Unmasking Young Learners’ Perceptions of Good Language Teacher Identity*

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This study explores the notion of ‘good language teacher’ (GLT) identity in the context of English education in South Korea. While other studies have investigated parents’ and general public preferences for and associations of good language teacher identity with ‘native-speaking’ teachers of English, little research has examined the views of young learners as to what constitutes a GLT. In this study, a survey tool was used to collect student images and descriptions of imagined, good English teachers. A total of 577 young Korean students (K-6th grade) provided their own images and descriptions of good English teachers, both in English and Korean. The findings indicate that student perceptions of GLT identity strongly reflects their immediate learning experience. Contrary to previous studies showing preference for teachers according to ‘native speaker’ or other markers (e.g., race, gender), the study demonstrated no strong preference for native speaking teachers. Instead, factors such as personality were emphasized. This study provides implications for recruiting and hiring practices for English teachers.

**Key words:** teacher identity, good language teacher, native-speakerism, survey study, young learners

1. INTRODUCTION

Private language institutes represent a major locale of linguistic and cultural exchange in

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South Korea. They are places where young learners can interact in meaningful ways with teachers from different countries, learning not only the English language, but being exposed to other cultures and ideas as well. Since the late 1990s, governmental policy shifts have allowed private institutes, *hagwons*, in general and English language institutes specifically to expand rapidly (Jeon, 2009; J. Lee, 2011). Private institutes increased from just 1,421 in the entire country in 1970 to 70,213 in 2008, with the vast majority of growth occurring since the late 1990s (Moon, 2009).

Alongside this boom and the emphasis on developing communicative competence in English has come an influx of English teachers from other countries. According to immigration statistics, the number of E-2 visa holders (language teaching visa) increased from 6,414 in 2000 to 17,122 by 2015 (Korean Immigration Service, 2015). E-2 visa holders can include Chinese teachers of Chinese nationality and Japanese teachers of Japanese nationality, but the great majority are English language teachers. This corresponds to an enormous amount of spending on English language education in Korea, which was a $17.7 billion per year industry in 2012 (J. Kim, 2013).

Government policies restrict English teacher visas to only citizens of native-speaking countries (United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa). Such restrictions, along with a general public perception of native speakers as the best teachers (Pederson, 2013), work to shape an ideology of language learning and ownership defined as native-speakerism (Holliday, 2006). Studies have been conducted to show that Korean mothers prefer native-speaking English teachers (i.e., Oh & MacDonald, 2012), even to the point where they are willing to temporarily separate families to live in English-speaking countries with their children (H. Lee, 2010). Qualitative studies have shown that Korean teachers of English have felt a lower professional self-esteem as a result of native-speakerism because they feel they cannot measure up to expectations placed on them (H. K. Kim, 2011).

This strong preference for native-speaking English teachers extends further in a preference in Korea for specifically white teachers (Grant & Lee, 2009). Race and language ideologies have become intertwined, and ‘native-speaker’ has come to refer specifically to a white person from one of the designated English-speaking countries. Gender is also a marker of English language teacher preference in hiring practices, with male native-speaking teachers in Asia having an advantage in obtaining jobs (Kobayashi, 2014), in contrast to findings of teachers in other contexts (Centra & Gaubatz, 2000). These multiple factors (i.e., race, gender, nationality, and personality) all play a part in forming public perceptions of ‘good language teacher’ (GLT) identity.

The perception of GLT identity, as discussed above, has implications for English language teachers in Korea. This paper seeks to critically examine these preferences from the perspective of the children studying at private institutes with the use of student images
and descriptions of imagined, good English teachers. In doing so, the study attempts to investigate whether age differences contribute to varying constructions of GLT identity. While there have been studies from the perspective of parents (i.e., Oh & MacDonald, 2012), of general public discourses in Korea (i.e., Park, 2010), and of college student preferences (i.e., Choi, 2007), young learner voices have rarely been heard or studied in regards to their preferences for English language teachers. Considering how early experiences with language learning and English teachers can impact the formation of their perceptions of language teachers, language users, and language learning in general in profound ways, uncovering young English learners’ attitudes, beliefs, and stance toward the shaping of GLT identity is of importance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Language teachers simultaneously embody diverse identities such as native speakers or nonnative speakers, gendered identities, and individuals situated within the local and global academic organizations and the broader society. Viewing language teacher identity as an example of social identity, an individual exists within multiple webs and relationships constructed between the individual and the broader communities of various range and size (Bucholtz, 1999; Norton, 1995; Ochs, 1993). In this vein, as Elinor Ochs (1993) noted, social identity is understood to reference “a range of social personae, including social statuses, roles, positions, relationships, and institutional and other relevant community identities one may attempt to claim or assign in the course of social life” (p. 288).

Analogous to the view of an individual’s identity construction as unstable and un-finalized (C. Butler, 2002), teacher identity is negotiated through social interactions, being in constant flux, within a particular socio-cultural, historical, and institutional context (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Søreide, 2006, 2007; Trent, 2012; Weber & Mitchell, 1996). In addition, while not only driven by the individual teacher, language teacher identity is also highly dependent on the norms and expectations imposed by the culture, society, or the community, insofar as they are seen to be capable of the practical and theoretical knowledge of teaching as well as the linguistic and cultural knowledge of the language they teach (Sercu, 2006; Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005). For instance, language teachers are expected to be fully capable of appropriating a variety of effective teaching skills and are required to be competent in the knowledge of both language and culture. Thus, rather than being a solely individual-driven endeavor, the construction of a good language teacher identity is also influenced and redefined by various conflicting and/or reassuring dominant ideologies.

One popular ideology circulating around the notion of language teacher would
nevertheless be the association of the teacher’s nativeness with regard to ownership of
English and good pedagogy. Exploring the socially constructed concept of native speaker,
Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (2001) argue that such identities of native or non-native
speakers are undergirded by “social factors—preconceived notions of what a ‘native
speaker’ should look like or sound like—that are not contemplated within the linguistic
construct of the native speaker” (p. 100, original emphasis). In a similar vein, in their study,
Clark and Paran (2007) note that native English speakers is one recruitment criterion along
with teaching qualifications, performance in an interview, teaching experience, education
background, visa status, and native English speakers that recruiters consider to be the most
important and influential factors for employment of English teachers. Though much debate
surrounding the merits and idealizations of native speaking language teachers compared to
non-native speaking language teachers exists (Cook, 1999; Medgyes, 1992, 1994;
Rampton, 1990; Widdowson, 1992, 1994), the belief that language is best taught by native
speakers and that these native speakers are equipped with accurate and appropriate
linguistic and teaching ability still seems to prevail, held by both the individuals and the
broader society (Ahn, 2015; Cook, 2005; Seidlhofer, 1999). Moreover, as evident as the
preference for native English-speaking teachers is in the hiring process, many institutions
and their employment policies seem to value and reemphasize the desirability of the
nativeness of the language teacher (Leung, Harris, & Rampton, 1997; Medgyes, 1992).
Braine (1999) also argues that non-native educators are challenged on their credentials and
are marginalized in the profession. Thus, such value-laden beliefs and understandings of
nativeness become the essential marking of social belonging to one of the two
dichotomous categories.

Another pertinent aspect with relation to the language teacher identity and nativeness is
race. For instance, through conducting semi-structured interviews with five non-white
Canadian ESL teachers, Amin (1997) reports on how these minority female teachers
envision their students’ ideal ESL teachers. According to these teachers, some ESL
students seem to equate the notion of native speaker identity with whiteness, as they made
the following assumptions: “(a) Only White people can be native speakers of English; (b)
only native speakers know ‘real’ English; and (c) only White people are ‘real’ Canadians”
(Amin, 1997, p. 580). That is, the students perceive that only White people can be regarded
as ‘native speakers’ of English, as these teachers are judged on appearance rather than
other criteria. In reverse, the students further assume “their minority teachers as non-native
speakers and therefore less able teachers than white teachers” (p. 581). Racial bias in
judging good English language teacher identity in Korea was confirmed by Grant and Lee
(2009). Grant, reporting on her time in Korea as a Black female native speaking teacher,
wrote of facing similar discrimination with her legitimacy as a native speaker, and
therefore the quality of her teaching ability being challenged on the basis of her race. S. J.
Kim (2015) further found that Korean children in her study harbored a negative bias toward Black people. While many factors contribute to the negotiation and construction of language teacher identity, nativeness and associated factors such as race, ethnicity, and gender seem to function as a primary index against which one understands who good language teacher is. In addition, studies examining good teacher identity markers, often conducted as survey studies with administrators, define those markers variously as dutiful, caring, compassionate, analytical, respectful, competent, and expert (Cruickshank & Haefele, 2001; Stronge & Hindman, 2003). These findings point toward the importance of personality factors in determining good teachers, at least from the point of view of administrators. There has been evidence for the primacy of these factors in a study done with Korean university students as well, however. Barnes and Lock (2010) found that Korean university students placed a heavy emphasis on rapport building skills when evaluating teachers, finding that those who were more effective at reducing anxiety were more highly rated. They also found that teachers’ delivery of class, especially in how they structured participation, factored into their ratings. These findings directed the present study to also consider personality as a factor in defining GLT identity.

Up to this point, few studies have focused on the complexity of English language teacher identity in Korea specifically. As reported above, there have been studies done on GLT from the perspective of Korean parents (i.e., Oh & MacDonald, 2012), and of Korean university students (Barnes & Lock, 2010; Choi, 2007). There have also been extensive reports on native-speakerism and racism in public perceptions of GLTs in Korea (Grant & Lee, 2009; H. K. Kim, 2011; Pederson, 2013). There have been very few reports, however, on perceptions of GLTs from younger learners in Korea. One exception is the study by Y. G. Butler (2007), which explored the question of whether young Korean learners preferred a teacher with American accented English or a teacher with Korean accented English. While the children reported a slight preference for American accented English, there was no difference in their learning outcomes with either teacher. By more fully understanding the perceptions of young learners, beyond the narrow scope of Y. G. Butler’s (2007) study, this paper aims to expand on our understanding of students, especially young English learners, perceptions of GLTs, and attempts to highlight their voices more clearly in the debate over what constitutes a good English language teacher in Korea.

For the present study, Norton and Toohey’s (2001) notion of good language learner (GLL) identity and Pomerantz’s (2008) research on GLL identity among college students in an advanced Spanish classroom are heavily influential, as they voice the idea of identity construction as occurring within a certain local, social context in which learners and their actions are received by others. That is, good language learner identity is continuously and locally constructed and negotiated during interaction. Thus, the process of identity construction is not limited to the immediate boundary of an individual endeavor, but rather
extends beyond to involve social interactions, driven by the norms and expectations circulating in the community, in the voices, perceptions, and beliefs of others. In this regard, the concept of GLT identity is assumed to be not only agentively displayed or claimed in interaction and demonstrated according to one’s own will, but significantly co-constructed by other contextual factors. Therefore, in an effort to better understand the concept of GLT identity, an investigation into discourses around the GLT identity from students will serve to identify how the students’ concept of GLT identity in South Korea is negotiated and constructed in an English learning environment. Thus, borrowing from the understanding that a good language learner is an ideological and discursive construction (Norton & Toohey, 2001), the paper investigates the concept of ‘good’ English teacher identity in a private English institute in South Korea, where 577 grade K-6 students provided their own images and descriptions of who good English teachers are.

Particularly, in concentrating on the English learning environment at a private institute, the following research question will be addressed: What notions of good language teacher (GLT) identity circulate in the images and narratives of young EFL learners? With the overarching quest to gain in-depth, profound understanding of GLT identity, the following paper illustrates how young learners (grade K-6) present their understandings of GLT identity in teaching English through the medium of images and narratives.

3. METHODS

3.1. Participants

Data were collected for this project at one private language institute in Seoul. The institute was chosen because it was a large language school with nearly one thousand students ranging from kindergarten to the final year of middle school. The private language institute was further chosen because all of the students were known to have equal exposure to both native and non-native English speaking teachers. The institute chosen had a large number of students as well as many instructors from both Korea and other countries (i.e., Canada, United States, and United Kingdom). The final reason the institute was chosen was that for Teacher’s Day every year, the school had an institute-wide project where students drew their teachers and wrote about them. The data collection tool was created to fit pedagogically with this regular institutional practice and was distributed within days of Teacher’s Day in 2014.

A total of 577 students participated in the research by completing one or both sides of the survey tool. Kindergarteners tended to draw pictures only, while elementary students tended to both draw pictures and write descriptions of their good English teachers. As
displayed in Table 1, the demographic breakdown of the students who participated
included 104 kindergarteners (18%), 99 first graders (17%), 94 second graders (16%), 75
third graders (12.9%), 61 fourth graders (10.5%), 50 fifth graders (8.6%), and 52 sixth
grade students (9%), with 42 students (7.2%) unknown since they did not correctly fill in
demographic information. While concentrated more in the lower age levels, the range of
participants yields a good range across the elementary grade levels. Of the kindergarten
and elementary students who participated, 225 (39%) were female, 231 (40%) were male,
and 121 (21%) were of unknown gender, yielding a good range of responses across
genders as well. Kindergarten students attended the institute five days a week, while
elementary students attended either two or three days a week, depending on the program.
All student participants used Korean as their first language. Middle school students at the
institute were excluded from the data collection because the procedure did not fit
pedagogically with the program and would have constituted an additional burden on
teachers. This study, therefore, focuses on the kindergarten and elementary students.
Participants showed a wide range of both English ability and exposure to English, as they
were separated into different levels by the institute. Some kindergarten and early
elementary students had only three months of exposure to formal English language
instruction, while some sixth graders had seven years of exposure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to provide some more detail on the actual teachers at the school as well,
before describing the findings because while students were asked to draw ‘good’ English
teachers, many (n = 412, 71.4%) drew pictures of actual teachers at the institute. There
were a total of 35 teachers at the institute at the time of the study, 21 Korean teachers
(60%), and 14 non-Korean teachers (40%), as shown in Table 2.
TABLE 2
Profile of the Teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Korean</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The countries represented by the non-Korean teachers were the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Since they were not participants, specific bio data were not collected from them. A skew in terms of gender distribution becomes clear in the Korean faculty being predominantly female (86%), while the non-Korean faculty is more balanced in terms of gender ratio: 8 males and 6 females.

3.2. Instruments

The survey instrument used for this study (Appendix A) was an adapted form of the visual and written narrative collection tool used by van Leeuwen (2000). The survey tool featured on one side a space for the student to draw a good English language teacher and to collect some demographic information on the students’ ages, language level, and gender. On the reverse side, space was provided for students to write about the imagined teacher they drew, following several prompts: teacher’s name, nationality, a physical description of the teacher, a description of the teacher’s personality, a description of what the teacher did in the classroom, and a time when the teacher’s class went well. The prompts were given in both English and Korean. Responses were collected in both Korean and English to reduce any impact that low language proficiency would have on the study. Students responded in the language of their preference, either English or Korean. Pictures were also gathered to support the younger students in sharing their responses. The research tool allowed for rich data collection of both images of good English teachers, and open-ended written descriptions.

3.3. Procedure

Data collection was carried out in several phases. First, contact was established with the institute and permission to do the study was sought from the director and vice directors. After permission had been granted and parents informed, the lead author in this study made multiple sight visits to the institute to meet with teachers and explain the data collection procedure. On the week of Teacher’s Day, the survey instrument was distributed to each class by randomly assigned teachers under the supervision of the director and lead teachers.
Students were instructed to complete the survey using a fictional or imaged teacher; however, as mentioned above, many students drew an actual teacher. Finished surveys were returned to a box on the director’s desk and then transferred to the researchers.

3.4. Analysis

Quantitative analysis was used to examine the data, using coding for both the drawings and written descriptions, gathered for this paper. First, demographic data were collected from the survey instruments. Then the images were coded by the researchers in the following categories: coloring, number of people in the image, direction of action (i.e., front facing, profile), body (i.e., full body, bust, face only), teachers’ actions, and objects associated with the teacher. The written responses were analyzed to provide frequency counts of GLT nationality and gender, as well as for counts of descriptive words used for teachers’ physical and personality characteristics. The descriptions of teacher actions in class and narratives of a good class were coded for general themes (i.e., games, joking, bookwork, going outside, etc.).

For the coding, both researchers coded the data separately for teacher gender, nationality, descriptive words, facial expressions, positioning, and presence of objects, and then compared findings to ensure inter-rater reliability. Discrepancies in the coding were resolved through discussion and consensus building between the raters. Descriptive statistics are given for the data below. Ratios of student drawn images of teachers were compared to ratios of actual teachers at the school using comparative statistics to determine what influence actual teachers at the institution may have had on the findings.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings for the quantitative data analysis were classified into four related categories: nationality, race, gender, and personality. In these areas, an analysis of the descriptive statistics from the coded student responses demonstrated interesting patterns or omissions. A fifth section was also added to investigate interesting differences that were observed when comparing data between ages and grade levels of participants.

A factor that colors the overall interpretation of the findings, however, is that while students were asked to draw an imagined teacher, the vast majority (n = 412, 71.4%) drew an actual teacher from the institute. Only 62 students (10.7%) drew a clearly imagined teacher (i.e., a cartoon character, superhero, a collage of alphabets, etc.), and in 103 cases (17.9%), it was impossible to determine whether the teacher that was drawn and described was real or imagined. This finding indicates that young children are highly influenced by
their immediate experience and environment when it comes to thinking about and describing their GLT. It is believed that the remaining data, 412 drawings (71%), still provide valuable insights into GLT identity construction by young learners because identity construction is a local process (Norton & Toohey, 2001), and that young learners will draw on local knowledge and experience to articulate and illustrate their beliefs and feelings. Of the good teachers drawn by students who were real teachers from the institute \( (N = 35) \), no teacher was drawn by more than 28 students, with no single teacher or small group of teachers skewing the data.

4.1. Nationality

Table 3 illustrates the breakdown of ideal good English teachers that students depicted. On the second side of the data collection tool, they were asked to give a name to the teacher they drew and to tell where the teacher came from. A slight majority \( (n = 265, 42.1\%) \) of the ideal good English teachers were indicated by students as coming from Korea. An additional 257 (40.8%) drew teachers from a native-speaking country (i.e., United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, or New Zealand), while 107 (17.0%) drew imaginary teachers whose country of origin did not exist.

### TABLE 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Gender ^a</th>
<th>( N )</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>64 Male</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Korean</td>
<td>112 Male</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>40.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>14 Male</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>8 Male</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia/New Zealand</td>
<td>4 Male</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other^b</td>
<td>2 Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown/Imaginary</td>
<td>14 Male</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. \^a Some students drew pictures of more than one teacher, resulting in pictures with multiple teachers of multiple genders and nationalities in some cases. \^b Examples include China, Japan, Mongolia, etc.

At the institute, students attended two classes on average. One class was taught by a Korean teacher, and the other by a native-speaking teacher. Understanding this circumstance, it becomes clear that for those students who drew pictures and described actual teachers, the nationality of their ideal good English teachers split along roughly the same ratio (1:1) as the teacher population of the institute. No clear preference can be seen for native-speaking or Korean teachers as GLT in these findings. Rather, it seems that the
data collected strongly reflects the immediate language learning experience of the students. From looking at the findings on nationality, it seems clear that although there is a strong preference for native-speaking English teachers in Korea (H. K. Kim, 2011; Oh & MacDonald, 2012; Pederson, 2013), that preference does not seem to be reflected in this set of student drawings of GLTs. This finding also goes somewhat against Y. G. Butler’s (2007) finding of preference among Korean young learners for American accented English speakers. This may be due to the fact that students were asked to imagine their ideal teacher rather than compare two English teachers. Imagining allows for students to consider a range of other factors beyond the narrow focus on accent. We will explore some of these other factors in the following sections with a broader discussion after introducing the other findings.

4.2. Race

While students were not asked explicitly to list the race of their understanding of good English teacher(s), they were encouraged to draw their pictures in color, using colored pencils. Not all of the drawings were done in color due to a lack of availability (generally younger classes had more ready access to colored pencils or crayons since they are used more often pedagogically at those levels). Of those drawings done in color, however, there are clearly no examples of darker skinned GLTs. The absence is striking, but it is not surprising. Other researchers have found White to be the default race in students’ minds when describing GLTs (Amin, 1997; Grant & Lee, 2009). Further, recent studies have found Korean children to harbor negative perceptions of darker skinned races, specifically African-Americans, due to inexperience interacting with people of those races and due to influence from negative discourses in the Korean community (S. J. Kim, 2015). If true at the location of this study, it would also make it less likely that students would draw a Black teacher as an example of a GLT.

This finding makes sense in considering the context of this study, if it is assumed that students are drawing from their previous and present learning experience in describing their GLTs. The institute that was the location of the study did neither at the time of the study, nor at any time prior to the study, employ any teachers of a race or ethnicity other than Korean or White. In this particular English learning environment, the students simply did not have experience learning from English teachers of other races. Analogous to how the GLT nationality ratio corresponded to the institute’s ratio, the absence of other races than Korean or White indicates how students’ language learning experience with relationships and contexts become highly influential in the students’ conceptualization of GLTs.
4.3. Gender

Of the GLTs drawn, 359 (62%) depicted a female teacher, while 176 (30.5%) depicted a male teacher. While these numbers seem to show a slight preference for male teachers when compared to the number of actual male vs. female teachers employed by the institute, a two-tailed t-test shows that this difference is not statistically significant ($t = .563$, $df = 610$, $p = .574$).

Looking more closely at the data in Table 3, it is possible to see gender differences among drawings of good language teachers from different nationalities. For instance, the number of male Korean teachers drawn ($n = 64$, 25.2% of good Korean teachers drawn) would seem to indicate a strong preference for Korean male teachers over the Korean female teachers, who make up 86% of the actual teaching staff at the institute. Looking more closely at the ten most commonly drawn GLTs who were actual teachers at the institute (see Table 4), it is clear that this skewing is due to the relatively small number of teachers at the school and the relative popularity of individual teachers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher (Pseudonyms)</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number of Drawings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chulsoo</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>28 (5.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Byungueun</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26 (4.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nari</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25 (4.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joan</td>
<td>Non-Korean</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18 (3.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bessy</td>
<td>Non-Korean</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17 (3.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>Non-Korean</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17 (3.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>Non-Korean</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>16 (3.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ella</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15 (2.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changho</td>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>15 (2.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>Non-Korean</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>15 (2.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While overall, the number of drawings of each teacher is evenly distributed, because there were only three Korean male teachers, and two of them were among the ten most drawn, it artificially seems as if male teachers were more preferred among Korean teachers than students’ experience would suggest. In this instance, it seems to be rather a case of a few teachers being relatively popular, perhaps because they are unique in the institute for being a minority of teachers. No strong generalizations for the population of participants can be made from this, however, except to show again that direct, immediate experience is highly influential in determining what children come to perceive as good or ‘good’ teachers.

This fits with previous studies of gender bias in teacher rating by students. While most work has been done with university students in the past, findings have tended to find little
evidence for gender preference of teachers (Centra & Gaubatz, 2000). This finding adds to previous research in finding little gender preference for teachers from young learners as well when articulating GLT identities.

4.4. Personality

In describing the personal traits of these good English teachers, various students provided an array of evaluative comments, including attitudinal and relational aspects. While 126 students did not provide a detailed written description of teachers’ personalities, most students responded with descriptions of teachers being good, nice, friendly, funny and kind. In addition, there were descriptions of the teachers’ intellectual qualities such as being smart, rewarding, and responsible in teaching. However, both students’ drawings and written remarks also involved potentially negative evaluations of the teachers. Such findings were surprising to the extent that the students were specifically guided to imagine and creatively construct their own understanding of a good English teacher. These negative evaluative remarks included both images of mad or furious facial expressions on the teacher and explicit statements of the personality being scary, angry, strict, and disciplined (see Table 5).

### TABLE 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality Descriptions</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kind</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funny/humorous</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nice</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scary</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strict</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, the frequency counts of the ten most popular personality traits used by these students indicated how some of these negative evaluations such as scary and angry were used more frequently than other positive evaluations including friendly, outgoing, or talkative. Such responses seemed to highlight how these young learners’ perceptions of good teacher identity often were associated with their diverse personalities, both good and bad. Thus, while the students were asked to envision their concept of a good language teacher, this understanding and representation of good teacher nonetheless carried multiple characteristics, both positive and negative. Moreover, personality aspects were rarely described with only one adjective, but frequently appropriated a combination of several
characteristics. One such example comes from a second grade student who gave a list of good, kind, and smart in English or another second grade student who wrote *museopgo chakhada* (scary and kind). Such reinforcing and conflicting characteristics in describing a GLT highlights how the students’ depiction of GLT is, in fact, complex, complicated, and diverse.

In addition, the distinction between kind and good draws attention to the fact that being a good teacher and a kind teacher may indeed be different and require further discussion and investigation. That is, the aspect of goodness seemed to be distinct from other positive attitudinal aspects. However, an interesting relationship was found between these personalities in the combination dynamics. For instance, students who described their GLTs as being scary rarely also used good as one of the characteristics of their teachers (2 out of 30). However, there were 10 students who said their GLTs were both kind and scary at the same time, which is similar to the case of angry and strict. Often times, these negative statements were used with the personalities of kind or nice, but not with the teacher being ‘good’. The fact that these negative evaluations were rarely mentioned alone again indicates the very complex nature of GLT identity construction.

Furthermore, when negative personality traits such as scary or angry were used, more detailed information and description often followed. One example of this type of description comes from a first grade student who wrote, “when she is angry, teacher doesn’t say she is angry.” This further explanation shows that the teacher still makes attempts to keep the class atmosphere positive and was seen as a good language teacher for this practice. This description also fits with a pattern of students providing negative characteristics with context, such as scary when angry or scary when mad. Thus, the GLT’s scariness was not unconditionally present at all times, but rather was seen to emerge in certain circumstances. Also, rather than being the only quality of GLTs, these negative descriptions were always associated and listed with many other personalities, and thereby demonstrated the students’ awareness of GLT identity as being a multifaceted and dynamic construct.

4.5. Differences Between Age Groups

In comparing statements about teacher personality offered by all the grade levels, students responses of negative evaluation seemed to concentrate more at the lower grade level students (see Table 6). In total, eleven responses of scary and angry were found from first grade students, and ten sixth grade students described their teachers as being scary, angry, or strict. What this distribution of responses suggests is that the learners go through a socialization process in language learning. Their views of GLTs shift and change over time, according to their grade level, which corresponds to their level of experience with
teachers and formal learning in general. This can be seen especially in the example of the eleven responses by first grade students. With the exception of one response, all referred to their actual teachers in the institute when describing their GLTs. Similarly, nine out of ten responses presented by sixth grade students also indicated their reference to the actual teachers in this particular institute. Thus, their reflection on GLTs being angry or scary was mostly based on their own previous and present learning experience in the institute.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Kind</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Scary</th>
<th>Angry</th>
<th>Strict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fact that the students present their understanding of this complex mixture of positive and negative personality traits even from first grade may suggest how their socialization process of learning begins at a very early age. Thus, the way these learners associate the notion of GLTs with encompassing not only positive traits but also negative characteristics indicates how students start to experience and determine what a language teacher is and should be like from early on.

5. CONCLUSION

While all young learners were asked to freely create and document their perception of GLTs through both images and written descriptions, the findings highlight the close connection of the students’ shaping of the GLT identity to the broader context in which they are situated. The fact that nationality, race, and gender of GLTs followed a similar pattern of actual teachers employed by this particular institute demonstrates how young students’ envisioning of GLTs greatly reflects their past and/or present experience, the relationship with their teachers, and the broader institutional context and society. Similarly, the findings of personal characteristics of GLTs also highlights similar trends as the other three categories to the extent that the students’ awareness of their teachers’ strictness or scariness functions as an indicator of depicting and representing GLTs. Here, such awareness of various personal traits observed by young learners becomes further elaborated as their learning experience continues.
Another important finding in our study was that young learners seemed not to emphasize native speakers in their imaginings of GLT identity. Contrary to previous studies (i.e., Y. G. Butler, 2007; H. K. Kim, 2011; Pederson, 2013), this study found no statistically significant preference for good English teachers to be native speakers. While racial markers indicated a preference for White or Korean teachers generally, there were limitations to this finding due to students’ lack of interaction with teachers of different races at the private institute. Although this limitation exists, it is important to note that this finding of people of different races being perceived as GLTs fits with past findings examining race and native-speakerism in Korea (Grant & Lee, 2009) and studies examining Korean children’s perceptions of race (S. J. Kim, 2015).

Although previous studies have shown that government policies and parental perception of GLTs are based on nationality, native speaking status, and other seemingly superficial factors (Oh & MacDonald, 2012; Park, 2010; Pederson, 2013), children seem to construct GLT identity in teachers based on more emotional connections. We can see these emotional connections rooted in their descriptions of the teacher personality descriptions. The connection between descriptive words and emotional connotation has long been recognized as significant in forming memories and opinions. In this light, with personality factors weighing more heavily in children’s perceptions of GLT than other factors, it may be fruitful for other stakeholders in children’s English education to consider more the affective work of teachers.

Such findings also emphasize the need to revisit the context in which young learners not only learn the target language but also develop their understanding of the people who speak and teach the language. Private institutes are not merely academic settings where students obtain and develop linguistic ability, but rather a locus where they construct and negotiate their understanding of GLTs. This type of educational context carries the potential to provide students with the foundation from which the perception of GLTs departs. In this regard, restricting their access to diversity and World Englishes may present young learners with a stilted viewpoint and narrow understandings of English, English users and communities.

With the development of global citizenship in the contemporary era being more emphasized, promoted, and valued than ever before, it is vital to examine and reimagine such institutional contexts with a careful evaluation of current underlying values and ideologies. They could become a venue through which change for better preparation of global citizens is initiated and delivered. This includes reexamining restrictive visa policies that promote not only native-speakerism, but a narrow view of native speakers. It also includes examining private institute hiring policies in regards to race and gender imbalances.

Since students’ direct experience is so important in shaping their perceptions of GLTs in
terms of nationality, race, and gender, it is important to consider these factors when institutes hire teachers. Over 80% of Korean students attend institutions similar to the one that was the site of this study (Byun & Kim, 2010). As a result of this high rate of attendance, private institutions have a large influence over English education, and over ideologies that guide perceptions of language learning and who can be an ‘good’ language teacher. This educational context can become a locus where students’ perceptions of race, language, nationality, and culture could be developed, broadened, and challenged. If these institutions provide children with a restricted population of teachers (i.e., native-speaker, white), however, students evidently develop their concept of GLTs in a narrow way, reinforcing stereotypical views of who can be a competent language user or teacher. In this global era, where world Englishes are common, having this narrow perception can impede students’ full participation in a global citizenry. It seems that more diversity in hiring practices could be one way to give young students broader exposure at an age where their experiences are so influential to their ideas and development of ideals.

There were several limitations to this study. First, for learners who potentially have difficulty elaborating in detail in English, individual or small group interviews may yield deeper understandings of GLT identity. Such interviews with both teachers and students could also signal and deliver other aspects of GLT constructs. An example of this issue is seen in the fact that there are only three main adjectives being used for GLT at the kindergarten level. This is partly due to the fact that many kindergarten students lack English or Korean writing ability and only provided the drawing section of the data collection tool and left the written description empty or fairly short. Future studies on very young students with limited writing ability could use verbal data collection in Korean for richer data. Second, this study was limited to one location. Since the findings of this study indicate a strong tendency for young learners to write about GLT from their experience, expanding the study to other contexts (public and private) where students may have different experiences could produce different findings and would be important in further verifying the findings of this study. Further research studies that examine the concept of GLTs in other academic contexts or in settings instructed by one teacher throughout the whole research process may additionally function to complement previous research studies. Future studies could also focus more directly on young learners’ constructions of GLTs in regards to nationality, speaking ability, and race. Finally, future studies should also more closely examine affective factors which inform young learners’ perceptions of GLTs. This study has found that these have an important influence, but more work in different locations should be done to more fully understand how emotional connections shape perceptions of GLTs.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX

Data Collection Tool

Good English Teacher Story

Name: __________________________  Age: __________________________
Class: __________________________  Day: __________________________

Directions: First, draw a picture of a “good English teacher”. This does not have to be a real teacher you know. Use color. Then write a short story about something that English teacher does to make them a good teacher. You can create any situation.

설명: 우선, “좋은 영어 선생님”을 주제로 색연필을 사용해서 그림을 그려주세요. 여러분이 이미 알고 있는 선생님이 아니라도 괜찮아요. 그리고 여러분이 그린 이 영어 선생님을 소개하고, 왜 좋은 선생님인지 이야기를 만들어주세요.

1. What is the teacher’s name? __________________________
2. Where is the teacher from? __________________________
3. What does the teacher look like (example: hair color, short)?

_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

4. What is the teacher’s personality?
선생님의 성격은 어떤가요?
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

5. What does the teacher do in the classroom?
선생님은 수업시간에 무엇을 하나요?
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

6. Write a short story about a time the teacher is good.
이 ‘좋은 영어 선생님’에 대한 이야기를 자유롭게 만들어 주세요.
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

Applicable levels: Elementary

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