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Teacher's Stories to Live bv: Life Stories of a Korean-American NEST Teaching at a University in Korea*

Hong, Young-Suk
(Jungwon University)

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This study explored how a Korean-American NEST composes her stories to live by in the context of Korean university in which 'nativeness' and 'whiteness' of English teachers are valued. The stories of a Korean-American NEST were interpreted and understood with narrative inquiry method (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As a result of the study, four implications from the participant's narrative emerged: Firstly, she constructed valuable meanings about being a teacher. Secondly, she did not feel any type of inequality or discrimination as an ESOL teacher of color in the Korean school context. Thirdly, she shaped very positive meanings in 'being viewed as Korean' as living in the Korean university context as a NEST. Lastly, she negotiated her NEST identities with cultural characteristics, not with color of face. The study expects positive resonance in all teachers' minds, thus leading them to think about 'who I am,' and 'who I am becoming.'

[Korean-American NEST/nativeness/whiteness/narrative inquiry/teacher's stories to live by/school landscape]

I. INTRODUCTION

Since English language has been accepted as a mediating tool of globalization (Tsui & Tollefson, 2007), English language learning has occupied the position of what every student should learn under the "Frenzy of learning English" atmosphere (Hong, 2014, p. 182) in Korea. It seems like "a national mission" (Tsui & Tollefson, 2007, p. 7) along with the change of focus of English education in Korea from the receptive skills (listening and

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reading) to the productive skills (speaking and writing) (Dirks & Kim, 2014). For the university undergrad, all students are required to take several levels of English conversation courses. There is no guarantee for graduation without passing some level of English proficiency for them.

Although Phillipson (1992) criticized the belief that the most ideal English teacher is a native speaker of English, the notable strategy for improving learners' English speaking ability was the hiring of native English-speaking teachers (Jeon & Lee, 2006) in Korea. In the same vein, hiring preferences for NEST[1]s occur in the university where I teach as an English professor. They employed 17 native speakers of English out of total 20 (2015 status quo) PECC (Practical English Conversation Course) full-time instructors. Official norms for native speakers of English from Korean educational institutions are: firstly, they should possess nationality of one of English speaking countries among seven (USA, Canada, England, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, the Republic of South Africa); secondly, they should use English as their first language. When hiring English instructor, native speaker preference seems to be obvious in Korean educational institutions.

In addition to this phenomenon, the concept of 'native speaker' which employers own is strongly related to effect of NS's "country of origin, names, ethnicity, skin color, and accent (Braine, 2010, p. 10)." This results in preference for the American citizen, Caucasian, and American English accent in the process of hiring. In the case of my university, 16 out of 17 native speakers possess North-American nationality (the USA: 14, Canada: 2), and among 16 North-American NESTs, 9 NSs are the whites and 4 NSs are Korean-Americans who have Korean-like appearance, but were born or grew up and were educated in the United States of America.

The linguistic and/or cultural hegemony prevailing in Korean educational institutions emerged when glancing at the NESTs employment conditions of my university, which gives priority to native speaker status and being Caucasian, making it an important criterion in the hiring of English teachers (Mahboob, Uhrig, Newman, & Hartford, 2004).

It is not the research purpose to discuss teaching efficiency between NESTs and NNESTs in this paper. I just accept native-speaker preference in the English education landscape in Korea as a 'storied phenomenon' (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Interpretation and understanding about this phenomenon will be explored in my further research. Here, I wonder about how a Korean-American instructor composes her teacher stories living in school landscapes where, on the one hand, much value is given to native

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[1] • 'NEST' is an acronym for 'Native English-Speaking Teacher'.
• Despite the fact that some argument for the definition of "Native Speaker" is still continuing in ELT field, I follow Davies (2003)'s definition as a 'person who uses the object language as her or his first language or mother tongue' in this study because of no proper definition.

speakers, but on the other hand, have a tendency of accepting only white-Americans as "real" native speakers.

The research puzzles are as follows:

1. How does the concept of "native speaker" the participant teacher has affect the composing of her English teacher stories?
2. How does the racial identity associated with Whiteness negotiate with the Korean-American native teacher's own identities she constructs when shaping her teacher's stories to live by[2]?
3. How do beliefs for 'being a teacher' make shifts in the participant teacher's stories to live by as she works with EFL students in her professional knowledge landscape[3]?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Nativeness and NEST Preference in ELT

The nativeness paradigm has produced a powerful impact especially on the ELT field. Being classified as a native speaker of English seemed like, first of all, having a right to teach English. The native speaker of English is characterized as someone not simply with English expertise, English affiliation, and English inheritance but also with socio-political and ethnically constructed identities, which have provided NESTs with a privilege for teaching English in nonnative English speaking countries (Lee, 2011). Although there have been so many arguments about identifying 'native speakers of English' (Boyle, 1997; Johnston, 1999; Luk & Lin, 2007; Pennycook, 1998; Phillipson, 1992; Widdowson, 1994) and about inequality and discomfort coming from the dichotomies of *Native* vs. *Nonnative* (Kachru, 1992; Medgyes, 1994; Paikeday, 1985; Rampton, 1996; Tang, 1997), the notion that the native speaker of English is the best teacher in language – it was criticized with the term of 'native speaker fallacy' in Phillipson (1992) and 'nativeness in language is a myth' in Davies (1991) – continues with the hiring preference for native English speakers (Amin, 1999; Braine, 1999; Brown, 1998; Liu, 1999; Medgyes, 1992) in the ELT field. Many Asian countries such as China, South Korea, Japan, and Hong

[2] 'Teachers' stories to live by', the expression of teachers' personal practical knowledge, are the stories they live and tell of who they are and what they know and are a narrative concept related to teacher identity(Clandinin et al., 2006).

[3] 'Professional Knowledge Landscape' means school environment that composes of relationships among people, places, and things in school, and it has absolute effect on shaping teacher's personal practical knowledge and teacher identity (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995).

Kong adopted the strategy of the hiring native speakers of English as ESOL teachers for the promotion of English language learning (Trent, 2012). For example, according to statistics issued by South Korea's Ministry of Education and Human Resources, 1891 NESTs from 7 English speaking countries (USA, Canada, England, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, the Republic of South Africa) were deployed for English instruction in public schools in 2006. The NESTs from North America, USA and Canada, commanded an overwhelming majority in those statistics (1421/1891). For Hong Kong, the Native English Teacher policy was established in 1998 to provide each public school with a native English speaking teacher. More than 900 NESTs were employed in Hong Kong public schools (Tham, 2008). As the most recent and close example, as I mentioned in section 1, my university made a contract with 17 NESTs out of 20 for practical English language teaching in 2015.

NEST preference in Korean ELT context is evident. However, it is not clear how 'native speakers of English' should be defined and identified (Boyle, 1997; Johnston, 1999; Luk & Lin, 2007) in the global settings. The nativeness concept depending on language settings of individual countries would be very different. What is the nativeness concept like in Korea then? Officially announced norms for NESTs from Korean educational institutions are their nationality from one of the English speaking countries among the 7, previously mentioned, and English as their first language. But I sense that there should be other things such as social factors, for example, 'what a native speaker should look like' in the real concept of 'nativeness' constructed in the school landscape where Korean-American NESTs are teaching. Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (2001) support my idea by saying that "nativeness constitutes a non-elective socially constructed identity rather than a linguistic category" (p. 100).

I wonder about what nativeness concept the participant teacher, a Korean-American NEST, possesses for herself and perceives from people surrounding her in the school context. And I really wonder about the ways in which she composes her teacher stories to live by with the nativeness concepts she constructed.

2. Whiteness and Racial Identity

Racialization is inevitably salient in English language teaching. Because the spread of the English language across the globe was historically connected to the international political power of White people, English and Whiteness are inextricably intertwined (Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Pennycook, 2001). White native English teachers are assumed to be more legitimate than English teachers of color even though non-White teachers grew up and were educated in Kachru's (1985) Inner Circle countries so that they speak mainstream, privileged English, that is to say, they speak a form of English associated with Whiteness

(Motha, 2006). This racial identity of non-White teachers threatens their own English teacher identity. According to Amin's (1994) research, the non-White minority teachers who were teaching ESL students from different racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds in Canada, believed the following assumptions as perceptions of their students' ideal ESL teacher: (a) only White people can be native speakers of English; (b) only native speakers know "real," "proper," "Canadian" English; and (c) only white people are "real" Canadians. These students' stereotype of an authentic ESL teacher made them feel disempowered and sense that their ownership over the English language is sometimes perceived as less than rightful (Motha, 2006). We can see other examples of grappling with racial identities associated with Whiteness of non-White native English teachers from *Paul* and *Laura*'s cases in Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (2001). *Paul* was born in Korea and immigrated to the U.S. at 9. He is a perfect user of English and identifies himself as a native speaker of English, but his friend doesn't because he does not "look like" a native English speaker. *Laura* was born in the Philippines and learned English as her first language. Although English is the best language with which she can express herself in conversation and writing, she reports being identified as a nonnative speaker 'all the time' because she is an English speaker of color.

In the Korean context, Choe (2007) reports that Korean EFL teachers believe "native English speakers" to be Caucasian people who were born and have lived in North America, England, or Australia. They associate the term of "native English speakers" with respect to ethnicity and nationality, not to English competence and culture. The following example reveals that native speakers of English have a connotative meaning in light of not only linguistic characteristics but also stereotypical racial appearance. A Russian woman told her experience of seeking a job of English teaching in Korea: Anyway, I talked to the owner of a kindergarten on the phone that I was Russian but that I could speak English and that I was qualified with a teaching degree from a teacher's college in Russia, trained to teach English and German. The only question the owner had for me, though, was "Are you white?" (Harris, 2004, p. 273). Ironically, even a person who learns a foreign language may easily get a teaching job if he or she is a Caucasian. Korean employers seem to think of Whiteness as a more important qualification than the nativeness as an English teacher. This reveals the racial bias about the native speakers of English in the Korean teaching and learning landscapes.

The participant teacher of the study, a Korean-American native English speaking teacher, is located in the similar working environment which was described above. I really wonder about how she negotiates her teacher identities when she faces the racial identity associated Whiteness as a native English speaking teacher.

3. Identity Theory

1) Teacher's Stories to Live by as Identity

The study draws on a narrative concept of "stories to live by" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) as referring to identity which is given meaning by the narrative understandings of knowledge and context. Teacher identity is understood as a unique embodiment of each teacher's stories to live by, stories shaped by knowledge composed on landscapes past and present in which a teacher lives and works. Stories to live by are multiple, fluid, and shifting, continuously composed and recomposed in the moment-to-moment living alongside students, colleague teachers, administrators, and others, both on and off the school landscape (Clandinin et al., 2006).

The participant teacher's stories to live by here, the expression of her personal practical knowledge, are the stories she lives and tells of who she is and what she knows with relation to the concept of nativeness she composes in the moment-to-moment on and off the school landscape.

I wonder how the nativeness concept she constructs affects the composing of her stories to live by as a NEST in the Korean university context.

2) Three Perspectives of Language Teacher Identity

The study is grounded on 'Three Perspectives of Language Teacher Identity' that Varghese et al. (2005) suggested as a newly understanding of identity.

> *First, identity is not a fixed, stable, unitary, and internally coherent phenomenon but is multiple, shifting, and in conflict (Gergen, 1991; Norton Peirce, 1995; Sarup, 1996; Weedon, 1987); by the same token it is transformational and transformative. A crucial component here is that of the primacy of agency in identity formation, a movement away from a structurally deterministic view of the fashioning of individuals (as implied in early theories of social reproduction and Marxism) to understanding individuals as intentional beings. Second, identity is not context-free but is crucially related to social, cultural, and political context-interlocutors, institutional settings, and so on (Duff & Uchida, 1997). An important aspect of this is the relation between assigned identity-the identity imposed on one by others-and claimed identity, the identity or identities one acknowledges or claims for oneself (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002). Third, identity is constructed, maintained, and negotiated to a significant extent through language and discourse (Gee, 1996; MacLure, 1993) (pp. 22-23).*

The study (Hong, 2013), focused on 'identity formation of NNESTs (Nonnative English Speaking Teachers) working in Korean elementary schools', also concluded that teacher identities are repeatedly constructed and reconstructed over time and on school contexts, and the construction of them is multiple and flexible. Along with those concepts of identity stated above, I will explore, that is, listen and read repeatedly, analyze, interpret, and understand the participant teacher stories of experiences as a Korean-American NEST.

III. METHODOLOGY

1. Research Setting and Participant

The research setting of this study is a private university located in a rural area in Korea. Almost all of the around 4,000 students live in the on-campus dormitories like a boarding school and the teaching staff also stay at the on-campus apartments during weekdays. One of educational goals from the school is 'raising globally able persons', thus emphasizing the teaching and learning of practical English. The students should pass 4 levels of Practical English Conversation Courses (PECC) as a mandatory requirement and finally should pass the SEN (Speak English Now) Test before their graduation.

The school hired 20 full-time instructors in a one-year contract track for PECC instruction. 17 among 20 are NESTs (Native English Speaking Teachers) and 16 are from North-America (i.e. the USA: 14, Canada: 2). It shows how much the institutional employers prefer American NESTs in terms of nationality. In addition, 9 out of 16 instructors are White. In this school landscape, there are 4 Korean-American NESTs. I inquire into EFL teacher stories of *Jane*[4] who has the longest teaching experiences, from 2012 to the present, among 4 Korean-Americans in this school context. The reasons why I chose *Jane* as one specific participant of the research are firstly because I, the researcher, already have almost 4 years' experience of living with her in the research context and secondly because she told me affluent EFL teacher stories she lived here.

Jane was born in Korea and adopted into an American family which had no child and German ethnic background just right before entering an elementary school of Korea when she was 7. Her parents in the United States were very scholarly with Ph.D.s and were teaching at universities. She grew up as the only child in her family and lived in a very White town. She was the only Asian in her neighborhood. She had bad experiences when

[4] All persons' names used in the study are pseudonyms.

some classmates made fun of her, calling her a 'Chink[5]' in the classroom of the elementary school.

Jane's undergrad major was Economics. She had working experience as an auditor in a hotel for 7 years. However, she came back to school for a Master's degree of TESOL when she had realized that firstly, 'I'm not happy with the auditor job.' and secondly, 'I'm an instructive type of person.' She had 2 years English teaching experience in China before coming to Korea as a NEST in her current university. She decided to come to the present school because of the natural environment surrounding it. She got married with a Korean man in the winter 2012. She has two children now. She is living in a faculty apartment on-campus with her family. She started her doctoral study in English Education at a university near the school she is working at.

2. Data Collection and Interpretation

Data were collected over the first semester of 2015. It was informed that the primary data source for the study would be face-to-face interview conversations at the first meeting with *Jane* and in the consent form for the research as well. I wanted to hear the participant teacher's stories in order to gain an understanding of her storied experiences in teaching EFL college students as a Korean-American NEST while living on the professional knowledge landscape[6] in which there is much value placed on 'nativeness' and 'whiteness'. I did not seek knowledge that can be generalized to all native English teachers, but wanted to understand *Jane*'s unique experiences as an individual person.

I had individual conversations with *Jane*. I believed that the informal nature of the conversational space would encourage the participant to reflect upon her previous experiences and to share these more comfortably as opposed to the formality of an interview conversation bounded by specific questions (Mitton, 2006). The interview conversations were held at my office six times, one to one and a half hours for each, over 10 weeks. All of the conversations were audio-recorded and transcribed and were used as field texts. I wrote 'narrative accounts' of *Jane*'s stories with the transcripts as research texts. The copies of the narrative accounts were shared with the participant and negotiated for clarity and meaning.

For this conversational data, I employed the narrative inquiry methodology from Clandinin and Connelly (2000). As I decided to attend to the lived experiences of my participant teacher, my thinking was guided by "three commonplaces of narrative inquiry–

[5] 'Chink' is a bad word for Chinese.

[6] 'Professional Knowledge Landscape' metaphor was developed to understand 'teachers' school environment' as composed of relationships among people, places and things (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995).

temporality (continuity), sociality (interaction), and place (situation)–which specify dimensions of an inquiry space" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 479). Building on the Deweyan theory of experience in thinking about narrative inquiry, narrative inquiry terms are "*personal* and *social* (interaction); *past*, *present*, and *future* (continuity); combined with the notion of *place* (situation). This set of terms creates a metaphorical *three-dimensional narrative inquiry space*, with temporality along one dimension, the personal and the social along a second dimension, and place along a third" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50).

Clandinin and Connelly (1994) suggest four narrative inquiry directions: *inward* and *outward*, *backward* and *forward*. By *inward*, they mean toward the internal conditions, such as feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions. By *outward*, they mean toward the existential conditions, that is, the environment. By *backward* and *forward*, they refer to temporality–past, present, and future. Thus, positioned within this three-dimensional space in narrative inquiry and asking questions pointing these four directions, I filed composed texts and wrote research texts that addressed both personal and social issues by looking inward and outward, and addressed temporal issues by looking not only to the present event but to its past and to its future (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Clandinin *et al*. (2007) emphasize the importance of 'temporality (continuity)' in a narrative inquiry by explaining that "events and people always have a past, present, and a future. In narrative inquiry, it is important to always try to understand people, places, and events as in process, as always in transition" (p. 23). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) also refer to temporality by looking *backward* and *forward* in an inquiry space. 'Sociality (interaction),' a second commonplace term in narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) refers to both personal conditions and social conditions, as well as to the relationships between participants and researcher. 'Place,' a third commonplace term in narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006), refers to "the specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place or sequence of places where the inquiry and events take place" (p. 480). All events take place in some place. I tried to think through the impact of each place on the participant teacher's experience.

During the process of the study, I, as a narrative inquirer, positioned me within three-dimensional space in narrative inquiry and asked questions pointing the four directions (backward/forward, inward/outward) when dealing with the storied experiences of my participant.

IV. NARRATIVE ACCOUNTS

1. Becoming a Korean-American NEST in Korea

Jane was adopted into an American family at her age 7 from Korea. Her adoptive father was a German-American and adoptive mother was a Korean-American. She was actually the oldest sister of *Jane*'s birth father. Jane told me her mom's stories.

> *My mom was divorced from her family in Korea. Actually she was kicked out technically. Because she was extremely smart so that she wanted to study abroad, it was not usual thing at that time. My grandparents didn't like that their girl wanted to go to a foreign country and live there. And my dad, a German German guy, white… my mom was viewed as a whore or prostitute to the people around her at that time. She gave up Korean identity. I never heard any single word of Korean from her. My parents have strong German accent of English* (Conversation with *Jane*, April 8, 2015).

Jane grew up in an English only language environment. That seemed to have *Jane* feel strongly herself as a native English speaker. In her childhood, she lived in really White conservative town. She experienced a kind of racial discrimination as an Asian-looking girl from some classmates in the elementary school. Her reaction to that was out of expectation. Here is her story.

> *Actually kids called my name and it happened because I looked totally different. They threw broccolis on my lunch plate, you know, we had to pay for lunch. I love broccolis. Then I don't have any problem with that. One time I talked to my parents, "Oh I think some my classmates tossed me some broccolis on my plate. They called me Chink." So I said, "I'm not a Chink." Very funny. My dad said, "Oh they probably love you because broccolis are very expensive." He was very nice. Later on, next day, I think, he went to my teacher and to the principal and talked about it. From next day, I couldn't have those kinds of lucky days, having free broccolis! Actually I didn't feel good. But I think I was cool enough to ignore that. My dad taught me very well* (Conversation with *Jane*, May 16, 2015).

Being viewed differently, that is to say, being a minority could easily facilitate discriminative treatment in some ways or in some forms in the community in which the person concerned is located (see Amin, 1997; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 2001; Menard-Warwick, 2008; Motha, 2006; Samimy, 2008). How he or she reacted would be different depending on the individual person. *Jane* learned how to deal with those kinds of things from her father. We can see how *Jane* negotiates her NEST identity with Korean-looking English teacher identity in the following sections.

Since *Jane* received a TESOL Master's degree, she had ESOL teaching experiences in the U.S. and China. Then she decided to come to Korea as a NEST for EFL college students. Her answers to my questions of "What made you decide to being a TESOL teacher?" and "Why did you choose Korea to come as a NEST?" were as follows.

> *At first, I did not want to be a teacher at all because of very bad experience from my maternal parents who were very poor as teachers. However, I found out that I have a talent in teaching while I'm doing the job of senior trainer as an auditor. Then I came back to school for a Master's degree of TESOL. ⋯ Actually I love to travel. Being a TESOL teacher is a good thing for travel. It was good to meet different people with different background. I considered Korea this time because of my background. I wanted to have a chance to understand my birth parents a little better. It's pretty similar to other Korean-Americans want to know about their identity* (Conversation with *Jane*, May 20, 2015).

Before coming to Korea, she had got job offers from two different institutes: from Defense Language Institute in Monterey, the U.S.; from the current university in Korea. Finally she chose Korea to discover her roots. She started her teaching job in a Korean university as a Korean-American NEST and settled here by marrying a Korean man and having two children. Her dream for travel was replaced with different passions for teaching English and for her family. *Jane* mentioned, "My dream was not changed actually, but adjusted."

2. Constructing the Meaning of Being a Teacher

At first, *Jane* had a very hard time culturally in Korea because she was really "American". She had never experienced the Korean culture before. One more thing was her high expectation about the students' English level. Sometimes she felt lost and she really didn't know where to start with the students. She described it like this:

> *The first year… it wasn't easy. The biggest impression was that Korean students didn't really want to talk to me because I spoke in English. I realized students were scared to someone who spoke in English. I had a very strong impression, 'Oh my God, they don't like me speaking English. They're scared.' When I wanted to say something, they just ran away. From second year, it gets better. I started to understand students' culture, contents,… getting better. I started to use some Korean. It seemed like they tried to open-up. I wanted to be close to them. I tried*

> *hard to be accepted by my students culturally. I searched for Korean underground singer, famous TV program, something like that. When I talked about that they accepted me* (Conversation with Jane, April 15, 2015).

Jane chose a strategy of sharing cultural connections to establish good relationships with the language students. Using some Korean language in and out of the classroom, even though it didn't sound perfect, made the students feel more comfortable and closer to *Jane*. Through the experience of teaching in PECC classes, *Jane* came to believe that the most important thing in teaching is "personal contact." She said that "I think teaching is dialogue, not monologue. Being together is more important." In this vein, she runs 4 study groups of 3 or 4 to increase the time for personal contact with students. The following story is with one of her study groups.

> *One of my study groups from the last year, some of students were Geunro students (who have part-time job on campus daytime). They couldn't take the class during the daytime because they had to work. The thing is I have my boy so I cannot teach night time. I asked them if they come over to my place or a study room by 7:30 am, I could teach them before their class starts. They actually joined my class and they were very diligent. They never delayed, always on time. It was very impressive. It was really cold day. We've done for whole sessions. Because we finished whole TOEFL books, we had a kind of small party in the morning with biscuits. I think it was lunch time. My husband called me. He said, "Hey, somebody made a scratch on my car." I said, "What do you mean?" My husband has to leave for work about 6:30. They actually cleaned my husband's car. They thought it was my car. They cleaned "my car-actually my husband's car" and put a small note "Thank you so much teaching us for free." They didn't know how to clean the car. It was really cold. They woke up really early. I'm being loved. I love them so much. So that was the first moment and I felt like this was really rewarding. I was so happy. I don't care about money. That was huge rewarding. My husband took a picture for the small Post-it note. It wasn't very good English, not long, but they wrote sentences like that in English. It was very good. I think I'm living on my dream now. Maybe I cannot be the best teacher. But I'm very happy that I'm one of teachers to be loved* (Conversation with *Jane*, May 13, 2015).

Jane is so proud of herself for being loved by her students. She believes that being loved by students is the best reward for being a teacher. This belief leads her to compose her teacher stories of having strong relationships with her students. In this vein, she feels regret

that she cannot have mentee students because she is 'just one-year contract instructor in the Department of Liberal Arts.' It makes her feel like 'being a woman who cannot have a baby.' Sometimes she is so jealous some professors of certain majors who have mentee students. However, the students still want to talk about their problems in the middle of night or if she is in her office they want to see her for a moment. Although she mentioned that there isn't any strong distinction between work and private life here as the most difficult thing, she says for now, "That's the part of reason because I'm living here inside of campus. Living on campus, it's not a big deal though. I mean that's what I chose to do that. That was my choice." (Conversation with *Jane*, May 13, 2015)

Jane's teacher belief described above reminded me of the notion of 'caring relation between teachers and students' (Noddings, 1984). Noddings (1984) insisted that the primary aim of education is the maintenance and enhancement of ethical ideals, that is, caring relationships between teachers and students. *Jane* and Noddings come to understand each other. Based on *Jane*'s belief, she defines 'teaching' as follows:

> *Actually for me, teaching is sharing, sharing what I have. I also got everything from students. Sometimes I learn from my students. I think learning and teaching cannot happen separately. Teaching is another form of learning. Teaching serves as sharing my knowledge, skill, attitude for my students* (Conversation with *Jane*, April 15, 2015).
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> *A teaching is a calling, a natural thing for me. I'm not a religious person, but I think teachers somehow have to have some kind of faith inside* (Conversation with *Jane*, April 8, 2015).

3. Experiencing Discrimination as an ESOL Teacher of Color in the U.S. and China, Not in Korea

When I thought about the research topic related to Korean-American NESTs, I expected to hear some stories of inequality sensed by my participant in Korea coming from her Korean-American identity. However, *Jane* tells me different stories.

> *In the states, I taught ESL classes. Out of my classroom, I was just totally American. But in my classroom, my students took me as Korean-American or Chinese-American because of my face. Most of my students were from Asia, Middle East. They saw me as an Asian woman. Asian students in ESL classes didn't like Asian-looking instructors. One of my friends, Chinese minority, who couldn't speak any single word of his first language, was a perfect New York English speaker. However,*

> *several students in an ESL class asked to change their teacher, my friend. Some of my friends, Asian-looking, had to change their classes because of their face. The students preferred "White" teacher* (Conversation with *Jane*, April 8, 2015).
>
> *When I was in China, I felt that way. They looked for Western-looking NEST. Sometimes school hired Russian (White) who couldn't speak English well. Ridiculous! Some students decided not to take my class because I looked like an Asian. It didn't really matter I'm from the states or not* (Conversation with *Jane*, April 15, 2015).
>
> *In Korea, I think I'm beneficial because I'm partially Korean-looking. Korean-American teachers are not discriminated in Korea, I think. I don't feel anything here as a Korean-looking NEST. But I found a different issue. Korean students don't like East Asian-looking teachers. It's a personal idea, not general. I think of Melisa (a previous NEST instructor at the present school of Jane)'s case. She looks like East-Asian. She is actually Cambodian. Some students said her pronunciation was a little weird, her English was little strange. But her credential was perfect. She finished her Master's degree in English Education and Literature and she grew up in the U.S. At the same time, I don't think anybody can have a bias to Robert (another previous NEST instructor) even though he has only bachelor degree in History. He is nothing to do with English major. In my case, no! Maybe students could talk behind me, but I've never heard that. I didn't feel that way* (Conversation with *Jane*, April 15, 2015).

I can see that the color of instructor still continues to exert a powerful impact on ESOL teaching practice through *Jane*'s stories. In particular, the students' racial identity works as a strong impact factor in complexifying the teachers' practice. Asian ESL/EFL students have a tendency to prefer 'white' teachers. They seem to be very biased on 'nativeness' and 'whiteness'. However, in *Jane*'s case, working as a Korean-American NEST in Korea, was different. Her identity with the Korean side of an American created a different situation of positioning her as an easy person to be close to and a more opened person for Korean students. She did not feel any inequality or discrimination in the school landscape as a NEST of color.

4. Meaning of Being Viewed as Korean in the Korean ELT Context

Jane's identity as an American was certain. She came to Korea to teach EFL college students as a native English speaker. Finding out the students were scared of the person who speaks only English made her feel embarrassed at first. However she found a way to

open up the students' hearts by approaching them culturally by using "weird" Korean in and out of the classroom. She realized that 'being viewed as a Korean' in the Korean ELT context is very good thing for building close relationships with students. She came to believe that her appearance is a great benefit for teaching EFL students in Korea. The following is the stories *Jane* told me.

> *I don't think I'm Korean. I was here as a German-American as my parents took me. But my students took me, because of my face, as a Korean-American. They took me as a Korean because I really look like Korean. But I was so shocked, because they don't, it seemed like, they didn't really accept me as an American. When I taught level 0 students, first year, they try to talk to me in Korean on any occasion. My students did not accept me as an American. I didn't really care, but the only thing is I was a teacher for them. The point is that they expect me little different from the NEST with white face, blonde hair, blue eyes something like that. ⋯ This is personal philosophy. I'm teaching young adults over 20years old. They have cognitive abilities. When they understand, they learn better. So at the beginning of the class, sometimes I explain some grammar in Korean such as parts of speech something like that even though I'm not fluent in Korean. When I explain certain things in Korean, it is more effective. I think it is a great benefit as being a Korean-American. Korean students say that our teacher can speak English fluently, that our teacher also understands Korean. So I think it was pretty beneficial. I don't think it's bad at all. ⋯ l really do have some beneficial stuff from my appearance. So students feel much more comfortable and obviously when I speak to them in weird Korean, they probably feel really awkward. But I just feel like I got some kind of benefit from my appearance* (Conversation with *Jane*, June 3, 2015).
>
> *I look like an Asian, so kids accept me as a Korean at first time. And when they are getting really close to me, they try to speak to me in English. They try to respect me as what I feel like as my own identity. I'm really happy with that* (Conversation with *Jane*, June 3, 2015).

Jane mentioned about her national identity several times during our conversations as a German-American, not as a Korean-American. I understand that it's not from her despising view for Korean identity. There was not any superiority or inferiority related to America, English or Korea. The concept of national identity she possessed was totally coming from her CULTURAL background in which she has grown up. She has lived in the USA almost for her entire life with her foster parents who had German ethnic background. We will have more accounts about this in the next section.

5. Negotiating NEST Identities with Cultural Characteristics, Not with Color of Face

Jane had some conflicts between *assigned identity* as a Korean by Korean people and *claimed identity* as an American for herself (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002). Although the students expected her to be very Korean with things such as the Korean language and Korean food at first because of her look, American culture characteristics *Jane* possessed made them accept her as an American. This always happened under the close relationships between *Jane* (teacher) and them (students). Jane talks like this:

> *I'm an American. I feel like a German-American. I feel like I'm a native-speaker, not as a Korean side of it. My cultural stuff is not actually Korean things. ⋯ I'm totally a German-American. It was really hard because of my look, face. They expect me somehow to be Korean. I had really hard time for the first year. ⋯ Teaching English through cooking, a kind of home education. I watched YouTube film 'how to cook' with my students. It's all English. I think it's effective. The students were very happy to learn those things. I like to bake more and more. Time to time, my students come over to my place, we cook together. It's like a cooking class. It's fun though. The students don't really expect me to BAKE because I'm Korean-looking. I said, "Hello, I'm an American. What are you talking about?" They were quite surprised when I mentioned that "I don't like to eat Kimchi, I cannot make any Korean food." They said "Oh, really?" My students expected me make Korean food. But I've never treated them with Korean food. ⋯ Anyway students see me as English teacher with a Korean citizenship at first time. But the semester goes, "Oh, she is different!" They have a little different perception toward me. When we develop our personal relationships, they see me or accept me as an American* (Conversation with *Jane*, May 20, 2015).

Perception toward *Jane* from other colleague teachers in terms of her national identity was different. These are her stories:

> *American doesn't really have any problem with my skin color. Once they hear my accent, they don't have any problems; they don't take me as a Korean-American. They'd never taken it that way. They can see me as a native speaker of English like other American teachers as an American. We're sharing same cultural background or talking about something in common culturally. For example, famous CM songs, jingles, commercial songs, TV programs, certain food brands, and brand name of supermarket … We share things like that. It's not about English. It's about cultural*

> *stuff. Because of that, I'm accepted to the American side. Even though I look like a Korean, I look like a Chinese, they always call me as an American. ··· For Korean colleague teachers, okay, one of Korean English professors, Minsu said that at first time because, obviously my Korean was not great, he just see me as one of foreign professors. Now we developed our friendship, feels getting closed as a colleague. So I asked, "So do you see me as an American or a Korean?" He just took me as Jane. When you get closed to have personal relationship, they don't see me as a Korean or an American. That's what he said* (Conversation with *Jane*, May 27, 2015).

Jane put up front 'cultural background' when she defined her national identity as an American by herself. To be able to share the same cultural background was the same as having a certificate for belonging to that community. There was no problem with other's skin color for the American NESTs to assign the American identity to *Jane*. For the Korean English teachers, it didn't matter whether *Jane* looked Korean or American since building personal relationships with *Jane*. They perceived her as an individual human being and as a valuable friend. We are living in the world of relationships. Meanings of identities we construct can be emerging from the nature of relationships we build.

V. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study was conducted for understanding 'teacher's stories to live by' of a Korean-American NEST who is living in a Korean university landscape. The school situation in which the participant teacher was located was characterized as putting much value on 'nativeness' and 'whiteness' for English teachers. This made me wonder how she composes her teacher stories as a Korean-American NEST in this context.

Followings are the explored meanings of teacher stories she lived as a Korean-American during the narrative process of research.

Firstly, *Jane* constructed valuable meanings about being a teacher.

She defined 'being a teacher' as 'being together by increasing time of personal contact with students.' The stories she lived as a "teacher" she defined, resulted in close relationships with students and being loved teacher herself by students. That became the reason for living as a teacher in this school landscape to *Jane*. *Jane*'s notion of 'being together with students' reminded me of Noddings's (1984) notion of 'caring relation' and Maxine Green's (1995) notion of 'seeing people's lives big'. Greene (1995) stated, "To see things or people big, one must resist viewing other human beings as mere objects or chess pieces and view them in their integrity and particularity instead" (p. 10). *Jane* tried to see

the students' lives big in caring relation with them.

Secondly, *Jane* did not feel any type of inequality or discrimination as an ESOL teacher of color in the Korean school context.

She experienced some discrimination as an ESOL teacher because of her Asian-looking appearance in the U.S. and China, but not in Korea. Generally ESL students did not like Asian-looking instructors no matter what country they come from. So it was common for the students to ask to change classes because of the instructor of color in other countries. However, *Jane*'s Korean origin worked even positively in the Korean context. For example, the students accepted her as a more comfortable English teacher and treated her with open-mind.

Thirdly, *Jane* shaped very positive meanings in 'being viewed as Korean' while living in the Korean university context as a NEST.

At first time when she came to the current university, she was shocked by finding that the students didn't like her to speak only English. She approached the students with her "weird" Korean, which was actually expected to be spoken by her from the first time. This helped her to be close with students by opening up their hearts. She realized that 'being viewed as a Korean' in the Korean ELT context is very good thing to build close relationships with students. She believes now that her looking Korean is a great benefit for teaching EFL students in Korea.

Lastly, *Jane* negotiated her NEST identities with cultural characteristics, not with color of face.

She is certain that she is American. However, she struggled with the conflicts between *assigned identity* as a Korean by Korean people and *claimed identity* as an American for herself at first. She explained her American identity with cultural experiences of America. This made her be accepted as an American to the students and to the American NESTs as well.

To conclude, the participant teacher of Korean-American NEST in the study lived her teacher stories grounded on the concept of 'being a teacher' she constructed. This concept of 'being a teacher' led her to build close relationships with the students. All teacher stories she composed had connections with her 'being a teacher' concept. 'Relationships' with people around her were always located in the center of her stories to live by. It did not matter for her whether she was viewed as a Korean or an American within close relationships with people in the context. She found a way of living as a teacher by valuing close relationship with students.

I hope that the implications from *Jane*'s stories resonate with all teachers' including Korean-American NESTs' lives, leading them think about 'who I am,' and 'who I am becoming.'

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Examples in: English
Applicable Language: English
Applicable levels: Elementary, Secondary, Tertiary

Young-Suk Hong
College of Liberal Arts
Jungwon University
MII 906, 85 Munmu-ro Goesan-eup Goesan-gun
Chungbuk, 367-700, South Korea
Tel: 043-830-8660
Fax: 043-830-8559
Email: yhong@jwu.ac.kr

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