	<p>*No teaching in Korea</p> <p>*Teaching in the United States: (1)Elem. &amp; advanced Korean Language to government officials (NNS of Korean)</p> <p>(2)Elem. Korean in university (NNS of Korean, heritage speakers, and NES)</p> <p>(3)Elem./ advanced Korean to first &amp; second generation Korean-American heritage speakers and biracial children</p>	<p>Plans to apply to Ph.D program in Bilingual Edu. Or Second Language Acquisition in the near future</p> <p>Plans to start a bilingual education program in Korean-American community</p>
<p><b>Liu Li</b> 1978 Chinese Married</p> <p>Pacific Univ. (Research Univ)</p> <p>TESOL K-12 Cert Prog</p> <p>9/03-12/05</p>	<p>EFL (Grades 3-12)</p> <p>No study abroad experience</p>	<p>* Tutored English for about 1 year and taught business English for about 1 year in China</p> <p>* Worked as an executive assistant at a foreign technology company where she used her English skills</p> <p>*Sept-Dec 2005 8 week student teaching (4 weeks in an elem. &amp; 4 weeks in a middle school)</p>	<p>Return to China to do one or more of the following &amp; start family planning;</p> <p>*Teach EFL to children</p> <p>*Teach EFL Business English</p> <p>*Assist her husband with his international trade business</p> <p>*Return to her previous job working at a foreign tech company</p>
<p><b>Xia Wang</b> 1979 Chinese Single</p> <p>Pacific Univ. (Research Univ)</p> <p>TESOL K-12 Cert Prog</p> <p>9/03-5/05</p>	<p>EFL (elem. to college)</p> <p>No study abroad</p>	<p>* No teaching in China but worked as an editor at an English textbook publishing company</p> <p>*Jan-May 2005 8 week student teaching (4 weeks in an elem. &amp; 4 weeks in a high school)</p>	<p>Begin Ph.D in TESOL in fall 2005</p> <p>Post-Ph.D. return to Germany to Complete the Master's program</p>

<p><b>Yuri Koh</b> 1980 Korean Single</p> <p>Atlantic Univ. (Teaching U)</p> <p>TESOL Master's Prog</p> <p>9/03 to 5/05</p>	<p>EFL (Grades 3-14)</p> <p>Spent one year in New York during middle school with her family</p> <p>Study Abroad in US. And Canada during high school &amp; college in Korea</p> <p>Transferred to Atlantic U. undergraduate program during her junior year in college</p> <p>Pre-Academic ESL program just before starting her third year undergraduate work at Atlantic U.</p>	<p>*No teaching in Korea (September 2004-May 2005) *volunteer teaching at a church-based (Free ESL classes for refugees, immigrants and government official spouses) ESL program-teaching beginning ESL</p> <p>*volunteered Elem. Korean Lang. at a university setting to (NNS of Korean)</p> <p>*4 weeks (Spring 2005) student teaching at high school</p>	<p>Return to Korea &amp; Teach EFL In college/university</p> <p>Possibly teach children as well</p> <p>After several years of teaching, apply to a Ph.D. program in the United States</p>
<p><b>Shu-Ming Fung</b> 1970 Taiwanese Single</p> <p>Atlantic Univ. (Teaching U)</p> <p>TESOL Master's Prog</p> <p>1/03 to 5/05</p>	<p>Remembers very little about EFL learning in Taiwan since she immigrated at the age of 12</p> <p>ESL in middle school</p> <p>No study abroad</p>	<p>*Tutored (1-2) English privately in Taiwan for about 2 years (2000-2002)</p> <p>*Volunteered teaching adult ESL for about one year (2002-2003)</p> <p>*Part time teaching at County Adult Ed.-adult literacy and citizenship classes (about 2 yrs)</p>	<p>Teach ESL full time (U.S.) Teach EFL in China/Japan Teach Chinese in higher educational institution in the U.S.</p>

### Purposes of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to deepen and enrich our understanding of the educational journeys of five East Asian women who were both visible minorities and non-native English speakers (NNESS) navigating through TESOL programs in the United States. This was to be accomplished through listening to their life history narratives and making sense of their lived experiences. This study drew attention to a group of pre-service teachers representative of a growing number of individuals in

TESOL programs across the United States, whose lived experiences in these programs, heretofore, have been invisible in the literature. Highlighting the identity constructions and negotiations of these East Asian women pre-service teachers should provide insights for other NNES pre-service teachers in the fields of TESOL and general teacher education (e.g., Amin, 2001; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Norton, 2000; Norton & Pavlenko, 2004; Pavlenko & Blackridge, 2004).

A second purpose of this study was to highlight and distinguish the differences and diversity among NNESs through the documentation of their experiences as international NNESs in the cases of Han Nah, Liu, Xia, and Yu Ri and as an immigrant NNES in the case of Shu-Ming. The data from this study problematized the notion that all NNESs come with similar experiences, identities, and goals. Exploring how they come to construct and negotiate their identities intertwined with issues of language, gender, race, and social class serves to distinguish these women and the diversity elements characteristics of their lives. Also the identity constructions and negotiations highlighting these differences help to inform, build upon, and critique the existing NNES research.

A third purpose of this study was to highlight the women's prior learning situations in their native contexts and their privileged class status, which enabled them to obtain and accomplish certain goals in their native countries as well as in the United States. Additionally, the study was intended to delineate critical and feminist perspectives (Freire, 1998; Norton, 2000; Pavlenko & Blackridge, 2004) in understanding the women's educational experiences. Such women often have been marginalized by certain ideological forces behind language, gender, race, and social

class. Their privileged-class identities may have mitigated the effects of their marginalization.

A fourth purpose of this study involved “looking at” the experiences of five East Asian women as they were told to me as opposed to “looking for” certain aspects of their experiences as commensurate with my expectations as a researcher with a similar positionality as an NNES, East Asian woman. These expectations would stem from my own personal experiences thus bringing both insider and outsider perspectives on learning and teaching in U.S. educational contexts.

A final purpose of this study was to use the data from this research, specifically the insights from the women’s narratives, to inform the growing body of theoretical knowledge in the literature on issues that directly influence both the lives and experiences of East Asian women pre-service teachers and the TESOL programs that purport to prepare them in diverse TESOL field. This is to be accomplished through listening to the pedagogical and curricular suggestions emerging from their lived experiences. Within the field that is predominantly shaped by women of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, studies such as this one pave the way to a better understanding of and a deeper inquiry into East Asian women pre-service teachers and their unique needs and contributions to the field of TESOL.

## **Organization of the Dissertation Chapters**

In the remaining part of this chapter, I set the stage for the East Asian women’s life history narratives by discussing the research questions and explicating the literature on NNES research to delineate the examples needed to be covered through studies such as this. Moreover, Chapter 1 discusses critical and feminist perspectives



and studies germane to highlighting multiple identity constructions and negotiations as a way to frame the study.

Chapter 2 outlines the methodology of the study. I explicate the methodological approach to the study and the detail processes, such as data collection, and analysis, and interpretation of the data. Moreover, I discuss my positionalities as an insider and outsider to the five East Asian women in the study. At the conclusion of Chapter 2, I delineate an overview of the narrative and interpretation chapters in order to set the stage for these chapters.

In Chapters 3 through 7, I introduce the narratives of Han Nah Jung, Liu Li, Xia Wang, Yu Ri Koh, and Shu-Ming Fung and interpret their narratives, highlighting their linguistic, racial, and gendered identities. Chapter 8, the final chapter, revisits the purposes of this study, and explicates some broad themes drawn from the insights gleaned from the women's narratives. I discuss the implications for TESOL teacher education programs and propose some future research directions. Finally, I conclude this chapter by discussing some theoretical, methodological, and ethical reflections pertinent to the overall process of conducting this study.

## **The Research Questions**

The main research question was as follows:

(1) How did the women's educational experiences shape their identity constructions and negotiations?

Ancillary research questions were as follows:

a. *Looking Back*: What kinds of educational experiences did the five East Asian women go through before beginning their TESOL programs?

b. *Reflecting on U.S. Educational Journey (TESOL)*: What were their experiences in U.S. TESOL programs? How did they navigate through their TESOL programs as East Asian women?

c. *Thinking Forward*: How did they envision their imagined future possibilities upon completion of their U.S. TESOL programs?

This study explored the lived experiences of five East Asian women, utilizing a past-present-future timeline (e.g., *Looking Back*, *Reflecting On*, and *Thinking Forward*), grounded in the critical and feminist perspectives, to examine how those experiences shaped their identities in different learning and teaching communities. This was accomplished through the utilization of electronic reflective autobiographical questions, electronic educational journal entries, in-depth interviews, and informal/formal conversations.

The study provided an opening that de-silenced their voices and unearthed the invisibility of their life history narratives in the literature. The aim of the study was echoed by Gilligan (1987), who urged society to “listen to women- to people the culture silence[d] ...listen instead to how they think about their lives in the terms that they choose to use—in their different voice” (p. 57). Thus, in order to highlight these different voices, I have included their life history narratives to “present experience holistically in all its complexity and richness” (Bell, 2002, p. 209). Their diverse stories of being NNEs of East Asian descent in TESOL programs pointed to different

identity constructions and negotiations while engaging in various communities. In several ways, this study was a response to Gilligan's (1987) call to listen to women's stories.

## **Background of the Study**

In 1966, the international organization, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), was initiated in the United States to meet the demands of a wide variety of groups. More and more foreign students were pouring into the U.S. to be "served by the programs of some 150 colleges and universities" (Alatis & Straehle, 1997, p. 12). This was also evident in the educational globalization occurring within the universities in the United States as indicated by the "increasingly diverse ethnic and linguistic composition of the student population on Western universities" (Singh & Doherty, 2004, p. 9). Additionally, there was a massive demand from foreign soils in the areas of English language learning and teaching expertise (Alatis & Straehle, 1997). Although TESOL began as an international professional organization to promote teaching, research, and the professional development of its members around the world, it has also become an academic program. It has become a teacher and researcher education program that prepares the pre-service and in-service teachers seeking to become English language teachers in different contexts (Garshick, 2004).

Through the development of this academically enriched teacher education program, the journeys of teachers became intertwined with lives of the English language learners (ELLs). This enabled them to work together to empower one another throughout their separate journeys in acquisition/learning (e.g., how does one acquire or learn English), sociolinguistics (e.g., pluralism and ideologies represented

by English), pedagogy (e.g., teaching methodologies, and curriculum design), theories (e.g., speech community, native speaker, and ideal speaker-hearer of English), and identity constructions and negotiations (e.g., self in relation to others in different settings) in the areas of English language learning and teaching.

With the numbers of students gaining admission into U.S. TESOL teacher education programs rising, the worldwide importance of promoting mastery of the English language has increased considerably (Braine, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 2000). Mastering the English language and or teaching the English language will inevitably bring economic and political power as well as opportunities to individuals in different English language using communities all over the world (Butler, 2004; Nunan, 2003).

*The Spread of English: The English Speaking Communities*

All over the world, there are different English-language-using communities, and depending on the community, the function of the English language has differed. Historically, prior to the 1960s, the world seemed to recognize three different English using communities; English as a Native Language (ENL), English as a Second Language (ESL), and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Gorlach, 2002; Kachru, 1988; 1992; 1997). English as a Native Language (ENL) is a system that is recognized in the English-dominant countries for individuals whose “mother tongue” or “native” language is English. English as a Second Language (ESL) is a system that “enables students who are not proficient in English to acquire academic proficiency in spoken and written English” (Ovando & Collier, 1998, p. 4) for usage in an English-speaking context. In other words, ESL is a system that meets the linguistic needs of immigrants and foreigners learning to speak English in a country where the first language is

English. Some of the countries that provide ESL systems are the U.S., Canada, Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and Ireland. Finally, English as a foreign language (EFL) is a system that instructs students who are not proficient in English to acquire academic and basic communication proficiency in spoken and written English in a non-English speaking context. EFL contexts are countries where English is not the main vehicle of daily communication. However, researchers and teachers in the field of TESOL began to recognize that English-using communities of the world cannot be categorized into neat divisions.

More recently, scholars have coined phrases such as English as an International Language, English as a Global Language (Crystal, 1997), English as an Additional Language (Kachru, 1997), English as a World Language, and World Englishes (WE) to suggest the worldwide importance of English language learning and teaching (Gorlach, 2002; Graddol, 1997; Smith & Forman, 1997). Specifically, the proponents of WE have been advocating for an enhanced conceptualization of WE to “recognize the functions of the language in diverse pluralistic contexts” (Kachru, 1997, p. 215). Research on this has indicated that some of the functions of the language were utilized in school subjects, scholarly publications, communication in transportation and travel, and in personal and business communication in aural, written, and electronic forms (Gorlach, 2002).

According to Alatis and Strahle (1997), Kachru’s notion of pluralizing the word, “Englishes” symbolized a “vital concept of pluralism, of linguistic heterogeneity, of cultural diversity” (p. 16). Pakir (1997) concurred by stating that Kachru’s work of WE pointed to “multi-identities...in English today” (p. 173). The

notion of WE pushed the English language and its teaching beyond the borders of the United States and Great Britain (Pakir, 1997). In relation to the notion of WE, Kachru coined three phrases comprising different groupings of countries: Inner Circle (IC), Outer Circle (OC), and Expanding Circle (EC). These distinctions were intended to represent the spread of the English language with respect to how the English language is perceived in those groupings of countries. These phrases described the countries around the world in relation to the functional use of the English language. Countries in the Expanding Circle include Caribbean countries, Egypt, Indonesia, Israel, Nepal, Saudia Arabia, and South American countries, as well as others. The countries in the Outer Circle include Bangladesh, Ghana, Kenya, Pakistan, South Africa, Zambia, Phillippines, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, and Tanzania to name but a few.

*Inner Circle Countries (IC).* The IC countries use English language as their first and primary language given the fact that these countries are “traditional bases of English dominated by the mother tongue varieties of the language” (Kachru, 1997, p. 214). These countries, including the U.S., Canada, Britain, Australia, and New Zealand are considered to be the key players responsible for preparing teachers in the field of TESOL. Also, these IC countries are perceived of as wielding power over the other countries in both the Outer and Expanding Circles due to the fact that former group claims dominance over the others in terms of access to and usage of the English language. With this espoused power wielding role, there seemed to be an unequal power relationship among native English speakers (NESs) and non-native English speakers (NNESSs) (Tsuda, 1997).

*The Outer Circle Countries (OC).* The OC countries include countries that have been historically colonized by English dominant countries; therefore, English is their second language or second dialect. Most people in OC countries use English or different varieties of English given that English has been “institutionalized as an additional language” (Kachru, 1997, p. 214) in these countries. In addition, the users of English in OC countries are “becoming players of English in the IC, introducing their own rules of construction and conduct in English” (Pakir, 1997, p. 172). Some of the OC countries include Sri Lanka, India, Singapore, and Malaysia (Canagarajah, 1999; Kachru, 1997).

*The Expanding Circle (EC) Countries.* In EC countries, English is a foreign language. For the most part, the English language teaching market has been increasing in these countries due to their need to gain an economic and political edge in the world (Butler, 2004; Kachru, 1997; Nunan, 2003). The perceived need to master the English language to attain this edge has pushed both students and teachers to learn English from native English speakers and to go abroad for English language instruction in the English speaking countries. Some of the EC countries include China, Japan, Taiwan, and Korea.

Due to the globalization of English language learning and teaching, Inner Circle countries have continued to gain political and economic power over the Outer Circle and Expanding Circle countries. Although it has not been explicitly stated, it can be inferred that English communication fluency as well as equating the English language with a native English speaker status could facilitate economic and political power in the world economy. Thus, individuals from IC and certain OC countries have

more power to exercise their linguistic competence as well as their material resources, over OC and EC countries in the field of TESOL (Kachru, 1997; Oda, 1999).

Nunan (2003) surveyed some of the Expanding Circle (EC) countries in order to better understand the impact that the globalization of the English language has had on their educational policy and pedagogy. The results of Nunan's findings for teacher preparation indicated that "[t]eacher education and the English language skills of teachers in public-sector institutions are inadequate...of even greater concern has to be the widespread use of nonqualified English teachers" (p. 606). Instead of pouring economic resources into hiring NES teachers from overseas, Nunan argued that it would be beneficial "to enhance the proficiency and professional skills of local teachers" (p. 608). Supporting local teachers through English language training and boosting of communication skills also was documented in Butler's (2004) study, which examined the proficiency levels of EFL elementary level teachers in China, Taiwan, and Korea. Similarly, Lui, Ahn, Baek, and Hahn (2004) found that Korean English teachers would need to gradually increase the amount of English language that they used in classrooms since most did not have the proficiency level to use English a great deal of the time. Their study also indicated that in order for Korean teachers to use more English language in their teaching, "curricula and assessment at both the national and local levels should be revised to focus on using language" (p. 633). The challenges and limitations of curricula and assessment on the communicative competence of both teachers and students learning English in Expanding Circle countries have been documented in other studies (e.g., Butler, 2004; Li, 1998; Nunan, 2003).



Nunan did not specifically discuss the preparation of East Asian women pre-service teachers from EC countries in the IC countries. However, his collective case studies of EC (China, Taiwan, Korea, and Japan) and OC (Malaysia and Hong Kong) countries did point out the need to better accommodate the professional and pedagogical needs of non-native English speaking (NNES) teachers receiving teacher preparation education in the Inner Circle countries such as the U.S.

With an increase in the number of teacher candidates gaining admission into U.S. TESOL programs from diverse linguistic and ethnic backgrounds, there became an urgent need to prepare non-native English speaking (NNES) teachers (e.g., Braine, 1999; Graddol, 1997; Medgyes, 1999; Singh & Doherty, 2004). Approximately, seventy-five percent of teachers in the field of TESOL were from NNES backgrounds (Liu, 1999). Although these NNES teacher candidates have come from all over the world, there has been an influx of teacher candidates from East Asian countries (e.g., China, Japan, Korea) (e.g., Nunan, 2003; Park, Lu, & Suh, 2004), the EC countries. The following may be some of the many plausible explanations for the increase in the number of NNES teacher candidates from East Asian backgrounds: (1) educational policy changes within these countries to include English language instruction at all stages of formal education; (2) increased desire on the part of these countries to acquire global power and gain knowledge resources through English language communication (e.g., Butler, 2004; Graddol, 1997; Nunan, 2003); and (3) differences between these countries and others in terms of both the functional usage of the English language and the system of instruction. Thus, it is important to understand the research

that has been conducted with respect to the teacher education and scholarship areas of NNES.

### Review of NNES Research

With the mission goals of the TESOL Organization and teacher education programs in the U.S. coupled with descriptions of English language-using communities in mind, I conducted a critical examination of 14 years of literature ending in 2004. In this critical examination, my goal was twofold: First, to search the journal articles for their contents and theoretical frameworks; and second, to examine the journal articles for their use of different research methodologies and research methods. My aim was to understand what kinds of research studies (e.g., focus and themes) were conducted in the areas of NNES scholarship and how (e.g., research methodology and research methods and techniques) these studies were conducted. This focused on research and teaching issues as pertaining to NNES professionals and TESOL programs from several notable refereed journals in both the field of TESOL<sup>2</sup> and the field of general teacher education.<sup>3</sup> These journals were selected due to their popularity and credibility in the fields of TESOL and general teacher education, and also due to their emphasis on preparing all teachers for diverse teaching contexts.

The results of this critical review revealed the following: (1) there were considerably more NNES research articles published in journals by the TESOL community than in the journals published by the general teacher education

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<sup>2</sup> (1990-2004); *TESOL Quarterly*, *TESOL Journal*, *ELT Journal* (2000-2003) *The CATESOL Journal*; (2001-2004) *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*. The last two journals are recent ones, which explore many issues of NNES scholarship.

<sup>3</sup> (1990-2004) *Journal of Teacher Education*, *Teaching Education*, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *International Journal of Teacher Education*

community; (2) for the NNES research articles published in journals in the field of TESOL, there was hardly any discussion about the differences among NNES professionals given that all NNES professionals were categorized into a single group. However, there were a considerable number of articles focusing on the comparison between non-native English-speakers (NNESs) and native English-speakers (NESs); and (3) for the NNES research articles published in journals in the field of TESOL, there were hardly any studies that examined the educational and teaching experiences of East Asian women enrolled in their TESOL programs (Park, 2004a). In the next several paragraphs, I highlight and expand on the above three findings from this review of NNES research in order to point out the gap in NNES research, thus the rationale for this study.

First, there were significantly more NNES research articles published in journals in the field of TESOL than in journals in the field of general teacher education. In examining 14 years of journal articles in the field of TESOL, 93 of these articles focused on NNES issues. On the other hand, in the field of general teacher education, there were no articles discussing NNES issues. However, there were eight articles that looked at different aspects of TESOL programs (Chinn, 1999; Fradd & Lee, 1997; 1998; Johnson, 1994; Pailliotet, 1997; Rhine, 1995; Sheets & Chew, 2002; Su, 1997). Although emerging themes from general teacher education journals focused on preparing teachers from diverse linguistic, cultural, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds, no study specifically considered the lives and experiences of NNES pre-service teachers navigating through their TESOL programs.

Additionally, the above suggested that the general teacher education field should begin to examine areas of importance in the field of TESOL since English language learners (ELLs) were increasingly becoming noticeable in mainstream classes as evident by reports in some recent articles (e.g., Sheets & Chew, 2002; Su, 1997). Also, the limited numbers of NNES journal articles published by researchers as indicated in several research studies pointed to possible constraints faced by NNES authors (e.g., Curry & Lillis, 2004; Flowerdew, 2000; 2001; Shi, 2002). The articles pertaining to these studies suggested that the field of TESOL is a new territory, which might explain why NNES scholars have encountered difficulties publishing in professional teacher education journals. Essentially, the difficulties and challenges faced by NNES scholars may have to do with how journal editors perceive the authors from NNES backgrounds. Moreover, these NNES authors may not have acquired fully the conventions, discourse, and strategies necessary in order to publish in U.S. academic journals (e.g., Benesch, 1999; Brady, 1999; 2001; 2001a; 2002; Canagarajah, 2002; Flowerdew, 2000; 2001; Harklau, 2000). It is important to understand that not all research studies on NNES issues have been conducted by NNES scholars, and many pertinent studies on NNES issues have been conducted by NES scholars as well.

Second, for NNES research articles published in the field of TESOL, there was hardly any discussion about the differences between NNES professionals given that all of these professionals were categorized into a single group. Some earlier articles suggested that NNESs and native English speakers (NESs) were understood dichotomously rather than on a continuum (e.g., Hinkel, 1994; Hoekje & Linnell,

1994; Kobayashi, 1992; Tyler, 1992; Yule & Hoffman, 1993). A plethora of studies described the pervasive “dichotimization” (e.g., othering or categorizing someone to be different due to the way they look or the way they sound) of NNES and NES constructs without demonstrating how variations in prior schooling and educational experiences could have influenced these NNES professionals in particular. By promoting “dichotimization” of NES and NNES professionals, these studies appeared to categorize the individuals as polar opposites, disregarding the notion that NES and NNES identities could be fluid and multiple, not binary (Norton, 2000; Pavlenko, 2003). This “othering” process also tended to overlook the notion of a NES and NNES continuum in that many may fall on different points of the continuum as in individuals who purport to be bilinguals, trilinguals, and even multilinguals. Similarly, the different lived experiences between international and immigrant NNESs have not been examined as a way to further acknowledge the diversity within the NNES continuum (e.g., Nero, 2000; Pavlenko, 2003; Pavlenko & Blackridge, 2004).

In addition to categorizing NESs and NNESs as polar opposites, articles examining NNES professionals tried to explore the advantages and disadvantages of being NNESs in relation to being NESs. This “othering” of NNES professionals contributed to a plethora of literature theorizing that they could not be ideal and credible teachers as NNESs. Due to the problems arising from this “native speaker fallacy” theory (Braine, 1999), scholars examining the NNES research and teaching issues began to take a stance, indicating that all teachers, whether NES or NNES, have needs and challenges in preparing English language learners (ELLs). To this end, the later studies began to examine the NNES research studies pointing to the fact that the

NNESs and the NESs differed in their needs and challenges as they faced their journeys in teacher education programs (Braine, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 2000; 2001; 2004; Liu, 1999; Medgyes, 1999; Widdowson, 1994). For instance, the NNEs were perceived to have more linguistic difficulties because their first language was not English: they lacked confidence to showcase their teaching, and they lacked understanding of the knowledge/power construction of the English language prevalent in the Western educational system.

If the needs and the challenges of NNEs were different, then it would be doing a disservice to the NNE pre-service teachers by giving them the same curriculum as the NES students in TESOL programs. NNE pre-service teachers may have been disenfranchised in such a way that they were not receiving the kind of teacher preparation their tuition paid for (e.g., Benesch, 1999). The reasons for studying the NNE pre-service teachers centered on the fact that these students and various leaders in their native countries were looking to the English-speaking countries and their TESOL education programs to give them the edge that they needed to improve their English language education. Thus, one of the most pressing reasons for studying the NNE students was to find ways to enhance the learning environment of the individuals who have come to the U.S. TESOL education programs in order to construct a different kind of knowledge (Ballard, 1996; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). In recognition of the existent differences between NESs and NNEs, several articles suggested ideas to empower NNEs in ways that helped them advocate for themselves (Amin, 1997; Tang, 1997). Additionally, many articles stipulated that TESOL programs have responsibilities to address issues of difference and diversity through

tapping into the linguistic and cultural diversity of NNES pre-service teachers as resources (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999), and instituting programmatic components designed to “humanize” (Price & Osborne, 2000) learning and future teaching experiences of NNES pre-service teachers.

Third, in NNES research articles published in the field of TESOL, there was hardly any work that examined the educational and teaching experiences of East Asian women enrolled in TESOL programs. The TESOL programs in the United States have continued to accept teacher candidates from Asian backgrounds (e.g., Butler, 2004; Graddol, 1997; Nunan, 2003; Park, Lu, & Suh, 2004). However, empirical data pertaining to how these East Asian women students navigated through their TESOL programs and how they became (or did not become) participatory members of different professional communities within the field of TESOL were almost nonexistent. A few exceptions to this were studies that examined immigrant women (Norton, 2000), visible minority women ESL teachers in Canada (Amin, 1997; 2001), an Asian female pre-service teacher in a mainstream context (Pailliotet, 1997), male and female Chinese-Canadian teachers’ identities and roles (Beynon, Ilieva, & Dichupa, 2001), professional identities of female, NES, and NNES, EFL educators in Japan (Simon-Maeda, 2004), and identities of female Japanese students in education (Morita, 2004). Thus, this calls for the conceptualizing of a “different experience ...building on, expanding on, and critiquing” (Turner, 2003) what appears in the TESOL literature. This enabled some hypothesizing as to why the educational experiences of East Asian women in the U.S. have been neglected in, and excluded from, the mainstream TESOL and teacher education literature.

The importance of the paucity of information in the literature on this topic points to the necessity for scholars in the field of TESOL to go beyond the status quo in understanding the lives and experiences of East Asian women and how their TESOL programs have (or have not) begun to serve their future professional needs. Though there have been examinations of the structuring of TESOL programs in meeting the needs of both NES and NNES pre-service teachers in the research literature (e.g., Govardhan, Nayar & Sheorey, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 2000; Ramanathan, Davies, & Schleppegrell, 2001), the results of these studies indicate that several teacher education models fail to account for the differences within groups (Park, 2004; Park 2006). Researching the experiences of East Asian women could highlight the prior academic learning situations of these particular women as largely embedded in privileged socioeconomic status in their native contexts in order to understand their identities constructed and negotiated within those settings. Additionally, critical and feminist perspectives could be used to theorize the identities of NNES, East Asian (i.e., visible minority) women in the field of TESOL.

#### *Academic Learning Situations in Asian Contexts*

In most Asian countries, students' sense of self is often related to how they did on college-entrance examinations, their English language proficiency as also related to different exam scores, the caliber of universities to which they were admitted, and the number of other accomplishments occurred. The English language was simply a subject to be memorized and mastered, not considered to be a tool for communication in the society. Asian students practiced study methods (e.g., memorizing vocabulary and grammatical structure, translating literature passages, intensive reading



techniques) that were praised and supported by the traditional teaching methodologies. However, once the students were admitted into a university, with some opting to take English communication classes, they became dumbfounded as oral production and interactions with native-English-speaker instructors were difficult to the point of being almost impossible (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Jin & Cortazzi, 1998).

Largely, the educational contexts in Asian countries pushed students to view the English language as a strategic tool for successful preparation for the college entrance examinations and not as a tool to enhance their communication abilities with native English speakers. Proponents of this view believed that to “train students to pass the entrance exams, teacher’s attention is greatly directed by what is on the exams” (Liu, Ahn, Baek, & Han, 2004, p. 704) and that meeting the national and local mandates for obtaining higher examination scores in these countries superseded the need for promoting communicative competence. However, critics of this viewpoint have contended that in many Asian educational contexts, “language instruction focused so intently on grammar and translation that students often acquired insufficient communication skills” (Butler, 2004, p. 245).

The normative curricular regime politically and culturally mandated in these educational contexts could be seen as being far from adequate in terms of enabling Asian English language learners to use the language for communicative purposes (Simon-Maeda, 2004a). Some scholars called these educational contexts depicting a hegemonic classroom situation where both curriculum and pedagogy were far from embracing with respect to students’ own life experiences and their critical consciousness about their learning contexts. Simon-Maeda (2004a) called this

hegemonic classroom situation oppressive in that English language learners were “trying to renegotiate traditional notions that constrain rather than expand their academic and life options” (p. 129) but were unable to do so given the dominant views of teaching to the test. Additionally, Saft and Ohara (2004) discussed the need to promote critical pedagogy in the Japanese educational context where “an emphasis on rote learning of facts and cultural influences [placed] priority on group dynamics [which] often have students reluctant to speak out in front of their peers” (p. 145).

In addition to the learning situations predominant in Asian countries, the beliefs and values that Asians have about how they learn languages may add to a better understanding of East Asian women in TESOL programs. According to Jin and Cortazzi (1998), the cultural influences from Confucianism and Taoism may have some bearing on how certain Asian students and teachers behave in English language classrooms. Cultural beliefs of Confucianism emphasized the importance of “kinship, hierarchy, external disciplines of behavior, humanitarianism, and morality” (Jin & Cortazzi, 1998, p. 108). In addition, Taoism’s core precept involves “being passive, not putting one’s self forward, [and] not joining in any activities” (Jin & Cortazzi, 1998, p. 111).

These cultural values and beliefs may affect how East Asian women experience their learning in classrooms. Because hierarchy and respect have been important aspects of their culture, students avoid expressing opinions and asking questions in the classroom. According to Jin and Cortazzi (1998), the traditional Asian classroom situation promoted “expecting offer of help, offering help, being tolerant, caring for face, participating passively, finding single solution, accepting uncritically,

being dependent, referencing” (p. 109). Being cognizant of East Asian women pre-service teachers’ prior schooling and cultural experiences assists in understanding the kinds of learning experiences they bring into U.S. TESOL programs. The students, after having learned in these contexts, likely have developed marginal linguistic identities such that they opt not to fully interact in the academic discourse occurring in English speaking classroom contexts. Additionally, these learning experiences are unlikely to lead to critical reflections or dialoguing with teachers within the classroom contexts (Saft & Ohara, 2004). Simply put, the women who have been the products of these learning situations may not have been equipped to interact with others via speaking (Miller, 2004). Moreover, understanding the educational journeys of East Asian women means highlighting the irony behind their privileged class status that provided a wealth of linguistic and educational resources in their native countries and outside of their native countries; but nevertheless brought them face-to-face with marginal linguistic and racial identities vis-à-vis the English language learning and teaching enterprise. In other words, the women’s identities could be interpreted as living on the margin of both marginalization and empowerment.

The aforementioned information regarding the women’s cultural identities could be interpreted as having two different perspectives. One is that there is an essentialized view of culture which perpetuates a static and homogeneous understanding of the women’s cultural identities. The contrasting view, the focal perspective of this study, is that the concept of cultural trait stemming from their lived experiences is socially and discursively constructed, rather than innate or representing objective truths (Kubota, 1999). Furthermore, it is important to understand that there

may be some uniqueness and difference in educational contexts among different East Asian countries, thus being influenced by their sociocultural positions. Thus, the East Asian women represented in this study do not come from monolithic backgrounds (Suarez, 2002), and therefore experience the TESOL programs differently.

*Privileged Class Identity: Cultural and Linguistic Capital*

A plethora of research on the relationship between class and marginalization has been conducted on learners of lower socioeconomic class and teachers of color who teach students in urban settings (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 1994; 2000; Price, 2000; 2002; Rist, 1970). However, research on groups of learners coming from more privileged settings, such as East Asian women matriculated into U.S. TESOL teacher education programs, has remained scarce. The notion that education is a fundamental human right, and not a privilege (Price, 2002) needs to be revisited for the East Asian women in the study. For them, educational attainment was a product of their privileged class. The privileged class gave them an edge in terms of educational pursuits to the point of being admitted into U.S. TESOL programs. Due to their privileged backgrounds, they gained different forms of capital involving learning and teaching English and gaining admission into teacher preparation programs abroad. Additionally, they came with economic resources that would sustain them until the completion of their degree programs. These women came to an English speaking country with a set of beliefs and knowledge, identities, and dispositions characterized by this privilege.

Bourdieu (1986) and Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) contended that one's social class has the possibility of transforming the cultural resources to which

individuals have access in their environment. As for the women in the study, their upper-middle to upper-class status in their native countries gave them opportunities to learn other languages, study and live in foreign countries, and ultimately, gain admission into TESOL programs in the United States. Moreover, Bourdieu argued that different experiences in an individual's home life could facilitate and expand a person's academic achievement. For the women in the study, the "different experiences" were opportunities of language enrichment programs in their native countries, living and learning in other countries, and ultimately, earning a degree in the United States. A degree from the United States was a form of symbolic capital that could potentially transform their lived experiences into something more meaningful and worthwhile as they imagined their future identities and possibilities. Moreover, Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) suggested that being part of a high social class status with abundant cultural resources was connected to educational success. In all of their cases, either their parents or the spouses (for those who were married) worked toward providing them with various forms of capital as a means toward their educational success. In other words, their family members provided resources (i.e. cultural capital, symbolic capital, and other forms of capital), which yielded important social, cultural, and educational profits in the cases of the women in the study.

Whether most of the English language learning occurred in the public schools or private language classes, the women had access to learning the English language beginning in their elementary school years. Although some could argue that all the grade school students in these East Asian countries had access to learning the English language due to the mandates from the Ministry of Education in these countries, the

five women in the study had special connections with the English language. This culminated in the realization of unique experiences for them as commensurate with their privileged-class status. In addition to what they gained from their English language learning communities in their native countries, they were given opportunities to go abroad to live and learn in foreign countries or to teach English (as was the case with Shu-Ming). Without the resources from their privileged backgrounds, the women would not have been able to partake of these cultural, linguistic, and professional experiences. Their short-term study abroad language learning and/or teaching experiences in Germany (Xia), Turkey (Han Nah), United States (Han Nah and Yu Ri), England (Han Nah), and Taiwan (Shu-Ming) afforded them cultural and linguistic capital, which coupled with other resources, enabled them to begin TESOL degree programs in the United States. Although each woman had different reasons for choosing to matriculate into TESOL programs in the United States, their experiences navigating various foreign cultures and languages gave them the additional motivation to begin these TESOL programs in the United States.

Interestingly enough though, the different forms of capital provided for the East Asian women in their earlier educational and cultural experiences, representative of privileges in their native countries, were not necessarily suitable in helping them to navigate through their TESOL programs. This was echoed in Hawkins' (2005) comment, "cultural capital must be defined differently and functions differently in different spaces" (p. 78). The specific kinds of privileges promoted in TESOL programs and considered as necessary for success in these programs were those

equated with being native English speakers, having English language fluency and having academic discourse competence.

I now turn to an examination of the critical and feminist perspectives in order to understand the ways in which issues of linguistic, gendered, and racial marginalization emerged in their privileged-class background as a further means of understanding their identity transformations.

## **Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives in Theorizing Identities:**

### **Critical and Feminist Perspectives**

A paradigm shift from positivism to postmodern, critical, and feminist perspectives has occurred within the field of educational research which supports the need for multiple theoretical and methodological approaches in order to understand identity constructions and negotiations occurring in marginalized populations (e.g., Davis & Skilton-Sylvester, 2004; Hawkins, 2004; Norton & Pavlenko, 2004; Pavlenko & Blackridge, 2004; Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005). Scholars working under the worldview of postmodernism, according to Richardson (2000), problematized the idea that “any method or theory, discourse or genre, or tradition or novelty, has a universal and general claim as the ‘right’ or the privileged form of authoritative knowledge” (p. 928). Furthermore, the shift to a paradigm embracing eclecticism has promoted different, multiple, and alternative methods leading to more complex and innovative methods such as life history and other forms of narrative research. These methods have proven useful in informing the complex identities of women of color as well as highlighting the “mismatch between the theories on the situated practices” (Davis & Skilton-Sylvester, 2004, p. 395) for individuals such as

East Asian women in TESOL programs. Couched in the postmodern worldview, the East Asian women's narratives of navigating within different learning communities opened the doors to revealing how they came to construct and negotiate their identities in relation to their gendered, linguistic, and racial experiences (Amin, 2001; Norton, 2000; Pavlenko, 2003). The gendered, linguistic, and racial identities of these women surfaced along side of the women's privileged classed backgrounds as they traversed different sites of learning and teaching. Hence, identity constructions and negotiations of the East Asian women in the study are suitably framed by the critical and feminist perspectives, as will be delineated below.

Critical perspectives have pointed to the interconnectedness of language, gender, social class, race, sexual orientation, and (dis)ability issues in influencing identity constructions and negotiations with regard to the imbalance of power embedded in society (Freire, 1998; Kubota, 2004; Norton, 2000; Norton & Pavlenko, 2004; Pavlenko & Blackridge, 2004; Price, 2000). In the field of TESOL, critical perspectives have influenced how non-native English speaking (NNES) students and teachers are viewed with regard to the English language learning and teaching enterprise due to the perceived imbalance in proficiency levels between the native-English speakers (NESs) and NNESs. Hence, scholars embracing critical perspectives have sought to promote the visions of democracy, social justice, and equity in educating the linguistically, racially, and culturally marginalized individuals (Freire, 1998).

Feminist perspectives have espoused "the centrality of gender in the shaping of our consciousness, skills, and institutions as well as in the distribution of power and



privilege” (Lather, 1991, p. 71). Consequently, such perspectives have pointed to the importance of breaking the silence of gendered oppression that has stemmed from existing unequal relations between women, (e.g., East Asian women,) and the rest of the politics (Weedon, 1987).

More specifically, feminist research in the field of education calls for “epistemological equality as a legitimate concern” (Thompson, 1994, p. 192) and questions the body of educational research literature that has been written by and for white male scholars. In the field of TESOL, much theorizing and teaching in second-language acquisition and applied linguistics has been researched and recited by white male scholars; thus, the voices of women scholars, especially the voices of women of color, have been scarce (Lin, Grant, Kubota, Motha, Sachs, Vandricks, & Wong, 2004; Pennycook, 1998; Yamada, 2003). Therefore, feminist research inquiries attempt to understand women’s experiences under the premise that “[w]omen should have an equal say in the design and administration of the institutions where knowledge is produced and distributed for reasons of social justice” (Harding, 1987, p. 7). To this end, proponents of feminist perspectives, whether they are advocating for African-American women, Latina women, Asian-American women, or other women of color, “applied their tools to building knowledge of women’s oppression and, based on that knowledge, to developing strategies for resisting subordination and improving women’s lives” (McCann & Kim, 2003, p. 1). Accordingly, the core of my study rests on the principle that East Asian women have a legitimate right to be heard regarding their experiences navigating through different English language learning and teaching communities while enrolled in U.S. TESOL programs.

Scholars grounded in critical and feminist perspectives on second language pedagogy and research have argued that there exists an “inequitably structured world in which the gender, race, class, and ethnicity of second language learners may serve to marginalize them” (Norton, 2000, p. 7). The “inequitably structured” world as pertains to this study involved the marginal identity relations imposed on the non-native English speakers (NNEs) by society which placed more credibility and legitimacy on native English-speakers (NESs) in any and all of the ESL/EFL/bilingual learning and teaching contexts. These perspectives, as related to the current study, emphasize the following components: First, East Asian women’s educational journeys in relation to issues of gender, language, race, and social class; and second, East Asian women’s identities negotiated and constructed in relation to different forms of participation (non-participation) in the dominant discourse in the field of TESOL (e.g., Canagarajah, 1999; Kubota, 1999; Norton, 2001).

Pavlenko (2004) addressed two issues germane to the critical and feminist perspectives. First, she stated that “systemic inequality; namely, the fact that gender, in conjunction with ethnicity, race, class, age, sexuality, or (dis)ability, may mediate individuals’ access to material and symbolic resources, including educational and interactional opportunities” (Pavlenko, 2004, p. 56). Second, she explicated that the “gendered nature of linguistic interaction suggested that even when students make it to the classroom, interaction patterns may favor some over others” (p. 58). Pavlenko suggested that it took more than encouragement and support from teachers and called for the development of specific strategies so that marginalized voices could be heard in the classroom. “Personal narratives, as a form of self-disclosure, knowledge, and

authority...” (p. 59) would be one of multiple ways of hearing marginal voices. She went further in her discussion by stating the importance of promoting critical and feminist perspectives in terms of the types of issues raised and the types of engagement offered in the classroom.

### *Theorizing Multiple Identities*

The East Asian women’s identities in relation to the issues they faced in their educational journeys became visible in terms of how these identities were actually constructed and which ones were further negotiated. Many scholars have written about the identities of English as a Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) teachers (e.g., Duff & Uchida, 1997; Johnston, 1997), non-native English speaking (NNES) in-service and pre-service teachers (e.g., Amin 2001; Pavlenko, 2003), and beginning ESOL teachers (e.g., Motha, 2004) informed by the fields of education, anthropology, psychology, and women’s studies. In many ways, my research on the identity constructions and negotiations of five East Asian women built on the above scholarly contributions as a way to expand the knowledge base in the fields of TESOL and teacher education. This was accomplished through examining, more critically, the experiences of these five East Asian women who were also self-proclaimed NNESs. In what follows, I bring together scholarly contributions pertaining to constructions and negotiations of identities.

According to Norton (2000), the notion of identity has been understood as “how a person understands his/her relationship to the world, how that relationship is socially constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (p. 5). Due to the nature of identity being continuously and

socially constructed and negotiated across time and space, a person would inevitably have multiple emerging identities. Norton's (2000) seminal piece explored the experiences of five female Canadian immigrant ESL students through a longitudinal case study approach, one that sought to understand their multiply constructed and negotiated, gendered, classed, and ethnic identities. Using interviews and diary studies, Norton laid out the issues of power manifested in their identities as language learners in an unfamiliar Canadian context. Thus, the identities of immigrant women and language learners were understood as negotiated in their sociocultural contexts. Specifically, for Norton's immigrant women, identity as a construct became (1) multiply layered; (2) a site of struggle; and (3) everchanging in different contexts in their lives throughout the diary study.

Similarly, Hawkins (2005) noted identities as

continuously being negotiated through social interactions ... in that learners come with diverse histories and understandings, and interact within an institutional setting that privileged certain ways of using language, thinking, and interacting with others...in essence, the learners navigate through complex nature of social languages in which they represent themselves as certain sorts of people, while being invited or summoned into certain categories or positions. (p. 62)

The immigrant women's identities became even more powerfully visible as writers revealing their "autobiographical, discursal, and authorial identities" (Norton, 2000, p. 148). Largely, Norton demonstrated how inequitable relationships inherent in society due to ethnic, gender, and class differences limited the learning and

educational opportunities of these immigrant women trying to survive in English-speaking communities. Norton concluded with a call for a pedagogy of possibilities (e.g. diary studies) where both researchers and the researched could acknowledge the complexities of identities as multiple, fluid, and contradictory in nature.

Moreover, Spillane (2000) went one step further to define the construct of teachers' identities as "[teachers'] sense of self [their identities] as well as their knowledge and beliefs, dispositions, interests, and orientation towards work and change" (p. 2). To further conceptualize the teachers' identities, Drake, Spillane, and Hufferd-Ackles (2001) stated that the teachers' multiple identities could eventually be understood from the stories narrated by the teachers. "Stories, as lived and told by teachers, serve as the lens through which they understand themselves personally and professionally and through which they view the content and context of their work" (Drake, et al., 2001, p. 2).

Following the ideas of Drake et al. (2001) and Spillane (2000) highlighting the use of narratives to understand identities of teachers, Clandinin and Connelly (2000), Connelly and Clandinin (1990) and Conle (2001) used narratives as an avenue to construct, reconstruct, co-construct, refine, and negotiate the stories being told through educational experiences. Thus, the use of narratives or stories has helped us understand how individuals experience their world. Elbaz-Luwisch (2001), in promoting issues of social justice, discussed the utility of storytelling as a way to highlight diversity and a way of "enabling students to become border crossers" (p. 81), thus crossing invisible divisions of racial, gendered, classed identities that often separate one group from another.

Two studies further deepened our understanding of visible minority women teachers and how their identities were constructed and negotiated within their teaching contexts (Amin; 1997; 2001; Tang, 1997). Studies conducted by Tang (1997) and Amin (1997; 2001) demonstrated how power becomes a large part of the English-language teaching world. Amin, in particular, examined the identities of NNES ESL teachers in Canada. Instead of portraying their identities as othered and marginal, as depicted in the grand narratives of NNESs, Amin concluded, on an optimistic note, that NNES ESL teachers in her study actually experienced a heightened sense of identities. They accomplished this through resisting the native speaker fallacy that only native speakers could be ideal English language teachers through seeing themselves as sources of empowerment for others. This culminated in the opening up of a pedagogy of possibilities for their students as well as other NNES ESL teachers.

Tang's (1997) study utilized the social identity perspective to examine how NNES EFL teachers view their sense of power and status as compared to NES EFL teachers. The author derived the meaning of social identity from Hogg and Abrams' (1990) work that "the social identity perspective holds that all knowledge is socially derived through social comparison" (p. 22). Although the NNES EFL teachers perceived their English language proficiency and fluency to be lacking as compared to the NES EFL teachers, the results of the study indicated that they also viewed themselves positively in that "they serve as empathetic listeners for beginning and weak students, needs analysts, and agents of change, and coaches for public examinations in the local contexts" (p. 579). Similarly, Amin's (2001) brief account of the study conducted in Canada explored the teaching lives of five "visible-minority

female” teachers in an adult ESL context. This study discussed issues of access as interconnected with teaching English by tracing out the authors’ ethnic Pakistani identity in the realm of English language teaching. Amin noted that access into the field of TESOL was equated with whiteness, thus rendering more opportunities for native English speakers in the field of TESOL. Amin concluded that this could have been attributable to their possession of linguistic and racialized privileges, which enabled them to exercise power over non-native English speakers.

Even though Tang (1997) and Amin (1997; 2001) raised issues of access, race, status, and gender in relation to teaching English in different contexts, their studies were about in-service adult ESL teachers from diverse linguistic, cultural, and racial backgrounds. The findings from their studies may speak volumes to how women from similar backgrounds navigate and could be empowered in TESOL programs. A study conducted by Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999) responded to what could be seen as limitations of Tang and Amin’s studies by describing a course in the MATESOL program, which was specifically designed for its NNES pre-service teachers. The authors observed that when NNES pre-service teachers, enrolled in the seminar class, were provided with opportunities to connect their own experiences and engage in self-representation (e.g. as NNESs), it heightened their awareness “toward received wisdom and challenged the appropriateness of imported materials according to their settings and their students’ lives” (p. 426). In all, NNES pre-service teachers experienced empowerment, which emerged from having new relationships with their teaching contexts (Lather, 1991) enabling them to feel empowered in and to claim ownership of the English language learning and teaching enterprise.

Also, other scholars have added to the theoretical and methodological knowledge landscape of identity constructions and negotiations. In highlighting gendered identities as limiting women's future imagined possibilities, Skilton-Sylvester (2002) discussed how the multiple roles of Cambodian women in their lives as workers, mothers, and spouses became influential in their decision to participate or not to participate in adult ESL programs. Similarly, Simon-Maeda (2004) studied NES and NNES women EFL educators' experiences attempting to problematize the existing educational situations in Japan. As these women narrated their teaching stories, the unraveling of conflicts embedded in their lives as professionals and women became apparent. The women told "stories from a myriad of standpoints, but taken together the stories have commonalities that TESOL education programs have not sufficiently addressed" (p. 406).

Additionally, Thornton-Dill (1987) discussed the difference between ethnic group and eth-class for a Black community that has relevance to understanding the racial identities of the East Asian women. Her analysis could be expanded upon by juxtaposing it to the experiences of the East Asian women. She stated, "[T]he ethnic group is the locus of a sense of historical identification, while the eth-class (the intersection of ethnicity and social class) is the locus of a sense of participational identification" (p. 103). For the five women in the present study, they were historically identified as being of East Asian heritage due to their countries of birth, their first languages learned, and their parental and ancestral heritages. This defined their ethnic identity, which interwoven with their racial classification as East Asians, highlighted both their ethnic heritage and their skin color as compared to NNESs from



dominant racial backgrounds (i.e. NNEs from European countries). As a result of these women's participation in English language learning communities in their native educational contexts and English language learning and teaching communities in the English-speaking countries (e.g., United States, Canada, England), their "eth-class" developed through these learning communities, though the extent of participation and concomitant identifications varied among study participants.

In examining social and cultural identities of teachers, Duff and Uchida (1997) studied four native English-speaking (NES) EFL teachers in the context of Japanese private EFL classrooms. The results of this study revealed that the identities of these teachers were "co-constructed, negotiated, and transformed" (p. 452) in that they were ever-changing in the ways that the teachers interacted with their social, cultural, and institutional contexts within a past-present-future timeline. Largely, the construct of identities were seen as emergent, becoming, blended, and blurred (Motha, 2004). Johnston (1997) further theorized the identities of teachers teaching in Poland. He discussed the results of life history interviews with 17 EFL teachers in Poland regarding their understanding of "career" and "profession" in ESL/EFL teaching. The life-story narratives of the EFL teachers revealed identities that were "dynamic, nonunitary," (p. 681) and alternative, which were complexified by the teachers' social, educational, economic, and political contexts.

Pavlenko (2003) and Motha (2004) further complexified the identities of pre-service and in-service TESOL teachers. Pavlenko focused on the identities of pre-service teachers enrolled in a TESOL program using their linguistic autobiographies. Pavlenko found that these teachers perceived their identities as "multicompetent,

bilingual, multilingual speakers, and legitimate second language users” (p. 251). These findings were also echoed in Cook’s (1992; 1995) work embracing the multicompetent nature of bilinguals and multilinguals. In Motha’s (2004) study of four beginning ESOL teachers, the author discussed the meanings of knowledge, pedagogy, and identity in the context of becoming an ESOL teacher and belonging to the TESOL profession. Hence, she was advocating for a move away from traditionally accepted understandings of pedagogy, identity, and transformation. Both Pavlenko and Motha have challenged the normative understanding of identities of pre-service and in-service TESOL professionals in that the meaning of pedagogy and identity lay in the lived histories of individuals in the classrooms.

Recently, Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, and Johnson (2005) explored three different studies on language teacher identity using three different theoretical lenses: social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978), situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and the concept of image-text (Simon, 1995). The purpose of their critical review was to understand how teacher identities have been theorized by presenting and juxtaposing different theoretical perspectives that could highlight many aspects of teachers’ identities. The authors wanted to “use one theory to enlighten the other ... by illustrati[ng] the range of substantive focuses, methodological approaches, and theoretical frameworks that are available to researchers” (p. 24). This review served as a powerful model, indicating that identity constructions could be a complex phenomenon, and that researchers would need a variety of theoretical and methodological tools to understand language teachers’ identity constructions.

With the foregoing studies in mind, the overall direction of my research focus was to understand how five East Asian women (EAW) enrolled in TESOL Master's programs in the United States experienced their educational journeys, hence their identity constructions and negotiations. I sought to accomplish this task by weaving different bodies of scholarly work into the data gathered from these women pre-service teachers through their life-history narratives. The multifold purpose of this was to (1) honor the diverse experiences of each woman given that their experiences have been invisible in the literature but visible in TESOL programs; (2) inform the growing body of theoretical knowledge through the connection of their lived educational experiences to TESOL teacher education curricula; (3) improve the quality of ever-expanding TESOL programs continuing to admit these women; and (4) continue the call for research agendas focusing on the lives and experiences of East Asian women in U.S. TESOL programs.

## **Chapter 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter details the design of the research study. First, I begin the chapter with a discussion of my subjectivity as a researcher coupled with a section on my life history narrative, highlighting the transformative nature of my educational journey. Second, I discuss the characteristics of the study design, pointing out different research approaches that emphasize the life history component informed by critical and feminist theory perspectives. Third, I discuss the methods used in this study. Finally, I conclude with an overview of Chapters 3 through 7.

### **“Being Attentive to my own Subjectivity”: The Researcher’s Journey**

The ideas behind this study stemmed from my own lived experiences as a Korean-American woman in both academic and teaching contexts. I, too, wrestled with issues of language, gender, and race that were a large part of my identity constructions and negotiations. The very qualities I brought into the study as an East Asian woman in the field of TESOL had the capacity to “filter, skew, shape, block, transform, construe, and misconstrue what transpires from the outset of a research project to its culmination in a written statement” (Peshkin, 1989, p. 17). My study became an “extension of [my] understanding of the worlds [I] seek to more fully comprehend” (Ramanathan, 2005, p. 291).

For example, all of the study participants and myself have had complex relationships with the educational contexts in our native countries as teachers, learners, editors, and tutors. We all went through TESOL programs located in the East coast region of the United States. All of us self-identified as NNEs. Shu-Ming and I shared an additional common ground in that we both claimed immigrant NNE status due to

our lengthy dwelling in the United States as both learners and teachers in ESL contexts. Furthermore, we both went back to our native countries during our adult years to teach English. Additionally, we both became disenchanted either with the English educational systems in our native countries or ourselves as teachers of English. This, in turn, propelled us to search for the best teacher preparation programs possible in order to become professionally credentialed and gain credibility in the ELT world.

Again, the experiences of the five East Asian women in this study were intricately interwoven with my own (Hansen, 2004; Ladner, 1987; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Ramanathan, 2005; Pennycook, 2005). I was one of them, and had dealt with many of the same issues with which they had dealt on a personal, academic, and professional level. Specifically, I was compelled to examine the notion of double consciousness in my own lived experiences as well as the lived experiences of the five women via the stories they provided for the study. The very selection of this dissertation topic, itself, reflected a subjectivity and bias in that I could not divorce myself from the experiences of these women. Largely, this study, in-and-of-itself, was a summation of my personal, and to some degree, my academic experiences. I identify fully with this idea: “These experiences were the reason why I became a TESOL professional, and my self-identification as an NNES is the identity that drives my research and teaching” (Hansen, 2004, p. 41). As a researcher journeying to understand the experiences of fellow East Asian women, I readily embraced the notion that conducting qualitative research has no set boundaries and limitations (e.g., Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Kleinsasser, 2000).

## **Birth of the Study Concepts**

It is very difficult to determine whether this work had its beginning when I was growing up...or whether it originated with my graduate school career when I became engaged in research for a doctoral dissertation. I am sure that the twenty years I spent being socialized by my family and the broader Black community ...shaped my perception of life, defined my emotive responses to the world and enhanced my ability to survive in a society that has not made survival for Blacks easy. (Ladner, 1987, pp. 74-75)

Ladner, in Harding's (1987) *Feminism and Methodology*, narrated how she was challenged in having to remember when the initial ideas to study Black Women such as herself emerged. I, too, have wrestled, to varying degrees, with the same challenge (i.e., when did the initial idea of this study emerge in my own life history timeline). The way I view and know the world has come from my own experiences, which led to other experiences (Dewey, 1938/1963). Through reliving my experiences, I have come to shape and expand my epistemology (McEwan & Egan, 1995; Trimmer, 1997). Thus, my educational journey, as I have lived it, became a part of this study. In what follows, I share parts of my life events that have transformed me from a girl who knew nothing about the English language to a beginning woman scholar in the field of TESOL research.

### *My Mother's Commitment to my Education*

I vividly remember the early years of my life in Korea. Although we could not afford it, my mother sent me to a kindergarten run by the Catholic Church in my

neighborhood. Perhaps, my mother's commitment to my education had something to do with her refusal to continue with her own education and my need to be successful in my future years as a woman. She took me to school everyday and made sure that I was doing well in school. According to my mother, she wanted me to start school early (at the age of 4) because I was extremely shy, passive, and non-verbal. Thus, my mother wanted to get me into school early to begin socializing with my peers. She also enrolled me into a private piano school since she believed that playing an instrument would aid me in getting out of my shyness shell. Fortunately for me, my piano teacher, Ms. Kim, was also one of my kindergarten teachers. I had to walk to Ms. Kim's house rain or shine. This continued for about four years until my family left for the United States.

#### *Accessing Different Forms of Cultural and Linguistic Capital*

I emigrated with my family from Korea in 1976 at the age of nine. At that time, my grandparents and their children (my mother's siblings) were in the United States living the lives of immigrants. Like many families emigrating from Korea, my parents wanted to provide their children with an abundant amount of cultural and linguistic capital (e.g., Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) that they never had themselves growing up in Korea. Even though I did not truly understand my parents' investment (e.g., Norton, 2000) in immigrating to the United States, I set foot in this country with hopes of a new beginning as a primary school student.

#### *Understanding the Meanings around Race and Linguistic Subordination*

I came to experience a different set of dilemmas in the English-speaking world. The white teachers whom I encountered in 1976 did not, or perhaps could not, relate to

me. I did not think anyone who was white or black could ever understand my Korean identity. I had a different way of knowing and understanding the world (e.g., ethnic epistemology) (See Ladson-Billings, 2000) due to my Korean heritage. Equally problematic was that my white teachers could not ever make the classroom experience culturally relevant for me (e.g., Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Turner, 2003) since I was the only Korean student in the entire school. I was the only visible minority who could not understand the English language. There were other visible minorities (e.g., blacks and Hispanics) in the class, but they, at least, had access to linguistic capital. I wanted to be white or black to be able to communicate in the English language and participate in classroom activities. Thinking about what I was feeling back then, I could not tell which of my identities was more problematic, being Korean or being illiterate in the English language (e.g., Foster, 1991). This was also echoed in Foster's (1991) work with Black teachers in the following:

When the interviewed women talked about the constraints on their lives, they referred most often to those constraints imposed by race, not gender or class. It is difficult for these women to separate being women from being black. Probably, because race, class, and gender aspect of their experience oppresses them most. (p. 252)

I thought that only time would reveal which was more oppressive for me.

Ladson-Billings' (2000) racialized discourses surfaced as I reflected on my initial perceptions of different racial groups in my elementary school classroom. White and black students called me "chink" and told me to return to Korea. As far as I could remember, "chink" was a racially derogatory term for all Asian groups at that time



(e.g., Kanno, 2003). Their racial overtones frightened me to the point of not wanting to go back to school. I was also frustrated because I could not fight back verbally. In order for me to fight back verbally, I needed to feel comfortable with the English language, which was not only uncomfortable but also inaccessible and complex for me at the time (e.g., Wong-Fillmore, 1983). Ironically, the series of name-calling and unfriendly faces somehow made me stronger. It gave me more motivation to continue learning in American classrooms, although I felt that no one could understand what it was like to be in my shoes (e.g., Suarez, 2002). I think those words have somehow been a part of my struggle to truly identify myself as an NNES woman, embracing a self-concept characterized by cultural and linguistic multiplicity. I believe my identity did not really stem from my physical appearance, or my accent-free speech, but more from my past experiences and the journey toward who I have become (i.e., from my lived experiences) (e.g., Braine, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 2004).

#### *Competing Access to English and Korean Literacy Development*

Except for twice a week, 30-minute lessons in a one-pupil classroom, I was pushed into a “sink-or-swim” situation in my mainstream classroom. This entailed full immersion learning of not only the English language but also other subjects as well, all of which were taught in English. My adaptation to English speaking was made more difficult given the fact that only Korean was spoken in my home. Because my Korean literacy was not completely developed at the time of my family’s immigration to the U.S., my parents required us to not only use the Korean language at home, but they also sent us to a special Saturday school where Korean language and cultural practices were taught (e.g., Kanno, 2003; Pease-Alvarez & Hakuta, 1992). My parents believed

that living in the borderland (e.g., Anzaldua, 2003) would afford me more possibilities as I embraced and promoted “multiple cultures, multiple consciousness [ways of understanding the world] and multiple possibilities” (Delgado-Gaitan, 1997, p. 37) for the future.

In the high school I attended, there were many international students from Asian backgrounds. It was a different feeling since I had not been exposed to being with other Asian students in my primary and middle school years. Although, I liked being with students who had the same racial and linguistic backgrounds, I quickly became “un-attracted” to them because I did not want to be labeled “Limited-English-Proficient (LEP)” (e.g., Miller, 2004). I felt that being a part of the LEP community made me look and sound unintelligent, so I needed to be a part of the native speaking community (e.g., Harklau, 2000; Kanno, 2003; McKay & Wong, 1996).

With persistence and hard work, I graduated from high school and chose to attend college as far away from my parents’ home as possible. In 1985, I went to Boston with the intention of becoming a medical doctor, because that was what my parents wanted me to be. I did not know whether I could do this, but because I always followed my parents’ directions, I acquiesced. They believed that my becoming a medical doctor would be even more opportunistic for me in giving me access to social capital (e.g., Bowles & Gintis, 1976) that they never had. I also agreed with them not only for the reasons of gaining social capital, but also for wanting to be a caring and compassionate doctor. I believed that everyone who opted to pursue medicine possessed an ethic of caring and compassion (e.g., Noddings; 1984; 1992; Valenzuela, 1999). I quickly learned from my cohorts among first year pre-medicine students that

there would always be fierce competitions. I was disenchanted by the level of dishonesty and fierce competitiveness that occurred in my own program. After the first year in this program, I pulled out and declared psychology as my major.

*My Experience as a Teacher-Intern in the U.S.*

Upon my return from Boston at the end of 1993, I began to search for employment. I came into contact with the director of a multicultural education program based in Washington D.C. The program's mission was to provide private schools in the D.C. metropolitan area with interns from diverse backgrounds. Although my resume did not reflect any kind of teaching experience, I got an interview with the Director, perhaps as a result of my being Asian. Shortly after that, I remember participating in a workshop discussing the issues and concerns around "multicultural education and diversity." I was placed in a private, K-12 school in Virginia working with three different elementary level teachers within one academic year (1994-1995). I was to observe, reflect, interact, and teach (e.g., Schon, 1983; 1987) promoting different ways of bringing diversity into this white, upper class environment.

At that time in 1994, I was the only Asian intern/teacher in the entire school. Teachers and students in the first through third grade classes asked me to provide a better understanding of the different Asian cultures and languages. In order to address diversity and multiculturalism among Asian cultures and languages, I brought in different cultural artifacts, discussed different holidays in Korea and other Asian countries, made Chinese dumplings in class, and helped students write a play depicting a culture clash. My surface understanding of the notions around culture and

diversity did not do justice to the subject since it often essentialized and dichotomized the concept of culture (e.g., Kubota, 2003).

During my Spring break from interning at this school, I visited Korea. I realized that much had changed. In Seoul, there were many billboard signs advertising English language institutes. Also, advertisements in the classified sections of the English language newspapers published in Korea called for teaching and learning English. After two weeks, I came back to the U.S. thinking about the possibility of returning to Korea to work.

### *The Value of the English Language Learning and Teaching in Korea*

In 1995, through family members in Korea, I found a job as an educational consultant and a program developer in one of the foreign language institutes in Seoul. I did not have any background in English language teaching and/or curriculum development, but my bilingual and bicultural identities secured the job for me. Although I was skeptical about working in an environment where I did not have any experience, I was thrilled about returning to my native country to give back to them some of what I had gained in the U.S. educational system.

During my stay at the language institute, I acted as a cultural and linguistic broker between the director of the institute and the American English teachers. My first year in Korea opened my eyes to culturally challenging situations. It was difficult for Koreans to appreciate that I was more westernized than Korean, and that my upbringing for the past 20 years in America had already shaped my identities to some degree. Even more puzzling to them was that I spoke Korean fluently just like them. I lived in a contradictory world (e.g., Kanno, 2003). In some situations, I would be

more Korean, and in other situations, I would be more westernized. Specifically, when I needed to advocate for the American English teachers working at my institute, I became more westernized. I was outspoken about the teachers' needs and concerns while teaching at the institute. The only time I felt completely Korean was when I spoke Korean.

As far as the teaching was concerned, I had an opportunity to teach a diverse group of students. I taught kindergarten level classes up through elementary school classes for teachers who were struggling to meet the new English curriculum requirements handed down from the Department of Education in 1997. In addition, I was establishing and teaching conversational English programs for top-management employees at the National Bank of Korea. These bankers were struggling to improve their conversational skills in order to compete at the top level of international banking and finance. These bankers needed to gain access to the English language, a benchmark symbol in global power and knowledge resources (e.g., Butler, 2004; Graddol, 1997; Nunan, 2003). I have learned that it was difficult for Korean English teachers and other administrators to teach conversational English in the Korean educational system for the old paradigm of learning English in Korea was not going to help them "communicate" (e.g., Butler, 2004; Li, 1998; Lui, Ahn, Baek, & Hahn, 2004). After two years of working as an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher and an administrator, I left the language institute to work in a university just outside of Seoul in 1998. I needed this change in the English language learning and teaching environment because I saw language institutes in Korea as money making business enterprises that failed to take into consideration the diverse needs of English language

learners. This was echoed in Pakir (1997)'s comment about English today being equated with money.

I was thrilled to land a position in a college because I would now be identified as an academically sound professional by the Korean society. By teaching in language institutes, you are identified as one of the foreign instructors who come to Korea and other countries to make money and learn about the native cultures. Even before I began my first day as a "PROFESSOR" at AmStamDong College, I had high expectations for this school and its English faculty members. I also assumed that this college, along with other colleges and universities in Korea, would treat their NES English professors better than what I had witnessed and heard from instructors teaching in language institutes throughout Seoul, Korea. I also assumed that they would treat Korean-American professors with more respect due to our bilingual and bicultural identities which would be seen as resources. I learned that my assumptions were incorrect even before I started teaching in this college.

I taught 19 hours of classes per week as opposed to 30-40 hours of teaching at the language institute. Because of this consistent teaching time in accordance with the college schedule, I had more time to do other professional development activities with my colleagues at the College. I taught English language and communication skills to English and tourism majors. Since English classes were one of the core requirements, students seemed more serious about learning English than the students from the language institute. However, I realized that the English language program and the professors' backgrounds did not reflect sufficient abilities to promote communication. Almost all Korean professors working in that English department were emphasizing

rote learning and language learning via the traditional methods (e.g., the Grammar Translation Method, the Audiolingual Method). I felt marginalized and silenced because my ideas for promoting a Communicative Approach to teaching English (e.g., Richards & Rodgers, 2001, Wu, 2001; Yu, 2001) were not embraced by the English department. In order to address some of these pedagogical and curriculum issue needs, the department had scheduled monthly meetings with the foreign professors. In these meetings, we discussed our needs as foreign professors working side-by-side with Korean English professors.

After teaching for a semester at AmStamDong College, I wanted to expand my credentials in the field of TESOL. With Master's and Doctoral degrees in TESOL, I felt that I would be accepted as a serious professional woman in the Korean educational system. In addition to my desire to get credentials in the field of TESOL, there were other external issues that led to feeling marginalized in that school. Many times, I felt discriminated against due to issues involving my gender, my ethnicity, and my linguistic abilities when interacting with Korean professors. I felt that I was not taken seriously by the Korean professors when I shared my ideas about how to make the English language program better. Due to their belief in dominant Korean cultural practices, women, especially unmarried women, were not permitted to have a position in decision-making processes. In addition to my "inferior" gender, there was an invisible power struggle between the Koreans and the Korean-Americans. Korean-Americans were not seen as "real" Koreans since they left their heritage to "assimilate" into American cultural practices. Furthermore, Korean professors perceived my highly proficient English language ability as a threat rather than as a

resource. After teaching at AmStamDong College for about a year, I came to realize that my shifting identities as a Korean-American, American, or Korean English professor were socially and discursively constructed among the Korean educated and Western educated Korean professors.

*My identity as a MATESOL Graduate Student*

I entered a MA TESOL program at American University in January 1999. My main goal was to complete the program as fast as I could and begin my Ph.D program in TESOL at a nearby institution. The MATESOL Program has helped me shape my understanding of second language acquisition and a variety of English language teaching methodologies. In my program, I was the only “hyphenated” NNES in the sense that I was the only bilingual and bicultural person. The rest of my NNES colleagues were international students. This raised some important questions for me. Why are there so many NNESs in my program? What does this mean for TESOL curricula? What studies have already been conducted to examine their experiences in TESOL? I felt alone being the only hyphenated individual. At times, I was an insider with my NNES colleagues because we could converse in our mother tongue. Most of the time, however, because my experiences were so different from the experiences of my NNES colleagues, I believed that I could not be an insider with them at American University. This was attributed to the fact that I could not relate to their experiences of being raised and schooled in Korea. Even though there was turmoil caused by my insider/outsider status which separated me from my fellow NNES MATESOL students, I still wanted to know more about them as individuals and how they experienced their identities in a TESOL program. Specifically, I wanted to know more



about what brought us to a TESOL program that purports to prepare individuals to teach English throughout the world. I did not seek answers to this query during my MATESOL program. My mission was to successfully finish my MATESOL program and start my Ph.D. program in TESOL in order to commence work as an educational research scholar. This would enable me to seek answers to research questions such as the aforementioned one.

*My Self in my Pedagogy*

My ESL teaching career began in January 2000. Just as I was completing my Master's in TESOL at American University, I landed an adjunct teaching position at Rosedale Community College. I was ecstatic that my program director gave me a teaching position in her ESL program. I was ecstatic because I was being given an opportunity to fuse what I had learned in my Master's work with real-life, authentic teaching. One can imagine the "new life" that came with being an ESL instructor. I worked hard to make sure that my "lesson plans" were flawless, and I made sure to promote the Communicative Approach in my daily life as an ESL teacher. I quickly realized that one approach cannot ever nor should it ever be the solution for ELLs' language acquisition (e.g., Park, 2004). Due to their differing personal, academic, and professional goals, utilizing only one approach to teach ESL would be doing a disservice to my ESL students in their learning experiences. With that realization, I focused more on students' future goals and different avenues for celebrating their individual experiences through introducing autobiographical writing projects to my adult ELLs (e.g., Park & Suarez, 2003).

Since I have also journeyed through difficult terrain as a second language learner, I wanted my students to come to know that I, too, had experienced a large degree of intimidation from my teachers who seemed so knowledgeable and powerful in the use of the English language. I wanted to create a learning environment different from the one I had had as a second language learner. Through the realization of this goal, my students would be able to experience a more comfortable and learner-friendly environment conducive to using a new language, exploring each other's cultures, and bringing in our human-ness into the learning sphere (e.g., Price & Osborne, 2002).

### *My Self in My Research*

As an Asian-American of East Asian descent, I came into the field of educational research in 2000. I was not fully aware of my marginalized status. In one of my first graduate seminar classes in a doctoral program, *Theory and Research on Teaching*, I came to understand and accept the ever-present conundrum that conducting educational research is political. Similarly, I have also come to understand that the capitalist system seldom works justly for *all* people. Upon that realization, coupled with the initial questions emerging from my interactions with NNEs, I chose to focus my research program on the lives and experiences of East Asian women teacher candidates enrolled in U.S. TESOL programs. Although my line of research suggested that it could be situated within advocacy research, I see my position as an “interpretive and political bricoleur” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 6).

My research has evolved into seeking out my ever-changing identities and that of women similar to myself in the context of our multilingual and multicultural backgrounds, values and beliefs in schooling and pedagogy, and the lived experiences

as second language learners for they “affect what, how, and why I research” (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 268).

### **Influences upon the Study**

While studying women is not new, studying them from the perspectives of their own experiences so that women can understand themselves and the world can claim virtually no history at all. (Harding, 1987, p. 8)

Critical and feminist perspectives, as discussed in the previous chapter, are crucial to this qualitative study due to the contents of the women’s narratives. The women wrestled with issues of language, race, class, and gender as forms of subordination and subjugation in the context of English language learning and teaching settings. By designing a study focusing on five East Asian women in TESOL, I inevitably took a stand for women’s experiences by making their experiences visible in constructing forms of knowledge. Also, not only were their experiences examined, but the larger sociocultural contexts within which the women were situated were examined as well. In other words, it was difficult to separate the women’s experiences from the larger socioeconomic, political, cultural, gendered, and racial contexts of their native countries as well as the Western cultures. Furthermore, this design highlighted a methodological approach focusing on women’s stories and on how they came to construct and negotiate identities in their own contexts (Madriz, 2000). Studies influenced by critical and feminist perspectives “connect qualitative research to the hopes, needs, goals, and promises of a free democratic society” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3) so that each woman could be given opportunities to say something important “about the disjunctures in her own life and means necessary for change”

(Lather, 1991, p. xviii). The meaning of “free democratic society” for East Asian women in this study was to understand their educational and teaching experiences using a variety of approaches highlighting the constructions and negotiations of their identities (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005). Their stories became the lenses into examining how their linguistic, gendered, racial, and classed identities have been constructed and negotiated.

This study has characteristics of qualitative, narrative, and life-history research approaches since my aim in the design of this study was to utilize the exploratory nature of conducting qualitative research as indicated below:

Researchers should not be forced to ask themselves whether they are doing critical ethnography or narrative research...should not feel that they must define their research identity based on such modes...should feel free to examine a variety of modes, to mix and blend different ones in the long journey toward answering research questions... (Shohamy, 2004, p. 729)

Specifically, I used characteristics described by several scholars in designing a study of East Asian women’s life history narratives. As a researcher, I crafted the educational narratives of East Asian women as they were told to me using a life-history timeline (Bell, 2002; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Dewey, 1938/1968; Foster, 2005). In what follows, I describe the characteristics and influences framing the study.

The first characteristic of the research design drew from Dewey’s (1938) notion of continuity at the crux of these women’s educational and teaching experiences. Continuity capitalized on the past that is remembered, the present relating

to experiences of the past, and the future looking forward to envisioning possible experiences (Dewey 1938/1968; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Thus, the past-present-future experiences of the East Asian women became the focus of the design. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Creswell (2002) stated that an individual's past experiences become important in how those experiences contribute to present and future experiences. The five East Asian women's life history narratives using the timeline of "*Looking Back, Reflecting on, and Thinking Forward*" captured their educational experiences vis-à-vis the English language learning and teaching enterprises. These phrases (i.e., "*Looking Back, Reflecting on, and Thinking Forward*"), different in their naming, all pointed to the reflective nature of the women's experiences (Pinar, 2004).

Contreras (2000) also discussed stories of experience (i.e., life history narratives) in teacher educational research as "an alternative paradigm of research that calls for more human and context-sensitive ways of developing an in-depth understanding of schooling that moves beyond observation" (p. 24). This study unearthed the experiences of the East Asian women pre-service teachers. The stories they revealed were deeply laced with underlying cultural assumptions and insights that East Asian women embody due to their ethnic, cultural, classed, and gendered upbringing, socialization and education (Bell, 2002). Thus, they became "experts in their own teaching and researching lives—experts who could share in decision making regarding teaching, researching, and professional growth" (Contreras, 2000, p. 24).

Second, the chronological nature (e.g., *Looking Back, Reflecting on, and Thinking Forward*) of the women's narratives highlighted different events in their educational journeys that have influenced their identity constructions and negotiations.

This characteristic was also important for researchers using life history, biographical, and autobiographical writings that tended to represent different events (Creswell, 1998).

Third, this study used multiple forms of data sources to collect the narratives of the women. The data sources of electronic reflective questions, electronic journal entries, and individual interviews (structured, semi-structured, and unstructured) added to deeper understandings of the women's narratives. The electronic reflective questions and electronic journal entries framed structured and unstructured questions that enabled these women to think about certain aspects of their experiences with regard to learning and teaching English in different contexts. Due to their reticent nature, the women wanted to have some guidance in writing about their educational journeys. The interview sessions served as a time period with which to expand on what they had discussed in their electronic reflective narratives and electronic journals. These sessions also tapped into other relevant questions. Throughout the data collections, I, as the researcher, also reflected on my own educational experiences in which I found myself and my stories to be a "nested set of stories" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 63) with that of the women.

Fourth, as a researcher, I reordered the narratives of women that were told to me in a manner that would be presentable in this dissertation. I re-storied the women's experiences using the life-history timeline of *Looking Back, Reflecting on, and Thinking Forward* in order to highlight the chronological nature of their events. By doing this, I was able to connect the "links among the events" (Creswell, 2002, p. 528) and craft a story of experience for each woman (Chapters 3 through 7).

Fifth, I utilized a *Feminist, Communitarian Ethical Framework* where I built “collaborative, reciprocal, trusting, and friendly relations with those studied” (Denzin, 1989). Thus, the ownership of the products of this study was shared between myself and my participants, the five East Asian women. Throughout different stages of the data collection, I shared the transcripts of the data, initial analysis of themes and categories, and narrative and analytical write-ups with each woman. This was done to ensure that what was actually written as the final product of the study would not be a surprise to them. I was also able to share with the women my own story interwoven into the final product (Creswell, 2002). By weaving my own story of experience throughout the interview process, I became a “real, histor[ical] individual with concrete, specific desires and interests and not an invisible, anonymous voice of authority” (Harding, 1987, p. 9)

By doing this, not only did I promote a collaborative effort in sharing the ownership of the data with the women, but also my research became personal in that I formed an intimate bond with the women I studied. This intimate bond did not supersede the need for mutual respect and honor of each other’s time, space, and knowledge of experience. The very nature of what I had gone through with each woman in this study was echoed by Toma (2000) who stated, “Because subjective qualitative research is inherently personal, researchers cannot and should not hide their attachment to the topic and persons they study. The attachment is what makes the two-way data collection process work” (p. 182).

## Methods of Data Collection

In what follows, I detailed the methods of data collection and my reflections pertinent to this section.

### *Entering the Field—Pooling Prospective Participants*

From September 2003 to July 2004, I searched for prospective participants. Due to the nature of my study, I wanted to get acquainted with prospective participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). My academic acquaintances were student colleagues and professors with whom I had crossed paths in regional and national TESOL conferences. These individuals, in different institutions within the East coast region, served as contact persons in trying to recruit prospective participants. I used a sample e-mail to initiate conversations with professors in helping me identify prospective participants (See Appendix 1). By January 2004, I had 12 prospective participants interested in my study who fit the selection criteria.

*Criteria in Participant Selection.* I used the following criteria in selecting prospective participants: First, each woman identified herself as a non-native English speaker (NNES). Second, each woman showed interest in the study and more importantly in understanding her own identities. Third, each had come from one of the East Asian countries, namely China, Japan, Taiwan, or Korea. Finally, each woman, at the time of the data collection, was enrolled in a TESOL program located within the East coast region.

*Getting Acquainted with the Prospective Participants.* I started making initial contacts with the prospective participants in September 2003 in order to get better acquainted and provide them with some general ideas of my study. I also told them



that I would not be ready to collect data from them until my dissertation proposal was successfully defended and my Institutional Review Board/Informed Consent (IRB) application was approved. Furthermore, I told them it would probably be the case that some of them would not be included in the final participant pool since some of the original 12 were planning to graduate in May 2004. By September of 2004, out of 12 prospective participants, 6 had already graduated and were either teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) in local counties or had returned to their native countries to teach English. Thus, I began my data collection with 6 East Asian women pre-service teachers: Han Nah Jung (Korean), Liu Li (Chinese), Xia Wang (Chinese), Yu Ri Koh (Korean), Hae Sun Kim (Korean), and Keiko Mochi (Japanese). For reasons I describe in the following, I did not end up using Keiko Mochi and Hae Sun Kim in the study.

*Sampling Techniques.* The process of gaining access to participants required the usage of both purposeful sampling and snowball sampling techniques in selecting the women for the study. According to Bogden and Biklen (2003), purposeful sampling requires the researcher to choose his/her research participants in order to “facilitate the expansion of the developing theory” (p. 65). Thus, promoting a purposeful sampling led to the selection of women for the study who were being selected not only due to their willingness to volunteer but also for their desire to better understand their academic and professional identities as East Asian women teacher candidates. My sampling technique also can be seen as “community nomination” described in the life-history studies that Foster (1991; 1994) had conducted with Black teachers. Foster’s community nomination brought together an “emic” perspective as an insider’s view of Black teachers’ experiences.

### *Initial Meeting with Each Woman*

In October 2004, I scheduled an individual meeting with each of the six women to provide them with information about the study. In order to make sure I covered all the relevant materials with each woman, I designed a guideline sheet for each woman. It served as a checklist for everything that I needed to do with each woman (See Appendix 2). I went through the data collection procedures as described in the informed consent (See Appendix 3). All six women were informed of the study and they signed off on the informed consent.

*Assigned Pseudonyms.* It was important for me, as the researcher, to provide pseudonyms for all participants and others involved in their stories. It was equally important to honor and uphold their ethnic identities reflected in their ethnic pseudonyms. I asked each one of the women to come up with their ethnic pseudonyms. One woman came up with her own ethnic pseudonym (i.e., Liu Li) and the rest of the women asked me to assign them ethnic names. I was honored to have been given this role in their narrative making. In turn, their ethnic pseudonyms became one of many “symbols of their ethnic identity” (Hansen, 2004, p. 47).

*Two Drop-Outs.* Even before the data collection began, I received an e-mail from 2 of the 6 individuals who had already signed the informed consent. Hae Sun Kim and Keiko Mochi had to drop out due to personal reasons. Although I was not thrilled about the two drop-outs, I reassured myself that the study would continue as this had occurred in the beginning of the data collection as opposed to the latter end of the data collection. I could have continued the data collection with the remaining four women, but I decided that I would contact the academic acquaintances who had

referred me to the original 12 prospective participants to add two more women to my participant pool. After several weeks of searching, I met Shu-Ming Fung (Taiwanese-American) through one of my professor acquaintances. Even though I was reluctant to include Shu-Ming in the pool due to her Taiwanese-American identity, she also self-identified as an NNES and she was very much interested in knowing more about her identities. With that, Shu-Ming and I began our initial data collection in November 2004.

### Data Collection Procedures

*Phase One.* The data collection was divided into three phases such that each phase informs the next one (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The first phase was Electronic Reflective Questions (i.e., Autobiographical Narratives), which lasted from October 2004 through December 2004. Due to the nature of autobiographical questions relating to their prior English language learning and English language teaching experiences in their native countries and in the United States prior to gaining admission into TESOL programs, I divided this phase into two parts. The first part highlighted experiences in their native countries, and the second part highlighted their experiences in the United States just before gaining admission into TESOL programs. Only some women had English language learning and teaching experiences in the United States prior to gaining admission into TESOL programs.

Each woman responded to questions related to their educational autobiography (See Appendix 4). The prompts and guidelines for crafting their autobiography have largely been adapted from the first assignment completed in one of my graduate seminar classes taken in fall 2001, *Theory and Research on Teaching* and my Cultural

and Linguistic Autobiography writing projects in my TESOL teacher education<sup>4</sup> and adult ESL teaching<sup>5</sup> contexts.

It was my hope to use these narratives to understand their prior experiences in English language learning and teaching in their native country contexts. The use of autobiographical narratives via e-mailing also assisted in understanding why they made the decision to apply for entrance into US TESOL programs. These initial revelations of their experiences as English language learners and teachers led to an understanding of the motivational factors contributing to their decisions to undertake studies in U.S. TESOL contexts. The autobiographical narrative nature of the questions helped me understand, a priori, their experiences before enrolling in U.S. TESOL programs.

I have methodologically grounded the use of autobiography within feminist epistemology. The proponents of ideas of feminist epistemology have contended that “reliable knowledge can only be achieved through a process, which includes, fundamentally, the subjectivity of experiences of individuals and groups of individuals; power and politics; and a dialectic of theory with individual experiences” (Griffiths, 1995, p. 75). Thus, autobiographical methods were epistemologically useful in understanding how East Asian women pre-service teachers came to understand their experiences prior to and throughout their TESOL programs.

Written autobiographical narratives focusing on the questions highlighted were collected via e-mail exchanges between the participants and myself as the researcher.

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<sup>4</sup> Research Project co-presented with Debra Suarez at *WATESOL Fall Conference (2002)* and at *International TESOL Conference (2003)*.

<sup>5</sup> Research Project presented at *International TESOL Convention (2004c)*

This mode of collecting their autobiographical narratives gave the participants more time to phrase and construct their experiential text within a comfortable venue (Kamhi-Stein, 2000; Kamhi-Stein, 2004). Also, these guided questions gave them more structure in what aspects of their educational journeys to share.

Unfortunately, not all of the women had completed the two parts of the reflective autobiographical narrative electronically during the October 2004 to December 2004 time period. As a result, I went through those questions with Han Nah Jung and Xia Wang during our first interview sessions. Han Nah later admitted that she preferred talking about them as opposed to writing about them. This resistance to writing, on her part, would also become a stumbling block for her in the electronic journal entries in the next phase of the study.

*Phase Two.* The second phase involved the Electronic Journal Entries, which began immediately after they turned in their electronic autobiographical narratives (Phase One). This phase began in December 2004 and lasted until the end of the interview phase for some women. Their journal entries captured their “during the program” experiences. This electronic journal writing revealed their thoughts and experiences that occurred on daily basis as they interacted with professors/advisors in their TESOL Program either in or out of classroom contexts; and both NES and NNES colleagues in class. Also included in these journal entries were programmatic structural contents and materials. Through their electronic journal writing, my hope was to understand their experience as East Asian women pre-service teachers (non-native English speakers) in the context of English language teaching education programs. Each woman kept electronic journal entries for a period of three to six

months until some data saturation occurred. Each woman submitted the following number of journal entries: Han Nah (0), Liu (4), Xia (5), Yu Ri (6), and Shu-Ming (7).

The journal entries were a series of reflective writings that related the experiences of East Asian women in TESOL programs for both academic learning and professional development purposes (Brinton, 2004; Brinton, Holten, & Goodwin, 1993; Burton & Carroll, 2001). These journal entries were made up of phrases, sentences, and brief paragraphs that described situations and experiences that occurred (a) in their graduate TESOL classes, (b) during interactions with faculty, advisors, classmates, and other administrative personnel in both TESOL and non-TESOL areas, and (c) while completing class assignments, projects, and other programmatic requirements (See Appendix 5).

Occurrences of educational incidents in the aforementioned situational contexts tapped into the following three experiences. The first area was how these women came to understand the meaning and the significance of English language teaching. The interpreted meanings and significances of English language teaching may have been influenced by their prior schooling and cultural experiences. The second area was in their perceptions of NES and NNES constructs and how they saw themselves in relation to NESs and other NNESs. The third area was these women coming to an understanding of how their experiences as East Asian women in their programs and outside of these programs influenced their gendered, ethnic, and classed identities. Also of interest here was how their pre-existing gendered, ethnic and classed identities influenced their journeys both inside and outside of TESOL programs.

These entries were collected via e-mail exchanges between the participants and myself. This mode of collecting their accounts gave the participants more time to phrase and construct their experiential text. In addition, it gave them a less-threatening venue for documenting their journal entries since most of them may have become at ease with using e-mailing (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

Methodologically, using journals or diaries of pre-service teachers could help researchers understand the fact that pre-service teachers “find dialogue journals [or journals and diaries] a safe place to write their questions, concerns, failures and success in their teaching [or in their teacher preparation programs]” (Brinton, Holten & Goodwin, 1993, p. 15). Furthermore, Nunan (1992) considered journals and other writing logs as “important introspective tools in language education research” (p. 118). In another study in Asian English language learning and pre-service teaching contexts, Maloney and Campbell-Evans (2002) discovered that their teacher candidates used journals as “an emotional release and a way of sorting things out” (p. 39). All in all, journal writing was an avenue for East Asian women pre-service teachers in this study to write down their experiences as they interacted with other students (NES and NNES) and TESOL and non-TESOL faculty. Also, it was important for them in being able to discuss programmatic documents.

Unfortunately, not all participants were engaged in this process. Han Nah Jung did not send me any journal entries whereas Liu, Yu Ri, Xia, and Shu-Ming were religious about writing their journal entries. Xia had done all her journal entries during her student teaching semester in spring 2005. Each woman had legitimate reasons for doing this or not doing this, as reflected by some of the literature. “Teachers may feel

that the task of keeping a journal is not worth including in their already busy schedule” (Matsuda & Matusda, 2004, p. 179). Some may have felt intimidated by writing in the English language for they were not confident with their grammar skills and writing skills. Others who produced journal entries may have felt that writing about their experiences was important in letting their voices be heard via a non-threatening manner through such a vehicle.

In many ways, I did not push the women to produce the journal entries since it was one of many data sources to be utilized in painting a picture of their experiences as lived. I did not want to force them to produce journal entries, for “teachers’ goals in writing journals are controlled by the teacher educator’s goals for using the journals” (Matsuda & Matsuda, 2004, p. 179).

Reflecting on the first two phases of data collection, electronic modes of collecting reflective autobiographical narratives and journal entries only worked for some women as evident in other studies. For some though, online modes may have promoted more communications for these students who tended to be reticent and silent in whole-class discussions (e.g., Brinton, 2004; Hawkins, 2004; Kamhi-Stein, 2000). Han Nah was inundated with her teaching responsibilities as well as with taking care of her children. Han Nah also may have been less willing to produce, in written English. This was evident by some of her earlier comments, in which Han Nah stated that she did not think she could do journal entries.

*Phase Three.* The third phase was the individual interviews. The women’s responses to the electronic reflective questions and their electronic journal entries framed the individual interviews. This “allowed [me] to enter into [East Asian women



teacher candidates'] perspectives. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, able to be made explicit" (Patton, 1990, p. 278). The one-on-one interview questions were structured and unstructured and tapped into the contents of their autobiographical narratives as well as their journal entries (Phases One and Two). For Han Nah, who only completed the first part of Phase One (Electronic Reflective Autobiographical Questions), I incorporated the second part of the autobiographical narrative questions into her interviews (See Table 2). As for the journal entries (Phase Two), Han Nah produced no journal entries; therefore, I probed her on some of this journal information in the interview sessions.

The majority of the interview questions emerged from what the women had provided for me in the Phase One and Two cycles of the data collection. The contents of the women's autobiographical narratives and journal entries framed the questions for the initial interview sessions. Although I had some topics that I wanted to probe with each woman, each interview session had its own unique characteristics in that the questions just naturally emerged from the previous interview transcripts. The structured interview questions covered demographic questions and led into general questions related to their understanding of NES and NNEs constructs in the field of TESOL. These included questions centering on intersection relationships.

All interviews were conducted at a quiet place convenient for each woman. Most of the interview sessions were conducted at their homes (Han Nah, Yu Ri, and Xia), somewhere on campus or their teaching locations (Liu), or at my home in the case of Shu-Ming. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for

the purpose of analysis. Two audio cassettes were used simultaneously to produce two equal tapes so that at the completion of the study, each woman received a tape of the interviews. All interview transcripts were shared with the participants and the duplicate copies of the interview tapes will be provided for the women upon completion of the dissertation. This also was consistent with the feminist, communitarian ethical framework I promoted in my relationships with the women throughout the study.

### Data Triangulation

The aforementioned data sources were all used in the process of data triangulation. The multiple data sources not only spoke to the guiding questions for this research study. The multiple data sources also reflected that “many sources of data [were] better in a study than a single source of data that [led] to a fuller understanding of [East Asian women teacher candidates]” (Bogden & Biklen, 2003, p. 107). The table 2 below shows the data collection sources and frequency of data collected from each woman.

Table 2. An Overview of Data Collection Sources and Data Collection Frequency

	<b><u>Phase One E-Reflection</u></b> (Parts I and II) Oct-Dec 04	<b><u>Phase Two E-Journals</u></b> Dec04-May05	<b><u>Phase Three Interviews</u></b> Dec04-May05
Han Nah Jung	Part I completed Only  Part II questions included in Interviews	None completed	Jan. 4, 6, 21, Feb. 1, 8, 15, March 15, April 19  8-90 minute sessions
Liu Li	Parts I, II completed	4 entries	Feb. 1, 8, 15, March 16, 18, April 27,  6-90 minute sessions
Xia Wang	Part I completed Only  Part II questions included in Interviews	5 entries	Dec. 27, Jan. 10, 24, 31, Feb. 3, 8, 14, March 15, April 19, May 3,  10-70 minute sessions
Yu Ri Koh	Parts I, II completed	6 entries	Jan. 17, 26, 31, Feb 14, March 2, 14, April 20, May 13,  8-90 minute sessions
Shu-Ming Fung	Parts I, II completed	7 entries	Dec. 21, 30, Jan. 21, 29, Feb 12, 19, March 19,  7-100 minute sessions

Dialogic Process

All of our interviews were conducted in an “interactive dialogic manner that required self-disclosure on the part of researcher [which] encouraged reciprocity” (Lather, 1991, p. 60). Due to the reticent nature of my participants (for some more than others), it was very difficult to get these particular women engaged in discussing their experiences during the first interview sessions. I felt that I needed to share with them a piece of my history as lived in order to present myself as an ethical researcher embarking on a study of the lived experiences of East Asian women. The fact that I

also shared my own experiences with these women helped me to (1) get closer to them as another human being; and (2) open up their experiences in my presence to understand their history as lived. Weinstein (2004) discussed her experience in promoting a curriculum entitled, *Learners' Lives as Curriculum*, which was built on the premise that “teachers must listen for learner stories to discover the most pressing issues that will bring language learning to life” (p. 111). In this community, Weinstein created space where “both her model [teachers’] and her willingness to participate as an equal created the trust that enabled reluctant strangers to become participants...teachers participated in the community they were creating in the classroom” (p. 119). Weinstein also saw herself as learner in that “like any learner, she also needed time within and across programs to tell stories about teaching and to compare and analyze [her own] experiences” (p. 119).

*Researcher's Journal Entries.* As a researcher responsible for this study and also as a research instrument, I kept a journal throughout all stages of this study. Reflecting on the first several entries of my initial researcher's journal (September 2003-March 2004), I had grappled with several issues pertaining to my study. These included issues such as what to study about non-native English speaking pre-service teachers, and why and how they should be studied. I also needed to think about whether the study would speak to both Master's and Doctoral programs. It took several months to narrow down the research foci. I believe that the questions I asked throughout different stages of my study, coupled with the conversations I had with my dissertation chair, members of my committee, colleagues, and my husband, enabled me to shape my study into both a theoretically and methodologically sound project.

### Data Analysis & Narrative Structure

I commenced the data analysis stage before the end of data collection which was consistent with the protocol of doing a qualitative study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). First, I performed line-by-line data analysis throughout data collection and after data collection was completed, I read through the entire data set for each woman at least twice to get a sense of each woman's narrative structure (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Creswell, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Second, I created a table displaying their demographic information, length of study in TESOL programs, ESL/EFL and study abroad exposure, teaching in native and U.S. contexts, and imagined future plans post-TESOL programs (see Table 1 in Chapter 1). The first two steps, discussed above, helped me to plan the structuring of the women's narratives using a past-present-future life history timeline.

Third, I shared the table created above with my participants for member-checking and verification of data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Creswell, 1998). Fourth, I winnowed the data by creating a text of important categories and themes in relation to the women's past (*Looking Back*), present (*Reflecting on Graduate Studies, TESOL, in the U.S.*), and future (*Thinking Forward*) life history trajectories. This was necessary to sort and reduce information to only the most relevant information related to the overall research questions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Creswell, 1998). Although the naming of "*Looking Back, Reflecting On, and Thinking Forward*" sections was my doing, the ideas (e.g., past, present, and future) germinated from the work of Dewey (1938) and Pinar (2004). Also, it is important to note that all three sections dealt with

the women's reflective process. In other words, "*Looking Back*" and "*Thinking Forward*" also dealt with reflective process (e.g., Van Manen, 19xx).

The *Looking Back* section chronicled the women's past schooling experiences in their native countries placing emphasis on the ways in which they learned and acquired the English language leading up to admission into TESOL programs in the United States. The *Reflecting on Graduate Studies, TESOL program, in the United States* section examined their experiences gleaned from their TESOL programs. In the case of Han Nah, her learning experiences in intensive English language programs became important due to the short nature of her TESOL program participation as compared to the other women in the study. The *Thinking Forward* section reflected imagined possibilities for these women in the areas of teaching and research in ESL, EFL, and bilingual contexts.

Each woman discussed what she hoped to do upon completion of her TESOL degree program in the United States. Moreover, the women made suggestions regarding the ways in which TESOL programs could improve their curricula in order to better accommodate the educational needs of international graduate students, NNESs like themselves. At the end of this stage of data analysis, I was able to craft narratives for the women highlighting their past-present-future life history timelines emphasizing the *Looking Back, Reflecting on, and Thinking Forward* aspects of their educational and teaching experiences. At this point, I shared the narratives with the women for verification purposes.

Fifth, I further analyzed each of the women's narratives crafted in step four by finding emerging themes relating to linguistic, gendered, racial, and classed identity

constructions and negotiations throughout their educational journeys. Linguistic identities pointed to how issues of the English language influenced their sense of self as EFL learners, ESL learners, graduate students in the United States, and as professionals in the field of TESOL. Largely, their linguistic identities were related to their understanding around NES and NNES constructs (e.g., Canagarajah, 1999; Nieto, 2002; Pennycook, 2001; Phillipson, 2000; Tollefson, 1995). Racial identities were heightened when the women came to English speaking contexts learning English with other NESs and NNESs from European countries (Amin, 1997; Tang, 1997). Gendered identities were under scrutiny due to what was expected for them in their native cultures both consciously and unconsciously. In most cases, these expectations were contradicted by the ways that these women wanted to be perceived of in the professional world (i.e., highly educated and in control of their personal destinies) (e.g., Norton & Pavlenko, 2004; Pavlenko, 2003; Pavlenko & Blackridge, 2004). Finally, their social-classed identities, to varying degrees, were privileged to the extent that these women were able to gain access to English language learning communities in their native contexts early in their schooling experiences and later were able to gain admission into U.S. TESOL programs.

As a way to organize these different identity themes, I created a table discussing some of the emergent identity themes relevant for each woman. This table also was shared with each woman so that they had some understanding of the nature of my analysis beyond the crafting of their narratives. In addition to the above identity themes, teaching and professional identities, transnational identities, and psychological identities also were examined for some women as they emerged through these

women's stories. The process through which I traversed in step four concluded with an in-depth analysis of each woman.

### Trustworthiness

My study's aim was not to predict, but to understand the lives and experiences of five East Asian women in TESOL programs. The credibility and the trustworthiness of my study had, as its foundation, the experiences of these five women. The five women and I became the sole knowers of their experiences; thus I worked toward conducting member-checking of the data, which was consistent with the protocol of a feminist, communitarian ethical model of sharing ownership of all data materials (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

### Transferability

There are a multitude of reasons why I undertook this study. Most notably, it was about the passion that I have for understanding East Asian women in TESOL programs. Inevitably, it was also about understanding myself as both an insider and an outsider in this research process. I do not intend for the results of my study to be generalizable. However, I would like to argue, with confidence, that the interpretations and representations in this study may speak to the lives and experiences of other East Asian women pre-service teachers enrolled in TESOL programs.

### Rendering a "Different Experience"

I had the privilege of reading Turner's (2003) dissertation work entitled, *To Tell a New Story: A Narrative Inquiry of the Theory and Practice of Culturally Relevant Teaching*, which further sparked my initial motivation for undertaking this dissertation study. Turner's work went beyond the all too familiar experiences of



African-American teachers becoming advocates and fellow sojourners of African-American students found throughout teacher education literature (e.g., Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Her scholarship called for integrating new experiences into culturally relevant teaching literature, which teachers of other ethnic and racial backgrounds could share. Her building on, expanding, and critiquing of the taken-for-granted ideas of culturally relevant teaching have resonated with my own work in understanding the lives and experiences of East Asian women in TESOL programs. Her work has given me the courage to problematize further how NNES professionals are viewed in the field of TESOL, to critique the taken-for-granted ideas of NNES teaching and research issues in TESOL, and to make commitments to examining the “different experiences” of East Asian women enrolled in U.S. TESOL teacher education programs.

### **An Introduction to the Narrative Chapters**

Within chapters 3 through 7, the women’s narratives are foregrounded to chronicle each woman’s life history as drawn from data collected between October 2004 and May 2005. Each is followed by the analysis of the narratives at the end of the chapter. Each narrative highlights the past-present-future life history timeline. I asked questions related to their prior educational experiences in their native countries in order to understand their English language and cultural learning experiences leading up to admissions into TESOL programs in the United States. Furthermore, I probed into how they imagined their futures to be upon completion of TESOL degree programs in the United States. It was within this past-present-future life history timeline of the five East Asian women that I have arrived at a fuller understanding of

how they had experienced and might continue to experience the English language learning and teaching enterprise vis-à-vis their identity constructions and negotiations.

All five women came from varying degrees of privilege classed backgrounds. Their privilege classed backgrounds were marked by the fact that they were introduced to English language learning at early ages and given ample financial and other supports to embark on study abroad programs geared towards completion of advanced degrees. Due to their privileged class backgrounds, these women came to both learn in and associate with different communities of practice, as sites of cultural and linguistic learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). With cultural and symbolic capital under their belts, they gained admission into TESOL programs in the United States with the intent of living out their imagined future identities as language specialists (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

As a researcher, my goal was to let the five women's narratives speak to me in ways that would not confine the narratives and the theorizing of narratives into one theoretical framework or methodological approach (Shohamy, 2004). As has been stated by many scholars studying identity construction, understanding teachers' identities can be a complex endeavor, and it can be further complexified when the teachers come from different educational, linguistic, social, cultural, and political terrains as was the case in my study (Norton, 2000; Pavlenko, 2003; Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005). My crafting of each woman's narrative represents one of many possible ways of interpreting how these women came to understand their identities in relation to their past, present and future experiences within the English language learning and teaching enterprise.

Each case highlights three different time periods in each participant's unfinished (Freire, 1998) life history: *Looking Back, Reflecting on Graduate Studies in the United States, and Thinking Forward*. For each woman, this explication serves as an unfinished life history, as further follow-up interviews might reveal other perspectives and revelations that may not have been highlighted in the study. It is important to understand that the construct of identities can not be nor should it be compartmentalized into past-present-future life history timelines due to the fluid, multiple, and contesting nature of these women's identities (Norton, 2000). These three different time periods might be construed as being fragmented; however, I stress this timeline in order to help me make connections with respect to the changing nature of their identities within their past, present, and future ESL/EFL contexts.

Each woman brought forth a unique narrative highlighting her East Asian background as reflected in the stories crafted in Chapters 3 through 7. Additionally, they portrayed grand narratives, stories that were told from the perspectives of learners and teachers incurring both challenges and victories in the contexts of English language learning and teaching (Norton, 2000; Pavlenko, 2004). Although each woman's narrative has been constructed in a parallel manner, some women's narratives will be more extensive than others due to variations in their lived experiences. Their narratives are symbolic of resistance to "essentialist ways of thinking about the experiences of [NNES or East Asian] women as fundamentally alike, a homogeneous group with common life opportunities and experiences already known to us before we actually see them or hear from them" (Harding, 1996, p. 432). To uphold this resistance, it was important for me, as a researcher, to share with the

five women as well as the readers as much as I could about the stories that came from within these women. Personal narratives come from within, and it was the choice of these women to share more or less with me as the researcher. In turn, I made choices to narrate these stories as I heard them and felt them as both an insider and outsider to the lives of my participants (Harding, 1987; Haroian-Gurin, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Van Maanen, 1988).

## Chapter 3: HAN NAH JUNG

### Looking Back: Educational Experience in Korea (1970-1996)

Throughout her schooling process in Korea, Han Nah had experienced a lot of pressure. Han Nah's experience learning English in Korea was primarily focused on doing well on college entrance examinations; as a result, her English classes were geared toward improving students' reading comprehension, translation, and grammar skills. She did not have enough opportunities to practice English orally.

While studying in Korea, she wished she had known that one day she would be living in an English-speaking society and needing to be fluent in the English language. She equated English as a subject to be mastered in order to score high on her school and college entrance examinations.

[W]hen I was in middle school, I never thought that I would live in the United States; I thought I would never use English again. I just thought it is only test for high school, test for middle school, test for entering college examination. I never thought that I would use this for me to live in my life.

So if I knew that I would have studied more. (Interview 2, 1/6/05)

Han Nah realized that if she had possessed clearly established goals for learning English earlier on, then she would have been motivated during her initial encounters with the English language.

In college, Han Nah deviated from how the English language was taught by focusing more on listening and speaking skills. She was attracted to watching news and people debating about the current events on T.V. because at that time, she said, "[I] wanted to be a kind of Korean-English interpreter. So [I] prepared for that career"

(Interview 2, 1/6/05). All her hopes were focused on passing the interpretation examination sponsored by the only interpretation and translation school in Korea. But in 1992, her dream of becoming a translator ended when she was unable to pass the entrance examination. Not wanting to go through additional long years of preparation, she decided to enter a graduate program to pursue Turkish language and Islamic women's studies in 1992.

### *Han Nah's Gendered Experience*

Choosing a co-educational college and selecting Turkish studies as her major ultimately was the decision of Han Nah's father. He dictated what would be the best area of specialization for her future. Her father believed that women needed to choose a major that was viewed as special in Korea due to fierce competition among men and women to secure a promising career upon graduating from college. "[M]y father thought that if I study [these] special things, it would be good for my career. In Korea, students' parents have full responsibilities, for their college life, so parents' influence is really huge. He wanted me to have a success in my life" (Interview 3, 1/21/05).

In addition to being a special and unique major, Han Nah noted that there was another reason why her father wanted her to pursue Turkish studies as her major. "He thinks that I cannot compete with men in Korean society. I should work in a very unique area that nobody else does to be successful in my life" (Interview 3, 1/21/05). Although she was saddened by the fact that her father did not believe she could compete with men, Han Nah viewed this as a part of reality for women living in Korean society. Since Han Nah was highly dependent on her parents for economic

stability, she did everything they asked her to do from selecting her college major to going “to graduate school and [going] abroad to study” (Interview 8, 4/19/05).

Han Nah often received conflicting messages from her parents when it came to men’s and women’s roles in Korea. Han Nah’s mother saw the women’s role to be that of a homemaker. She believed that “if women live very happily, she does not need to work. Being a housewife is good with a high status man” (Interview 8, 4/19/05). Her mother translated women’s happiness as being a good nurturer for a successful man. On the other hand, Han Nah’s father always advised her to be independent from her husband, since men could become easily tired of women’s economic and emotional dependency on them. Moreover, her father believed that a woman could be just as capable as a man in finding her professional niche. But Han Nah’s mother stated, “You can’t study because you have to take care of your children. Who is going to take care of your children” (Interview 8, 4/19/05)? Han Nah often wondered why her mother did not understand her need to have a career and develop herself professionally.

In academic settings, Han Nah also felt inferior due to her gendered experiences. Han Nah reminisced about the days when she was an academic assistant for a director of Middle East studies in graduate school in Korea. Han Nah was among several academic and research assistants working in the Middle East studies department, but she was the only woman graduate student. She stated that her professor always wanted Han Nah to serve guests coffee instead of asking male students to do so. While she thought it was odd that she was the only student serving coffee, “I thought I had to do it because I was a woman” (Interview 7, 3/15/05). At

that time, she accepted this behavior as part of being in an academic setting working under her professor and she did not view it as gender inequity. “[I]t’s acceptable. It is not just a relationship between men and women, kind of relationship between professors and students. This is also a Confucian type philosophy; he is my professor; he is also my elder, so I have to do something for him” (Interview 7, 3/15/05). She equated the serving of her male professors and male students with Korean social norms, and it was something that occurred at her own home as well. Han Nah and her sisters helped their mother with household chores while her brother and father were recipients of what was served.

As she was thinking back to her gendered experience within her home and school in Korea, she remembered her mother’s words. Her mother told Han Nah and her sisters to be successful in their academic pursuits during high school, but seek a different pathway shortly thereafter. “[A]fter finish[ing] college, you have to get married with someone who is very successful” (Interview 4, 2/1/05). In some respects, Han Nah agreed with her mother because it is very difficult for women to have a successful career and a happy home life.

In Korea, it is really hard for women to have success in their family and success in their life career. So she just focused on family first, because she always thinks that someone who has career [could] never get married. Someone who get married [would be] without career. (Interview 4, 2/1/05)

Han Nah discussed navigating the balancing act of her work and her family through ten years of experience as a married woman. She established lower



expectations for herself and did not believe in being a perfectionist. More importantly, she has decided not to compare herself to single women with careers. With this philosophy, she noted that it was possible for her to be a career woman and a mother/spouse and do them well. Reflecting on her own experience, Han Nah gave me some advice about my future roles as both a married woman and a professional woman.

You may feel that after you get married, you may not be successful that much in your studies. After you get married, you never compare with someone who never gets married and just study. You can find a woman who can work for you. [Your] mother [can] take care of your child, and your housework; then you can work outside and you can maybe work inside and outside. (Interview 6, 2/15/05)

Han Nah realized that finding someone to help her with her household chores was harder than she had imagined, but believed that it would be the best option for a woman such as herself to navigate her career life and her family life. Han Nah's rule of thumb has been to be content with herself and her husband and the multiplicity of roles established for her by her Korean and Western societies.

*Han Nah's Foreign Linguistic and Cultural Experience before Immigrating to the United States (1992-1994)*

Han Nah perceived her foreign experiences across the 1992-1994 academic years to be a key motivating factor that led her to the TESOL program in 2003. The impetus for gaining foreign linguistic and cultural capital was due to the discrepancy between what she had learned in high school English classes and what was expected

of her as a student in college classes. Han Nah stated her dilemma, “Actually many college students can read *Times* and *News Week* articles, but they can’t speak anything. It was highly unbalanced” (Interview 1, 1/4/05). Han Nah understood that learning a second language meant “getting a tool for communication with the people who speak the target language and get some ideas and information from them” (Interview 4, 2/1/05), and she wanted to be a part of a community where people used English as a tool for communication. With these goals, she went to three different countries to improve her linguistic and cultural knowledge of the English and Turkish languages throughout different time periods during her college and graduate studies.

*Pushing to be Vocal.* Han Nah studied in England for three months during her junior year in college in 1992. In England, she was the only Asian in her language class. The problem was, “I was in really higher level because my test score was very high. I was good at grammar, writing, and reading and all that, but unlike Asian students, European students spoke English very well. But they were bad at grammar, writing, and reading” (Interview 1, 1/4/05). In that class, all the European students spoke and they perceived Han Nah to be non-vocal and aloof. So in the beginning, her classmates helped her to socialize by beginning conversations with her. Han Nah stated that after a while, they began to neglect her and Han Nah was left out in the communicative activities both inside the classroom and outside of the classroom. All in all, her initial foreign experience in England was not a very positive event in her life.

*Using English Only.* Han Nah’s second study abroad was in the United States.

Han Nah went to an intensive English language program at a state university in the Midwest during her senior year in 1993 for two months. She had already come with some foreign living experience. She knew how to study and she knew what she should focus on, which entailed speaking the language. She sought out native speakers to practice her English. She attended an American Protestant church to expand her contact with English speakers even though she was not Christian. Her dorm life was good, and her roommate was a girl from Thailand. She was forced to speak English with her. Looking back at her two-month experience in the United States, Han Nah said she gradually became more confident about her foreign language and cultural experience.

*Matriculating in a Ph.D Program in Turkey (1994-1996).* In 1994, Han Nah commenced studies in a Ph.D. program in Islamic women's studies in Turkey. This followed on the heels of completing her Master's program in Turkish studies in Korea the same year. During graduate school in Korea, Han Nah envisioned herself as a professor working in Korea but researching Middle East studies, with an emphasis on Turkish women. By studying in Turkey and specializing in Islamic women's issues, she hoped to bring new and enlightening perspectives into the Korean higher educational system. This prompted her to continue this field in a Ph.D. program in Turkey upon completion of her Master's in Korea in 1994, since she believed that living in a Turkish society among Islamic women would help her understand their experiences firsthand. "I just wanted to research on Turkish women, working women. In Korea, there are lots of discrimination and they can not be promoted in companies, I

just wanted to know if there were these kinds of things in Turkey” (Interview 3, 1/21/05).

Han Nah shared much about her experience living and studying among the Turkish people during her Ph.D. program from 1994 to 1996. Turkish professors’ expectations of her as a doctoral student were low. Because Han Nah was one of few Asians studying in Turkey, her Turkish professors and peers saw her as a marginal member who could never be a full-fledged participant in the Turkish scholarship community. Hence, it was easy for Han Nah to study; all she had to focus on was her Turkish language proficiency.

[My Turk professors] did not expect that much. They never expected me to do kind of research. They always thought that I may go back to Korea someday and, it does not matter, if I did something in Turkey. I had low motivation and kind of agreed with them in that I am going back to Korea, and I am going to do something in Korea, not in Turkey.

(Interview 5, 2/8/05)

Han Nah never saw herself as a part of the Turkish community; she always knew that she would return to Korea to enter a scholarly community there, discussing Turkish studies and Islamic women’s issues. Han Nah’s sense of identity as a single woman living in Turkey and knowing that she would return to Korea kept her close to the scholarly community in Korea. “When I was in Turkey, I always thought I definitely would go back to Korea; [so] I always contacted with my friends in Korea, professor in Korea, and almost every vacation, I went to Korea” (Interview 7, 3/15/05).

*Choosing a Traditional Path.* Temporarily setting aside her Ph.D. program, she returned to Korea in 1995 and married her college sweetheart. When Han Nah's husband wanted to come to the United States to begin his graduate studies, Han Nah was confronted with a dilemma. "I had to choose whether I had to [return] in Turkey [to finish my Ph.D. program] or come [to the United States] with him" (Interview 1, 1/4/05). She realized that if she were to immigrate to the United States with her husband then that would signal the end of her Ph.D. program in Turkey. Han Nah, once again, relied on her parents to help her make this decision for her. Her father strongly recommended that she return to Turkey to complete her degree program; on the other hand, her mother urged Han Nah to comply with the duties of a married woman. "[B]ecause you are a married woman, you never live separately. So I listened to my mom and kind of my society. I always heard that women should be this way. I had to have a baby to keep my family to continue" (Interview 1, 1/4/05). As a result, Han Nah chose the path that traditional Korean society had set forth for a married woman which was to be with her husband and continue the legacy of her husband's family.

### **Reflecting on Graduate and Intensive ESL Studies in the United States (1996-2005)**

Upon arriving in the United States in 1996 with her husband, Han Nah studied at Yilan Intensive English Institute (pseudonym) for 18 months while her husband was a student at Yilan State University. She only attended the intensive English program for four months due to her first pregnancy, which occurred in 1997. There was a large Korean community in this city. This created a problem for Han Nah since she could

not use English frequently. She observed, “[I]t is really weird between Koreans to speak English” (Interview 1, 1/4/05). Since Han Nah was in the intensive ESL program housed in Yilan State University, her classes were focused on getting international students acclimated to the system of academic discourse in the United States. She had to complete many different kinds of assignments such as writing essays, keeping conversational and reading logs, and writing journal entries.

*Finding a Niche at Atlantic University (1998)*

Han Nah and her husband moved to a city in the mid-Atlantic region due to her husband’s transfer to Atlantic University in 1998. He had decided on a transfer because Atlantic University had a better international relations and economics program compared to Yilan State University. During her husband’s matriculation in Atlantic University, Han Nah kept busy by taking sociology courses in the hopes of continuing studies in the areas of sociology and women’s issues. However, due to her second pregnancy in 2001, “[she] could not keep studying because no one helped [her] to take care of the children and housework” (Interview 1, 1/4/05). She decided not to continue with sociology since she saw her English language proficiency (or lack thereof) to be a barrier for her to excel in the research areas of sociology and women’s issues. “The problem is that if I study sociology, I really have to speak English very well, or write English very well. Because this part needs lots of research, so I think it is very hard for foreigners” (Interview 3, 1/21/05). An additional foreseeable problem was that since she was not planning to return to Korea immediately, she wanted to go into an area with more independence and potential growth as a teacher in the Korean-American community. If she were planning to return to Korea upon completion of her

and her husband's studies, her knowledge of sociology and women's issues would be beneficial to her future work in Korea. But that was not the plan.

*Going from F2 to G4 Visa Status*

Upon earning a Master's degree in international relations, her husband entered an international financial organization as a full-time employee in 2001, at which time Han Nah and her husband's visa status in the United States changed. Han Nah realized that with her visa status going from that of a spouse of an international student (F-2) to that of a spouse of a full-time employee (G-4), that this was the most important factor in truly understanding her identities.

When I had G-4 visa, my status was totally different. That made me a totally different woman. Post 9-11, spouses of [international students] F-1 visa cannot get a degree in the States. So they cannot study, they cannot work, they just have to stay at home. Lot of women have their own career when they were in Korea, but when they came to U.S., their situation totally changed. They feel that they are nothing, just prepare some foods for her husband three times a day, clean the house, no friend, no car, it is really sad. (Interview 6, 2/15/05)

Before her husband began his full time employment, Han Nah felt that she was bound by the immigration and visa regulations set forth by the United States. However, upon obtaining full-time employment, Han Nah was also given the liberty to pursue a degree program as well as a career path. "After I got G-4 visa, I could find a job" (Interview 6, 2/15/05).

Han Nah discussed how she got started teaching the Korean language. In trying to secure a job suitable for herself, Han Nah searched on the Internet, and realized that there were limited job opportunities for her due to her status as a foreigner. She came to the conclusion that there were only two options for her to work in the United States. The first option was to do simple office/administrative work in the Korean-American commerce community, and the second option was to use her specialized skills to work in America. Since knowledge of the Korean language was a specific skill for her, she chose the latter option to work.

#### *Commencing a TESOL Certificate Program*

In the hopes of improving her language teaching methodology, Han Nah began a TESOL certificate program in 2003 at Atlantic University. She undertook a specific TESOL certificate program at Atlantic University which was designed for students who wanted to complete introductory courses in the field of TESOL but did not want to complete a Master's program or obtain K-12 certification. For Han Nah, a certificate program was an ideal situation since she had earned a Master's degree in Korea. Under a certificate program requirement, she completed five courses, which allowed her to teach adults in both ESL and EFL contexts. After entering this TESOL program, she came to the realization that many Korean students entered into TESOL programs in order to "learn English. Through TESOL, not just the way of teaching, learn English through the program, which [was] the first goal" (Interview 2, 1/6/05). As for Han Nah, she came into a TESOL program with an additional agenda for herself. "I [did not] come into TESOL to learn how to teach English, but how to teach foreign languages to people who do not speak that language. It is really helpful for me



because I already know foreign languages other than English” (Interview 1, 1/4/05). Han Nah’s interest in learning about effective foreign language teaching methodology led her to gain admission into a TESOL certification program housed in Atlantic University.

There were situations where having to “speak English” in front of her Korean TESOL colleagues and having to speak Korean to her children became barriers in her desire to improve her overall proficiency in the English language. “Because I have to speak English in class, they understand what I am saying, but they also know what the mistakes are when I am speaking. My English speech is kind of Korean way of speaking English” (Interview 1, 1/4/05). Han Nah saw speaking English in front of her Korean colleagues as shameful since they would notice and could ridicule her lack of proficiency in English language. In addition, Han Nah believed that she was not able to improve her English language proficiency due to her desire to improve her children’s Korean language skills. “I really want to speak English very well, and then I can practice my English with my children, but I don’t want my children to only speak English. So I always speak Korean at home, and then I don’t have that many American friends outside because I am really busy at home with my children” (Interview 7, 3/15/05). Everything Han Nah has done in her life as a mother depended on figuring out what would be in the best interests of her two children. In having children, this had changed her life perspectives and future trajectories. The dual challenges of being a Korean mother and an English learner continued to haunt Han Nah.

### *Claiming both Korean and Western Identities*

Han Nah tutored one Korean woman, Hyo Jin, in English over the course of one academic year to meet a tutorial requirement of two courses she took in her TESOL program. She taught this woman basic reading and conversational skills. She felt uncomfortable tutoring her at times because she was a friend. Her tutee did not speak English very well, even though she had been living in the United States for 6 years. She lived in Ju Ahn Dong (pseudonym), a Korean town community located near Atlantic University. Han Nah stated that Hyo Jin's life was less complicated by living in Ju Ahn Dong, since she did not need to use the English language for communication as a result of living there.

As for Han Nah, "[Ju Ahn Dong] is a small Korea in the USA. I don't want to live that way" (Interview 3, 1/21/05). "That way" meant living among the Korean-Americans and not having to use the English language to communicate. She wanted to experience living among Westerners as opposed to living in a small Korea in the United States. One of her reasons for immigrating to the United States was to learn the English language to become a bridge between the Korean and American societies. For her, living as a bridge meant having choices in her language use. "[I] can go outside and use English, and [I] can come inside and speak Korean. But many immigrants don't speak English so they do not want to watch any American TV or read any books. They have only Korean culture" (Interview 3, 1/21/05). After residing in Ju Ahn Dong herself for six years, she realized that most Korean immigrants choosing to live in a town like Ju Ahn Dong had resisted the Western English-speaking culture because they were still living in "Korea" psychologically, without understanding the immense

changes that have occurred in their home-land in the past several decades. Han Nah hoped Korean-Americans could broaden their horizons and teach the next generations the benefits of claiming both Korean and American identities. She strongly believed that this could be done through building a bilingual school nestled in a Korean-American community, such as Ju Ahn Dong.

*Using Knowledge Gained in TESOL to Teach Korean*

Han Nah translated her knowledge gained from TESOL courses to become a proficient Korean language teacher. She stated that if she had not taken any English language teaching methods courses at Atlantic University, then she would have taught Korean the way she was taught English in Korea. Since her ways of learning Korean and English in her past educational journey emphasized grammar and translation, she imagined herself using the traditional methods of teaching a language without the TESOL methodology courses. In teaching Korean, she used authentic materials as in taping Korean news segments for students to practice their listening. She also created different kinds of dialogue that would likely occur on a Korean T.V. drama, as well as follow-up activities that would help the students with their reading comprehension and writing skills.

I don't use the book that much [in teaching Korean], only for [highlighting] grammatical things and then I made [my] own handouts and topics for each week, dialogues, vocabulary and grammar. I made a dialogue video. So we watch video first and then they just try to catch from the video. They learn vocabulary by watching the video.

(Interview 2, 1/6/05)

Due to her own teaching of the Korean language and her experience in the TESOL program as a student, she believed that her students could benefit much from different uses of technology in language learning and teaching. “In traditional classroom settings, I think teachers can only teach with traditional way, kind of teachers teach and students learn. In smart classrooms, we can use lots of technology, so students can learn something by themselves without teachers” (Interview 4, 2/1/05). Han Nah believed that technology could enhance both teaching and learning by exposing students to different native and non-native speakers than simply the instructor. She stated, “If [the students] only talk with the teachers, they are only going to be accustomed with the teachers. If they watch video, listen to the tapes, they can be exposed to other native speakers” (Interview 4, 2/1/05), which was what occurred in authentic communicative situations.

In a private language institute connected to the United States State Department, Han Nah taught three one-on-one classes of advanced Korean. Because students were advanced Korean speakers, Han Nah recorded Korean news for students to listen to in order to have free discussion. In addition to in-class oral and comprehension activities, Han Nah also asked them to send her a weekly e-mail in Korean to practice their writing skills. Even though there were long hours involved in teaching Korean, she said that she would not change her job for anything in the world. She commented, “Actually, I love my work. I get lots of energy from work, because when I stay home all the time, I kind of get tired mentally” (Interview 6, 2/15/05).

### **Thinking Forward: Imagining her Future Possibilities (2005+)**

Han Nah's immediate plan upon finishing her certificate program was to continue teaching Korean to a group of children at her home as well as her adult Korean classes. She said that she would like to start an after school program focusing on Korean language skills with different level school-aged children. Han Nah's short terms goals were to expand her bilingual pilot program with a few children, apply to the Ph.D. program at Atlantic University, and get involved in professional development programs.

#### *A Call for Building a Korean-American Bilingual Community*

Han Nah's long term goal was to build a bilingual school in a Korean-American community. The mission for her future school would be for the children to have an international perspective. Han Nah believed that if Korean-American children have strong linguistic and cultural identities then they "can be kind of international people who can live in Korea and the United States and work for foreign countries" (Interview 1, 1/4/05). For Han Nah, in order for Korean-American children to maintain their linguistic and cultural identities, it is critical for them not only to speak their native language but also to understand and experience their cultural identity.

Han Nah said that most of the Korean parents in the United States were busy, so they were not able to spend a lot of time with their children studying Korean. She wanted to establish a kind of a bilingual school for Korean/English, similar to Spanish and English programs instituted nationwide. Many Korean Americans "speak Korean but kind of really like a child language, because they can't develop their mature Korean language" (Interview 1, 1/4/05). Han Nah believed that in order to help

children maintain their heritage language and culture, parents should continue to speak Korean at home.

*Perceived Limited Opportunities in Korea*

Although Han Nah would love to remain in the United States with her family, she said that if her husband were to get a better opportunity in Korea, they would have to move back to Korea. “It is a good society for men, even though the man is lower level than women in terms of educational credentials, he can become more successful in his life than women [in Korea]” (Interview 5, 2/8/05). Reflecting on that imagined future, Han Nah did not know whether she could work in Korea for she believed that there would be many obstacles for a married woman in her mid 30s such as herself. On the other hand, she could envision herself teaching children but even with that, her concern was that “it would be very hard for me to work at a private English institute because they want very young and more, very competitive to get into institute since they have high salary” (Interview 5, 2/8/05). She did think about what her imagined future would be teaching in Korea if given that opportunity. She envisioned herself teaching English grammar, reading or listening. “Although I have been learning much useful method for communicative lesson in English class, I may not have any chance to teach English in the way I have learned it” (E-Reflective Q/A, 11/25/05). Due to the dominant educational system in Korea and the practice of teaching to the college-entrance examinations, Korean public schools and some language institutes wanted teachers to teach more grammar in order to prepare students for those examinations. The social and educational norm in Korea was that native English speaking teachers were ideal for teaching speaking and communication skills.

In addition to thinking about her future vision as a teacher interested in building a bilingual school, she was also planning to get involved in professional development areas as they related to TESOL and her Korean language teaching profession. She was also getting ready to apply to a Ph.D. program in either Second Language Acquisition or Bilingual Education but also thinking about integrating her interest in an interdisciplinary field due to her women's studies and Turkish language and literature background.

### **Interpreting Han Nah's Narrative: Complex Nature of her Gendered, Linguistic, and Racial Identities**

Han Nah's identities as a Korean woman and a pseudo-Turkish scholar were complexified in her early years as evidenced by her educational experiences in Korea and in Turkey before coming to the United States. This was attributable to the manner in which her parents and the Turkish scholarly community interacted with her throughout this time period. It was exemplified by her father taking it upon himself to select her undergraduate and graduate majors rather than giving her free reign to select such majors for herself. Even though his motives for such decisions may have been pure, this still served to impress upon her the fact that she would need to be beholden to male's decisions for her throughout the course of her life.

Han Nah's father's decisions for her to major in Turkish and Islamic studies and his belief that women could be independent were paradoxical with respect to that which is prescribed by Korean society. Korean society not only devalues women but also perceives women to be dependent on men: their father when single, their husband when married, and their sons when elderly according to Confucian philosophy. Han

Nah found herself torn between adhering to the dictates of her father and following the advice of her mother who wanted Han Nah to adhere to Korean societal norms with respect to the expected roles for women in Korean society, namely caring for their children and husbands.

Thus, tension between Han Nah's parents' views in regard to how Han Nah should think about her future gendered and professional identities created stress for her. Han Nah was compelled to listen to the voices of her mother and Korean societal norms as she moved forward. However, there was a new set of tensions related to pursuing a Ph.D. program in Turkey. This related to the fact that Han Nah's Turkish professors perceived her as an outsider in relation to what she could accomplish in the Turkish educational setting as a Ph.D. student. Thus, she had to come to terms with and accept the fact that the Turkish scholarly community would never consider her to be a credible Turkish scholar. Therefore, she had to accept their construction of her since she had no intention of marrying within the Turkish community, and thus staying in that community.

In addition to being linguistically and racialally marginalized within the Turkish community, Han Nah also felt challenged by using the English language with native English speakers during her brief study abroad programs in English speaking countries (e.g., England). This stemmed from differences between how the English language was taught and used in the Korean and these other educational contexts. The challenges that she encountered with respect to learning and using the English language in the study abroad programs exacerbated her feelings of linguistic marginalization. Despite the challenges encountered in these settings, her (upper)



classed identity served somewhat to mitigate her feelings of marginalization with respect to these linguistic and racial identities due to the sheer fact that she was situated in these privileged English speaking communities.

Even though her privileged-classed identity served somewhat to mitigate feelings of marginalization, she continued to construct a marginalized linguistic identity when she was not able to engage in classroom discussions in her intensive English language classes in England. The continual development of this marginalized linguistic identity coupled with the comparisons she made between herself and other NNEs from dominant racial groups contributed to the development of marginalized racial identity in these educational settings. She tried to compensate for these feelings of inadequacy relative to others by asserting that she was on an “equal footing” with them since they both brought different strengths into the classroom. Han Nah’s lack of oral participation could be labeled as a racializing practice, which marginalized and silenced the voices of subgroups such as NNEs like Han Nah. In Han Nah’s world, opportunities to speak out diminished since she was the only Asian in the class and she perceived her oral skills to be “inaudible and incomprehensible” as compared to her white NNEs. In the end, Han Nah was indoctrinated into a racializing practice that equated the white race to be “audible speaking” and equated the Asian race to be “inaudible speaking” (Miller, 2004).

On a more positive note, Han Nah’s English language learning opportunities in various contexts permitted her entry as a legitimate member in English speaking countries, and enabled her to connect with the employment opportunities possible in her imagined communities (Norton, 2000). However, this legitimate membership

could only take her up to a certain point due to her feeling marginalized about not being able to orally participate in classroom discussions. Thus, she was not able to reach the legitimate central membership, a group understood as experts in that community.

In looking back at the experiences that shaped her gendered, linguistic, and racial identities both in Korea and outside of Korea prior to entrance into the United States, Han Nah was influenced by the notion of “double consciousness.” It had brought on tensions between her Korean cultural norms and her desire to be an independent woman scholar. The double consciousness meant living in between tensions created by her desire to obtain a higher education degree in contexts other than her native country and her husbands’ career paths as well as other familial obligations. With these experiences as her background, Han Nah and her husband began their lives in the United States as temporary immigrants.

For Han Nah, getting married, moving to the United States, and having children changed her life trajectory from what she had envisioned for herself earlier in her educational journey. Being married and having children pushed her into having to construct and negotiate her imagined future identities as a professional Korean woman, a spouse, and a mother. In her roles as a wife and mother, Han Nah needed to think about and balance the best possible future options for both her husband and children. This included having to make sacrifices with respect to her own career aspirations to accommodate her husband whose international position could move them elsewhere in the future.

Han Nah's extensive study-abroad experiences in English-speaking countries presented her with challenges that coincided with her NNEST and racial identities. The negative experiences that she encountered in these study-abroad programs were a major factor in her deciding to use her native language to find and stake a claim to her professional niche. As a result, Han Nah opted to teach her native tongue (Korean) in the United States in order to claim stronger linguistic and cultural identities. She believed that this choice would not only benefit her career in the United States but it would also benefit her children growing up as bilinguals. Being admitted into a TESOL program for her was a way to learn and improve her Korean language pedagogy. Working as a Korean language teacher in the United States allowed Han Nah to meet both her maternal and domestic responsibilities as well as her professional goals by teaching her children the Korean language and working part-time away from home.

Han Nah chose to go into a field that would ultimately benefit her children as well as herself. It allowed her to claim dominant linguistic and racial identities and her professional teaching identity in Western educational contexts. In deciding to teach the Korean language and promoting bilingual education in the Korean-American community, Han Nah positioned her Korean ethnicity and Korean/English linguistic identities as assets with which to resist the embracing of only an English linguistic identity (Giampapa, 2004). This was one way she elicited to manage her double consciousness.

Specifically, Han Nah wanted to build bilingual education programs to serve as a bridge between the Korean and American communities which, in turn, would

promote societal inclusiveness as well as the development of strong cultural and linguistic identities for Korean-Americans especially bilingual and biracial children. This would enable the formation of a structure where one society could be included in the other as a way of building a stronger linguistic and cultural community.

Han Nah's coming back to teach the Korean language as opposed to teaching English or Turkish played a salient role in how she desired to be positioned and how she positioned herself within the dominant society. Han Nah's positioning of herself via her dominant language led to the legitimation of her teaching and linguistic identities.

Han Nah's exhibiting of both resilience and self-sacrifice would surface in relation to her husband's place of employment in the future given the fact that the family might have to relocate to Korea if better prospects opened up for him there. Despite her willingness to make these sacrifices, Han Nah did indicate some trepidation about returning to Korea, since returning to Korea, in large part, would represent limitations on possibilities for Han Nah as a woman, as a professional, and as a mother raising two children in the Korean educational contexts. It would be a step down in every aspect of her life were they to return to Korea, given that her ideas with respect to educational improvement and the professional identities of women would be checked by dominant images of society, namely men in higher places. Such a move would destabilize her newly acquired identity in the West. It would provoke a new round of choices and selection necessary to manage yet another identity shift for her.

## Chapter 4: LIU LI

### Looking Back: “Something Full of Magic” (1978-2003)

Liu’s experience learning English in China became a strong foundation for her learning it in the United States. “Even though most of my experience was about memorizing, retelling and taking the multiple choice tests I still benefit[ted] a lot from this way of learning” (E-Reflective Q/A, 11/25/04). Liu’s memories of learning English in China remained positive throughout her educational journey. She stated that although the learning process in China was mundane and rote, she felt that she had gained much knowledge about the way the English language worked. Her venues for learning English were in public and private schools and through English clubs at the university. One of the limitations of learning this way for Liu was that, like many Asian students, she did not have much opportunity to practice her oral English. Due to the limited opportunities for oral English language practice, Liu diligently sought out ways to practice speaking and listening authentically.

#### English as “Full of Magic”

Since Liu’s first encounter with English in middle school in China at the age of 12, “[learning English has become] something full of magic that holds me to it till today. I never stop learning it ever since then” (E-Reflective Q/A, 11/25/04). This “magic” kept Liu going in her earlier years learning English. The “magic” that propelled her to learn new words, seek out opportunities to listen to native English speakers, and gain opportunities to be around people who used English fluently to their advantage brought her to seek further education in the United States. Due to China’s dominant way of introducing English as being the Grammar-Translation

Method, she memorized grammar rules, vocabulary words, and reading texts in order to be at the top of her class.

She worked hard, getting up at 5 o'clock in the morning to listen to United States radio broadcasts in order to hear the native English-speaking voices. She also read literature to become familiar with writing conventions. There were times when she felt frustrated in terms of not knowing the historical and cultural background of the talk topic. But “you never feel you learn the language completely which makes me keep going and studying. This “full of magic” was all about learning different phrases to say the same things, expressing the same ideas in different ways, and want[ing] to be a part of that” (E-Reflective Q/A, 11/25/04). She wanted to have the chance to get closer to native English speakers, to talk to them, to experience the fullness of the magic, to watch T.V., to listen to the radio, and to overhear people talking. She also worked as a volunteer for a Microsoft conference and came to know people in the international technology area. She worked as a translator between the Chinese people and the United States experts during her college senior year in China in 1999. Working with international technology people encouraged and motivated her to continue learning English.

### *Teaching English in China*

During her college years in China from 1996 to 2000, she home-tutored a high school student to help him prepare for his college-entrance examination. Liu used to tell her tutee that “if you know the principles, you can figure out the problems” (Interview 1, 2/1/05). Liu helped him to organize what he needed to memorize and

understand different strategies in college-entrance test taking. She felt that through her tutoring experience, she had the responsibility to change another person's life.

When you teach English, you are changing someone's life, and that is such a burden. You did not want someone's life to be hanging on your shoulders. But sometimes I feel a lot of pressure when thinking a person's life is under your control; therefore, I chose to teach business English. (Interview 1, 2/1/05)

While some would feel that tutoring students and helping them navigate their learning trajectory could be perceived as an act of accomplishment, Liu realized that tutoring the high school student became more work emotionally than she was able to handle. She knew that she loved teaching English, but felt that she should find a different venue where she and the student could both learn as a way to improve the quality of their lives. As a result, after two years of tutoring this high-school student, she decided to place the focus more on the business side of the English language since business administration was one of her majors in college. Liu began teaching business English in 1999 in small groups as well as in company classes.

Through this business English teaching experience, she realized that she liked talking to people not only about their business ventures but also about the strategies for improving their English as businessmen and businesswomen. Teaching business English gave her comfort "even though we both have [an] accent and made some mistakes" (E-Reflective Q/A, 11/25/04). Her role as an English teacher gave her opportunities to know different people, bring new knowledge to them, and open a window to their worlds, "but when it is beyond my capability to explain some

language problems, I feel very bad since they all count on me to solve it” (E-Reflective Q/A, 11/25/04). As their teacher, Liu felt that she needed to have all the answers, and when she did not, she was often withdrawn from her role as a teacher. This feeling of having to know all the answers as a teacher might have been the result of the ways she was taught and learned throughout her educational journey in China, which was more authoritarian and teacher-centered than students and teachers opting for learner-centered education.

*Seeking Out Better Opportunities (1996-2003)*

Because Liu majored in business administration and English literature in a college located near Beijing, she saw her interest to be in international business. At that point, she had said to herself, “I am going to be a business woman dealing with international [related matters] in the future” (Interview 4, 3/16/05). Liu landed a job in an international trading operation, but she decided against working for this company because it was in Datong. She did not envision any growth and development for herself as a business woman working in her hometown, and wanted to find opportunities in Beijing, a center of international business growth and development. As a result, Liu turned down the job offer in her hometown and took an offer that had very little connection to international business venture. It was, however, located in Beijing, where she saw her life continuing after college.

I did not want to go back to my hometown. I wanted to find a good chance in Beijing and I did, but it was not what I really wanted to do. But it helped me to stay in Beijing. It had nothing to do with



international business. I felt sad for a long time about this because that is not what I expected for the rest of my life. (Interview 4, 3/16/05)

Even though she felt sad about refusing the international business-related job in Datong, she comforted herself by stating that her Beijing job had helped her make connections with people throughout the business sector by working as an account buyer doing translation work and attending conferences internationally with her upper management groups. Liu also commented that even though working for the Beijing company was not where her heart was, she “got used to it” (Interview 4, 3/16/05). It meant envisioning a bigger world for herself and for her future in international business.

Liu sought out graduate degree programs in the United States around her college completion time in 2000. Most Chinese people went to Australia, Ireland, or England to study due to the low exchange rate, lower tuition and the availability of work in places such as supermarkets where international students could legally earn spending money. Liu’s reasons for coming to the United States as opposed to other English-speaking countries were that only the universities in United States offered fellowships and scholarships for Chinese Master’s level students and that they also ranked higher in overseas education among the schools in English speaking countries. She stated, “Nothing could be more attractive than achieving Master’s degree in education and be around an English-speaking environment in the United States” (E-Reflective Q/A, 11/25/04). With this in mind, she began her Master’s in TESOL program in the United States in September 2003.

## **Reflecting on TESOL Graduate Studies in United States (2003-2005)**

Liu was initially admitted to her Master's in TESOL program in 2002 but needed to defer her admission due to her visa status. She was refused a visa to enter the United States three times between 2002 and 2003. She had expended a lot of time and energy and she could not just give up because of the visa rejection. “[My husband] understands that if I cannot get the visa, I am going to be upset for a long time. Even if I am happy with him, happy with my job, I feel I have one thing that is missing” (Interview 4, 3/16/05). Liu and her husband both knew that Liu would need to complete a part of her life that she had yearned for ever since she was in college. It would be important for Liu to experience studying the language and learning about the culture in an English-speaking country. In August 2003, a month after her marriage, she reapplied for the fourth time and was given her visa to enter the United States as an international student in Pacific University's Master's in TESOL program.

### *Wrestling with the U.S. Visa System*

Liu felt victimized by the visa-issuing system, seeing an element of discrimination on issues of visa validation for Chinese and Taiwanese students studying in the United States. She believed that rejection of visa applications for Chinese international students was common and that there was discrimination. Chinese students were usually given a 6-month visa validation period, but Taiwanese students were allowed a 5-year visa validation period. Through her own experience and experiences of other Chinese students like her, Liu believed that the United States held a certain perspective on Chinese students. “It is only dictated by the United States, and we have no chance to argue. Even the Mexican people can get multiple

entries in five years, so I don't know why Chinese people are treated badly when it come to visa validation" (Interview 4, 3/16/05). Liu saw the international student visa problems to be targeted at Chinese students only and commented that this situation could be related to the political relationship between China and the United States.

Liu accessed different avenues to get her visa on the fourth time. She knew that she would be rejected again if she went through the regular process. "I got visa. It was not with the regular application process. My husband knew the ambassador, so that's why I got the visa. If I went through the regular way, there is no way that I could have gotten the visa" (Interview 4, 3/16/05). Liu felt that she needed to politically navigate this process and used her family's power to be included in the visa acceptance pool of Chinese international graduate students.

#### *Navigating Through her TESOL Program*

She chose to study TESOL in the United States because she was interested in learning the English language; her top priority was placed on learning and improving her English language learning and teaching skills in order to act as an ambassador to this international language. "I feel I take more responsibility to introduce this beautiful language to as many people as possible, and learn how to teach it effectively for delivery purpose" (E-Reflective Q/A, 11/25/04). She reminisced about her past and highlighted specific events that had led her to study TESOL and the English language.

As an English major and as a home tutor, she felt that "my explanation [made] my students more confused and even if I [knew] the right answer, but [I could] not explain to them why and how. Knowledge [could] not be shared with others without the techniques of teaching, so [I] decide[d] to learn how to teach and make it easy for

my students to learn” (E-Reflective Q/A, 11/25/04). Her desire to be a part of a Master’s in TESOL program in the United States grew out of her wanting to improve her own linguistic and cultural knowledge since these skills, she felt, could only be improved by living and interacting with people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. She also wanted to be a part of a community where students and professors discussed innovative ways of teaching and learning English in order to expand her teaching and delivery skills in working with future English language learners in China. All in all, she wanted to bring about changes in China to improve how they interacted with the world through increased fluency with the English language.

#### *Participation or No Participation?*

In reflecting on her experience in some TESOL program courses, she felt that she was just “sitting [in classrooms] listening, not really participating in the discussion.” She stated that she learned a lot by just listening and she also commented that “[n]o participation [did] not mean, [she was] not learning” (Interview 3, 2/15/05). She felt that “participation” should come in different types in order to reach out to different learning styles. In Liu’s experience, native speakers in her classes liked to talk and “the native [English speaking] students would give some points that would broaden my horizon, but I don’t think sometimes they make good points” (Interview 2, 2/28/05). While Liu appreciated native English speakers’ comments and ideas during class discussion, she often felt that they were talking aimlessly. On the other hand, the non-native English speakers in her classes were relatively silent. Liu’s experience was that some NNEs would like to vocally participate in class discussion, but that they

did not really have much time, and most of the discussion time was “taken up by the native speakers, so we [just kept] silent. We only do group discussions and group studies, and international students are grouped to study together because we can understand each other better” (Interview 2, 2/28/05). She realized that there were other ways for her to participate in the class.

When she did participate in other forms, there were other issues that surfaced. In one of her classes, she interacted with an NES classmate, discussing the issues of identity and second language learning. Through this interaction, she felt rejected by Western culture and lost confidence in her capability to communicate with people. Before coming to the United States, she was proud of her English-language abilities, and now she felt it to be deficit and even an obstacle. “The longer I stay here, the stronger I feel being excluded by the culture” (E-Journal Entries, 12/15/04). Her classmate’s response was that Liu’s English was good enough, and that she might just be too fussy about her English language proficiency in that she was being too focused on her speech, rather than the meaning. Liu’s perspective on this discussion led her to think that perhaps the NESs with whom she had interacted in her TESOL program expected Asian students to be silent in class such that Asian students were already seen as others in their [NES] minds. “When they say that my English is good enough, I understand they are trying to be nice, but it actually hurt a lot if it is not the fact” (E-Journal Entries, 12/15/04). The comment that Liu’s English was “good enough” bothered her because she always thought that her English was NOT [her emphasis] good enough. She believed that it may be good enough for communication and expressing her ideas, but not good enough to function on the academic level. Her

expectations for herself had always been high. “So if they said [English is good enough] to me many times, I feel it is not true.” Liu wanted to know their real opinion, not just “good” said in the interest of being nice. “I don’t know other people, but my personality will always tell me to tell the truth to other souls” (Interview 2, 2/28/05).

“No, I Don’t Think So!”

These feelings of rejection and the loss of self-confidence in her ability to use the English language as a form of communication extended beyond the four walls of the classroom. In her role as an assistant in her TESOL program, Liu worked with a professor and a doctoral student on a project that had started before Liu joined her Master’s in TESOL program. On one particular day, they were working on a data set and Liu tried to explain to her colleagues why the data that they had collected was incorrect. “Because I just got to the United States a few months ago, I tried to make my idea clear to them with my limited oral language proficiency. But they did not believe me and kept saying, ‘No, I don’t think so’ ” (Interview 2, 2/28/05). Liu said that she continued to give a detailed explanation about the computation process while they continued to insist that Liu’s explanation was incorrect and did not listen to her. “I can do nothing but wait for what results they got from their discussion, and they never confronted on the fact that my explanation was correct. I felt the situation had to do with [my status as a NNES]” (Interview 2, 2/28/05). Liu felt that the professor and the doctoral student ignored her explanation because they could not understand her English, and instead of trying to understand her and helping Liu clarify her explanation, they disregarded her contribution to the program project.

### *“I Told You So!”*

Liu had decided to stay quiet about the project results even if she wanted to say, “I told you so! It’s kind of silence resists” (Interview 2, 2/28/05). She believed that arguing would make the relationship with them worse, “so why not just keep silent. You can check all the files and you can find the mistakes by yourself and by that time, you are going to feel guilty for what you have done to me” (Interview 5, 3/18/05). Liu’s thoughts on this event coupled with her relegated role as a secretary instead of a respected contributor with valuable ideas, contributed to the attribution of rejection of her ideas due to her limited English language proficiency. This kind of experience had reminded her of her race as an East Asian woman working hard to “tolerate and forgive people” in many different contexts. She strongly believed that the professor and the doctoral student would have treated her differently if she were a NES. “I hope my voice could be heard in this so-called fair country” (E-Journal Entries, 12/15/04). She was given few opportunities to make her voice heard and few opportunities to become involved in doing research. “I have to just do my class work well, and get teachers impressed by my jobs in the class work; that’s the only thing I can do” (Interview 2, 2/28/05).

### *A Sense of Community: Belonging and not Belonging*

Liu felt that international students were being looked down upon and that native speakers had advantages since they were born into the English language, which gave them certain status in the TESOL program. Being an international student in a TESOL program meant her status in the program was really low because of her English language abilities, Liu stated. “Except for the academic knowledge, [I] still [had] great gap between other speakers. NES, speak English fluently. Even if I [knew]

the academic knowledge well, [I] still [felt] less of a status because of language” (Interview 2, 2/28/05). Liu talked about ways to overcome this feeling of low status in her program. She thought she needed to talk more in the classroom to convince “myself and others even if I am not a native speaker, [that] I can still contribute something to the class, try to make friends with as many friends as possible, not only just Chinese friends. [If I do this, it can] make me feel kind of accepted in this environment, not isolate myself, push myself more within the community to be more participatory” (Interview 2, 2/28/05).

Reflecting on some of these negative experiences in her TESOL program made her realize how comfortable she had been in her native country in terms of interacting with different people. She stated that in most cases in China, people were always relying on her to get the right answer and they listened to her instead of her listening to them. “In all different contexts, people lean on me. They trust me and I am kind of a little bit above the capability of the average people. I am not saying that I am better than they are. In some aspect, I might be worth their trust. They listen to me, and accept my opinion” (Interview 5, 3/18/05). Liu felt a disconnection between what she knew and was capable of and the cultural environment of this country and what people thought she knew. There were numerous times when people interrupted Liu because she was not fluent with the English language. She often felt ashamed of her oral proficiency (or the lack there of). This prevented her from expressing her ideas. During one of our interviews, I commented that her ideas were clear and she articulated her feelings well. To my comment, she responded, “I have something to say. I have a lot of feelings inside of me” (Interview 5, 3/18/05).



Liu's feelings of discomfort emanated from the fact that her feelings had been suppressed by people, language, and culture.

I think the language might be the major problem for me. Because at the beginning, I think when I catch up my language proficiency, everything is going on well and there will not be any problems. But it turned out to be different. You can't express ideas or share ideas with people. It just feels like you are alone. (Interview 5, 3/18/05)

Her level of comfort was very important for Liu since she believed that the comfort level was related to her self-dignity. When she was not recognized, she became frustrated and upset with herself and others.

Liu did not believe that her program had a sense of a community since she believed it did not have a core focus.

In order to build a community of practice inside and outside of the program, I feel that I meet people in the classroom, [but] I have no chances to meet the students in my program outside of the program. Outside of the program, I feel there is no difference from when I am in China. [There should be] more opportunities for NESs and NNESs to get to know each other better, so maybe NNESs can feel like I am into this society and I am into this culture, learn about what other people are thinking about. (Interview 4, 3/16/05)

Liu believed that a community was an environment where everyone could exchange and share information. She stated that there was a community in her program but it was not for everyone.

If you don't feel like [doing something special for others], then you are excluded from that community. Once you feel that you are not part of the community, it is very difficult to get access to the community. We are kind of a circle, small society and something important in the TESOL field. Some people will tell you how to present papers, go to present with her or something like that, so that's the advantage of being in a community. (Interview 6, 4/27/05)

Liu thought having a community meant everyone was included. She understood that smaller communities existed, but for her to witness in her own program that some were excluded made her feel more uncomfortable.

#### *Pre-Student Teaching Experience*

During the spring of 2005, she observed some elementary and middle school classes and did one-on-one tutoring with some of the students in those classrooms, which was a pre-requisite for her student teaching semester in fall of 2005. While observing and tutoring students in the American classroom setting, she reflected on her experience of teaching in China and pointed out some differences she observed. In China, she was only exposed to adult learners, and noted that adult learners were more self-motivated, self-controlled, and actively engaged. With the adult learners, they were more focused and practical since improving English was for their business. On the other hand, teaching at the elementary level in the United States was much more difficult since these children could be easily distracted. Some did not understand English since they used another first language at home.

During the spring 2005 semester, she started her pre-student teaching observation at a middle school under the mentorship of a gifted teacher. He was from Africa and had been in the United States for over 20 years. He went through several schools to receive his Bachelor's and Master's degrees and finally became a teacher. Liu was very impressed with the students because they responded to the teacher in an engaging way. Even though they were talkative and playful in the classroom, she saw that the mentor teacher and his students had good relationships in class. Liu strongly believed that a good relationship between teacher and the students would motivate student learning. With this thought, Liu reflected on her role as a graduate student and some of her professors in relation to what she witnessed in the middle school with the mentor teacher and his students. She realized that she was not getting in her own program what the middle school students were getting from their mentor teacher. "The fact that the mentor teacher cares for EVERYONE [her emphasis] [regardless of] your background is more than admirable. If they don't care too much about their own benefits, the students might feel better, and much to do with personality and experiences through the life" (Interview 6, 4/27/05). Liu also believed that certain kinds of experiences that her mentor teacher endured made him an effective teacher. She said that he had suffered a lot after he came to the United States and he understood what the students' parents were going through because he also went through it. He tried to assist his students both inside and outside of the class.

### *Images of Being an ESL Teacher*

Sometimes, Liu wondered about what it would take for NNEs like herself to

work as English teachers in the United States. Language proficiency would be an issue, she observed. “Sometimes, I feel [if] I would teach in this country, I might not be qualified because my language is not that good. How can I get on the platform and teach other students? How can I trust [myself] if I cannot speak [English] very well” (Interview 1, 2/1/05)? Liu believed that teachers needed to understand the students, their achievement levels, and their difficulties in order to be effective ESL teachers. Teachers must really love teaching and know the responsibilities of their jobs.

I think the teachers play an important role [in motivating] students. I like responsible teachers, careful about the future of the students. [As for teaching English in China,] most people who chose to teach either because they can’t find a better job or because right now, the teachers get higher salary. Either money motivated or have no job availabilities. I think only small percentage of people really like to teach especially for young kids. (Interview 4, 3/16/05)

#### *Roles as a Wife, Daughter, and Daughter-In-Law*

While her TESOL program presented her with one set of experiences, she also felt something else happening in her personal space without her husband and family in the United States. Liu stated that her situation and her sense of identity would differ if she were in the United States with her husband or the rest of the family. Being in the United States without her husband by her side, Liu had learned to tolerate a lot of the loneliness. But she still believed that no one could understand her.

Some of my Chinese friends could find boyfriends and girlfriends, but I have to stay by myself all the time. I just have to learn to kill the boring

time by myself. Some Chinese students learn to stay here longer until they get a green card or American citizenship, but I never think of that. My family is the most important thing in the world, and just for family, I can sacrifice my own career and my studies, and I can sacrifice myself. (Interview 2, 2/28/05)

Liu believed that her husband and other family members in China were relying on her to be a western cultural ambassador. When she thought about helping her family and country with the ideas she gained from being schooled in the United States, she did not want to be as resistant to the English language and culture. “I am the only person they can rely on, if I am so isolated, then how can they do. I don’t know. I want my family to be here, so I feel that my mind is settled down and I don’t need to worry” (Interview 4, 3/16/05). It was apparent that Liu was in the middle of a battle between her desire to bring about changes in her country and the welfare of her family with the linguistic and cultural knowledge gained from studying in the United States and her struggles as an NNES in a foreign graduate school program.

In thinking about her roles as a wife, daughter, and daughter-in-law, Liu reminisced about the relationships between her and her mother and her and her mother-in-law. Liu sometimes thought about how her mother-in-law might have reacted to her decision to study in the United States if things had been different. Liu believed that her marriage would be harder and there would be more sacrifices on the part of Liu if her mother-in-law was better educated and from a higher socio/economic level. In fact, Liu’s mother-in-law was very proud of Liu since she was doing what her husband could not do, which was becoming a scholar. On the

other hand, Liu's parents worked for a university and are "picky" people who held tougher standards. Her parents were reluctant to give her permission to marry her husband.

They don't really like him. But because I love him, they will treat him well. But according to their standards, it's not a good match. It is enough for one side of the family to be highly educated and picky people. You know if his parents are also like my parents, then this marriage might not work out. I feel that I am good for him and his family. If his family has some opinions about me, I feel very upset. I may not continue this relationship, but it's good that his parents are easy going. (Interview 5, 3/18/05)

Liu's parents believed that she could have married into a better family in terms of their education and their socioeconomic status. Her mother thought that she could have done better and that she had better prospects, while her father did come to terms with the fact that as long as they loved each other and treated each other well, everything would be fine. "When [my mother] found out that my husband does not really have high education and degree, she was kind of disappointed" (Interview 3, 2/15/05). She did not care too much about the money they made, but she cared a lot about if this person was knowledgeable. Her parents earned associate degrees, and his parents, at best, only had middle school or high school educations.

## **Thinking Forward: Imagined Future Possibilities (2005+)**

I feel the longer I stay in the education program, the more interest I have in dealing with children. When I came into the middle school and elementary school, I have some kind of feeling in my heart that I have never found before. I think that I might change my career in the future and when I stay with them. I feel naïve as they are. I feel very relaxed and very happy. I always had dreams of being a very successful woman, and do something very successful in the field. I never thought about being a common person, a teacher. I feel that when I face these kids, they are like my children, especially the special ed student I tutored. I wish I could be with him everyday, so that I could help him, and he will not be down. (Interview 6, 4/27/05)

The above excerpt was shared with me upon completing her first three weeks of her pre-student-teaching experience. Because Liu had never thought about teaching children, she never imagined that she would feel moved by her pre-student-teaching experience in an elementary ESL classroom. She stated that being a teacher of children would be one of her future options upon returning to China.

### *Her Desire to Teach Children*

In thinking about what she would do when she returned to China upon completing her Master's in TESOL program in December 2005, Liu was reminded of what her parents told her when she was in high school and thinking about college majors and a future career. They wanted her to be a teacher because it was perceived to be an easy job by her parents. Since Liu was born with some health issues, her

parents always wanted her to protect herself. Liu never took her parents' suggestions seriously. "I strongly protested their idea [of me being a teacher]. I will never do a job like that because I thought that I had some ability to do something better than that. It is common in China that if people cannot get into good schools, good universities, then they go to teachers' college or nursing school" (Interview 6, 4/27/05). Teachers college did not require high scores, but Liu's scores for college entrance were extremely high. Her parents had certain expectations for Liu because she had health problems and she was the only child. At one time, they wanted Liu to get into a good university. When they saw her working hard everyday, they felt that she did not need to do that and that she should chose another easier life.

#### *Perceived Limited Opportunities in China*

Even with her Master's degree in TESOL and different teaching experiences, she noted that she might not find a job immediately due to only having a Master's degree. She observed that there were many people with Master's degrees from English-speaking countries in China. She thought that it would be beneficial to find a job in Beijing. If there were no job availabilities for her in high-ranking universities, then she would look into foreign corporations. Her Master's program would qualify her for positions other than in English education. Liu said that she would like to be in some business related to education, help her husband with his international trade business; or do some work with a previous employer integrating specific technological skills into the Chinese market. She was looking forward to such opportunities in China. She felt that she may need to get her Ph.D. at some point in her life, but for



now, she “[did not] want to lose so many opportunities for a Ph.D. I need to know why I want to do a Ph.D” (Interview 2, 2/28/05).

### **Interpreting Liu’s Narrative: Complex Nature of her Gendered, Linguistic, and Racial Identities**

Liu’s identity as an English language learner and user was strong throughout her educational journey in China because of her high academic achievement. Also, she desired to further this linguistic identity by expanding her knowledge of and improving her communication skills in the English language, which she characterized as “full of magic.” Although her strong sense of linguistic and racial identities as a Chinese English language learner and user were omnipresent throughout her early educational and work experiences, her linguistic identity became challenged in later years as an English language teacher in China. She had believed that her strong linguistic identity would take her far in both her educational and work experiences. Thus, she assumed that she would excel as an English-language teacher in China when she commenced her teaching in this subject. However, when faced with some problematic situations and questions with regards to her business-English teaching experience, she began to doubt her linguistic abilities as a Chinese English-language learner and teacher.

Despite Liu’s gendered identity as a married woman, compelling her to conform with the societal norms for married woman, she was very much supported by her husband and mother-in-law to continue her education in the United States. This may have been attributable to the fact that her husband and mother-in-law viewed her as someone who could serve as a linguistic and cultural ambassador in China. Also,

they viewed her as someone who could change the family's classed identity through the attainment of higher educational credentials. Due to the fact that none of her husband's family had more than high school education, Liu's Master's degree in the United States became a symbol of power and cultural capital for this family with which they hoped they could capitalize on in perpetuity. Liu's educational credentialing was seen as a symbol of power and privilege by her husband's family such that they would go to great lengths to ensure that she be enabled to earn these credentials. An example of this was the fourth visa application in which Liu utilized her husband's contact in the ambassador's office to gain admission into the United States. Without this privileged connection, Liu would not have had the opportunity to commence her Master's program in the United States.

Despite the support given to her by her in-laws, Liu experienced tension from her own mother due to the fact that she had married beneath her social class. Also, Liu experienced tension from her parents in terms of their projecting limited possibilities for her with regards to career choices. This tension emanating from her parents and her in-laws created much stress for Liu. She was torn between having to live up to her responsibilities as a married woman and having to live up to her self-imposed responsibilities as an only child, potential mother, and potential cultural ambassador.

Within the English speaking contexts, Liu's linguistic identity construction was complexified due to its interconnectedness with other such tensions such as racial identity. Primarily, this resulted from her being a nonnative with regards to the English language. Additionally, Liu's level of self-awareness as an NNES, visible minority heightened as she interacted with her NES classmates within the program. Her

construction of self as an NNES and negotiation of herself to be a legitimate TESOL student and future educator were constrained by the dominant discourse, which stipulated that only white native English speakers could be ideal English teachers. This native speaker construct more often than not placed NNES teachers, such as Liu, on the margin due to their linguistic identities as members of Expanded Circle countries, where English is viewed as a foreign language.

These NNES English teachers were further marginalized due to their gendered and racial identities as visible minority women. For Liu, this occurred she believed when her contributions to a project for which she worked on with a professor and a doctoral student were repeatedly dismissed. She speculated that these repeated dismissals of her opinions were due to the fact that she was not a white NES graduate student. This led to the further marginalization of her linguistic and racial identities as an NNES graduate student. Her decision to stay silent rather than continuing to assert her opinions on the project represented a marginal non-participatory practice which resulted in her decreased involvement in the project. For Liu, the commingling of gendered, linguistic, and racial identity issues contributed to her decision to stay silent and not to push her case any further. This move is consistent with the role expected of a woman from a traditional Chinese family and the doctrine espousing that “silence resists.”

Throughout these perceived marginalizing experiences with regards to her linguistic, racial, and gendered identities as a Chinese woman graduate student in a TESOL program, her participation in that program soon became a humbling experience for Liu. When the individuals with whom she came into contact with in the

United States, especially in her TESOL program, failed to recognize her potential as evidenced by the high status positions she had held in China, she felt as though her dignity was being trampled upon by these individuals. Most notably, these individuals in her program were her fellow NES colleagues and some of her professors. The struggles that she faced in this program created problems for her in terms of whether she would be able to meet her in-law's expectations for her (i.e., linguistic and cultural liaison) upon her return to China. Her self-confidence, self-worth, and self-dignity continued to break down as a result of these incidents, which consequently were related to her linguistic and racial identities.

Although Liu's initial plan was to complete both her Master's degree and Ph.D. degree programs in the United States, during the course of completing her Master's program in the United States, she came to realize that there were competing identities pulling her in different directions. Specifically, this pertained to her gendered identity as a married woman, which contradicted her professional aspiration of obtaining a Ph.D. degree in the United States. Her decision not to pursue a Ph.D. program in the United States was partly due to the pressure she felt in having to conform to Chinese traditional roles for women. Additionally, it was her newly formed interest and motivation in teaching children that pulled her away from enrolling in a Ph.D. program in the United States. She longed to teach children back home, even though her parents, husband, and parents-in-law approved of her obtaining a Ph.D. degree. It was her pre-student teaching experience during spring of 2005 semester that kindled her desire to teach children back home in China.

This desire directly contradicted what she had originally planned to do, but paralleled what her parents had wanted her to do and pressured her into doing all along while growing up in China. The main difference though, was that her parents chose this career for her as a limiting possibility out of concerns for her health and well-being, whereas Liu chose this career based on free choice commensurate with her teaching experiences. Her interest in teaching English to children in China also coincided with her desire to start a family upon completing her Master's degree program as well.

Liu strongly believed that her options in China would be numerous due to her student teaching experiences in the United States, her Master's degree in TESOL, and her networking contacts she had developed in China. With these numerous foreseeable options ahead of her, she would be able to strengthen her linguistic, racial, and gendered identities as a married Chinese English-language specialist in China. This is how she sought to balance out the competing identity construct pressing on her from within and from multiple directions beyond her control.

## Chapter 5: XIA WANG

### Looking Back: English Language Learning Experience in China

(1979-1997)

Although Xia excelled in her studies in the Chinese public schools, she did not like the methods of instruction. Her former teachers used Audio Lingual (ALM) and Grammar Translation Methods (GTM) to teach English. The main focus was on memorizing vocabulary words through repetition and translation from English to Chinese. Although some English classes were supplemented with technology-aided lessons, she thought that they were boring and redundant due to the “misuse of the technology.” “It’s like moving the whole textbook onto the website or onto the disk” (Interview 1, 12/27/04). This is how she described her English language learning experience. Then she began weekend enrichment classes as a 4<sup>th</sup> grader:

I benefited more from weekend “enrichment” schools [where] the English class is more interactive and the teacher speaks better English. [They] will find pen pal in other countries for us to write with and pair us as chatting partners. Also [I] had native-English speaking guest teachers from time to time. (E-Reflective Q/A, 10/17/04)

#### *From ALM and GTM to Weekend Enrichment Program*

Xia attended the weekend enrichment English program until she graduated from high school in 1997. Her experience in the weekend enrichment school was different from her public school English-language classes in that English was taught in English and not in Chinese. She was amazed at the fact that her teachers pushed students to use English as a tool for communication; hence, she was immersed in an English-speaking environment. Xia was first introduced to a pen pal through the

weekend program, which was one of her teachers' class projects. Although this pen-pal system only lasted for about one year, the experience provided Xia with the desire and motivation to have a better grasp of the English language for communication purposes.

*“They just said, a, b, c, and d!”*

While she enjoyed learning English in the weekend enrichment English program, she stated that her high school years (1994-1997) preparing for the college entrance examination were gloomy and pressure came from all different directions: other students, parents, and teachers. Due to the nature of these college entrance exams, the focus of the English classes was to practice the listening tests and be familiar with test-taking strategies.

In my high school, the teacher did not even speak a full sentence in English. They just said a, b, c, and d. Since it was a multiple choice, they focused on correct answers all the time. Every class, they [gave] us the right answers. They [would] explain the answers in Chinese.

(Interview 1, 12/27/04)

Xia perfected her test-taking strategies during her high school years. She became very confident in her ability to excel in every subject related to the English language since the goal was to do well on school and national exams. “English [was] never a difficult subject to me especially at school where the main purpose of English teaching [was] passing exams” (Interview 1, 12/27/04). Although she excelled academically, she realized the limitations that the Chinese public educational system had placed on her being able to teach English.

*“Don’t Invest Too Much Time or Energy!”*

Xia entered college as an English literature major in 1997. While she was in college, she interned at a publishing company where she focused on developing technology-aided English textbooks. She believed the role of publishing companies was to cater to the needs of English teachers in both the public and private education sectors. As an editor in the design team, she worked closely with a technology specialist developing an on-line English language textbook and programs. Xia and her design team colleagues developed a text for the English book, and the technology specialist’s role was to transfer this into an appropriate computer on-line text. Xia felt that the innovative ideas of her design team were often hampered due to her boss’ need to speed things up. “Don’t invest too much time or energy, and just do what the textbook does. Something innovative, he said no, but something identical to the textbook he would say yes” (Interview 1, 12/27/04). After working at this company for several years, she realized that her innovative ideas to bring forth technology-aided English-language learning programs had barriers that she could not overcome. As a result, she began to think about better ways to produce English- language learning and teaching materials and curricula that the Chinese educational system could adopt.

*Talking to Pass the Tests*

While working at the publishing company in China, she felt the need to experience a different educational context. Her boyfriend was planning to go abroad to study, so Xia researched some schools in the United States and Germany. They applied to programs in both the United States and Germany; however, her boyfriend was admitted into an engineering program in Germany and not in the United States.



Xia, on the other hand, was admitted into a TESOL program in the United States and an European studies program in Germany. After much consideration, she decided to be with her boyfriend and deferred her TESOL program admission in the United States for one year to embark on a different program in Germany in 2002. This MA program was in European studies encompassing politics, economics, history and law, as well as an organized overview of the whole of Europe and its history.

During her experience in Germany, she experienced language knowledge construction and production that she had never experienced in China. All of the weekly exams in her program were administered orally in German.

I appreciated the assessment system in Germany because it really was not a test. It's like a talk. Professors really want to know how much you know. It's also very good opportunity for students if they have questions. They can ask questions and it's very interactive. I like that. [But], it's probably too hard for me. (Interview 4, 2/3/05)

Because she was used to taking written exams in China, oral examinations were a novelty; however, this method of eliciting knowledge also gave her a lot of anxiety.

### **Reflecting on Graduate Studies in the United States (2003-2005)**

Even though she had not completed the MA degree program in Germany, she had to start the TESOL program in the United States or risk losing her slot. In September 2003, she entered Pacific University's Master's in TESOL program. Xia had gained admission into several TESOL programs in the United States, but decided to enter the Pacific University TESOL program because "[the people in this metropolitan area were] better and well educated" (Interview 5, 2/8/05). She definitely

did not want to be in a country where people could “purchase” degrees. “You study one year [in England] and get a Master’s, and they go back to China, and just can’t find a job because people know that a degree from England means nothing” (Interview 5, 2/8/05). Her belief was that she needed to be in an environment where people were better educated, which meant that she could have more opportunities to construct her experience and knowledge.

### *Constructing and Negotiating a New Learning Ground*

Xia’s expectations from her TESOL program were crystal clear. She wanted to do research with a professor, but she was not allowed, due to her Master’s level status. After being held back from doing research by one of the professors, she wrote an e-mail to another program professor, Dr. Jennings (pseudonym), discussing her desire to do research. Xia had spelled it out in her personal statement when she applied to the program:

In my personal statement, I stated that what I wanted to do in my Master’s program. But when I came here, it’s not exactly what it turned out to be. [M]y advisor was not very supportive about me doing research. She simply stated that Master’s students were not expected to do research. I talked with her about that, but she did not respond at all.  
(Interview 1, 12/27/04)

However, Dr. Jennings welcomed Xia into one of her research projects. Before she commenced conducting research with Dr. Jennings, Xia felt restless just taking classes. “I felt really bored because there [was] no new things coming into my mind, repeating what I have learned before. I just wanted to do something outside of class

but there was just no chance to do them” (Interview 1, 12/27/04). Xia wanted to go beyond taking courses in that she wanted to experience this culture and know the educational system in the United States in order to improve the educational system in China. Xia desired to enrich her own knowledge and experience but also wanted to change the lives of people living in China by bringing new ways of learning and teaching back to China. Even though she felt situated in her new learning context in the United States, she could not help the feelings of powerlessness and uncomfortableness that surfaced.

*Feeling Powerless in being a Second Language User (2003-2005)*

From the beginning of her Master’s TESOL program in the United States, she had felt powerless even though some of her professors and colleagues nurtured her educational journey.

Not only in the program but the whole environment makes me feel so powerless because I think language is power. I don’t have strong language capability, so I feel powerless myself. Inside of me, I feel powerless. The fact is that I am powerless because [I] am just a traveler or an immigrant. (Interview 1, 12/27/04)

For Xia, being proficient in the English language meant wielding power in different situations. But as an NNES who was not quite proficient in the English language, she perceived herself to have a lower status in her TESOL program. She constantly needed to interact with NESs since she was not sure that people truly comprehended her. The fact that people either repeated what Xia said or figured out what she said by emitting

non-verbal cues was evidence to her that she held incomprehensible communicative skills.

Xia yearned for an enriching experience in her Master's program and later in her Ph.D program. She wanted to become a scholar and teacher. "I have never been satisfied by [just taking courses]. I think the degree does not really mean a lot to me at certain point. It is what you really get from here. It's what [I] have in mind. I can even buy a degree from England. I am looking for experience" (Interview 1, 12/27/04). To Xia, an enriching experience meant going beyond taking courses instituted in her program requirement. She was at Pacific University to gain a different kind of learning experience compared to what she had gained in China. She wanted to do more critical thinking in her overall educational journey in the United States.

#### *International or Immigrant NNEs*

She also felt powerless and confused about her identity when interacting with a temporary job opportunity on campus. Xia contacted a person in charge of recruiting temporary test scorers at Pacific University during the spring break 2005 session. During her phone conversation, Xia noticed that the person on the phone was also Chinese, so she started to speak in her native tongue. This recruiter identified herself as an immigrant NNEs, and simply assumed that Xia would not be able to do a temporary job as a test scorer. As a test scorer, Xia and others would read and assess ESOL students' writing. Her sense of powerless came with not being able to do anything about her identity as an NNEs even though this temporary test-scoring job asked for bilingual test scorers. She came to understand that this bilingual identity could never be legitimized if the person claimed a non-White race.

Xia was confused because her own NNES identity and her teaching of ESOL students on a daily basis would have more than qualified her to understand the writings of ESOL students. The immigrant NNES responsible for recruiting test scorers stated, “[The students’] handwriting is very poor and their language is really poor, and you probably cannot read it because you are an NNES” (Interview 3, 1/25/05). Her statement did not make sense to Xia and she believed that the test-scoring people wanted a NES who was also fluent in another language and not an international student. However, the job advertisement did not stipulate such a restrictive requirement. After trying to explain to this recruiter that she herself was more than qualified for this temporary job, Xia was allowed to start if and only if she went through a training session, “[to] see that whether I can score the test with validity or reliability and if I pass the training session, then I can do the job” (Interview 3, 1/25/05).

*“It’s doing disservice to the Students!”*

Another incident within her assistantship work at Pacific University enhanced her sense of powerlessness about her identity, not only as an NNES but also as a graduate student without any decision-making status. For several weeks during the fall 2004 semester, Xia worked with a professor and a doctoral student on state-mandated curriculum, also known as National Standards System (NSS). She stated that her involvement in the NSS made her feel more powerless. She felt that way because of her student status, even though she worked day and night for several weeks to present the TESOL standards to the NSS supervisors. She could not make any suggestions to improve this politically mandated system.

I have a lot to say about [NSS]. It's not practical. Each teacher has [her] own concerns about the students not the standards. If the people who write the standards do not know how to teach the students, it [becomes disconnected]. It's not proper to their students. (Interview 5, 2/8/05)

After her experience with the NSS standards, Xia believed that the NSS could never satisfy the learning needs of culturally and linguistically challenged children housed in the K-12 educational system, and that NSS was just another way to wield control over the teachers of ESOL students.

### *Re-Visioning "Ideal English Speakers"*

Through some of her second language acquisition and second language research theory classes, she came to better understand the constructs of NNESs, NESs, and bilinguals. She came to realize that the "ideal English speaker" did not always mean that speaker was a native English speaker, and she could also categorize herself as bilingual. She defined ideal English speakers as follows:

[P]eople who can get the meanings [across] and understand people well, or solve problems or reach their [communicative] purposes. Of course, there is a lot of other things involved, but I think that we have to understand that our way of speaking English is different from the natives who speak English. Focusing on the language part, we are not only using it, but we have to monitor it. (Interview 2, 1/10/05)

Xia felt that even though she could confidently claim a bilingual identity for herself, she could never express her level of confidence when she was in the midst of a social environment. She put it this way: "[M]ost of the people speak perfect English; the

pressure increases and never stops” (Interview 2, 1/10/05). However, knowing that she had an identity option of the bilingual was a strong impetus in building her confidence level. She stated that courses which highlighted the value of second language users as bilinguals and multilinguals have helped her to become more confident in choosing a TESOL profession. She has also learned that second language theories could validate her lived experience as a bilingual. She stated, “I become more confident about my profession [as a bilingual] and moreover, I have theories to back me up” (Interview 2, 1/10/05).

### *Recognizing the Great Divide*

As she delved deeper into different theories in the fields of TESOL and general education across the 2003-2005 academic years, she recognized the great divide between researchers and practitioners. With this recognition, she felt even more justified to go into ESL student teaching even if her primary goal was not to be credentialed as an ESL teacher in the United States. “I think as an education major, there is no way you can be a good researcher or a good teacher, without really teaching. I think it is impossible. I have to do student teaching right now. [O]therwise, I just don’t feel like I am qualified to be an education major” (Interview 2, 1/10/05). Her student teaching experience (spring 2005) not only validated her sense of identity as an ESL teacher but it also provided her more in-depth understanding about what actually occurs in public school classrooms and confirmed her desire to continue her education in a doctoral program in TESOL.

*Student Teaching with NNES Mentor Teacher, Ms. Tomiko*

He burst into laughter. He said that you were only here for one and a half years and you are going to teach English? Foreign teachers who do not speak English well teach English to the kids who don't speak English. At the moment, I was kind of upset...

My English is not perfect, and how can I teach other people English?

(Interview 2, 1/10/05)

This assessment prompted Xia to reveal her insecurities toward her English language proficiency: How could she teach other people English when her English was not perfect? She started to question the English language teaching policy instituted in the United States, where foreign born teachers, NNES teachers were given opportunities to teach English or teach in English. "It is impossible for [us] to speak native English, speak English as a native" (Interview 2, 1/10/05). Her ingrained belief was that if a person taught English, then s/he would have to be perfect in English; hence one had to claim a native-speaker-of-English identity in order to teach English. With this embarrassing incident, Xia began the first day of her student teaching experience in her Master's degree TESOL program.

The first eight weeks of her student teaching were under the mentorship of an NNES teacher, Ms. Tomiko (pseudonym). She was a native of Japan, who had gone through her Master's in teacher credentialing in the United States. Ms. Tomiko had been teaching elementary ESL since 1999 upon completing her Master's in TESOL program from a university in the mid-Atlantic region. Xia perceived her mentor



teacher's English to be "very good" for someone who had begun her Master's education in the United States.

On the first day of her student teaching at Memory Lane Elementary School (pseudonym) located near Pacific University, Xia was nervous for she did not know what to expect from her students. She stated that her nervousness elevated in front of young children, and the situation exacerbated her anxiety when she had to communicate in English. After the first week of her student teaching, she articulated her understanding about the relationship between being a language teacher and the level of confidence. As a second language user and learner, Xia was confident about her English, since everyone could see that she was an NNES and her language was "good enough" to interact with both NNESs and NESs. However, her level of confidence became altered when she shifted her role from a second language user to an ESL teacher. "But as a teacher, the situation is so different. It decreases my confiden[ce]. It's not like we can find excuses for ourselves in speaking Chinglish and sometimes having fun. I speak Chinglish purposefully having fun, but [I] can't do that as a teacher" (Interview 2, 1/10/05). She wanted to be perfect in English in order to be seen as a good and credible teacher of ESL.

Xia understood Ms. Tomiko's pedagogy to be flawless. "[Ms. Tomiko] is very professional and creative. She does a lot of hands-on in class, and she has so much emotional energy. She acts out a lot, and the kids just love her. She is a very good teacher" (Interview 3, 1/25/05). Xia felt that international people were under more pressure than the natives after observing Ms. Tomiko's experience at the school and reflecting on her own experience as an international student. Xia could tell that her

mentor teacher worked extremely hard in order to prove to herself and her mainstream teaching community that she was a credible teacher and indeed qualified to teach ESL. Xia noticed that Ms. Tomiko frequently worked late to prepare for the next day's lesson, which was her schedule for the first couple of years working in Memory Lane Elementary School.

Xia felt that Ms. Tomiko's way of motivating and engaging her ESOL students came from her heart. "The kids are so bright that if you care for them, then they know. They can tell from your face, your eyes and they really like you. If you don't, then they can tell and they will stay away from you. They are like clams and they are going to close" (Interview 3, 1/25/05). In addition, she came to better understand herself as an ESOL practitioner in that being an ESL teacher was more than knowing and delivering effective pedagogy; it was about caring for her learners from culturally and linguistically challenged backgrounds in the United States. Even though Xia did not have a strong sense of identity as an ESL teacher, her sense of herself as an NNES was changing:

I am never afraid of being recognized as an NNES. I am kind of proud of that way. I speak English and they understand me. They can recognize that it is not my first language. I speak two languages. I always think that way and I am very positive. I want to improve my English but not for the purpose of being identified as a NES. (Interview 2, 1/10/05)

However, Xia often wondered about the meaning and the identity of NNES ESOL teachers since they brought in another dimension: linguistic proficiency (or lack

thereof) as teachers of the English language. For Xia, the issues may be in knowing how to present oneself as an ESOL teacher who was not 100% comfortable with the English language.

How do you present yourself as a teacher, especially as a second language teacher when your language ability is not 100% competitive.

It is a concern. You need to prove your ability to other people, your colleagues, and your bosses. You need to prove your ability to yourself.

You need to tell yourself that I can do it. I think that is the key.

(Interview 3, 1/25/05)

During her student teaching experience, she was observed by her university student-teaching supervisor. Xia gained some valuable insight through listening to the supervisor's suggestions about classroom management, improving the delivery of lessons, and being mindful of integrating state standards in the lesson plans. Although Xia understood her supervisor's comments and feedback on her lesson planning, she felt a disconnect between her own standards of pedagogy and the state mandated standards. "For me, I am kind of confused by the state standards and my own standards. [They] are so called communicative teaching methods. It is so hard to carry out, especially when someone is sitting there and observing you" (Interview 4, 2/3/05).

Xia wanted to carry out her communicative teaching methods, where her ESL learners viewed English as a tool for communication, within a step-by-step lesson plan. However, she also had to think and be mindful about the different objectives and types of activities mandated by the state standards and curriculum. Due to these limitations set forth by the confines of student-teaching and the national mandates, Xia

felt that she could not truly interact with her students in giving them ample time to talk. Xia was compelled to continue making lesson plans that included the integration of standards and state mandates into her ESL curriculum such that she did not think it would be possible to genuinely engage with her students in class. Perhaps, this perception was due to her lack of experience being in a classroom as an ESL teacher.

*Working with Ms. Harley, NES Mentor Teacher*

The second placement during her student-teaching semester was in a high school ESL classroom with a mentor teacher very different from Ms. Tomiko. According to Xia, Ms. Harley, a native English speaker, was more interested in administration than in teaching. “I know [Ms. Tomiko] is exceptional. I did not expect that this second mentor teacher would be as good as she is, but at least, she should go through all the steps in giving a lesson. [I]t is not giving a lesson. Go back to your seat and do whatever you want” (Interview 7, 3/15/05). Xia felt that she was not given a clear set of directions on her roles and responsibilities, so the first two days, she just sat at her desk located near Ms. Harley’s desk. She could not put up with sitting for the entire day, so on the third day, she walked around the classroom and helped the students during their independent work. “I can’t bear [sitting at my desk]. I just walked around looking for something to do myself. She [was] fine with it” (Interview 7, 3/15/05).

However, Ms. Harley did suggest an idea that Ms. Tomiko had not during the first eight weeks. Ms. Harley wanted to interact with Xia through a dialogue journal, a venue for the two to communicate Xia’s experiences. Xia religiously wrote in her journal and turned it in to Ms. Harley on a weekly basis. She shared an excerpt of her

journal and asked me whether or not her journal content could be construed as sounding disrespectful to Ms. Harley. She read the following excerpt from her dialogue journal:

[The students] in the second period need more instruction than I thought. They needed the teachers to help them with the pace and reflect on each session and make predictions. They needed to be asked questions after each session, so that they could adjust their understanding and raise individual questions that cause misunderstandings when they read. Book report is a very effective way to evaluate students' comprehension and sometimes, develop students' writing skills. However, it can be overwhelming for many ESOL II students. They need [explanation and clarification] before doing it independently. If the teachers could go over the gist of the story by using a story map to organize class discussion so that students can know what to write and how to write it. High school students are complicated in terms of cultural backgrounds, and they need more time to work by themselves. I know that it is important for them to work by themselves, but how teachers play positive role in their learning influences students' attitudes as well as academic performance at school. (Interview 7, 3/15/05)

She realized that she needed to change the last part of the above excerpt as not to sound too harsh to Ms. Harley. She did not want to sound as if she were suggesting different pedagogy for Ms. Harley. Although she wanted to return to Ms. Tomiko's

mentorship, Xia was looking forward to taking over Ms. Harley's class to show her what "teaching" was all about. "[I]n two weeks, I am going to take over the classes and probably I will show her what teaching is" (Interview 7, 3/15/05).

### **Thinking Forward to her Future Possibilities (Summer 2005+)**

After working with Ms. Tomiko and Ms. Harley in two different ESL settings, Xia realized that teaching ESL did not have as much to do with how well one spoke the English language as it did with one's attitude toward one's students. Xia believed that Ms. Tomiko had "touched more students' lives and influenced their lives than [Ms. Harley]" (Interview 7, 3/15/05). In addition, Ms. Tomiko's caring attitude toward her students also came from how she viewed her teaching profession; it was about making difference in her students' lives and their future.

While taking courses in her Master's program, she did not realize the practicality of the coursework and the different assignments required for each class. However, she came to realize that a lot of the courses that she had taken were indeed useful and helpful to practitioners. "A lot of the courses are very helpful. I did not realize that until student teaching. [W]hen I am in the position of teaching, I realize that that's the thing that was really helpful for teaching. If you want to teach well, you'd better use all the strategies, methods and assessment classes" (Interview 3, 1/25/05). Throughout her student teaching experience, she had come to connect what she was learning as a student teacher to what she was reading in the textbooks. For Xia, the contents of her textbook became reality in her student teaching context. Furthermore, Xia felt that her student teaching experience had prepared her to enter

the Ph.D. program in TESOL at Pacific University and design a research program for her future work as a teacher educator and scholar in the field.

*Perceived Limitations in China*

Imagining her future in China, Xia stated a lack of satisfaction with what she had gained from her Master's program, which would likely inhibit her from doing an effective job either as a program director or teacher educator in China. "If I graduate from here and go back to China, probably I'll be jobless....It's very hard to get a job in a public school system" (Interview 2, 1/10/05). Even though it would be very difficult to find a job in a public school system in China, Xia believed that there were many things that she could do to improve the English educational system there and she was looking forward to having many options for herself.

I am thinking where I should go when I go back to China. Should I go to the government to establish some relationships before I start my own business? Should I go to some industry to [attract] some people so that there are a lot of language training programs carried out in those industries? I can go to those industries to get to know the people, and start my own business. It's a type of language school for adults. There are also more and more housewives who really want to know how to raise their children, and how to educate their children. I think it is a good opportunity to have a place for them to learn how to be the first educator for their children. (Interview 4, 2/3/05)

## **Interpreting Xia's Narrative: Complex Nature of her Linguistic, Racial, and Gendered Identities**

Xia's identity as an English language learner was strong during her early educational experiences in China due to her stellar performance on examinations and other assessments of English language abilities. However, the strength of her English language identity was confined to the walls of her classroom, since her abilities in the English language only allowed her to score high on examinations and not to use the language for authentic communication. Moreover, her identity as an English language learner was only in comparison to Chinese students. She only had limited exposure to few native English speakers with whom she came into contact in her weekend enrichment program.

It should be noted that the Chinese educational system did not promote her nor others to use the English language authentically with native English speakers. The Chinese Ministry of Education dictated the English language curriculum be focused on memorizing the English language as opposed to promoting conversational fluency. Despite the existence of any real or perceived short comings in the Chinese educational system with respect to English-language instruction, the coupling of her English language learning experiences in the system and her participation in the weekend enrichment program contributed to her development of strong linguistic and racial identities as a Chinese English-language learner and user.

In the workforce upon graduating from university, Xia's identities as a Chinese female NNES editor were contested due to her exposure to repeated hegemonic



practices in the publishing company. An example of this was her failed advocacy for the production of authentic English language materials using technology. Specifically, her vision regarding the types of English language materials that should be produced did not mesh with the management in the company. That management redirected her every time she tried to operationalize this vision via the production of materials.

Furthermore, Xia's one year stay in Germany complexified her linguistic and racial identities further as a non-native German speaker. Her identity as a non-native German speaker coupled with being only one of a few Asian students in her program contributed to feelings of marginalization in this program. The realization that her gendered identity as a significant other was not strong enough to retain her in a program of study in Germany led her to pursue a Master's program in TESOL in the United States, which had been her primary interest all along.

The reality she faced in the United States in relation to English language learning and usage was different from what she had envisioned for herself in these contexts and what she had experienced in her native country. It was evident that her linguistic identity was transformed once she came to the United States due to a host of problems related to how the English language is perceived in the worldwide context and who is seen as legitimate owners and users of the English language. Specifically, as Xia began to compare herself to NESs in her TESOL classes with respect to linguistic fluency, she began to question all she had accomplished back in her native country with respect to learning and using the English language. Thus her linguistic identity suffered. This was ironic in that Xia had gained entrance into the U.S.

educational system (MATESOL program) due to her excellent command of the English language in her native country, which could be seen as a form of privilege.

Moreover, Xia's linguistic identity could be defined as complex due to her claiming of non-native English speaker (NNES) status. Her desire to master the English language and sound like native English speakers (NESs) dominated her educational experiences in her TESOL program. Xia indicated strong feelings of powerlessness, most notably with respect to her linguistic and racial/ethnic identities in situations related to her production of the English language. She provided an example of these feelings of powerlessness by noting that she was a traveler and an immigrant and could never claim a permanent identity studying and living in the United States. Xia's linguistic identity encompassed how she positioned herself and how the dominant, as well as her local culture, positioned her in relation to the English language.

A turning point came when she was given the theoretical tools to problematize the dominant discourse in TESOL, which fostered the idea that only NESs could be legitimate and credible teachers of English. In one of the graduate courses in her program, she came to realize that she could also claim "bilingual" and "ideal" English-speaker identities in that there was no such person who could speak or use English perfectly. The revelation gleaned from this course gave her newfound understanding that she too could claim ideal English-speaker and teacher status, thus helping her to problematize the dominant discourse. This experience of being able to problematize the existing discourse was what she had yearned for in coming to a program to learn new ways of constructing knowledge. However, as was apparent in her narrative,

Xia's theoretical tools to challenge the existing dominant discourse could not assist her outside the classroom.

Interestingly though, Xia's identities were challenged by individuals with whom Xia believed she shared linguistic and racial comradeship. Xia felt that she not only had to prove her English-language abilities to NESs but that she also had to prove her English-language abilities to immigrant NNEs as well. As a result of her encounter with the Chinese-American contact person for the temporary test-scoring job, Xia commented on the fact that it would be difficult to have her bilingual identity legitimized due to her claim of non-white racial status.

The crux of her experiences and understanding about her linguistic and racial identities came with her student-teaching experiences under the mentorship of Ms. Tomiko and Ms. Harley. In the process of constructing and negotiating her identity as an NNEs ESL teacher, Xia discussed some divergent views of herself as an English-language learner and beginning English-language teacher. On the one hand, Xia's confidence was high as a perceived ELL or bilingual. On the other hand, as a teacher, Xia's confidence was considerably lower because she felt that her level of English proficiency was not perfect enough to be an excellent language teacher.

Xia viewed her identity as a TESOL graduate student to be different from her identity as an NNEs ESL teacher. Xia's construction of identities as both a graduate student and an ESL teacher echoed Gee's (2004) construct of social languages. Gee posited that learning a language was equated to learning social languages within discourses. In other words, Xia's social languages would offer her ways to not only communicate informally with colleagues in her graduate school program (e.g., using

Chinglish) but to be recognized by others as an English teacher using only proper English and not “Chinglish” to teach ESL students. The very decision that Xia made about not using Chinglish in her ESL teaching setting alluded to sources for her informed decisions and the reasons behind such decisions. These pointed to the nature of how the English language is perceived in the world.

It was primarily through her student teaching experience under an NNES mentor teacher that Xia was able to validate her sense of linguistic and racial identities and gain confidence as an NNES ESL teacher. Even with this burgeoning sense of identities as an NNES ESL teacher, she realized through her teaching experiences under Ms. Tomiko that she would always have to work hard in order to establish legitimacy or credibility for herself as a qualified NNES ESL teacher due to her claiming non-dominant race.

Xia emerged from these student teaching experiences with the knowledge that teaching ESL has much to do with the attitude that one exhibits towards one’s students as it does with how well one speaks English. With this growth stemming from her educational and teaching experiences, Xia came to recognize that being a bilingual NNES, who could utilize cultural and linguistic experiences in crafting her teaching pedagogy coupled with addressing the needs of her students, was as important, if not more important, than being proficient in the usage of the English language.

Xia believed that her position as a professional TESOLer was validated through the completion of her Master’s degree in TESOL from an accredited school such as Pacific University. Even with this validation, she perceived that there would be limited opportunities as a single Chinese NNES ESL teacher in China since she

would not have had established herself professionally and she lacked the privileged-class connection needed to secure a university teaching position. Therefore, she commenced a Ph.D. program in TESOL to strengthen and expand her professional credentials, thus embarking down yet another path that would require further identity shifts.



## **Chapter 6: YU RI KOH**

### **Looking Back: Early Educational Experiences (1980-2001)**

Yu Ri's one year stay in New York at the age of 13 with her family sparked her interest in the English language and motivated her to immerse herself in English language learning and English language education. Her visit to New York started out as a scholarly endeavor for her father who was a visiting scholar at a university during the 1992-1993 academic year. For Yu Ri, staying in New York with her family as a middle school student brought forth complexities both as a middle school student needing to return to her academic work load in Korea after one year and as an English language learner in a new cultural and linguistic setting.

Yu Ri was well aware of the load of school work awaiting for her upon her return to Korea, so during her one year stay in the United States, she worked with her mother reviewing and catching up with math and Korean classes using textbooks her mother brought from Korea. She would do multiple-choice questions and her mother checked and explained the answers. "I had to study Korean subjects in the United States. I can remember that [it] was stressful, that I should not be far behind compared to other students who were studying in Korea since I was scheduled to return in one year" (Interview 2, 1/26/05). In New York, her sources of stress, in addition to having to study Korean subjects as well as the American school subjects, were that she never experienced the language problem in Korea and she felt like an outsider in the American classroom settings.

### *Realizing Her Goals in Learning English*

Upon returning to Korea in 1993, Yu Ri came to the realization that she wanted to learn English as a way of communication. She desired to learn ways to convey her thoughts and opinions through the English language, as opposed to simply using the language as a subject for knowledge. She knew this was difficult to do in Korea because there were not that many English speakers. She saw herself “talking to herself in English” (Interview 2, 1/26/05). She also practiced listening as a way to get familiar with the language in order to have some sense of pronunciation, stress, and intonation. She focused on activities like listening to music, radio, and watching TV. However, more often than not, learning English in middle school in Korea was textbook driven and focused on reading and listening, the kind of teaching, she thought, that made students in the classroom passive, bored, and dysfunctional when talking with English-speaking foreigners in Korea.

Yu Ri’s preparation for her Korean college-entrance exam began in her middle school years. She realized that there was no way to get away from the pressure of entrance exams, since it was one of the most important parts, if not the most important part of her Korean high school life. Even through this mundane preparation for the college entrance exam, Yu Ri sought out ways to improve her conversational English skills. She was influenced by native English-speaking teachers due to the manner in which they taught conversational English classes. “It was teachings [that led to] use English as a communication tool.” A specific middle school English teacher had influenced her a lot through her duties as a “young-uh-boo-jahng [“class leader” in



Korean]. We were kind of close, and she gave me newspapers, cartoons, and English books and I really appreciated her” (Interview 5, 2/23/05).

*Entering a Foreign Language Women’s High School & Women’s University*

Still in Korea, Yu Ri entered a foreign language high school in 1996 upon her mother’s strong recommendation due to her connection as an alumna. This school was highly regarded in the Korean educational system and teachers were very liberal such that physical abuse from the teachers was uncommon, unlike other high schools in the Korean educational system. Although Yu Ri thought about possibly attending a co-educational high school, she gave in to her mother’s recommendation. Yu Ri’s classmates at the Korean foreign language high school went through the same kind of experience preparing for college entrance exams. There was a mandatory after-school study period during which everyone gathered in one classroom to study and practice test taking and basic skills from 5:30-9:00 every evening until the exam time; this lasted for three years.

However, Yu Ri began to experience a different learning situation in some of her Korean high school classes, interacting with native English-speaking teachers as instructors in conversation classes twice a week. Students in these conversation classes were given English names and learned about American customs and cultures. She realized that taking conversational classes with a NES teacher in high school gave her confidence in speaking English. At this school, she encountered one of what she considered the most impressive English teachers in all of her schooling experience. Her teacher showed that she cared for her students, remembered all the students’

names, encouraged students to ask questions, and also invited her students to her home during holidays.

In Korea, she entered Yeo Ja University in 1999 with a major in international relations and a minor in English literature. She chose international relations/English literature as areas of study because she wanted to know more about current events in order to become more viable in both English-speaking and Korean societies. Also, she undertook these courses in order to understand the world which required a firmer knowledge of the English language. But she realized that English literature and English were different majors and had different foci.

### **Reflecting on Graduate Studies in U.S.: Transitioning into U.S. Academic Discourse (2001-2005)**

In 2001, Yu Ri transferred to Atlantic University with junior-year status in the international relations department for several reasons. First, she desired to learn more about the academic discourse in the United States for which she had been initially introduced as a middle school student in New York back in 1992. She felt that she had not adapted to the learning environment as a middle school student in New York; therefore, she sought out another opportunity to study in the United States. “I wanted to try to adapt to the American culture [for the second time] because I did not adapt well before [in middle school in N.Y.]. I wanted to know how I [could] survive in the American educational system” (Interview 2, 1/26/05). The second reason for transferring to the United States was that she perceived herself to be a failure since she had not been able to enter one of the leading women’s universities in Korea. In that respect, she stated,

I was not quite satisfied with myself because I did not like [Yeo Ja University] when I first got into that university because I had graduated from a foreign language high school, where all the smart and intelligent people attended, but [Yeo Ja University] was not regarded as a good school [in Korea]. So I was kind of disappointed at myself because I was not that good. I needed to compensate through coming here and study. (Interview 3, 1/31/05)

Yu Ri was disappointed at her college entrance exam scores since she believed her friends went to better schools than she, which prompted her to begin the transfer process.

*A Door to the Master's Degree TESOL Program (2003-2005)*

Yu Ri became interested in TESOL during her undergraduate years in Korea for a multitude of reasons. These included the experience that she had gleaned from her high school education as well as the influences that different English conversation teachers had imparted on her contributing to her desire to learn more about the linguistic nature of the language. Also, since her university in Korea did not offer TESOL as an undergraduate major but did offer this for Master's students, she opted to come to the United States to finish her undergraduate degree prior to gaining admission into a MATESOL program in the United States. She wanted to learn the language so that she could also learn the cultural and practical aspects of English. She viewed being in the TESOL program as getting one step closer to becoming a professional in the field of English language learning and teaching.

In her TESOL program, Yu Ri felt comfortable interacting with NNEs from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. For Yu Ri, it was comfortable to be around many NNEs in her TESOL courses, but if she had been the only NNE, then it would have been challenging for her since she would have had to try very hard to be one of the NNEs, meaning that she would have had to participate a lot more in class. As an NNE student in a United States classroom, many different types of participation in courses convinced her that she was communicating effectively with professors through more than simply whole-class discussions. Professors could see that she had more to contribute through different means than just oral participation in class.

Furthermore, her professors who came from diverse backgrounds also encouraged her own journey as an NNE. “I can be more motivated because [this one teacher] speaks English fluently. I [am] impressed” (Interview 3, 1/31/05). For Yu Ri, this particular professor was a role model in that she could also overcome linguistic and cultural barriers in order to teach English. In discussing the professors with the most positive impact on her education, she cited as the best the professors who brought in hands-on material, allowed for participation, and provided work in small groups, which was less intimidating than speaking in front of the entire class. She also appreciated professors who gave clear and succinct examples to illustrate theory in practice in TESOL courses. One particular professor that Yu Ri was fond of was not only knowledgeable and organized in her teaching, but she also provided different forms of learning activities in her courses.

*Volunteer Teaching Opportunities: Adult ESL and Korean*

In 2004, she sought out two different volunteer teaching opportunities as a way to introduce herself to learning to teach. She wanted to get a taste of teaching before she began her student-teaching experience in the spring of 2005. Her first volunteer teaching experience was in an adult ESL course, which met once a week in a church-based program for newly-arrived immigrants and family members from African and Hispanic countries. Her second volunteer teaching experience was teaching Korean language to interested adult native-English speakers and heritage Korean speakers once a week. During these months of volunteer teaching, she wished she had commenced volunteer teaching during her first year in the TESOL program, for she realized the value of teaching in relation to different learning and second language acquisition theories learned in her TESOL program courses.

Yu Ri's low-level beginner class in the church-based ESL program was challenging. Yu Ri was not able to do a needs analysis of her students since "it [was] really tough unless I [spoke] their native language" (Interview 3, 1/31/05). Yu Ri introduced them to some daily greeting phrases and showed them pictures of different pieces of furniture since they were interested in learning about discourse of shopping because of their new immigrant status in the United States. There was no conversation in the class but only new phrases and vocabulary teaching. In addition to teaching them phrases and vocabulary words, and the pictures that accompanied them, she also played tapes and conversations in which they could hear native English-speaker pronunciations. Yu Ri said that since it was a free class, students were not that committed and some were absent more than not.

Yu Ri believed that it was important to make the language simple and prepare the instructions before the actual lesson when dealing with novice beginner students. In addition, she thought that being able to speak another language might have been helpful: “Sometimes using students’ native language in class can be effective. I think TESOL program explain[s] that you should use English even though you are teaching low beginners. But I am curious or suspicious whether it is really effective” (Interview 7, 3/14/05). This suspicion of “needing” to only speak English became even stronger as she experienced teaching English to the beginner students and teaching Korean to beginners. Yu Ri compared her teaching beginner English to beginner Korean. “I am teaching Korean to low beginners and I use English. I think it is unfair to teach Korean with English instruction because they are low beginners. Even though I want to teach them in Korean, they would not understand it” (Interview 7, 3/14/05). Thinking back to what her TESOL program courses had emphasized in terms of using English to teach English, she wanted the freedom to teach Korean using Korean. But this became rather difficult for her students for they did not have any knowledge of the Korean language.

On a related note, Yu Ri’s experience teaching Korean to NES beginners was similar to how Korean English teachers taught English in Korea, since they used Korean to teach English. However, the difference was the following according to Yu Ri:

I [was] teaching Korean with English, I never thought that my students in Korean class as babies. When I [was] teaching English to low beginners at church, I sometimes [thought] that because of their lack of

English ability. I sometimes consider[ed] them as not adults, but younger than they [were] because of their ability. Because they use[d] broken English which may [have been] thought of as equating them to not being equipped with cognitive ability [as in church adults].

(Interview 7, 3/14/05)

In Korean class, she had more chances to talk to them about their daily life in English. Because there was not much interaction occurring in a language that they both understood in the church-based ESL class, she did not feel as close to them as she did with the Korean-class students.

*Student-Teaching Practicum at a Local High School (Spring 2005)*

Yu Ri's student-teaching practicum in a public high school during Spring 2005 consisted of 30 hours of observation, teaching five lessons, and being videotaped for three of the five lessons. Initially, Yu Ri felt intimidated about the prospect of teaching a class and being videotaped and having mentor teachers observe her teaching. Before starting her high school observations, she set down a list of expectations which came from her experience with adults and their intrinsic motivation as well as her own experiences. She believed that most adults came to learn because they were motivated and thus, she expected these high school students as near adults, to be "into" school and to study hard. However, when she did not see that in classes, she attributed their lack of interest to the fact that public education was free. She also thought that perhaps their parents were not interested enough or that they were not pushing the children to work hard in school. "Because I grew up in an environment where teachers were expected and students were supposed to study hard, maybe yeah, that could be part of

my expectations” (Interview 5, 2/23/05). She attributed her expectations of the students she encountered in the student-teaching context to the way she had learned in high school in Korea.

Overall, Yu Ri was very excited about doing her student teaching at a high school. She was surprised to see ESL teachers teaching content at this high school which was different from her middle school experience in New York. She thought that it was great to be able to explain the lessons or materials in a way that the ESL population would understand through content ESL. Yu Ri’s initial read on the high school students she encountered during her student teaching was that “my students are not academically oriented. I was really shocked. Because they want to talk even when the teacher is in the classroom. It is out of control” (Interview 4, 2/14/05). She realized that she was dealing with a group of students for which she did not envision encountering from a teaching standpoint in her future imagined teaching context in Korea.

*“Why do they get up so early to come to school?”* In Yu Ri’s observation of high school classes, she encountered many teachers. She saw some good model teaching in some classes, but in others, she did not witness any “teaching.” In a particular class, she expected the teacher to “teach” something.

The class was divided into groups, where they did silent reading of each chapter followed by a student summarization of the meaning of the story. There was no teacher instruction going on in small groups. I did not observe any teaching so I was kind of disappointed. Maybe she is a good teacher, but I could not see her teaching, I don’t know, so I



can't tell whether she has good instruction or not. (Interview 5, 2/23/05)

Yu Ri equated "teaching" with teacher-directed lessons not with group work and/or individual work. After observing for several weeks, Yu Ri questioned, "Why do these students come to school? Why do they get up so early to come to school?" To Yu Ri, she did not see any lessons apparent in classes; teachers did not "force" students to learn anything, and lessons were slow-paced. Yu Ri was not quite sure whether or not the students had been learning since she saw very little teacher-directed lessons. An example of a teacher-directed lesson occurred in a content ESL class, and Yu Ri noted that this teacher was actually "teaching." An economics class watched a video followed by the teacher questioning students on the content. Also she learned about disciplining disruptive students who were not paying attention in class. To Yu Ri, this was about learning since there was a clear role for the teacher as an authority figure.

When Yu Ri blurted out, "I am not sure why they should come to school to learn so early in the morning [if they're not being taught anything]," she may have been conceptualizing learning based on what she had been accustomed to in the Korean educational setting, which differed markedly from what she had been observing in the United States public educational system. Generally speaking, Yu Ri thought that teachers in the United States did not force the students to learn. She stated the following:

They just explained something and the classroom was not structured in that there would be different ways to control what the students were learning. Not all classes had some kind of worksheets to check whether

they had learned or not. They were not focused on academics, but perhaps, were more interested in obtaining specific skills. (Interview 5, 2/23/05)

In Korea, Yu Ri would see the same situations of teaching and learning in vocational schools, but not in Korean public schools or colleges. The reason for this was that the purpose of vocational schools in Korea was not to go to college but to learn specific trades or skills to get a job after graduation. It is important to note that Yu Ri's images of students in this high school were in stark contrast to the images of high school students in Korea. Simplistic view was that Yu Ri perceived high school students in the United States (e.g., ones in her student teaching context) to be on the lazy side whereas the high school students in Korea to have more motivation and proactive about their education.

Yu Ri's overall impression of her student teaching assignment at the high school was that it served as "a good experience to get up early in the morning. I felt that students were more open to me due to my NNES status" (Interview 6, 3/2/05). Some students talked about the fact that they felt disadvantaged because their language was not good. There were open conversations among high school students about what they were thinking. They asked her questions about college life and what she learned, and the logistics of attending college. Her assumptions about them wanting to get a job right after high school were disproved when they asked her questions related to her academic work and life style as a college student. She talked to them about the college application process, her experience studying in Korea,

studying in the United States for the last two years of college, and professors' attitudes toward international students.

After having worked with some high school ESL students in the United States, she realized that content ESL was possible. Students, she thought, may not be fully supported by their parents for studies, but the school system provided a translation system and an academic support system for students who fell behind. In Korea, if students got poor grades, it was the students' fault, but in the United States, teachers and administrators tried to find out the reasons behind the students' poor academic behavior to get to the root of the problem.

Yu Ri's conception of "not academic" in observing the high school students' classes was that compared to American university settings, no academic questions were asked. These would include questions pertaining to reading comprehension and other questions that made students think critically about the topic discussed. There was very little academically-oriented discussion in high school classrooms. Yu Ri unconsciously compared what she was witnessing in her high school classroom practicum experience to what she had gone through in the United States learning contexts as an undergraduate. Also, she compared this to what she had gone through in Korea.

*More Volunteer Teaching Experiences.* Yu Ri also shared some of the things that she could have done differently from the beginning of her program. She wished that she could have done more volunteer teaching from the beginning, as opposed to tutoring one-on-one. After having done one year of volunteer teaching and one semester of student teaching, she realized the value of learning to teach in the field of

TESOL, which would benefit her upon her return to Korea. She also wished she had interacted more in English with native English-speakers and volunteered as a tutee during her undergraduate years at Atlantic University. Even toward the end of her program, Yu Ri still felt uncomfortable participating in classes. She thought that her personality lent itself to “listening to people to learn” as opposed to “talking to learn”, and she needed to write down information to understand what she had learned (Interview 5, 2/23/05).

### **Thinking Forward: Future Plans upon Returning to Korea (Summer 2005+)**

Yu Ri planned to return to Korea and teach EFL in a college/university and/or in a pre-collegiate setting. Her desire to teach children in Korea came from her belief that it was important to provide motivation when people were young. The teachers’ role in motivating children was important, especially for upper-elementary level students in Korea.

#### *Teaching Opportunities and Pedagogical Ideas*

She pondered the possibilities of promoting communicative ways of teaching; and planned to bring in different activities that could help the students to understand and use the English language authentically. Examples of this would be (1) having the students watch/listen to international news broadcasts in order to have discussions related to current events; and (2) having free flowing conversations with native English speakers or bilingual speakers. Often she questioned the nature of communicative ways of teaching English in Korea, since the curriculum in Korea was

fixed and the methods of teaching the language was focused on teaching to the college entrance examination.

### Professional Status

Yu Ri's understanding of what it meant to have a TESOL degree from the United States was that the possession of such a degree would enable her to believe that she was qualified to teach in a Korean university/college. Also, it would give her more status than teacher education credentials from Korea would have provided. A degree from abroad was more respected than a degree from Korea. It was perceived as more professional. It was easier to get a job with a U.S. TESOL degree. Significant experience was not considered as important in Korea as it was in the United States, and a younger person would get hired more quickly than a person with much more experience. In general, Yu Ri believed that many people in Korea were trying to get prepared to teach English there, since the English language was perceived of as an international language, as a job-related test, and as something that all levels of people wanted to study and learn.

When she returned to Korea, Yu Ri imagined that she would want to participate more in professional development workshops, teach and learn more about the Korean educational system, do research on Korean learners, and engage in some collaborative research and teacher-training work with other colleagues. Specifically, she wanted to expand her lesson-planning strategies in devising lessons using English, while not using Korean to teach English, and she wanted to adapt some of the contents from the books to reflect students' needs. She also wanted to focus on language

training for practicing teachers who wanted to learn real language and, not just classroom language.

Yu Ri did not, as yet, see herself as a professional, but she did see herself as an educator. She did not have a firm teacher identity at that point, and still felt that she was lacking in experience in the field and in society itself.

I don't have a firm identity in the TESOL field, even though I taught in volunteer teaching, and also in high school, but it was not a professional teaching. It was more like an experience. I think I am an educator, but I don't quite have a firm identity yet as an educator. When I go back to Korea, [if] I have more interactions with English teachers in Korea or maybe native English teachers, I can have more firm identity as an English teacher. (Interview 5, 2/23/05)

### **Interpreting Yu Ri's Narrative: A Complex Amalgamation of her Linguistic and Racial Identities**

During her initial educational experiences before embarking on a study-abroad program in New York, the source of Yu Ri's English-language learning was mainly confined to the walls of her classrooms and the learning of English was mostly tied to regurgitating the contents of textbooks to perform well on examinations. However, she was still able to form a strong sense of self as a Korean English-language learner (ELL) and user. Similar to other women in the study though, her strong linguistic identity as a Korean ELL and user was formed through comparisons of herself to other such learners and not to native English speakers.

When she embarked on her studies in New York, she had to balance the two educational curricula, one from the U.S. and the other from Korea. This became the focal point of her one-year stay in New York. With this balancing act, she felt that she was not able to fully adjust to the educational system in New York and her identity as a Korean English-language learner (ELL) and user was shaken. Also, this linguistic identity became more complex as a result of her interactions with NESs, bilinguals, and other NNEs in ESL and mainstream classrooms. Nevertheless, Yu Ri's experience in New York during her middle school years became the fuel that ignited her desire to expand her identity as an "authentic" ELL throughout the continuation of her studies in Korea and beyond.

With regard to the time that she spent in the mainstream and ESL classes in the United States, there were complexities that accompanied being with an array of students from different linguistic, cultural, and racial backgrounds. Her identity as an ELL began to shift as she needed to use the English language as a vehicle for daily communication. Yu Ri was not secure about her sense of belonging to a specific group since she not only had to interact with NESs but also had to interact with bilingual Korean-Americans and international NNEs as well. She was not only linguistically challenged but racially challenged and marginalized as a Korean student with minimal communication skills. For the first time in her life, she stated that she felt like an outsider due to her linguistic and racial identities as a Korean student in the U.S.

Upon returning to Korea from her one year stay in the United States, Yu Ri turned this challenging experience into a positive outcome through her dedication to expanding her linguistic and racial identities as a Korean ELL. She became more

proactive in questioning the ways in which the English language was being taught in Korea. She wanted to claim a different linguistic identity, an identity that would include both ELL and authentic user. Her bonding with fluent Korean English language teachers and NESs throughout her secondary education in Korea presented her with new ways of understanding the English language. Simply put, her linguistic and racial identities as a Korean student learning and using the English language had to be expanded in order to strengthen her identity as an international ELL. Thus, she opted to major in English literature and international relations in Yeosu University in Korea.

Yu Ri was the only one in the study who had transferred to a U.S. institution during her undergraduate years. Yu Ri's motivating factor for coming to the United States was the culmination of difficult experiences in both Korea and in New York. Unlike the other women who opted to enter the United States to study for more positive reasons, Yu Ri entered the United States citing negative reasons for her choosing to undertake studies here. Yu Ri's competitive nature was so deeply embedded in her that she could only see herself as a failure for not having been able to enter her university of choice (i.e., her mother's alma mater).

With these feelings of failure for having entered a second tier university in Korea driving her decision to transfer to a U.S. university, she successfully navigated through an Atlantic University undergraduate program in International Relations. With her desire to better understand the English language learning and teaching contexts, she entered a MATESOL program. Even though she professed uncomfortableness in the classroom in relation to interactions with NESs, Yu Ri did state that she felt more



comfortable interacting with NNEs in her TESOL program. Her explanation for this was that being with other students who were like her racially, ethnically, and linguistically, prevented her from having to masquerade as a NES, which she would have felt compelled to do if she were the only NNE in the program.

The crux of her experiences and understanding about her teaching identity came from her volunteer teaching and student-teaching experiences. In the process of describing the construction and negotiation of her identity as an NNE ESL teacher, Yu Ri's inexperience in the field of teaching stemming from her youth and lack of prior work and/or teaching experiences became evident in her discussions about her student-teaching and volunteer-teaching experiences. Due to her lack of teaching experience, she more often than not resorted to discussing her student-teaching experiences as they related to her experiences as a student primarily in the Korean public educational system. Throughout her discussion, there was much comparing and contrasting of teaching and learning from what she was accustomed to in Korea to what she had witnessed in high school classrooms in the United States.

One example of this was the belief that Yu Ri maintained regarding teacher-directed instruction, which from her experiences as a student in Korea was viewed as the dominant type of instruction for classrooms. Yu Ri noted this in her initial student teaching experiences in which she commented on the lack of teacher-directed instructions in the U.S. classrooms she observed.

Prior to commencing her student-teaching experiences, Yu Ri maintained the viewpoint, as per her experience as a student in the Korean public educational system, that teachers were not responsible for helping students to get to the root of their

problems. This was the responsibility of the students and their families, and not the teachers. From her student-teaching experiences, she noted that teachers in the United States often help students deal with their out-of-school problems, unlike in Korea. Yu Ri embraced this new-found relationship that she could build with her students, and sought to pursue it in future teaching situations upon returning to Korea.

An example that dominated her thinking as pertaining to the maintenance of certain preconceived notions or biases of what students should be like was based primarily on knowledge gleaned from having been a high school student herself. Without having had any contact with U.S. high school students beforehand as a teacher, she commenced her student-teaching experience. Yu Ri had a clear understanding of what her students should be like in the classroom and in relation to their work ethic, since her formulation of high school student identity came from her own experiences as a high school student in Korea. She allowed this to shape her image of their learning potentials and aspirations beyond high school. Yu Ri stated that she had assumed that these high school students would be motivated, as was the case for herself as a student and her ESL adult students whose motivation to learn the language was for the purpose of survival as immigrants in this country. After spending nearly one semester with these high school students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, she learned that many of the students were in fact, enthusiastic learners, who liked it that she was also an NNES similar to themselves. They even asked her numerous questions about college and applying to colleges.

Another preconceived notion that Yu Ri brought to her student-teaching experiences was that English should be taught using English, which differed from how

she had been taught English in Korea. Yu Ri interpreted her Korean experience to have been mis-educative experience (Dewey, 1938). This notion was upheld through her volunteer teaching experience in which she had to teach English to newly arrived immigrants using English for practical considerations. In contrast to this, however, she noted that teaching Korean to native English students and heritage Korean speakers using English was not consistent with the teaching philosophy to which she adhered, stipulating that a language being taught should also be the language of instruction.

Through her student teaching experiences, Yu Ri was able to move beyond simply having to rely on information gleaned from her experiences as a student in both Korea and the United States in defining the proper roles and responsibilities for teachers in various teaching contexts. Also, through these experiences, she was able to understand the hard realities of the classroom, specifically the situations of ESL students in the context of these ESL classrooms.

Although Yu Ri is grateful for all that she had gleaned from her TESOL program and the student teaching experience in the United States, she indicated uncertainty about what lies ahead of her in Korea for she will probably be competing with U.S. educated teachers possessing a wealth of teaching experiences. For Yu Ri, she awaits yet more shifts in her identity constructions and negotiations in Korea, as a beginning NNES EFL teacher competing for positions in the field of English-language teaching.

## Chapter 7: SHU-MING FUNG

### Looking Back: Educational Journeys in Two Different Contexts

#### (1970-1988)

In her early years in Taiwan (1970-1983), Shu-Ming recalled experiencing a great deal of pressure to learn English. She did tedious and boring work such as grammar memorization, and translation and did not like participating in her English classes. Through the traditional approaches to teaching English in Taiwan, she excelled in English classes in school, and was seen as one of the elites in her class. There was an internal sense of being a better student relative to others in the class. Moreover, there was always much pressure to elevate her ranking, and she felt that “being able to survive that kind of environment [made her] a fortunate student” (Interview 1, 12/21/04). Although Shu-Ming did not consider herself to be a competitive person, she commented that her earlier schooling experience in Taiwan brought out her competitive nature due to multiple pressures from teachers, parents, and classmates.

#### Learning in the United States

In 1983, Shu-Ming and her family (parents, younger brother and sister) immigrated to the United States. This move was precipitated by her parents’ desire to improve their children’s education since, according to Shu-Ming, schools in Taiwan were full of torture, pressure and disempowerment. Pressure emerged from having to keep up with other students through tracking and grade scales and the importance of class rankings which were listed, for public notice, in the classrooms. Equally important was the need for the entire family to expand their economic viability in the United States. For these reasons, they immigrated to the United States, assisted by

Shu-Ming's parents' friend residing in the United States. Specifically, Shu-Ming's parents' friend helped her father obtain a skilled-worker's visa to enter the United States. At that time, it was possible for foreigners with specialized skills to enter the United States. As a result, the entire family began their new lives in United States in 1983.

Upon immigrating to the United States, Shu-Ming and her family lived in Evermore City (pseudonym) with a majority population of Hispanics and African-Americans. She remembered being in English classes with Hispanic students. She often wondered why her Hispanic classmates were still in ESL classes even though they sounded fluent in English. Since there were only a few Asians in her first schooling experience in the United States, she was forced to speak and continue to learn English.

Most of my ESL teachers in public schools were white, bilingual in English and Spanish. I wished my teachers could speak Mandarin Chinese! In retrospect, I am glad that none of my teachers spoke Mandarin Chinese because this 'forced' me to learn English in English. I recall wondering how come some of my Latino classmates have been in the United States for 3-5 years but are still in the same [ESL] classes with me, a newcomer? (E-Reflective Q/A, 11/15/05)

Shu-Ming stated that she did not want to remain in ESL classes for a lengthy duration as had some of her Hispanic classmates.

She began her post high-school program in a nearby community college in 1988 and after two years at the local community college, she transferred in 1990 to a

university and declared government politics as her major in 1990. In selecting her college major, she opted out of American literature or English because she did not think her English level was good enough to pursue this major. However, she loved history and was fascinated by how the American governmental system worked, so she declared her major as government/politics.

During her senior year in college, she started to work part-time at the government printing company to provide secretarial support to the director. Upon graduating from college, she obtained full-time employment with the same company and worked there from 1990 to 2000. She worked her way up to becoming an assistant director, took on more responsibilities to the point of running the office when the owner was away. The company's competitor bought the company and offered Shu-Ming a full time job in 2000, but she decided that it was time for her to move on to do other things.

*Tutoring English in Taiwan (2000-2002)*

In 2000, Shu-Ming went back to Taiwan to live and work because she wanted to make some changes in her life. She went to Taiwan with the intent to live and find a job. She figured that she would live off some of her savings from working at the government printing company initially, and that she would look for a job in Taiwan in the meantime. She initially wanted to work in the business sector using her English skills, and was not planning to teach. However, her family and relatives strongly encouraged her to tutor English to children and adults because the English-language learning and teaching enterprise was viewed as "lucrative and special" (E-Reflective Q/A, 11/15/05) in Taiwan. The English language teaching enterprise in Taiwan was

equated with high salary earnings and was perceived of as a specialized skill-area for highly qualified people. Although she fell in love with tutoring English to different groups of people in Taiwan, she felt that she lacked the know-how in English language teaching. This tutoring experience brought her to the world of TESOL “because I knew I was [a] terrible tutor of English. I enjoyed tutoring English, but I did not know how to do it effectively” (E-Reflective Q/A, 11/15/05). She described her experience to be, “me talking and them listening to real live person speak English” (E-Reflective Q/A, 11/15/05). Shu-Ming felt that her teaching deficiency was due to monologue teaching. Students were just there to listen, which led her to think about getting trained in the field of TESOL. Even though she felt that she was not good at it, she enjoyed tutoring. She thought that she possessed specialized knowledge that she could impart to them, which made her feel important and knowledgeable.

### **Reflecting on Her TESOL Graduate Program (2003-2005)**

She researched on the Internet to identify the best program in the United States and in England and selected the Atlantic University Master’s in TESOL program with entrance slated for the spring of 2003. She wanted to become a “professional career TESOLer, more than a person who can speak English, teach English to make extra cash” (E-Reflective Q/A, 11/15/05). For Shu-Ming, a “professional career TESOLer” denoted a person who was trained to teach English from a highly credible four-year institution. She had heard many stories of white, native English speakers with little or no training in TESOL teaching English in Asian countries. She did not want to be equated with a group of people with little-to-no professional training teaching English. She sought a “real” degree program as opposed to a certificate from intensive TESOL

teacher training programs. She wanted to be a part of a profession that led to a professional career, which called for “doing it the harder way, the real way” (Interview 1, 12/21/04). She expected to learn theory and also learn some practical, hands-on techniques that complemented the theory learned in the courses.

### *Claming Dual Identities*

Within the TESOL community, she had a clearly defined set of identities. She perceived herself to be “native speaker of Chinese and near native of English” (E-Reflective Q/A, 11/1/5/05). She understood that others in her program saw her as a near-native English speaker.

I have been told by fellow teachers that I am a near-native English speaker, especially in my speaking/accent. I have had students tell me they like my class, and that I speak clearly. I think fellow teachers and students do take me, an NNEST [non-native English speaker], more seriously knowing that I am working on a master’s in TESOL; I have been professionally trained. (E-Reflective Q/A, 11/15/05)

Shu-Ming’s sense of self came not only from how she viewed her own identities, but also from different people she interacted with on daily basis. Her teaching colleagues and graduate program classmates viewed her as a near native with flawless accent.

Moreover, her students from the adult ESL program often commented that Shu-Ming articulated clearly in class and this contributed to their enjoying her teaching. More importantly, it was evident that Shu-Ming’s sense of her professional identity as an English teacher came from her professional training in her Master’s in TESOL program.



I see myself as definitely an NNES, but I am closer to the native speakers than the international students. With the international [NNESs], I do my best to help them. I help them because I see them as foreigners. They need all the help they can get, because of the language, different life style, and being away from home. (Interview 1, 12/21/04)

In the TESOL community and other teaching and learning settings, Shu-Ming saw herself as a resource for NNES international students. She explained to them about the assignments and syllabi, assisted them with borrowing materials/equipment from the TESOL office, allowed her colleagues to observe her teaching and conducting teaching demos in her class, and provided a listening ear to many of her international colleagues.

Shu-Ming's attitude toward international NNESs was that she wanted to help them in variety of ways such as correcting their papers and helping them to navigate the academic discourse in the Western educational context. Because she perceived herself to be closer to the native English-speaking group, she figured she would be an ideal candidate to understand both the native and the nonnative sides. She stated that sometimes "[Her NNES international classmates] don't know what to do, and see herself close to the native side" (Interview 1, 12/21/04). She identified herself as someone who knew the academic system in the United States and therefore she saw herself as a capable person in helping her international NNES colleagues navigate the TESOL program. Shu-Ming's NNES classmates, who asked her to tape a dialogue related to a class assignment, saw Shu-Ming as someone who had grown up in the

United States and was not an international student. They believed that she was someone who knew the system and someone who was as good as the native English-speakers.

Shu-Ming perceived herself and other NNEs like her to be role models in that they had been teaching from their own experiences in learning a second (or additional) language and culture. Being in a classroom setting with other NNEs created a “safe learning environment conducive to learning” for herself and other students like her. While Shu-Ming displayed some altruistic behavior when it came to assisting her international NNE colleagues, she wished that some of her international NNE colleagues would study harder and be more serious about being educated in the United States. “[Some of them] are probably from very wealthy families and have received some sort of scholarship. They need to appreciate their privileged status by working harder” (Interview 1, 12/21/04).

#### *International NNE Classmates*

In class, Shu-Ming noticed that international NNEs did not participate as much but were capable of offering insightful ideas through technology-aided discussions widely used in some institutions. Shu-Ming figured that NNE international students did not participate as much in class, perhaps due to the speed of the language in class discussions and issues of self-confidence. Shu-Ming thought that there could also be some “safe environment” for NNEs, as in using technology to help them navigate through class discussions. She stated that “computer-posted writing can check their own writing but with speaking, you are put on the spot. Computer postings can provide a chance for NNEs to prove themselves [and] their ability” (Interview 2, 12/30/04).

The fact that Shu-Ming had a strong sense of dual identities was evident in two positionalities. She wanted to assist her international NNES colleagues as a person claiming a near-native English-speaking identity and at the same time, she claimed a non-native English speaking identity in stating that she was still learning English “but not in a structured classroom” (Interview 1, 12/21/04). She stated that she still needed to look up words that she did not know and was still being exposed to English. This was like scaffolding toward mastery of the language, digging deeper into idioms and parts of the English language.

During one of our latter interviews, Shu-Ming compared herself to an NNES with a Russian background. Shu-Ming commented that a white NNES (Russian) who was a colleague in her program may have had an easier time with her own identities than she did. “If [my Russian classmate] does not open her mouth, then people would not know her non-nativeness” (Interview 1, 12/21/04). If Shu-Ming did not open her mouth, people would probably conclude that she [didn’t] speak English at all or at least, not well. Clearly, even with Shu-Ming who had a strong sense of her identities, she felt the difference between herself, a visible minority, and someone like her Russian classmate, who was from a dominant racial background.

#### *Sense of Belonging and Not Belonging*

Shu-Ming’s relationship with her TESOL colleague from Taiwan (an international NNES) led her to join the Taiwanese Students Association during the 2003-2004 academic year. She wanted to be with a Taiwanese friend, be connected to her native culture, and socialize with other Taiwanese. But somehow, she felt that perhaps she did not belong because her work was in TESOL while the others in this

international organization were from either the computer science or the natural science fields. “Something is not right. Even though I joined because I wanted to feel like I am with my people. I didn’t feel I was with my people, and then coupled with the fact that they didn’t do many outings and events that I thought they would or should, I eventually dropped out of the association” (Interview 2, 12/30/04). Shu-Ming’s desire to reconnect with her Taiwanese roots and culture within the academic setting brought her to join the Taiwanese Students Association. However, she realized that being of Taiwanese heritage was not the most important factor for her in belonging to the association.

Even though Shu-Ming stopped attending the Taiwanese Students Association meetings, she continued to be in contact with her Taiwanese friend outside of class time. Initially Shu-Ming was excited about befriending a Taiwanese classmate, but later they drifted apart due to different schedules and different residences. Although their intimate friendship subsided, Shu-Ming continued to serve as a resource for her Taiwanese friend by providing answers to her questions related to grammar and translations and providing a listening ear. Shu-Ming stated that she was flattered that she could answer her friend’s questions related to the English language. When she could not answer a translation question, she was motivated to improve her knowledge of both languages and her understanding of both cultures.

Shu-Ming stated that sometimes she felt that she was alienating herself from the Asian-American community because she did not know where to meet them. In addition, she thought that it could also be differences in personality factors, not being able to connect with them, and could be an existence of cloud of competition, since

Shu-Ming was “not studying to become a doctor, not already married, [and] family background being different from typical Asian-Americans” (E-Reflective Q/A, 11/15/04). Although her parents never pushed her, Shu-Ming was positioned by her Asian-American community as a woman who needed to get married to a rich man and also be in an economically viable profession.

### *Volunteer Teaching Experience*

Shu-Ming began her teaching experience as a volunteer at an adult education center in 2003. For about a year and a half, she volunteered in the center, working as a substitute teacher intermittently, until she was given her own class. “Later as I became bolder, I taught my own ESL class” (Interview 1, 12/21/04). This feeling of boldness came with more experience in the classroom, and she stated that this feeling had nothing to do with being an NNES. It had to do, much more, with how she saw herself as a classroom teacher. As a novice teacher, she worked on classroom management and pedagogical issues and as she “learned more, [she] became bolder, as a teacher” (Interview 1, 12/21/04). After having tutored in Taiwan and having taught in classrooms in the United States, she realized that her preference was toward being in ESL settings due to having students from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds and having access to authentic materials.

### *Being a Convincing and Effective Pedagogue*

Shu-Ming believed that NNES teachers like herself could teach from their experiences and could create a safe learning environment for their students. For Shu-Ming, a safe learning environment had multiple meanings. It was safe for students because they saw their teachers as role models, could learn English and study hard

without any limitations, and had a motivational push coming from themselves as well as from teachers and parents. Even though she was comfortable with herself as an English teacher, she sometimes questioned her roles as an English language teacher in relation to her ability and her non-native status. She stated that “when you are not a NES, what do you think my students see me. You have to be convincing [as a language teacher]” (Interview 1, 12/21/04). Within her, there was a sense of tension in how she saw herself as a classroom teacher teaching English and how society saw her as an English teacher with a non-native status.

In relation to teaching English, she realized that some of the disadvantages of English teachers with a NES status were that NESs might have difficulty in explaining grammar. Although Shu-Ming claimed an NNES status, she saw herself as someone who would have difficulty with such explanations. However, she felt that this task of explaining grammar would become easier with more teaching experience. She considered herself to be the next best “teacher” compared to some of her NES teachers, although she had experienced some problems with pronunciation of some vowels. On the whole though, she considered herself “to be on an equal footing” with native English-speaking teachers for prospective jobs (Interview 4, 1/29/05).

In her own teaching identity, she has had self-imposed challenges as an ESL teacher but her students had not challenged her to that point. She believed that because her race equated to being an NNES, she needed to persuade people that she was a qualified ESL teacher, and one way was earning a Master’s degree in TESOL to prove such legitimacy. As a “career TESOLer,” she felt that she needed to project an image that convinced people that she was qualified and credible in the field of TESOL. She

felt rewarded to hear that she sounded near native, which she thought validated her identity. But on the other hand, Shu-Ming wanted to be validated for what she could do in her ESL class as an instructor, not simply as a person who sounded near-native. Being identified as a good teacher was more important to her than being identified as a NES or as a near NES. Also, the validity of her ESL teaching came not only from her degree program but also from her lengthy residence in this country.

*Being Confident.* Shu-Ming stated that “I think much of teaching and being a good teacher has to do with self-confidence. First [we must] believe in ourselves, be a people person, [provide] support/feedback [for our] students about their learning. Self-confidence comes from within but also from your students” (Interview 2, 12/30/04). When Shu Ming was in a classroom, she thought she was confident and comfortable. She stated that she was confident in teaching reading and computer but was not confident in teaching pronunciation, since she could not hear certain stress sounds. In order to have confidence in teaching, she commented that one did not have to sound perfect or sound like a native. “I think it is so sad that because you think you don’t sound native or you have an accent, you can’t teach in America” (Interview 2, 12/30/04).

#### *Bringing Theory into Practice*

Towards the end of her TESOL program, she became more comfortable with bringing theory into the practice of teaching English, which was one of her reasons for seeking the Master’s degree. She stated that she felt good about her own teaching materials and different pedagogical techniques she employed in her classroom. More importantly, through being with others in a similar career path, she realized that being part of a teacher preparation program was really important in terms of being

empowered to identify herself as a professional. Teaching ESL and getting prepared in a TESOL program were equally important in her coming to understand her field.

Shu Ming wanted an expanded community of practice by becoming a member of different regional TESOL groups as she drew near completion of her TESOL program. She wanted to know what other NNESTs were doing and wanted to know the types of issues related to employment and NNES identities for which they had been confronted. She joined the Washington Area TESOL organization in order to probe into the areas of TESOL professional development, NNES identities, and employment options.

### **Thinking Forward: Imagined Future Possibilities (2005+)**

Shu-Ming's definition of being a professional in TESOL meant walking into a classroom with confidence, being able to teach and even improvise, meeting students' needs, and appreciating the general sense of being with people from different cultures. She felt a sense of security upon graduating from her Master's in TESOL program since she perceived herself to be a professional in TESOL. Her immediate plan was to start teaching or continue teaching as a full time employee. Although her immediate future plans were to teach in the United States, she could see herself also teaching in China. "I want to teach in higher education. Initially in China for a couple of years and eventually teach in the United States" (Interview 1, 12/21/04).

### ***Images of Going Back and Forth***

For Shu-Ming, she viewed her dual identities as a way to capitalize on her being able to go back and forth in different contexts to teach English. Furthermore, now that she had earned her Master's in TESOL degree from the United States, she



felt that she was even more valued as an English teacher in China and/or in Taiwan, even though she would need to compete with white native English-speaking teachers who might not have had any qualifications or credentials in teaching English. She stated the following:

[A]n MA in TESOL is certainly valued in Taiwan/China. It is a required qualification for employment especially in public schools and higher education. Although, sadly, its value is ‘downgraded’ when many employers there still have this unconstructive attitude that any native English speaker can teach English. I think, in my case, being bilingual [and] also near-native in English and with a MA in TESOL makes me competitively employable in China or Taiwan.

(E-Reflective Q/A, 11/15/04)

Basically, she knew that her competitor in teaching English in China or Taiwan would be an NES, either with or without a TESOL degree. She was resigned, in part, to the idea that NESs might be preferred by employers over her.

#### *Imposed Limitations from the Outside*

Shu-Ming started to communicate with some hiring companies in China near the end of her Master’s program at Atlantic University in order to find out the prospects of teaching there. Shu-Ming was advised that she was a very disappointing prospect. They basically e-mailed her and told her not to bother applying. The perception in China was that only Caucasians could teach English. It appeared that companies in China preferred Caucasians who were native English speakers as teachers. One of her former colleagues, working as a hiring administrator in China,

told her that she had to fight with a company to have a Korean-American be hired. Since Shu-Ming was an ethnic Chinese, she would be treated as Chinese even though she was an American citizen. Her former colleague also told her that they might pay her as a native Chinese woman. After discussing opportunities, she concluded that she did not want to be in a situation where she could be mistreated by her future employers. In addition to teaching English as a qualified and certified professional in different contexts, she also saw herself teaching Chinese in higher educational institutions in the United States. Shu-Ming chose to leave her options open in relation to future teaching possibilities.

### **Interpreting Shu-Ming's Narrative: Her Linguistic and Racial Identities as an Immigrant NNES**

Both feelings of marginalization and privilege emanated throughout Shu-Ming's educational experiences in the United States and in Taiwan. Her overall experiences, as an immigrant NNES woman gaining cultural and linguistic capital outside of her native Taiwan, rendered a different narrative as compared to the rest of the women in the study. Shu-Ming's length of stay in the United States coupled with the commencement of her ESL experience at an early age gave her the linguistic tools and a firm sense of linguistic identity needed to navigate the schooling process as a dual language learner and user. These would enable her to be confident navigating the social languages embedded in both the academic and social contexts at later points in her life.

Even with a dual linguistic identity, Shu-Ming's educational experiences in the United States as a Taiwanese-American were not always privileged. There were

incidents when Shu-Ming, too, felt marginalized due to linguistic challenges that she encountered. This included her experience as the only East Asian in an ESL classroom when she first arrived in the United States. Within this environment, she was confronted with a multitude of difficulties such that she was linguistically and racially marginalized in a classroom composed primarily of Hispanic students and teachers who were white, brown, and bilingual, speaking only English and Spanish. This experience brought her to seek a dominant linguistic identity as one of the mainstream students such that she would be able to emerge out of the clothing of an ESL student. Nevertheless, her sense of belonging in the “middle”, not fully claiming a NES or an NNES identity, made her choose not to major in English in college. Ultimately, in choosing to expand her linguistic identity as an ESL teacher, she realized that claiming a hybrid identity, which placed her in the middle, was mutually beneficial for both herself and her students in ESL contexts.

Her teaching experiences in Taiwan made her feel more connected to the teaching profession despite the disconnect she felt in terms of knowing that she needed to but not being able to incorporate theory into practice. More importantly, she relished the opportunity to teach such that she would be able to privilege her linguistic identities pertaining to knowing and being able to communicate in two languages. Her sense of identities around the English language and non-native speaker status was paradoxical. Although she felt marginalized due to linguistic challenges as an immigrant NNES and an EFL teacher in Taiwan, she ultimately opted to connect with the English language at the end by entering a teacher preparation program in the

United States. She felt that her sense of linguistic identity would be legitimated by being prepared in a fully accredited four-year institution.

In her TESOL program community at Atlantic University, Shu-Ming's identities as an NNES, a near-NES, a "Generation 1.5" (i.e., Immigrant NNESs), and a bilingual painted a portrait of a visible minority with a diversified set of identities as a result of seeing herself in relation to Asian NNESs, European NNESs, and NESs. Most prevalently, Shu-Ming claimed the multiple identities of a near-NES (someone who is perceived as almost a native English speaker), an NNES, and a bilingual. Among an array of identities that Shu-Ming claimed, her experiences were close to the experiences of "Generation 1.5" individuals (similar to myself) who were of a status "in-between" that of first and second generation immigrants to the United States. "Generation 1.5" individuals claim two or more languages, cultures, and nations as their own. Even with both Shu-Ming and myself claiming the "Generation 1.5" identity, I realized that there were subtle differences between us such as age of arrival, years of formal ESL/EFL learning, and linguistic and cultural experiences dominant at home that positioned us differently with respect to our linguistic and cultural identities on the NES and NNES continuum (Goen, Porter, Swanson & VanDommelen, 2002; Roberge, 2002).

Shu-Ming's insider and outsider status in relation to her NNES colleagues from Asian and European countries became a dominant theme as she journeyed through her TESOL program at the Atlantic University. She was an insider as compared to them due to her length of stay in the United States and her status as an immigrant NNES. However, she was an outsider to them due to the fact that she had

not been exposed to the same privileged experiences (i.e., study abroad programs, private language institutes, etc.).

Beyond her TESOL program community, Shu-Ming, though attempting to be positioned as an insider with respect to her fellow NNES Taiwanese colleagues, was positioned as an outsider by these individuals. This was exemplified by incidents in which members of the Taiwanese Student Association were not open to her suggestions and innovative activity ideas. This could have been due to the fact that the members viewed her as an outsider given that she was majoring in social science discipline, whereas most of the other members were majoring in either natural sciences or computer science disciplines. The resistance to her by these other members could have been attributable to perceptions that they held of her as an outsider given the fact that she was not an international NNES student like them. Shu-Ming's comparison of herself to international NNESs in their backgrounds, mannerisms, and perceived work ethics was echoed by Thornton-Dill's (1987) statement in relation to ethnicity and social class, "With those of the same ethnic group but of a different social class, one shares the sense of peoplehood but not behavioral similarities" (p. 104).

Shu-Ming portrayed an overall sense of confidence in herself as an ESL teacher. She indicated the importance of this for ESL teachers by stating that being confident and having confidence to teach were the most important attributes in being a credible and qualified teacher of English. Even with her overall feeling of confidence though, she frequently felt tension in terms of how she saw herself as a classroom teacher teaching English and how society saw her as an English teacher with a non-

native and non-dominant racial status. Shu-Ming felt that because of her race as an Asian ESL teacher, she would need to convince others that she was qualified to teach English by earning a Master's degree in TESOL from a respected university. Her teaching identity would need to be validated by being in a TESOL program that would legitimize her linguistic and racial identities as a professional TESOLer. Also, her teaching identity would be validated by utilizing her own learned experiences as an immigrant NNES to reach out to and teach other NNESs in ESL classrooms. Overall, it was more important for her to be recognized as an effective ESL teacher than as a fluent NNES or near-NES.

By sharing her lived experiences with her adult ESL students and acting as a cultural and linguistic broker for some of the international NNES classmates, Shu-Ming was enacting a political vision for them. This vision would enable them to seek out and find opportunities to be participatory members in the English language learning and teaching communities, respectively. Shu-Ming's NNES pedagogies highlighted a new set of directions in her and others' ESL teaching tools. They entailed more than the simple understanding and incorporation of TESOL theories. They incorporated the lived experiences of students and allowed for a political vision for Shu-Ming herself, and others, as teachers, and their ESL students.

Shu-Ming saw herself as being competent to teach English in relation to other NESs. This probably stemmed from her status as an immigrant NNES, and length of stay in this country as compared to international NNESs. Shu-Ming felt most confident about her teaching identity when she compared herself to other NNESs from

international backgrounds, and thus was confident to label herself as a highly capable NNES teacher in relation to these others.

When it comes to her future teaching options, Shu-Ming claims a transnational identity, being able to go from one linguistic and cultural context to another, with few perceived challenges with respect to her teaching abilities. However, toward the end of her TESOL program, she was told that she would encounter some foreseeable obstacles in finding a teaching position in China due to her national, political, and gendered identities as a Taiwanese woman. With this information, she came to the realization that her identities as a non-white, NNES teacher would be more of a challenge than an asset. The very nature of her profession being gendered and racialized by these outside forces draws attention to the fact that individuals, such as Shu-Ming, could be rejected for teaching positions based on criteria other than their linguistic and cultural knowledge in the fields of ESL and EFL. For example, criteria such as gender, race, ethnicity, and social class are often used to exclude otherwise competent teachers such as Shu-Ming.

## Chapter 8: UNDERSTANDING THE NARRATIVES

This study was designed to build upon the research conducted by others examining the broad issues of non-native English-speaking (NNES) professionals in the field of TESOL. Its uniqueness as a study, though, is that it focused on a group of study participants who, heretofore, have been neglected in the research literature, but have been visible in U.S. TESOL teacher education programs, namely NNES East Asian women.

### *Revisiting the Purposes of the Study*

In undertaking this study, I had five purposes. The first purpose of this study was to deepen and enrich our understanding of the educational journeys of five East Asian women who were both visible minorities and non-native English speakers (NNESs) navigating through TESOL programs in the United States. This was accomplished through listening to their life history narratives. The crafting of their narratives utilizing the *Looking Back, Reflecting On, and Thinking Forward* timeline both deepens and enriches our understanding of their experiences. Also, this approach represents a holistic orientation with which to honor the experiences of these women throughout their educational journeys. Canagarajah (1996) delineated a rationale for using narratives in understanding individuals:

[N]arratives are gaining prominence in research publications because they represent, holistically, the local knowledge of the communities studied...narratives represent knowledge from bottom up;...it is also worthy to note that marginalized groups such as women, Blacks, and traditional oral communities, who widely practice empathetic ways of



knowing, are considered to conceive/embody knowledge in narrative forms. Narratives open up possibilities for these groups to participate in knowledge construction in the academy. (p. 327)

Related to the aforementioned purpose, the women's narratives serve as a call to those in the fields of TESOL and general teacher education in terms of increasing understanding of and uncovering the ideological nature of the lives of non-native English speakers (NNESs), as individuals, who may become marginalized due to issues of race, gender, and language (Amin, 1997; 2001; Kubota, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Pavlenko, 2003). Through their narratives, we come to understand their desire and drive to become legitimate members in the world of English language teaching (Canagarajah, 2006; Widdowson, 1994). This was echoed by Lawrence-Lightfoot's (1994) plenary address regarding the need to accumulate rich and various stories that stir the normative discourse in the TESOL profession and shape a new public discourse. It also appears in Simon-Maeda's (2004) work.

We will only begin to recognize the limitations and distortions of narrowly constructed analyses and policies when we begin to accumulate rich and various stories, and when because of their increasing number and power, they begin to shape a new public discourse. (p. 431)

The next two purposes of the study were to highlight the diversity of the overall experiences of these East Asian women and to understand the women's prior learning experiences in their native contexts. For the latter, specific focus was directed on each woman's privileged-class status. This enabled the women to strive for and

accomplish certain goals in their native countries and in the United States to varying degrees. The experiences of the international NNEs in the study, namely Han Nah, Liu, Xia, and Yu Ri were varied and differed from the experiences of Shu-Ming, an immigrant NNE, as well.

Their narratives revealed a multitude of identities possessed by the East Asian women, all of which were interconnected in the webbed relations of power as indicated with reference to the critical and feminist perspectives. These perspectives highlight the women's experiences as enmeshed with the notions of subjectivity and identity (Norton, 2000; Weedon, 1997). Weedon (1997) defined subjectivity as "the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individuals, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world" (p. 320). Specifically, critical and feminist perspectives draw attention to the East Asian women's experiences and their identities as being intricately interwoven in the relations of power. This culminates in privileging of native-English speakers' (NESs) experiences and the marginalization of non-native English-speakers' (NNEs) experiences in the world of English language learning and teaching. Poststructuralist perspectives describe women's experiences and identities as multiple, contradictory, and changing over time and space. In turn, Norton (2000), grounded in the critical, feminist, and poststructuralist perspectives, argued the following ideas about identities characterized by subjectivity: Identities are multiple in nature, identities are sites of struggle, and identities change over time and space. Hence, the life history narratives of the women in the study unfolded the complex, interconnected, multiple, and fluid nature of

identities in relation to language, race, gender, and their social class navigating the world of English language learning and teaching.

Another purpose of this study was to “look at” the five East Asian women’s experiences as juxtaposed to my own as a person with both insider and outsider perspectives on learning and teaching in U.S. educational contexts (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). This heightened my awareness, as a researcher, as to how I positioned myself, and was positioned by others with regards to the experiences of the five East Asian women in the study. My desire to understand my own positionality as a researcher was echoed in Florio-Ruane’s (2001) *Teacher Education and the Cultural Imagination: Autobiography, Conversation, and Narrative*. Through the teacher inquiry studies she embarked on with her pre-service teachers, Florio-Ruane set forth on a journey to “look both outward and inward” (p. xxiii) in order to learn more about her teachers’ life journeys as well as her own life journey.

Although I was not one of the study participants, my life history narrative was interconnected to theirs through the sharing of similar experiences. Specifically, the disclosure of my own experiences, as I conversed with these women, helped them to understand that their experiences, though different, were not necessarily unique to them (Foster, 1994). This removed much of the reticence that the women felt toward participating in the study at the onset of the project. My insider and outsider perspectives also proved useful in connecting to the women.

The final purpose of the study was to use the insights from the women’s narratives to speak to the nature of TESOL teacher education programs making appropriate recommendations and suggestions to improve the quality of such

programs. In what follows, I discuss the insights gleaned from the women's narratives as a way to explicate the overarching themes related to knowledge construction, pedagogy, and identities. The intention of such an explication is to add to the existing body of theoretical, methodological, and practical knowledge in the fields of TESOL and general teacher education.

### **Thematic Discussions: Insights from the Women's Narratives**

The narratives of the five East Asian women enrolled in U.S. TESOL programs revealed complex identity constructions and negotiations as the women recounted journeying through their educational experiences in their native countries as well as in the United States. The analysis of their narratives, as grounded in critical and feminist perspectives, revealed the interconnectedness between language, race, gender, and social class which were all deeply embedded in their educational journeys. These perspectives magnified the power struggles (both visible and invisible) with which the five East Asian women wrestled as they interacted with the world of English language learning and teaching in their native contexts as well as in U.S. TESOL programs.

The women's narratives tell a multitude of stories. These stories could begin to help TESOL programs reconceptualize their curricula (Canagarajah, 2006; Johnson, 2006; Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Also, the narratives could aid these programs in reconceptualizing English as an international language, the ownership of which belongs to everyone who learns and uses the language (Llurda, 2004; Widdowson, 1994). In this section, I discuss thematic ideas that cut across the women's past, present, and future life history timelines with reference to the research questions raised

in Chapter 1. This chapter concludes with a discussion of implications for TESOL teacher education programs as well as future research directions.

*Theme 1: College Entrance Examinations as both a Hegemonic and Empowering Practice*

Much has been written on how certain countries, specifically Kachru's Expanding Circle countries, use scores of the college entrance examinations as a gate-keeping device for university entrance (Butler, 2004; Li, 1998; Lui, Ahn, Baek, & Hahn, 2004; Nunan, 2003). For these women, the college entrance examinations served as both hegemonic and empowering practices in their educational journeys. All of the women, to varying degrees, with the exception of Shu-Ming, were "victims" of the college entrance examinations process throughout their educational experiences in their native countries. They were bounded by doing well on the exams, and all class learning materials were related to teaching to the test. Without problematizing how the knowledge was constructed, throughout their educational journeys in their native lands, the women memorized different forms of "knowledge." This was done to learn and strategize the contents of college entrance examinations, specifically in the areas of the English language. This could be characterized as the dominant ideology. It is predicated on having subordinate groups of students and teachers gear their learning and teaching to the test (McLaren, 2003). The dominant ideology of college entrance examinations practiced in women's native countries could be labeled as hegemony, which McLaren states as follows:

the maintenance of domination not by the sheer exercise of force but primarily through social practices [what people say and do], social forms, and social structures produced in specific sites such as the

church, the state, the school, the mass media, the political system, and the family. (p. 76)

On the other hand, for all of the women in the study, excluding Shu-Ming, their high scores on the college-entrance examinations provided them with access to prestigious universities in their native countries and likely contributed to being able to enter universities in English speaking countries to further their studies. Even though Yu Ri might not have gained admission to her first choice university, her second choice was also viewed as one of the leading women's universities in Korea.

*Theme 2: Conflicts between Public School English Education and Issues of Communicative Competence*

This theme was closely related to how the public educational systems in the women's native countries viewed knowledge construction as related to each country's national mandates on college entrance examinations. With the exception of Shu-Ming, all of the women experienced conflicts between narrowly defined English-language learning requirements for academic ascension and their new found interests in learning and expanding on communicative English language abilities. All the women experienced a disconnect between how they learned English in their native countries and how they wanted to learn English with a focus on the conversational components. In response to this conflict, Leung (2006) outlined the need for recontextualizing communicative competence by aligning it with the needs of local knowledge construction. This would enable the learners of the English language to be competent not only in the areas of Grammar-Translation and Audiolingual Methods, but also in the areas of communicative grammar, sociolinguistics, discourse, and pragmatics. Also, in the promotion of the communicative competence approach, Holliday (1994),

Canagarajah (2006), and Kumaravadivelu (2006) explicated the need to go beyond the techniques and approaches predominantly utilized in teaching English. They advocated viewing students and classrooms for the possibilities that could be authenticated in local learning and teaching contexts in order to promote greater communicative competence. To this end, the need for a post-method approach, “questioning the existence of methods and not trying to invent a new one” (Canagarajah, 2006, p. 20), favors the promotion of critical practices toward viewing individual learners within their classroom contexts in relation to the entire sociocultural contexts.

Even though all the women excelled in academics with respect to English-language learning in their respective public educational systems, they all sought out different means beyond their public educational contexts to improve their conversational English. These included study abroad programs in foreign countries (Han Nah and Yu Ri), English conversational classes in native countries (Han Nah, Yu Ri, and Xia), and communications with native English speakers (NESs) (Han Nah, Liu, Xia, Yu Ri, and Shu-Ming). The women’s desire to improve their conversational English stems from their need to become legitimate members of the English language learning and teaching communities (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Additionally, it is connected to how the English language is perceived in their native countries and who is seen as “owners” of the English language (Widdowson, 1994).

### *Theme 3: Choosing and/or Resisting Gendered Practices*

The theme of Choosing and/or Resisting Gendered Practices appears in the experiences of Han Nah and Liu, as the two married women in the study. Although

this theme, pertaining to the intersection of gender and profession, was also covered with the three, not-yet-married women in the study, the discussions of these three women revolved around their future imagined identities as spouses and mothers. Furthermore, Han Nah's gendered identities as a married woman with two children highlight difficult choices that women such as Han Nah have to make in relation to their education and their professional careers.

To varying degrees, both Han Nah and Liu spoke about or alluded to choosing and/or resisting traditional gendered practices as either handed down by their traditional societies and/or through parental/familial influences and obligations. Both Han Nah and Liu were influenced by the notion of "double consciousness" in which they had to navigate between the tensions created by their desire to obtain higher education degrees in contexts other than their native countries while also having to meet their spousal and other familial responsibilities. According to Goldberger (1996), among other critical feminist scholars, the double consciousness for bicultural as well as multicultural individuals "[is] marked by the conflict between the old cultures' norms of receiving knowledge from sanctioned others [as in parents when single and a husband when married] and new Western cultural norms that sanction personal authority and independent thought" (p. 349).

Their roles as spouses placed them in the situation of having to put aside or alter their career aspirations and/or goals to be with their husbands as a result of having this double consciousness. Both Han Nah and Liu were pulled in the direction of having to conform with their native societal norms for how married women should behave. However, both Han Nah and Liu's experiences as married, East Asian women



contradicted what they wanted to experience as professional women. This contradiction paralleled Sandra Harding's (1987) statement: "Not only do our gender experiences vary across the cultural categories; they also are often in conflict in any one individual's experience." (p. 7). As a result of these internal conflicts, and decisions to favor family over careers, neither Han Nah nor Liu opted to earn a Ph.D. degree while claiming the identities of wife and mother in the case of Han Nah (Maher, 1996).

Moreover, their parents were very influential in pushing them in various directions earlier in their lives. For example, Han Nah's father's choice of major for her was designed to place her in a pool to be competitive with other men, though she was denied input on this choice. Similarly, Liu's parents wanted her to become a teacher for reasons that were largely related to her gender and the competitiveness that would underscore some of the male-dominated positions for which she would be competing. Liu vehemently rejected this recommendation for many years. This was due to the fact that Liu believed that only students with low college-entrance examination scores went to teachers' college in China. Liu's perspective on teaching was shared by those in Maher and Ward's (2002) *Gender and Teaching*. A parent of one of the student teachers commented that she wanted something more for her daughter, since she was so smart and she could see her daughter becoming a doctor rather than a teacher. These examples point to the feminization of the teaching profession, which in turn, translates into a teaching profession that is characterized by lower status than other professions (Maher & Ward, 2002). Interestingly enough, Liu

ultimately opted to become a teacher for reasons unrelated to her parents having chosen this professional career path for her.

Also, Han Nah plotted a professional course for herself, highlighting her dominant linguistic and racial identities independent of any parental input. Her professional career choice embraced her mothering identity (Mills, 2004). Han Nah's return to her mother tongue to re-establish her professional identity could be seen as promoting her dominant linguistic image and assisting her with the rearing of her children to be fluent bilingual speakers so as to enable them to navigate through both linguistic and cultural worlds (Kanno, 2003; Kouritzin, 2000). Han Nah's negotiated identities were similar to mothers interviewed by Mills (2004) in studying the reasons for mother-tongue maintenance. One of the mothers in the study responded, "I've had two reasons, for the children and for myself" (p. 179).

Discussion of this theme raises important questions regarding issues of balancing work and family for women graduate students like Han Nah and Liu. This theme also points to women's experiences as being socially constructed, thus placing them in identity positions of having to give up or set aside their professional goals in order to adhere to traditional gendered practices of married women (Simon-Maeda, 2004).

#### *Theme 4: The Nexus of Linguistic and Cultural Empowerment and Linguistic and Racial Marginalization*

Within the TESOL program communities, the East Asian women in the study were socially constructed as non-native English-speakers (NNESs), visible minority women with marginal racial backgrounds, and perpetual English language learners (Amin, 2001; Braine, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 2004; Norton, 2000; Pavlenko, 2003). Their

NNES identities encompassed several areas that were dominant in the explication of their narratives. In what follows, I discuss the nature of their NNES identities as revealed through their narratives.

This study heightens our awareness of these women's experiences as both empowering and marginalizing in the world of English-language learning and teaching. The women's desire to be fully proficient as English language users was equated with (dis)empowering experiences in different contexts. For all five women, they interacted with the English language and cultural learning experiences via English conversation classes and their exposure to native and near-native English speaking teachers in their native countries and in the United States. This provided them with a sense of empowerment in terms of being part of English-language learning communities.

*Linguistic and Cultural Identities Empowered.* The women's experiences within these English language contexts provided them with opportunities to claim privileged-class identities. Not many students in East Asian countries ever have the opportunity to study abroad (Han Nah and Yu Ri), to study in private English language learning settings outside of their public school classrooms (Han Nah, Yu Ri, and Xia), to work in international, English speaking contexts in their native lands (Xia, Liu, and Shu-Ming), or to immigrate to the United States at an early age (Shu-Ming). Even though Shu-Ming did not share similar forms of privilege with the international NNESs in the study, her family's immigration to the United States to gain better economic mobility and obtain better educational opportunities for Shu-Ming and her siblings could also be viewed as a form of privilege. It was a form of privilege in that

they were exposed to opportunities to secure linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic capital that would enable them to move beyond the communities in Taiwan (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). All in all, the women's privileged backgrounds and vast amounts of educational experiences within and beyond their native countries were intended to provide them with linguistic, cultural, and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1986; Lin, 2004).

*Linguistic and Racial Marginalization.* Despite possessing privileged-class identities, the women's experiences could be interpreted in ways other than linguistic and cultural empowerment. Theoretically, a different way to understand these women's experiences entails the linguistic and racial marginalization that they encountered in the United States stemming from interactions with students from different linguistic, cultural, racial, and classed backgrounds. Many interpretations exist for why the women experienced linguistic and racial marginalization. In what follows, I discuss possible interpretations.

Specifically, they all had marginalizing relations with the English language and native English speakers (Belcher & Connor, 2001; Liu, 1999). When they set foot in English speaking countries to be part of TESOL programs, they experienced a host of problems related to how the English language was perceived in the worldwide context and who was seen as legitimate owners and users of the English language (Amin, 1997; 2001; Widdowson, 1994; Johnson, 2006). This led to them seeing themselves as inferiors to NESs and other European NNEs in the areas of language fluency and communications (Pasternak & Bailey, 2004). They saw themselves as perpetual learners as opposed to seeing themselves as bilinguals and multicompetent individuals

(Amin, 2001; Carroll, 2006; Cook, 1992; 1995; Kubota, Bashir-Ali, Canagarajah, Kamhi-Stein, Lee, & Kim, 2005; Pavlenko, 2003; Tang, 1997). The women, to varying degrees, came to realize that only NESs could be ideal English language teachers. Their linguistic identities encompassed how they positioned themselves and how the dominant, as well as their local cultures, positioned them in relation to the English language (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005). An example of this was Yu Ri who stated feeling out of place in the classroom context as she interacted with NESs in the TESOL courses, thus losing her voice as an NNEST in the whole classroom discussions.

From a racial perspective, another way to interpret the women's experiences could be that they compared themselves to their colleagues who were white native speakers and non-native speakers. In comparing themselves to their white NES and NNEST classmates, their lack of oral participation in ESL classrooms and/or TESOL graduate courses could be perceived of as self-debilitating and/or self-marginalizing. This was due to the fact that they now had to produce oral English communications in different discourse communities as opposed to their having to do so in the comfort of their native learning contexts (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

A similar interpretation is offered in Miller's (2004) study where Asian ESL students' experiences were marginalized culminating in the silencing of their voices. According to Miller's interpretations, the Asian students in her study were neither accepted nor liked by their non-Asian classmates due to their Asian-ness, which was equated to them being silent and shy in classroom interaction. Similarly, for the five East Asian women in the study, opportunities to speak out diminished. Possibly, this

stemmed from the fact that they were the only Asians in the class and thus were perceived to have oral skills that were “inaudible and incomprehensible” as compared to their white NES and NNES classmates (Miller, 2004). Hence, the women were indoctrinated into a racializing practice that equated the white race to be “audible speaking” and equated the Asian race to be “inaudible speaking.”

In the case of Han Nah, she quickly realized that it would be difficult for her to attain legitimacy as a native speaker in the world of English language learning and teaching as a result of her negative experience being the only Asian student in intensive English language institutes. As for Liu, she felt that her contributions on the program project (working with a professor and a NES doctoral student) would have been taken seriously had she been a white NES graduate student. Also, she would have been spared from having to hear statements from her professor and this NES doctoral student such as “no, I don’t think so.” Because she was not a white NES graduate student, she was not legitimized as a speaker. As a result of this racializing practice, Liu stayed silent not to damage the working relationship further, which became the marginal non-participatory practice which deterred her from participating in the future as indicated in Norton’s (2001) discussion. Interestingly enough though, Liu interpreted this silence to be a symbol of power rather than weakness which echoed Hurtado’s (1996) statement that “Many women of Color use silence with a specific goal in mind and return to their own safe communities to share what they have learned and to verify the accuracy of their observations” (p. 382).

Shu-Ming realized that she was perceived of as racially and linguistically different when compared to white NNES classmates who came from European

backgrounds. Shu-Ming talked about a White Russian classmate and noted that if this woman did not speak during classroom discussions, then other classmates would not have assumed that she was an NNES experiencing language difficulties (Hansen, 2004). For Shu-Ming though, she stated that her not speaking during classroom discussions would have been attributed to her having language difficulties since others did perceive her to be an NNES. This was echoed by Kubota, Bashir-Ali, Canagarajah, Kamhi-Stein, Lee, and Shin (2005) in that “the possession of linguistic capital alone is not sufficient for gaining economic and social power; one’s race and other traits [such as gender, ableism, ageism, and sexual orientation as possible other traits] influence how one can convert the cultural capital into social, economic, and symbolic capital” (p. 3).

This study highlights the fact that individuals, such as these women, who experience marginalization in educational settings or elsewhere have to exhibit resiliency in terms of future educational or professional directions. They were essentially forced to resist the pressures exerted on them by dominant influences, such as different individuals or ideologies prevalent in their environment, bent on asserting or dictating that they must follow specific pathways. All five women displayed resistance and resiliency in the face of these pressures. This resistance and resiliency culminated in the women being able to follow through to completion of the TESOL programs, and, for several of them to successfully navigate through student teaching experiences.

*Theme 5: Pedagogy of Empowerment and Possibility*

The study delineated the importance of learning to teach (e.g., student teaching) and teaching experiences as many of the women in this study were able to overcome feelings of powerlessness and marginalization in their graduate TESOL programs. They overcame these feelings by being empowered through pre-service teaching experiences (Liu, Xia, and Yu Ri), the volunteer teaching of adult ESL students (Shu-Ming), and the offering of Korean-language teaching for both children and adults (Han Nah). Many of the women cited the importance of being able to incorporate much of what they had learned in their graduate programs in these specific teaching positions which helped them, even further, in being able to designate themselves as credible and legitimate NNES teachers.

Before they embarked on their different teaching contexts, though, all five women were confident about their declarative knowledge, which constituted knowledge acquired through the courses they took in their TESOL programs (Freeman, 1996; Johnson, 1999; Pasternak & Bailey, 2004). The application of their declarative knowledge was “lived out” or “tested out” within teaching communities, and it was within these communities, that the women also gained their procedural knowledge (i.e., their ability to teach ESL). It was important for them to combine both declarative and procedural knowledge in the commencement of their identity constructions and negotiations as teachers of ESL and Korean (Han Nah, and Yu Ri to some degree). For them, it was knowing about the English (Korean) language and knowing how to navigate through different ESL learning and (Korean) teaching



contexts that contributed to identifications of themselves as ESL teachers (Pasternak & Bailey, 2004) and Korean teachers (Han Nah and Yu Ri).

Liu, Xia, and Yu Ri experienced what Brinton's (2004) NNES teacher candidates went through to varying degrees. All three lacked confidence in the beginning of their student teaching and pre-student teaching experiences; however, the women's confidence levels did increase due to having supportive and encouraging mentor teachers in the case of Liu and Xia, and having students who validated her as a teacher in the case of Yu Ri. With regards to perceived linguistic challenges, all stated that they were nervous about teaching ESL with these perceived challenges emanating from their English language oral communication abilities. On the whole, they stated that they did not experience any negative impacts due to outside influences or marginalization as tied to English language production. All in all, their perceived linguistic challenges may have stemmed more from their lack of experience in teaching and in interacting with different ESL populations than from any actual limited linguistic production abilities.

Unlike Liu, Xia, and Yu Ri, Shu-Ming's lived experience as a long-time English- language learner and user was actually an asset for her in her teaching settings. She constantly told her students that it was possible for them to learn and be fluent in the language and that she was living proof of this assertion (Braine, 1999; Medgyes, 1999). This statement of Shu-Ming also coincided with what Amin's (2004) study participants told their students about themselves as visible minority ESL teachers. "English is not [our] mother tongue, and it can be learned" (p. 70).

To varying degrees, their student teaching and/or volunteer teaching experiences gave them new perspectives about teaching in general. All of the women said that they were able to use effective pedagogies emerging from their lived experiences as language learners in different contexts. Medgyes (1999) discussed the advantages of NNES teachers due to what they had gleaned from their own experiences as second language learners. He summarized their advantages over the NES teachers as: First, they are able to provide good learner models for imitation. Second, they are able to teach language learning strategies more effectively (Oxford, 1990). Third, they are able to supply learners with more information about the English language as in the case of forging both declarative and procedural knowledge into their teaching (Pasternak & Bailey, 2004). Fourth, they are able to anticipate and prevent language difficulties better. Fifth, they are able to be more empathetic to the needs and problems of learners (Brady & Park, 2004). Finally, they are able to make use of the learner's mother tongue (Kouritzin, 2000; Shin, 2005).

Furthermore, the women saw themselves as good models for both learning and teaching English. They utilized an ethic of caring to be sensitive to their students' linguistic and cultural issues, and they, more often than not, became resources for their students (Noddings, 1984; Valenzuela, 1999). They shared stories of successes and failures with their students as a way to help them understand that language learning is a process-oriented endeavor. Also, the women helped their students to empower themselves by infusing them with political vision to question how the English language should be taught to them and how they should be perceived of by others in the English language teaching field (Simon, 1992). Moreover, the experiences of these

women paralleled Amin's (2001) minority teachers' comments in that "teaching English well is not a racial or biological quality but a craft" (p. 74).

*Theme 6: TESOL Program Credentials as a Symbol of Status*

All of the women in the study perceived the usefulness of obtaining TESOL program credentials (e.g., an introductory certificate, Master's Degree, and K-12 certification) to provide them with status (i.e., face validity). This would bring them one step closer to being full-fledged members of the TESOL professional community, each with a voice in this community. They interpreted the obtaining of credentials from their TESOL programs to be both legitimate and valid ways of finding and securing their identities as NNES TESOLers (i.e., TESOL professionals).

*Theme 7: Finding a Professional Niche*

As a result of their U.S. graduate educational experiences, specifically related to teaching experiences, some women redirected their professional life trajectories. Depending on the women's experiences, the redirections were either self-determined or determined by outside forces beyond their control. Han Nah's need to position herself within her dominant linguistic and racial identities culminated in her deciding to teach the Korean language and promote Korean-English bilingual education instead of continuing with her Turkish language and Islamic women's studies programs. Liu, as a result of her heartfelt experience in elementary and middle school student teaching settings, decided to teach children as one of her options upon returning to China. Xia commenced a Ph.D. program in TESOL to continue her quest to make a difference in the world of English- language learning and teaching in both the United States and China. Yu Ri returned to Korea upon completion of her Master's program

in search of English teaching positions. And finally, Shu-Ming, in addition to teaching ESL to adults, began providing intermediate Chinese to university students while continuing to look for opportunities to teach English in China.

*Theme 8: Perceived Limitations in Native Contexts*

Although all of the women successfully completed a Master's degree program in TESOL in the United States, they talked about the gloomy prospects of finding and securing teaching positions in their native countries upon their return some day. According to the women, they are likely to encounter a host of challenges for which they will have to face, such as a greater demand for native English speaking (NES) teachers than native born, non-native English-speaking (NNES) teachers in a multitude of contexts (issues of supply and demand). Also, they will have to confront not having the right kinds of connections to secure teaching employment (issues of access), and having to compete with individuals with Ph.D. degrees needing teaching positions (advanced degree holders from English-speaking countries as well as native countries that are unemployed or underemployed).

All of the women had very clear understandings of what was wrong with their countries' educational systems as consistent with that borne out through their lived experiences. At times, this inhibited them from being able to relate what they had learned in their native countries to what they were learning in U.S. educational contexts. Basically, their exposure to different learning/teaching contexts in different countries provided them with experiences in order to more objectively evaluate their countries' educational systems and determine what improvements were needed.

However, the study also highlighted the women's realization that they would not be able to make any significant changes in the school systems within their native countries upon return to these countries with U.S. TESOL degree credentials. This realization was, in all likelihood, attributable to the knowledge that they possessed regarding the non-malleability of their countries' educational systems coupled with the knowledge that they gleaned from situated learning contexts in the U. S. fraught with their own sets of mandates and requirements (Lui, Ahn, Baek, & Hahn, 2004). That is, the women recognized that there were parallels between the U. S. and their home countries in terms of the potential for encountering difficulties with respect to making changes in the educational systems, while at the same time having to conform to specific mandates set by the state and national governments.

### **Implications for TESOL Teacher Education Programs**

What appropriate and specific TESOL teacher education implications can be drawn from the women's life history narratives? I consider five possibilities here.

#### *Understanding of Personal Biography*

The women's narratives reveal that much needs to be done with regards to TESOL programs admitting NNEs from similar linguistic and cultural backgrounds such as these women (Kamhi-Stein, 2000). To paraphrase Julian Edge (1996), TESOL programs need to bring together the theoretical, the professional, and the personal in understanding their pre-service teachers, for their biographies have a wealth of information about their educational history and their prior learning experiences that could begin to assist TESOL programs in truly knowing their students. This is important given that these pre-service teachers will eventually be responsible for

teaching students in a variety of teaching settings. It is about understanding their identity constructions and how their identities have been negotiated and constructed prior to entrance into TESOL programs. By understanding the biographies of individuals who enter their TESOL programs, this should enable these programs to become professionally accountable to the learning and future teaching needs of all pre-service students, as opposed to adhering to a “one-size-fits-all” approach in TESOL teacher education.

*Becoming Critically Conscious of Critical Multiculturalism*

Critical multiculturalism advocates multicultural education for all students rather than just for ethnic minority students who may need to raise their self-esteem. With its focus on demystifying hegemonic knowledge and dismantling a social, racial, and economic hierarchy, critical multicultural education involves all students, including those with racial and economic privileges. ... Just as multicultural education should be inclusive in terms of participants, it should be comprehensive with respect to curriculum. It demands that curricula, materials, and daily instruction involve all students in critical inquiry into how taken-for-granted knowledge, such as history, geography, and lives of other people, is produced, legitimated, and contested in power struggles. (Kubota, 2004, p. 40)

Related to this idea of using personal biographies to promote change is the provision of avenues for *ALL* pre-service teachers to be critically conscious of critical multiculturalism surrounding their professional journeys (Kubota, 2004). Both NESs

and NNEs within TESOL programs are responsible for getting to know each other and becoming more aware of and being more critical about how they gain knowledge, what instructional materials are used, and what kinds of diverse materials are represented in the curricula across the field of TESOL. This will enable all to realize the diverse linguistic, cultural, and racial make-up of the English language learners around the world. In so doing, this will help pre-service teachers and their future students embrace English as an international language that is owned by all varieties of speakers, and not just White, native-English speakers.

*Highlighting Sociopolitical and Geographical Issues Pertaining to TESOL Education*

As TESOL has become increasingly international and self-conscious in its orientation given the strong globalization narrative with which it now must contend, it has opened a space for discussing realities from non-western parts of the world. (Ramanathan, 2005, p. 122)

Insights from the women's narratives point to the importance of TESOL programs in English-speaking countries learning more about their NNE pre-service teachers' native countries and how English educational programs are being implemented in these countries. What are their national mandates? What are their overall goals in learning and teaching English? How do these countries perceive NNEs and NNEs in the field of TESOL? What are the rationales behind sending their students to English speaking countries to be credentialed in TESOL? How does the National Council on Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) in the United States align with their local organization of accreditation of teacher education? Additional research into ascertaining the answers to the above questions could help

teacher educators in TESOL programs in not only understanding their students' backgrounds, but in beginning to understand how the English language is being perceived abroad. Furthermore, answers to the above queries could begin to shed light on what TESOL degree credentials symbolize for these NNES pre-service teachers, their future students and the parents of these students, and policy makers in the women's native countries.

Furthermore, with these questions, there is also an issue of access pertaining to TESOL education within and beyond the women's native countries. For example, an issue of access revealed different forms of privilege, highlighting differences between NNESs in the study. This pertained to the fact that the two international Korean women (Han Nah and Yu Ri) had much more in the way of language learning experiences (i.e. study abroad programs) in English speaking countries while completing their education in Korea as compared to the two international Chinese women (Xia and Liu). This could have been due to sociopolitical reasons, as it may have been easier for individuals from countries such as Korea to have been able to study abroad, as opposed to individuals from more closed countries such as China. An additional rationale could be that some Korean parents could have much more in the way of economic resources to enable their children to obtain human capital at earlier stages of their educational experiences.

*Reconceptualizing TESOL Curricula from Bottom Up: From the Women's Lived Experiences*

The study highlights the need for graduate TESOL programs in the U.S. and other dominant English speaking countries to reconceptualize their curricula in order to enact changes, at the programmatic level. Such reconceptualization could go some



distance in ensuring that the needs of a growing body of students in these programs, namely NNES East Asian women, are being met by the programs. The study participants made numerous recommendations for programmatic improvements with some dominant ideas emerging across participants. In what follows, I explicate their programmatic suggestions, which could be transferred to other TESOL programs across the nation and elsewhere. It is important to note that these suggestions are the results of their lived experiences of learning and teaching in their native countries, other foreign countries, and TESOL programs in the United States (Amin, 2001; Kamhi-Stein, 1999).

First, the women suggested that their programs should provide a wide variety of courses for international NNES pre-service students who plan to return to their native countries to teach. The women stated that most TESOL graduate students from Asian backgrounds return to their native countries to use the knowledge that they had gained in the United States TESOL programs, since there are very few opportunities for them to stay in ESL contexts in the United States. To address this, the women proposed adding courses pertaining to foreign language teaching methodology for teachers planning to teach outside of the U.S. contexts.

Second, the women suggested instituting a language training and academic discourse program for newly arrived international students through either mini courses or professional development workshops scheduled throughout the academic calendar year. International students would become familiar with the academic conventions of United States graduate programs and also become more comfortable with the different paces of student and teacher interactions. Through these different workshops,

international students also could work toward improving their English language proficiency (Medgyes, 1999). This was exemplified by the fact that the study participants, who had emerged from prior educational experiences in their native countries, had to be inducted into a new set of academic discourse in navigating through higher educational contexts in the United States.

Third, the women proposed a course designed by both native-speaking and non-native speaking professors to address issues of culture and diversity as pertained to English language learners. Specifically, the women called for cultural and linguistic sensitivity training for NESs, collaborations between NESs and NNESs to build communities of practice and a sense of community for all, courses on how the American educational system works for international students, courses on cultural issues and diversity for ELLs, programs to focus on an overall international mission beyond the Americas and Europe, and compulsory (mandatory or requisite) work assignments between native and nonnative students (Kubota, 2003). In proposing such course ideas, the women argued that the focus of the TESOL programs should highlight an international mission and not just be limited to focusing on native, non-native, Americans, Europeans, and/or South Americans. There should be connections, they added, with universities in Asian countries, and teaching exchange and language and cultural immersion programs for practicing teachers (Suarez, 2002).

Fourth, the women called for courses where both NESs and NNESs could benefit by trying out different teaching and learning methods. They stated that the native English speakers could benefit because they would be able to see which methods and strategies worked well with second-language learners, and the non-native

English speakers could improve on both their language usage as well as working in team-teaching situations. The women believed that these types of courses could go beyond the tutorials instituted in their TESOL programs, since both NES and NNES pre-service teachers would be working together to improve teaching and learning for English language learners (Braine, 1999; Kamhi-Stein, 2004).

Connected to this idea, the women suggested that their programs should create a confidence-building course for both NES/NNES teachers in which teacher candidates could critique each other's teaching in order to improve their practice. This course could consist of teaching demonstrations, presentations about different pedagogical materials and techniques, and reflective journaling about one's own experiences in learning to teach English. Teaching demonstrations could provide opportunities to watch and critique one's own and other's teaching in either authentic settings or in graduate classroom settings. In addition to teaching demonstrations, students could share with each other through presentations what types of pedagogical techniques and teaching materials were successful and unsuccessful. They also recommended that students write reflective journal entries about their development as teacher candidates learning to teach. The women strongly suggested that everyone in TESOL programs should begin teaching early in their teacher preparation programs (Richards & Lockhart, 1996).

Finally, the women proposed adding courses emphasizing technological instructive tools, wherein students and teachers would be able to take teaching beyond the classrooms. They believed that TESOL programs should also find ways for graduates who planned to return to their native countries to locate and use different

kinds of authentic materials, update students about educational contexts in EFL, and about what teaching approaches work in EFL contexts (Freed, 1991; Fang & Warschauer, 2004; Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

*Integrating TESOL Field Experience throughout Master's Programs*

In addition to the aforementioned suggestions and recommendations, the women espoused the importance of their student-teaching, volunteer teaching, and other teaching experiences as being the most significant contributor to their identification as burgeoning language teachers during their TESOL Master's programs. They felt empowered through a variety of teaching situations. The women were able to connect TESOL theories learned in their coursework into their authentic teaching experiences. For example, Han Nah would not have implemented communicative competence into her Korean language classes had the concept not been introduced to her in her Atlantic University TESOL courses. Both Xia and Yu Ri commented that their student-teaching opportunities provided them with tools to teach a diverse group of ESOL students. In addition to bringing theory into practice, they experienced, first-hand, the realities of classroom teaching (i.e., implementing classroom management, promoting a variety of learning styles and strategies, and collaborating with different teachers in both ESOL and mainstream contexts). In the case of Liu, she witnessed caring and renewing experiences between her mentor teacher and his students. Her desire to teach children as one of her future imagined opportunities was a direct by-product of her pre-student-teaching opportunities with a diverse group of students. As for Shu-Ming, her level of confidence and self-esteem increased as a result of her lengthy volunteer teaching and adult ESL teaching

experiences. She concluded that her teaching came from her lived experiences. Through sharing her own victories and struggles as a former ESL student in the United States with her adult ESL students, she imparted a sense of confidence and self-esteem in her own students.

Many TESOL programs situate field experience (i.e., student-teaching experience) at the end of coursework or have fragmented classroom observations within certain classes; however, a few notable teacher education programs in this country integrate field experiences across the programs (Darling-Hammond, 2000). For example, the Developmental Teacher Education (DTE) Program at the University of California, Berkeley (Snyder, 2000), is an exemplary program that assigns equal importance to both coursework and the requisite five field experience placements throughout the program's 2 years. The TESOL programs may need to revitalize and restructure their field experience in order to introduce teaching at the beginning of their Master's degree programs.

### **Future Research Directions**

The findings from this study shed light on additional research opportunities in the fields of TESOL and teacher education. Further research studies need to be designed for NNES pre-service and in-service teachers, specifically East Asian women, who continue to be admitted into TESOL programs in the United States in large numbers. Specific research foci should be directed to issues of linguistic empowerment and marginalization and the intersectional relationships between these issues and issues of power, gender, race, and social class. Also, research studies should be designed to examine the ethnography of communication, interactions, and

programmatic curricula executions that aim to internationalize TESOL programs (Matsuda, 2003; Pakir, 1999; Ramanathan, 2005), with NES and NNES graduate students and their professors as main participants in the study. In addition to the broad research directions above, in what follows, I discuss my specific research focus resulting from this study.

The follow-up studies to be conducted based on the current study are pertinent in continuing to honor these women's life history narratives and in monitoring, over a longer period of time, the identity reconstructions and renegotiations that occurred as a result of having participated in graduate U.S. TESOL programs. The findings that emerged from the study with the five East Asian women, coupled with these future research directions, will continue to inform the growing body of theoretical, methodological, and practical knowledge necessary to advance the field of TESOL and general teacher education. Here, I delineate and comment on specific research study questions emerging from the findings from the current study.

*Identity Re-Constructions and Re-Negotiations in New Contexts*

*How are the five women experiencing their identity reconstructions and renegotiations, specifically in the area of teaching, as a result of completing their TESOL teacher education programs?*

*Have they been utilizing what they have learned from their TESOL programs in their current situations?*

In order to probe the above questions, I propose to do follow-up studies (1 year, 3 years, and 5 years) with my participants. Upon completion of their TESOL programs in the United States, the women are doing as follows: One woman is

teaching the Korean language to adults in two different institutions. One woman is teaching ESL in a public school system in the United States and plans to return to her native country upon completing one-year of ESL teaching in the United States. One woman has been matriculated into a Ph.D. program in TESOL. One woman has returned to Korea in search of an English teaching position. One woman is teaching adult ESL in an adult education program as well as teaching Chinese to university students.

Specifically, I intend to deepen my understanding of how they experience their new teaching contexts as NNES teachers who have completed TESOL teacher education programs and how those experiences have shaped their identities as in-service ESOL practitioners (Motha, 2004).

For the women who have returned to their native countries, I would like to propose a study utilizing an electronic diary (in addition to other means of data collection) of how they are navigating their new teaching contexts as NNESs with U.S. TESOL credentials. This will contribute to a better understanding of how U.S. TESOL programs could (re)structure their curriculum for their international teacher candidates' future teaching contexts (Butler, 2004; Li, 1998; Nunan, 2003).

*Evaluative Programmatic Studies: Issues of Knowledge, Pedagogy, and Mentoring*

*How do different TESOL programs understand the needs of international NNES students?*

*What expectations do they have of their students?*

*How do they prepare their students to teach English in different contexts around the world?*

In order to probe the above questions, I would like to design a study examining the two TESOL programs utilized as sites in my dissertation (Atlantic University and Pacific University) in order to discern the meanings behind curriculum, pedagogy, knowledge construction, and mentoring as they relate to the overall mission of the international TESOL community (Ramanathan, Davies, Schleppegrell, 2001; McDonald, 2005).

*East Asian Perspectives on U.S. TESOL Programs*

*What expectations do universities or the Ministries of Education in China, Korea, and Taiwan, respectively, have toward U.S. TESOL programs?*

*How do they envision what the students from their countries will learn within U.S. educational contexts that these students will be able to apply in those native teaching contexts?*

*What are the future directions of English language and cultural education in China, Korea, and Taiwan?*

In order to respond to the above questions, I plan to institute an international EFL teacher exchange program with a university or universities in China, Korea, or Taiwan in order to bring together the cultural and linguistic strengths of both the United States and East Asian countries in preparing future ESL/EFL teachers in an era of globalized communities. Through this kind of teacher exchange program, mutual understandings of what the expectations are from different parties involved in preparing English teachers for globalized contexts will develop. Hence, my future



research directions are tied to finding common threads in improving the overall quality of education for the culturally and linguistically diverse ESOL population by better preparing their future teachers within sound and effective TESOL programs.

Before I conclude, I share some final theoretical, methodological, and ethical reflections.

### **Theoretical, Methodological, and Ethical Reflections**

*In what ways have my experiences [as a graduate student in a Research I institution, as an NNES, and as a Korean-American] informed my research endeavors?* This question has been of paramount importance to me throughout this entire research process. Though my data collection spanned seven months, from October 2004 through May 2005, the brewing ideas percolating throughout this study began even before I commenced my Ph.D. program. Throughout the study, there were issues of uncertainty and unpredictability that were ever-present in terms of the conducting of this study. I believe that these reflections added important dimensions to my study since these reflections added knowledge with regard to theoretical, methodological, and ethical issues germane to the study. To this end, in this section, I foreground my critical reflections per having wrestled with specific theoretical, methodological, and ethnical issues germane to the study. I also want to credit the development of this section to Bruce Van Sledright, Michele Foster, and Jeremy Price with regard to what they have shared with me in advancing my own work.

### Theoretical Reflections

Presently, it is widely acknowledged that all researchers are influenced by their particular perspectives. But what about the perspectives of ethnic minorities? In what ways do our experiences inform our research endeavors? Many of us are first socialized into the values, norms, and communication standards of our home communities, and later, after many years of education, into those of the mainstream culture [TESOL or U.S. discourse communities]. Moreover, the subordinate position assigned to our communities in the American social order forces us to see ourselves through others' eyes. This means that we are more likely to understand, if only through our own lived experiences, what it means to be marginalized. (Foster, 1994, p. 131)

*In what ways does my work promote Western TESOL methodologies and programs as panacea for East Asian women's TESOL knowledge constructions?* This reflection, deeply invisible has surfaced. The above excerpt from Foster's work coupled with my own weaving through the reflective process has allowed me to think about not only how the English language is perceived in the international context as mentioned by the participants of the study but also how Western TESOL programs could be perceived by individuals in non-Western countries as more and more individuals from these countries come into the Inner Circle countries (e.g., the U.S.) to be educated. Although the study I present here does not condone the hegemony of Western knowledge and practice spreading in non-Western countries such as the host countries of Han Nah, Liu, Xia, Yu Ri, and Shu-Ming, this needs to be explicated here

in order to understand varying degrees of theoretical views. For example, some might argue that Western TESOL programs, given the way they are privileged in the world, could otherwise be seen as hegemonic in that many East Asian countries may look to the knowledge of the West to help them better understand for example, English language programs, teacher education, and professional development of both pre-service and in-service teachers (e.g., Kubota, 2004; Pennycook, 2001).

Moreover, as I stated in Chapter 1, I commenced the study with some preconceived notions of what my participants had likely experienced based on my own lived experiences as a Korean-American in the field of TESOL. These preconceived notions probably colored my perspectives with regards to the purposes of this study; however, this was only natural in conducting any kind of qualitative research. Nevertheless, I came into this study devoid of any specific agendas. Specifically, I came into this study to “look at” their experiences and not to “look for” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Van Sledright, 2002) specifics in their experiences as East Asian women matriculating through TESOL programs. I could have come into the study with specific things to “look for” as in understanding how the women become legitimate peripheral participants in different communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), socialization processes in TESOL programs, discourse analysis of their interactional experiences, and critical race theory to frame their experiences (Ladson-Billings, 2000), to name a few. However, I chose to let the data speak such that different theoretical views, as opposed to utilizing a single theoretical framework, would inform my analysis. These theoretical views as pertains to the critical and feminist perspectives and ethnic epistemologies (Ladson-Billings, 2000) of

East Asian women in TESOL programs came from scholars for whom I had been educated in their views during my latter years of graduate education. Also, I desired to engage in conversations with these scholars regarding their views as I continue to expand my research endeavors (Foster, 1994; 2005).

### *Methodological Reflections*

The women whom I chose to study through purposeful and snowball sampling techniques, I believe, also decided to volunteer for this study due to my well-regarded reputation within the regional TESOL community and the rapport that I had established with some of their professors. All five women either knew me through their professors or through regional conferences. Through these connections, an indirect sense of trust developed between us with me as a researcher and my work in the field of TESOL. Foster (1994; 2005) named this “reputational sampling.” That I was already visible in the community and knew their professors on both personal and professional levels likely influenced the decisions of these women to participate in this study. The fact that I came into their lives as a doctoral student could have been interpreted as an issue of wielding power, either directly or indirectly, over these women given their position as Master’s level students and as younger Asian women in TESOL.

Even after they had signed the informed consent, some women had remained distant due to my identity as a Korean-American. Both Korean women saw me to be far different from what they had experienced as Korean women in both native and U.S. educational contexts. Han Nah, for example, checked out my curriculum vitae in trying to understand my background as well as the credibility and legitimacy of the

study that I was proposing to do. It was very challenging to establish a good working relation with her due to her distant-ness. She also challenged me in my own research endeavor. She did not understand why I chose to study a group of women who were seen as privileged, since her study as a doctoral student in Turkey had centered on examining the experiences of poor, rural Turkish women.

With both Han Nah and Yu Ri, when my insider perspective vis-à-vis their experiences was further revealed, this seemed to close the distance gap. I spoke some Korean language with them during the interview sessions and I also shared bits and pieces of my lived experiences as a Korean-American woman in the U.S. educational system and a Korean-American woman teacher in the Korean educational contexts. They became more accepting of me as an insider and they began to share more openly about their experiences in both Korea and outside of Korea. I realized that with Han Nah, more than others, I had to work hard in order to “pass the initial test” that she imposed on me as there was this invisible divide between her as a Korean woman and me as a Korean-American woman. This kind of initial resistance by participants was also echoed in Foster’s (1994) interactions with her Black teacher participants.

Throughout the data collection process, I encountered some challenges trying to engage women with different data sources. Was I asking the right kinds of follow-up questions? Did the women feel pressured to perform in certain ways throughout the interview sessions? Was I making myself clear? Because two women had initially pulled out of my study, I was apprehensive about women pulling out of the study in the midst of data collection due to the process being perceived of as “too much” work for them while performing other responsibilities as students, mother (Han Nah),

spouse (Han Nah and Liu), and teachers. Although I tried to encourage them to participate as much as they could with different data collection practices, I did not want to be perceived of as wielding too much power over the participants. Specifically, when Han Nah became resistant about doing journal entries via e-mail, I accepted it as a part of the methodological dilemma that not all women would be amenable to different data collection procedures. For example, Han Nah may have been apprehensive about revealing her English language limitation, especially in writing since she hardly writes in the English language. I am not certain what would have occurred if I had been more firm about having Han Nah do her journal entries. Now, I realize that the richness and power of the method of journal writing could be potentially valuable pedagogically if I had “pushed” her to do her journals. In the future, as I plan out the follow-up studies explicated in the “Future Research Directions” section, I would like for the women, especially Han Nah, to begin writing their way into understanding their lived experiences better. This might perhaps bring added dimensions to her self-understanding as a Korean woman teaching the Korean language in ESL contexts using strategies gleaned from her TESOL program at Atlantic University.

What was a paramount importance for me as a researcher from a methodological standpoint was that I be perceived of as an “insider” by my research participants as opposed to being perceived of as an outsider. Even as an insider, though, I am reminded of Foster’s (1994) reflection with her work with Black teachers that “research conducted by insiders cannot capture the total experiences of an entire community” (p. 144).

### Ethical Reflections

I determined to do all of the tape transcription work on my own. I did not want to entrust these tapes, the intimate conversations I had with my participants, to someone else due to ethical considerations. These concerns involved the divulging of intimate details of these women's life stories to a stranger or strangers. Although transcribing these tapes was a long arduous task, I would not have done it any other way and benefited additionally from being able to once again, "feel" their experiences as I listened to them immediately after each interview. It also helped me to generate analytic memos for each woman with regard to preliminary data analysis. Furthermore, this was a good opportunity for me to include some follow-up questions as I was transcribing the tapes (e.g., Knight, 2000).

### **Concluding Reflections**

Through the life history narratives told by these East Asian women, much was revealed by the women as they recounted journeying through their educational experiences in the United States. Primarily, it was discerned that through their participation in the TESOL programs and through their interactions with others both inside and outside of the programs that there existed a shared sense of diverse identity constructions and negotiations in relation to issues of language, gender, race, and social class. Most importantly, their participation in this dissertation study afforded them and myself the opportunity to share with, in a public academic space, what it means to be East Asian women in the field of TESOL. Personally, there were some powerful moments as I conversed with Han Nah, Liu, Xia, Yu Ri, and Shu-Ming. The powerful moments such as reliving the incidents that have either marginalized or

empowered me throughout my interactions with the English language and teaching enterprise have added multiple dimensions to my insider and outsider perspectives. Although this study was designed initially understand the experiences of five East Asian women navigating through their U.S. TESOL programs, I came to understand my journeys better in light of rendering our experiences together. Thus, our voices, once silenced, became unsilenced through the study.

I am hopeful that the insights gleaned from these narratives can begin to inform TESOL teacher education programs in order to improve the quality of education for all TESOL students, continue the conversations among scholars bridging Western and non-Western TESOL, and learn from one another in furthering our research agenda in the areas of NNES issues.

I am honored to have been a part of the construction of their life-history narratives, and for the insights about the practices of TESOL programs for which they have provided me.



## Appendix 1

(Sample E-mail communication, October, 2003)

Hope this e-mail finds you well. Professor Bobson<sup>6</sup> referred me to you. I graduated from [your Program] in 2000, and immediately began my doctoral studies at University of Maryland College Park. I have recently completed my candidacy exam and am now thinking and planning out my dissertation proposal.

This semester I am looking for and talking with some East Asian women matriculated in the Master's TESOL program in different institutions in the DC metropolitan area. Towards the end of Spring 2004 semester, I will start collecting data for my dissertation study.

In a nutshell, my study will focus on the experiences of East Asian women (Japan, Korea, China) navigating through the issues of power, gender, identities, race, and ethnicity that are embedded visibly and invisibly in the TESOL preparation programs.

This semester, I am just getting to know my "prospective" informants since my informants and I need to build trust and understanding of one another before I embark on the official data collection stage. I am asking you if you'd be interested in knowing more about this research focus. Since I am just getting to know the possible informants, I am not making any decisions of who will actually be my research informants. Please let me know your thoughts, and would love to sit down and chat over a cup of latte.

(Sample E-mail communication, October, 2003)

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<sup>6</sup> A pseudonym

## Appendix 2

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Initial \_\_\_\_\_ Date

### **Informed Consent Form**

**Project Title:** Understanding the Identities of East Asian Women (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and/or Taiwanese) Teacher Candidates (EAWTCs) in U.S. TESOL Programs

**Statement of Age of Subject:** I state that I am over 18 years of age and wish to participate in a program of research being conducted by Gloria Park in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland 20742.

**Purpose:** The **purpose** of this dissertation study is to understand the identities of six EAWTCs enrolled in TESOL programs. Specifically, this study asks: (1) What is their understanding of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in their native countries? (2) What is their understanding of the field of TESOL in the U.S. context? (3) How do they participate (or not participate) in their TESOL programs? The above questions will begin to unpack the issues around pedagogy, curriculum, and knowledge production for EAWTCs in U.S. TESOL programs.

### **Procedures:**

**Electronic Autobiographical Narrative:** I will be responding to e-mail questions that ask about (1) the status of the English language education in my country, (2) my English language learning and teaching history in my native country and in the U.S., and (3) my interest in gaining admission into my current TESOL program. Some of the sample questions are as follows: (a) how is teaching English viewed in my country? (b) when did you first become interested in learning English in your country? (c) what motivated you to gain admission into a TESOL program? The total time I will be spending on this task will be approximately 3-5 hours over the period of one to two months.

**Electronic Journal of Educational Incidents:** I will be sending in bi-monthly electronic journal entries of educational incidents that have occurred in my program as I interact with my classmates, professors, and program requirements around (1) my understanding of native-English speaking (NES) and non-native-English speaking (NNES) ideas, (2) my experience as an East Asian woman, and (3) my perception of program's effectiveness for my future goals. In each electronic journal entry, I will be discussing the above issues using the following prompts: (a) where did the educational incident occur? (b) who/what was involved in this incident? (c) briefly describe the incident. The total time I will be spending on this task will be approximately 2 hours per month over the period of four to five months.

**Individual Interviews:** At an interview location convenient to me, I will be asked to respond orally to questions concerning (1) demographic information about my current TESOL program, (2) my views on the status of NES and NNES teacher candidates, and (3) a set of questions that have emerged from my electronic autobiographical narrative and my electronic journal of educational incident data. Some of the oral sample questions are: (a) about how many (or what percentage) of your classmates are non-native English speakers? (b) how do you see yourself in the program? (c) a list of emerging questions from the electronic autobiography and journal have not been determined at the time of this informed consent. The total time I will be spending on the interviews will be approximately 3-5 hours over the period of two to three months. I will be able to ask Ms. Park to stop the audiotaping, if at any time, I feel uncomfortable about being audiotaped.

**Focused-Group Interviews:** I will be asked to participate in a conversational interview with other women participants in this study. A convenient location will be determined by the participants. The nature of the group interview questions will be about (1) our perceptions on the effectiveness of our TESOL program for our future teaching and professional purposes, and (2) other programmatic questions that may have emerged from our electronic autobiographical narratives and our electronic journals of educational incidents. Some of the oral sample questions are: (a) what is your understanding of an effective TESOL program? (b) what do you hope to get out of your program? (c) a list of emerging questions from the electronic autobiography and journal have not been determined at the time of this informed consent. The total time I will be spending on the group interviews will be approximately 2-3 hours over the period of one-two months. I will be able to ask Ms. Park to stop the audiotaping, if at any time, I feel uncomfortable about being audiotaped.

**Confidentiality:** All information collected in this study is **confidential**, and my Real name will not be identified at any time. Pseudonyms will be used. All digital Data (e.g., e-mail submissions) will be deleted from Ms. Park's e-mail account as well as from the computer hard drive once paper copies have been made. I will trust Ms. Park to destroy the digital data and notify me once this has been done. All technical data (e.g., interview tapes) will be stripped and burned once paper copies have been made. All data, e-mail print outs and interview transcriptions completed by me will be kept in Ms. Park's locked file cabinet in her private home office. Only Ms. Park will have access to the file cabinet. The identifying information will be destroyed in the paper shredder within 5 years after this research project has been completed. The resulting reports will be used for educational purposes only.

**Risks, Benefits:** I understand that there is no more than minimal risk to me since confidentiality will be maintained at all times for all participants and all institutions. I understand that the analysis of the electronic autobiographical narratives, electronic journal, transcribed interview data, my TESOL program

documents as well as Ms. Park's research journal is not designed to help me personally, but that Ms. Park and the members of her dissertation committee hope to learn more about EAWTCs' identities while journeying through their TESOL programs. This in turn may help U.S. TESOL programs and teacher education scholars to delve deeper into examining the issues around pedagogy, curriculum, and knowledge production for EAWTCs in U.S. TESOL programs.

**Freedom to Withdraw and Ask Questions:** My participation is voluntary, and I understand that I am free to ask any questions or to withdraw all forms of participation from this study at any time without any penalty.



I, \_\_\_\_\_ have read about and understand the nature of this study.

I \_\_\_\_\_ agree to participate.

I \_\_\_\_\_ do not agree to participate.

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date : \_\_\_\_\_

Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

**Investigator:** **Gloria Park** *Ph.D Candidate* at University of Maryland, TESOL Teacher Education 2311 Benjamin Building, College Park, Md. 20742 (Cell) 301-758-1970 [gloriapark2004@yahoo.com](mailto:gloriapark2004@yahoo.com)

**Study Advisor:** **Dr. Bruce VanSledright** *Professor* at University of Maryland, Teacher Education 2311 Benjamin Building, College Park, Md. 20742 (O) 301-405-3141 [bv14@umail.umd.edu](mailto:bv14@umail.umd.edu)

**Contact Information of Institutional Review Board:** If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact: IRB Office, University of Md. College Park, 20742 (O) 301-405-4212 [irb@deans.umd.edu](mailto:irb@deans.umd.edu)

## Appendix 3

### Guidelines for My First Meeting with the Dissertation Participants

#### Procedures:

1. Go over the informed consent (2 copies: one for her and one for me)
  - a. Give her some time to read on her own
  - b. Address some of the pertinent issues like, freedom to withdraw, and discussing any kind of questions or issues they may have about the study during the data collection
2. Segue into my dissertation study
3. Describe the contents of the Red Folder: Two published article that discuss my line of work
4. “Guidelines for Electronically Journaling Educational Incidents”:
  - a. Go through this with her
  - b. Have her start this as soon as possible
  - c. Indicate that it might not be possible for her to do this on weekly basis since there may not be any incidents to discuss. If this is the case, she should do it every other week
  - d. Journaling should be done via e-mail either as a body of the text or as an attachment
  - e. Do not need to use the table format on the second page, but should address the questions indicated.
  - f. Give her an example of what I mean by educational incidents
  - g. All sent out copies of the e-mails (educational incident journals and autobiography) should be kept as her personal copy for later verification.
5. Answer any questions they may have, and let them know that if any concerns arise during the data collection, they should feel free to let me know.

Before the data collection begins, I will be meeting individual woman at the location of her choice to explain my dissertation study. Specifically, I will explain the purpose of the study and the procedures for data collection as stated in the Institutional Review Board application and informed consent form.

## Appendix 4

### **Guidelines for Electronic Reflective Autobiographical Narratives**

The goal of this electronic autobiographical narrative section allows you to construct a short personal history that describes what led you to a U.S. Master's in TESOL teacher preparation program. The questions below will offer you a better understanding of what to address in your autobiographical narrative.

**Directions:** Please use the following questions that pertain to your history prior to gaining admission to a Master's in TESOL Program to craft your narrative. Use the body of the e-mail text or the attachment. Although there is no page limit to this narrative, it would be important to try to address all the questions below. Please respond directly under each prompt. If I need further clarification, I will e-mail you with specific questions. I want to thank you in advance for sharing your thoughts.

### **Writing Prompts<sup>7</sup>:**

#### **PART I**

##### **Section I: Value of the English Language Education in your Native Country**

1. How is Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) or Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) viewed in your country?
2. Who has access to the English language learning in your country?
3. Who has access to the English language teaching in your country?
4. How are women EFL teachers (Native English speakers) viewed in your native country?
5. How are women EFL teachers (non-native English speakers) viewed in your native country?
6. I am assuming that most EFL teachers in your native country are non-native English speakers. How does this affect the way the English language teaching profession is viewed in your native country?

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<sup>7</sup> These questions have been adapted from the first assignment in one of my graduate seminar classes, *Theory and Research on Teaching* taken in Fall 2001.

7. How does the above affect you as an East Asian (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese) woman in your country?

### **Section II: Your English Language Learning Journey in your Native Country**

8. When did you first become interested in learning English in your native country?
9. What personal attributes of yours made you feel specially suited to learn English in your native country?
10. What features of learning English most appealed to you? Which features least appealed to you?
11. What was your experience learning English like?
12. Where did you learn the language?
13. Who did you learn it from? Describe your English teacher and other classmates.

### **Section III: Your English Language Teaching Journey in your Native Country**

**(Only answer the following questions if you have taught English)**

14. When did you first become interested in teaching English in your native country? What factors most contributed to your decision?
15. What personal attributes of yours made you feel specially suited to teach English in your native country?
16. What features of teaching English that most appealed to you? Which features least appealed to you?

17. What was your teaching English experience like? Where did you teach? Who were your students? Describe your teaching colleagues and textbooks/curriculum used for your classes.

## **PART II**

### **Section I: Your English Language Learning Journey in the U.S.**

**(Only answer the questions that apply to you)**

18. Describe your English language learning experiences in the U.S. What were your teachers and your classmates like?
19. How did it feel compared to learning English in your native country?
20. How do you think others viewed you?

### **Section II: Your English Language Teaching Journey in the U.S.**

**(Only answer the questions that apply to you)**

21. How did you become interested in teaching English in the U.S.? What factors most contributed to your decision to teach in the U.S.?
22. Describe your English language teaching experience in the U.S. Where did you teach? Who did you teach? How did other teachers and students view you do you think?
23. How did it feel compared to teaching English in your native country?

### **Section III: Your Admission into the U.S. TESOL Program**

24. Why are you in a TESOL program?
25. What are some of your significant English language learning and teaching experiences that have led you to a TESOL program path?



26. Why did you decide to pursue a degree program at your current institution as opposed to other institutions in the U.S. or in other countries?
27. What does pursuing a Masters degree in the U.S. mean to you as an East Asian woman who speaks your native tongue?
28. What is your ultimate goal for pursuing a Masters in U.S. TESOL?
29. What are your academic and professional needs? In other words, what do you see yourself doing after you finish the program?
30. Where does what you know about TESOL or English language teaching (ELT) come from before coming to your current program?
31. How would your Masters in TESOL degree be valued in your native country?

#### **Section IV: Demographics**

32. When were you born?
33. Where were you born?
34. What grades (formal education) did you complete in your native country?
35. What is your marital status?
36. Do you live with any members of your family or relatives in the States?
37. How long have you been in the States as a student?
38. Is your status “international student”?
39. How long have you been a student in the current TESOL program?
40. About how many (what percentage approximately) of your classmates or students in the program are non-native English speakers? What countries are they originally from?

41. About how many (what percentage approximately) of your classmates or students in the program are females?
42. How did you describe your TESOL program when you first entered the program?
43. How would you describe your TESOL program now?

## Appendix 5

### **Guidelines for Electronically Journaling Educational Incidents**

The goal of this exercise is to have you journal your educational incidents via e-mail. This electronic journal will convey your experience while enrolled in a Master's in TESOL program.

**Definition of Educational Incidents:** Educational incidents are situations that occur in your academic, personal, and professional contexts that may be thought-provoking and/or may trigger a memory of other incidents that have happened in the past educational experience. Your journal of reflections will help reveal your thoughts and experiences as you live or (have lived) through your program.

**Directions:** These educational incidents will be made up of phrases, sentences, and brief paragraphs that describe situations and experiences that *have occurred*

- (a) in your graduate TESOL classes,
- (b) during interactions with faculty, advisor, classmates, and other administrative personnel in TESOL and non-TESOL areas, and
- (c) while completing class assignments, projects, and other programmatic structure outlined in your program

*around*

- a. your understanding of the constructs of NES and NNES
- b. your experience as an East Asian woman
- c. how your program will meet or not meet your future goals.

Please use the table below as a guide to reflect on your experiences as you organize your thoughts of educational incidents and send them electronically on weekly (bi-monthly) basis.

The Week of	
Where did the incident occur?	
Who was involved?	
What happened?	
Any other thoughts that were triggered by what happened.	

An example of an Educational Incident that happened to me:

Where did the incident occur?

In a TESOL Graduate seminar course in Spring 2003.

Who was involved?

My interaction with one of the NNES Ph.D students in my program.

What happened?

In the class, we were discussing some identity issues, and I was sharing with the class my identity as a NNES professional. As soon as I made that comment, she asked me, “do you identify yourself as a NNES?” My response was very short, “yes.” However, her question made me think about how other students in my program perceive my identity. She was reluctant to believe my claiming of NNES identity. Later, She and I got together to talk more about her question to me in class. This incident led to our collaborative research project, and we have become friends and confidant in our program. After reading my autobiography, she understands why I identify myself as an NNES.

Any others thoughts that were triggered by this incident:

I became more aware of how other NNES colleagues perceive me to the point of having open conversation with other NNES friends. I also became more interested and aware of the fact that our identities are co-constructed meaning that we construct our identities with the text and with the sociocultural contexts we live in, but we also co-construct our identities with other people (how others perceive us). I came to understand NNESs with international student status better in that they perhaps have more challenges and concerns than I can ever imagine.

I have always been interested in this area, but her comment in my class has sparked my interest to go deeper into the world of East Asian women in TESOL programs, which has led to my dissertation study.

## Appendix 6

### **Interview Questions**

The goal of this exercise is Interview questions will be used to expand what they have narrated in their autobiography and their journal entries. There will be a set of questions, but most of the interview questions will be of a list of questions that emerged from the contents of the autobiographical narratives and the journal of educational incidents. It is my hope that the interview questions will unpack what has already been articulated in their autobiography and journal entries in order to address the issues around pedagogy, curriculum, and linguistic knowledge production in their Masters in TESOL programs.

#### **Interview Protocol:**

- (a) I will ask you several demographic questions followed by questions pertaining to your understanding of Native English Speaking (NES) and Non-Native English Speaking (NNES) constructs.
- (b) I will ask you a list of questions that emerged from the content of the autobiographical narratives and journal of educational experience.
- (c) Please feel free to let me know when you do not want to be audiotaped for all interviews will be audiotaped and transcribed for the purpose of analyzing the data.

#### **Potential Interview Questions:**

*NES and NNES Constructs:*

- (1) How do you see yourself in your program?
- (2) How do you think others see you in your program?
- (3) What kinds of images are connected to how you see yourself and how others see you?
- (4) What is the meaning of “native-ness” or “white-ness” (being white) in TESOL?

- (5) What is the meaning of “non-native-ness” or “Asian-ness” (being Asian) in TESOL?
- (6) What does NES mean to you?
- (7) What is it like being around NNEs in your program? How do they relate to you?
- (8) What is it like being around NESs in your program? How do their relate to you?
- (9) Talk about any disadvantages or disadvantages of being in your TESOL program.

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