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"English Is Power": Narratives of Asian English Teachers in Language Education

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Employing narrative inquiry, this study investigates how Asian graduate students enrolled in a U.S. language teacher education program perceived power relations between American English and other Englishes as well as power relations between English and their native languages. This study also examines how linguistic hegemony affected their identity formation as preservice English teachers. Data sources for this study include individual interviews, group conversations, and language autobiographies. Following a strategy of thematic narrative analysis, the author analyzed the stories told by these preservice English teachers and identified five emergent themes: English as a communication tool, English as power, negotiating the ideology of standard English, unique accent as identity, and the desire to become a more flexible language teacher. This study reveals that English as a communication tool is closely related to English as power in terms of participants' commitment to English. However, this study also suggests that Asian English teachers view a unique accent as part of their identity, leading them to challenge the ideology of standard English and potentially become more flexible language teachers.

[narrative inquiry/language teacher education]

I. INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, nonnative English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) continue to outnumber native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) simply because of a growing demand for English instruction (Braine, 2005). In Asia, most English teachers are nonnative English speakers (NNESs). Every year, many Asian graduate students come to U.S. universities to be professionally trained as English teachers. Through personal conversations with Asian graduate students, I know that many of them plan to return to their home countries

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to teach English as a foreign language (EFL) after they earn their Master's and PhD degrees in language teacher education programs.

While many studies have been conducted with a focus on the identities of NNESTs in ESL (e.g., Amin, 1997; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Liu, 1999; Mawhinney & Xu, 1997; Tang, 1997) and EFL settings (e.g., Choe, 2005; Duff & Uchida, 1997), the identities of Asian graduate students enrolled in a U.S. language teacher education program have been less actively explored by educational researchers. Their identities rest on the border between language teachers and English language learners.

One might argue that the idea that Asian graduate students' identities in the language teacher education program are on the borderline between language teachers and English language learners conflicts with Freeman and Johnson's (1998) argument that language teacher education focuses on teacher-learners (i.e., students of teaching) who are distinct from language learners. Freeman and Johnson (1998) stress that English teachers are learners of English language teaching, not learners of the language itself. However, Freeman and Johnson focus on language teachers who are NESTs working in the U.S. In contrast, I suggest that language teacher education should consider NNESTs—in particular, nonnative English-speaking Asian graduate students—as learners of the English language as well as of language teaching. The distinction I draw stems from the reality that Asian graduate students from several of the countries included in Kachru's (1985) Expanding Circle have spoken English as a foreign language solely in academic settings and not as a second language in their home countries, and they came to the U.S. to improve their language skills as well as to hone their language teaching methods.

In this study, therefore, I explored how Asian graduate students enrolled in a U.S. language teacher education program perceived power relations between American English and other Englishes as well as power relations between English and their native languages, and how linguistic hegemony affected their identity formation as preservice English teachers.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

With the trends of globalization and the spread of English, English has become the key language in the world. In South Korea, the importance of English as a foreign language is rapidly growing. Thomas (1996) notes that English is regarded as "the prestige language associated with power, and those who can afford the often private education with high quality English instruction benefit as their linguistic ability affords them further access to the economically and politically elite stratum of society" (p. 133).

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Knowing English gives individuals access to scientific and technological information, global economic trade, and higher education.

In a similar vein, Kachru (1986) claims, "knowing English is like possessing the fabled Aladdin's lamp, which permits one to open, as it were, the linguistic gates to international business, technology, science and travel. In short, English provides linguistic power" (p. 1). The ability to speak a language can make it possible to gain access to social and institutional structures, consequently privileging one community of speakers over another. Here, Bourdieu's (1991) concept of linguistic capital can be used to explain why nonnative English-speaking Asian graduate students studying in U. S. universities try so hard to master English; they can obtain knowledge and educational qualifications through schooling that grant them cultural capital. Christian and Bloome (2004) state that symbolic capital should be considered in relation to linguistic capital, cultural capital, and economic capital. Depending on individuals' interactions within their society, they may or may not have symbolic capital, which is closely aligned with social identity and social status. I believe that Asian graduate students have more opportunities to gain economic capital in their home countries after experiencing the U.S. education system through their parents' or families' financial help and support.

The view that English is the best language for educational and socioeconomic advancement continues to grow worldwide, especially in Asia. Consequently, as Kachru (1992) points out, more and more parents in Asia want their children to be equipped with this powerful linguistic tool. In this sense, as Pennycook (1995) argues, teachers, teacher educators, and researchers need to recognize that "English...acts as a gatekeeper to positions of wealth and prestige both within and between nations, and is the language through which much of the unequal distribution of wealth, resources, and knowledge operates" (p. 54). At the same time, one might characterize this trend as English linguistic imperialism, which Phillipson (1992) defines as a process by which the dominance of English is maintained by the continuous reconstitution of the power inequity between English and other languages (p. 47).

In opposition to this potential linguistic imperialism, Kachru (1992) wants to see English as an international language (EIL) that represents "a repertoire of cultures, not a monolithic culture" (p. 362). EIL refers to "the use of English as a means of international communication across national and linguistic boundaries" (Jenkins, 2006, p. 160). In his later work, Kachru (1997) suggests adopting the term "World Englishes" to "recognize the functions of the language in diverse pluralistic contexts" (p. 215). In this study, I use the term EIL to refer to a contact language used among NNESs as well as between native English speakers (NESs) and NNESs. Kachru's ideas coincide with TESOL culture as described by Edge (1996): diversity, inquiry, cooperation, and respect. Edge (1996) argues that there is not one best way of learning a language or one correct way of

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teaching. Instead, Edge (1996) values diversity and respect for difference. Like Kachru, Canagarajah (1999) focuses on resisting the hegemony of native speaker standards and appropriating English for NNESs' own local use. Canagarajah (2005) believes that a single dialect of English "fails to equip our students for real-world needs" (p. xxv).

III. METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design

This study employs a narrative inquiry approach. The use of stories as cases presents "a way of knowing and thinking that is particularly suited to explicating the issues with which [teachers] deal" (Carter, 1993, p. 6), and stories have "the power to direct and change our lives" (Noddings, 1991, p. 157). Narrative is used as a primary form of discourse in everyday interaction (Schram, 2006). As Schram (2006) suggests, a story is "a natural, obvious, and authentic window into how people structure experience and construct meaning in their lives" (p. 105). Stories are not simply personal but also social and cultural because personal events are structured according to socially- and culturally-shared conventions of telling (Smith & Sparkes, 2008). Riessman (2008) also notes that narratives reveal socio-cultural values because elements of society and culture emerge even in personal stories.

In addition to socially- and culturally-shared conventions of telling, narrators represent their identities by telling stories (Smith & Sparkes, 2008; Wortham, 2001). Wortham (2001) comments that personal narrators can form a coherent sense of identity through the opportunity to tell stories about their lives. Smith and Sparkes (2008) also contend that personal narratives have the potential to reveal identity because telling stories about our lives creates narrative identity. In order to understand these students' identity formation, I attempted to construct a coherent narrative out of the various reflections and commentaries collected in narrative data. In constructing this narrative of their experience as NNESs, I actively collaborated with study participants to construct meaning during the individual interviews and group conversations (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). To understand the epistemological assumptions held by English teachers from different Asian countries, narrative inquiry provided a method for examining their stories and becoming aware of the underlying assumptions that their stories embody (Bell, 2002). Additionally, narrative research helped me explore the identity formation of Asian English teachers as articulated through talk, self-identification, and social interaction.

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2. Setting and Study Participants

This study was conducted at a major research university in the Midwestern United States. At this top-tier research university, the School of Education provides a language education program designed to educate inservice and preservice teachers on topics such as how to teach and research in the areas of English, literacy/reading, and ESL/EFL education.

All the participants were born and received their regular school education (from elementary school to college) in their home countries, and all came to the U.S. to earn a Master's or doctoral degree in Language Education. They were in their late twenties to late thirties at the time of the interview and had between six months and five years of teaching experience in middle schools, cram schools, or colleges in their home countries. They are identified by pseudonyms in this study to protect their privacy and identity.

Minsu was a Korean graduate student who began learning EFL when he was in middle school. After completing his Master's degree in the United States, he taught English at both a middle school and a cram school located in Seoul for four years. He entered a U.S. language teacher education program to become a better English teacher and understand different aspects of English teaching in an ESL context. Bin was a graduate student who began learning EFL when he was a middle school student in South Korea. He taught English at both a middle school and a cram school located in a small city for three years after graduating from a university in South Korea. He came to study in the U.S. language teacher education program because he wanted to enlarge his understanding of language education and was interested in training EFL teachers in South Korea. Yiping was a graduate student who came from Taiwan to the U.S. to study ESL/EFL with the goal of teaching English when she returned to Taiwan. She taught English at a cram school located in Taipei for eighteen months. Chen was a Taiwanese graduate student who started learning English when she was in the sixth grade. She worked as an English teacher at a college located in west-central Taiwan after earning her Master's degree.

3. Data Collection and Data Analysis

To generate multiple sources of narrative data, I utilized individual interviews, group conversations, and language autobiographies. I began my interviews with "more open-ended and less structured" and "more flexibly worded" questions (Merriam, 1998, p. 74), asking participants to share a personal story based on their learning and teaching journeys. These types of questions encouraged them to narrate their stories at length. The interviews lasted for approximately 90 to 120 minutes. Group conversations provided a

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context in which the participants—Asian graduate students—entered a discourse space in which they were able to reflect on their learning and teaching experiences in the U.S. and their home countries. These group conversations allowed them to position themselves as empowered graduate students willing to express their opinions actively. The group conversations lasted for approximately 90 minutes. Interviews and group conversations were audiotaped and videotaped. After the interviews and group conversations, study participants' language autobiographies were gathered to support the emerging themes and patterns (Glesne, 2006). These language autobiographies contain their written narratives about learning and speaking English, including frustrations they experienced while learning English.

During data collection, I began transcribing the interviews and group conversations verbatim and continued using this method throughout the remainder of the process. After all the data were collected and transcribed, I started to analyze the entire data, including spoken texts (e.g., interview and group conversation transcripts) and written texts (e.g., language autobiographies). To analyze participants' personal narratives of their experiences and meaning-making, in which they made sense of their lived experiences, I thematically categorized Asian English teachers' narratives of teaching and learning experiences in their home countries and the U.S. Following Riessman (2008), I refer to this strategy as "thematic narrative analysis." As Riessman (2008) suggests, I applied a thematic approach (Glesne, 2006) to stories that developed in conversational interviews and group conversations as well as to those narratives found in their language autobiographies. Glesne (2006) describes thematic analysis as "a process that involves coding and then segregating the data by codes into data clumps for further analysis and description" (p. 147). After reading my data several times, I first attempted to develop an overall sense of the major themes that emerged regarding issues of language and power.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

During the data coding process, five themes relevant to my research questions emerged: English as a communication tool, English as power, negotiating the ideology of standard English, unique accent as identity, and the desire to become a more flexible language teacher. Each theme's discourse will be discussed in detail in order to understand Asian English teachers' beliefs or perspectives on the critical issues of language and power through their learning and teaching journeys in the U.S. and their home countries.

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1. English as a Communication Tool

This theme demonstrates why study participants worked hard to learn English. Participants' motivations for learning English ranged from direct commitment to English as a communication tool to a more general sense of joy or pleasure in learning a new language.

Minsu told me about his long journey of falling in love with English. He stated, "[W]*henever I traveled to foreign countries I communicated in English, even when I didn't know how to speak the language of the countries. English is a good tool, and it means we can communicate internationally* (lines, 429-431, interview, 10/8/2010). Minsu viewed English as a tool used to communicate internationally with other speakers from foreign countries. His early experience of English as a common language in encounters with foreign people and travel to foreign countries made him fascinated by English. Chen held a view similar to Minisu's that English is a means to communicate with people who do not speak English as their native language. She said, "[H]*ere it means American English, but when you're out of the U.S., it means more like World English, world language, something you communicate with someone who doesn't speak the same language*" (lines, 472-475, interview, 10/14/2010). Yiping made a similar remark: "*English…is like a communication tool used to communicate with others, and it also helps you to learn more about the world because everyone uses English*" (lines, 171-173, interview, 12/22/2010). She viewed English as a common language among people who speak English as a foreign language or as a second language. Bin also wrote in his language autobiography, "*I could talk with students whose nationalities were Greece, Brazil, Italy, the USA, Canada, and Hong Kong, etc. Although we could not see each other face to face, we had no problem exchanging our ideas through the Internet. The world is one. Really one*" (lines, 39-42, language autobiography, 2/19/2011). Using English enabled him to take online courses provided by a U.S. university and exchange teaching ideas with graduate students from different countries while working in an English institution in South Korea.

In summary, all of these graduate students drew the conclusion that learning English is beneficial for people whose first language is not English because it allows them to communicate internationally with people around the world. Participants' commitment to English was directly connected to their view of English as an international communication tool.

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2. English as Power

In addition to the dominant view among participants of English as an international communication tool, participants' attachment to English was deeply embedded in the concept of English as linguistic power in their societies (Bourdieu, 1991; Fairclough, 1989, 2001; Pennycook, 1995). Participants described English as a form of linguistic power closely linked to political or national power that might give pleasure as well as pain or burden to those who wished to learn the language as a second or foreign language. This theme was revealed in their language autobiographies. All of the study participants grew up in a society in which English—as a prestige language—is associated with power (Thomas, 1996). Most language autobiographies illustrated how hard participants tried to master English from an early age, and how they or their parents viewed English as a powerful linguistic tool. This suggests that English is regarded as the best language for educational and socioeconomic advancement in their societies (Kachru, 1986, 1992).

Yiping's story shows us how language is related to power. Yiping's language autobiography describes how she tried hard to learn English since junior high school. She wrote: "*After my graduation from junior high school, with my interest in learning English, I chose to study at a language college, Star College of Language, to exalt my academic levels. At that time, I did put a lot of effort into learning English.*" (lines 25-28, language autobiography, 2/10/2011). To improve her English proficiency, she strove to immerse herself in an English learning environment. Yiping believed that speaking her native language could interfere with her learning of English, and she finally decided to stop speaking her native language to her father in order to improve as an English language learner although this decision made her father angry. Her account implicitly demonstrates the importance of learning English in her society by describing how her father finally acquiesced to her decision to speak only English. The other participants' language autobiographies included similar assumptions of English as a particularly powerful form of linguistic capital.

This idea of English as linguistic capital reveals a set of power relations between participants' native languages and English. Most participants mentioned the positive elements of English as a communication tool, but they simultaneously pointed out "a sad reality" (Minsu, interview, 10/8/2010) they face as English language learners and English language teachers in the U.S. and their home countries. Bin stated:

576 *English? Burden, stress... actually, I'm interested in language,*
577 *but I think* [native] *English speakers don't understand people*
578 *who should learn their language forever...*

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581 *I started to learn*
582 *the English language from middle school, and I still learn English.*
583 *I think it is a waste of time, but I think I should learn English...*
584 *English is power.* (interview, 10/12/2010)

Bin considered English a "burden" and "stress" that he wanted to reduce or relieve (line 576). He pointed out that as a NNES, he has to continue learning English until he can master the language (lines 577-578) because English is "power" (line 584). His narrative demonstrates that English is not only a powerful language that gives benefits to fluent speakers in his society but also a painful language to be learned throughout his life. He implied that speaking English fluently in Korean society can grant him linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1991), but he also suggests that the learning process of an English language learner takes too long, leading to a major sacrifice of time, money, and energy.

Minsu's thoughts on the concept of English as power were very similar to Bin's, but Minsu spoke from a more critical perspective than Bin. Minsu stated, "*I gradually began to realize* [that] *it is a very sad reality. The fact that the U.S. is a powerful nation and the fact that English, especially American English, is a powerful dialect is a reality*" (lines, 206-209, interview, 10/8/2010). Minsu viewed English communication as a benefit to anyone who lives in a globalized world because a wealth of information is published in English. However, Minsu expressed anger at the time of the interview although he added, "*it is not all bad* [and] *negative*" (line 211). He believed that "a sad reality" made him come to the U.S.—in which a powerful dialect, American English, is spoken and used—to study and earn a degree in order to climb the ladder of success in Korean society.

In summary, participants directly stated (e.g., Minsu and Bin) or implied (e.g., Yiping, and Chen) that English is power. Minsu viewed American English as a powerful dialect associated with success in Korean society, and Bin viewed English as a powerful language that brings power to fluent speakers in Korean society. On the other hand, two Taiwanese graduate students (Yiping and Chen) implicitly portrayed English as power in their language autobiographies. Yiping's language autobiography suggested that learning English is significant enough in Taiwanese society that her father would allow her not to speak her native language in order to improve her English. Chen's language autobiography also revealed that she ultimately decided to major in English—the most dominant foreign language in her society—in college even though she had struggled to find an interest in learning English throughout her schooling.

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3. Negotiating the Ideology of Standard English

Some participants critiqued the concept of standard English while other participants internalized standard English ideologies. Participants' positions were largely divided into two categories of negotiation: either accepting or resisting the ideology of standard English. While Bin, Minsu, and Chen resisted this ideology in slightly different ways, Yiping did not show any resistance to the concept of standard English.

Yiping emphasized the importance of age in learning to speak English like a NES: "*Especially in case they learn English at an early age, they might not have that kind of problem because their pronunciation is perfect*" (lines, 133-135, interview, 3/8/2010). According to Yiping, speaking standard English means achieving "perfect pronunciation." She believed that NNESs—especially adult English language learners—cannot be "perfect" speakers of English. By saying "[A]*s long as the person is a native speaker, he or she speaks standard English*" (lines 539-540, group conversation, 11/18/2010), Yiping implied that only NESs can speak standard English and that NNESs' English might not be accepted as standard English.

In contrast to Yiping's assumption that a single kind of standard English exists, Bin, Minsu, and Chen resisted the ideology of standard English. Bin stated:

608 *I know that some American leaders think*
609 *American people should have one language and one school system,*
610 *but I think they are trying to have impossible goals.*
611 *First, there is no standard English because even at every U.S. University, in the classroom*
612 *we hear different dialects. They speak different Englishes.*
(interview, 10/12/2010)

This excerpt shows an understanding of EIL. Bin repeatedly made the descriptive claim that "there is no standard English" (lines 610-611), basing this claim on his learning experiences in U.S. classrooms. However, I recognized that Bin could not have learned this idea before coming to the U.S. (lines 249-250, group conversation, 11/18/2010). After starting to study in the program, he realized that there is no single way to speak English and no single method to teach English. He stressed the importance of EIL, which allows for a variety of Englishes to be spoken worldwide. His long and extensive participation in a U.S. language teacher education program made it possible for Bin to resist the ideology of standard English, leading to his claim. Bin explicitly supported an EIL perspective, characteristic of a certain pedagogical model that English teaching should include different Englishes.

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Minsu also resisted the ideology of standard English, especially in relation to his future teaching of English in South Korea:

510 *Because my goal is to communicate in English,*
511 *whether my counterpart is a native speaker of English or a nonnative speaker of English*
512 *As long as we both mutually understand each other*
513 *using a language, then I think that's enough...*
521 *I want to help my* [Korean] *student to become a speaker* [of English]
522 *who is sensitive to culture and to speakers* [of different Englishes],
523 *not necessarily American culture or standard language.*
(interview, 10/8/2010)

This excerpt illustrates Minsu's pedagogical goals in the EFL context. He wanted to focus not only on standard American English or American culture but also on different Englishes spoken by NNESs across the globe (lines 521-523); as a language teacher, he negotiates the idea of standard English from an EIL perspective.

Chen provided an even broader critique, claiming that people were not going to argue for standard English in the future because society is embracing diversity more fully:

555 *I think maybe there is still a standard, but I think*
556 *people are more open now, so they don't just teach that specific part of English*
557 *People like we talk about, like if even African-American people use English differently,*
558 *but nowadays people will try to put that element into the classroom*
559 *also, so that's why I said society is more open now.*
560 *They want to embrace more diversity in the classroom.*
(interview,10/14/2010)

This excerpt indicates that Chen accepted the descriptive claim that there is a standard form of English (line 555), but she remained confident in her position that people no longer uphold standard English because they want to "embrace more diversity" in the classroom (line 560). Although it seemed to be difficult for her to deny that the teaching of standard American English is the mainstream discourse of our educational system, Chen consistently stressed the importance of language teachers' flexible attitudes toward the idea of standard English. In line with an EIL perspective, she believed that there is no one method or model of how English should be spoken.

In summary, Yiping accepted the concept of standard English whereas Bin, Minsu, and Chen resisted the ideology of standard English, expressing an EIL perspective that

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English teaching should include different Englishes and that there is no one model for teaching English.

4. Unique Accent as Identity

The issue of speaking English with a NNES accent cannot be separated from the ideology of standard English. In the ELT profession, NNESs have been considered less desirable English teachers because they are perceived as speaking accented English. In the present study, Asian English teachers' accent issues turned out to be quite complex and contradictory. While participants considered their unique accents to be reflections of their identity, all of them seemed to demonstrate an implicit wish to erase their accents and speak English with a native accent. Personal narratives from individual interviews, group conversations, and language autobiographies highlight Asian English teachers' self-perceptions of their accents as NNESTs (see Kim, 2012 for relevant discussion).

In line with the findings of the previous study (Kim, 2011), Bin described his own accent as "terrible" but "unique" (line 638, interview, 10/12/2010). He told me that he wanted to change his Korean accent because he wanted to speak English with an American accent (line 643). Bin repeatedly sought my agreement, asking, "*We Koreans like American English, right*?" (line 644) and "*From early childhood, we got used to American English. Because of that, we learn American English, not British English, right*?" (lines 645-646). He seemed to desire confirmation of his belief that Koreans like American English and that Koreans feel more comfortable speaking and listening to American English rather than other varieties of English. Especially as an adult English language learner, Bin believed that mastering the American English accent is the most difficult part of achieving English proficiency. He thought that American faculty members and his peers would perceive his English as imperfect English (that is, not like the English of American people) even though he had trained as an English teacher for years in a language teacher education program (lines 140-142, interview, 12/13/2010). Bin also told me that "*many times I feel especially American classmates may think American English is the best English*" (lines 147-148). Bin's classroom observations as a graduate student might have affirmed his perception that American English is the language he should speak as an English teacher in the English language teaching (ELT) profession.

Similar to Bin's perception of his imperfect English, Minsu shared his conflicted experiences in relation to his accented English. Minsu said, "*I have been feeling that people sometimes don't understand when I try to say something...not very often that happens to me*" (lines 536-538, interview, 10/8/2010). According to Minsu's observations, people sometimes failed to understand him because he does not speak "in

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certain ways" (line 540). I would interpret speaking "in certain ways" as speaking "standard American English." He believed that certain words should be pronounced "in certain ways" to make his English understood by others. However, he tried to mediate his position regarding speaking standard English, emphasizing the importance of intelligibility (Smith, 1992). Minsu said, "[A]*s long as people understand me, I think my accent or pronunciation doesn't have to be a certain way*" (lines 552-553). This position is very similar to Yiping's: "[A]*s long as others understand my English, I don't think that* [my accent] *can be a problem*" (line 136, interview, 3/8/2010). Like Minsu, Yiping mediated her position by claiming that intelligibility should be the primary criterion to judge NNESs' accents, including her own accent.

Chen had a more flexible perspective on speaking accented English. She stated that issues of speaking English in a specific accent are no longer as serious in multilingual classrooms, but she also expressed reservations about her position, saying, "*I don't know*." Logically, Chen understood the controversy surrounding the requirement to speak unaccented English as an English teacher, but she did not seem to feel free from the ideological pressure to subscribe to the belief that ideal English teachers should not have an accent.

In summary, all of the participants believed that they could not lose their own accent, but they still wanted to eliminate it if possible. Although Asian English teachers might accept the reality that they cannot speak English like NESs because English is not their native language, that does not necessarily prevent them from simultaneously wishing to speak English with a native accent (Jenkins, 2005). This obvious contradiction highlights the complexity of their identities as NNESTs who do not speak English as a first language, supporting my own understanding of identity formation based on the premise that identity is not fixed but contradictory, multiple, and changeable over time and space (Kim, 2012; McKay & Wong, 1996; Norton, 1995, 1997; Van Sluys, Lewison, & Flint, 2006).

5. The Desire to Become a More Flexible Language Teacher

This theme centers on pedagogical issues, which are also connected to the critical issues of language and power in language teacher education. All of the participants were preservice second language teachers majoring in Language Education at a U.S. university. To elicit more data about individual approaches to teaching English, I asked each participant about the importance of teaching English, and all expressed a desire to be a "more flexible" English teacher. Participants had slightly different approaches to becoming more flexible language teachers. Some focused on the weaknesses of the English education system in their home country that should be changed, and others

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focused on the role of language teachers in helping their students become global citizens who speak EIL in a global world.

Bin critiqued the standards of English education in South Korea. Bin, who had worked as an English educator for many years in his country, strongly critiqued the "abnormal" English education in South Korea. Bin stated: "*I don't think English education in Korea is normal. It is very abnormal, and I found that many students don't like to learn English, but parents push them to learn English*" (lines, 542-544, interview, 10/12/2010). Bin criticized score-oriented English evaluation examinations and parents' extreme expectations for their children's English development regardless of their children's learning interests or aptitude. As an Asian English professional, Bin hoped that English education in South Korea could be changed to more flexibly embrace students with diverse learning needs and styles.

On the other hand, Minsu, Yiping, and Chen shared their views on language teachers' roles in the era of globalization. Minsu shared his flexible teaching philosophy, focusing on the roles of English teachers rather than discussing English education in South Korea. Minsu said, "*To me, by teaching English I help my students to be able to communicate internationally and also because a lot of information is published in English, it is beneficial for them at least to read in English*" (lines 439-442, interview, 10/8/2010). This excerpt illustrates Minsu's understanding of the importance of his role as an English teacher: English can help students to communicate internationally with people from different countries and to gain access to a vast amount of information published in English. Minsu also critiqued the language policy in South Korea that requires almost all to speak English regardless of their language abilities.

Yiping described English teaching as "a mission" to help her students use English effectively:

180 *Before I came here, I thought teaching English was*
181 *just like teaching a language, but now I think teaching language is really important,*
182 *more important than I thought before*
183 *because language, it's more like if you don't have this ability,*
184 *you cannot communicate with others, and you cannot explore countries*
185 *where English is spoken, so...English teaching maybe now for me*
186 *it's not only a job, but also like a mission*
187 *to help students to learn English well.* (interview, 12/22/2010)

This excerpt demonstrates how Yiping flexibly positioned herself as an English teacher. She believed that language is more than a communication tool. For Yiping, teaching English is not just a job but a "mission" (lines 186-187). She hoped that as an English

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teacher, she could help her Taiwanese students open up new worlds and perspectives through the effective use of English. Essentially, Yiping wanted to help her students become successful global citizens by using their English language ability to survive in a globalized world.

Chen's perspective on English teaching also stresses the importance of flexible language teaching. She mentioned, "[S]*tudents are just different, so instead of holding your own belief, it's better to be flexible. Maybe try to listen more because I think as teachers we just like to talk, we don't like to listen* (lines 402-406, interview, 10/12/2010). Chen wanted to approach her class as a facilitator rather than as a teacher by trying to listen to and learn from her students rather than by imposing her knowledge on students. She suggested that teachers should facilitate students' interactions and create opportunities for them to participate in the process of meaning-making, thus supporting their diverse interests and abilities. Chen's narrative of her teaching experience presents language instruction as a flexible process that accounts for and supports differences in students' learning styles and needs.

In summary, all participants—based on their learning and teaching experiences in the U.S. and their home countries—wanted to become more flexible language teachers to make language education better for their students and increase students' ability to speak with others in an era of globalization. In particular, one Korean participant (i.e., Bin) pointed out problems with English education in South Korea that need to be changed to help students improve their English proficiency and become good communicators (rather than simply high-scoring test-takers).

V. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

So far, I have discussed five themes that emerged as discourses from narrative data of Asian English teachers, confirming that participants' stories are not simply personal but also social and cultural (Riessman, 2008; Smith & Sparkes, 2008). The findings of this study provide concrete examples of what scholars and researchers have argued with regard to their theories or theory-based research. The first theme, English as a communication tool, demonstrates the dominant view among Asian English teachers of English as an international means of communication (Widdowson, 1994). This theme aligns with the concept of EIL that refers to "the use of English as a means of international communication across national and linguistic boundaries" (Jenkins, 2006, p. 160). Participants' attachment to English was directly connected to their view of English as an international communication tool.

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I found that participants' commitment to English was also connected to the concept of English as a form of linguistic power in their societies (Bourdieu, 1991; Fairclough, 1989, 2001; Kachru, 1986; Pennycook, 1995) —the data's second major theme. All participants grew up in a society in which English, as a prestige language, is associated with power (McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008; Thomas, 1996). Their language autobiographies illustrated how they strove to master English from an early age because they or their parents valued English as a powerful linguistic tool. This theme also reveals power relations operating between English and their native languages. This emergent theme confirms the concept of linguistic imperialism as linguicism (Phillipson, 1992). Power is expressed in English rather than through other languages, and this power dynamic is then reinforced by ELT professionals around the world. The first and second themes intertwine issues of language and power, confirming Bourdieu's (1991) argument that language is more than an instrument of communication and that through language, power is determined and used depending on a person's race, ethnicity, culture, and class.

The third theme, negotiating the ideology of standard English, is a particularly controversial issue of English learning and teaching among NNESTs. Asian English teachers' positions were largely divided into two categories of negotiation. While Yiping accepted the ideology of standard English as described by Wiley and Lukes (1996), Bin, Minsu, and Chen resisted it from slightly different positions. Although Yiping did not explicitly articulate that English teachers should speak standard English so that students can learn standard English, both believed that standard English should be the norm for communication and teaching (Quirk, 1990). On the other hand, Bin stressed the importance of EIL, which allows for a variety of Englishes to be spoken worldwide. This resistance to the idea of American English as standard English agrees with Kachru's (1992) critique that the norms are externally established by American English. Minsu, as a language teacher, negotiated the idea of standard English from an EIL perspective. His pedagogical goals suggested that language teachers should focus not only on standard American English or American culture but also on different Englishes spoken by NNESs across the globe. Chen emphasized the importance of language teachers' flexible attitudes toward the idea of standard English. She believed that there is no single method or model for teaching English, ideas in line with an EIL perspective.

The concept of standard English cannot be separated from the influence of speaking English with an accent on the identity formation of NNESs, leading to the fourth theme—unique accent as identity. Personal narratives from individual interviews, group conversations, and language autobiographies highlighted Asian English teachers' self-perceptions as NNESTs. They believed that they could not eliminate their own accent, but they simultaneously wanted to if possible (Jenkins, 2005). In other words, all participants were affected by the myth of the non-accent (Lippi-Green, 1997). As Lippi-

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Green argues, they might know that accents have little or nothing to do with communicative ability to effectively use English in a global context. However, the myth of the non-accent still played a role in their assessment of what constitutes "perfect" English.

Lastly, the final theme, becoming a more flexible language teacher, interweaves the critical issues of language and power in language teacher education. All participants agreed that they became more flexible language teachers through their learning and teaching experiences in the U.S. and their home countries. I define teaching flexibility as participants' ability and desire to mediate between standard and accented English and between English as power and English as communication. Interestingly, Korean English teachers took different positions from Taiwanese English teachers in terms of how they valued flexibility and teaching the diversity of English. In short, all participants emphasized the importance of EIL perspectives, celebrating and supporting diversity (Pakir, 2009).

To conclude, this study reveals that the emergent themes interacted within and through discourses of language, power, and ideology. English as a communication tool is closely related to English as power in terms of participants' commitment to English. Asian English teachers seemed to view a unique accent as part of their identity, leading them to negotiate the ideology of standard English and become more flexible as language teachers. For further research, teacher educators and researchers could investigate how Asian English teachers negotiate discourses of language, power, and ideology in their real classrooms.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

1. What does English mean to you?
2. What do you think of the idea that native speakers of English can only be speakers of Standard English?
3. How do you feel about your accent as a nonnative English speaker?
4. Tell me about your idea of becoming an "ideal" English teacher after graduation.
5. Tell me about a good or bad experience with your nonnative English teachers when you learned English in your home country.
6. Tell me about a good or bad experience with your students or parents.
7. Tell me about some important attributes that English teachers should have.

APPENDIX B

Group Conversation Questions

1. Tell me about your experiences and ideas about what kind of English was taught, what is being taught, and what should be taught in the EFL classroom.

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2. Are you familiar with any accent(s) other than the American accent?
3. Have you ever learned British English or other Englishes in your home country?
4. Do you think British English should also be taught at primary and secondary schools?
5. Can you understand Indian English well?
6. If you have any problems with understanding Indian English or any other Asian Englishes spoken by people from different Asian countries, how can we as English professionals solve this issue?

Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Levels: Tertiary

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