

## Intercultural Competence and Critical English Language Teacher Education \*

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In this paper, we explore how English language teacher education could be envisioned in different ways if one were to adopt a ‘social’ approach toward English language education. More specifically, drawing on our experience, which we gathered as Korean faculty members of two Canadian universities, with the help of reflexive inquiry, we highlighted the importance of fostering critical intercultural competence among language teachers. Focusing on a small-scale case study of Korean teacher candidates who participated in a short-term community-based service learning in Canada, our analysis examines how to train English teachers to develop their own intercultural understanding through experiential learning activities, so they can better develop intercultural competence among their students. We argue that a critical understanding of linguistic and cultural diversity is an essential component of English language teacher education in increasingly diverse EFL classrooms across South Korea in the era of globalization, transnationalism, and multilingual/ multiculturalism.

**Key words:** critical intercultural competence, critical pedagogy, teacher education, English as a foreign language teaching, multiculturalism, service learning, teaching efficacy

### 1. INTRODUCTION

As represented in the recent conference of the Korea Association of Teachers of English (KATE), ‘social’ approaches toward second language (L2) education highlight the

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complex intersections between language, culture and identity, and provide a more comprehensive understanding of English learning and teaching in today's world (see e.g., Block, 2003; Ortega, 2009). For example, in the era of globalization, transnationalism and multilingual/multiculturalism, English teachers need to develop students' intercultural competence, not merely communicative competence, since the students would be required to interact with people belonging to different cultures in English.

This paper explores how and why developing both an enhanced appreciation of linguistic and cultural diversity as well as critical intercultural competence are an essential component of English language teacher education in today's increasingly diverse English classrooms. We highlight the importance of fostering critical intercultural competence among language learners and teachers, focusing on a small-scale case study of a group of Korean teacher candidates. As Korean faculty members of two Canadian universities, we draw upon our reflexive inquiry to foreground our past experiences using experiential learning, both in the form of short-term community-based service learning and through in-class experiential learning activity. Reflexive inquiry is an "inquiry situated within the context of personal histories in order to make connections between personal lives and professional careers..." (Cole & Knowles, 2000, p. 2), and we conducted our reflexive inquiry to formulate its implications for Korean EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms. Our main research question is to investigate how teacher educators may use experiential learning activities in order to train English teachers to develop their own critical intercultural competence, so they can better facilitate that skill among their students.

We begin with a brief account of the social and cultural turn in applied linguistics/L2 education research and its implications for EFL teacher education. This is followed by a description of a small-scale pilot study on Korean pre-service teachers who participated in a short-term community-based service learning in Toronto, Canada to cultivate intercultural competence. We then present our reflexive inquiry on the importance of developing critical intercultural competence among our students along with pedagogical suggestions for in-class activities, which might be used in Korean EFL classrooms. We conclude by providing implications of the study for English teacher education in Korea in the era of globalization.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. The 'Social' and 'Cultural' Turns in L2 Education**

Among the healthy expansions in applied linguistics/L2 education research since the mid-1990s, is the so-called 'social' turn in SLA/applied linguistics (e.g., Block, 2003). The

emergence of ‘social’ and/or ‘sociolinguistic’ approaches to SLA/L2 education has contributed to reconceptualizing L2 learning as a situated social practice and highlighted the social context of L2 education (e.g., Bayley & Schecter, 2003; Duff, 2008; Kasper, 2006; Lantolf, 2000). Moving away from the notion of language as an abstract, bounded system in traditional SLA/L2 education research, SLA/L2 education research has begun to increasingly attend to both learners as complex human beings and the complex relationship among language, identity, and learning. Particularly, critical scholarship on social dimensions of L2 education attends to the changing context of English language education in the era of globalization, and how social relations of power can both constrain and enable the learning and teaching opportunities for language learners and teachers (e.g., Cummins, 2000, 2001; De Costa, 2018; Jeon, 2012; Norton, 2013; Pennycook, 2001; Shin, 2012, 2014).

Similarly, the ‘cultural turn’ in (foreign) language teaching since the 1980s highlights how language interacts with culture and identity in language learning and teaching, and underscores the importance of fostering both communicative and intercultural competence among language learners (Byram, 1997, 2009; Byram, Holmes, & Savvides, 2015; Johnstone & Sachdev, 2011; Mitchell, Pardiniho, Yermakova-Aguiar, & Meshkov, 2015). The notion of cultures as fixed, homogeneous boundaries, which relates one nation with one culture, is increasingly challenged by a transcultural approach, which moves beyond cultural stereotypes and brings complexity, pluralism and hybridity to the forefront of theoretical discussions on cultural communities (Risager, 2007, 2011). Subsequently, while it is challenging to define ‘intercultural’, intercultural competence should include “above all the acquisition of the pragmatic skills required to adapt one’s English use to the demands of the current communicative situation” (Jenkins, Cogo, & Dewey, 2011, p. 301).

Such a cultural turn in language teaching further promotes the social/sociolinguistic approaches toward L2 education research, which challenge the notion of language as fixed boundaries and actively engage with the complexities and messiness inherent in language as a form of social practice. For example, research on English as a lingua franca (ELF) critiques the notion of communicative competence, or pre-set ‘standards’ and ‘norms’ in languages and cultures, because ELF is “a continually renewed, co-operatively modified, somewhat HYBRIDIZED [emphasis in original] linguistic resource” (Jenkins, Cogo, & Dewey, 2011, p. 297). As Baker (2011) argued, in today’s world of globalization, speakers of English appropriate the language to articulate their own complex identities. English language teachers should thus encourage their students to become aware of the hybridity and fluidity inherent in all cultural communities. Indeed, there is an increasing emphasis on the need to develop the intercultural competence of learners in curricula and policy across the world (Byram & Parmenter, 2012). Emerging research on language teaching began to examine the importance of developing teachers’ own intercultural understanding. For

example, Bastos and Araújo e Sá (2015) illustrated Portuguese secondary school teachers' accounts of integrating intercultural dimension into their professional practices to develop their intercultural communicative competence. Likewise, Pinho (2015) examined her student teachers' accounts to explicate how developing student teachers' intercultural sensitivity has led to enhanced knowledge about what they call 'intercomprehension'. Nonetheless, L2 teacher education research on cultivating/developing learners' intercultural competence is yet under-researched as far as L2 education/applied linguistics is concerned.

## 2.2. Critical Intercultural Competence for Teacher Education

While some previous studies examined Korean teacher candidates' overseas training programs, they mainly focus on overseas programs' effects on English proficiency and confidence (Choi, 2013; Lee, 2016) or overseas training program model development (Jeong, 2013; Lee & Jeong, 2016; Shin, 2018; Yoo, 2015), but do not specifically attend to the social dimensions of English language teaching and cultivating critical intercultural competence.

L2 teaching for the purpose of developing intercultural awareness must pay attention to the social structural conditions of the communication, which may affect the perceived value of certain cultural groups by others (Block, 2012). For example, according to Holliday (2009, 2011), individuals often co-construct their identities through communicative activities by drawing upon specific discourses; therefore, we need to critically understand what it takes to avoid 'Othering', given the post-colonial relation between the 'West' and the 'periphery.' Similarly, Canagarajah (2012) challenged the colonial discourse of the 'centre' and the 'periphery,' which labels certain cultural groups and their values and norms as inferior or superior to others (Canagarajah, 2002; Kubota, 1999, 2001; Kumaravadivelu, 2008; Shin, 2006; Shin & Kubota, 2008). For this reason, critical cultural awareness, or "the ability to deconstruct (neo)essentialist and hence unjust discourses and representations of the 'other'" (Zotmann & Hernández-Zamora, 2013, p. 360), is essential in order to adequately and fairly accommodate the complexity and fluidity of identities and cultures in today's globalized world. Fostering critical intercultural competence, thus, inherently involves 'critical intercultural learning' (Jack, 2009, p. 95), and unlearning one's own privilege is essential (Spivak, 1993).

One of the ways to facilitate the critical intercultural competence of English language pre-service/in-service teachers involves international immersion experiences, which place pre-service teachers in situations where they must function within a different cultural context. In the next section, we introduce how a short-term community-based service

learning program, as a form of international experiential education, facilitated Korean pre-service teachers' intercultural development and self-efficacy.

### **3. THE CASE STUDY: COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICE LEARNING IN TORONTO**

#### **3.1. Community-Based Service Learning**

This section illustrates a small-scale case study of an international community-based service learning program conducted by Mihyon. Community-based service learning engages students in activities which provide service to the community, while connecting their experience in the community to academic learning by means of reflections (Eyler & Giles, 1999). According to Bandura (1997), personal self-efficacy refers to a personal judgement of "how well one can organize and execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations that contain ambiguous, unpredictable, and often stressful elements" (p. 201), and the most effective way of developing self-efficacy is through the mastery of experiences, that is, the experience of success. Community-based service learning has proven to be effective in improving pre-service teachers' personal self-efficacy (Cone, 2010; Root, Callahan, & Sepanski, 2002) as well as increasing sensitivity to diversity issues (Boyle-Baise, 2005; Root et al., 2002), empathy for others (Jenkins & Sheehey, 2009), and commitment to social justice (Baldwin, Buchanan, & Rudisill, 2007; Brown & Howard, 2005) and teaching in general (Boyle-Baise, 2002). Pre-service teachers' learning experiences are linked to their academic learning through reflections (Eyler & Giles, 1999), which enables them to develop the above-mentioned traits that are required for effective teaching.

In the context of international community-based service learning, the nature of the situation could be defined as ambiguous, unpredictable, and stressful, and exacerbated by the intercultural setting. Intercultural experiences as an integral component of international community-based service learning provides added benefits by facilitating the intercultural awareness of pre-service teachers. According to Bennett (2004), intercultural experiences transform one's worldview from ethnocentric to ethnorelative, because the "default" ethnocentric world view, while sufficient within one's own culture, is inadequate to develop social relations across cultural boundaries (p. 74). An ethnorelative worldview perceives one's own beliefs and behaviors "as just one organization of reality among many viable possibilities" instead of unquestionably perceiving them as "just the way things are" (p. 62). By fostering ethnorelative mindsets, immersion experiences within a different cultural

context contribute to the development of pre-service teachers' critical intercultural competence.

### 3.2. Participants, Data Collection, and Setting

In the Toronto community-based service learning program, 10 pre-service elementary school teachers from Korea served as homeroom teachers at a two-week long summer camp. Its main objective was to teach Korean culture to the participating Korean-Canadian students. It was offered by a Korean community organization in Toronto, Canada, in July 2017. The pre-service teachers were comprised of one second-year, one fourth-year, and eight third-year university students, of which three were male and the rest were female (see Table 1 for more information about the participants). They belonged to the same Korean university which specializes in elementary school teacher training. Since English is one of the school subjects that starts in grade 3 in Korean elementary education, the pre-service teachers had been trained in elementary English education along with education in other subject matters. The services they offered to the summer camp was considered volunteer work and did not involve any payment, and their home university provided scholarship to partially compensate expenses including airfare and housing.

**TABLE 1**  
**Participants**

Name*	Years in University	Gender	Class Taught, Number of Students, and Their Ages
Sungwoo	4	M	Class 3 (8 students 9–10 years old)
Yunseon	3	F	Class 2 (11 students 6–8 years old)
Jooree	3	F	Class 5 (6 students 13–14 years old)
Youngmin	3	M	Class 1 (11 students 4–5 years old)
Yeonhee	3	F	Class 5 (6 students 13–14 years old)
Myungee	3	F	Class 1 (11 students 4–5 years old)
Yaerin	3	F	Class 4 (7 students 11–12 years old)
Jooyeon	3	F	Class 4 (7 students 11–12 years old)
Yoonsik	3	M	Class 2 (11 students 6–8 years old)
Wonhee	2	F	Class 3 (8 students 9–10 years old)

\*pseudonyms

The data about the program were derived from collected site documents (the curriculum of the summer camp and the teaching materials), interviews with the Korean pre-service teachers, and reflective essays authored by the participants. The language of the interviews and reflective essays were Korean; all Korean data were translated into English by Mihyon.

The main relationship between Mihyon and the pre-service teachers was that of a researcher and participants. In addition to the official interviews, Mihyon had opportunities to personally interact with the Korean pre-service teachers at the summer camp during her visit as well as at the dinner gatherings that she hosted at her house. Mihyon was an alumnus of the Korean university where the participants were attending, which facilitated building a rapport with them.

The duration of their visit to Canada was three weeks: two weeks of summer camp volunteering and one week of pre-camp preparation and after-camp activities. The summer camp was to teach Korean culture to Korean Canadian students between 4–12 years (around 90% of the students) along with some students (the remaining 10%) from Korea for short-term study abroad during their summer vacation. The camp began at 9:30 am with a morning assembly for a period of 30 minutes in which the pre-service teachers and the students sang both the Canadian and Korean national anthems. Then, they performed national gymnastics (*gukminchejo*, an assemble of physical exercise), which was followed by morning class, lunch, and afternoon class, ending at 3:30 pm. After the afternoon class, the pre-service teachers attended a teachers' meeting until 4:40 pm. The subjects taught in the camp included holiday customs, taekwondo, food, arts and craft, music, games, letter writing, and the Korean language. Taekwondo, traditional women's craft, and the Korean language were taught by external teaching staff, while the majority of the classes were taught by the Korean pre-service teachers. There were five classes divided in accordance with the students' age group; two pre-service teachers were assigned to each class.

### 3.3. Intercultural Experiences in the Service-Learning

With regard to the teacher candidates, the main motivations for joining the programs included gaining experience in a foreign country, meeting new people, and participating in a volunteer program. For example, Youngmin, who had developed an interest in multicultural education while serving as a multicultural education mentor in Korea, said that he wanted to apply what he had learned in Korea into a multicultural setting in Canada (personal communication, July 14, 2017). Teaching Korean culture to non-Korean students appealed to him as a new challenge. Jooyeon recognized a rare opportunity to teach elementary school students in Canada and stated that her curiosity about the acclaimed high quality of Canadian education made her apply for the program (reflective essay, August 28, 2017).

Before their departure, the participants expressed both worries and positive expectations with regard to new experiences. The majority of the pre-service teachers were concerned with the language barrier and possible cultural differences with their students as well as their new roles as homeroom teachers. Yoonsik wrote, "it is not until the 4th year

practicum, when we assume a role as a homeroom teacher in Korea. Nine of us were either 3rd or 2nd year; we all had a great concern about assuming a role of homeroom teacher. Furthermore, because the education environment in Canada must be very different from that of Korea and the students' characteristics must be different, we all were very worried and concerned" (reflective essay, August 28, 2017). A few pre-service teachers in their reflective essays (August 28, 2017) also expressed the pressure that they felt, because they believed they represented Korea (Yunseon) and the home university (Jooyeon) to their students, which, in turn, motivated them to work harder. The pre-service teachers in their reflective essays (August 28, 2017) also voiced their positive expectations with respect to new experiences and meeting new people in expressions such as 'special' (Youngmin), 'precious' (Myungee), 'excited' (Myungee & Yaerin), and 'happy' (Yaerin).

Dealing with the language barrier was one of the main challenges that the pre-service teachers faced. During the preparation period prior to the camp, the pre-service teachers were informed that their students would not be able to speak Korean well, although they would still understand it, and would feel more comfortable with speaking in English. Jooree recalled she was a bit baffled when she first learned that her students could not speak Korean (interview, July 28, 2017). Even though the students could mostly understand Korean, their listening comprehension was limited, because they could not understand difficult Korean words. Jooyeon recalled that when she met her students for the first time during the morning assembly time, she readily approached them and said hello in Korean, but she was disappointed that her students could not speak much Korean (interview, July 28, 2017).

To overcome the language barrier with their students, they adopted various strategies including speaking in English to their students. Yeonhee added that she spoke to her students slowly in Korean, using only very simple vocabulary and body language and gestures when necessary (reflective essay, August 28, 2017). In Wonhee's case, she mostly spoke in Korean, providing English translation for only difficult Korean words (reflective essay, August 28, 2017). Yoonsik shared the experience of his first class, in which he had to teach a game called "Speak with your body" to his students, who were between 6–8 years. He felt difficulty in explaining the game rules in English; so, he described the rules with the help of gestures to assist his students in understanding the game rules and to make them interested in the game, a strategy which Yoonsik had learned from an English education course at his home university (reflective essay, August 28, 2017). Local volunteers at the camp, who were proficient Korean-English bilinguals, also supported the pre-service teachers. In their reflective essays (August 28, 2017), many pre-service teachers including Jooree, Youngmin, and Wonhee, acknowledged the assistance of the volunteers in facilitating their interactions with the students. As the camp progressed, in addition to the efforts of pre-service teachers and volunteers, the students also attempted to

interact with their teachers and overcame the language barriers. Yunseon appreciated her students' willingness to try to speak her in Korean as the camp continued, which also helped to better develop a rapport (reflective essay, August 28, 2017). At the beginning, she and her students felt awkward and communicated in English only. However, towards the end of the camp, Yunseon learned that 'the heart could speak to the heart' (*maeumeuntonghanda*) despite language barriers (interview, July 28, 2017).

Although the Korean teacher candidates were informed that their students' Korean proficiency, especially for speaking, was very low, they found significant individual differences in their students' Korean language skills. In her reflective essay (August 28, 2017), Yaerin identified three groups of students according to their Korean proficiency: Korean Canadian with little Korean, Korean Canadian who spoke Korean at home, and Korean students visiting Canada for short-term study abroad (reflective essay, August 28, 2017). Having three groups of students in some of the classes lent more complexity to the pre-service teachers' teaching practices and experiences. To tailor her lessons to suit her students' different Korean language proficiencies, Yaerin used English YouTube video clips for students possessing little Korean proficiency whereas she added Korean subtitles to the video clips for the students from Korea (reflective essay, August 28, 2017). Even though she found the development of the "individualized" teaching materials rewarding, Yaerin admitted it was time consuming. In Yeonhee's class, some students translated what she said in Korean into English for their classmates who did not understand her (reflective essay, August 28, 2017). She later admitted that she felt embarrassed when she realized, although most of her students could understand her Korean, she spoke it unnaturally slow and with a lot of gestures.

Overall, the pre-service teachers discovered ways to handle the language barriers by utilizing various resources available to them and concluded their service successfully. The experience of success led to the enhancement of their self-efficacy. The pre-service teachers reported a new level of self-efficacy in different aspects of teaching in terms of subject matter and teaching a certain age group. For example, before the camp, Youngmin was apprehensive about teaching in English because of his poor pronunciation (reflective essay, August 28, 2017). Yet, he gained confidence in teaching in English from his experience of teaching students with little Korean knowledge and speaking "survival" English to them; of course, this enhanced confidence with respect to teaching in English did not mean his English proficiency had improved. Both Youngmin and Myungee commented that they gained confidence in teaching students belonging to grades 1 and 2 in their future classrooms in Korea, the lowest grades in Korean elementary school, through their homeroom teacher experience of teaching students between 4 to 5 years of age in Toronto (reflective essays, August 28, 2017). Their remarks illustrated how a successful intercultural teaching experience enhanced their self-efficacy as future teachers of young

students. The next section further elucidates how the Korean teacher candidates' service-learning experiences in Toronto facilitated their intercultural awareness along with our reflexive inquiry on ways to further develop their critical intercultural competence.

#### **4. REFLEXIVE INQUIRY: FOSTERING CRITICAL INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE**

This section involves our reflexive inquiry on past teaching experiences in order to provide implications for Korean EFL classrooms. We both share interests in promoting critical intercultural competence through experiential learning within the context of our post-secondary teacher education courses. Therefore, to prepare for a new term, we engaged in conversations between us about our previous courses and research. As two teacher/researchers, we employed concerted efforts to delve retrospectively into student reflections from Mihyon's service-learning program, sifting through comments related to the development of intercultural awareness with program content. As illustrated in the following sections 4.1 and 4.2, we felt that the pre-service teachers could benefit from pedagogical activities to better promote critical intercultural competence, not mere awareness of cultural difference, among the Korean teacher candidates. We searched through previously used resources in our classes to identify which might be particularly useful to achieve this goal. In section 4.3, we suggest a classroom activity to foster critical intercultural competence among Korean English teachers and students without first-hand overseas experiences.

##### **4.1. Emerging Intercultural Awareness of the Participants**

While serving as a homeroom teacher and residing in a foreign country, although for a short term, many Korean pre-service teachers realized cultural differences between the two countries, some of which were perceived as *culture shock* in both educational and broader social contexts. While attempting to handle the culture shock, the pre-service teachers developed a certain level of cross-cultural awareness. For example, many pre-service teachers found that their students were culturally different from Korean students. According to Myungee, her students sometimes behaved in a way that was unacceptable to Koreans (reflective essay, August 28, 2017). The pre-service teachers were most shocked when the students voiced their dislike for the camp such as "I don't like the camp," "I want to go home," "It is boring," and "I don't want to do it" (reflective essays, August 28, 2017). Yaerin recalled her shock at the first day of the camp (reflective essay, August 28, 2017). As an ice breaker, she asked her students to tell the class what they liked and disliked.

Right after one student said, “I don’t like to go school,” another student said, “I don’t like being here” (reflective essay, August 28, 2017). While she initially felt that making such a statement to the whole class was “rude,” she tried to make sense of what she was told by attributing it to the fact that the student grew up in Canada. She also questioned herself whether she was over-reacting to the student’s remark. The following interview extract shows that the pre-service teachers frequently encountered similar remarks from their students.

Extract 1. (Interview, July 28, 2017)

Mihyon: What was the most difficult aspect about teaching at the camp?

Jooree: It was very difficult to motivate my students. They did not possess a strong motivation [to learn]. Before I began teaching, I thought my students came to the camp to learn *taekwondo* and *janggu*. But many came to the camp because their mothers enrolled them in the camp.

Mihyon: I see. They did not want to.

Jooree: Right. When I asked, “*How are you?*” One student said, “*I don’t like this camp*” (*original* in English). I was perplexed. It was difficult to explain to them why they had to attend the camp....

Yunseon: We (Koreans) don’t say we are bored to the teacher, right? When my students said they were bored, and they wanted to go home, I was really worried. I tried to make my class flow in a more interesting manner by adding a game at the beginning.

Jooree: Students in Korea try to speak nicely to their teachers to give a good impression of themselves, but Canadian students expressed their feelings by facial expression and sometimes verbally. I thought they didn’t hide their feelings. Canadian students are more honest than Korean students. At first, I was bewildered when my students said, “I am bored,” “It is not fun,” and “I don’t want to do it.”

In the excerpt, Jooree attributed her students’ low motivation to participate in the camp and their dislike about it to the fact that they were forced to attend the camp by their parents. In her comments on her students’ negative remarks about the camp, Yunseon drew on a stereotypical image about Korean students, who would not inform their teachers that they were bored. Her comments on what she thinks of as the typical Korean behavior illustrates that her students’ negative remarks about the camp were hard for her to understand and accept, which made her very concerned. She tried to solve the problem by

making the class more interesting for her students. Building on Yunseon's comments, Jooree offered her understanding of the difference between Korean and Canadian students. She attributed her students' negative remarks about the camp to cultural differences, that is, in her own words, "Canadian students are more honest than Korean students". In a similar vein, Myungee, in her reflective essay, added her understanding about her students: Although the Korean-Canadian students looked the same as Koreans, they had a "Canadian mindset," which sometimes led them to behave in an unacceptable way to the Korean teacher candidates. This excerpt shows the service-learning experiences facilitated the development of a more ethnorelative worldview. In order to understand their students' unacceptable (mis)behaviors in relation to the Korean cultural norm, the Korean pre-service teachers attempted to understand why their students behaved in that way by drawing on their perceived understanding of Canadian culture from their students' perspectives.

Furthermore, intercultural awareness can be enhanced not only by understanding cultural differences, but also by realizing cultural similarities between cultures, as exemplified in Yoonsik's experience (reflective essay, August 28, 2017). When Yoonsik first heard one of his students say in class, "I'm bored. I want to go home," he recalled that he was so shocked that he was rendered speechless. In his essay (August 28, 2017), Yoonsik reported, "It was very rare for even a young student to say something like that to a teacher in Korea." Initially, he considered it to be the perceived cultural difference between the two countries. However, he continued, "I became used to hearing such remarks from my students, as I heard it as many as 100 times over the course of the summer camp. I realized that my students said that they were bored not only because they were really bored, but also because they sought attention from me and their classmates." He added that he uncovered similarities between Canadian and Korean students in terms of their need for attention. Yoonsik resolved the culture shock by developing an understanding of his students' need. Resonating Yoonsik's experience, Yeonhee's experience of teaching at the camp debunked her stereotypical idea about Canadian students. In an interview (July 28, 2017), she shared her experience, "I expected Canadian students would not listen to the teacher, because they grew up in a more relaxed environment with more freedom. But I was surprised that my students listened to me and took away their cell phones before the class started. I found that my Canadian students are similar to students in Korea." The experiences of Yoonsik and Yeonhee highlight how service learning enabled the pre-service teachers to develop a greater understanding of students from different cultures by being more interculturally aware.

The teacher candidates acknowledged the positive influences of their immersion experience. Myungee, who described her students as those "with a Korean appearance but a Canadian mindset," (reflective essay, August 28, 2017) initially had a difficult time

accepting her student behavior, due to what she perceived as cultural differences. For example, a few of her students did not participate in a class activity, claiming they were too tired after running around during the breaktime. Yet, Myungee became more accepting of her students' behavior, as she developed a rapport with them. Myungee wrote in her reflective essay (August 28, 2017), "My experience in Canada will help me to better understand my future students in Korean classrooms, who could have different personalities, and values instilled in them." Likewise, Youngmin also commented that his service learning experience helped him to understand his students from their individual standpoint and to accept diversity, making him more open-minded (reflective essay, August 28, 2017). Youngmin wrote that after the camp concluded, he fully embraced the motto that "everyone is different" (reflective essay, August 28, 2017). This experience of acceptance learned by way of the cultural immersion experience can help pre-service teachers to deal with situations where their future student behaviors are different from their expectations. This experience alone may not guarantee that the Korean pre-service teachers can accept such negative remarks about the class or classroom activities by Korean-Canadian students without any apprehension. However, when the pre-service teachers encounter student behaviors out of their cultural norms, they may be able to deal with the "difference" with more ease, by drawing from their experience in Canada. It can serve as the catalyst for the development of intercultural understanding of diversity and cultural differences. Further, the intercultural immersion experience expanded their insights into cultural differences and enhanced teacher efficacy and intercultural competence. Development of intercultural competence is especially relevant to Korean society which is rapidly becoming multicultural due to the increasing number of migrant workers and immigrants. The pre-service teachers will engage with an increasing number of students with cultural differences in the multicultural Korea. Overall, the majority of the pre-service teachers expressed that they would participate in an international community base service learning program again in the future if possible, which shows their willingness to continue the development of intercultural competence.

Nevertheless, we also identified a particular area of concern related to the Korean teacher candidates' responses above regarding cultural differences and provide further critical reflection of them in the following sections.

#### 4.2. Critical Reflections on Participants' Intercultural Awareness

While analyzing the students' reflective essays together, with the aim of fostering critical intercultural competence through experiential learning, we were left with mixed feelings. On the one hand, we were both happy to see how international community-based service learning programs contributed to enhancing Korean pre-service teachers' self-

efficacy and facilitated the development of intercultural competence by transforming ethnocentric worldviews to more ethnorelative one, however limited. On the other hand, we felt that a better pedagogical support would be needed to foster the *critical* intercultural competence suited to personal connections that signal deep critical reflection for an EFL context in Korea.

For example, we questioned some Korean teacher candidates' comments about how they interpreted and perceived rude behavior of their students (e.g., "I'm bored") as a form of cultural difference between Korea and Canada. We did not agree that student's saying "I'm bored" to the teacher in class is symbolic of 'Canadian' culture, because we felt that it would be considered as 'rude' in most Canadian classrooms as well. It may be reflective of the essentialist notion of culture, which overgeneralizes the 'Canadian' culture. As Jack (2009) rightly points out, intercultural competence is ultimately about representation (of Others, but also of the Self), in that it aims to encourage students to capture the "dialectical and relational nature of identity construction" and "the role of discourse in enabling and constraining understandings of certain people or objects in the world" (p. 101). (Mis)representations of other cultures and people from those cultures is a crucial issue with regard to L2 teaching in the era of globalization.

As such, the Korean teacher candidates' interpretation of the perceived rude behavior of students as a form of cultural difference, and as a sign of desire for attention from teachers, may be reflective of the colonial discourse around the image of superior 'self' and the inferior 'other' (see e.g., Kubota, 1999, 2001; Shin, 2006; Shin & Kubota, 2008). We wondered if the power imbalance between the Korean teachers, who did not feel confident in their English proficiency and cultural competency, and the English-speaking, Korean-Canadian students might have been a factor in such responses. We wondered if the Korean pre-service candidates might respond in the same way to similar behaviours of Korean students or *damunhwa* (multicultural) students from other Asian nations within Korean classrooms. More importantly, such a superficial understanding of a culture could lead to perpetuating cultural stereotypes, albeit positive, upon their return to Korea. We also wondered if they could have taken more pedagogically meaningful actions, instead of relegating it to the mere issue of cultural difference, if the service-learning activity was combined with critical awareness activities in class to help the Korean teachers adopt a post-colonialist perspective, which highlights non-essentialist views of culture and identity.

Of course, we acknowledge that the development of intercultural competence of the Korean teacher candidates is a work-in-progress and that they may be able to develop a further in-depth understanding of cross-cultural differences with more experience in the future. Yet, increased exposure to intercultural experiences alone does not guarantee the development of critical intercultural competence among students without being combined

with critical pedagogical activities to unveil societal power structures embedded in cultural representations of different cultural groups.

For this reason, we continue our reflexive inquiry in the following section in the framework of an in-class critical pedagogical activity that may be used in Korean EFL classrooms for the development of critical intercultural competence. Although our case study focused on an international immersion experience, cultural differences are not only found across countries, but also within them. Sub-groups within a country have their own culture. Furthermore, we argue that an international immersion experience is not the only way to foster critical intercultural competence for Korean teachers. Well-planned classroom activities from a critical pedagogical perspective could complement the international immersion experiences in English language teacher programs in Korea.

#### 4.3. Nacirema: An In-class Experiential Learning Activity for Critical Intercultural Competence

This section introduces a classroom activity designed to develop critical intercultural communicative awareness/competence: Nacirema (“American” spelled backwards). The idea of the Nacirema classroom activity, we report below, is adopted from Ting-Toomey and Chung (2011). We illustrate how this activity may be used in Korean EFL classrooms both for pre-service and in-service teachers and learners of English through Hyunjung’s experience of successfully using it in two different contexts of language teacher education in Canada and in Korea.

For this activity, the classroom functions as the lost island of Nacirema, whose culture has long been closed to the outside world. For the first time in their history, the people of Nacirema (Naciremans) will allow outsiders to visit their culture. The teacher requires 3-5 volunteers from the students, who will play the role of anthropologists (or visitors) exploring the Nacireman culture. When Hyunjung engages in this activity with her university students, she informs them that they would play representatives of the University of Saskatchewan (UofS), sent by the president of the university to find out more about the Nacireman culture and how they communicate with each other. Their goal is to learn as much as possible about the Nacireman culture and then report to the UofS president. The president would be visiting the new culture in the following week. The anthropologists would take a walk outside and be prepared to return and explore the new culture.

Meanwhile, the students, who remain inside the classroom and will play the role of residents of the island (Naciremans), are provided with instructions about the Nacireman cultural values and communication rules and prepare for their role in the activity. While the students familiarize themselves with the Nacireman communication rules that they

learned, the teacher goes out to meet the anthropologists and provide each of them with a topic to investigate (e.g., learning about their greeting customs). The teacher encourages the anthropologists to explore the topic in a creative way and think of questions to ask. Some time is then given for both sides to prepare to perform their assigned roles. Once both sides are ready, the anthropologists can begin to meet the Naciremans for the first time.

One anthropologist at a time enters the culture (or the classroom) and engages in conversation. They take about 2 minutes to frame questions about the Nacirema culture before going up to each person. As the second visitor enters, there will be about a minute's briefing time for the first anthropologist to debrief the next visitor. After all three visitors completed their 2-minute conversation in order to explore the culture, the teacher poses the following discussion questions for the class. The first two questions are put forward to the anthropologists in a whole-class discussion format:

- 1) How did you feel doing this activity? Why?
- 2) How did you make sense of this new culture?

Through the discussion, the class explores the feelings of the anthropologists. Students often expressed feelings of frustration when they were ignored by the interlocutors and were not able to figure out anything about new cultural norms. The next four questions are posed for small-group discussion:

- 1) What was happening during this activity?
- 2) What does this show about how we make sense of new culture (and people from the group)?
- 3) How does this relate to your own experiences? Have you been part of "out-group"?
- 4) How are stereotypes created and perpetuated?

From Hyunjung's experience, students usually became very engaged in the discussion, which often lead to the topic of cultural stereotypes. The anthropologists' reports shared in the class, or their interpretation of the Nacireman culture, were often incorrect. Therefore, students were easily able to understand how assumptions about certain cultural groups and their people may be perpetuated even when they are completely false. They were also reminded that they need to be mindful of stereotypes formed through superficial interaction with people from another culture. It is important to note that to better connect the Nacireman activity to promote *critical* intercultural competence in teacher education programs, teacher educators needs to adopt a critical pedagogical approach to unravel the

unequal power structure in cultural representations of people from different culture. The goal here is to move beyond superficial understanding of cultural difference (or cultural stereotypes) and challenge the common assumptions by combining it with relevant readings and scaffolding questions.

For example, in her teacher education courses in Canada, Hyunjung tried to ask her students to connect the discussion and their reflection to the assigned reading on non-native speaking language teachers in the field of L2 education. The topic of discussion often develops into students' perception of good teachers or the ability of teachers belonging to different cultures. For example, students often connect to their study abroad experiences, where they felt that they were part of an "out-group," and see how mismatched expectations, resulting from cultural differences sometimes, had negative consequences on them. French as a Second Language (FSL) teacher candidates, who tend to learn French through their schooling in areas of Canada where French is not much spoken outside of the classroom, are passionate about sharing their stories of being positioned as non-native speakers of the language during the course of their job interviews or by their students and colleagues. The discussion then easily moves onto the topic of how such stereotypes may impact their perception of students in multilingual classrooms in Canada.

When Hyunjung attempted in engaging in a Narcireman activity at a graduate workshop for both pre-service and in-service English teachers at a Korean university in Summer 2018, she asked questions to connect to the students' personal experiences or what they observe in media. The discussion then naturally led to the issue of *damunhwa* (multicultural) students and their families living in Korea. The Korean teachers and teacher candidates actively shared how the term '*damunhwa*' or people from *damunhwa* background (mostly from other Asian nations) are often associated with 'problem', 'poverty', or 'crime' in Korean society. The discussion also continued to question why some *damunhwa* people, for example those from the U.S. or Canada, are not categorized as part of the *damunhwa* group along with migrants from South-East Asia. While it is often more challenging to engage with people from privileged groups by questioning their own privilege and hidden assumptions, the discussion facilitated a critical reflection on the degrees of biased perceptions (or stereotypes) that they themselves held toward different groups among *damunhwa* people in Korea. Another student shared her experiences of feeling being part of an 'out-group' member during her study abroad experience in Australia. This connected to a discussion around ways in which they do not fit neatly into any essentializing categories (e.g., 'privileged' vs. 'underprivileged'), but rather it was how holding multiple social positions depending on the particular social context that mattered. This was a critical pedagogical moment to draw in-service and pre-service teachers' attention to the importance of social structure, which positions some individuals more

advantageously than others and its consequence in terms of social inequality and differential access to educational opportunities by their students.

## **5. CONCLUSION: ENGLISH TEACHER EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY KOREA**

This paper has examined the importance of fostering critical intercultural competence in L2 teacher education. We reported a small-scale pilot study to develop intercultural awareness among Korean teacher candidates participating in a short-term community-based service learning in Toronto, followed by reflexive inquiry on emerging themes from the teacher candidates' essays and interviews with them. To further develop students' and teachers' critical intercultural competence, we suggested an instructional activity for experiential learning, which could be used both in authentic intercultural communication settings outside of Korea and in EFL classrooms within Korea.

From the social or sociolinguistic approaches to L2 education, English language learning always takes place *in context* and the classroom, thus, needs to be linked to the larger social context within which it is situated in relation to societal power relations. In this sense, English language teaching is inherently about social inequality and social transformation (Shin & Lee, in press). As such, English language teacher education could be adapted in different ways in order to promote critical intercultural competence both for language learners and teachers.

We acknowledge that this study is limited in terms of the number of the case study participants and the range of suggested in-class instructional activities for fostering critical intercultural competence. We also acknowledge that by combining a report on a case study and our reflexive inquiry on the study with our teaching experiences, this study may not follow a conventional research report format. We invite Korean researchers and teachers to join us to draw on their own reflective practices to further enrich their understanding of critical intercultural competence. To support our collaborative inquiry, we suggest possible areas for further investigation. For example, given the prevalent use of multiple forms of literacies, including digital literacy among L2 learners in today's world (New London Group, 1996), the role of technology in fostering English language learner's critical intercultural competence warrants attention. Technology-based classroom activities to develop students' intercultural competence, without first-hand intercultural communication opportunities, may serve as a particularly useful pedagogical tool for Korean EFL classrooms (see e.g., Lázár, 2015; O'Dowd, 2015; Trejo & Fay, 2015). Furthermore, critical analysis of the cultural aspects of English language teaching curriculum, textbooks, and teaching materials is crucial to unfold how some cultural groups are represented with

bias (or with more privilege) in language teaching materials (e.g., Tajeddin & Teimournezhad, 2015). Using pop culture as a form of instructional material is also an engaging way to expand critical awareness of others. Using authentic reading materials such as multicultural English picture books is another effective way to link ELT to the topics of social justice and critical intercultural competence (Shin & Lee, in press). We hope our inquiry will provide ELT researchers and practitioners with opportunities for critical reflective moments in an increasingly multicultural and multilingual Korea.

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