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Korean language teachers' vulnerability over English competency in Korean-only classrooms

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Abstract

The recent trend of the internationalization of higher education has increased the significance of English as a medium of instruction and communication on campus in non-English speaking countries. Within this context, this study explores emotional vulnerability of teachers of Korean as a second language (KSL) over their foreign language competency, particularly English. Analysis of interviews of twelve KSL teachers demonstrates these teachers' divergent ways of interpreting and implementing Korean-only instruction, a prevalent norm within the language program, according to their perceived foreign language competency and relevant emotional vulnerability. KSL teachers with proficiency in other foreign language(s) tended to challenge the monolingual norm by utilizing their bilingual skills and experiences as resources for their teaching. Monolingual KSL teachers interpreted Korean-only narrowly and supported a monolingual immersion approach as a way to secure their teacher authority. Regardless of their attitudes towards the Korean-only instruction, however, most teachers experienced various levels of anxiety concerning their perceived lack of adequate English proficiency in the KSL classroom. The results suggest how second language teachers struggle to maintain legitimacy and authority against the hegemony of English in non-English second language contexts, providing implications for the language teacher education.

Keywords: Vulnerability, Korean as a second language, Teacher identity, Teacher emotion, English as a global language, Korean-only instruction

Introduction

Recent research on language teacher identity explores various aspects of teacher identity negotiation (e.g., Barkhuizen, 2017; Cheung et al., 2016; De Costa & Norton, 2017; Lindahl & Yazan, 2019; Varghese et al., 2005, 2016), with nearly exclusive focus on second language (L2) teachers of English. While language teachers in similar contexts may have certain practices and experiences in common, the sociolinguistic uniqueness of each language such as the perceived status of the L2 leads to distinct teaching experiences. For example, research discussed the impact of recent valorization of English as a global language on learning of other languages, suggesting that there is a difference

in learners' motivation towards learning English, as opposed to learning other L2s (e.g., Bernaus et al., 2004; Csizér & Lukács, 2010; Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002; Henry & Apelgren, 2008; Kobayashi, 2013). Learner motivation and attitudes have a significant effect on how teachers design their lessons and adopt pedagogical approaches as well as how they view themselves as a teacher and interact with their students. In this regard, L2 teacher identity in non-English L2 contexts may not be adequately understood simply with the general notion of L2 teacher identity. L2 teachers in those contexts are often viewed as learners of other powerful languages that their students speak, notably English. It is important to discuss the unique sociolinguistic context of the L2 teaching to understand non-English L2 teachers' identity negotiation and struggles.

This study explores emotional challenges experienced by twelve teachers of Korean as a second language (KSL) in South Korea (hereafter Korea), by analyzing their interview responses concerning teacher identities and instructional approaches. It particularly focuses on those teachers' vulnerability as it arises against the broader sociopolitical context of language education, a context increasingly dominated by global market forces and English language. Due to the recent trend towards internationalization of Korean universities and English-medium-instruction (EMI) courses, 'English Fever' runs through Korean university campuses, making English as a value capital for assessing both students and teachers (Author, 2020). Within this context, teachers increasingly face a higher demand for English competency, feeling the strain of expectation and inadequacy. This study discusses how these feelings of inadequacy over teachers' own English skills permeates into Korean-only classrooms. By analyzing teacher interviews on how they interpreted and implemented the conventional Korean-only instruction to secure and support their teacher identity and practice, this study aims to answer the following questions: (1) How do KSL teachers forge an identity through different interpretations and implementations of the Korean-only instruction?; and (2) What way does KSL teachers' vulnerability offer an understanding of L2 teacher identity beyond English?

In what follows, I first introduce the notion of teacher vulnerability and describe the current context of KSL education in relation to the internationalization of higher education in Korea. In the following analysis of KSL teachers' narratives, I focus on how their interpretations and implementations of the Korean-only instruction reflect their feelings of vulnerability towards growing emphasis on English. In the final section, I discuss affective dimensions of KSL teacher identity and argue that their KSL teacher identity is not independent from their status as English users and learners. This is to say, their identity is inevitably appraised according to English language competency, which increases their vulnerability on both personal and professional levels.

Teacher vulnerability

Research has shown that teachers' emotions are a critical element in the dynamic process of negotiating and constructing teacher identity, just as linguistic and sociocultural backgrounds also inform or comprise aspects of that identity (Song, 2016; Benesch, 2012, 2017; Golombek & Doran, 2014; Golombek & Johnson, 2004; Loh & Liew, 2016; Wolff & De Costa, 2017; Zembylas, 2005). Studies in this area suggest that emotional expressions and management of emotions are linked to individual dispositions and life experiences, and also to institutional and work contexts. How teachers perceive the

emotions they feel, and whether or not they express these feelings, usually fall along lines compatible with institutional or cultural norms and expectations (Hargreaves, 2000; Zembylas, 2005). Benesch (2017) and Author (2016) examined the emotional challenges facing language teachers from a sociopolitical perspective, and observed the effects of social structure and hierarchies of power on teachers' emotional experiences. From this perspective, emotions language teachers experience cannot be reducible to just independent psychological makeup, but are social constructs which interact with the very context in which they manifest.

Focus on teacher vulnerability presents a way to explore how school norms and cultures put significant pressure on teachers. Teacher vulnerability is related to how individual teachers respond to individual and group interactions, how they manage classroom experiences, and how they process everyday challenges. Kelchtermans (1996, p. 996) defined vulnerability as "the feeling that one's professional identity and moral integrity are questioned," which is a feeling that teachers may have, in translation, like failure, overriding any sense of legitimacy as a teacher. Describing vulnerability as "a complex, multi-dimensional, multi-faceted emotional experience" (p. 901), Lasky (2005) emphasized its role in understanding teachers' lived experiences for their identity negotiation and transformation. Vulnerability may lead to burn-out and self-isolation when teachers avoid circumstances that threaten personal comfort. However, facing and acknowledging the uncomfortable feelings can give teachers opportunities for pedagogical and self-transformation (Lasky, 2005; Zembylas, 2005). Individuals' identities, beliefs, and self-perceived competencies affect how teachers react to their vulnerability, but the institutional and sociocultural contexts also play a significant role in teachers' differing experiences with vulnerability (Kelchtermans, 1996; Lasky, 2005; Zembylas, 2005).

In this regard, it is critical to examine teacher vulnerability within a specific sociocultural and institutional context. Providing a contextually specific example of teacher vulnerability, Gao (2008) observed the ways in which Chinese teachers' growing sense of vulnerability within a context of rapid educational commercialization. Facing intensive scrutiny of teacher qualification, teachers in the study experienced difficulty assuming authority in the classroom. Traditionally, teachers in China hold an authoritative position, but they are also expected to project moral qualities and professional abilities showing they can handle tasks and take necessary control under any circumstance. Paradoxically, these expectations lead teachers to feel more vulnerable due to their fear of failure or loss of control, or the perceived likelihood of public shaming. Gao argued that shifting educational contexts which diminish traditional Chinese teacher-reverence and professional authority exacerbated teachers' experiences of vulnerability.

Author (2016) also examined Korean English teachers' struggles to maintain a weakening belief in their own teacher authority in the midst of globalization and an increasing demand for native-like English competency. Similar to their Chinese counterparts in Gao (2008), Author found out that Korean teachers' feelings of vulnerability were linked to growing concern over what it means to be a good teacher amidst a cultural climate of waning teacher authority via shifting educational demands. While some teachers expressed their feelings of vulnerability and understood that they needed to re-consider their ideas about 'a good teacher,' other teachers attempted to conceal their emotions by telling covert stories. Clearly, these teachers had differing emotional reactions to the

sources of their vulnerability, and this highlights the need to understand interrelationships between the educational context and teacher identity (Lasky, 2005; Zembylas, 2005).

As vulnerability is inextricably bound to the sociocultural and sociopolitical contexts in which it is experienced (Author, 2016; Gao, 2008; Kelchtermans, 1996; Lasky, 2005; Zembylas, 2005), it is important to explore the specific educational context of KSL teacher vulnerability. The recent internationalization of higher education has generated a unique educational context, shifting teaching and learning practices on campus significantly. Specifically, the increasing push for English use on campus challenges KSL teachers in motivating their students to invest in a non-English second language, maintaining teacher authority, and keeping up and implementing what constitutes effective pedagogy (Gayton, 2016).

Internationalization of Korean universities and Korean language education

Due to a diminishing enrollment of domestic students and the perceived need to internationalize higher education (Byun & Kim, 2011), universities in Korea host increasing numbers of international students and scholars. As recently as 2018, there were 142,205 foreign students studying in Korea, more than ten times the number of the international students in 2003 (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2018). The increase in number of international students enrolled in Korean universities has brought two new changes: (1) an increasing presence of English use on campuses and (2) an increasing number of KSL learners. Many Korean universities competitively offer more English-medium-instruction (EMI) courses to increase university's international index that is often used to measure the university's overall quality and competitiveness (Byun & Kim, 2011). All domestic Korean students are also required to take a certain number of EMI courses as part of their degree requirements, which emphasizes the significance of English as an academic language among Korean students as well as international students (Author, 2020).

While more international students are learning KSL than ever before, the increase in international students pushes more English-Medium-Instruction (EMI) courses, emphasizing the role of English at Korean universities. The minimum-level proficiency in the Test of Proficiency in Korean (TOPIK) for college admission is Level 3 or 4 (out of 6), but international students, once admitted, end up taking both Korean-medium-instruction and EMI courses to complete their degree requirements. Many non-EMI courses tend to include partial English instruction in order to accommodate the increasing number of international students without strong proficiency in Korean (Song, 2020). The increasing role of English on Korean university campuses means that there is little motivation for international students to learn KSL and that Korean students and faculty including KSL teachers experience higher pressure to use English and deeper anxiety about their English competence (Park, 2015).

In correlation with the rise in number of international students, KSL education has also expanded. Nevertheless, rapid creation and expansion of new Korean language programs has generated novel challenges for KSL teachers. For example, no clear medium of instruction policy for the KSL classroom and specific pedagogical approaches concerning multilingual learners in the classrooms (Kwon & Jeong, 2009) generate more

confusion for KSL teachers, making the implicit norm of the Korean-only immersion approach guide instruction and classroom interactions. In this context, the use of other languages including learners' first languages are prohibited altogether or recognized as the 'necessary evil' in most KSL classrooms (Choi, 2009). Within this context, each teacher plays a critical role in interpreting, negotiating, and implementing the Korean-only instruction (Menken et al., 2010; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). Examining how teachers interpret and enact the Korean-only instructional norm in their classrooms provides a window into their perceptions and beliefs about language use and learning as well as how they negotiate power and agency, foregrounding their teacher identity in the process (Johnson, 2013; Menken et al., 2010; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996).

This study explores KSL teachers' vulnerability reflected in their narratives about Korean-only instruction in the classroom. It focuses on how KSL teachers' vulnerability about foreign language competence, particularly in English, affects the way they negotiate and implement the monolingual instructional approach. So far, little research has discussed L2 teachers' vulnerability about English competence in the non-English L2 classroom which operates based on a monolingual immersion approach. Research on the KSL context is rare, and KSL teacher identity is even scarcer. Thus, it is timely to explore KSL teachers' experiences of vulnerability in relation to their identity struggles in the face of internationalization and increasing demand for English on campus.

Methodology

This study is part of a larger study on the internationalization of Korean higher education and EMI courses at Korean universities over one year. The analysis here is drawn from interviews with KSL teachers about language policies, classroom language usage, and challenges they face.

Context and participants

The university where the study was conducted is located in southeastern Korea and had 27,839 students in the 2019 academic year. 1,368 international students were enrolled in the same academic year. The university implemented flexible, yet vague language requirements for admitting international students, requiring them to demonstrate proficiency in *either* Korean *or* English via a score on one of the following tests: Test of Proficiency in Korean (TOPIK), TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication), or IELTS (International English Language Test System). The university offers both English-Medium-Instruction (EMI) and non-EMI (Korean-Medium-instruction) courses, but no clear Medium-of-Instruction (MoI) policies are implemented for multilingual classrooms (Song, 2022). Most international students, both English speakers and KSL learners, along with domestic Korean students, enroll in both EMI and non-EMI courses to complete their university degrees. Even in 'official' EMI courses, instructors interpreted the MoI policy differently and implemented their own MoI policy utilizing varying degrees of Korean and English for their students' diverse language proficiencies in English and Korean (Song, 2022).

The situation extends to KSL education on campus. While there is an implicit 'norm' or a 'tradition' (원칙 *'won-chik'*) for Korean-only, no clear, explicit MoI policies exist for the KSL classrooms as reflected in the teachers' narratives in the study.

The university offers various types of KSL courses including credit and non-credit courses, semester-long and short-term courses, and special KSL courses for specific majors, and the norm of Korean-only instruction is applied differently among those courses. Thus, KSL teachers may have different interpretations of and attitudes toward the Korean-only instruction. The majority of the KSL learners in the program were Chinese students (80%), while the remainder were from other Asian countries (14%)—such as Mongolia, Vietnam, and Japan—and other countries (6%).

Twelve KSL teachers in the study are Korean native speakers, either holding a graduate degree or currently working on one at the time of the study. Their KSL teaching experiences ranged from one to eight years, and several teachers also taught other foreign languages. Some of the teachers also taught Korean courses for undergrade and graduate students, and those courses may include more students from non-Asian countries. Table 1 describes participants' backgrounds.

Data collection

Each of the twelve teachers was interviewed for sixty to ninety minutes. Eight teachers participated in in-person interviews and the other four teachers in online interviews. In-depth semi-structured interviews with twelve pre-interview questions were conducted to understand nuanced and detailed meanings of KSL teachers' emotional experiences and practices (Patton, 2015). All interviews were conducted in Korean, recorded and transcribed for data analysis, and then translated into English (underlined words indicate words spoken in English during the interviews). I also produced a detailed fieldnote for each interview, documenting significant points of each participant's interview responses and my own reflection on what and how the participant said.

The concept of "active interviewing" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003) was utilized as a framework for collecting and analyzing interview responses as co-constructed between interviewer and interviewee. From this active interviewing perspective, participants are "active subjects" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003) who mediate perceived realities and knowledge bases that are shared and not shared with the interviewer during the interview process. As interviewer, my role was to actively draw attention to the problems and concerns the participants might raise and then move towards critical reflection through an evaluation of their responses. As a former Korean language teacher in the U.S., I utilized my own experiences in language education to commiserate with the teachers regarding their frustrations, which I also had experienced in the classroom. This helped all of us to find common ground, and allowed me to bring attention to 'contextual' and critical readings of their experiences, opposed to some sort of 'text-book' assessment on their experiences in the KSL classroom. My role as an interviewer was not to remain 'objective, but rather actively involved in the interview process by co-constructing interview responses together with the participants (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003).

Table 1 Participants

No	Name	Years of teaching KSL	Educational background	Foreign languages spoken	Note
T1	Sung-Mi	3 months	BA in English MA in English Ph.D. student in KSL Education	English	Taught English at Korean universities over 4 years
T2	Su-Jin	3 years	BA in Korean MA in Korean Education; Ph.D. student in KSL Education		
T3	Jeong-Ah	5 years 8 months in Uzbekistan	BA in English MA in TESOL in UK Ph.D. student in KSL Education	English	Occasionally teaching English to Korean students
T4	Yeon-Woo	2 years 6 months	BA in Japanese MA in Japanese; Ph.D. students in KSL Education	English, Japanese	
T5	Jin-Joo	8 years	BA in Korean MA in Korean Education; Ph.D. in KSL		Coordinator of a Korean Education Center
T6	Kyeong	6 years	BA in Korean MA in Korean; Ph.D. student in KSL		Planning study abroad to learn English
T7	Ji-Su	5 years	BA in Japanese MA in Korean Education; Ph.D. student in KSL	Japanese	Studying English and Chinese to help students with quick explanations in those languages
T8	Ji-Min	8 years 6 months in China	BA in Chinese MA in Korean; Ph.D. in KSL	Chinese	Being enrolled in Japanese Program at an open university
T9	An-San	4 years	BA in English; MA in English; Ph.D. in KSL	English	
T10	Dae-Gu	3 years	BA in Korean; MA in Korean; Ph.D. student in KSL		
T11	Ye-Soo	3 years	BA in Korean; MA in Korean Education; Ph.D. student in KSL		
T12	Kim	1 year	BA in Chinese; MA in Applied Linguistics; Ph.D. student in KSL	Chinese English	

Data analysis

The data analysis process was inductive and recursive (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I utilized thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify recurring themes in teacher narratives. I used a manual coding procedure by reading the transcribed interview data and fieldnotes repeatedly, focusing on participants' views of the Korean-only norm and their language use in the classroom.

During an initial coding, I identified participants' divergent attitudes toward the Korean-only instruction, views of language teachers' responsibilities, student–teacher relationships, descriptions on competence in other languages, and emotional expressions about their positions and teaching. In the next rounds of coding, I compared

and integrated those initial codes and categories to analyze how participants' views of the classroom language use and their backgrounds were related.

After each participant's within-case analysis on the theme, I conducted cross-case analysis to compare participants' cases. The cross-case analysis demonstrated that teachers' differing views on the language policy were mediated by self-assessment factors, such as perceived foreign language competence or professional competence—that is, did they meet perceived standards in meeting the teaching responsibilities within the cultural and institutional context of KSL education.

The analysis also identified significant sources of their vulnerability: feelings of anxiety about English, concerns about losing authority, and feelings of guilt about not meeting expectations of proper teachers. The teachers felt pressured by student expectations and felt some degree of guilt over their own sense of lack of adequate skills in English, which, in turn, gave way to feelings of inadequacy and vulnerability. Due to their perceived lack of adequate skills in English, those teachers felt themselves unable to meet Korean cultural expectations of being all-knowing teachers, and therefore unable to achieve teacher authority. The critical analysis on the teacher emotions demonstrated that their instructional preferences often conflicted with their views of student needs, and these conflicts revealed teachers' own emotional and professional needs.

Results

Diverse interpretations and implementations of Korean-only instruction

Teachers in this study acknowledged the implicit norm of Korean-only instruction within the program, but interpreted and implemented it in ways to legitimate their own pedagogical approaches in the classroom. Their responses to the Korean-only instruction ranged from, "ridiculous" to "absolutely necessary," which meant there were very different approaches to teaching among the teachers. Seven teachers (T1, T3, T4, T7, T8, T9, and T12) held negative attitudes towards Korean-only and believed that allowing learners to use their first languages, such as English, Chinese, or Japanese, is a better pedagogical approach for enhancing student learning. The rest of the teachers (T2, T5, T6, T10, and T11) held a favorable attitude towards the Korean-only instruction, insisting that immersion would be the best way for students to improve proficiency faster. On the basis of a teacher responsibility/good teaching from their perspective, those teachers justified their own views of the Korean-only instructional approach. For example, implementing a multilingual approach is "doing what is best for students" (Jeaong-Ah), and teaching Korean exclusively in Korean is the best way for "carrying out a fundamental duty of language teachers" (Su-Jin).

Teachers' differing justification was relevant to their linguistic background and identity.

Teachers who have other language skills tended to consider the Korean-only instruction as a guideline rather than as a strict rule to follow. Yeon-Woo (T4) suggested that Korean-only instruction acknowledged within the program is not a policy, and teachers may choose to use. She said:

> I don't think there is any explicit policy, so teachers can implement their own policy. Teachers who can speak English utilize English, believing in its effectiveness. I also think that using languages students can understand would be an effective way to teach low-level classes. (T4 Yeon-Woo)

Her belief that there is no systemic approach to language usage in the Korean class-rooms was also supported by other teachers. Several teachers including Yeon-Woo have been told to utilize other languages to teach KSL courses outside of the KSL pro-gram. For instance, Jeong-Ah (T3) reported being told to use English while teaching a three-week intensive Korean language course for international exchange students. But she felt pressure to use Korean-only when teaching in the KSL program. This seems to support Yeon-Woo's view that no systematic and consistent approach exists.

Jeong-Ah (T3), who had a background in English education, commented that she utilized English instruction in the classroom when needed, especially for lower-level learners who tend to have difficulty understanding lessons in Korean only. She sug-gested that teachers who insist on Korean-only teaching lack experience in L2 learn-ing themselves, and thus lack empathy for learners who are struggling to learn a new language. In contrast, Jeong-Ah said that her own L2 learning experiences enhance her classroom pedagogy.

> *When you teach Korean as a second language, teachers who have a command of other languages are different from those who can only speak Korean in their understanding of learners. The differences include the degree of their understand-ing of psychological, affective, and contextual issues as well as their awareness of common errors and difficulties of a group of learners with certain linguistic and cultural background. (T3 Jeong-Ah)*

In Jeong-Ah's view, teachers who embrace their identity as a bilingual speaker with L2 language learning experiences have a greater awareness of the language learning process and more empathy for their students. She believed that teachers in this group tend to utilize a multilingual repertoire in teaching, enacting their bilingual identity (Elis, 2004; Motha et al., 2012; Zheng, 2017). Jeong-Ah's remarks point to the peda-gogical split among KSL teachers: those who majored in foreign languages, such as English, Chinese, and Japanese, were likely to support and implement multilingual approaches in teaching Korean language, while teachers who majored in "*jeongtong*" (pure, traditional) Korean are more likely to embrace the legitimacy of a Korean-only approach in their teaching. Teachers from the *jeongtong* Korean group had studied Korean linguistics and literature as an academic subject before shifting to KSL educa-tion. According to Jeong-Ah, these teachers' in-depth knowledge on Korean linguis-tics and literature for Korean speakers, but limited exposure to KSL or L2 education may have influenced their approaches towards the Korean-only instruction. Jeong-Ah also noted a contradiction of enforcing divergent approaches to different Korean courses across campus, such as the credit-bearing Korean language courses offered for international students, and the non-credit courses in the language education center. She was encouraged by the coordinator of the KSL program to use English in order to "speed up" Korean acquisition in for-credit classes, but was instructed by the same coordinator to use Korean only in non-credit classes. Jeong-Ah said it was "ridiculous" to require Korean-only instruction for one class, but not for another, since all students should be entitled to teaching methods helpful to their speedy lan-guage development.

Several other teachers who studied other foreign languages exhibited similar experiences. For example, Ji-Min (T8) and Kim (T12) hold a B.A. degree in Chinese, and their views on the Korean-only instruction echoed that of Jeong-Ah. For example, Ji-Min (T8) disagreed with the coordinator who believed that using Korean exclusively in the KSL classrooms would encourage students to practice and learn Korean more quickly. Instead, Ji-Min found that incorporating explanations in Chinese when teaching native Chinese speakers saved her students from minor but time-consuming difficulties as they learned the new language.

> *I could expect Chinese learners' common mistakes and difficulties in learning Korean, and I could help them by using Chinese examples. Also, I could give them some further assistance in Chinese outside the class. In this regard, my Chinese skills give me an advantage in teaching KSL leaners. (T8 Ji-Min)*

Ji-Min confirmed that she was able to utilize the same technique for non-Chinese students, saying "English-speaking students often ask questions in English about the meaning of a Korean word that does not exist in English. I quickly confirm the meaning of a similar English word." Discussing her experience of teaching Korean in China for six months, Ji-Min addressed the benefit of using learners' first language (L1) in the classroom:

> *Because I witnessed the success of Korean learning among students in China who were taught in Chinese, I don't think that students need to learn an L2 in the target language only. I found that students there made much fewer errors on the features that many KSL learners are struggling with. Therefore, I disagree with the idea that Korean should be taught in Korean only. (T8 Ji-Min)*

Ji-Su (T7), who has a command of Japanese, also had an unfavorable view of the Korean-only instruction, suggesting that Korean-only would only be effective for much younger learners who have more time to learn, as opposed to adult learners who need to learn Korean fast in order to attend university courses. In Ji-Su's view:

> *Using Korean only seems like pouring Korean language-input into children. Pouring one hundred words of the target language over time makes the children speak the language as if it were their mother tongue. For adult learners, however, we need to use time more efficiently. Using other languages is good if that makes them understood and use the language quickly. (T7 Ji-Su)*

In her multilingual approach, Ji-Su used Japanese explanations for Japanese-speaking KSL learners, and prepared a list of frequently asked questions and examples in English for non-Japanese speaking students.

In contrast, the five teachers in the study who supported the Korean-only instruction considered the approach to be both institutionally sanctioned and non-arbitrary. Jin-Joo (T5), the coordinator of the KSL program, stated that the multilingual approach adopted by several teachers in teaching Korean could interfere with learners' development of fluency in KSL.

Jin-Joo: We don't use other languages in the classroom. We don't use them at all.

Interviewer:	What do you do when students could not understand?
Jin-Joo:	We use lots of pictures. I think that we should not use other languages in the classroom. I occasionally allowed English use in a course for graduate students because the course is only for three hours per week. I noticed that students who used English, or their L1, were slower in developing Korean fluency.
Interviewer:	Do you use the same technique for teaching grammar?
Jin-Joo:	For teaching grammar, I used the same method. For example, I showed lots of examples for the usage of different particles, '-un' and '-nun,' instead of giving them a verbal explanation on their usage in Korean.
Interviewer:	Do the students ask questions in English?
Jin-Joo:	We prevent them from doing that.
Interviewer:	So, you don't answer them if they ask questions in English?
Jin-Joo:	They don't ask questions in English. They understand that it is not allowed in the classroom.

The interview excerpt here clearly demonstrates Jin-Joo's belief in the effectiveness of Korean immersion. She confirmed that "we"— teachers in the program—use (and should use) the Korean-only approach due to the perceived benefit of the monolingual approach. When asked, Jin-Joo explained that Krashen's (1985) $i+1$ (comprehensive input) is the best model for teaching a second language, highlighting the importance of providing appropriate and sufficient input for Korean language acquisition. Here, her selective reference to the theory (only Krashen's) helped her justify her support of the Korean-only instruction, and her role as the coordinator enabled her to represent the teachers (as she used "we") with her personal view of the approach.

However, Jin-joo also mentioned KSL teachers' frequent use of English in graduate Korean-language courses in which more English-speaking students enroll, indicating, perhaps, that her belief of the Korean-only instruction is not consistent, but rather context-specific. This apparently conflicting position on how best to teach Korean— on the one hand, viewing a multilingual approach as an interference in learning the language and, on the other, acknowledging the pedagogical usefulness of using other languages—indicates the struggle Jin-Joo must have in maintaining her education beliefs while dealing with classroom realities.

Other teachers who had a Korean education background favored the Korean-only instruction, at least "officially" (some teachers expressed conflicts about it, which is discussed in the next section). They echoed Jin-Joo, suggesting using Korean-only in the classroom helps learners the best. Su-Jin (T2) stated that learning Korean through immersion provides an advantage of learning the language in a natural way. Dae-Gu (T10) also said that Korean-only "pushes students to think in Korean," which he believes is critical for language learning.

The discussion in this section presented KSL teachers' various reactions toward and interpolations of the Korean-only instruction. Their views seem to reflect their own linguistic backgrounds and identities, which, in turn, become resources for implementing pedagogical approaches in linguistically diverse classrooms (Morgan, 2004). Teachers who do not have significant proficiency in other languages seem to support

the Korean-only approach, regardless as to whether they acknowledge the effectiveness of multilingual approaches in teaching. Advocacy for the Korean-only instruction perhaps justifies KSL teachers' own monolingual identity, even to the point of valorizing KSL teachers with native abilities and professional education in Korean language. Teachers with advanced foreign language skills, on the other hand, used their own multilingual identities as a resource to resist the monolingual approach, highlighting their L2 learning experiences shared with their students.

Global English and KSL teacher vulnerability

While KSL teacher narratives in the previous section revealed individual differences in their interpretations and implementations of the Korean-only instruction, the narratives also collectively pointed out a vulnerability these teachers felt regarding their competency in English. That is, KSL teachers experienced vulnerability concerning the increasing demand for English competence even in the Korean-only classrooms, regardless of their view of the monolingual norm.

Several of the KSL teachers reported growing discomfort over how their students were not engaging in classroom activities. They blamed themselves for not being able to motivate their students due to their lack of adequate English language skills. These teachers felt their inability to speak English was to a sign of their low authority, especially when facing Western students with very different cultural orientations and classroom behaviors—and a more obvious and explicit display of their emotional struggles and discomfort in the classroom. KSL teachers blamed themselves for not being able to accommodate English-speakers due to their perceived lack of adequate English skills, even in the classroom in which only Korean is sanctioned to use. Being a native speaker is often a sufficient qualification for English teachers in ELT (Ruecker & Ives, 2015), but this does not seem to apply to the KSL teachers in the study.

Kyeong (T6) admitted that her support of the Korean-only instruction was mainly due to her lack of proficiency in any other language, and expressed a desire to speak the languages of her students. She expressed her frustration about explaining meanings of simple words in Korean by using more new words in Korean due to her not being able to speak other languages, particularly in English.

> *I don't speak any foreign language. If I were able to speak a foreign language, I would use it when needed, at least in the lower-level classrooms. I think that it would be possible to use Korean only in the intermediate- or upper-level classrooms, and adopting an approach that taps on other languages would help learners to speed up their language development initially. But I cannot speak any foreign languages. (T6 Kyeong)*

Acknowledging her language limitation, Kyeong suggested that KSL teachers' attitude towards the Korean-only instruction is related to their Korean-only language competency. She said that she feared that miscommunication with students might negatively affect their motivation to study Korean language. Kyeong believed that having English as a "common language" (in her words) would be a great resource for teachers and

helpful to students, and expressed her high desire for good English skills for teaching. She added:

> *I majored in Korean language in college and also earned an M.A and a Ph.D. in Korean Education. Thus, I don't have good English skills. Now I am 29 years old, and I considered going abroad to study English before it is too late. I think that I should study English. (T6 Kyeong)*

That Kyeong so openly expressed her desire to go abroad to study or improve her language skills in English demonstrates her understanding of a classroom reality: English language skills, even for KSL teaching, are in high demand. Kyeong's revealing of her age points out her frustration and feeling of shame as she needed to consider what younger college students would do, even after completing graduate degrees and professional trainings in KSL education. Thus, age here also indexes her professional status—her professional credentials and teaching experiences. However, Kyeong's awareness of her own position as a non-English speaker and a learner of English language brings with it a sense of vulnerability in her current position as a KSL teacher in a changed culture. She is aware of the struggle to maintain her own sense of legitimacy as a KSL teacher within this shifting context of language education towards English proficiency.

Two other teachers, Daegu (T10) and Ye-Soo (T11), shared their conflicts concerning their views of Korean-only instruction and the needs for them to develop their English competency. They believed that Korean immersion is the best way for KSL education, but their use of English in the classroom would be helpful in communicating with students by providing additional information about the lesson. They admitted that their English is not strong enough to use confidently in the classroom. Ye-Soo showed her anxiety of her English skills, saying that her use of "imperfect" English might hurt her students' attitudes toward her lesson and possibly her image as a teacher.

The bi/multilingual KSL teachers in the study also acknowledged the importance of English skills in their teaching and reported their emotional vulnerability over English competency. Jeong-Ah (T3) who had studied English education in the UK pointed out "the power of English" over any other languages in teaching KSL. She noted that few KSL courses were taught using a mixture of Korean and Chinese, despite the fact that Chinese is the dominant L1 among KSL learners. This situation indicates the significance of English even in the KSL classroom. Additionally, she believed that English proficiency is considered to be one of the most important qualifications for KSL teachers from the perspective of students, no matter their country of origin or first language. Jeong-Ah commented:

> *I am not sure how students assess teacher qualification. They may consider several traits. Obviously, teaching well would be the most important. They love teachers who are funny. But I think that these are just a <u>plus</u>. The most important aspect that students consider when they access KSL teaching would be teachers' ability to speak other languages, particularly English. (T3 Jeong-Ah)*

Jeong-Ah said that she was able to utilize her English proficiency to great advantage in her classroom. She believed that her reputation as a good English speaker made her a popular teacher, and that students in her classroom bonded in their use of a common

language, English. Jeong-Ah understood that her privileged professional status was earned and guaranteed by what she had accrued through the power of linguistic capital of English (Bourdieu, 1986). Her language skills match the current academic culture, which demands for KSL teachers' English competence as a significant teacher qualification.

Three KSL teachers have a good command of Chinese or Japanese, but lack sufficient English competency. These teachers sought greater English proficiency because they wanted to be better prepared to answer questions from English-speaking students and to maintain classroom control. They described their experiences with students who express negative attitudes, resist participation in classroom activities and completing assignments, and sometimes even walk out of class during a lesson. The reported that these incidents really challenged their self-confidence and resulted in increased anxiety about facing students from certain cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Yeon-Woo (T4) who is a fluent Japanese speaker spoke about students' expectation of KSL teachers:

> *I don't think that [English competence] is required for KSL teachers. But students think otherwise. They consider English proficiency one of the most important qualifications for teachers, as they speak ill of teachers who cannot speak English. Such a teacher would be seen as, "someone whom they cannot communicate with." (T4 Yeon-Woo)*

Yeon-Woo expressed great discomfort with perceived expectations regarding her English skills as she was afraid of being "someone whom they (her students) cannot communicate with" because such a teacher frustrates and demotivates students. This fear drove her to prepare answers to frequently asked questions in English. She admitted that her own "poor English" compromised management of moment-to-moment situations in the classroom, deepening her anxiety when facing Western students who she thought would expect her to equip with better English.

Similarly, Ji-Min (T8), a fluent Chinese speaker, struggled with students' lack of comprehension.

> *I feel bad that I can't make my students understand fully. I feel powerless when I realize that I don't have any <u>card</u> [ability] to deal with English-speaking students, I mean Western students, when they complain about difficulties understanding me in my face with explicit emotional expressions. It makes me very anxious and uncomfortable when I am unable to manage the students due to my lack of communication skills in the language they can understand. (T8 Ji-Min)*

Ji-Min's reaction to her students' very visible frustration made her question her competency as a KSL teacher, even as she felt the unfairness of being expected to know English while teaching KSL in a Korean-only program. But she blamed her inability to manage her classroom on her lack of English skills, and felt guilty about not having them. Ji-Min's conflicting feelings conveyed a real sense of vulnerability, the feeling of "losing control of the processes and tasks they[she] felt responsible for" (Kelchtermans, 1996, p. 997).

Vulnerability very much described Ji-Min's situation as a KSL teacher in this situation where her emotional responses and teacher identity are mediated by the changing sociocultural and sociopolitical contexts of higher education today (Kelchtermans, 1996;

Lasky, 2005; Zembylas, 2005). Ji-Min's professional training in KSL education and her Korean-Japanese bilingual identity were undermined by the language ideology of English which privileges English as a powerful communication tool and as a valuable pedagogical resource. Ji-Min believed that lacking fluency in English meant that she might not be seen as professional or deserving of respect as a good teacher, and this filled her with self-doubt and conflict about her professional identity as a teacher. On the other hand, Ji-Min also felt resentful since English proficiency was never a requirement of study or employment for KSL teachers. But she did not blame her students for what she saw as their negative attitudes and non-participation in her KSL classes. Instead, she blamed herself, expressing feelings of guilt over failing to reach her students, which meant failing to fulfill her teaching obligations. KSL teachers' guilt over not having good English skills reflects Korean people's anxiety over English competency in the context in which English is valorized as one of the most valuable soft skills (Park, 2015). What is notable here is that the anxiety over English competency creeps into the KSL classroom, affecting native Korean speaking teachers who support Korean-only instruction. Ji-Min's emotional vulnerability concerning her English skills raises questions about what makes a good language teacher since being a native speaker of Korean with professional knowledge does not seem to hold the same prestige as a native speaker of English in ELT.

Discussion

The analysis of KSL teachers' narratives revealed these teachers' emotional vulnerability over English language competency, highlighting how their vulnerability affected the ways they interpreted and implemented the Korean-only instruction in their classrooms. KSL teachers' vulnerability discussed in the study locates L2 teacher identity in a broader sociolinguistic context. Even under the Korean-only norm, KSL teachers in this study experienced high pressure for English use. Unlike native English-speaking teachers who enjoy privileges in ELT (e.g., Ruecker & Ives., 2015), the KSL teachers, native speakers of Korean who teach Korean in the Korean 'monolingual' society, did not enjoy the same level of prestige and authority. Instead, they were constantly reminded by their students and the educational climate that they were English learners. Their narratives demonstrated that their perceived lack of English proficiency questioned about their L2 teacher identity. That is, most KSL teachers who lack English proficiency see themselves through that lack, rather than as KSL professionals with native speaker status and professional expertise.

The sense of vulnerability experienced by KSL teachers without English language fluency does not only come from student expectation due to the fact that the actual number of English-speaking students in a typical KSL classroom is proportionally small, and the number of Chinese speaking students constitutes the majority, over 80 percent of the student population. But none of the KSL teachers expressed anxiety over not knowing Chinese or expressed any sense of obligation to learn Chinese. English fluency seems to represent something else, and KSL teachers' self-blame could be related to personal regret at not having studied abroad or otherwise gained a good command of English. In turn, KSL teachers' personal regret intensifies their sense of professional vulnerability; they fear loss of teacher authority in classrooms where internationalization of student population means that English language fluency plays an increasingly important role.

Jin-Joo (T5) commented that offering many EMI courses on campus has reduced the need for international students to learn Korean and increased expectation of English usage in the KSL classroom. This shift in student expectations has created extra pressure for university instructors, including KSL teachers, to speak English (Byun et al., 2011; Choi, 2016; Kim et al., 2014). KSL teachers' feeling of increasing vulnerability is due to the shifts in social expectation and cultural contexts in higher education in Korea today, and these changes extend far beyond KSL education. Thus, recognition of the hegemony of English in language education, particularly in the discussion of (non-English) L2 teacher identity and status is crucial for understanding L2 teachers' experiences in non-English L2 contexts. The language struggles facing KSL teachers are particularly relevant to the language ideology of English, particularly native speakerism, that recognizes L2 teachers of other languages as learners and non-native speakers of English (Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992).

Additionally, KSL teacher vulnerability in this study points out the widespread ideology of English in the broader social context of South Korea, which highlights the value of English as one of the most significant soft skills and capital (Park, 2015). Within this context, Korean speakers suffer from high anxiety in their endless race for obtaining good English skills. Song & Park (2019) illustrated how Korean English teachers' anxiety is grounded deeply within social structures, emphasizing that feelings of individuals are not independent from broader and dominant power structure and ideology. KSL teachers' vulnerability in the current study highlights this interdependence, demonstrating how the dominance of English makes these non-English L2 teachers feel vulnerable even within their L2 classrooms. The results also demonstrate how KSL teachers' vulnerability about their English proficiency became a significant contributor to their interpretation and implementation of Korean-only medium of instruction approach. This is reminiscent of the studies by Ellis (2004) and Zheng (2017) which showed how multilingual teachers brought richer resources from their own language learning experiences into their classroom practices. The discussion of KSL teacher emotions provides a unique example of how teachers' linguistic background and their language learning experiences become significant pedagogical resources through their adjustment and adoption of the medium of instruction policy.

Conclusion

This study explored KSL teachers' views of Korean-only instruction in relation to their emotional struggles in facing the increasing demand for English competence in shifting educational context. KSL teachers' narratives demonstrated how individual teachers' divergent attitudes and approaches toward Korean-only are relevant to their own foreign language competence, highlighting teachers' linguistic background as a resource for their pedagogical decisions (Ellis, 2004; Morgan, 2004). Teachers with other language skills were able to work around the Korean-only approach by utilizing multilingual practices in their classrooms (Motha et al., 2012; Zheng, 2017) whereas monolingual KSL teachers tended to support the Korean immersion approach to secure their teacher authority in the classroom.

KSL teachers' vulnerability in the study points out the relationship between L2 teachers' emotional struggles and the shifting teaching conditions that generate new standards

for what it means to be a 'good teacher' (Kelchtermans, 1996; Lasky, 2005; Zembylas, 2005). The notion of a good teacher in the context of international universities suggests that English competence is a criterion for meeting it, but realization of and resistance to this expectation makes L2 teachers more vulnerable. The vulnerability KSL teachers experience indicates how expectations or even assumptions of English language fluency for L2 teachers reaches into L2 contexts beyond English teaching, categorizing professional L2 teachers merely as non-native English speakers in the local classrooms.

The results also raise a question about the implicit, yet wide-spread institutional norm of Korean-only in the KSL classrooms. This monolingual norm itself delimits KSL teacher identity by disallowing their utilizing bilingual experiences and relevant identities in the classroom. No clear guidelines for the medium of instruction in the L2 classrooms perpetuate the myth of a monolingual immersion approach, detached from classroom realities. To enhance teachers' emotional well-being and help teachers advance pedagogies, clear and realistic guidelines should be provided through more critical discussion and support for effective pedagogical approaches. Administers and teacher educators together can implement policies and practices specific for the local classrooms that would take L2 teaching beyond a monolingual approach found in the framework of the native speaker model. Such collaboration would help L2 teachers prepare for the classroom realities, advocating for their and their students' dynamic negotiation of identities and practices.

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