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LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND NARRATION: A  
PHILOSOPHICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL INQUIRY INTO  
INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH TEACHER EDUCATION IN  
SOUTH KOREA

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## ABSTRACT

The field/industry of international English teacher education has been booming in recent years. Evidence of this can be seen in the increase in teacher education and teacher training programs and the rising volume of research in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Educators all over the world are producing an abundance of academic work and capital via the sustained popularity of English language learning in Asia and throughout the world. The knowledge base and adjoining professional practices span the globe, and global or macro perspectives of these phenomena still guide our understanding of the field. In this light, it is important to develop cogent and effective means of thinking/rethinking international English teacher education in terms of local knowledge. I believe that it is important to explore not only the content of this contentious field but also the modes of knowledge production. With this in mind I have conceived of a philosophical inquiry that begins with the personal and the immediate and seeks out not only a philosophy of local knowledge but a pedagogical and methodological process that potentially disrupts generalized modes of knowledge production.

The focal point of this dissertation is a fifteen week Second Language Acquisition (SLA) course I taught in Spring 2010. This was a Master's level course in a TESOL program at a large university on the outskirts of Seoul, Korea. The conditions which brought me to this

setting and the specified requirement of teaching generalizable language learning theories to English teachers in Korea are part of world-wide trends in teacher education. The frantic pursuit of English proficiency in Korea has led to increased attention to teacher education (Jo, 2008) and the field as a whole is still guided by generalizable theories of language and learning. In a larger context, globalization in educational spheres has led to a need for comparable methods, results, and bodies of knowledge, and teacher education on a worldwide scale has embraced these values (Bates, 2008). This classroom research project is an attempt to develop a philosophy of local knowledge alongside of a pedagogical model for exploring such knowledge via teacher narratives. How can narratives offer new possibilities for local resistance and challenge contemporary practices of professionalization and globalization? What are the parameters of and the potential of a philosophy of local knowledge as the starting point for such challenges?

This inquiry falls into two distinct sections—a pre-active stage and an interactive stage (Goodson, 1998). The pre-active portion (Chapters Two, Three, and Four) describe trends in international teacher education and narrative research and consider the possibility of rethinking these according to a philosophy of local knowledge. The interactive stage (Chapters Five, Six, and Seven) describes events which occurred throughout the fifteen week SLA course and explores resonating concepts.

Eighteen participants in the SLA course produced weekly narratives related to academic

theories, exchanged reflections on a collaborative class website, and wrote language learning/teaching autobiographies as final projects for the course. Additional data sources included personal interviews, course evaluations, and classroom discussions recorded in my personal teaching journal. I analyzed these exchanges with the hopes of understanding underlying assumptions and investigating ways that practicing teachers in a graduate program in Korea were able to elaborate upon, challenge, and inquire into these assumptions. Resonating concepts in the data included *expectations*, *theory*, and *progress*. Chapters Five, Six, and Seven elaborate on these concepts and attempt to discern ways of opening our understanding of emerging problems in international teacher education.

The data suggested various relationships between theory and practice rooted in the professionalization of teaching and teacher education, a range of lingering effects rooted in persisting West to East dichotomies, and problematic ways that learning theories and teacher narratives impact teachers' expressions of their experiences as teachers and learners of English. I conclude with a discussion of pedagogical and philosophical problems which arise in efforts to invoke local knowledge in a global educational sphere and a call to move beyond a reflective/narrative framework in teacher education.

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## Part One: Pre-Action

*Excuse my wandering. How can one be orderly with this? It's like counting leaves in my garden, along with the song notes of partridges, and crows. Sometimes organization and computation become absurd.*

– Rumi, 13<sup>th</sup> century Sufi poet

*[A] wholly dynamic way of looking at things is repugnant to the reflective consciousness [that] delights in clean cut distinctions, which are easily expressed in words, and in things with well-defined outlines, like those perceived in space.*

– Henri Bergson, 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century French philosopher

### Chapter One: Orientation

I pile onto a subway car beneath downtown Seoul—caught up in a bee swarm of bodies desperately searching for small pockets of unoccupied space. It is morning rush hour in one of the most heavily populated cities on the planet. As the doors snap shut I slip into a crevice that conforms to the exact contours of my own body. No need to hang on to any handles, no possibility of falling—we are packed in too tightly to fall over. I'm back in South Korea (hereafter Korea). It is a world away from the spacious campus of Penn State University where I spent the past two years reading, writing, and greedily indulging in every academic curiosity I could imagine. At the moment those times seem deceptively simple and peaceful. The man to my left and front provides a cramped reminder of all those who suggested that PhD school was somehow removed from the *real world*. An image of lying on

a fat library sofa crosses my mind—a book in my lap and a highlighter in my hand. Reading Foucault, Judith Butler, Rumi, Wendell Berry, Ngugi... somehow I get the sense that collage of ideas was less 'real' than this, like they are mere abstractions in contrast with the sharp elbows that keep prodding me into the present struggle toward the walls and desks that allow this amorphous swarm of bodies to come into being as office workers, saleswomen and men, government inspectors, teachers... necessary things to be if one is to survive here.

To my immediate right is the inner wall of the silver subway car, and framed upon it is an advertisement that catches my eye. Two young and attractive people stand face to face. On the left is a White male in neat black sneakers, jeans, and a form-fitting gray t-shirt. Across him is an Asian woman (presumably Korean) in high heels, tight slacks, and a black tank top. Her profile and the outfit accentuate ample breasts directly beneath a smooth caramel-colored shoulder. The two figures stand against a gray wall that could be a hospital, a prison cell, or an office building, and directly behind them on the wall is a large bright blue square.

Our subway car reaches yet another stop and we all shuffle around the car to make room for some to squeeze out and more to pile in. I am pushed closer to the advertisement and so get a better look. The two figures are not standing upright. They are leaning into one another at an awkward angle. The feet look to be over a yard apart, their hips are somewhat closer, and their faces are within inches of one another. One can imagine their breath wisping against each others' slightly pursed lips. The negative space between their bodies forms an equilateral triangle—an age old symbol for the masculine, a sharp, aggressive, even phallic shape that is at the immediate center of the entire ad. Beneath the White man's gelled hair his face seems relaxed but poised—neck cocked out slightly as he stares into the eyes of the Korean woman. She meets his eyes with a cold stare of her own. Her sharp jawline perfectly mirrors his, and her left hand clutches a notebook and pen—the only objects that disrupt the

balance of the picture, as the White man has come to this confrontation empty handed. Beneath them, in capital letters, reads the phrase “DIRECT ENGLISH”, and immediately under it (written in Korean) “Speak one-to-one with native English speakers!” Presumably, he does not need anything. Presumably, his body is enough to fulfill whatever functions this space requires of him. The female, however, clutches her pen and paper, almost like she's armed, more than ready for whatever confrontation (linguistic or otherwise) that is about to unfold.

I have arrived at my stop and I stumble through and along with men in dress shoes and ties and women in sharp business skirts click clacking in exaggerated high heels. This is my first morning at my new job at a large Korean University on the outskirts of Seoul. I have been hired to teach graduate courses in a TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) program, and I am on my way to meet my new bosses and colleagues. As I approach the TESOL office for the first time I cannot help feeling a little like that young White man in the subway ad poised to face the solid glare of the other. Of course I feel somewhat empty handed.

\*

Sitting in the grass without a picnic blanket—I enjoy the sensation of dirt against my heels and calves. Of course it's only a minute or so before I have to start brushing ants off my legs and arms—before the soil starts to cling to the soles of my feet and my clothes. My natural impulse is to fight these things—to maintain the sharp distinction between this environment and this body. I can't help but to imagine the sensation of being totally immersed in the dirt. What if I were buried underground? From such a place it would be pointless to count the individual grains of dirt and mud, or to keep tabs on every worm and beetle that

picks away as this body converges with all of the little molecules and bundles of molecules surrounding it. I wonder if I would recognize the instant this body became indistinguishable from the soil—the moment that the synthesis became complete.

Not all becomings have to be so dramatic. Indeed, it's the seemingly understated nature of these syntheses that allows us to disregard them so easily—to see ourselves as somehow autonomous and distinct. Cells synthesize with cells becoming skin. Skin synthesizes with other types of synthesis, bone, blood vessels, all temporarily becoming a human hand. This hand synthesizes with other another hands undergoing the same complex processes. Two hands meet—new lovers, warmth, and newly discovered signals. At this point “any object we care to interrogate, however humble, proves to be a multilayered formation of staggering complexity” (Massumi, 1992, p. 52). This is not the case because of the inherent complexity in a single entity. This is so because any inquiry involves countless, even infinite interfaces that exceed the human capacity to name, to bracket, and to categorize. It's just an ant, brush it away and retain separation. But the distinctions we draw between selves and environments are merely based on convention—the result of clinging to representations of one and the other.

“So what?” would be an entirely fair question. I make the declaration. I come out of the philosophical closet and finally admit it: I believe in a material world outside the realm of human consciousness. But so what if human consciousness is a part of the world rather than the other way around? What does such a thing mean for the work I am attempting to do? How would such a thing impact a pedagogy and a philosophy of English teacher education in an international setting? How does this impact the manner in which one teaches teachers? How does it change the way one might research human activity and what does it imply that one can really know about such activities? I don't know. A vast majority of what we 'know' about teacher education, globalization, and the construction of knowledge comes from more

idealist traditions. Our body of knowledge tends to either neglect material bodies in themselves or ceases to believe in them altogether. Research in the social sciences is designed to tell us more about our theoretical formulas than the world itself. This of course elicits a danger in becoming completely self-assured in abstract ideals, structures, categorical impositions. Discourse, signifiers, human perceptions rule, and it becomes nearly impossible to believe in the world (Deleuze, 1995).

This dissertation is/does a number of things. First and foremost it is an experiment of sorts. Not in the traditional empirical sense of controlling a sample and isolating variables based on formal predictions. It is an experiment in the sense that I wish to find out what happens in classroom inquiry where one believes in a material world. The activities I explore in this dissertation center around a master's level Second Language Acquisition (SLA) course I taught in a Korean University, during the Spring of 2010 just a few months after I (re)arrived in Korea. The content of the course, as defined by my department head, related to theoretical knowledge of the ways individuals acquire additional languages. The syllabus, the reading materials, all the course content, the assignments, and assessments were all up to me. Yet there were looming constraints. In order to graduate from the program, students had to pass a multiple choice comprehensive exam during their final semester. This comprehensive exam covered mainstream theories of language and learning formulated predominantly by North American and European researchers in North American and European institutions. I think it is worth noting that I was never asked to demonstrate knowledge of a second language (I was not asked if I had mastered Korean or any other additional language), and I was never asked nor expected to demonstrate any knowledge of 'Korean' philosophies or theories of language. Indeed, I would have otherwise been completely lost, as the sanctioned tradition was precisely the one into which I had been educated.

My immediate concerns were quite simple. What am I doing here? What do I have to

offer? What sort of assumptions about knowledge and about education in general are necessary in order to justify my place here? Having limited experience teaching English in the Korean context, and absolutely zero experience teaching English as a non-native English speaker (a position many of my students were in), it seems safe to assume that I was not hired based on a congruence between my own practical knowledge of teaching and that of those enrolled in the program. The questions on the comprehensive exam did not explicitly address, incorporate, or require any knowledge of Korea, Korean society, Korean teachers and students, or the Korean language. Indeed everything my students would be held accountable for could be described as *generalizable*. Knowledge of language, linguistics, education, learning theories, the brain... whatever this general expertise was, inevitably it was expertise from and of someplace else. It would seem that content superseded context in order for me to be seen as qualified to teach this course.

I have conceived of a classroom research project that would allow me to pedagogically experiment and explore this local context. In one sense I confront what I perceive to be grave dangers in importing detached intellectual theories and asserting the relevance of such theories in the Korean context. Chomsky's language acquisition device/ Krashen and the affective filter/ input and intake/ noticing/ recasts/ grammatical competence/ communicative competence/ four types of motivation/ six types of intelligence... all glorious tributes to the nuance of academic research and human creativity. Also potentially harmful when presented as universal truths about the nature of language and activity that dictate the proper perspective and behavior of effective language teachers and learners. Bearing no judgment on the internal validity of these concepts, there are intimate connections between the importation of knowledge from the West (primarily Europe and North America) to the fringes (everywhere else). Through lenses such as post-colonialism (Willinsky, 1998), neo-imperialism, globalization, hegemony (Gramsci, 1971; Kubota, 2007; Pennycook, 1994), and

orientalism (Said, 1979) SLA becomes an interdisciplinary field predominantly embodied in the work of White male researchers and theorists. On rare occasions, there are contributions made by individuals from places such as Africa, the Indian sub-continent, and various parts of Asia, areas greatly affected by the global spread of English and English language teaching, but even this work originates almost exclusively in Europe or North America or is constructed by individuals educated there. In short, SLA, as presented as a cohesive academic field in numerous canonical textbooks is a European and North American tradition seeped in cultural, philosophical, and epistemological assumptions of institutions situated in these places and propagated by students of these schools (for examples of such SLA summary textbooks see Ellis, 1997; Johnson, 2004; Lightbrown & Spada, 2006).

It is therefore easy to see this context as a sort of 'front lines' of academic hegemony and the imposition of Western institutional values upon a world that seems all too eager to snatch them up. As a White, native-English speaking, middle-class, able-bodied, heterosexual male pursuing a degree at a university in the United States, I am conscious that these attributes are very likely the reasons why I was brought here. Challenging and possibly disrupting flows of knowledge originating in the 'West' and pouring into the 'East' means confronting the very conditions though which I came to work here. To speak out against such issues is to challenge my own presence and flirts with the hypocritical. How can I responsibly speak of challenging the conditions which have brought me here? This seeps into the foundation of my project and what I hope to accomplish. It is a problem that forces me to rethink my pedagogical goals and develop more adequate and more sensitive connections to my students and my teaching environment.

Yet even more difficult, I must confess to harboring deep reservations about such confident assertions of the global dominance of English and North American academic traditions and what it all actually means. While the material conditions of globalization and



cultural imperialism may indeed be very real, they are also abstract perspectives which may seem quite removed from the challenges experienced by English teachers or teacher educators in their everyday lives and practices. Academic work that grapples with these global trends seldom center on individual experience (Park, 2009). When it does, such experiences coalesce into general themes which act as topographies of social realities (see Kubota, 2011; Lee, 2009). A plane of theoretical abstraction still rules—terms and categories represent people, events, and places. The result is that researchers learn more about the validity of their own theories than they do the singularity of that which is researched—indeed, that's often the point of doing research. Events and individuals become evidence of academic theories and global trends. Lived experiences and narrations become representations of dominance and complicity. My concern is that such 'theory building' research projects avoid or gloss over the experience of becoming researcher and researched, teacher and taught, and the singularity of events and individuals as they collide into one another. Thus I am not making a call for studies that focus on the agency of local peoples in light of global forces so much as I am asserting that it is necessary to think of this entire realm in new ways. I hold to the belief that we may create unthinkable possibilities by engaging with individuals in ways that do not seek to reduce them to representational academic discourse.

In short, I view this teaching context as highly charged and highly problematic, and therefore I see a need to resist writing a typical doctoral dissertation (if by typical one thinks of succinct research questions, a systematic methodology for answering those questions, subjects, analogical or categorical descriptions, analysis, and a claim). This is the case for a number of reasons but not least of all because I view these teaching and research events as supremely personal. I do not mean *personal* in the individual and narrative sense of the word (though I mean this too). I speak of the personal in the sense that these are singular and unique events, and categorizing them in ways that would make them easily manageable or

generalizable to other events or contexts is to do a disservice to them. I believe that events within this site of teaching and research are not 'like' any other events in any simple way, and they should not be treated as such. Yet they are not anomalies. All over the world people are positioned as teacher educators in the global English profession. Many of these teachers do not come from nor have any real knowledge of the local contexts in which their teachers/students work (see CELTA, n.d.). Teacher training is big business and big money. Certainly such phenomenon are related to a globalized and market driven world of English teacher education in Korea (Bates, 2008). Indeed, there is plenty of research to confirm that such trends are real. What is interesting is that I have yet to find any research which seriously interrogates from a firsthand perspective the increasingly common phenomenon of White, 'native' English speakers, educating practicing non-native English speaking teachers. Describing this phenomenon as 'under-researched' is to be extremely generous.

In response to a literal lacuna of primary research that takes these problems seriously and responds to the position I find myself in, I feel a need to make personal happenings public, to describe events in the global spread of English and the teaching of teachers. But this has to be done delicately, and in full recognition of the paradoxes of retelling experiences and attaching such experiences to a teller—speaking with authority as outsider and other. It is unlikely that I have the skill to avoid or even recognize all of the paradoxes and problems I inevitably face. If I seriously grapple with the complexities of globalization, professionalization, and market-driven policies and the manners in which they impact English teacher education then I have to look no further than my own body. This is where things become personal in a more narrative sense. Thinking about my presence here as an expression of Western dominance, hegemony, and institutionalized racism means that anything I do in this setting becomes an expression of such things. Even resistance to such trends becomes rooted in particular bodies of knowledge—dependent upon many of the

forces which brought me here in the first place. I quickly place myself in a bind. Categories, names, theoretical or political concepts such as racism, globalization, and imperialism might help me make sense of things, they might offer a sense of stability. But these concepts leave me in a terrible paradox. My resistance is made possible by that which I resist and these things remain an expression of the imported knowledge that I take as problematic.

So one of my primary research goals is to assemble a platform that affords the opportunity to conceive of international English teacher education in new ways and pushes our understandings of it into new trajectories. The goal is to produce rather than critique. “As Genosko puts it, a being-for rather than a being-against” (Evans, et, al., 2004, p. 334). I wish to embrace the difficulties and the contradictions that arise with my very presence in Korea and all that I believe I have to offer this place. Yet If I wish to incite movement, to rethink these terms, this context, and my place within it, I am in need of something more than a correct theoretical interpretation—new or newish categorical formulations of *being*. *Being* leads me, again and again, to 'being' a White male, being a native English speaker, being American, being foreign, being privileged, and on and on. This line of thinking, this *being*, is ruled by analogical thought, a mode of thinking that remains the dominant mode of social and scientific inquiry:

[I]solation of the typical individual (considered outside the real flow of its actions; as essentially dead); decomposition into parts and determination of intrinsic qualities (dissection); logical recomposition into an organic whole exhibiting signs of 'life' (artificial resuscitation); extrinsic comparison between wholes (analogy).... Like, habit, reaction: same difference. Imitation of life (Massumi, 1992, p. 97).

In contrast with methodologies of being, of categorizing, theorizing, discerning the state of things, one can speak of *becoming-other*—of a tension between two modes of desire, the desire to be known and the desire to transcend (Massumi, 1992). As a tension between that which *I am* and that of my potential, becoming is movement between a knowable subject recognized by self and other, a name, a plotted point on a trajectory, an example of a category or type—toward something queer and unrecognizable.

Herein is a concession that there is in fact a real world quite disinterested in human perception and that this world imposes itself and enunciates itself in ways not fully comprehensible to us, but in ways that nonetheless work in conjunction with what is known or knowable in creations of affect, sensation, and percept quite indifferent to analogical human thought. This realm includes 'us' rather than the other way around. The 'us' becomes what a great poet once called life's longing for itself (Gibran, 1971). To become-other “one need only live more fully... [to be] on the other hand, it is necessary to pass a test” (Massumi, 1992, p. 108). Is this really a such-and-such? Let us gather our tools of measurement, plot our results and make a claim. Of course one never fully escapes one's self or the determinant conditions of one's body. One never accesses a third space (Zou, 2000) or fully maps out a becoming. On the other hand one is never bound to a known or knowable subject. This is the tension between metaphysical *being-without-becoming* and *becoming-without-being*, where “becoming means transcending the context of historical conditions” (Zizek, 2004, p. 14). Deleuze and Guattari (1977) call such oppositions molarity and permanent revolution—each one an expression of a “preferred impossibility” (Massumi, 1992, p. 117). Why impossible? In the first lines of this paper, stuck in the crowded subway train, I struggled toward my new job just after arriving in Korea. With this assemblage each individual caught in that train took a place and performed our functions. We were in a period between—between our homes and our jobs, not mothers, fathers, children, and not teachers, office workers, or salespersons.

We were en route—in a space of transformation between molar identities—we were commuters. Yet this is not a place of complete freedom. Signs, representations, other bodies all remind us what we are, what we should or could be. In my case it was an advertisement projecting a handsome young White man about to confront a well-armed other—empty handed save his body and all that it entailed. But I get ahead of myself and most likely leave the reader too little—and so a little on the structure of this paper and the classroom project.

### **Assembling the Project**

Most directly, this is a classroom research project. I wish to inquire into classroom events in ways that address the balance between my own theoretical and practical concerns, and the institutional and personal needs that student/participants bring to our course. Given the apparent conflict between my concerns about the wholesale importation of foreign academic theories, and the students (possibly superficial) need to learn such theories, I decided to inquire into the feasibility of utilizing personal experiences as a means of exploring and critiquing SLA course content. Rather than teaching and critiquing theory in explicit ways I decided that course participants would write about personal language learning and teaching experiences that they believed were in some way related to the theoretical readings for each week. In addition, the final project was a language learning and teaching autobiography intended to afford participants the opportunity to explore and critique both personal beliefs and SLA theory.

This research inevitably touches on several layers. Three of which I will express via research questions intended to guide both myself and the reader through this process. First, there is the pedagogical layer through which I address the practical issue of utilizing teacher narratives as a means of grappling with generalized theoretical concepts. In these terms, my

question would be: how can the use of teacher narratives provoke the development of theoretical knowledge, and how can they afford participants the opportunity to both situate and critique mainstream SLA theory? In a more analytical layer, I am interested in taking a closer look at the concepts that emerged in this SLA course via personal narratives and the various forms of discussion. In these terms my question is: what concepts did participants invoke and how did such concepts define, limit, or expand participants potential subjective becomings? Finally, in a more personal and somewhat philosophical layer, I wish to explore the constraints that I bring here along with my own struggles to rethink and re-create the terms through which I understand this teacher education context. The subsequent question would ask: how did my approach to this classroom research project impose subjectivities and afford participants (myself included) the opportunity to become-other? What constraints did I place on this context and in what ways can we/ did we resist, remake, or re-write these constraints?

I have divided this dissertation into larger sections. Borrowing from concepts expressed by Goodson (1998), the first four chapters present a pre-active stage and the final four chapters present an interactive stage of the research. Put simply, my first task is to express more clearly the context of my work and to justify my concerns. I refer to the various planes as “chapters” purely in an attempt to resist academic jargon, but in fact these shorter chunks within the larger work are not chapters in a conventional sense. Following the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), I see each “chapter” as its own space of inquiry or plane. The means of moving from one chapter to the next exists within each, but I make no attempt to construct or impose a cohesive narrative thread. Each chapter contains its own problems and stylistic components that I felt were necessary in order to address the particular problems under consideration. Rather than feigning cohesion I wished to express these teaching and researching events in a way that preserves disjunctions and singular confrontations. Each

chapter is an attempt to form and to 'unblock' concepts (more on this in Chapters Three and Four). The order of these planes roughly approximates a traditional dissertation and I have attempted to make these as coherent as possible; beyond that basic reasoning they are quite arbitrary. Making sense of these teaching experiences has been a difficult process and the sense I have made is anything but logical, well-ordered, and linear. Expressing my fumbling toward a coherent statement through the use of loosely connected concepts seems more honest, so I invite the reader to pass through these utterances as you see fit—though as I mentioned, I have tried to organize them according to a somewhat logical and somewhat conventional trajectory.

The second chapter confronts what I perceive(d) to be the status quo in international English education and Korean teacher education. I begin by describing recent policy shifts and connecting these trends in Korea to a larger global movement toward professionalization in both education and teacher education. There is currently a massive worldwide reorganization in teacher education (Bates, 2008). It is important to consider what this means, not only on a global scale but on a local and human scale. I outline the prevalent responses to trends in the worldwide spread of English and argue that both value-neutral perspectives (Crystal, 2001) and determinist/emancipatory models (Luke, 1992; Phillipson, 1992; 2008) fail to adequately cultivate local perspectives and local ways of knowing, leaving academics caught in an illusory choice between cultural imperialism and simple relativism. Other alternatives are required if I am to express an adequate English teacher education pedagogy in light of the difficult issues surrounding the spread of English and the professionalization of the teaching of English. Chapter Two is, to put it mildly, a case against contemporary solutions situated in discourses of globalization and neo-liberalism, and seeks nothing more than to create a degree of doubt in the feasibility of teacher education pedagogies which situate themselves along this line of thinking.

The third chapter moves toward a theory of local knowledge by first working through literature on indigenous knowledge and post-developmental postmodernism. I find that this body of work offers much in the way of formulating resistant pedagogies, but requires further reflection on the problem of situating of indigenous knowledge within academic spheres. A sensitivity to language and experience from within academic circles allows me to address some of the difficulties of expressing alternative ways of knowing within the confines of modern academic discourses. Work that takes these problems seriously has a responsibility to expose the limits of institutional knowledge. In short, Chapter Three marks my personal struggle to rethink the global-local dichotomy and to tentatively formulate a concept of local knowledge that serves as a foundation for my approach to this classroom research project. It is probably the most abstract portion of this dissertation, as it presents an effort to produce a productive concept upon which to justify my work here.

The final portion of the pre-active stage is Chapter Four. There I paint a rough portrait of narrative approaches to teaching and research, and initiate a shift from *narrative research* to *narration*. Chapter Four offers a more nuanced description of my teaching and research methods and attempts to justify the preliminary decisions I made regarding course activities. I also outline my methods of analysis and the underlying reasons for my approach to the project in general.

In the second stage, the interactive stage, I narrate a number of events that occurred during the SLA course. Chapters Five, Six, and Seven each explore central concepts that emerged in this research process. As I expressed above, I intended each chapter, given enough contextual knowledge, to be an exploration which stands on its own. Rather than organizing data according to a structured narrative, I view my analysis as a collection of concepts and problems laid out in confrontation with one another (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994). I see these chapters as a collection of assemblages, syntheses of bodies, ideas, concepts,



and forces which resist oppressive boundaries of formal organization or academically verified structures. The various narrations/ re-narrations invoke various movements, and the resulting descriptions emerge according to the particular context of narration. Perhaps I will succumb to the temptation to use the obnoxious prefix *post*—a *post-narrative* project. I seek to play with/ relate to people, places, and events in a way that do not view them as fixed entities but as concepts that emerge and mutate as I engage with them. Each chapter explores a concept that emerged during the research process and attempts to 'unblock' the concept (see Hughes, 2009). Additionally each chapter heading throughout the dissertation contains a single concept in parentheses directly beneath the chapter title. This represents a decisive concept in the chapter and the purpose of each chapter is to take this concept into new directions, to rethink the concept according to its real-world material complexities and to follow such complexities as far as I can (to 'unblock').

Through this writing exercise I have discovered that the quality of an experience and my capacity to communicate these experiences are disparate events and that it is within this disparity that I might be afforded the possibility to change—where one invents the meaning of change and the rules by which one can change—the placing of boundaries for the purpose of remaking boundaries. The writing of this work is as much a part of the 'research' as the teaching, the data collection, analysis, or claims. I have no intention of treating my reporting of these events as transparent or even perfectly logical or systematic.

When one walks into the rain the first reaction is to shield oneself in vague attempts to avoid getting wet. Yet at some point one becomes saturated. When more rain becomes redundant then one stops running for cover. At this point it becomes possible to play. In some ways this speaks to my own sense of uncertainty. The pre-active stage of this project is an expression of uncertainty. I see these stage as my own fumbling toward a justification, an attempt to reach the stage where I feel I can freely play. Once this business is done,

explanation becomes redundant. The interactive stage is akin to this sense of play. Though in some ways I remain cautious. I still think of my readers, the need for clarity, the need to express these ideas in conventional ways (after all, this dissertation does require signatures if it is to serve its purpose). Though my writing never quite reaches the sensation of full saturation, these chapters are efforts to play with various sorts of data collected during the fifteen week SLA course.

## Chapter Two: The Spread of English and the Building of a Global Profession

### Getting Situated

November 2009—Professor Lee, the head of our department, presented the group of faculty members with a list of potential classes for the coming semester. I had written several proposals for courses I wanted to teach, including *Inquiry-based English Education*, *Postmodernism and Education*, *Alternative Research Methods*, and *Cultural studies in TESOL*, and I was disappointed to see that none of them had made her short list. I skimmed choices including *Psycholinguistics*, *Linguistics*, and *Teaching English in English*—none of them particularly inspiring. Finally, *Second Language Acquisition* (SLA) stood out. It was not what I had hoped for, but it offered some possibility of addressing my own social and cultural concerns surrounding English and English education in Korea. When I informed Professor Lee of my choice she explained that students sometimes dreaded the theoretical nature of SLA. As a required course, however, they begrudgingly signed up and struggled through it. Immediately I was faced with the challenge of designing a course that students (supposedly) did not enjoy, as well as the expectation that it would cover a set of general language learning theories.

My coworker, Rob, explained that he would be teaching one section of the SLA course as well. “I use the textbook written by [insert White North American researchers here]. It starts with Chomsky and innatism and moves through information-processing models, and it presents the ideas simply enough for students to grasp them. We have used that textbook in all the SLA courses for the last few years. I highly recommend it.” A second challenge confronted me. Within our program SLA had been represented by neatly packaged mass-produced textbooks offering concise summaries of an established scientific field. Even

though objections to positivist approaches to SLA and English language teaching had been raised for some time (Pennycook, 1989), the department tacitly encouraged a more narrow view of the field in a number of ways. For one, all students that did not receive straight “A's” in the program had to take a written comprehensive test before graduating. Tests were multiple choice or short answer and pertained to foundational or basic knowledge usually covered by bestselling textbooks that made up the course content. I was also instructed not to give an “A+” to more than 20% of my Master's level students. It seemed to me that these conventions had the capability of reducing an instructor's job to clarifying or passing on the secondhand information described in secondary resources, and also required me to sort out which students grasped these in the most predictable and/or fundamental ways.

My own convictions about teaching graduate courses were sharply opposed to the reduction of an entire field of study to a single, 'neutral', secondary resource. From the outset of my work here I felt a need to consider not only the content of the courses I would be teaching. I wished to trouble basic assumptions that I believed to be fueling both worldwide English language teaching but also the science of language teaching that accompanied it. I wished to avoid a tendency to reduce

teaching to the transmission of knowledge about language structures, disembodied its practice from political and identity connections in local and global scenes.... [T]his approach to teaching... serves as an instrument for the dominant, rationalistic, modernist rationality that has been imposed in the globalized world of English (Jordao, 2009, p. 99).

It seemed to me that the worldwide spread of English via the teaching of idealized grammatical structures and functions, and the procedural and theoretical knowledge of how to

teach these were both situated in deeper philosophical and social beliefs that themselves tended to go unquestioned. Jordao's (2009) concerns that these foundational assumptions are continually left out of English language teaching and teacher education can be seen as a call for a methodology of continuing teacher education in TESOL that seeks to give a voice to non-native teachers of English. As a preliminary answer to this challenge I found that Aoki and Jackson's (2007) words resonated with me:

The most important task for the student can no longer be the absorption of texts, the extraction of main ideas, or the learning of facts, concepts or theories, but rather the use of texts to think critically—that is, the use of texts to think independently and differently (p. 6).

If it is fair to assume that a field is not made up of a set of basic truths but a particular orientation to texts, then the purpose of an introductory course to a field such as SLA would be to help students engage in the conversations that happen in the field. Aoki and Jackson (2007) favored this underlying purpose over a transmission models which hold that the instructor's duty is to present learners with basic knowledge produced by the field. This decision seems particularly relevant in light of Phillipson's (1992) observations that the academic field of English language learning is situated in imperialist practices. I was concerned about the simple fact that most of the knowledge in mainstream SLA originated in North America and Europe. It seemed important that course participants not view this movement of knowledge (from “West” to “East” and from researchers to teachers) as a neutral and necessary phenomenon. In particular, I felt it necessary to address uniqueness of the Korean context so that class participants would engage with the SLA field as a series of ideas and debates rather than a set of scientific truths that they needed to adapt to their

teaching.

While I felt confident, maybe overconfident, about my underlying goals in the course, tacit university customs were not the only thing promoting a more content based, basic-knowledge approach to teaching and learning in this environment. It is crucial to consider the specific goals of class participants and underlying trends in Korean teacher education as well as the goals of individual students. As it is quite easy to acquire a teaching certificate in Korea, teacher hiring is extremely competitive—often with twenty applicants for every public school teaching position (Jo, 2008). Teachers are selected according to their score on standardized exams that cover pedagogy, content knowledge, writing, and an interview (Education in Korea, 2007). Those who enroll in TESOL programs around Korea often do so for the purpose of preparing for these competitive entry exams or gaining points in an elaborate system of promotion (Jo, 2008; Kane, 2007). So while my department head did not explicitly impose any restraints on my teaching, it seemed likely that my hopes of situating and critiquing ideas and connecting them with lived experiences would potentially face resistance on both an institutional level and a personal level. My first hurdle—I had constructed a dichotomy, critical engagement versus basic content.

With this chapter I engage with this binary (real or not) between my own goals and the structural constraints within which the SLA course would take place. I outline some recent trends in Korean teacher education and in second language teacher education more generally. Next, I describe three common approaches to the worldwide spread of English—neutral, determinist, and emancipatory perspectives. By situating these debates within my own experience and concerns, I wish to show that none of the general macro-approaches were sufficient for my purposes. Further, my dichotomy between situating teacher knowledge and a banking approach is a product of such macro approaches that are in need of greater elaboration (I take on these problems in the next chapter). The body of work I draw upon is

not representative of the knowledge base in any single field but instead includes work that has influenced and continues to influence my choices as a teacher educator in Korea. Further, while teacher education and professional development are heavily researched topics, teaching and research conducted by non-Korean researchers who teach Korean teachers in Korea is quite rare (Oliver, 2009). Classroom research that directly confronts the question of importing foreign instructors into such spaces is even less common and that which does so from firsthand accounts is virtually nonexistent. Therefore I draw upon an eclectic set of ideas that help me cultivate a more nuanced sense of this immediate space of teaching and learning.

### **Some Policy Shifts in Korea**

The infamous 7<sup>th</sup> national curriculum of Korea, implemented in 2000 (Ahn, 2003), offered clear explanations of the goals of Korean English education and the means through which these goals should be realized in public schools. The most profound shift was the new push for communicative competence as opposed to grammatical knowledge (begun in the earlier 6<sup>th</sup> national curriculum). According to the International Review of Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks Internet Archive (2002; cited in Shin, 2004) the purpose of English education in Korean public schools was to address the needs of a new global economy and develop a worldly perspective among students. The curriculum set out to globalize the country, and the development of students' critical thinking and problem solving skills as well as oral proficiency in English were necessary in order to achieve these means (Ministry of Education, 1997; Jung & Norton, 2002). The communicative turn in Korean English education was therefore not limited to linguistic goals, but was in fact implemented to achieve specific economic and political goals. Communicative English proficiency, world-views, and even a

national identity were rigorously pursued through the implementation of such policies. Put simply, Korea made the decision to move to a global knowledge economy (Andrew, 2007), though what that means is a complex issue in itself. The communicative goals scripted in the 7<sup>th</sup> national curriculum were a quintessential part of a curricular turn that encompassed culture, behavior, and an orientation to the globalized world.

In order to achieve these ends policy stressed the practical use of English through task-based teaching methods that would instill both a sense of national pride and global awareness among English language learners (Jeong, 2001). The curriculum expressed the need to not only be able to construct grammatically correct sentences but to recognize the appropriate use of language, including when and with whom certain grammatically correct sentences should be constructed. The 7<sup>th</sup> national curriculum called for drastic changes such as proficiency-based instruction (where students are allowed to learn according to their own interests and abilities) while the foundation of such instruction was “37 types of linguistic structures... [and] the 79 functional expressions of communication” (Jeong, 2001, para 43). For example, students should be able to use seven words per sentence in grades 3 and 4 and nine words per sentence for grades 5 and 6. Further, they should recognize 480 words after elementary school and 1,300 words at the conclusion of high school (Jeong, 2001; Jung & Norton, 2002). A dissonance emerged between the student centered proficiency-based techniques mandated by the document and the reduction of language to quantifiable linguistic structures. As tested, language remained syntactic and grammatical while demanding a child-centered proficiency based pedagogical model and communicative competence. The massive college entrance exam (*sooneung*) remained the quintessential mode of national assessment despite requirements for a new approach to English education (Seth, 2005). Put simply, the 7<sup>th</sup> national curriculum legislated new teaching methodologies while maintaining standardized and structural means of measuring success.



Such changes placed enormous pressures on Korean teachers who were widely seen as lacking the oral English proficiency to implement this new aggressive curriculum (Jung & Norton, 2002). Further, the official goal of globalization and the required curricular shifts were at odds with everyday classroom realities, including large class sizes and the need to prepare students for standardized exams (Shin, 2007). These pressures, as well as a fervent push to ensure that public education remains competitive with private education (Dawson, 2010) led to an explosion of English teacher education programs in Korea. Teacher education takes the form of TESOL certificate programs and graduate degrees, and these often employ “native speakers” from countries one might call “the blessed six” (United States, England, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Ireland). University graduates from these countries have been imported for years to teach conversational English in a variety of settings (Oliver, 2009), and the turn to teacher education via TESOL followed suit.

Where English became a mandatory subject from the third grade of elementary school in 1997 (Jeon, 2009), more recent legislation has further expanded English education by requiring public schools to begin English instruction from the first grade in elementary school (Jo, 2008). Further, a number of major universities are shifting or planning to shift the medium of instruction from Korean to English in courses ranging from sciences, mathematics, engineering, and economics (Im, 2009). Success in nearly any academic discipline in a Korean university increasingly requires a high level of English proficiency from both students and faculty. Thus, English Immersion programs began popping up at the elementary, middle and high school levels, and English immersion became central to debates about the place of English in Korean society (Lee, 2008). Put simply, English immersion has limited or even banned the use of Korean in many formal English classes. There of course remains a possibility that the prohibition of L1 in certain English classrooms perpetuates the notion that native speakers are ideal language teachers (Shin, 2007). In tandem with a

government the continuing presence of native English speakers in Korean public schools (Lee, 2008), one can say that pressures on Korean teachers continue to mount, and the call for greater English proficiency, as well as professional knowledge for Korean teacher, continue follow suit.

Official policy relied on theories of Second Language Acquisition in order to justify the influx of native teachers, the reduction or banning of Korean in the classroom, and the English curriculum designed to achieve the political goals of globalization. The language learning theories used were not only limited to specific Western academic discourses (traditional Korean philosophical orientations to both language and pedagogy were completely absent), but were further limited to mental processing models of language acquisition favored by mainstream linguistics and psycholinguistics. Mental processing theories specifically mentioned or alluded to include critical age hypothesis, developmental psychology, and innatism and such cognitive theories justified the implementation of mandatory English education in all public schools from the third grade in elementary school (Jeong, 2001). While the document repeatedly called for communicative and task-based teaching techniques and a need to focus on pragmatic aspects of language production, the underlying theoretical position was purely cognitive and psycholinguistic in nature. Not only did the seminal presentation of these ideas in English (see Jeong, 2001) present these theories as irrefutable scientific fact, the document actually presented conflicting learning theories (such as behaviorism and constructivism) solely within the confines of a cognitive model of language learning. Justifications of the policy (Jeong, 2001) reduced complex epistemological questions of teaching and learning English into a discussion of techniques and outcomes, and thus simplified the challenges of socially oriented epistemological positions into mere teaching techniques.

Park (2009) found that Korean people often see English as an imposition that requires

excessive time and money in a place where parents already spend an average of 25% of their income on their children's education (Lee, 2002). Second, there is a widespread belief that it is nearly impossible for Korean people to speak English well (Park, 2009). English as 'unspeakable' in these two senses has led to a relentless pursuit of the most efficient and effective means of alleviating the English problem (*ibid*). Thus, English education in Korea has emerged as a unique combination of competition fueled schooling alongside of a scientific managed curriculum (Pennycook, 1989). This scientific management approach to schooling holds that "schools would become the primary socializing agency for intellectual, social, and moral development..." (Shannon, 1990, p. 10). Further, the efficiency and effectiveness mode of education hinges on directly comparable evidenced-based schooling under the banner of neo-liberalism. This is perfectly consistent with the decision to add the phrase "Human Resource Development" (Andrew, 2007) to the official title of the Korean Ministry of Education.

While the official policy stresses the rational management of students in order to achieve predetermined social and economic outcomes, there are implications to teaching and learning English that are entangled with much larger social, economic, and cultural shifts in the Korean context. In its rigorous pursuit of cause and effect and measurable outcomes, strict scientific views tend to diminish the larger political implications in English language education in favor of an efficiency/effectiveness model. The pursuit of English has continued, as those who propose solutions to the 'English Problem' (Park, 2009) have continued to place their faith in the science of language acquisition theory and pedagogical methods. The basis of those rational decisions, as well as the consequences of these pursuits, remain outside of the scientific field. That is the job of cultural theorists and artists. The tendency of proponents of the neutral approach to focus exclusively on measurable linguistic outcomes overlook crucial aspects of educational processes.

## Inside/Out → Policy and the Emergence of Professional Practice

I received a paper from a participant during the first month of the SLA course. She explained that one of her primary classroom goals was to teach critical thinking to her elementary school English students. She justified her work, in part, by citing official education policy calling on more critical thinking exercises in order to ensure students would be prepared to participate in the 'globalized' world. She held that the Korean education system had been too focused on test taking skills and the rote memorization of facts, and she felt certain that what was needed was a curriculum more focused on critical thinking (Response paper, April, 2010). When I read her paper I felt that she was defining critical thinking in terms of a predetermined outcome, an individual skill set to be taught to Korean students that was in preparation for, but completely complicit with participation in the global economy. Encouraging students to critique the underlying purpose of their 'education for globalization' remained outside the scope of her plans. When I confronted her about my concerns and the potential limitations of her definitions she became visibly uncomfortable. I tried to coax her to tell me more about her underlying goals. She never answered, and instead she asked me to tell her how to clarify her ideas. I resisted my urge to tell her she should be helping her students question the conditions of their learning, to seek out contradictions in their experiences with English and English education. The very thought of doing so felt condescending and self-righteous. Instead, I continued to push her to find her own answers, and to further question what she meant by 'critical thinking'. I was met with silence and a stream of embarrassed gestures.

She may have been drawing on a popular term in order to engage with me—to show support and interest in my approaches to teaching. I may have simply been distancing myself from her descriptions in order to maintain a sense of expertise. Perhaps it was important to

me to reject her ideas in order to maintain a sense of 'more critical'. Perhaps not. It is impossible to tell for sure. I read her paper as an attempt to convey her progressive attitudes toward her elementary school English classes. Though at the same time her justifications did not go beyond official policy, and they did not question (nor suggest her students would have the opportunity to question) the larger implications of these new goals. Still I am uncomfortable with my response. In order to work through this tension I will turn to set of concepts from which I have also tried to distance myself for multiple and complex reasons. What I call the 'mainstream' literature in teacher education, second language teacher education (SLTE), and TESOL will help me situate my response within larger trends in order to further think through my harsh reaction to this participant's ideas.

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It might be tempting to write off the the current atmosphere in Korea as a hyperbolic response by a small country to a rapidly globalizing world. Korea is surrounded by established and emerging economic powerhouses, and the need to remain economically and politically competitive receives a lot of attention in Korea (Jo, 2008). Yet official Korean policy has remained quite comparable to worldwide happenings. Teacher education, like education in general, is undergoing massive changes on a global level (Bates, 2008). This is at least in part because current research continues to show that teachers matter (Tatto, 2006), meaning that policy makers have viewed teacher education as an efficient means of influencing educational outcomes. As teacher education comes under greater scrutiny a growing consensus has emerged on the place of schooling in society and the need to cultivate professional teachers able to reach these ends (Paine & Fang, 2006). This consensus presents important tensions in teacher education generally and SLTE and TESOL more

specifically. Much of the debate in teacher education has failed to engage with interconnections between standardization, globalization, and accountability. This absence leaves me without a clear model for approaching my unique teaching context—namely, that of a White, American, male concerned with the global trends in education who is working with English teachers in Korea.

One quite vague categorization of teacher education has juxtaposed what one might call *procedural approaches* against *professional approaches* (Bates, 2008). Procedural approaches refer to settings where policy makers assert explicit expectations as to what students should know, how teachers should teach, and how these processes should be assessed (Tatto, 2006). Professional approaches maintain that teachers must require a degree of autonomy in order to respond to the needs of students in specific contexts (Bates, 2008). Of course educational policies and practices rarely fall exclusively into one category or the other. As I will attempt to show here, the process approach and the professional approach are not necessarily mutually exclusive categories and in fact, one can conceive them as falling into a larger paradigm of global professionalism. If successful, movements toward professionalism may in fact make procedural approaches unnecessary by adopting many of the same principles.

A procedural approach charges teachers with the responsibility of administering a centrally-planned curriculum in an efficient and effective manner. Standard assessment procedures ensure that teachers achieve the desired outcomes and much of teaching is based on ensuring success (as it has been defined by policy makers outside of the immediate school context). A scientifically verified set of developmentally appropriate outcomes dictate the curriculum and require teachers to meet these demands. In both Korea and the United States this accountability perspective incorporates a centralized curriculum and has considered rewarding teachers who meet these curricular demands with merit pay (Yeom &

Ginsburg, 2007). In this sense, one might see an increased trend in the loss of teacher autonomy and the centralization of curricula as processes of de-professionalization (Yeom & Ginsburg, 2007). If methods, curriculum, and assessment are all formulated by policy makers removed from teaching settings, then the individual teacher's job is reduced to administering these treatments. Techniques may vary between one site and the next, but the success of teachers and schools are measured by a single set of principles. Such a model is an effective way of ensuring the ability to compare achievement across contexts. Both nationally and internationally, schools and students stand side by side measured by a single standardized units of measurement. Teachers' primary job is to increase these comparable outcomes—ensuring that their schools and students remain competitive.

Such approaches to knowledge and institutional schooling fit into a neo-liberal model based on competition, efficiency, and uniform equality—in short, a business model (see Shannon, 2005). “In this view of the world, education, like knowledge, becomes commodified, something that is to be bought and sold as a commodity or a consumable” (Bates, 2008, p. 281). Subjects are treated according to uniform assessment methods, and the result is what one might conceive as a set of information bytes (Bates, 2008). Think *Jeopardy*. In fact, it was recently reported that a supercomputer played a round of *Jeopardy* against the games' two most successful human players. The computer, complete with voice recognition software and a roomful of data processing hardware was able to play in real time, eventually dominating its human opponents (Markoff, 2011). It was able to recognize language, utilize and select from a mass of algorithms suggesting possible answers, then express its answer in a monotone computerized voice, all within fractions of a second. One can speculate that information processing models of cognition, and uniform information based recognition/recall assessment techniques, reduce knowledge to the storage and retrieval of information in way that adhere to this metaphor. This reduces teaching to the capacity to program brains

(students) to respond to answers in the proper way. One might wonder how the computer would have done if the game was slightly more complex. What if contestants were required to give informed opinions about the political significance of the Algerian revolution and its effects on African politics (rather than simply reciting the dates it occurred and the historical figures involved)? What if they had to interpret the sonnets of Shakespeare, or question their relevance in a contemporary curriculum (rather than simply state the main theme or what meter was used)? What if the host of the program spoke with an Indian-English accent? Would the computer have had such an easy time against its human opponents? This is not to say that human cognition is superior (though it is). I am simply wondering if particular models of knowledge and assessment may miss the point of education.

One might be comforted by research which has continued to recommend that procedural knowledge alone is insufficient for effective teaching, and that situated teacher knowledge is crucial to teacher education programs (Dembele & Schwille, 2007; Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Many have argued that teacher education practices lag behind research stating that teachers' experiences are crucial to understanding and improving English education (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Wright, 2010). Professional development thus supports the cultivation of situated teacher knowledge and seems to stand in opposition to strict procedural approaches, it is less clear, however, what professionalism means and how it impacts teacher education policy and practice.

The term "professionalism" in teacher education continues to receive a lot of attention and numerous policy makers continue to call for the professionalization of teaching. One could conceive of professionalism as dual movements toward practices and perspectives *unique to the field*, and conversely toward greater homogenization *within the field* (Yeom & Ginsburg, 2007). In the first case, teaching would distinguish itself as a unique orientation toward the world with its own ways of knowing. In the second case, teaching would achieve a



common language and a shared set of practices which lead to more readily comparable outcomes. There is a strange sense of becoming unique through becoming the same.

Teacher education practices which adhere to a professional model of the field have taken these basic concepts in a lot of different directions. Increased attention to teacher reflection, school based teacher learning, and inquiry/action research mark a few of the ways that professionalism has manifested in practice (Wright, 2010). Korean educational policy documents have also called for professionalization (Yeom & Ginsburg, 2006). Recommendations have included longer pre-service education, merit pay, and a degree of autonomy in developing teaching materials (*ibid*). It is interesting to note that the same tensions found in the professionalization of teaching have found their way into policy through the seemingly contradictory calls for 1) increased centralized control of curriculum and assessment, and 2) greater autonomy in the construction of the curriculum. In other words, both the hardening of teaching as a unified profession and its relative uniqueness as a unique way of knowing work in tandem. As the field hardens into a unique profession these movements contribute to further moves in centralized planning. This might suggest that the process/professional dichotomy tends to oversimplify the reality of teacher education and its seemingly contradictory developments. They read somewhat like broad ideological orientations as much as refined academic theories.

A more theoretically situated debate in second language teacher education (SLTE) and TESOL has placed linguistic knowledge against knowledge of the situated needs of particular students (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Yates & Muchisky, 2003). Some arguments have held that the knowledge base in language teacher education must reside in teaching rather than in language or linguistics (Freeman & Johnson, 1998), while others have insisted that increased attention to sociocultural knowledge and situated teaching practices might detract from knowledge the ways languages are actually learned (Yates & Muchisky, 2003). Linguistic

based researchers insist that language and the acquisition of language should remain at the forefront of SLTE. They reiterate the importance of rule based systems as the foundation of both linguistic knowledge and teaching activities. In this sense, linguists, applied linguists, and SLA researchers who stress language and cognitive language acquisition processes subscribe to rule-based norms might be described as a *linguistic/syntactic model of teacher education*. I use this term to describe those who adhere to a rule based model of language and language learning and who believe that these rules are accessible to researchers through scientifically verifiable empirical processes.

Freeman and Johnson (1998) have offered a theoretical basis for situated sociocultural knowledge in teacher education that opposes linguistic/syntactic models. According to this model teachers must be understood as individuals in specific social contexts undergoing the process of learning to teach. Many of the views in the professional movement in teacher education are congruent with this belief and share this rhetoric of situated and contextual knowledge. In general there has been increased attention to reflective practice, teacher knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge (Wright, 2010). These involve complex meaning making processes and teacher educators are charged with the responsibility of cultivating thoughtful reflection on these processes. Evidence continues to mount that policy changes in Korea have not significantly impacted actual teaching practices (Kim, 2008). Thus many who have advocated these sociocultural approaches hold that language teaching is a situated social process where meaning emerges in a constant fluctuating relationship between text and context (Gebhard, 1999). Policy mandates alone do not impact teaching sites in anticipated ways, therefore a richer understanding (and perhaps manipulation) of local teaching practices comes into the scope of knowledge production. Second language teacher educators have paid increased attention to teachers' experiences and used these in order to develop situated knowledge. Such knowledge might be referred to as professional

knowledge or reflective knowledge.

It would be a mistake to conflate process approaches to teacher learning with a linguistic/syntactic model and professionalization with sociocultural perspectives. Calls for more reflective forms of teacher practice have emerged in linguistic/syntactic teacher education models as well. “A reflective language teacher should also ask questions such as what it means to know a language, how teachers should treat learners' nontargetlike forms...” (Yates & Muchisky, 2003, p. 139). This statement suggests that the linguistic/syntactic model can accommodate professional models of teacher education and typifies a traditional linguistics bias. The key here is that they assume that language production requires target-like forms rather than target activities. Students are reduced to being learners of language forms. Even liberal educators who give lip-service to the notion that native-like production is not a reasonable target for learners maintain this general focus on linguistic targets, and thus they reinforce the student-like/school-like nature of language teaching and learning that is by no means inherent to either language teaching or learning. “The pursuit of general linguistic competence is a severely limited description of learner activity” (Porter, 2010, p. 210), and more socially oriented perspectives on language teaching challenge the preeminence of linguistic competency based on formal knowledge. Language activity rather than language structures come to the forefront in the classroom. More socially oriented perspectives have shown that it is outdated and irrelevant to believe that SLTE can or should be limited to knowledge of grammar or SLA theories. Linguistic/syntactic and sociocultural models retain differing viewpoints regarding the proper objects of reflection. Sharp distinctions in their perspectives on language and its connection with human activity underscore these views. Debates continue within English language learning and SLTE regarding what sorts of knowledge an effective teacher is required to have. SLTE and educational policies “appear to be reconstructing teaching and learning practices within narrowly prescribed and measurable

learning outcomes, and through the operation of evidence-based theories” (Gale, 2007, p. 471) despite new calls for professionalization and situated teacher knowledge.

“Trend[s] toward greater centralized control over teacher education in both the United States and South Korea” (Yeom & Ginsburg, 2007, p. 303) are certainly not limited to these countries. As Bates (2008) has demonstrated, intergovernmental organizations and various global institutions have instigated a worldwide centralization of educational policy. These moves demand greater conformity in the interest of comparing and juxtaposing educational systems. The various forces behind these moves are many, but it is clear that globalization and subsequent international educational standards do not emerge from various localities or nations equally. It has been well documented that in Korea, for example, education policy borrows heavily from the policies of North America and Europe (Jo, 2008; Wright, 2010; Yang, 2008; Yeom & Ginsburg, 2007). The standardization and conformity demanded by large international organizations such as the European Union, the Organization for Economic Cooperation, the World Bank, reflect an investment in a particular global model of education.

Of course it does not follow that these forces ensure that all education systems or practices become indistinguishable. Policy only goes so far in determining educational practices and neo-liberal attempts toward educational conformity do not play out in the same way everywhere (Kim, 2008). In China, for example, modern approaches to teacher education and professional development connect rural areas in China with modern China, as well as China to the globalized world (Paine & Fang, 2006). Teacher practices are cultural and not easily subsumed under global models or centralized planning.

In sum, dichotomies in SLTE—global/local, process/professional—have not resolved themselves according to theoretical debates on sociocultural and cognitive models of SLA that raged throughout the 90's (Beretta & Crookes, 1993; Lantolf, 1996; Long, 1990). There is an assumption underlying both perspectives. Through systematic, empirical, and verified

practices researchers, teachers, and policy makers can subdue the messiness of the text-context. In the case of linguistic/syntactic models, the control is systemic and explicit. Within professional models regulation is no longer limited to rule-based linguistic and cognitive processes. The problem I perceive in these sociocultural models is that they may move this rule based cartography from language and cognition to social processes, where my setting is circumstantial and succumbs to the professional and academic theories which dominate the field. One example is the call for studies that analyze “the ways in which gestures, physical objects, and the physical positioning of the L2 user... shape the processes involved in L2 learning” (Gebhart, 1999, p. 550). It is a matter of “my position”, “my gestures”, “my body” in relation to others that meaning emerges, and they emerge according to theoretical and empirical conventions. They do not center questions of their own normalizing practices or their relevance in Korea. Korean English teachers, their views, traditions, epistemologies, are all recognizable and coded aspects of context. No one ever suggests that Koreans must get over their shyness in order to learn algebra, but with English such statements persist (Jo, 2008). There is a continued tendency to look past the ways that we construct 'the field' and the ways that the field impacts what we think about education and ourselves. Knowledge still belongs to those who research these contexts and knowledge still requires the verification of more “universal” epistemological principles. What actually happens must pass through the filter of that which these theorists can or choose to utter.

Here I can return to my student who wished to incite critical thinking in her English classes. Along similar lines by which my participant limited what was subject to the critical thinking she desired of her students, sociocultural perspectives of teaching and learning to teach do not engage with the conditions of their becoming. Certainly “[r]eflection and constant self-appraisal are... now integral to the training and continuing professional development of education practitioners in Western educational settings” (Hodgeson &

Standish, 2009, p. 319). “Reflection may well appeal to researchers eager to engage with practice in ways beyond the technical and managerial, but [reflective practices] can be appropriated by the very frameworks of thought it sets out to overcome” (Hodgeson & Standish, p. 319). One can envision the production of situated tests which outline taxonomies of teacher knowledge, rating reflection, assessing the ability to respond to students needs—a fuller and more situated rubric outlining what is peddled as a culturally neutral means of assessing teaching knowledge and performance. Their theoretical origins, epistemological positions, and the purposes these regulations serve remain beyond question. The pursuit of effective, scientifically verifiable, comparative, and competitive outcomes underlies the more ornamental debates regarding the place of sociocultural knowledge versus linguistic knowledge or professional knowledge versus procedural knowledge. Though professionalization and sociocultural approaches are situated more firmly in actual teaching practices, these debates do not take issue with the epistemological grounds or the ways they are inextricable from larger global incentives—which themselves deserve interrogation. Whether one demands professionalization and teacher reflection or one seeks to disseminate standard linguistic knowledge and best teaching practices, it is clear that the unique status of English in global settings requires attention in international English teacher education. Particularly in light of the high concentration of North American and European academic orientations that have followed English into Korea and elsewhere and continue to dictate the most effective and efficient means of teaching the language, it is important to take into account general orientations to the spread of English.

### **The Spread of English**

So why should the spread of English and the industries of English education and

English teacher education be of any concern to me? After all, I have profited from all of this. I live a comfortable life in Korea—with a beautiful Korean wife in an apartment in a nice neighborhood in Seoul. If I was hired to pass down the scientific findings in the SLA field that class participants thought would benefit them, why would I give it a second thought?

I would like to begin answering that question with some reflections on a trip I took across India several years ago. Hours after landing at the airport in Mumbai, I arrived in what had been described to me as the “traveler’s part of town.” I wandered around the streets for a few minutes looking for the names of hostels I’d memorized from my guidebook. After maybe 10 minutes two little boys began following me, one walked next to me, the other a few steps behind. They didn’t say anything. There was only the slapping sound of their bare feet, like leather against concrete as they scrambled to keep up with me. The boy to my left finally explained that he knew a good cheap hostel a few blocks away. I grudgingly followed, and during the short walk a number of children joined us. As I walked through the entrance to the hotel a boy asked for some milk, and the younger kids surrounding him began to chant in cluttered harmony, “milk, milk, milk.” I reached into my pocket to pull out some change. As soon as the children recognized the act, a swarm of little hands pulled on my pockets and on my shirttail until the hotel owner came out with a rolled up newspaper and swatted them away with one hand while pushing me through the doorway with the other. I spent the next 10 hours in my room contemplating the looming existential crisis. What the hell was I doing in India?

A few weeks later I met a social worker from Mumbai and described my first day in India. She explained that the kids were “employed” by gangs, and she went on to explain that any money they collected for “milk” strengthened the presence of these gangs and did nothing to really help these children. She explained that giving a child \$1 U.S. meant that the child would have earned more in a few seconds than many adults would earn in an entire day.

She further mentioned that the children often have deals with the local shops, so that a well intentioned traveler is ultimately taken for a lot of money, most of which ends up in the hands of the same local gangs. She described a thriving economy based on the guilt, good intentions, and the ignorance of tourists. The question of what to do when a hungry child asks for milk had seemed like the most straightforward ethical question imaginable. Suddenly such questions seemed unclear, and whatever was 'right' was inextricable from this economy. How can one not help a hungry child? How can one support these gangs? There seemed no right answer. The very presence of my body here trumped my meaningless sentiments.

After my hiatus in India, I returned to the world of teaching in Korea. It was nice to return to a routine and a seemingly more predictable world, but my perceptions of my job as a teacher and my role as a White educator in Asia were strongly influenced by my travels. Awareness of my body, of my identity, of the privileges that had enabled my travels and my career as an English teacher upset any simplistic understanding of my work in Korea. The simple act of teaching English seemed an inadequate description of what I was doing here. To teach seemed to involve much more than passing on grammar, vocabulary, and communicative strategies to students, and I began seeking out ways to discern and discover these other 'things'. Teaching (or 'just teaching') became an impossible task, but writing off all English teaching as a form of cultural, economic, and social domination seemed just as impossible. After all, I was there. I had to maintain some belief in what I could accomplish. I retained the belief that classroom experiences could be meaningful and relevant to both me and my students. I believed that something could be learned—not just grammar or speaking conventions, but something more meaningful and useful. I may very well have been seeking to relieve myself of a debilitating uncertainty and helplessness I first felt in Mumbai, but I held to the possibility that genuine educative experiences are as inevitable as they are impossible. My orientation to the academic dimensions of education began with a passing through of the



primary ways that writers and researchers have described the social and cultural implications of the global spread of English. In the following sections I offer basic competing perspectives that I found.

### **Neutral Perspectives**

A world famous entrepreneur gave a well-received and quite famous speech in February of 2009. The speaker proudly proclaimed:

English is the world's second language.... With English you can become part of a wider conversation. A global conversation about global problems, like climate change, poverty, hunger, or disease.... English is becoming the language of problem solving, not because America is pushing it, but because the world is pulling it. English represents hope for a better future, a future where the world has a common language to solve its common problems (Walker, 2009).

The speaker is a businessman. More specifically he is an international information technology entrepreneur. He does not offer any social science or linguistic evidence for his beliefs, and the conclusions here seem to be grounded in a vague and speculative sort of common sense. When he rhetorically asks “is English... washing away other languages?” he quickly answers “not likely.” He glides over an incredibly difficult question without mentioning the basis of such debates or even explaining why he is so optimistic. He is probably right. It is not likely that the spread of English is directly or simplistically leading to the extermination of other languages, but he is not right to casually dismiss potential consequences and dangers. His talk expresses an optimism that the spread of English enables learners to

participate in a global conversation, but at no place does he question this global platform or the ways that it might limit what we recognize as problems. Further, his metaphor of a pushing and pulling of English tacitly affirms a center and a periphery based on a dichotomy between America and the rest of the world. This is particularly problematic at a time when nations and regions are becoming more and more culturally, linguistically, and socially diverse, partially as a result of the globalism the speaker so readily celebrates (Kubota, 2007). His speech does little more than to peddle a romantic image of English as a tool of inclusion—and it is interesting that he does this from the perspective of an international businessman with much to gain by increased access to global markets stroked by the spread of English.

Korean English education policy does not explicate an official ideology regarding the global spread of English. However one must assume that the justification of such policies requires beliefs that the learning of English is either beneficial in the ways described above, or at the very least that the benefits of English in Korea outweigh the dangers. Rational-choice theory holds that language use hinges on individual decisions (de Swaan; 2001; van Parijs, 2004, cited in Phillipson, 2008) and generally conforms to a neutral perspective that holds that English is a neutral medium of communication that happened to be in the right place at the right time (Crystal, 2001). Those who choose to learn the language do so because they are rational beings who have made an autonomous decision to do so, and governments who push the learning of English do the same. Based on a weighing of the benefits and drawbacks, both individual choice and national policy are reflections of a careful weighing of the pros and cons of learning English. The medium of communication is not an expression of power but an expression of choice on the part of the speakers. As a teacher educator in Korea, I believe that it is absolutely necessary that I respect the choices of the Korean English language learners in my courses. That said, the liberal-humanist view that my students are simply here by simple choice seems to dodge serious discussions of subtle (and often times

not so subtle) conditions that fuel such 'rational' choices.

Despite the rational choices Korean English learners and policy makers purportedly make, the current trend in Korea and elsewhere is often described as “English mania”, “English frenzy”, or in other similar terms (Shin, 2004; Park, 2009; Walker, 2009)—decidedly irrational designations to be sure. In 2008 alone, private English education costs reached 20.9 trillion won (roughly \$13.7 billion US) in South Korea (Kang, 2009). Doctors in Korea have even reportedly performed a surgical procedure that snips a small piece of tissue beneath the tongue with the goal of improving patients' pronunciation of English (Park, 2009; Shin, 2004). The most glaring problem with neutral perspectives on the spread of English is that they do not engage with the connections between individual choices and the social conditions within which such choices are made. There is little mention of historical conditions such as intimate connections between the spread of English and colonialism (Willinsky, 1998), or market-driven forces which fuel both national policy and personal choices (Jeong, 2001; Shin, 2004). These are all considered relics of another era—a era from which we have successfully emancipated ourselves. Such views are exceedingly optimistic at best.

A more nuanced response to questions surrounding the spread of global English manifests in the well-known debates in world Englishes (Kachru & Nelson, 2001). A liberal view of English holds that descriptive linguistics, which seeks to describe and document the ways that languages are actually used, is more beneficial and informative than a prescriptive view holding that codified grammatical and lexical rules should govern standard language use (Kachru & Nelson, 2001). Outgrowths of this perspective support a larger political and pedagogical movement towards legitimizing alternative dialects of English, as well as supporting the rights and the value of non-native speaking language teachers (Canagarajah, 1999a; 2006; Holliday, 2006). Dispelling naïve views that native speakers inherently possess the proper forms of English and are therefore ideal language teachers (Canagarajah, 1999a)

is certainly a powerful academic and political pursuit, as is work which challenges discrimination against non-native speakers and teachers of English. In light of the fact that “[m]erely being a citizen of an English-speaking country provides the basic credentials of teaching abroad” (Oliver, 2009, p. 5), pursuit of the rights of “non-native” English speaking teachers seems to be a clear sign of progress. One might even be tempted to view these new political grounds as verification of the neutrality of the spread of English through old fashioned liberal views of diversity and equality. Through a world English perspective, the rights of English speakers of all dialects can be realized. Yet there are concerns which common world English debates fail to acknowledge.

### **Determinist → Emancipatory Models**

Perhaps the most salient attack on the appropriation and acceptance of new forms of English comes not from conservative positions (see Quirk (1986), but from the voices of those who have had English (in its standard or liberal/diversified forms) thrust upon them both culturally and professionally. Ngugi (1981) argued that the resistance to colonialism and imperialism required a rejection of English as a medium of literary and cultural expression. He asked, “[h]ow did we... come to be so feeble towards the claims of our languages on us and so aggressive in our claims on other languages, particularly the languages of our colonization?” (Ngugi, 1981, p. 9). The very presence of English in any form is problematic and perhaps most so when it becomes a part of the colonized culture. Further, validation of new forms of English are in danger of slipping into an apolitical view of the emergence of these new forms (Park, 2009). Even contemporary postmodern perspectives, which affirm that globalization leads to complex hybrid cultural practices rather than cultural homogenization (Perez-Milans, 2010), risk suggesting that the persistence of diversity dispels

our fears globalization. World English debates are in danger of slipping into a rather predictable neo-liberal phenomenon which further propagates the spread of English under the guise of English diversity. Speak English in any form you choose, but speak English—diversity within workable limits.

English certainly is not a neutral medium of communication (Im, 2009; Phillipson, 2008). Such realities regularly manifest in everyday classroom exchanges:

Korean students tend to be very quiet in English classrooms, believing they are only allowed to produce a perfect native like performance. On the contrary, a varied form that results from L1 interference is often punished by classmates, and even English teachers who maintain the teaching ideology that only Standard English, American English in the case of Korean context, should be valued (Im, 2009, p. 15)

The view here is that language ideology exists within and is maintained in everyday personal interactions. The author insinuates that the inclusion of various types of English (ie, world Englishes) could benefit students who are shackled by the belief that they must speak perfect American English. A logical extension would posit that students are in some ways working in favor of their own domination. Students cling to negative views of *Konglish* (Im, 2009) and punish those who fail to speak American English in classroom dialogs. If I am reading Im's (2009) statement correctly, then it is students who are at least partially to blame for discrimination against varied forms of English, and thus the duty of the enlightened educator is to challenge such beliefs so that a path may be paved toward a greater acceptance of international forms of English.

Park and Abelmann (2004) locate an intricate class structure in the practice of English

education in Korea that suggests it may be a little more difficult to simply mandate equal acceptance of all dialects of English. They assert that the types of English education available to individuals strongly conforms to class divisions. Traveling to English speaking countries to learn English, getting private instruction with native English speakers, and after school worksheet lessons all act as markers of social class. The ability to speak English, and to speak the 'proper' form of English, is a powerful means of identifying with an elite class. As the capacity to speak English far exceeds its practical use in Korea (Park & Abelmann, 2004), it is reasonable to agree with Dewey's basic belief that social knowledge is too deeply embedded to simply change according to new sets of academic standards (Shannon, 1990). There have always been dialects of any given language, with centripetal and centrifugal forces reinforcing and challenging norms of use (Bakhtin, 1981). Working toward a deeper social acceptance of English varieties is an extremely enthusiastic endeavor. This does not mean that it is not worth pursuing. But even if universal acceptance of English varieties somehow materialized, this does not answer extremely tricky questions regarding the right not to learn English, nor does it confront problematic relationships between the spread of English and the spread of commercially-based global interests.

To this second issue, writers like Ngugi (1981) and Phillipson (2008) have taken more radical stances to the spread of English. Phillipson (1992) constructed what is still an iconic position on the spread of English. His most relevant argument was related to the promotion of TESOL and English language teaching as a professional field.

TESOL (the Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages) itself is a significant export item—teaching materials, examinations, know-how, teachers et al.—for the British and Americans, and a vital dimension of English linguistic neoimperialism. The asymmetrical relationship between 'natives' and 'non-

natives' is confirmed in the naming of the profession. 'The naming "TESOL" already assigns dichotomous Self-Other subject positions to teacher and learner. (Phillipson, 2008, p. 10)

If the very construction of the field is based on the spreading of American and English social and cultural dominance, on the maintenance of a self-other dichotomy, and the establishment of a global market, then correct responses seem to be quite limited. Within this view the native English teacher must either quit her or his job or work toward the elimination of that job. In other words, I get the distinct impression that linguistic imperialism suggests I need to pack my English up in my suitcase and head back home to the United States where my educated, middle class, White, heterosexual, male, English dialect is no less privileged.

Beliefs that English language education necessarily perpetuates Western domination requires a number of assumptions. Namely, those working toward greater proficiency in English do so against their own interests. This is made possible because of a dominant ideology which results from readily identifiable relationships between access to material production and sustained economic interests (Luke, 1992). The presentation of such relations as normal and necessary equates with the transmission of dominant ideologies that one can juxtapose to an informed and enlightened view of the reality of such conditions. According to a strict Marxist view, then, any real change would require shifts in the material relationships between various stakeholders. In this context, perceptions of English education, proper forms of English communication, the need to learn English can only change when the modes of cultural and material production change. Once the educational project is cast in terms of ideology and social reproduction the role of educators becomes a simple paradox. The educator who recognizes such processes takes on the task of empowering students *within* an oppressive system. One challenges the system from within and does so as a part of

that which is allegedly challenged. A system which allegedly reproduces inequality and the ideologies upon which inequalities are maintained (Stuckey, 1991) must in some sense work against itself—educator as emancipator (Freire, 1970), public intellectual (Giroux, 1992), organic intellectual (Gramsci, 1971) or some other version of an enlightened leader-creature. Such a position requires the educator, who has become educator via the system of domination, to consider the conditions into which she or he has emerged as educator.

Such views do not sufficiently address the historical fact that there were times when oppressors withheld access to English and times when colonized people demanded English education (Canagarajah, 1999b). Indeed, education in local languages was as much a part of the colonial project as was education in English (Canagarajah, 1999b; Pennycook, 1994). It would be difficult to argue in favor of such linguistic determinism in a post-colonial era where English education and English teacher education no longer require barricades (Fanon, 1963). Quite the contrary, knowledge of English is pursued by both individual and nation alike. Unless these people are working in favor of their own domination, one must consider that English education is neither value-neutral or inherently evil and oppressive. This difficulty has given rise to tensions that have a great deal of influence in the ways that researchers and English teachers think about their work.

Critical perspectives to teaching English in Korea are not exceedingly popular, but they do exist and they do work within the tensions between determinist and emancipatory views of education. A well known maxim in Korea views citizens as human capital or human resources that stand in the place of a dearth of natural resources (Jo, 2008; Kane, 2007). In opposition to this scientific management view of education, critical educators in Korea have called on English teachers “to engage their students in a pedagogy that will... empower them as legitimate speakers of English whose culture and discourse standards are equal in status to native speakers” (Shin, 2004, p. 71). While this call falls within a world English view of



linguistic inclusion, Shin (2004) discloses a more problematic axiom for this approach to teaching.

Although these standards of discourse seem to be self-inflicted as a form of internalized oppression, Koreans set these standards through *a lack of critical consciousness of the true meaning of EIL* and the cultural and linguistic hegemonic spread of American discourse as the standard” (Shin, 2004, p. 72, my emphasis).

So even though the underlying purpose is to empower students through the legitimization of their own form of English, student resistance is positioned as a barrier to the realization of the true meaning of English in Korea. In this case, the teacher has access to the true meaning while students are still immersed in a set of false beliefs. In a sense, despite the emancipatory rhetoric the relationship between teacher and students remains remarkably similar to that of traditional educational roles. The teacher possesses knowledge while students signify a lack of knowledge.

While the general call for greater critical awareness of the relationships which have fueled the global spread of English and the training of English teachers is of utmost importance. One must not, however, assume to have greater knowledge of the oppressive potential of English than those students sitting in their seats awaiting yet another English lesson. And a teacher educator (particularly a White native English speaking teacher educator) must be leery of any notion that she or he understands the experience of English ideologies more than those non-native English speaking teachers who struggle to find their place in the TESOL field.

There remains a distinction between the critical practitioners, those in the trenches

practicing pedagogy, and the theorists who have become well-known (almost iconic) figures of critical pedagogy who do the theoretical and scholarly work which presents critical pedagogy as an academic field (Shin & Crooks, 2005). Here we still see the micro-macro, practice-theory conventions playing out. Though it is unclear if this distinction is mere convention rather than reality (it is possible that these well-known public intellectuals are practicing critical pedagogy in their own settings), one still must concede that structural aspects of the field (the school/the university, practitioner/intellectual) still permeate our understandings of the field and the practice of critical pedagogy. It has yet to transcend the conditions of its own coalescence as an academic field and has yet to be understood as a solely local practice. It is clear that such distinctions have been addressed through academic discussions (Carr, 2006), but they remain, at least within the level of representation, within the confines of global or macro representations of human activity. The tacit agreement among critical theorists is that institutional processes are key. It remains unthinkable that these theorists not only describe institutional practices, but that such descriptions also create the institutions and institutional subjects they are intended to critique—institutions build upon critiques of institutions.

This difficulty is all the more troubling given recent trends that focus on self-development and seek to include moral and ethical aspects of education in the teacher education curriculum (Mann, 2005; Moussu & Llurda, 2008). The development of teacher selves and teacher identity is becoming more and more readily accepted as an important aspect of the teacher training process. It is quite frequently asked whether or not teacher educators are responsible for helping to develop teachers' sense of self. It is less commonly asked whether or not teacher educators have the right to do so. Another set of questions must be asked. According to what sorts of values will these teacher selves be formed? Are these discourses of empowerment neutral? Whose interests do they serve, and how do they

position teachers and those learning to teach? The implied message in emancipatory discourses seems clear. Recognize your semi-oppressed nature and utilize the tools of critique that these institutions have created in defense of them. The message: you are not you, you are you in this discourse and the sooner you recognize this the sooner you may proceed with your emancipation. We will provide you with the logic, the theory, and the intellectual practices necessary for you to recognize what we have turned you into. The irony is that one must become the creature we envision in order to become oneself.

One cannot judge or evaluate the context without individuals nor can one evaluate individuals outside of a particular context. “Any analysis of discourses and the individual devoid of a social context is flawed and limited because it denies the relational positioning of the individual within social fields” (Hunter, 2005, p. 184). Questions of how to deal with global issues become both clear (work on the local level of the individual) and problematic (the global problem does not exist outside of the scope of those who comprise it). How does one then convince the local of its place within the global? Is doing so a means of inserting a set of values upon a local space that come from a dislocated theoretical position? Then how does one know for certain if the problem as defined from a global perspective (linguistic imperialism, hegemony, racism, domination) takes on meaning in a local space? The impulse is to name the problem then to find in every interaction and action further evidence of that problem. Mutated perhaps, but with enough theoretical imagination, anything emerging from such a garden can be named the weed or the fruit of the speaker's choosing.

These tensions pursue a balance between institutional forces, ideologies, and histories on one hand, and individualism, free choice, and agency on the other—or, a national and international 'glocal' dialectic (Arnové & Torres, 2003; Weber, 2007). Tensions between socially determined and agentic perspectives of education remain a defining aspect of pedagogical practices that seek to challenge status quo models of teaching and learning.

Canagarajah (1993) warned that macro-level perspectives miss the nuance of classroom realities, while emancipatory models present simplified and even romantic characterizations of resistance. Norton-Peirce (1995) similarly rejected views of education that rely too heavily on the concept of determined social reproduction. She insisted that educators and scholars must recognize relationships between individuals as they relate to the social forces in which they function. Though ideologies have certainly played a powerful part in the spread of English, the process by which such ideologies are formed, accepted, and sustained are best understood as collective practices (Park, 2009), or as effects of practice (Foucault, 1970) rather than as static and determined false beliefs. The logical spaces of inquiry, therefore, are local settings, individual classes, and everyday practices of teaching and learning.

One study that approaches this nuanced approach to cultural aspects of English language learning was Canagarajah's (1993) critical ethnography of a Sri Lankan classroom. He found that students showed a good deal of resistance when he overtly addressed topics such as cultural domination and alienation, and ways that these manifest within English language education. Students were rather disengaged from such questions and favored (in some cases) the grammar-based approach which would lead to a higher score on standardized tests (Canagarajah, 1993). The author concluded that such a stance incorporated aspects of resistance (active and specific critical engagement) and of opposition (unclear and ambivalent disengagement). He therefore identified both complicity and resistance within his students' classroom activities.

This study hinges on a number of assumptions that are shared by a number of educators claiming a critical stance in English language learning settings. First, there is a general belief that local activities conform to these general categories (oppositional/ resistant/ complicit) and can/must be understood in more universal terms. Secondly, the logical appropriation of these actions into such categories precludes the students' own experiences

of opposition, resistance, complicity, and so on. The strength of this move, despite the insistence that micro-perspectives offer a nuanced view of both resistance and complicity in English education, depends on resituating these into a generalizations that contribute to a global/macro theory. This is a somewhat typical approach during the 1990's when ethnographic methods marked a desire of TESOL researchers to gain a better understanding of the ways larger theoretical propositions functioned in local contexts. The local is thus defined in terms of the ways that local practices and trends effect and adhere to global perspectives. While this line of research gives us a much clearer view of individuals and communities and the ways they engage with English, describing this as a local perspective is somewhat of a misnomer. Rather, it is an appropriation of local practices to global frames.

Contemporary views of globalization and the relationship between the local and the global tend towards a glocal perspective. Glocalization designates a dialectical relationship between the local and the global (Wright, 2004). Instead of viewing globalization as a one way process where global forces converge on local settings, the glocal perspective seeks out ways that local spaces impact the global discourse. The ways that English, English education, and English teacher education respond to global shifts while simultaneously contributing to global trends would be focal points for researchers and teachers discussing glocalization (see Sarroub, 2009). Yet it is clear that we remain fixed in a global/local paradigm. Local contexts and customs receive greater attention, but are understood only in relation with global forces (many of which are outlines in determinist models I described above). This has deep implications in the ways teachers, teacher educators, and researchers talk about local settings. What is missing is the expression of the singular, that of the local not in relation to other but rather the local in itself. What is difference when it is *not different from another*, but instead, *difference it itself* (Deleuze, 1968)? As researchers draw upon locality, the local is enjoying a good degree of popularity in world English and educational research

more broadly. Yet this work continually reduces the local into an expression of the global in local terms, or the movement of the local into the global sphere—glocalization. This already suggests a macro-perspective—local in relation. Is it possible to consider otherwise in pedagogy and in research?

Geertz (1992) lamented the Chomskyan turn in linguistics and the undying impulse to seek universals and generalizable knowledge in the human sciences. A sense of a “placelessness” arises when one seeks generalizable knowledge (*ibid*). One can go all the way back to Hume, in fact, in defining knowledge as moving beyond what is immediately given (Deleuze, 2001). One can experience the sun rising, but the sun will rise tomorrow is not given to experience, thus empirical knowledge in the traditional sense must transcend what is immediately given in experience (*ibid*). As such philosophical positions have become givens in institutional research and the subsequent discussions of pedagogy, I think it is fair to recall Orr's (1992) critique:

a great deal of what passes for knowledge is little more than abstraction piled on top of abstraction, disconnected from tangible experience, real problems, and the places where we live and work. In this sense it is utopian, which literally means 'nowhere' (Orr, 1992, p. 126).

While it is not fair to call critical practices or the whole of educational research “utopian”, I think it is reasonable to question this impulse to generalize, and to interrogate our inability to fully engage with *singularity* and *difference in itself*. Particularly in light of concerns I noted earlier relating to the professionalization of teaching and teacher education.

We remain stuck in a dialectic of sorts with the glocal serving as a synthesis of the local and the global, when it may well be that it is not these spaces as objectified by modern

research, or set in opposition to one another that accurately engages with the experiences of globalization or local culture. If relations matter, and if they stand against the rationalist, academic territorialization of global/local subjects, then they can only matter as singular events, not as syntheses of dialectical relationships. Global or local objects, when designated as such, already require a particular view of both geographical space and human experience. We become lost in academic abstractions that have no place other than molar empirical variables with which to understand the singularity of events.

The use of glocal to describe or prescribe events is innocuous in the sense that it fails to account for the infinite complexities involved in any event designated as global/local. In an even more concrete sense, not all glocal spaces contribute significantly to the macro-meta view which affords us economic and social patterns through which we continue to identify ourselves as a 'global village'. In short, the global/local tension model leaves one stuck in macro perspectives. Indeed, one is stuck understanding the term local as necessarily in a binary relationship with global forces. Why not move the view from these objects: economic trends as objects, personal choices as objects, social opinions as objects in favor of the singularity of the local? It is not opposed to global. It is not an ideal or identifiable hybrid called glocal. What is needed in order to move past this limiting view is an empiricism of events rather than an empiricism of objects.

When one views these institutions and these spaces according to a molar model (as stable objects), one can make claims as to the hybrid nature of both systems, teachers, pupils, practices, and so on. Words like "glocal" follow suit. Viewing these in terms of movement negates the naming game in favor of descriptions of the unstable forms of movement that create these spaces. Hybridity connotes the molar—the naming of the thing—stability, if only long enough to pass into relation with (an)other (Massumi 2002). Against the notion of a local and a global dialectic, of the hybrid discourse which in essence only names

that which was previously unknowable, I wish to further explore a notion of local knowledge as singular and only singular.

It is beyond me to decide whether the value-neutral or the determinist/emancipatory perspective holds the truth. More real to me is the impossibility of subscribing to neutrality or determinism because the former releases me from any deeper responsibility, and the latter requires me to dismiss the class participants' goals as wrapped in false consciousness. Further, critical perspectives that seek a synthesis between the local and the global preclude the possibility of local knowledge as the limits of inquiry. I refuse that my job here can be summed up as either passing on a set of neutral scientifically verified facts, just as I refuse that I am here to thrust my students into a global arena or emancipate my them from themselves.

The paradox of this entire chapter is that it rests on a generalized and generalizable set of trends. It is precisely a larger picture of English and English teacher education that I have worked through here that needs to be challenged. In the following chapter I work through the possibility of eluding the need to choose process, professionalism, neutral/determinist, or emancipatory as categorical orientations to teaching. I explore a theory of local knowledge and singularity—not local as opposed to global, but local in itself. I wonder if these dichotomies are not products of macro perspectives on the spread of English, perspectives that are mere distractions resulting from assumptions that are deeply engraved in modern intellectual traditions.



## Chapter Three: Conceptualizing Local Knowledge

### Two Clocks

A new clock was completed in the town hall tower in New Haven, Connecticut in 1826. This was a time of modernization, a time of expansion, and a time of great technological advancement. This new clock in the town square was not the first to overlook New Haven. Just a few miles away Yale University boasted an older clock tower. After the completion of the new town hall clock these two timepieces watched over New Haven in mechanical harmony. All was well until the change of the seasons.

The new clock began lagging behind the Yale clock. Slightly at first, at one point it fell a full fifteen minutes behind. Then it began to speed up again, eventually catching the Yale clock and even surpassing it. Over the course of a year, it would fall behind then surpass its companion with each changing season. After a good deal of concern, town officials determined that both clocks were functioning perfectly as designed. They had been constructed to measure time in different ways. The Yale clock was set to *apparent time* while the clock in town hall was set to *mean time*.

*Apparent time* has been measured for thousands of years. The most recognizable instrument for doing so is the sundial. It measures the placement of the sun in relation to a singular point on Earth. The latter, *mean time*, is an average of all the 365 rotations of the Earth that occur over the course of a year—that average is 24 hours. That standardized deviation now equals what we think of as one full day. This may not seem like the seeds of an ideological crisis to us 21<sup>st</sup> century folks, but in early 19<sup>th</sup> century New England what ensued was a battle over the nature of time and the relationship between humans and the earth. Should time be measured according to the specific relationship of the sun to the earth in a singular space, or should it be reduced to fixed increments for the purpose of constructing

an efficient industrial society? In the case of apparent time virtually every community would have its own time designation, as it would be the only place on the planet aligned with the sun in a particular way at a given instant. According to mean time large regions would share a time designation that was efficient but synthetic. This was a practical necessity in the emerging industrial society, much of which was due to the need to synchronize train schedules and emerging systems of mass communication. It is safe to say that mean time won. The natural span of space that aligns with the sun at more or less the same angle gave way to standardized and somewhat arbitrary time zones. Our clocks and watches now refer not to the sun but to other clocks. It is no longer convenient or even feasible for local communities to keep their own time (see O'Malley, 1990 for a more detailed account of these events).

In effect, what emerged was a new concept of time suitable for the modern era—one that Shakespeare summed up long before with the declaration that *time is off its hinges* (Deleuze, 1989). Kant described a world where humans do not measure time but where time measures humans (*ibid*). The clock came to represent time then to rule over it. We no longer react to time itself, but instead we measure ourselves according to a representation of time—this results in the formation of both the concept of *time itself* as distinct from representation, and it goes to the heart of the nature of knowledge and experience in the modern world. Concepts of both *the representation* and *the real* simultaneously emerge. In science and in modern life one comes to know the way time is measured, its capacity to measure, the relevance of various approaches to measuring, and thus learns to critique the validity of measurements. How was the measurement applied? What are the limits of our capacity to measure? What are the limits of my knowledge as derived from human tools of measurement? Knowledge of time has required one to move beyond direct experience (Deleuze, 2001) and philosophically, the age old image of 'wisdom' gave way to the modern

notion of critique.

Kant's great contribution has been the establishment of limits that result in the designation of certain types of knowledge to certain schools of thought, and these in turn represent the sum of such knowledge (Deleuze, 2008). In other words, modernity delegates our ignorance rather than embracing it or accepting it. *That* is not my field, *that* sort of knowledge belongs *there*. I am not required to understand *that*. Instead I have learned *this*. The pursuit of formal knowledge is a pursuit of the pieces and a narrowing of scope—specialization. I can show you evidence of what I have learned, and I have learned only that for which I have evidence. This leads us to a new need, the need to consider the scope and the consequences of our ignorance. “If we lack the cultural means to keep incomplete knowledge from becoming the basis of arrogant and dangerous behavior, then the intellectual disciplines themselves become dangerous” (Berry, 2000, p. 12). The crucial question is not *how does one apply knowledge*, but rather, *how does one locate and grapple with the limits of one's knowledge*. These are modern questions. Or more accurately, questions that the modern age requires us to ask.

The principle questions I wish to grapple with here ask if it feasible to conceive of a local knowledge situated in experiences of becoming local—where knowledge is not extracted from one's locality and is not representative of any other locality. I am seeking that which is singular and non-representational—that directly confronts the limits of both my own knowledge and the modalities through which I create and express it. I do not intend to be deconstructive or destructive to my discipline or to science as an industry. Following Berry:

I am not of course proposing an end to science and other intellectual disciplines, but rather a change of standards and goals. The standards of our behavior must be derived... from the nature of places and communities. We must shift

the priority from production to local adaptation, from innovation to familiarity...

(Berry, 2000, p. 12)

This chapter is a struggle toward this type of adaptation and an effort to express what local knowledge might mean in this setting. My peculiar experience of being a teacher educator from the United States, here in Korea, working with English teachers from both Korea and all over the world leads me to question what any semblance of *local* could possibly mean here. Despite these contradictory conditions, I explore the possibility of local knowledge as the engine of a pedagogy and a basis for inquiry. In this teaching setting I speculate as to how such knowledge might function and how it might apply to my own practices as a teacher educator. As a researcher I wish to adapt an adequately humble approach toward research and teaching, one that is neither theoretically productive or generalizable but singular.

I begin by considering literature on indigenous knowledge. I conclude that because of the nature of this teaching and learning setting it is both dangerous and ineffective to dogmatically apply an academic framework based on indigenous knowledge. As an alternative I consider ways that Deleuzian perspectives can work in tandem with theories of local and indigenous knowledge. This chapter serves as a transition into a more straightforward description of my pedagogical approach to classroom events, and seeks to locate my position as an outsider with the strange goal of pursuing local knowledge in a global context. In short, the project here is to set the stage for the rest of this dissertation. This chapter is my effort to work my way toward an active narration rather than a representative account of 'what happened' and 'what it means'. Hopefully by the end of this chapter these goals will make sense to the reader.

## Beyond Professionalization: Fumbling with Indigenous Knowledge

*The fear that modern man will encounter nobody else but himself on the globe is about to revolutionize contemporary perceptions. The pursuit of space-centered unity is turning into the search for place-centered diversity. After all, it is only from places that variety crops up, because it is in places that people weave the present into their particular thread of history (Sachs, 1992, p. 112).*

While the last chapter was loaded with my apprehensions over both macro-perspectives of world English and professional models of teacher education, here I undertake the more optimistic project of considering alternatives. One of my primary concerns in teaching this course was the conditions through which I justified my place in our graduate program. With little experience in the Korean public school system, and no experience as a Korean person teaching English, the reasons for hiring me did not seem directly related to experiential knowledge. While I felt some degree of comfort in my understanding of issues faced by North American and British course participants, as I had taught in Korea for several years before leaving to study for my doctorate in the States, any claim to intimate knowledge of the tensions and difficulties that Korean English teachers experienced was a farce. I was not hired because I had overcome similar challenges that the bulk of my students were facing. There were other reasons that brought me here. It is too simplistic and too speculative to say that I am here as a direct result of linguistic or cultural imperialism (Phillipson, 1992; Said, 1978). Words like those may explain global happenings, but they tend to shut down rather than to invoke inquiry into singular local contexts. In short, they are words which stem from the industrial world of *mean time*. I will have to work harder for a more nuanced description of this place. Fully aware that the second chapter provided a macro-level explanation of my concerns, here I seek out not the micro (as related to the macro), but singularity—what it might mean, how it might inform my teaching, and how it may direct my inquiry. So my first problems refer to orientation and action—philosophy and politics. They are philosophical in

that I work towards a relevant description of singularity, and they are political in that I situate this description within the space of this utterance.

The conditions by which I came here, was hired, and was deemed qualified to work in this setting required a number of underlying assumptions. The first of which is that being educated in a doctoral program in the United States was sufficient preparation for teaching Korean teachers in Korea. I do not want to jump to the conclusion that this was based on racial or cultural dominance. I do not wish to speak for my Korean employers or the Korean students who enroll in our program. Given the highly competitive nature of the process of acquiring a teaching position in Korea (as I described in the previous chapter), it is clear that some certainly deemed it positive that I was a White, American educated instructor. It is also obvious that direct experience of the issues that Korean English teachers face on a daily basis did not factor into my hiring. Finally, at no point have I been asked to demonstrate any ability with Korean language, Korean philosophy, or even specific knowledge of Korean educational policy or pedagogy. My most optimistic guess as to why I was an attractive candidate to teach in this context, and I have many more cynical explanations as well, is that I possess some body of general knowledge or expertise that is applicable to Korean English educators in some way. In fact, my initial question arising from participant expectations is whether or not I do in fact have something to offer that is in line with my own beliefs yet could be useful to those enrolled in the SLA course. I first turn to a number of indigenous scholars and non-indigenous scholars who offer epistemological alternatives to the ones I feel permeate these spaces of teaching and learning.

### **Indigenous(es)?**

One of the most strikingly obvious attributes of Korea is the massive and abrupt

changes the country has undergone in the past century. Lee (2004) identified three discontinuities in Korean philosophy over this period, 1) the colonization of Korea by Japan at the beginning of the twentieth century, 2) the rapid modernization of the 1960's and 1970's, and 3) the era commonly called IMF (in 1997 when the International Monetary Fund bailed out the Korean financial system in exchange for the adoption of neoliberal economic and cultural policies—see Klein, 2007). It was only some fifty years ago that South Korea was considered among the poorest nations in the world (South Korea Government, n.d.). It is now among the world's largest economies (*ibid*). This is largely the result of rapid modernization, a process that has had multiple consequences on Korean identity and the very question of what a Korean traditional culture actually is. To this day, North and South Korea wage an ideological war with quite different views on what it means to be a 'true' Korean.

If one considers the immense social, cultural, and economic shifts over the past century, locating a philosophy or pedagogy that is uniquely Korean becomes quite a tricky project. This is perhaps even more difficult for a non-Korean speaker such as myself as there is significantly less scholarship in English on Korean traditional and indigenous knowledge than, for example, neighboring China and Japan (Shin & Crookes, 2005). Even scholarship in the Korean language has only recently begun to turn towards precolonial texts (Lee, 2004). Indeed, Lee (2004) laments that many Korean people are unable to even read these texts in the original script (Korean academic writing largely took place in a Korean version of Chinese script, called *hanja*). Subsequently, Korea has not embraced precolonial or premodern philosophies as means of solving modern problems (*ibid*). Political and intellectual solutions have been sought out in Western discourses—modernity in order to overcome modernity (Paik, 1996; Yeom & Ginsburg, 2007). Even critical views of English in Korea that purport to explain local constructions of English have tended conform to modern conceptions of the nation-state (see Park, 2009), in effect collapsing localities into a cohesive modern nation

(Porter, 2011). Yet the term *nation* opposes the local as easily as it does the global, and we must be cautious when collapsing localities into national unity. The point is that resistance in this context is quite complex. A molar Korean identity juxtaposed to an identifiable other is not a useful construct. Indigenous versus modern knowledge also introduces fierce difficulties. In response to these difficulties I will pursue an eclectic set of ideas to inform my pursuit of a concept of the local. Ironically, this might indeed be the most “Korean” move I can make considering the degree to which Korea has historically adopted and adapted a range of philosophies originating elsewhere (see Lee, 2004).

These goals bring to mind views within TESOL that continually argue that language and language learning can only be understood within specific sociocultural contexts (Canagarajah, 1993; Norton-Peirce, 1995; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Such work has increased in popularity in Korean academics. In one recent example a researcher applied a sociocultural framework in order to investigate ways that a Korean scholar negotiated shifting identities as she moved from middle school teacher in Korea, to graduate student in the United States, to professor of education back in Korea again (Lee, 2009). The study offered reasonable descriptions of ongoing negotiations and tensions she experienced adapting to various settings. But the work ultimately mapped out this woman's unique experiences according to the pretense of a theoretical framework that related more to a theory of identity and cultural negotiation than to this woman's experiences. This sort of orientation to research leads to general accounts of what this woman experienced moving from one context to another, and the research reappropriates such experiences into brief summaries such as *reformation of beliefs* or *adjustment of identity* which are scarcely more than a paragraph long. This does not necessarily undermine what sociocultural research can do, but it does suggest that what we ultimately gain from such research is a more nuanced understanding of our generalized theoretical frameworks. These should not be misconstrued



as knowledge of this woman's experiences or these contexts.

Such views, while accurate in the assertion that environments matter, remain fixed on the abstract. We can only say things like *context is important—here is my theoretical framework and the evidence*. One may understand the nature of the relationship. Once can theorize about connections and consequences, the interconnections between macro and micro cultures, but one is bound to the framework and the material conditions that emerge from the institutional relationships and modes of knowledge production. Dialectical materialism traps itself within its own theoretical construct. In claiming knowledge of these people/contexts it must overlook the conditions of the analysis. That which does not conform to the researcher's theoretical construct must be mapped out and territorialized according to the formal system or else it must remain beyond the scope of what we can formally call knowledge. This leads to difficult questions regarding the origins of sociocultural theory, and leads one to question the worldviews and interests that must obscure themselves in order to produce knowledge of people and places.

While a full rejection of Western cultural theories is likely impossible, these contradictions have led me to consider the voices of indigenous scholars. The very idea of indigenous is complex and contested. Is a unified concept of *indigenous* feasible or responsible? Can indigenous knowledge from other times and other places have any relevance here? Is the assertion that it does a hegemonic move? Does it mystify an 'other'? Academic literature on the subject continually comes back to the notion of individuals within a context (Chinn, 2007). But rather than considering theoretical positions informed by indigenous philosophy, I thought it useful to address the ways in which indigenous peoples have sought out a voice within dominant political and intellectual paradigms. Speaking in a North American context, Turner (2006) believes that certain people in his indigenous community must educate themselves according to Western academic traditions. Such

scholars would acquire the dominant intellectual discourses while remaining loyal to their communities, and this might ensure that such communities would achieve greater representation in political spheres. Turner (2006) calls these individuals *word warriors* and juxtaposes them to other community members whose primary duty is to maintain traditional knowledge—a division of academic labor. Taking my cue from Turner, my duty as an instructor would be to teach the accepted content in the field so that a more diverse group of scholars would gain access to the discourse. My work becomes one half of a dialectic, one in which the word warrior may achieve the synthesis between indigenous knowledge and representation in the dominant political and intellectual sphere. My job would be to supply the dominant knowledge. This implies that my resistance to simply passing on mainstream SLA theories might be construed as a disservice to those seeking a voice in the field. This is essentially a conservative view of classroom curricula. Further, it preempts the possibility of change within the learning environment. The classroom crystallizes. It is no more than a place from which one gets the knowledge or becomes socialized to the dominant modes of Western discourse. Once learned, learners readily apply the knowledge in new contexts. The location of change and possibility moves out of the classroom into larger political spheres, spaces from which indigenous people continue to be marginalized.

The possibility that the classroom, or the scope of Western academic knowledge itself, is susceptible to and even bound to change opens a space for considering such knowledge in a broader light. Classroom practices based on local or indigenous ways of knowing requires the negotiation of a number of difficulties. While indigenous perspectives often stress relationships between selves and contexts rather than subject/object relations, it is not easy to think about how one might emancipate these relationships from the theoretical realm in order to explore them within pedagogical practice. One always returns to the space from which the utterance was uttered. This is difficult, as the relationship between humans and our modern

spaces is somewhat ambiguous. We are materialists to the degree that materialism accommodates our critique or our point of view. But our academic critiques inevitably lead back to the material conditions of the utterance. Various voices in the academic literature reveal this necessary ambivalence towards our material conditions. “[T]o a great extent we are a displaced people for whom our immediate places are no longer sources of food, water, livelihood, energy, materials, friends, recreation, or sacred inspiration” (Orr, 1992, p. 126). On the other hand:

Whether we are city dwellers in profound denial or Aboriginal people drawing on old ways to regenerate new knowledge, we live in relation to land—we bundle up when the snow comes, we fuss when spring is late, we breathe deeply and restore our souls when the sun warms us in to a new season (Haig-Brown, 2008, p. 12).

This seems like a contradiction. We are displaced peoples bound to our places. On one hand, modern subjects find themselves entrenched in industrial relationships with our food, water, and vital necessities. On the other hand, we are, no matter what, in a very real relationship with our environment, and this has very real implications. The fact that I do not grow my own food does not mean that my food choices have any less impact on community and self.

In a theoretical sense these difficulties arise within and are the result of our modern and postmodern designations of space and our attempts to situate ourselves within it. Enlightenment thought upset the conception of a stratified vertical universe and laid it out on a horizontal plane where a homogenous universe extended infinitely outwards (Sachs, 1992). The term *space* came to represent this universe of concentric circles. Space became the

language of territorialization, thrusting the whole of what can exist under the banner of a single concept. Space subsumes places. This is possible because all places could subsequently exist in relation to one another within space, and what emerged was a new relativism based on homogeneity. Administering mean time to broad territories is an example of such moves. The specificity of place becomes lodged within the grand concept of space. Theorists have recently presented fierce challenges to the notion of space as homogenous and person-less (Barnett, 2008; Thrift, 2004). Space can become phenomenological or particular, but such becomings often critique space according to the rules of its original modern formulation. From place to community, community to individual, and from individual to 'dividual' (Deleuze, 1995), concentric circles lunge infinitely outward and infinitely inward territorializing everything in their path under the homogenous entity we call space.

In contrast, place tends toward definite articles and proper names. A less favorable concept to contemporary postmodern theory, place often slips into the molar. But it is a mistake to conflate the singularity of place with a molar and fixed identity. Such *places* become static—New York is New York; my kitchen is my kitchen. This renders our knowledge and our designation of places as place-less and timeless. This is strictly modern as it situates an image of the world as a view. “The whole of objectivity is spread out like a spectacle on which the cogito casts its sovereign gaze” (Ricoeur, 2007). Being certain of an object requires the positioning of a subject in relation to an object. Deleuze (1988, p. 14) calls this “the reign of the subject and the empire of structure.” Objective knowledge is representational and possible only from the stance of the subject in relation to the object as it is represented. One must represent the object in terms of what is knowable. This distance, this experiencing of the object as a subject, means that objective knowledge resides in neither, but rather, in representational knowledge that captures the 'view' and posits it in ways external to the immediate sensation. Places become points on a grid, unique in their relative positioning to

other points and the place itself.

The concept of space has proven critical to modern scientific analysis which reduces disparate events to explainable theories. Empiricist knowledge requires one to go beyond what one can directly experience or know (Deleuze, 2001). The paradox is that what we know is something that has no material substance but exists only in our representational thought (Berry, 2000). *Fifty-eight percent of students prefer to learn through direct instruction, or the subject performed multiple identities.* Dewey (1907) recognized this problem with exceptional clarity, and expressed them in pedagogical terms:

No number of object-lessons, got up as object-lessons for the sake of giving information, can afford even the shadow of a substitute for acquaintance with the plants and animals of the farm and garden, acquired through actual living among them and caring for them. No training of sense-organs in school, introduced for the sake of training, can begin to compete with the alertness and fullness of sense-life that comes through daily intimacy and interest in familiar occupations (Dewey, 1907, pp. 24 – 25).

This expresses, in extremely practical terms, what one can describe more philosophically in the form of a question: *what are the conditions from which we can conceive that knowledge does not require immediate sensual experience?* How is it possible that one can posit theoretical knowledge or objective knowledge as relevant across time and from place to place? I look around me at the drab gray building in which I teach, the stale packaged food and sweetened drinks my students slurp down, the coffee we all sip on before class that was grown god knows where and encourages god knows what sorts of economies. What stories do we have to tell? How can we grasp our stories as unique and singular and how can they

help to dismantle the subject/object as a source of knowledge in favor of singular events and places?

### **Representation and French Fries**

I believe there are ways of confronting place-less tendencies both in research and in pedagogy. One path forward involves the problem of language and representation. “How do we explore our profound concerns about the identity crisis of the modern individual self shaped early in life by industrial eating, while escaping the banality of over-dramatizing the little take-out box of french fries for ‘the masses’?” (Esteva & Prakash, 1998, p. 51). I do not believe that this is simply a problem of how such views are received. Nor is this a call to be more delicate or precise with our language. This question cuts right to the heart of the problem of writing and describing the world in academic terms. Esteva and Prakash (1998) express the tension that exists between what they experience and what they can possibly utter. They speak of their own experience seeing industrial food and eating habits warping and distorting community life and the place of individuals within it. They speak of these things in books, and they use language that resonates within academic spaces. They are fully aware that any expression of the problem of the box of fries becomes rooted in the place from which they speak. One may directly experience danger and destruction brought on by industrialization, but the sensitive author and reader must confront the fact that they are engaging with a book. Their reader connects with these ideas in a place and time removed from that which the authors speak. The little box of fries comes to represent knowledge that goes beyond that which we have experienced. I believe the authors here are confronting the limits of representation. The little box of fries becomes “the little box of fries”. What they experienced as the identity crisis of the modern self becomes “the identity crisis” of “the

modern self.” One could (and to some extent MUST) simply live with this tension.

A short story helps take this further. A professor and mentor of mine working in India described a woman and a young boy that she passed every day during the walk to her office. This mother and child lived in what would be described as extreme poverty, according to the standards of the industrial West. Little by little the professor and the mother became familiar with each other—eventually exchanging greetings then having short chats. One day the professor offered to take a photograph of the woman's child, as it was clear that the woman had no pictures of her son. The woman replied, “why would I want that? My child is right here in front of me. I have no need for a picture.” (Prakash, 2009, personal communication).

While the people in the story would no doubt express and interpret these events differently than I would, I believe that this story can tell us quite a bit about the concept and the limitations of representation. According to the Seon Buddhist tradition (more commonly known by its Japanese translation *Zen*), the essential difference between a landscape and a picture of a landscape is the *frame* (Watts, 1958). Once the frame is in place we have a picture (a representation), a landscape (object), and a perspective from which the picture emerged (subject). This is the *view* developed in Descartes work (Ricoeur, 2007). One could even argue it is only this framing function that allows it to become a “landscape.” We sever what is infinite into an object and call it (or show it to be) a landscape. An experience, or synthesis, subsequently becomes an object.

One can read this woman's refusal of the photograph as a refusal to place her son within such a frame. Representation hinges on the practice and utility of blocked concepts (Deleuze, 1968; Hughes, 2009). The framed photograph, containing a finite amount of information, becomes intertwined with the boy who is infinitely singular. The 'boy himself' (a problematic concept) *is* the process of becoming, *is* movement, and is ontologically indistinguishable from his place(s). The photograph is necessarily a freezing of such

movement. One confronts the eventual (if not inevitable) practice of taking the representation for the represented. *You look good from that angle!* Even more, the representation can potentially become more boy than the boy. *Why are you not like that now? You have changed so much!* Tension arises out of dual existence of the boy and the representation. It is not a matter of positing that what is represented exists or does not exist, nor is it a question of something beyond representation. It is a matter of experience. Placing the boy into the spatial and temporal frame of the photo incites the experience of both the representation and the non-representational.

Such ideas are far from new in Western cultural theory, and they are central to what one could call a discursive turn. Western cultural theory and its revived interest in the body, a supposedly materialist move, has recognized the body as a mediated expression of signs (Massumi, 2002). These signs make sense; they resituate and subvert sense. This all takes place within the reading and interpreting of signs which, in turn, entail the creation of new signs. This form of materialism was necessarily abstract in that our discursive bodies could *make sense* but did not themselves sense (*ibid*). Bodies were that which emerged within structures that positioned them and made them meaningful. In other words, all became discourse, and any 'thing' perceived or sensed became a sign. Indeed, one of the key insights of poststructuralism was that signifiers do not become signifieds, but rather, create more signifiers (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Storey, 1997). Bodies, sensations, and experiences all conform to the tyranny of the sign reminiscent of the ways places conform to the tyranny of space.

Such discursive views of bodies have proven extremely helpful in research that has sought out to uncover subtle ways that power and positionality reproduce social oppression. Gee (1989) defines discourse as “a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a



socially meaningful group or a social network” (p. 18). Following Foucault's (1977; 1978) work in the mid-1970's, discourse here refers not only to linguistic behaviors but turns its focus to social networks. Political structures, institutions, social norms all act as discourses, and within them music, non-verbal expressions, clothing, etc all take on unique and contested meanings. Analysts assume that structures on a meta level determine the meanings of smaller components. These social forces make certain stories and readings of such stories possible while excluding any number of possibilities. In one study, Gee (1993) provided an analysis of two oral stories told by elementary students in a classroom setting. The first of which was told by a White child; the second was told by a Black child. The researcher identified storytelling conventions within each story and pointed out the ways these conventions were typical of generalized and racially marked discourses. The study argued that institutions and teachers value particular discourses over others. Students performing the valued discourses were rewarded, while those performing marginalized discourses were penalized, regardless of whether or not there was any evidence of learning.

This entails a reading of both language and bodies *as discourse*. One can and must chart out the structures which position particular signs in particular ways, leading to the authorization of some at the peril of others. Gee describes his somewhat structural analysis:

I would argue that interpretation... is an amalgam of structural properties of texts and creative inferences drawn on the basis of context and previous experience. Contemporary work on narrative... has greatly undersold how much meaning is, in fact, available in the structure of a linguistic text. (Gee, 1991, p. 16)

This statement clearly utilizes context and experience as the principle means out of strict

formalism. The structuring context reveals the bulk of what is necessary to ascertain meaning. Signs/signifiers/bodies perform within structured frameworks. Though poststructuralism has explored the historical and impermanent nature of such structures, we still see little room here for conceiving of their shifting nature. The analyst (the subject) is still describing the view (object), and the analysis is necessarily forced into a set of recognizable points in a formal system and the productive functions of the analysis, indeed of the entire approach to the research necessarily obscure themselves.

A more poignant way to problematize this is to ask:

How does a body perform its way out of a definitional framework that is not only responsible for its very construction, but seems to prescript every possible signifying and countersignifying move as a selection from a repertoire of possible permutations on a limited set of predetermined terms?" (Massumi, 2002, p. 3).

The most evident problem is that the context and the experience of interpretation themselves, in conjunction with discursive analysis, obscure both the sensing of these discursive bodies under analysis as much as the sense of the analyzing event. These are, in other words, place-less analyses which attend to structure and form as abstract systems. What Gee (1993) excludes is precisely the singularity of the events he describes, and the movement through formal structures, that he must reduce to static terms in order to conduct his analysis. His is an abstract materialism where all material conforms to a structure which is inaccessible in its entirety to any single context or event.

A phenomenological view (rather than structuralist) would situate language and analysis within individual consciousness. We thus find ourselves caught between formal

structures and the essence of experience—naive realism versus naive subjectivism (Massumi, 2002). But this choice is by no means given. The late work of Husserl (see 1973) increasingly brought the foundations of consciousness “deeper and deeper into the world” (Hughes, 2009, p. 6). This later Husserlian phenomenology (sometimes termed *genetic phenomenology*) traced the genesis of consciousness to the formation of objects—themselves not predetermined or given but produced through perception (*ibid*). In other words one concedes that one cannot, in any simple realist way, know the nature of objects as such, nor can one's consciousness emerge in isolation of objects. Be it a body, a theory, a story, a self or an other, one cannot reduce knowledge to formal structural positions or to subjective consciousness.

The writings we write, the photos we take, and the representations we create enter a difficult relationship with that which we represent. I take a move through these concepts into new planes and new stories. The mother and the child, my professor, Deleuze, representation all become not only contexts of analysis but events. Language necessarily fails to contain the experience because it never stops producing. Language fails because it performs its function perfectly. It expresses sensations, it hardens into an idea, then represents fundamental concepts, becoming a photograph of its own, wherein all the subsequent segmentation commences. It has to. This is what happens when we evoke the problem of the little box of fries. The most treacherous line one must travel is this inevitable segmentation—the movement of sensation into representation (Deleuze, 1968; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). This is not a requiem for radical thought. Far from it, this calls upon the limitations of what has been thought and asks us to think movement. Yet these sensual aspects of becoming with/in language are deeply entrenched in Western modes of thought. The sign reigns supreme and a slew of consequences follow. In the following section I will ground these consequences in more concrete terms in hopes of invoking an alternative.

## Keegan's Curriculum

My reflections here involve a lesson plan designed for a group American preschoolers. My nephew is 4 years old and attends a preschool that regularly e-mails descriptions of classroom lessons and events. Last week they described a lesson on the five senses. The kids learned the names of the five senses, helped them understand that these senses allow us to seek out and respond to information about our surroundings. Further, the lesson linked a number of sensory descriptors such as sour, bitter, smooth, cold, loud, and so on to the five senses. Of course these kids were not tasting and touching for the first time. My nephew is very familiar with the sense of taste (which he commonly expresses when he is not pleased with dinner but begs for cookies). What their lesson seems to offer is an introduction into a system of thought and a set of relations within that system. The lesson here is *that* reference refers to *that* sensation. This results in such statements as *lemons are sour* or *fur is soft*. My nephew will require this knowledge in order to survive modern schooling, but he in no way requires such knowledge to sense or to pursue pleasure and avoid discomfort. He requires this knowledge if he wants to 'talk about' these sensations in an abstract manner. "Lemons are sour" and "fur is soft" are not experiential expressions. They are abstract generalizations precisely because it is impossible to experience "lemons are sour". This is the inception of analogical thought—subject and predicate adjoined by the verb *to be* (Foucault, 1970). In a word, my nephew's principle lesson is in associating sensations with expressions, and the learning to link the self to representations of objects through an analysis of rational concepts.

Science and engineering play on these basic functions (Olkowsky, 1999). If one states "the lemon is sour" one can logically ask "how sour?" A quantifiable function allows one to interpret sourness. One can engineer new lemons that are more or less sour—that contain

quantities of other isolated sensations. “When we talk about the sensation of increase, we tend to reduce it to merely an increase in sensation” (Olkowsky, 1999, p. 127). When one holds a child there is an increase in pressure against the body, one that starts perhaps with contact, then pressure, resistance, and finally pain. This constitutes not a single increase in pressure but a *qualitative* sensation of increase (*ibid*). Yet the representation of sensations as static and quantifiable tends to lead to their externalization (*ibid*). The object becomes too heavy, a quantifiable statement dependent on the distinction between the self, sensation, and the object—rather than place within experience the simultaneous becoming of both (an experience and a qualified change).

My nephew's new understanding of our system of describing relations between self and object is a basis of interpretation, one where direct experience of sensations transform into declarations of objects and effects—relations between subject and object. As far back as Hume we learn that knowledge depends on the move from *this lemon gave me a sour sensation* to *lemons are sour* (see Deleuze, 2001). The former is an experience; the latter is knowledge. My nephew becomes familiar with such perspectives through his formal education. Olkowsky (1999, p. 126) calls this “an effect of our tendency to externalize the sensation.” My nephew receives a language—the conflation of this language with experience is what leads to knowledge as the externalization of sense. This externalization, however, is never complete. There is always the potential of the sensation of language and the sensation of language as inadequate. However, the result of our externalization of sense is the inscription of distinct knowable objects engaged upon by relational subjects.

Juxtaposed to the object/subject, *singularity* offers the potential to rethink representation, propositional knowledge, and duality. One fabulous example of this sort of singularity is embedded in the Buddhist tradition of giving thanks for a meal. One gives thanks for a bowl of rice and the nourishment it brings to one's body. It takes very little

imagination to recognize that the rice had to have come from someplace—perhaps from a generous person who gave a monk some spare change. Then one considers the farmer who must have tended to the rice crops—then perhaps the rain and the soil which made such growth possible—the seeds from which the plant was sown. It soon becomes apparent that one must give thanks to an infinite set of contingencies from which the bowl of rice and the eater emerge. Rather than a subject and an object, the eating event emerges as something which is not composed of a subject eating a bowl of rice, but as an event which reveals complexities beyond that which the rational mind can grasp. Positing objective knowledge of the rice, the monk, or the act of eating requires one to reduce much of what made any of these materially possible.

This positing of knowledge about subjects and objects hinges on the need to block concepts. One can call the phrase “grain of rice” representational of actual grains of rice insofar as it is recognizable as and participates in the general concept (Hughes, 2009). In other words, a single grain of rice fits nicely with a general concept of rice so long as one subsumes difference into categorical sameness (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The complexity captured in the Buddhist mealtime prayer becomes clear here. The process of unblocking the concept of any single grain expresses its singularity. This grain is positioned in one part of the bowl rather than another. It is of a slightly darker shade or a varied length. One could follow the grain of rice backwards and discern its relations to other grains, seeds, soil, to rain and sunshine as well as its future and the energy it brings to the body, the excrement, and fertilizer it might become, the ways the human energy unfolded and so on (see Hughes, 2009). Infinite relations and infinite time fold and unfold within the singularity of a grain of rice, and the further one unblocks the concept the more one recognizes the grain as unique and infinitely different from all other objects that fit so nicely into the blocked concept one might call a 'grain of rice'. Representational knowledge, *knowledge of*, requires the blocking of

concepts—a somewhat arbitrary decision regarding how and when to ascribe identity.

While these speculations make for fine word play, singularity (in the sense of the philosophical expression unblocking of concepts) is an extremely practical way of understanding the workings of one's world. Berry (1990) expressed the same sort of movement when he described a bucket on a fence post on his grandfather's old farm. This bucket had been hanging there for many years, and Berry observed that the bucket had literally become a part of its surroundings. The handle had rusted from years of rain and moisture. Feathers, pebbles, bird droppings, seeds, dead insects, bits of grass and fallen leaves had been decomposing inside for decades. What ensued was the “greatest miracle... it was making soil” (Berry, 1990, p. 154). Of course it would be possible to analyze these processes in a scientifically objective manner. One could measure the amount of material that had fallen into the bucket, or one could determine what nutrients had formed. One could determine how efficient this process of soil making was in comparison to others. Yet such views completely miss the process of singularity. What was taking place in the bucket was the “slow work of growth and death, gravity and decay, which is the chief work of the world” (Berry, 1990, p. 154). Both within the bucket, and among the bucket and its surroundings we see not singular objects but processes. The bucket is making/becoming soil. Put another way, the object as complete and knowable overlooks “the whole set of relations belonging to actual experience” (Deleuze, 1968, p. 261). The essence here is not substance—soil, bucket, fence, observer. The essence (if there is one) is making/becoming in conjunction with what is made/what becomes. This is a process far too complex and singular to be reduced to a set of objects in predictable relation. This is becoming as singular rather than being as object.

## Language, Events, and Narration

I have obviously strayed far away from the seemingly straightforward questions of how to approach my SLA class. In order to remain within the problem of curriculum and pedagogy, and the question of how one might conduct both a graduate course and a classroom research project on the premise of unblocking concepts, it is crucial that I recall that while each singular event expresses the entire universe, the primary modalities I am working within here are events and language—though these are not necessarily in opposition to one another. Drawing on Berry's (1990) bucket, I need to conceive of a way that these events are not reducible to his description of them. Conversely, one can (and perhaps must) think about his reflections as linguistic events—events that are indistinguishable from the processes he attempts to describe. In other words, one cannot distinguish the writing/speaking/working itself from the process of making/becoming soil. Though language as we conceive it is an essentially human practice, it is not an imposition upon singular events. The events we read emerge within but are irreducible to language (Deleuze, 1969). Linguistic expression affords one the opportunity to acknowledge that one is working in such conditions. This is precisely what is needed to address the problem that Esteva and Prakash (1998) discovered in their 'box of fries'.

So how can I draw upon all this? One can consider, theoretically at least, a blurring between the previously accepted divisions between the narrating subject, the narrated object, and the context of narration. More specifically:

There is no longer a tripartite division between a field of reality (the world) and a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (the author). Rather,



an assemblage establishes connections between certain multiplicities drawn from each of these orders, so that a book has no sequel nor the world as its object nor one of several authors as its subject. In short, we think that *one cannot write sufficiently in the name of an outside*. The outside has no image, no signification, no subjectivity (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 25, my emphasis).

The referent of such language is the process of *linguaging* in relation to a set of circumstances too complex to represent. It is an event. I am not a subject constructing a chain of signs which reference objects in the world (at least not in a representational sense). I am in a process of narration—a purely productive event. One could refer to the sensation of engaging in relational events—the experience of debate, of narrating, of expressing (Barnett, 2008). One inextricably participates in the making of soil, and language is a mode of production. One cannot speak the sense of one's words (Deleuze, 1968). This means I am beyond representation (potentially said as “*I is beyond representation*”) though I cannot represent that which is beyond representation.

While these concepts have prompted some to accuse Deleuze of transcendentalism (Thomasson, 2006), these sorts of accusations miss the point. This orientation to language affords one the opportunity to acknowledge that one is working in concepts. If one works as a farmer, the modes of expression and becoming are specific to the various places of one's work. Within academic traditions narration emerges in response to specific problems. Within the representative tradition of knowledge production the author is in the precarious position of having to block concepts in order to represent them in language. The inability to designate within writing that which is outside of writing in no way leads to the conclusion that nothing exists beyond what is or can be written. Indeed, culture forms at the ends of reason (Deleuze, 2008). Yet *within* reason the perennial quotation marks have been cast. In

philosophy, in science, in the context of modern critique one measures “time” rather than time —“french fries” rather than french fries.

One then engages with language in an experiential and performative sense and references (rather than represents) that which is outside of language. The process of unblocking includes reflexive aspects of a narration because the project consists of apostrophizing the terms taken to be real. This is because the object is created in and by the system within which it emerges. The process of languaging the object, its context, and its viewer requires me to reveal their conditional status *within language* as you read it and attribute it to a system in which it functions. The object is not a cat or a rock, planet Earth, or a pizza cutter but something in the process of becoming such—events emerging in but irreducible to language.

### **All So Many Words**

The kinds of problems that these orientations to language might address are very old and very well known in traditions outside of Western enlightenment and post-enlightenment philosophy. In particular, two forms of Korean Buddhism waged a fierce ideological debate regarding the status of language (Kim, 2004). This debate centered on distinctions between doctrine and truth. On one hand, the Gyo tradition held that the highest learning a Buddhist could aspire to was full understanding and mastery of Buddhist texts. On the other hand, the Seon tradition held that truth transcended all doctrine and all language—even the language of the Buddha (Keel, 2004). This ideological dispute brings to the forefront the nature of language and its capacity to serve as a container or vehicle for truth. The political implications seem easy enough to deduce here. The Gyo tradition sought truth within Buddhist doctrine and the Seon tradition sought truth beyond doctrine.

Hyujeong, a practitioner of the Seon tradition sought to reconcile the differences in these two approaches to Buddhist doctrine. His move was to insist that Gyo was the word of the Buddha while Seon was its mind. In other words “[t]he true purport of Gyo is paradoxically to point beyond itself to wordlessness” (Keel, 2004, p. 178). By placing the transcendence of itself as a primary task, language was no longer representational or referential but emergent. This attempt of reconciliation between the more dogmatic branch of Buddhism, which held that the doctrine *contained* the truth, and the Seon tradition which denied doctrine (and hence all language) the capacity to contain truth, allows one to conceive of language as event. Words can become one mode of action and a possibility realized in the potential of others.

Perhaps the clearest enunciation of this relational and pragmatic orientation to language 'resides in' the concept of Upaya. As found in the quirky religious text called the Lotus Sutra, Upaya refers to *expedient means* as a Buddhist teacher's method of engaging with students through language (Kim, 2004). In short, Upaya is a teaching, a verbal exchange between a teacher and a student uttered with the purpose of attaining enlightenment. The words themselves do not contain truth. One cannot write down the words of the teacher and teach them in another context. The utterance is relational. It is between the student and the teacher. There is speculation that even the Buddha himself could not utter the truth as he saw, primarily because his utterances were intended for those who were unenlightened (Kim, 2004). His words were meant to teach, not to convey the true state of the universe in any representational sense.

This does not mean that the words should be taken lightly. The teachings were relational and perhaps all the more important for this reason, even if they were not intended to contain truth beyond the context of expression. This, of course, is political in a way similar to Hyujeong's treatment of experience in favor of doctrine. In Upaya we have a teaching that is

non-representational but it retains faith in that which cannot be represented. It is situated between representation and non-representation. It is both/and. Upaya speaks of a transcendent truth that emerges in the immediate exchange.

The spirit of upaya in the Lotus Sutra serves to free human reason from dogmatism, in which only one perspective may be applied to every situation.

Upaya is not an absolute truth but represents provisional and partial truths which are designed for specific people in specific circumstances. Thereupon, an upaya in one circumstance cannot be the truth when preached for someone else in different circumstances (Kim, 2004, p. 82).

Upaya simultaneously works in two directions. One, it serves as a way of reading past Buddhist doctrines, such as the Four Noble Truths or the concept of Nirvana, as expressions of contextual knowledge and situational teachings aimed at a singular audience in a particular place at a specific time. Two, it opens a space for the generation of new teachings, new truths to be expressed according to new contexts. Upaya marks an analytical lens as well as a pedagogical technique.

Similar to the earlier teachings on expedient means, the Seon tradition held that attempts to iterate ultimate or transcendent truth in language was to do violence to it (Keel, 2004). In the predominantly language driven atmosphere of modern academics, skepticism regarding the place of ultimate truth is well placed. Wordless or otherwise, ultimate truth is not a fashionable pursuit—nor is it my pursuit. In light of my earlier struggles with representation, I borrow from these traditions the notion of language as expedient and therefore as an emergent event possessed by neither speaker nor listener. The task therefore calls for “producing within the work a movement capable of affecting the mind

outside the representation; it is a question of making movement itself a work” (Deleuze, 1968, p. 9). Put another way, rather than stuttering in language, one seeks to make language stutter (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Rather than an expression of or a reference to knowledge, language becomes 'play' that retains extremely serious intentions of both *becoming* and *revealing itself* as an event.

A final concept of language as *movement* incites the work of the 13<sup>th</sup> century Sufi poet Rumi. For him words would invoke a “sweet confusion, the sense of being in many places at once saying multiple sentences” (Barks, 1995, p. 9). In the poet's own words, “I've lost the thread of the story I was telling... Narrative, poetics, destroyed, my body, a dissolving, a return” (Rumi, cited in Barks, 1995, p. 14). Though language fails the poet, it is the ability to speak of, to reference, that makes this breakdown of language function. This suggests that language approaches a new sense of urgency. Two statements, uttered nearly a millennium apart express this crucial function:

“When a man makes up a story for his child, he becomes a father and a child together, listening.” (Rumi, cited in Barks, 1995, p. 146).

“We write not with childhood memories but through blocs of childhood that are the becoming-child of the present” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 168).

In both cases we see that language, the expression of a story or memory, is a productive event. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) refer to these as incorporeal transformations. There is a sense of Austin's (1962) speech acts—the utterance produces a real world change. *I sentence you to 20 years in prison* or *I wager \$1000*. These utterances are not simply true or false. They invoke a real world change that results (in these cases) in incarceration or a

substantial loss of money. These changes are incorporeal but nevertheless material. That the two examples above differ in that one refers to a story in the present, and the other to memory, is less important here than the transformations that occur within language. The telling transforms. In the first case the speaker becomes both the father and the son engrossed in the structure of the tale. In the second case the writer becomes that which is remembered in relation to the structure of the present. We become movement through structures. In both cases the body is raw material transformed in events.

### **Toward the next plane**

A theory, a mode of research, or a curriculum based on static theories which contain value and knowledge in and of themselves requires the blocking of concepts. While blocked concepts are inevitable the ways of handling them will be defining aspects of the pedagogy of narration that I attempt to perform. In the following chapter I sketch out the decisions I made regarding the SLA course (action) and the ways I will treat the experiences as a researcher (analysis) as they roughly correspond to the problems I identified in this chapter. General statements which will guide my efforts are as follows:

- There is nothing to fear or to hope for within a concept *in itself*. Concepts as shared through language are events, and events are neither inherently empowering or intrinsically subjugating.
- Events include but are not reducible to language. Narratives and other data sources cannot be construed as containing categorical representations of real pedagogical events or concepts.
- The work produced by course participants are contingencies. Any attempt to isolate their work and extract meaning for the purpose of my pedagogy or research is an

attempt reduce my analysis to a set of blocked concepts.

- It is necessary to block concepts.
- It is desirable to unblock concepts, but the techniques for achieving this and the implications of doing so are as of yet unclear.
- Linguistic expressions play upon the functions of blocking and unblocking and are categorically reducible to neither.

What do all these philosophical propositions mean for a pedagogy? In terms of the project, this means unblocking concepts in a way that traces (some of) their contingencies and conceptualizes them as singular. Bergson's (1913) emphasis on intensity rather than reflection is relevant here. The unblocking of concepts is not a categorical or reflective exercise so much as it is an experience with intensities. Lines and categories are perhaps necessary in order to communicate in this format but they are only tools through which intensities express themselves. In the face of my own habits of thinking and my own prejudices, I am after a sort of pedagogical and methodological delirium. Why? Simple: the unblocking of my own concepts is a productive process that requires me to think differently. This is not in the hopes of achieving a truer picture of what is, but instead is an effort to experience what *could* be the case. I set out to perform rather than to describe, to experiment rather than interpret (Deleuze & Parnet, 1977). In terms of pedagogical decisions, in the next section I briefly lay out my approach to the course, the activities I wish to introduce, and the assignments that I will utilize. I will also lay out a brief methodology for the research-teaching project and provide some guidance for the following chapters.

## Chapter Four: Outlining a Pedagogy of Narration

### Assembling Methods

I was drawn to narrative modes of research almost immediately. Mostly out of an interest in the stories people tell, and what was probably a solipsistic desire to tell my own stories, I came to embrace the idea that narratives produce unique forms of knowledge. This approach to social science research in general, and educational research specifically, is not new. Using narratives in research is not simple business, as one needs to explain particular choices made in the research process, clarify exactly what one intends to learn from stories, and define exactly how one defines 'story'. It turns out that there are a number of options, and narrative research is anything but a quaint and agreed upon deviation from more traditional approaches to qualitative research. There is an abundance of literature that purports to clarify what it means to make stories the basis of one's research. It is getting easier and easier to find guidelines for this sort of work. Yet as this approach continues to coalesce into a methodology or set of methodologies, it becomes clear that questions regarding what a materialist ontology would mean for the research of stories has been largely overlooked. So in this chapter I will offer a brief synopsis of general approaches to narrative research and muse over an approach to narratives in light of a concept of local knowledge. Following Deleuze and Guattari's (1994) proclamation that concepts emerge in response to specific problems, I will confront the problem of developing narrative or narrative sorts of research that do not adhere to structuralist categorizations of language nor fall into a phenomenological ideal of essences. Finally, I will tentatively outline a set of methods I have undertaken to guide me through the interactive stage of this classroom research project.



## Reformist Research

As a response to the need to formulate new ways of discerning knowledge through research, Polkinghorne (2007) uses the term *reformist research* to describe work seeking to challenge status quo practices in the production of academic knowledge. Accordingly, conventional researchers seek to strictly define and isolate variables and ascribe reliable techniques that correspond to a rational and knowable reality that various observers can agree upon. On the other hand, reformers seek to expand definitions of argument and evidence in order to understand human experience and knowledge in new ways (*ibid*). Polkinghorne (2007) has asserted that narrative research falls within the reformist category. Put simply, new research methods are needed in order to produce new kinds of knowledge, and new research methods are needed to challenge not only the knowledge claims of the past, but the manner in which these claims are made. While there is no doubt that a 'narrative' approach to knowledge production has been reformist at various times and places, the presumption that they necessarily work in this way is somewhat troubling. Reformist methods inevitably fall into their own conventions, and no single method, narrative or otherwise, can adequately maintain a reformist position once it hardens into a tradition. Following the footsteps of earlier reformers may depend less on imitating and adapting a set of techniques, or paying allegiance to a 'type' of research, and more on continuing the task of trying to understand research, experience, and knowledge in new ways (Bateson, 1994). One might follow the lineage of a set of narrative techniques in research, and thus call oneself a narrative researcher, but this in no way ensures that such work conforms to the purposes implied in reformist research.

Evidence of this lies in the ways that narrative work has unfolded in social science and educational research. Much of the research that directly addresses narratives begins with a

statement much like the one you are currently reading—attempts of varying complexity that assert that there is little agreement on what 'narrative' actually refers to, what narrative research looks like, how one goes about conducting narrative research, and what claims one can make based on narrative data (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber, 1998; Pavlenko, 2001; 2007). “Once [personal stories] have been collected... novice researchers often do not know what to do with them” (Pavlenko 2007, p. 163). This statement is a truism in a sense because one would expect that novice researchers often have little idea what to do with *any* data once it has been collected. There are numerous efforts to clarify and in some cases prescribe remedies for looming uncertainties that confront narrative researchers (Denzin, 1989; Nekvapil, 2003; Pavlenko, 2007). Certain voices have insisted that:

the future development of the field of narrative research requires a deliberate investment of effort in the elucidation of working rules for such studies. These would necessarily focus on approaches to analysis of narrative material and the development of techniques that could be employed in relevant studies (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber, 1998, p. 1).

The idea here is that narrative researchers have tended to elude requirements of providing a clear and systematic description of their methods, and thus a formal and transparent set of techniques must be developed. Herein is a move to ensure that the quality of narrative research is dependent on the application of reliable techniques rather than on individual abilities, hunches, affects and other such threats to the control and logic generally assumed to be foundational to social science research. Such moves can be traced all the way back to Francis Bacon who speculated that the rules of scientific analysis can be perfected to the extent that the discovery of scientific truths would not depend at all on the ability or the

intelligence of the researcher (Dewey, 1920). Others, however, have been less superstitious in their belief that technique can or should trump human intuition, sense, and fallibility. These voices have, conversely, sought to resist prescribed methods and norms when exploring narratives.

When reduced to the level of research *type*, narrative research commonly breaks down into two categories. These are, *research of narratives*, where 'narratives' are objects of analysis and a researcher uses them to create themes, develop categories, and compare stories. The second is a *narrative form* of research where various descriptions and observations are configured into a storied format (Polkinghorne, 1995). In both cases, the research is marked by the overt use of narratives that conform to a particular definition, such as "the representation of an event or a series of events" (Abbott, 2002, p. 12). In the first case, *research of narratives*, a narrative acts as an object of analysis, in the second *narrative form*, narrative suggests an approach to analysis. In both distinctions, the term narrative refers to an object, that object which is analyzed or that which is created through analysis. Purpose, underlying beliefs and assumptions are implied by the manner in which such objects are utilized and/or constructed by the researcher.

The problem is that narrative research remains fastened to the level of object and technique (we are working with stories and there are specific ways that we work with them). This is a shortcoming for two reasons. First, even (one might say especially) if one subscribes to a belief that *all* life is experienced narratively (Ricoeur, 1991;1994), this in no way requires that stories, narratives, or the notorious *I, you, and we* manifest in the research or the research writing. If life is experienced narratively (a difficult concept to say the least), one can assume that all discourse can be understood in such a way, regardless of the first person *I* or an intentional storied structure (see Newkirk, 1992). Narrative research need not be biographical nor is it necessary to impose an overtly narrative structure onto an analysis

(Georgakopoulou, 2006). Second, the initial turn to narratives in research was at least in part due to a need to address particular research problems (Chase, 2005). Challenges to existing conventions were at least partially pragmatic. On the level of reform, new techniques must be understood as a response to specific problems in singular contexts. If narrative and reformist research were ever completely synonymous, it was a union that began to fray the moment a set of conventions defined a *type* with any semblance of a unified set of beliefs and techniques. So a closer look at the use of narratives in research will necessarily focus on the specific problems within which various concepts of narrative research arose.

### **Problems and Concepts**

In order to deal with the various territories and techniques that have come to represent narrative research it is useful to understand the term 'narrative' as a concept and to recognize that concepts are always created in response to specific problems (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994). Understanding narrative approaches to research works against arguments for prescribed techniques and agreed upon rules. Rules conform to a given setting. Viewing problems as singular and in a necessary relationship with a particular context requires a researcher to invent and discover rules rather than to impose or to follow them. That said, patterns certainly exist/emerge, and when seeking out possible guiding methods for research it is helpful to explore some of these patterns.

Researchers initially turned to narratives as data when it was determined that personal stories helped to explain individuals' behavior in relation to their environment (Chase, 2005). Anthropologists and sociologists alike viewed participants' stories as representative of larger (usually marginalized) social groups. Narratives represented entire groups or cultures (Langness & Frank, 1981, cited in Chase, 2005). These early uses of narratives did not pose

any threat to the positivist or behaviorist leanings of the era. They quite simply added to the existing toolbox a methodology that addressed a need for a particular type of information in light of certain empirical questions. This anthropological approach inquired into interpretation in relation to social behavior and commonly relied upon linguistic structures as fundamental points of analysis. Indeed, the rise of personal narratives in research has been closely associated with the broader linguistic turn of the mid to late twentieth century. Barthes (1989) dramatically stated that narratives signify “that point where not ‘I’ but only language functions...” (p. 56). Barthes and other structuralist thinkers viewed narratives not as the product of an autonomous self but rather as a system of signs through which social positions are formed and sustained. The view of language as a finite system opened a space for researchers to engage in systematic explorations of the structures of this system (Prince, 2003), and allowed claims to rest upon the analysis of linguistic structures. Such ideas are commonly referred to as the impetus behind the narrative turn in social science (Webster & Mertova, 2007), which has inspired serious consideration of the stories of ordinary individuals in social science research.

Labov (see 1973) is often credited with inciting a general turn towards oral narratives spoken by ordinary individuals everyday (Chase, 2005). Their particular contribution consisted in presenting “the idea that ordinary people’s oral narratives of everyday experience (as opposed to full-fledged life histories, written narratives, folklore, and literary narratives) are worth of study in themselves” (Chase, 2005, p. 655). Most significantly, Labov scripted the minimal criteria of a fully formed narrative: abstract, orientation, complicating action, result, evaluation, and coda (Chase, 2005; Mishler, 1995; Patterson, 2008). While this somewhat structural account of narratives was groundbreaking at the time, reducing narratives to essential clausal components was not an altogether new idea. As early as 1863, Freytag delineated a similar set of minimum criteria, stating that a narrative necessitated a setup,

climax, and resolution and could thus consist of as few as three phrases (cited in Casebeer & Russell, 2005). Regardless of the scope of a narrative, or the arguments regarding the minimum criteria, the narrative turn allowed for a sharply defined linguistically driven analysis of stories. The nature of 'the speaker' coincided with the underlying structure of the narrative.

In order for an analysis to work, it was necessary to gather full narratives which could then be broken down to clausal components. Each component of the story was categorized and coded according to these categories. This process allowed one to compare the fully formed stories of various participants by investigating the specific ways that various clauses were constructed and what sorts of positioning and assumptions lied therein. Labov (1973) was able to reveal that African American Vernacular English (AAVE) was not a deficient code. The crucial insight was that what was perceived as deviation from linguistic norms was itself systematic (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The deviant hybrid was itself a code worthy of exploration. This was an extremely effective means of comparing narratives across cultures and negated views that particular languages or versions of language are inherently better than others. This opened the door towards a sort of linguistic relativism which was paradoxically built upon a broader notion of essentialism. For once we find the underlying structures of language a new egalitarianism based on sameness has the opportunity to grow.

The context of narrative research, the position of the researcher, and the various levels of experience one can glean from narrative analysis presented new problems and new opportunities in narrative research. Labov (1972) conceded that the researcher's presence is never wholly absent, but that with the proper techniques "it is largely overridden by other factors" (Labov, 1972, p. 115). He went on to name the problem of observing people speak when they are not observed the *observer's paradox* (Labov, 1973). A larger critique of this work, however, could reveal that the entire system of analysis is based on the containment of types. Strangely, static identities remained the foundation of linguistic and social categories

even though one had to go to great lengths to find these types in any pure form. The pattern is one of containment—containment of language types and corresponding identities. Connections between language and identity could be empirically realized in linguistics. Of course, social science owes a debt of gratitude to such work. These concepts elicited the problem of identity and hybridity at the cost of reducing these to linguistic functions that expressed them. Connections between language and identity present the danger of crystallizing both language types and identity. Second, such claims do not account for the presence of the researcher in the observation of language or the gathering of stories. While identities may be contextual and linguistically constructed on a superficial level, there is a limit to this co-construction when one treats the place of the researcher as a transparent variable.

More recent work with narratives has often been defined by the way it deals with the problems of researcher and subject as well as the problem of structure. While the view that storytelling individuals can be reduced to narrating functions (structuralism) has fallen out of fashion, aspects of this approach to narrative research remain quite popular. One notable example is a narrative study on the ways that various individuals constructed a sense of self through stories (Hunter, 2009). The study involved 22 participants, all of which had an early sexual experience with an adult. Multiple interviews were held with each participant, and participants' stories were examined for recurring themes as they related to individuals' personal histories. The researcher then categorized narratives into various types: narratives of silence, suffering, transformation, and transcendence (*ibid*). What emerged was an in-depth comparison of ways that individuals described early sexual experiences, which gave researchers an opportunity to theorize about ways that a single narrator drew on various types of narratives for a variety of purposes.

This sort of work goes well beyond the clausal analysis in Labov's work (Patterson, 2008). Storytellers were not reduced to their stories in any direct way and the researcher did

not view the story itself as a static entity built of corresponding clauses that could be isolated and directly compared to the narratives of other participants. Secondly, the context in which the narratives were told came into consideration. The stories emerged *with* a researcher in interviews, and the interaction between narrator and listener provided the conditions which allowed the narrative to be narrated. In response to such assumptions, Hunter (2009) implemented a variety of techniques, which included constructing observational field notes directly following interviews and contrasting participants' narratives with biographical data on participants retrieved elsewhere. These techniques helped to emphasize the interaction, and shifted focus to what was speakable in a particular context.

This is a notable departure from earlier research, which focused solely on language at the expense of the narrating subjects and the experience of narration. Though this movement takes us from the transparent narration of static events to the inclusion of the experience of creating a narrative in a particular context (Squire, 2008), comparison among cohesive subjects remains at the foundation of such work. The researcher constructed/discovered themes within the narratives. Even though the contextual nature of the narratives were stressed, it is unclear how the context of the telling or the researcher's participation in the narrating event influenced the analysis of stories. Furthermore, the stories and the analysis of stories all hinged on the speaking subject. Even if these were subjects in a particular context, the power of the analysis and the subsequent claims resided within an individual storytelling subject. I am not suggesting this to be a shortcoming in any way. A degree of transparency on the part of the researcher was likely crucial to the interpretation of the telling of early sexual experiences, and effectively limited the researcher's claims. While the researcher and the site of narration were by no means transparent, they were treated as limitations rather than specific research problems. But do stories really work like this? One is left to wonder how to deal with narratives in research when one assumes that stories are not at all reflective



of the individual storyteller. What if stories are more immediate, and sensed, felt, and experienced most purely in the complexity of speaking relationships? The site of narration as a specific research problem and a more singular and sensual understanding of stories requires further exploration and further reform.

Questions about the interaction and the positioning of the listener/analyst are by no means unique to narrative research. Indeed a common theme among discursive approaches to narrative takes a more radical approach to such questions. In discourse studies, the intentions of the narrator are no more circumstantial to an analysis than is a listener or analyst. The context of an analysis and the conventions wherein certain readings become possible or inevitable serve as the foundation of such studies. The meaning of a text or of the narration of an experience depends on social forces that transcend the intentions of any single author or reader. These various forces are commonly referred to as 'discourses.'

In educational research what one could call the *discursive* approach to narratives is most clearly exemplified in the work of various members of The New London Group (1996). In particular, Gee's (1989) treatise on discourse asserts a number of key points. Among these points, discourses always involve a set of values and viewpoints, they are resistant to internal criticism, and they are defined internally and in relation to other opposing discourses. Such perspectives allow researchers to describe contexts according to linguistic and social practices. While discourse is not limited to language as such, there are limitations to viewing everything as discourse. Essentially the researcher delegates all activity, all possible happenings, to the realm of discourse in the same way places have been reduced to points in space. In other words, discourse acts as a unifying term through which social interactions become the result of discursive signs. The identification of such signs represent the locus of inquiry.

Such work rightfully addresses the need for researchers to address “behaviors that are the norm rather than the exception in classroom situations [and] often ignored as data” (Bannink & Van Dam, 2006, p. 284). This expands the definition of discourse, and therefore expands what is considered worthy of the the attention of the researcher. The movement here is a matter of scope (in terms of what can be contained within an analysis), rather than a movement toward another type of analysis altogether. A discursive treatment of narratives gives us a tool with which to dissect contained narratives according to a prescribed set of rules. Such tools have been highly effective at locating conventions and value-laden practices that favor certain forms of logic, and certain modes of expression, within identifiable structures. A problem, however, is that the *narrative* becomes subsumed within a larger linguistic system, the components of which remain outside of the scope of analysis. The context itself can be read as text, and analysis of both text and context depend on the crucial act of isolating and containing which components of discourse are objects of analysis and which components act as the foundation of analysis.

One's own meaning making systems allow narratives, indeed any linguistic territory, to be contained in particular ways. These conventions entail the positioning of various narrated subjects. Yet these conventions are continually placed outside of the field of inquiry. While I am not accusing this line of work of sliding into objectivism or formalism, I am suggesting that a model of discourse analysis relying on a discernment between what is and what is not subject to analysis places certain (and rather narrow) ways of knowing at the center while marginalizing others. What is sacrosanct is the analytic framework—the research conventions and the various discourses which utilize, contain, and interpret participant narratives in particular ways. What seem to be missing are tools with which a researcher can interrogate such discourses that produce certain readings of narratives—in other words, there

are no analytical tools allowing me as a researcher to meaningfully question why I come to particular conclusions, why I contain participant narratives in certain ways, and why I conduct research according to a specific set of conventions. This is a contained view of narratives, leaving narrowly defined participant narratives open to scrutiny while any other number of discourses are left unexamined. These shortcomings reflect a dialectic between the subject and the object—researcher researched—analysis and narrative. The discursive approach seems incapable of addressing the partial objects and mutual becomings that simultaneously emerge on various planes. In other words, what is ignored are the material conditions of narration. Bodies are transformed into discourse, and discourse shows no potential of becoming bodies, molecules, sensations, and affects. The discursive approach remains attached to its idealism.

### **Narrative Waves and the Possibility of Narration**

Narrative research has been around long enough to be assimilated into a 'wave model' (Georgakopoulou, 2006), further suggesting that these approaches to research are no longer necessarily 'reformist' in nature. The movement has been defined as:

the study of narrative as text (first wave) to the study of narrative-in-context, but there was still something neat about the conceptualization of both text and context: the former was still defined typologically and on the basis of abstract, formal criteria (minimal narrative definitions were undeniably influential); the latter was often seen as a surrounding frame, something to be contained and tamed by the analysis (Georgakopoulou, 2006, p. 123).

There are no doubt countless ways that one could construct these various 'waves', but it would make sense to begin with the use of life stories and cultural/grand narratives as representative of entire cultures (Chase, 2005; Georgakopoulou, 2006). A turn toward the stories of everyday conversations came about with the work of Labov (1972; 1973), and often focused on the narrative structures that emerged in everyday conversation and the minimum components of a story in what was an extremely effective manner of comparing the narratives of various people in various linguistic groups. The trend then shifted away from a focus on key events and the ways individuals structure key events in narrative discourse, in favor of an analysis of the relationships that narratives established. Thus one can describe a shift from text to context (Georgakopoulou, 2006). Thus, researchers began to take a functional approach rather than a structural approach to narratives. Understanding the manner in which subjects constructed stories in order to establish a relationship in a particular setting was a common trend in this kind of work, but often led to the problem of researchers representing a relationship about a context outside of that context.

Georgakopoulou's (2006) call for a third wave in narrative research invokes the identity era, and a turn toward 'small stories', defined as "under-represented narrative activities, such as tellings of ongoing events, future or hypothetical events, shared (known) events, but also allusions to tellings, deferrals of tellings, and refusals to tell" (*ibid*, p. 123). This opens the possibility of using a narrative lens to analyze experiential data without relying on key structural components of a narrative. By reducing the requirements of what linguistic or paralinguistic data is subject to analysis, this 'small stories' approach effectively moves the locus of study away from selected chunks of discourse toward a more nebulous narrative identity. 'Narrative' becomes the assumed basis of identity and researchers then face the "need to know if there is anything systematic about the contexts of occurrence of small stories other than that they frequent ordinary conversations" (Georgakopoulou, 2006, p. 123), so that

the social organization of small stories, and the ways that small stories and the emergence of identities, are encouraged or limited in various contexts (*ibid*). Though this affords us opportunities to analyze a wider range of social activity and the emergence of identity in novel ways, it is difficult to determine whether or not this approach really moves us past the rigidity of reducing social functions to predetermined linguistic patterns, or if it simply has the effect of trapping all activity within the realm of identity and all identity into the realm of narrative. I suspect that there are liberating and restrictive components in this move. There is still an ontological assumption that is not confronted in such work—namely, the idealist assumption that the narrative construction (structural or functional) and subsequent interpretations are adequate means of understanding the material conditions of the narration. Whether it invokes structure or function, whether it is big or small, a life story or a simple utterance, and whether it requires a format or encompasses all discursive experience, narrative remains an application of a framework upon language, and a means of interpreting, that maps out a territory of language and language events. This model retains a cartography of language and places in its focus one specific 'mode' or 'type' at the exclusion of others. The exclusion may subsist in the object of analysis or in the scope of the theoretical lens. The point is that by retaining this conceptual grounding, the very notion of questioning the consequences of such moves is still categorically outside of the scope of analysis. It is also based on identifiable sets of properties that leaves us stranded in ideals. Perhaps this is necessarily so, but reducing the world to identity and to a particular narrative framework risks what the 13<sup>th</sup> century Sufi poet Rumi calls mistaking the curtains for the world (Rumi, cited in Barks, 1995). The pressing question of that world beyond the curtains continues to elude any school of narrative research.

## Narration

A creation myth indigenous to Australia begins with a creator “wandering the world, it found half-made human beings.... vague and without features” from which the creator “carved heads, bodies, legs, and arms out of the bundles” (Morgana's Observatory, 2006). Just as the creator carves and shapes raw material into fully formed human beings, the narrator and the audience become fully formed storytellers and listeners. This creator encounters raw material—molecules with very real potentials and equally real limitations. There are also countless possibilities of what can emerge from the narration, but these possibilities are not infinite. A glass of water has the potential to become ice, gas, but not to become a bird (see DeLanda, 2009). But we sever this creation myth from its conditions of narration, we analyze it, and thus we can understand its parts and interpret something about the culture (the speakers and listeners) from which this story emerged. Narratives and the analysis of narratives constantly rely on bracketing or isolating of variables within what we choose to call a story. We then make claims regarding the subjects that appear in the narrative (focus on content), or we focus on the narrating subject (focus on context or function—what does this narrative 'do' to the speaking and listening subjects?). Yet the concept I wish to develop here responds to a different problem, the problem of moving past approaches to narratives bogged down by literary and academic designations. I am trying to think in terms of *narration* (rather than narrative) as a means out of the structurally or functionally stable subjects that typically ground narrative analysis.

The iconic modern composition, *4'33'* (1952) contained only rests, but it overtly referenced that which was outside of the composition itself. It was four minutes and thirty-three seconds of 'silence', but rather than the absence of sound, this silence was productive (Deleuze, 1989; Mazzei, 2010). “You could hear the wind stirring outside during the first

movement. During the second, raindrops began patterning the roof, and during the third the people themselves made all kinds of interesting sounds as they talked or walked out” (Cage, cited in Kostelanetz, 2003). The point that all sound can be interpreted 'musically' is a fairly simple one. What distinguishes any duration of silence and noise from music is a framing of those sounds. Yet it is a mistake to reduce Cage's piece to this concept. He is not a philosopher; he is an artist. His goal is not to iterate a concept (all sounds can be music). His goal (at least superficially) is to induce the experience of random sounds that become music—to open up our habit of bracketing sounds in a way that distinguishes music from sound. He is not 'making a point' as a philosopher or might do, he is attempting to produce affects among listeners (perhaps even to allow listeners to dissolve into the composition), as each performance of 4'33” would disclose a completely different set of sounds and a completely unique listening experience. On a side note, it is interesting to question whether or not Cage succeeded in opening the concept of music or if, on the other hand, he may have infiltrated all sound with the musical frames.

If one were to explore this concept further we would see that there is a profound point to be made regarding a composition and its concept. A piece of scripted music is necessarily and always accompanied by countless partial objects we might unify under the term 'context.' Like Cage's account of 4'33”, there are raindrops, wind, heavy sighs and chatter, even non-verbal components such as the acoustics in a concert hall or a bedroom, the presence of a music critic, or an old friend with a complicated past. There can be an ideal account of the song that includes notes, rests, chords, and instrumentation, but these do not correspond directly with the performance of the piece. Even if the performance only consists in pressing play on an MP3 player, it is always already in a context. One can understand a piece of music in isolation from a performance, but the performance is then incomplete—severed from the singularity of the performance that makes it meaningful in infinite ways. The writing is a

representation of the piece. The performance is never stable or fully knowable. So what is the composition itself?

The question of whether or not it is possible to think of a narrative without a narrator brings to the forefront the problem of how researchers continually try to craft a cohesive narrative and to make meaning (Mazzei, 2010). “The aim in seeking the possibility... is not to improve the hearing, nor to probe for deep-seated meanings, but to rethink what it means to hear and listen to voice” (Mazzei, 2010, p. 514). A story in itself is not the performance of the story by a subject that we distinguish from what is not the subject, any more than it is a set of linguistic structures that we mark as 'narrative' as opposed to 'non-narrative'. Not only interlocutors, but place, time, and the influx of singular elements that make up what we call 'context' are in constant tension with the idealized version (what becomes the semi-stable representation) of the story. We create a split between representation and performance, and much of the academic work with narratives must commit to distinguishing between, then focusing on, either the former or the latter. The ways narrative researchers deal with this split often times defines the 'type' of narrative research—research of narratives or a narrative mode of research.

The *narration* of the creation myth, the actual speaking performance by the storyteller, is a point of convergence where the storyteller becomes storyteller, audience becomes audience—the creature becomes creator and the raw material within the story becomes human. The story incites a doubling where forces confront one another as raw materials (bodies, on the level of the content, and language, on the level of the narrating activity). The storyteller expresses a story of creation while simultaneously engaging in creation. Here I am reminded of Foucault, where we hear that the body is that which is internal and the mind/soul is external (Butler, 1997; Deleuze, 1988; Foucault, 1977). One's body is the surface of inscription (or the raw material) that emerges within a place, within language, and within



others to become self/selves. Put another way, the subjects engaged in the storytelling and listening, and the characters within the narrative, the external and the internal, none of these are in dialectical opposition. The self within does not externalize a narrative, and narrative thinking or self-conception does not precede acts of narration. The pattering of words, tones, and inflections, the narrative self, and subjectivity emerge in/as singular events that make no primal distinction between inside/outside, self/other, speaker/listener. "The Other appears as that which organizes Elements into Earth, and earth into bodies, bodies into objects..." (Deleuze, 1969, p. 318). That is why the narration cannot freely create the characters in any imaginable way. We confront real bodies with real capacities and limitations. In this case, narrations are events in which certain potentials are realized.

Invoking *narration* as the point of convergence is an attempt to think the remaking of this rupture between speech and the context of speech. As a partial response I have taken small pieces of various data and used them to trouble or to unblock concepts that permeated my beliefs about our course and the possible directions it could take. Analysis therefore does not attempt to isolate common themes that represent or are represented repeatedly in narratives. Any story that I work with has to be understood not as an expression or a representation but as a selective synthesis. While there are undoubtedly narrative mechanisms at work, narrative structures are incapable of standing alone and they are not representative of any essential speaker, subjectivity, or experience. Reducing narratives to categorical themes is a reduction that necessarily overlooks the fact that all language plays both a representative and performative role. Further, it completely eludes the virtually infinite ways that language and events can potentially emerge. This is why Deleuze (1995) suggests that narrative is an extremely limited conception of events. When a character acts according to its perspective of a certain situation a narrative emerges. But narratives are possible only through a particular means of attaching sensory-motor schema to experience. It is important

to remember that a Deleuzian view of the self does not “advocate a dissolution of identity, a complete destabilization and defamiliarization of identity” (Grosz, 1994, p. 172). Instead, identity and subjectivity are events with no ontological distinction from the conditions of our recognition. They are to be played with, utilized, intensified, in order to produce new becomings. One experiences a circumstance then one responds. Interpretation is born out of this simple formula. Once the sensory-motor scheme and the experiences upon which interpretation emerges break down—once movements (both narrative and physical) disorient themselves, then the narrative structure/pattern is only one of many modes of movement, one mode of what Deleuze (1968) would call incorporeal becomings—one to which we perhaps continually return but which no longer holds dominion over the interpretation of events and relations.

In a more practical sense, this means that the methodological reference of unblocking concepts does not depend on isolating stories, SLA theories, personal experiences, and interactions from one another. There is no discovering of selves or the narrative structures of the self. No distinction can be made between a theory and the expression of the theory, nor can I divide the interpretation of language from the relations it encompasses. What I call unblocking is a doubling. It is simultaneously an exploration and creation of concepts. Reading and discussing these theories (making meaning) and situating these theories within concrete settings (which include present teaching context, memories, language learning beliefs, and so on) entail both a movement through concepts and a movement into concepts.

An analysis is similarly a productive event which follows these same multiple movements. It is worth quoting at length here:

the double is never a projection of the interior; on the contrary, it is an interiorization of the outside. It is not a double of the One, but a redoubling of

the Other. It is not a reproduction of the Same, but a repetition of the Different. It is not the emanation of an 'I', but something that places in immanence an always other or a Non-self. It is never the other who is a double in the doubling process, it is a self that lives me as the double of the other: I do not encounter myself on the outside, I find the other in me (Deleuze, 1988, p. 81).

In an attempt to operationalize this difficult idea, I will simply say that to me, this means that the term narrative is a way of taming, mapping out, and domesticating stories. Analyzing events according to narrative structures, calling any event 'linguistic' or 'narrative' means that I am restricting it and reducing it to a set of predetermined conditions. The work is not situated in deciphering meaning and reducing events to themes. The task seems much harder. The task is production rather than restriction. What kinds of statements produce, guide, and multiply the various blocked concepts we engage with in our classroom experiences? This requires a move away from convergent thinking, which is the overwhelming mode of thought in social science research, toward a more divergent approach (Robinson, 2005). In other words, instead of seeking a convergence of patterns, behaviors, and activities into somewhat stable categories, the analysis seeks to begin with a concept or idea and to see where these might lead—how they might diverge in various directions.

In a very simple sense, meaning making is not understood in the ordinary sense of the word. I am not shackling myself to the meaning of narratives and the meaning of participants' interpretations. Meaning is not the reference (such as the meaning of the word 'dog', or the meaning of the word 'narrative'). Meaning is the impact of language events. This is closer to the idea expressed in the statement *my life has meaning* or *our relationship has meaning* (see De Landa, 2009). Meaning is likened to impact—the effect/affect of utterances. When I say *that was a meaningful experience* I do not refer to a semantic *meaning* of the experience. It

states much more simply, that the experience had an impact or it changed me. This more primal *meaning* is the locus of my inquiry. I am trying to creating movement, affect, and significant events with the expressions of class participants.

In sum, narrative as a functional analytical tool draws events into the homogeneity of space. It allows me to plot movement, to categorize experience, to discern the direction of movements (as plotted along predictable arches), and lay claim over the narrative and the narrator. Yet this tends to obscure the relational reality and the language as event. Narration is not a trajectory or a set of structures which contain linguistic descriptions of events. Narration is an event. A narration is singular and exudes a countless set of possibilities (future) that become possible via a countless set of contingencies (past). But it is perennially/perpetually singular. That which converges, once spoken/iterated necessitates a blocking which marks the beginning of the work and a particular possibility that actualizes in the blocking/unblocking event. The work therefore moves in two directions, 1) into the blocked concepts—as an unblocking via the analysis of contingencies with what *has been* narrated, and 2) forward into further narration as connecting to new contingencies, which works on the level of the narrating analysis (present into future). These bidirectional movements are what I will refer to as narration.

### **The Course and the Project**

From the outset of the course it seemed necessary to include course material that covered or summarized topics likely to appear on the multiple choice/short answer comprehensive exams that students needed to pass in order to graduate from our program. Course material in and of itself would in no way ensure that my pedagogical aims of unblocking concepts could take place. It would seem that in some ways the material we used

would not be the key to achieving my (pre-active) pedagogical goals. All that seemed clear is that curricular materials should 'cover' the concepts that participants will later be tested on. Okay, I do not fully believe that. The materials we would use are of the utmost importance because they play a large role in the ways course participants would engage in the field of SLA. I did come into the course with an agenda and I felt that certain materials were more conducive to the potential of unblocking concepts than others. However, selecting the proper concepts to teach would not suffice.

I decided to choose a secondary resource as the main text for the class. But rather than selecting a book that summarizes the 'main points' or fundamental concepts in SLA, I found a book which both summarizes the history and the underlying theories that have informed SLA research, and provides an explicit argument in favor of a particular orientation to the field. Marysia Johnson's *A Philosophy of Second Language Acquisition* (2004) covers the general learning theories that have dominated SLA research, beginning with behaviorism, moving through cognitivism (and information-processing), functional grammar, and finally introducing sociocultural theory. While she offers a summary of established practices within each tradition, the primary purpose of the book is to display the shortcomings of cognitivism and introduce sociocultural theory and dialogism (via Vygotsky and Bakhtin) as favorable options for both SLA researchers and language teachers. Her explicit thesis is that the sociocultural tradition empowers language teachers because it highlights specific contexts rather than generalizable theories of the mind and homogenous constructions of language. Interestingly, these are essentially the same ideas that I frequently questioned in the second chapter of this paper. So I find myself in a position of teaching a book which makes arguments that I am explicitly challenging. This was a necessary choice, however, as the sociocultural tradition is often posited as the most recent and most progressive approach to SLA. It is also quickly gaining in popularity among Korean theorists. In other words, a

Deleuzian or indigenous construction of the field did not seem to be an option as there is very little work which represents such views in SLA or applied linguistics. While I reject many of our textbook's underlying assertions, it affords us the opportunity of introducing the field as a series of debates rather than a collection of simplified scientific discoveries.

In addition to the Johnson (2004) book I have also gathered a number of primary sources, research articles, book chapters, and published personal narratives that work with general SLA concepts in greater detail. It is my intention that participants should seek out a few ideas that resonate with them and explore these in more detail. These primary sources also contribute to the class discussions and short lecture/presentations I give when concepts seem particularly difficult or particularly important to the field as a whole.

### **Classroom Activities**

My primary goals included challenging the universal truth and applicability of SLA theories, and stressing that these theories are local (Western) concoctions rather than truths about the best ways to learn languages. In order to do so, it seemed useful to ask participants to explore the relationship between these various concepts and their own experiences both teaching and learning languages. With this in mind, I decided that personal narratives could be a useful tool. Each week, all class members would write a personal vignette that they thought of while doing the assigned reading. The vignette was only required to be a page or two in length and should be related to the general concepts covered in the reading. No explicit analysis of the connections between the narrated events and the theories was necessary, as we would devote class time each week to considering these possible connections. During the sharing of vignettes, participants would work in small groups, reading each others' stories and interpreting the connections between narrated

experiences and the theories. I hoped that the vignette writing process and the group reflections upon them would give participants the opportunity to view their experiences more deeply and to affirm/challenge the theoretical concepts via their personal experiences. Further, rather than assessing students according to their ability to grasp these theories, I asked participants to construct a language learning/teaching autobiography as a final project. The goal of this autobiography was to elaborate upon and challenges various concepts covered during the course.

The final project due at the end of the semester was also an attempt to elaborate on the personal vignettes participants wrote each week. Participants should utilize the experiences they wrote during the semester and weave them into a larger language learning/teaching autobiography. I stressed that the paper should incorporate a narrative thread, which is to say that participants should utilize their experiences in order to make a point. This point should be related to the concepts that we discussed in class. Quoting from the syllabus I gave participants on the first day of class: "The purpose [of your autobiography] is to explore a theory in order to gain a deeper understanding of oneself as a language teacher or learner and to use one's experiences to better understand theoretical constructs in SLA" (course syllabus). I stressed that the goal was not to show mastery of the theory, but instead to situate the theory within one's personal experience, and further, to use experience to critique theory and theory to interpret experience. To borrow the language of Orsen Welles *Citizen Kane* (1941), the requested that the story contain a rosebud, or a central idea that ran through the course of the narrative.

I left it open to what degree I would explicate the specific theories in the book. My intention was to keep classroom lectures to a minimum so participants would have the maximum time possible to challenge SLA theories and to share and elaborate on their vignettes. However, realizing that the comprehensive graduation exam required participants

to be able to recognize and retrieve specific concepts, I understood that the amount of direct support I offered would have to be flexible.

## **Analysis**

Given the stress on personal narratives in the coursework it is clear that they will make up an important aspect of my analysis. So I will have to give at least some preliminary thoughts on how I will treat narrative writing. Along with the narratives, however, there are several other data sources that play into my expressions of these events. Data sources include class journals and class notes that I wrote during the fifteen week course, as well as student response papers (each week participants were required to write a personal vignette which described a personal experience with language that connected in some way to the theoretical concepts covered in that week's reading), a class Wiki to which each participant was asked to post anonymously once per week, final autobiographies, and interviews with four participants who produced especially complex work. The organizational structure of the analysis is not thematic or directly temporal. Instead, I analyzed data for resonating and reoccurring concepts. Once I extracted three dominant concepts (expectations, theory, and progress), I searched through data sources for various directions in which participants carried these concepts. In particular, I attempted to discern ways that the larger concepts synthesized with personal experiences and interactions.

I must ask myself whether or not I need to treat these various data sources in similar ways. In other words, am I analyzing 'narratives' or am I analyzing various sorts of events? Drawing on the general notion of unblocking concepts and viewing language as an event (ideas I attempted to work with in Chapter Three) it seems clear that while narrative writing is the principle mode of expression, I need to deny it a privileged status. So while I stress that participants should use their autobiographical writing to 'make a point', my analysis will not



take the general theses or the narrative means of expressing them as the primary focus of analysis. This basic point of departure contrasts with common approaches to narratives in research.

### **A Departure: Methods not a Methodology**

Throughout the 1990's, the American musician Prince granted very few interviews. In the interviews he did grant:

the reporter could not use a tape recorder or take written notes.... At the time, it was assumed that Prince did this because he was beavershit crazy and always wanted to be in a position to retract whatever was written about him. However, his real motive was more reasonable and (kind of) brilliant: He wanted to force the reporter to reflect only the *sense* of the conversation.... He was not concerned with being misquoted; he was concerned about being quoted accurately. Prince believed that he could represent himself better as an abstraction.... He could only be presented as the sum total of whatever was said, devoid of specifics (Klosterman, 2009, p. 16).

While I cannot agree with the full of this writer's presentation of Prince, it clearly opens up the potential for a deeper exploration of what it means to interact then present shared events. There are at least two distinct levels one can explore in a hypothetical interview of this nature. There is the concept of what he actually said—the content of the conversation, then there is the concept of the constraints placed upon the activities within the conversation—the activity. In this case, the inability of the interviewer to record or write down specific quotes obscures the level of content and highlights the activity of the conversation. The event is not simply a

set of utterances spoken in response to one another. The event carries with it this unbearably effective restraint, bringing this restraint into the content the reporter would wish to represent. Was this Prince's intention? I disagree with the writer insofar as I believe it is impossible to tell (even if Prince were to explain to us his reasoning we would only have our memory of the conversation to support our interpretation). The effect, or one effect, is a heightened sensitivity to the context of the exchange rather than the content of particular statement. What we 'know' or 'learn' about Prince emerges on the level of the speaking event. "Even when you're simply transcribing a person's direct dialog, you will rarely capture how they actually feel" (Klosterman, 2009, p. 23). What we can know about a person in terms of what they feel or what they mean, slips into the realm of the shared event.

Thus, there are no great confessionals in this research project and no great realizations in terms of the nature of participants or the origins of their beliefs. I am not seeking to answer 'why' questions through the discernment of categories or identities. I am not attempting to construct any whole or molar subjectivities nor explain behaviors—non-Korean participants did x because of y—Korean teachers expressed x in response to y. This would be to limit the inquiry to content and it would mean to simply represent as a narrative represents one's perceptions. There are no *why* questions to be answered here. Instead the inquiry centers around *how*. Deleuze (1995) locates the emergence of narrative in the moment that events are attributed to a sensory-motor system. The cohesion that arises within a narrative is the linking of sensations to a body. Everything falls into a line or trajectory. Leaving out proper names as much as I could is one way I have attempted to resist the cohesion of a narrative and the collapse of sensory-motor systems into a collection of phrases, statements, and interpretations which represent the experiences of a sensory-motor system. Deleuze and Guattari (1994) speculate about sense, percepts, and affects as prior to this connection to an identifiable sensory-motor system (brains, bodies, and

interpretations as we can recognize them from outside or beyond the event). Such work has produced a lot. But it is limited here. My goal is to play with the notion of understanding individuals and events in a conceptual rather than a structural or functional manner.

I therefore favor the term *emergent methods* of classroom research as a description of my own reformist project—reforming my own conventions as the project unfolds.

By their very essence, analytical cartographies reach beyond the existential territories to which they are assigned. Like artists and writers, the cartographers of subjectivity should seek, then, with each concrete performance, to develop and innovate, to create new perspectives, without prior recourse to assured theoretical foundations or the authority of a group, school, conservatory, or academy. . . . Work in progress! (Guattari, 1989, p. 133).

The very 'idea' of unblocking concepts is tricky, as any unblocking is both partial and conceptual. By using participants words alongside of my own words and memories, I am seeking to open up common educational concepts and reveal their growth and manifestations within the roughly confined event designated as the SLA course of the Spring semester in 2010. Thus, my research moves toward the a-subjective—without sustained identifiable subjects about whom I form categorical interpretations and make defensible claims. Instead, it is an assemblage that is more of an attempt out of categories and analogical thought (these subjects reacted *like* this). My goal is to try and think and act differently both pedagogically and methodologically.

In a sense, this entire work is an attempt to rethink this context, to rethink teaching and teacher education in an international space, and to rethink the forms of knowledge that arise from conventional research practices. Thus, rather than treating narratives as structures or

functions, or even as privileged modes of becoming, I use the term narration in order to draw attention to the emergent nature of this work and to trouble the conflated nature of the collection, analysis, and reporting of data. In short, the nebulous question that drives this dissertation is “can we think this differently?” Even if this is all somewhat vague and even sanctimonious, I think its necessary given the research context.

Pedagogically I seek to better understand how the use of personal narratives in a theoretically dense MA level SLA course can be used to afford participants the opportunity to explore and to resist generalizable learning theories. I explore ways participants express their understanding of SLA theories and how they tie these theories into their personal experiences. I also ask whether their expressions conform to scientific-realist views where the theories iterate scientific truths about language and learning, or if participants engage with more interpretive perspectives that disrupt scientific-realism. I seek out the potential of personal narratives as a means through which theoretical concepts might be problematized or verified and in what ways this kind of work affords participants the opportunity to rethink both experience and theory. Did participants orient themselves to theories as scientific truth?

Guiding questions are as follows:

- How do participants narrate their experiences as English teachers in the Korean context? What identifications do teachers make in a theory-based, master's level course? How do these identifications reemerge and break-down across narrations?
- How were my experiences and my needs as an educator negotiated? In what ways did tensions between student goals and my needs emerge and how did they influence the direction of the course?
- In what ways can teacher narrations serve as a curricular foundation for teacher

education in a theory-oriented graduate course for teachers of English in Korea?/ What are some resistances to such narrations and why might they persist?

- How can such teacher narrations offer a potential for developing local interpretations of linguistic and educational theory among English teacher in one graduate level course?

## Part Two: Interaction

### Chapter Five: Thinking and Rethinking a Place of Learning

#### (Expectations)

##### First Day of Class

I showed up thirty minutes early to arrange the desks in a circle. According to my attendance sheet eighteen students were en route. In the small classroom, cramped with two-person tables that could accommodate roughly forty students, achieving a circle required a lot of shuffling around. I ended up dragging several tables into the hall and could still barely form a circle around the perimeter of the room. Students began showing up about fifteen minutes before class, and by the time everyone had arrived my attempts to create a comfortable environment looked ridiculous. We were all elbow to elbow and visibly uncomfortable. I had expected this set-up to be more conducive to conversation but the results seemed forced—too late to change. I handed out the syllabus and began discussing my approach to the course.

According to the plan, participants would be reading roughly one chapter per week from the course book (Johnson, 2004) alongside of optional supplementary readings (empirical studies and theoretical pieces which elaborated on material in the course book). I explained that rather than describing agreed upon conventions and scientific discoveries in the field of SLA I intended to present the field as a history of theoretical arguments. As this was a more accurate portrayal of the field, I told students that their principal task over the semester would be to utilize supplementary readings (provided on our class website), class discussions, and personal reflections on language learning and teaching experiences to

decide which theories made the most sense to them. In addition to weekly posts on a class Wiki, participants would be responsible for writing vignettes each week based on personal experiences they believed were connected to the theories we were covering on a given week.

The only task I asked students to complete on the first day was a written statement about what they hoped to gain from the course. I asked participants to complete the sentence “this semester in our SLA course, I hope to...” on a note card I handed to each person. I asked them not to include their names on the cards as I didn't want any participants to be intimidated or nervous about revealing their personal goals, and because I wanted the responses to be as honest as possible. I also felt that for the purposes of analysis it would be more beneficial to view these responses not as personal motives that I would attach to particular identities, but rather as a collection of voices. I didn't want to attach particular desires or goals to particular people or arbitrarily assigned groups just yet. One might think of:

a strange respect for the individual, an extraordinary respect: not because he would seize upon himself as a person and be recognized as a person... but on the contrary because he saw himself and saw others as so many 'unique chances'—the unique chance from which one combination or another had been drawn. Individuation without a subject (Deleuze & Parnet, 1977, p. 40).

These words express a manner of treating both myself and other classroom participants—as material possibilities which become limited with the imposition of categories of any sort (including names, nationalities, and the like). Steering clear of specific categorizations was one part of my efforts to resist ascribing identities upon the data. I wished to see responses as a collection of concepts that could function as a web of possible directions, and I wished to

sever these possibilities from individual intentions. These responses were a set of concepts that we as a group created. In practice, however, these theoretical imaginings quickly slipped into the habit of stable categories—posing a new set of challenges to me as both an instructor and a researcher.

Out of the eighteen responses I found that most expressed fairly ambiguous goals. Responses suggested to me that participants had a fairly wide range of expectations, though explicit descriptions of larger social issues in teacher education, things such as the importation of academic knowledge from foreign sources and the spread of English language in general, were noticeably absent. In itself this may not be significant, but given my own proclivities, such an omission was meaningful to my approach to the course. As it is widely recognized that neo-liberalism and globalization in teacher education manifests itself through a standardization of knowledge, what counts as knowledge, and what teachers need to know (Bates, 2008), I felt that two points needed to be addressed. First, I wished to explore the value in or dangers of imparting standardized knowledge, and secondly I hoped to interrogate the sources of such knowledge. If these were my primary concerns, my own goals already seemed to be at odds with those described by course participants'. The dangers of importing theoretical knowledge as solutions to Korean problems was not something that participants felt the need to address in our opening task. There even seemed to be a tacit approval of generalized scientific knowledge. These social and global concerns would require a little more time to emerge as legitimate discussion topics. Would I need to impose them upon their already complex expectations?

In all honesty, my initial reactions were quite sour. I noted that most goals centered around three general goals: 1) acquiring effective teaching techniques, 2) gaining knowledge of theoretical principles that would enable teachers to address teaching difficulties, and 3) developing a deep understanding of theoretical knowledge for no specified reason.



Expectations seemed conducive to particular divisions of labor within the classroom setting, and there were no obvious deviations from the utilitarian and professional goals that tend to accompany the standardization of teacher education in countries all over the world.

Nothing here seemed to reveal any resistance to these trends, and every category that emerged positioned participants as seekers of knowledge, the scientific field as the pool of knowledge, and myself as the mediator. Responses suggested that content should consist of representative knowledge of either efficient means (teaching techniques) or scientific functions (theory). It was easy to pass these week one responses as typical of higher education in Korea and elsewhere. After all, several students in our program had already expressed to me that their primary purpose for pursuing their master's degree was to prepare for various teachers' exams. They seemed to be seeking out knowledge from texts and from an instructor for the purpose of becoming more effective and efficient teachers of English, and of furthering their professional careers. Everything that I wished to challenge stared right at me as I arranged and interpreted the note cards with their responses scrawled across them. I saw no real surprises and I believed that my points of departure had been drawn (only later did I recognize that I was probably the one drawing them).

The first general goal to emerge in the participant responses was a general desire to improve teaching practices. Typical statements included "I want to find a better way to teach" and "I signed up [for this course] in order to prepare myself for teaching difficulties" (Participant responses, March, 2010). I could see general assumptions that the acquisition of effective teaching methods would be a natural result of learning the course material. Pennycook (1989) criticized the common understanding that teaching practices emerge from an increasing base of scientific knowledge and demonstrated that the history of teaching practices is a local and contextual rather than a linear and additive phenomenon. The teaching of language has never been unified in ways that the 'field' would assert, and the

emergence of a field of teaching methods based on universal principles (whether they are cognitive or behavioral in nature) may very well be a reflection of so called scientific fields imposing themselves on teachers. Phillipson (1992) went further with his well known proclamation that the formation of a scientific field around English language teaching was a direct function of global imperialism. In relation to participants' responses, Phillipson (1992; 2008) seemed to be spot on. Participants confirmed the value of such scientific knowledge and a desire to model teaching practices according to the principles of such knowledge. Efficiency and effectiveness were the purposes most commonly mentioned.

The remaining two themes I extracted from the responses seemed to further confirm my concerns. Responses repeatedly centered around a union between theory and practice, a general concept that I found quite appealing. One stated that the purpose of the course was to “understand psychological ways as well as techniques” (Participant response, March 2010). Statements such as “the most effective ways of learning the second language” and “how students learn a second language” (Participant response, March, 2010) were littered throughout and augmented by the desire to learn “new ways to teach” and “the most effective ways of learning a second language” (Participant responses, March, 2010). What is interesting here is the way this participant limited language learning to students, and thus suggested that the processes we were studying were limited to school practices. In other words, the needs of schooling came to the forefront while the field of SLA became a set of scientific discoveries that administrators and teachers would adapt to their teaching situations. It also became a set of answers or possible answers to the problem of English. The application of these themes to practice seemed to be the holy grail of their education endeavors. The implications of these desires were as yet unclear. Improving oneself, fulfilling one's duty as a teacher by learning the most recent theories, and the desire to be as efficient an English teacher as possible were driving forces in these early responses.

Voices focusing on theoretical knowledge seemed to center around a narrow understanding of the SLA field. The field was a set of scientific findings that addressed “basic behavior” or “the way language works in the brain” (Participant responses, March, 2010). While behaviorism and cognitive processes have dominated SLA since the 1960's, the field has more recently included social concerns and sociocultural conceptions of language use and mental functioning (Johnson, 2004; Lantolf, 1996). Even so, responses showed that learner behavior and cognition remained emblematic of the field. Even more comments, such as “I wish to learn about childrens' acquisition process” and “SLA can tell me how we process language” (Participant responses, March, 2010) addressed cognition as a universal process. It seemed that a general conception of SLA was that it was a scientific field that dealt with universal principles of mental cognition. Coincidentally enough, the first chapter of the course textbook addressed the limitations of a cognitive approach to SLA, and mapped out the ways that such approaches serve to disempower teachers. What seemed to be basic and prevalent assumptions about the class were precisely the first points of contention that we would face in the course content.

If my own impulse to challenge common constructions of expertise and knowledge were outside of the scope of what it seemed students expected to be doing here, pushing against those boundaries would pose somewhat of a problem, both philosophically and practically. How could I justify a pedagogy that rejected foundational and common sense truths about teaching and learning to teach? How could I, as an outsider, confront and challenge the goals that participants brought to our graduate program? To assert from the outset that the course would not be structured in a way that was conducive to the acquisition of general knowledge would run the risk of undermining participants' goals of becoming 'experts'. Thus, from the outset I had to be aware that my intentions of situating knowledge in teaching and learning experiences could potentially alienate participants own constructions of

expertise, and may threaten the trajectory of becoming expert in the English teaching profession in Korea. If it is true that many Korean teachers and prospective teachers enroll in graduate programs for the purpose of preparing for highly competitive and highly standardized teacher exams (Andrew, 2007), and as an outsider concerned with imposing a foreign epistemology, negotiating such concerns would become a primary pedagogical task.

### **Expecting Expectations**

I have no idea if my rough categorizations might be convincing to anyone else, but they strike me as a little too cozy with my original personal and theoretical concerns. What coalesced were predictable conclusions that surrounded my own points of tension based on nothing more than simple responses to a vague question. My reductions only required a little knowledge of globalization and abstract conceptions of how professionalization was effecting teacher education as a whole. It all fits a little too perfectly. While it may well be the case that the discourse of professionalization had a profound impact on participants' expectations, it is just as easy to speculate that these categories were ready to leap into any number of directions and could have any number of causes and implications. My conclusions are, perhaps, a product of the impulse to categorize, and to formulate fixed interpretations, more than they are a realistic depiction of what was really going on. More accurately, it is only one of any number of potential descriptions and directions. After all, there is no way to be sure if these responses can reveal any 'actual' goals or if they were simply a reflection of what participants thought I expected them to write. At the very least I would have to recognize that these personal goals were both individual intentions as well as a means of engaging with me via this mode of communication. It is important to take participants at their word while keeping in mind the conditions under which they expressed themselves. If I wish to avoid the impulse of simply working within and against my own constructions, then acting upon subtle

opportunities to rethink these responses can be crucial step towards building a pedagogy that confronts these problems.

With a little experimentation it becomes obvious that responses could trigger multiple meanings. When one participant stated the need to learn “how SLA influences learning and studying a second language” (Participant responses, March, 2010), one could interpret it as a fairly typical statement expressing the desire to create a more efficient classroom based on scientific principles. *How can SLA knowledge improve my teaching?* One could just as easily focus on the use of the word *influences* and suppose that the writer is seeking out a better understanding of the ways that the field itself has imposed itself upon local classroom practices. The ambiguity is an obvious effect of a vague question and a very short answer, but the ambiguity is precisely what allows me to both impose my own concerns using the words of others, and what affords me the opportunity to work through some of the limitations I am placing on responses.

Other responses seem to augment an efficiency-based perspective in conjunction with reflective and/or personal goals: “I hope I can better understand my teaching methods and how they influence students.” I want “to be more sensitive to students' needs.” “I want to find a connection between L1 & L2 acquisition” (Participant responses, March, 2010). One could interpret each of these statements as signifying the pursuit of outside knowledge as a solution to real-world teaching events. The second statement in particular goes so far as to invoke a potentially emotional and intuitive skill, and suggests that knowledge of the SLA field can help a teacher develop these skills. *Learn the principles and develop the sensitivity of a great teacher. If I understand the mental functioning of my students, the fundamental points along the process they undergo, I will lead them more effectively.* But what is the goal? In both cases the writers focus on a relationship with language learners and express a need/desire to understand them more fully. There is no reason to assume that any of these participants

consider the field of SLA to offer anything more than a set of tools for reflection or ideas to be reflected upon. In other words, none of these statements directly determines that the answers to their problems lay within the 'scientific truths' posited by SLA. Based on the responses alone, it is impossible to say if the pursued knowledge is located within 'the field' or within the participants' reflective appropriation of general concepts. *I cannot understand my students resistance in class. What do researchers have to say about this? Do their ideas have any use in my setting? What other issues might contribute to my students difficulties learning English? If they have no trouble expressing complex ideas in their first language, then what other factors do we have to consider?*

In fact, there are more responses that emphasized teaching contexts, participant's own particular problems, and their identities as teachers. One response stated, "I want to set up my own philosophy to teach students" (Participant response, March, 2010). Nowhere in the week one responses is there clearer evidence that participants sought to appropriate SLA to their individual teaching practices and identities. To make one's own philosophy suggests that furthering one's knowledge of the field fuses with one's own beliefs, needs, and capabilities. The outcome is not *knowing*, but as the participant stated, a *setting up*, a production—a creation augmented by the reflections of others who have contributed to the field. The value of course content would then rest in its capacity to be understood and appropriated by individual educators—one can envision the creation of something new and individual, rather than a simple one way flow of knowledge from either 'the West' into Korea or from SLA experts to English teachers.

The move to categorize responses was conducive to a reiteration of my own concerns. and therefore presents a point of departure rather than a place of arrival. Tracing potential directions, what seemed to be counter-intuitive readings of the ways concepts were potentially constructed, gave me the opportunity to rethink my beliefs and my rather closed

and predictable interpretations of participants' responses. Playing with these readings produced ambiguity and revealed that there are various potential points of entry besides my original concerns surrounding hegemony and globalization via academic theory. Beginning with a first principle, that of theoretical and professional hegemony, only limits my own orientation to the class and my understandings of other individuals.

That said, there also seemed to be plenty of evidence for the primacy of the effective-efficiency model, where students would come to my course and learn the scientific knowledge produced by SLA in order to improve the effectiveness and the efficiency of their teaching. After all, if various participants interpreted the field as a science of “how the brain works” and “the study of how a second language is processed” (Participant responses, March, 2010), then I would feel a responsibility to offer course participants a greater range of choices and a variety of views of what kind of knowledge the field actually seeks to produce. If participants indeed were pursuing generalized theoretical knowledge then I would have something tangible to work against. These are, however, only a sliver—a single possible trajectory.

My own fears, my own baggage, and the goals and possible goals of everyone involved in the course were anything but a simple identifiable tension or two way push and pull. “Whenever one believes in a great first principle, one can no longer produce anything but huge sterile dualisms” (Deleuze & Parnet, 1977, p. 54). Coming into this setting armed with my concerns and my abstract knowledge about theoretical hegemony was leaving me no other pedagogical options than to react to this principle. I had named my enemies right from the start—those creatures one calls 'standardization' and 'professionalization'. If I came here believing that structures and functions of language are a foundation for a worldwide market (Thornbury, 1997), and pedagogical knowledge was the basis of educational globalization (Bates, 2008), then these would be my principle enemies before even meeting any class participants or hearing their ideas.

## Considering Pedagogy

The problem of confronting students with contradictory goals to both one another and to a teacher is an old one—and probably inevitable, to some extent, for any progressive educator. This is particularly meaningful to teachers who take on the role of challenging or deconstructing students' identities (Aveling, 2006; deFreitas & McAuley, 2008; Pennington, 2007). Aside from the obvious contradiction of trying to undermine or challenge power while actually wielding power (at least in the limited space of the classroom), and the problem of viewing such goals as universally applicable, there are immediate problems with confronting students' desires. How can I really understand or claim to understand their desires? I assume that I cannot. Deconstructing identities functions by first locating them, creating them, and finally dismantling them—ideas rule such pedagogies. Possible selves and potential directions are nowhere to be found. So it is vital to my own purposes here to recognize the constraints and constructions that I impose.

I find myself bound up in two contradictory readings of participant responses, both of which present their own sorts of pedagogical problems. The first focuses on a desire for both theoretical and practical knowledge sanctioned by the academic field of SLA and personified by me. This view concerns itself with the flow of knowledge from outside in, from West to East/ North to South. The second presents academic knowledge as a set of concepts which affords participants an opportunity to formulate their own beliefs and reflect on their own teaching practices. The former reading is one expression of my own demons, my own tensions and concerns that I attempted to outline in Chapter Two. The latter, my alternative interpretation, is reminiscent of the discourse of glocalization that is increasingly popular in educational research (Brooks & Normore, 2010). This refers to the dialectic between international global forces and the manifestations of these forces in national and local spaces



(Weber, 2007). While it is helpful to think of my local place of teaching and learning in terms of a relationship with outside forces, global markets, cultural shifts, and educational policies, it is important to remember that it “is an abstraction, useful to understand and explain social change in a general and theoretical sense rather than in concrete, empirically specific ways that highlight the patterns and contradictoriness of human experience in contemporary times” (Weber, 2007, p. 280). The dialectical view embedded in 'glocalization' already presupposes a general principle (globalization) and reduces it to a dialectic, thus limiting interpretations and imposing a limited framework of what is happening, what teachers know, and what they need. One must confront the possibility that 'glocal' induces the final territorialization of local places by situating all local activity into a universal grid. It becomes impossible to recognize local activities outside of the context of this grid, when in fact, it is the grid itself that poses some of the immediate problems (or at least the justification of the most immediate problems) local places currently face. This is 'glocal' becoming as neo-liberal appropriation of the general concept of 'global'. Thus it is important to regard 'the global' as a function rather than an attribute. In such a case, a local/global dialectic no longer works when the local is an iteration of place—a way of expressing a singularity that cannot be represented in full. Situating a place on the topological map or social grid does little more than to reduce the local to a function of the global—terribly vague and gross abstractions—reduction through representation. A concrete and material engagement with places must resist the blocking of places and people into categorical expressions, and resist the impulse to reduce them to variations of a deeper fundamental homogeneity—local beings as subjects on a global grid.

On the level of teacher education practices I believe that I can confront a range of work that constructs simplistic (and sometimes complicated versions of simplistic) foundations of teachers' needs. The points that resonate are 1) my continued concerns over imported knowledge and the consequences of imposing a professional field upon English teachers in

South Korea, 2) the question of what such knowledge can potentially do for course participants, and 3) the potential of participants' reflections serving as a means of both developing and challenging general theoretical knowledge. While this presents me with a fresh new set of concepts, a pedagogy which elicits them and is conducive to partially unblocking them is still a challenge.

If “educational groups are 'called into being' and framed by institutions” (Evans, Cook, & Griffiths, 2008, p. 335) then it becomes crucial to engage with such groups in ways that escapes the institutional gaze upon the individual, and therefore, “the question of creative pedagogy becomes one of how to ‘play with’ or subvert the relations between the group and the institution” (*ibid*). The institutional setting does not determine the subjects of study. Instead of relying on subjectivity as the sole locus of analysis and engagement, I want to focus on the material becoming of people with/in concepts. Individuals merge with theory and new creatures emerge. I speak of these through the creation of concepts—unblocking these in an attempt to trace a new line of thought and to know/do differently. These concepts assemble. They have nothing to do with an essences of 'me', 'participant', 'Chomsky', 'SLA', or otherwise. What is the nature of such creatures? Where do students take this? Do participants position theory on the level of abstract truth which in turn gives shape to personal experience? Do the origins of such theory emerge as characters in their personal narratives? Are lives simply imperfect expressions of theoretical forms (in the Platonic sense)? If so, how do teachers emerge? How are teachers' roles formulated in congruence with the positioning of theoretical knowledge?

Fortunately, the course material would immediately offer the opportunity to explicitly confront some of these issues. The first chapter in the coursebook presented a critique of the cognitive bias in SLA and the need to rethink the field as a whole (Johnson, 2004). In addition, supplementary readings for the following week presented debates in SLA theory

between cognitive and socially oriented perspectives of language learning (see Beretta & Crookes, 1993; Gregg, 1993; Lantolf, 1996; Zuengler & Miller, 2006). The next chapter explores some of the ways the concept of language learning theories opened in various directions from the outset of the course discussions.

## Chapter Six: Conceiving Knowledge

### (Theory)

A teacher stands at the front of a classroom while small groups of Korean college students sit at their desks in groups of four. The teacher has given them a prompt—*describe your best vacation*. While the small groups struggle to engage in conversation, the teacher stands in front of the room with a copy of the seating chart. He matches the names on the chart with the students he observes speaking. When he sees a student speaking he places a small mark next to their name. If students put their heads down or fail to participate in the conversation he places a different mark next to their name. At the end of the semester the teacher can tally all of the marks for each name and calculate each student's score. It is all very straightforward, objective, and fair.

One participant in my SLA course had observed an expert teacher and described his lesson in this way. When I asked him to justify the teaching technique he cited 'comprehensible output' (a theory we had covered in class). This hypothesis claims that "comprehensible output may help the learner recognize that there is a gap in his or her knowledge of linguistic properties of the target language" (Johnson, 2004, p. 52). A psychological function referred to as 'noticing' (*ibid*) affords learners the opportunity to recognize what they cannot say in their target language and supposedly leads to the acquisition of new grammatical forms and new vocabulary. According to these principles an efficient and effective conversation class should seek to optimize meaningful output. The teaching technique above aligns well with a typical reading of the output hypothesis and would certainly give students the chance to speak. The prompt was related to a target-grammar structure (simple past versus present perfect verb tenses). It made perfect sense. A discussion about one's best vacation would likely require knowledge of these grammatical

rules. The technique also afforded teachers an opportunity to objectively assess and record which students were speaking the most, thus cutting out the ambiguity of participation scores. Yet one's conclusion regarding the quality of this teaching method attaches itself to the concept one decides to use to describe it.

It would be equally plausible to invoke a number of other concepts. For example, if one were to invoke theories of intentionality, real-world purpose and pragmatic effect would be the foundations of genuine communication and would therefore be necessary components in any genuinely communicative language classroom. From such a perspective, the classroom above would promote nothing more than practice with vocabulary and grammatical structures with the purpose of learning vocabulary and grammatical structures. The status of 'conversations' would come into question. From this theoretical perspective one could hypothesize that students were assessed on their willingness to practice examples of language (quite a different intention from engaging in meaningful discussion). The technique could quite likely lead to 'talk', but there is no reference to the driving forces behind any communicative act. Talking to talk—language as examples of language. To put it another way: *what is the meaning of meaningful?* Does meaning simply connote speaking a message or does the statement have to encompass genuine intentions—real-world effects? Does simply saying something that contains a message, even if that message has no purpose outside of simply speaking the message, still count as meaningful communication? *What is your favorite movie? Do you like spaghetti?* Does this lead to language acquisition? If so, does the ability to form grammatically correct sentences lead to the ability to convey one's intentions in a real-world setting? This leads to further questions regarding the definition, the purpose, and the foundations of language. More simply, these questions lead to more theories. Other possible theories might be the concept of identity (Norton-Peirce, 1995) which would likely focus on the students' desires to be seen in particular ways. The

concept of pastoral power (Foucault 1978; Schutz, 2004) might lead one to consider ways students were coerced into performing as the teacher had predetermined they should perform. The teacher was rewarding those who conformed most readily to those expectations, and the most successful students were those who were most easily led. Other concepts would undoubtedly lead one in different directions—all theories—all opening different possibilities in our understanding of a simple communicative task.

This is not news. This is, of course, indicative of any academic research. The ability to discern one perspective of many is a defining feature of the modern intellectual. In a very fundamental sense these various theories we have at our disposal all function in similar ways. Each imposes a frame upon classroom activities and ensures that they are understood accordingly. Whether it is output, power, identity, hegemony, or the like, all interactions fit into a grid which orders, territorializes, and maps out the range of possible behaviors. Understanding these behaviors means understanding the grid. Thus, social science research teaches us about our research rather than the material conditions of the world itself. From a pedagogical perspective a couple of problems become clear. How does one introduce theoretical concepts in a way that highlights this crucial limitation of theory? More practically, how can one introduce theories in ways that do not frame them as simple justifications for one's practices? More philosophically, how does one embark on theoretical discussions which do not posit such theories as scientifically sanctioned truths about the material world but instead as potentials? Adapting Deleuze and Guattari (1994), theory does not explain but itself must be explained. At the risk of falling into dichotomous thinking (theory explaining versus explaining theory), it seems worth some effort to understand how participants grasped, utilized, and manipulated theoretical concepts. How did various beliefs about the nature of theory function in our classroom?

## The Idea of Theory

It became immediately clear that theory held a tenuous place in our SLA course and that individuals had quite different ideas about what theory was and what it could do. As the opening chapter of our course book explicitly discussed the need for a shift in power in the SLA field, the positions of teachers and researchers became a dominant theme and tied in closely with concepts of theory and practice. In line with the ideas presented in our readings, a major problem with the current state of the SLA field is a division of labor mandating that researchers develop theory, policy makers create educational goals according to these theories, and teachers adapt and administer the sanctioned treatment. Researchers know and teachers do. Along these lines, one of the most urgent needs described in the reading was a movement from generalizable knowledge produced by professional researchers toward a field that embraces the contextual knowledge of practitioners, thus inciting an era of equality in SLA (Johnson, 2004). The author argued that the cognitive bias in SLA was a primary reason for current inequalities and that a paradigm shift (Kuhn, 1962) toward a 'dialogic' perspective, via contemporary applied linguistic models based on Vygotsky (Johnson, 2004; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Lantolf, 1996) would provide the framework for such an egalitarian shift. It is unclear to what extent course participants really engaged with the nuances of the author's arguments, but there was a great deal of support for the general idea of embracing teachers' knowledge and challenging the influence of professional researchers. Yet as I suggested above, this in itself did not guarantee that we would be able to grapple with theory as anything other than representations of generalized scientific discoveries.

While the rhetoric of egalitarianism and the promise of a new SLA paradigm were well-received, the initial agreement was accompanied by a degree of reticence. "A New Model of SLA Knowledge-Building is very ideal, however, the new dynamic interaction seems to me

that is impossible even though I don't want to be cynical. But it's a good proposal to open possibilities" (Class Wiki, March, 2010). Introducing this problem from the outset offered participants important opportunities to openly question the author and the framework offered in the coursebook. The gap between the ideal theory and reality opens a space for critique though this seems to take place on a level unintended by the author. More, this participant recognizes the potential of theory acting as an instrument for rethinking our practices and to "open possibilities." Thus a simple rejection or acceptance of Johnson's (2004) 'new model' misses the point. Evidence of the 'truth' of dialogism yields to the utility and the impact of such perspectives, or is at least understood as having the possibility of doing so. And the very act of questioning the author's position conjured the possibility of interrogating the generalized positions in the course book. Another comment made on the class Wiki stated: "I got strong impression that many researchers don't regard the teachers' feedback and collaborations as necessary. I sometimes feel some theories that theoreticians think are perfect don't work in some situations" (Class Wiki, March, 2010). Challenging the authority of researchers maintains a practical sense here. Local space sits beyond the reach of those who are detached from a teacher's everyday classroom practices. Even a "perfect" theory is insufficient. The notion that general knowledge does not apply directly or unproblematically to specific teaching situations suggests that the uniqueness one finds in local teaching settings surpasses the capacity of theorists to seamlessly apply knowledge to any setting. There is no shortcoming in particular theories. Rather, the critique takes place on the level of 'theory' itself. Theoretical knowledge slips into the abstract—something beyond the reality of specific settings, and the local space of teaching and learning is elevated.

A theory-practice divide personified as researcher-teacher presents an opportunity to challenge outsider knowledge via the specific needs in various teaching settings. As theory becomes abstract, and as theory becomes an extension of particular 'types' of people



(researchers or academics), individual teachers find grounds for asserting their own knowledge and justifying their practices on their own terms:

One thing I am seeing is the canyon between these researchers and myself, the teacher. And unless a researcher can come up to me and tell me the best way to help my students acquire a language...well...I'll just continue teaching as I have (Response paper, March, 2010).

This statement asserts a gap between teachers and 'others.' But this is more than a simple valuing of the practical problems of classroom teachers. The writer here places somewhat rigid expectations upon the specific work that researchers should do. *Tell me the best way.* Thus the statement simultaneously stresses the immediate teaching context, and invokes the possibility that researchers could possibly know or discern the *best way* for this teacher to teach. This leads to a curious ambiguity. Elevating the practical applications of theory shows the possibility of both challenging the ideal of a transcendent *right way* as based on scientific discoveries (as in the first two quotes), or reverses itself to regulate modes of research so that the *best way* is more easily understood by and applicable for teachers. In the second case, the knowledge researchers develop is useless unless it can be directly applied to my own context. The writer here demands concrete, even procedural knowledge, yet the only way that an outsider (an other) could posit such knowledge of this teacher's immediate context would be to generalize it. Abstract knowledge of language teaching and learning processes is therefore useless unless it functions as an abstraction in the practical setting. The *best way for my students* suggests both a capacity to resist abstract foundations as well as a demand on the means of producing a particular sort of abstract knowledge easily applied by teachers.

The immediate needs of classroom teachers continually came to the center of

discussions. As with the comment above, it was almost unthinkable to some that SLA would not directly address teaching methods. As one participant wrote, "I keep having to remind myself that this is SLA, and SLA theorists have no responsibility to make their scientific findings practical for teachers" (Response paper, April, 2010). This statement echoes an assertion I made a number of times in class. I continually distinguished between concepts created in SLA and the ways these concepts could be or had been taken up in practice. If a researcher finds that cutting students' palms and drawing blood increases their ability to retain new vocabulary then that is simply the finding. The problem of what to do with such a finding is an issue to be taken up by teachers and policy makers. I tried to reiterate this distinction because I hoped to show that research findings do not in any way determine classroom activity or teaching methods. Teachers take concepts and apply, adapt, mutate them in the uncertainty of real-world interactions. Yet this notion repeatedly slipped into a the division of labor (researcher/ teacher) we had all taken as problematic.

The researcher-theory and teacher-practitioner association provoked much stronger assertions regarding the structure of the field. Such statements often made 'theory' the primary target. In the words of one participant:

All of this theoretical research, experimentation and thesis-writing is a huge MISDIRECTION of ENERGY, TIME, and MONEY. What does the education industry really need? Simple answer: more good teachers.... To me, the answer lies in practice, not in theory and I've seen very little 'practical' in almost two years of my TESOL MA (Response paper, April, 2010, emphasis in original).

This is a clear call for change on a structural level. Yet interestingly, even though this echos sentiments in the course book in that it seeks to move away from the detached knowledge

embraced within abstract theory, this participant overlooks and even rejects the theoretical foundations for such a shift. Instead of a paradigm shift we see a rejection of science (or at least science as represented through 'research' and 'theory'). We see a call for theory to be replaced by practice:

it's time for the TESOL industry to start a shift from idolizing theory and research to endorsing a push to develop training programs based on putting theory into practice.... Along the same lines [our program] should have more practicum classes.... Until this happens, I think that a good portion of a lot of intelligent people's time, money, and energy is being wasted on intellectual posturing” (Response paper, April, 2010).

It is worth noting that the confident (perhaps overconfident) declaration for “putting theory into practice” neglects to give any elaboration on the status of theoretical knowledge. One participant explained “most people enroll in the master's program, expect to put in two years of hard work, and come out and be able to teach perfectly” (Participant interview, June, 2010). Considering the call to end “theoretical research” (whatever that might mean), and the belief that it is a waste of time, energy, and resources to develop theory, it seems important to question the plight of 'theory' and to question the status of practice if not grounded in theory. In other words, there seems to be new possibilities and new dangers in such beliefs.

The current state of both teacher education and English language teaching potentially draws these sentiments into a larger set of professional trends. It is interesting to note that the participant above used the term “industry” to describe TESOL. It is dangerous to read too much into that single word, but it most certainly hints at a link between the business world and the academic world. Regardless of theoretical position, the way in which the field is

structured takes precedence. If it is indeed true that education is giving way to neo-liberal global forces which require readily comparable curricula, methods, and homogenous assessment techniques (Bates, 2008), then the “industry” that this participant describes here is in fact thriving. In the shape of certificate programs, continuing education, and other market-driven teacher education institutions, ongoing training and improvement is most certainly happening. The declaration that we need “more good teachers” (Response paper, April, 2010) plays right into this homogenization when the notion of what makes a good teacher is left unquestioned. The demand that these institutions be practical and that they immediately improve teacher performance is well in line with not only the dictates of the private market, but are also well-aligned with the global trends which make both state mandated and market-driven demands on the results and products of education.

Thus the call to resist the importing of theory, in and of itself, in no way ensures local resistance to generalized knowledge. The call for the 'practical' here and the structural changes intended to serve it, the suggestion of an 'industry' rather than a 'field', invokes the possibility of a neo-liberal models of knowledge production and perhaps even the fusion of theory and practice into market commodities. This would be less of a rejection of 'outside' or generalizable knowledge and more of an embracing of knowledge which increases the ease through which theoretical knowledge can be effectively applied by teachers. It is therefore likely to work less as a form of resistance and more as an instantiation of presentism (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). Presentism has been defined as a belief that teachers only require immediately applicable, short-term perspectives that directly impact classroom practices (see Lortie, 1975, as cited in Hargreaves and Shirley, 2009). While 'presentism' was a term originally coined to describe the ways that teachers react to immense pressure from public schools (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009), it is now important to understand that such pressures must not only be understood in terms of state pressure on public teachers, but as

an immense private market which works alongside, and at times in conflict with, state schooling in Korea and elsewhere (Lee, Lee, & Jang, 2010). This is meaningful for our SLA course because numerous participants are a part of this private education industry and are thus affected by state mandated national exams via a private market. The ability to provide the most expedient and effective teaching methods are not only a part of public schooling but a crucial component in the English education market. Indeed, South Korea's private education industry is by far the largest in the world relative to the size of the formal education system (Dawson, 2010). This suggests that private and public institutions are engaged in a competition to meet both globally influenced and state mandated standards. So the pressures cannot be said to be simply applied to teachers employed by the state. It is a more nebulous and discrete set of pressures in some ways, and in others, much more encompassing.

In a pedagogical sense, this translated into a counter-intuitive approach to the concept of theory. Rather than advocating a synthesis of theory into practice, in the form of presenting teaching methods in line with specific theoretical positions, I found myself reiterating a division between theory and practice in the interest of displaying the ways that concepts can impact the ways we think about teaching. Voices which were critical or resistant to the very concept of theory were by no means more inherently liberating than the 'teaching' of theory. The tendency to dismiss abstract thought on the basis of complexity or a lack in procedural topographies in no way ensured the empowerment of teachers or the development of local knowledge. Indeed, if nothing else, the notion of teaching theory excused me of the awkwardness and dishonesty of posing as more knowledgeable about specific teaching contexts than the teachers themselves. This so-called distinction between theory and practice, and my resistance to business models of teacher training, gave me the sense that I was simply teaching ideas—that teachers could then decide for themselves what they meant

and in what ways they applied to their own places of practice.

There are calls to put theory to rest—to move past the institutionally invoked habits and insecurities that keep teachers believing that their own practices require some transcendent and objective knowledge. “Educational theory is a widely felt need to ground our beliefs and actions in knowledge that derives from some authoritative, external and independent source” (Carr, 2006, p. 137). If one looks at educational theory, in the abstract and disembodied sense, as an expression of the relationship between universities and practitioners (Carr, 2006), then disembodied or abstract knowledge is in fact an invention, a set of institutional practices which claim to be something they are not—namely, a set of ideas that transcend the immediate context from which they come. Abolishing these sorts of theories does not ensure the destruction of ontological abstraction or ideas but rather, abolishing these theories from the scope of educational conversations is simply a rejection of a certain type of practice (practices of theorizing in the abstract). What is missing from the very notion of education without an imposing theoretical truth serving as a justification for classroom practices is the fact that the imposition on localities, in the end, is not theoretical. It is practice that imposes. Whether these impositions take on a theoretical or a procedural flavor is beside the point.

It is important to recognize that the effective/efficiency (or presentist) model, by definition, resists the capacity to question its own premise. Of course it depends how one defines an “effective” or “efficient” teacher, but insisting that research and theory are a waste of time, energy, and resources has the effect of placing effectiveness at odds with more philosophical practices, like asking *what constitutes a good teacher, what are various ways one can understand effectiveness, and what are possible consequences to holding these as the foundations of a 'good' teacher*. This is pedagogically important because it reveals the complexity of engaging with theory and the need to recognize the various levels upon which individuals engage with it—theories of theory.

Despite my reservations about participants' calls for efficiency based models of teacher education, this does suggest that Johnson's (2004) call for empowering teachers based on a sociocultural model, in some sense, could have the effect of simply imposing one more theory—abstractions piled on top of abstractions. A shift in rhetoric does not guarantee a change in the practice of research and teaching. As one participant wrote, “in my opinion, we can't find the right answer or wrong answer *in a new model* of interaction” (Class Wiki, March, 2010). The rejection of a “new model” could have appeared out of either an acceptance of current models just as easily as it could embody a rejection of the 'model' model altogether. What sorts of teaching practices are most effective? How does one achieve higher talking times? How can a teacher maximize output? These sorts of questions suggest practical manifestations of theory. Yet the assumptions which make such models of teaching 'correct' or 'desirable' sit outside of the scope of inquiry. What are the desired outcomes? How can we know exactly what they are learning? What are some consequences of such assumptions that we may be ignoring? That which is in fact theoretical knowledge becomes axiomatic. It becomes assumed that an eighty percent talking time is optimal because it is assumed that output increases accuracy, when 'accuracy' becomes the unquestioned axiomatic foundation. The layer of inquiry is reduced to *how does one actualize these axioms in various contexts?* What is missing is a locally devised theory of knowledge which approaches more fundamental and philosophical questions. Such 'practicum' models are espoused as empowering teachers, but the assumptions become obscured. Rather than make theory axiomatic, it is potentially beneficial to inquire into the axiomatic and expose its tenuous and theoretical nature.

It is worth noting that such a 'practicum' style of teaching would potentially bring the knowledge of outsiders into teaching practices in new ways—invoking a more nuanced notion of authority on classroom practices. You may adapt your practices as you see fit but they

must adhere to a set of principles that will go unchallenged and remains outside of discussion. There are numerous ways to achieve the eighty percent talking time goal but there is no sphere for challenging that goal, nor is there in-depth discussion of the underlying assumptions upon which the goal stands. The danger is that the theory becomes common sense and the real skill becomes applying the theory that has been handed down by the unquestioned heights of SLA abstraction.

### **Theory Itself**

Any hopes that the course would center around a sustained rejection of all outside knowledge quickly proved to be wildly inappropriate. I believed that participants would jump at the chance to critique not only individual theoretical positions but the larger practice of theory in general. As I attempted to argue above, the rejection of 'theory' in favor of practical training in no way guaranteed an embrace of local knowledge or any substantial challenge to the authority of outside voices. Yet a sustained inquiry of these issues clashed with *theory as content*, which I define here as a result of beliefs in the existence of abstract principles of language learning and the inherent value of such knowledge. A number of participants expressed a desire to understand scientific principles as such—outside the realm of practice and experience. Such assertions influenced the directions of the course more than I could have anticipated.

Several weeks in I had a rather tense exchange with one participant. In a private exchange this person snapped “I don't want to talk about experience, I want to know what these theorists *actually said*” (Personal communication, April, 2010). This was obviously in partial response to the weekly assignments requiring participants to relate a personal experience with language to the theories under discussion. We had been spending



considerable class time trying to connect personal experiences to theoretical concepts. Up to that point in the course, we had spent between a third to a half of all class time reading and discussing participants' vignettes. I had avoided lecturing altogether and instead had been attempting to pose my own questions, and tried to provoke participants to direct their own questions toward possible connections between the readings and the weekly vignettes. While discussions admittedly centered on my own questions, and the connections I was seeking between the personal vignettes and the theoretical concepts in the chapter were slow coming, I was quite surprised by the force of this person's assertion. The exchange expresses a concept of personal experience becoming a distortion of abstract principles. The 'actual' theoretical position, 'theories themselves', supersede the directions teachers take them or the ways that they grow in reality. There was further evidence that the vignette assignment, and the focus on experience, worked in opposition to *theories themselves*. As another participant explained, "I wanna know or study exact definitions. I'm a little confused about the definition of theory" (Course evaluation, June, 2010). In conjunction with the earlier complaints, this statement suggests that there was some reticence to delve completely into experience without a solid a priori understanding of the theories. An understanding of the theory was required prior to personal interpretations or reflections upon practice. Indeed, numerous statements alluded to the need to understand the underlying theory before delving into the supposedly more difficult task of exploring what theory can do. "I'm a little confused about the definition of theory" potentially expresses an uncertainty not only in particular theories but in the meaning and status of *theory itself* (an altogether different level of inquiry from *theories themselves*). One can speculate that the very notion of theoretical ideas in and of themselves becomes problematic. In other words, participants may have been unsure what 'theory' actually means. What a fabulous goal for the course—inquiry into the meaning of theory rather than theories. Though as a starting point, participants resisted such

uncertainty. “I wanted less time for discussion and more lecture time” (Course evaluation, June, 2010), and “I think we spent a little too much time discussing. I wanted more lecture so I could understand basic concepts” (Course evaluation, June, 2010). My responsibility as an instructor seemed to include alleviating such uncertainty, and direct instruction seemed a common and recognizable request.

I therefore made a major shift in the ways I approached the course material. I broke my cardinal rule. I began lecturing—even constructing power point presentations. I began giving my interpretations of theories. This was significant to me, as power point has (and in some ways still does) represent the ultimate tool of reduction and outside authority. *Look at these bullet points. Copy these gross simplifications of extremely complex ideas. Memorize them and understand them because they represent the knowledge of SLA.* For the remainder of the course I began each class with a presentation or a somewhat rigidly structured activity aimed at producing explicit definitions, examples, and descriptions of the content of course readings. I justified this by presenting theories not as abstract discoveries but as responses to other theoretical positions. In other words, Chomsky and Universal Grammar would have to be understood in the context of a debate between innatists and behaviorists. Vygotsky would have to be understood, in part, as a response to Piaget. A dialogical component comes to the forefront and presents somewhat of a challenge to the notion of universal principles toward which researchers and theorists edge ever closer.

In tandem with this new compromise was an overtly critical stance toward the 'actual truth' of the ideas we discussed. In other words, a potential emerged where the field itself could become a space where a truth or scientific discovery outside the scope of institutional practice was unthinkable. Again, this mirrored the tone of the book we were reading in that the notions of bias and of perspective were highlighted. Which of course invoked conflicting responses. Indeed, a number of participants brought up this issue in relation to the book we

were using. "This book is strange. Most textbooks have bullet point summaries and a list of main points at the end of each chapter. This one just has a bunch of debates." (Response paper, April, 2010). Another said, "the voice of the author is so different from many other SLA books, of course, by my understanding. She shouts at readers 'Horray for Vygotsky , Back off, Chomsky'. Interesting!" (Class Wiki, March, 2010). It might then be possible that working through the ideas within this particular textbook has the potential of disrupting realist or scientific views of the favor and provoking more suspicious or even critical readings of what was presented as knowledge. One participant even admitted "I never thought a textbook could be biased" (Course evaluation, June, 2010). This is a far cry from a view that all textbooks are biased and need to be engaged with thoughtfully or critically, but it does provoke one to consider that focusing on paradigmatic debates in the field could lead to fuller and less trusting interpretations of the field. In a sense, the author of our primary text became an unreliable narrator, and participants often described the bias in her arguments. One person wrote "I hope that her bias doesn't prevent her from giving clear and reasonable arguments" (Class Wiki, March, 2010). Another complained about the partial language the author used in a short biographical introduction to Vygotsky, "now she says 'as one would expect of a genius, some of his ideas transcend time and space' whereas [in earlier chapters] everyone was some kind of a cognitive jerk." (Class Wiki, May, 2010). It would then be fair to say that presenting theoretical concepts as paradigmatic debates, rather than a collection of additive scientific facts, at least in some ways undermined the sociocultural theoretical positions advocated by the author, while provoking readings of the field as uncertain and open to the fallible practices of human interpretation. So in a sense, our engagements with the book undermined the author's agenda of promoting a new paradigm in SLA, while it did incite more complex and even critical readings of knowledge production in SLA.

The emphasis on critique in course interactions was not solely viewed as empowering or

even helpful. One participant described the coursebook as “filled with negativity” (Course evaluation, June, 2010). Indeed, participants interested in finding new ideas and new possibilities for their teaching expressed a feeling of alienation. Critique thus showed the potential of shutting down (Turnbull, 1998) in a setting where many participants likely wanted to learn new ideas and to develop the possibility of implementing new ideas into their teaching. On a more positive note, one participant mentioned “what I took from this course was that there really is no final answer or truth” (Participant interview, June, 2010). But it must be noted that sustained critiques of the truth value of *theories themselves* and the immediate utility of these theories in English classrooms was far from universally appreciated by participants.

Sustained critiques of particular theories frustrated some participants by reiterating a negative tone toward mainstream concepts and an showing an incapacity to impact teaching practices in tangible ways. At the same time such critiques afforded some the opportunity to challenge authoritative voices in SLA in surprising ways. Indeed the simple fact that participants saw the textbook as biased imposed an irregularity from what some conceived as a normal course where an instructor guides students through a textbook and ensures that everyone is able to grasp the basic content in acceptable ways. The practice of seeking out bias and making this bias a focal point of discussion invoked the possibility to questioning the format and content of the textbook. Whether or not this transformed into what some may call a 'critical consciousness' is another question altogether. Here it is only possible to say that questioning the perspectives of an author brought about the potential of viewing such texts in more complex ways. This, however, was by no means unanimously accepted. Some were able to grasp and appreciate the ensuing ambiguity, some were frustrated by the sheer impossibility of immediately transforming critique into effective teaching practices.

## Theory and Experience

Attempts to critique what I viewed to be imposing forces from the outside often invoked surprising resistance. This could not solely be chalked up to the need or desire to develop teaching practices as suggested in some statements above. Conceptions of theory moved in surprising directions that seemed to have little to do with their immediate applications in practice, and remained quite distinct from the concept of *theory itself*. Some examples came to the forefront during the third week of class when we covered a chapter on behaviorism. This chapter presented a review of the history of early SLA and described early research associated with behaviorist learning theories. The chapter covered some of the debates that led to the establishment of a cognitive tradition in SLA. While it was obvious that the author presented behaviorism as little more than a historical relic that set up the rise of a cognitive tradition based on the ideas of Noam Chomsky (Johnson, 2004), it was surprising that this 'relic' was the center of quite strong responses among participants.

Initially these responses generated a quite logical tone that embraced the common sense tone of behaviorist learning theory.

Actually I agree that the learner's external environment served as a stimulus for the processes of learning, so I think that's why most of learners and parents would like to make or find a good environment for learning. Because it might bring some results it called habit formation (Class Wiki, March, 2010).

Behaviorism here offered the participant a very practical description that justified common beliefs that a suitable environment is necessary for good language learning.

It's obvious that behaviorist, cognitivist, sociocultural, and just about any other learning theory of note would likely stress the importance of the proper environment for language learning. Still, the straightforward stimulus/response construction resonated with a number of participants and played to common sense notions of repetition and memorization.

I totally agree that we need a new trend rather than Behaviorism, however I can't ignore the effect of behaviorism. We have a big class in public school, so I sometimes push my student to practice some pattern drills!! It really works (Response paper, March, 2010).

This statement reiterated the common sense and practical implications one could extract from behaviorist learning theories. The so-called new trend stood in opposition to the reality of teaching in Korean public schools. Challenges to the feasibility of a new paradigm in SLA relied on practical implications without exploring nuanced issues in the theory itself. Common-sense thus refuted theory by displacing the conditions of the inquiry. The practical grounds of teacher practice dictate the use of a theory, rather than the converse where theoretical parameters gauge the effectiveness of teaching practice. Yet the turn is incomplete here. The question of exactly what effective teaching is remains outside of the scope of inquiry. The stimulus/response model simply 'works', and there was no exploration of the consequences of adopting this model as a principle of language learning, nor did participants challenge the feasibility that such theories could simply be used to justify large class sizes and rote memorization as a basis for language learning. We are left with no inquiry into the question of what it means 'to work'. Another statement reiterates this clearly:

I wonder if we can be possibly achieve best results from the new model of SLA Knowledge-Building in real life? I want to learn about the right way or the wrong way but in my opinion, we can't find the right answer or wrong answer in a new model of interaction (Response paper, March, 2010).

Again, the use of practical teaching experience served to verify the theory, but it did not lead to a deeper engagement with the assumptions and the consequences of this learning theory. The so called “best results” were not in question. Theories were not judged here by the ways they lead to various conceptions of 'best' but on whether or not they could lead to this unquestioned notion of effectiveness.

Originally presented as mere footnote in the history of SLA, behaviorism stood as a site of important questions about the relationship between the learning context in Korea and other parts of the world. One statement on the class website provoking this possibility stated “behaviorism has some points which we should pay attention to.... we need to practice and memorize the basic patterns especially in EFL environments like Korea where we are hardly exposed to the authentic English use” (Class Wiki, March, 2010). This statement, along with numerous others, maintained a need to understand older learning theories that had been officially discredited in SLA discourses. What stands out about the statement above is the common sense tone that asserted the need to learn basic patterns (much like the preceding statements) and the association between this need and the “EFL environment.”

The 'nature' of Korea as an EFL environment came up in discussions, posts, and response papers throughout the course. The EFL/ESL divide was continually invoked as a means of describing *why* behaviorism was appropriate in the Korean context. It was, in fact, one of the most common means through which participants asserted the unique qualities of

their classrooms and resisted the general theories in the textbook. Behaviorism and EFL intermingled and provoked strong connections between theoretical knowledge, teacher subjectivity, and geography. I first noticed this possibility when a few Korean participants snickered while I described the basic idea of stimulus/response. One person spoke up, “do you think the Korean education system is based on behaviorism?” Several more students giggled softly. Several others confirmed that Korean schooling conformed to the principles we had been discussing. Further, they asserted that the lack of opportunities to engage in authentic English dialog in this 'EFL' setting meant that the straightforward memorization approaches were necessary. The very act of designating behaviorism as an obsolete theory in SLA became an indictment (or at least a positioning) of Korean schooling. Even though the crux of the theory of behaviorism as presented in the Johnson (2004) text was North American (B.F. Skinner) and European (via a brief introduction to structural linguistics), the entire notion of behaviorism quickly and strongly associated with the Korean English educational context. Secondly, the dismissive tone that the author took toward the theory incited a defense of the effectiveness of behaviorism *in an EFL environment*. The defense of behaviorism, time and time again, came down to a description of Korean as an *EFL setting* where more 'natural' or organic approaches to language acquisition were not practical. Korea became an expression of a 'lack' of opportunities to speak English in proper settings. The EFL setting itself served to defend language teaching in Korean schools. Whether this was more the effect of my own teaching, the tone of the book, or of the ways participants engaged with the theory, it became obvious that more was at stake here than an elaboration of a dead-and-gone learning theory.

Through the concept of *EFL* (a theory of the spread of global English), 'behaviorism' became a concept unique to the specific 'lack' perceived in the Korean setting. The fact that it was presented as an obsolete theory has the capacity to further the notion that Korean



education is somehow peripheral and distant from the cutting edge work done in places more central to the production of SLA theory. The linear or additive model of theoretical progress, which was advocated in our course book (behaviorism was the first paradigm, then we stumbled upon cognitivism, now we have a new dialogic theory which fills in the gaps left with the old ones), aligned with a general need to understand not only the newest, most 'complete' language learning theories, but also invoked the need to understand past theoretical positions which had dominated the field. Statements alluding to this 'need for the basics' persisted throughout the course and accompanied virtually every critique of older SLA models and theories. "I think we should not discard the aspects of previous findings" (Class Wiki, March, 2010). A foundation in the basics of SLA was important and perhaps more useful to English teachers in an EFL context. Yet the linear model of theoretical progress (behaviorism → cognitivism → dialogism) effectively placed Korean education in a position of being 'behind' countries who could afford to adopt more progressive theories. This was based on affordances in so called ESL settings where it was possible to develop natural language skills.

One problem I found myself constantly bringing up was the fact that behaviorism never was intended to be a teaching method. While there are possible connections between behaviorism and the well-known audio-lingual method (Pennycook, 1989), as well as a natural association between pattern drilling and habit formation, it is important to remember that behaviorism is a theoretical construct that seeks to describe and explain language acquisition. It is not a set of methods that teachers practice in real-life classrooms. While I took constant care not to conflate these two points, the connections between the various learning theories and classroom methods persisted. This is yet another danger in the ways that theory tended to slide into teaching methods and practices. Adhering to a linear model of theoretical development only seemed to exacerbate the tendency to situate Korean English education at the periphery of SLA when generalized notions of teaching procedures collapsed

into the general learning theories in a straightforward way. The practices in Korean public schools became confirmation that Korean education was not only 'behind' the supposedly more progressive ESL world in terms of theoretical orientations, but the discrepancy in popular teaching practices followed and confirmed this knowledge gap. On the other hand, the particular needs of the 'EFL' world served as a justification for this gap and even as a foundation for resisting new paradigms and new impositions.

With behaviorism in particular, but also with other approaches to SLA, numerous participants defended principles simply on the basis that it “feels comfortable and familiar” (Response paper, March, 2010) or it “what I am used to” (*ibid*). A set of nebulous teaching methods and the structure of Korean education as a whole thus found a home in the behaviorist SLA paradigm. This notion of 'feeling comfortable' turned out to be much more significant than a simple familiarity. As one participant wrote in detail about the language learning experiences of her hearing-impaired child. She described his process of learning language in terms of Chomsky's theory of universal grammar. He had great difficulties picking up language “like everyone else” (Response paper, April, 2010) and instead was able to get his ideas by using gestures and vague utterances. It wasn't until he was five that it became clear he had a problem hearing. His language learning experiences highlight the limitations of Chomsky's approach to linguistics in the real world. As Chomsky was only interested in ideal speakers in ideal settings (Chomsky, 1965), this little boy did not fit neatly into linguistic theories which did not account for the messiness of real life—in other words, it did not account for difference in a way meaningful to this mother. She perceived the abstract principles of cognitive linguistics as placing her son on the margins of language learning. His L1 learning was therefore 'abnormal' in terms of how language acquisition had been defined. This participant asserted that her son learned his first language by memorizing the sounds of syllables, then words, then finally was able to “memorize phrases” (Response paper, April,

2010) and her description sounded quite like the description of behaviorism in our coursebook. This mother attributed her son's success to an out-of-date and even archaic theory of learning.

Even if this participant's reflections were based on a misreading of theory (namely, that learning theory is equivalent to teaching techniques), this vignette was used to resist principles of Chomskian linguistics in meaningful ways. Her son's success overcoming a hearing impairment to learn his first language did not rely on behaviorism in a strict sense. It is clear that one potential objective could (and perhaps should) be to encourage participants to realize that these theories are only explanations, not scientific truths and certainly not teaching methods. That said, there is much more at play here than the simple exploration of explanations. These theories and the images that they conjure are obviously embedded in a history, and discussing the validity of these theories also conjured personal experiences associated with them. This could disrupt the entire process of narrative vignette writing as a pedagogical tool, and personal experience as a curricular device into question. I must ask myself: do these associations help gain a clearer picture of theory or do they muddle up the (sometimes thin) line between theoretical descriptions and prescriptive teaching methods? Is reflection on personal experience worth this potential misunderstanding or does this simply set up a new teaching task?

Requiring connections between theory and experience via personal narratives invoked misreadings of what theory is, and this tended to result in a conflation of SLA theory with teaching practices. Clear evidence of this was evidence in one statement, "we reject the habit formation (behaviorism) and follow the rule formation (cognitive stlye). I have never heard the dialogical tradition before but *I guess it is kind of communicative language teaching*" (Class Wiki, March, 2010, my emphasis). In short, I'm torn. While I am convinced by arguments against behaviorism as a theoretical framework for language learning, the manner in which

participants associated this theory to the real world teaching context served as a foundation for meaningful readings of SLA theories. So while it seemed that many individuals completely missed the point that behaviorism is not a teaching method, such misreadings were the source of critical readings of the text. The pedagogical question is, how can I (or should I) try to correct this misreading at the expense of undercutting a critical and personally meaningful reading of the text?

The emphasis on personal experience produced concepts which did not fit easily into a dichotomy between *theories themselves* (what the theories actually argued) and the rejection of theory in favor of practice and procedure (teaching knowledge based on obscuring theory). The narrative exploration did not make sense to those who adhered to one or the other side of the dichotomy, but provides a space for new readings and misreadings of theoretical concepts.

### **New Problems and New Concepts**

It remains unclear whether we, as a class, needed another theory of theory, a new theory of practice, or if the presentation of theoretical knowledge itself was sufficient in allowing participants to situate knowledge in their own ways. It was often difficult to distinguish a line between assumptions and facts, or more accurately, there were difficulties in distinguishing and marking what knowledge was theoretical and what was axiomatic. Theoretical constructions often took on a flavor of ontological truth, and such happenings were not least of all attributed to EFL and ESL as territories of English language learning. There is some doubt as to whether or not participants saw the EFL/ESL distinction as a theoretical construction, or if it was taken as an a priori geographical and cultural fact. Yet based on a review of the work participants produced on the topic, I believe that the tentative

historical conditions of EFL/ESL distinctions remained beyond what we were able to interrogate. The significance of this is in the continual manner in which participants invoked the “Korean” context as a means of challenging the imposition of outside theory. EFL continually stood as a justification for particular beliefs and practices at the expense of others. In this way, theoretical constructs (EFL) proved to be effective tools of resistance, though when they were used as such they slipped outside of the scope of inquiry. While it is probably useful to discuss the unique attributes of Korean education, history, and identity in relation to English language teaching and SLA theory, it is problematic to present these as fixed concepts—particularly when they are coded according to a single unifying construct such as ‘EFL’.

Participants acknowledged that theories “can have input in the decision making of SLA” (Class wiki, April, 2010). The concern here is not theory itself but the possibilities and the limitations that arise with the use of particular theories. Thus, the proper concept could retain the potential of leading to a more inclusive field, even if such concepts did not directly address the immediate context of teaching and learning.

I am interested to read on and see how she advocates ways these changes between theory and practice can be realized. I completely agree that there needs to be more input from teachers and learners, but I am unsure how this can be put into practice (Class Wiki, March, 2010).

The level of critique here is not related to teaching practice as such, but rather the practice of producing knowledge. In other words, there is some possibility of engagement with the field and the ways that various players in the field are positioned and valued. Such a view plays strongly into the potential shift away from efficiency and effectiveness models as sole

expressions of teacher development toward a broader understanding of the production of knowledge.

If 'theory' itself could be treated as a concept, then perhaps classroom practices could seek to reveal the tentative and slippery nature of the concept. The locus of inquiry could become theory rather than theories, and the focus on our exchanges could become ways that we understand and come to believe in knowledge rather than simply how we can apply knowledge. How have we come to understand theory in certain ways? What does it mean to me in light of my experiences teaching and learning languages? How do theories play out in classroom settings? What can they do for me? While I may have been successful in troubling the concept of theory, there may have been no exploration of this definition/concept that enabled participants to play, to open, or to unblock it. In other words, philosophically this is quite productive, but pedagogically we are now faced with the problem of how to engage with the uncertain and contingent foundations of these concepts in productive ways.

There is a need to explore not only in the relationship between theory and practice but between theoretical and axiomatic knowledge. Calls for shifts away from cognitive to sociocultural paradigms are often epistemological in nature. Epistemological positions were probably not sufficiently addressed in readings or in my own presentations of concepts, and this had consequences for the ways that we developed the meaning of the course content. In fact, many critiques both in the readings, and in our discussions, sought out to debunk various learning theories on scientific grounds, making the question of epistemology quite slippery. The status of the textbook becomes important here. The very notion of questioning the validity of the textbook opened possibilities for critique. Though here there is no explicit evidence of a critique of theory and the ways it can be used (the locus still seems to be logical argumentation and rational theory), there is the potential to question the validity of what is read. In this sense the textbook itself can be read as a primary source—an argument for a

certain theoretical orientation over another (sociocultural theory rather than cognitivism).

Even the overtly critical tone was appreciated by some. “I liked the book... and this course definitely helped me improve my critical thinking skills” (Course evaluation, June, 2010). So critiquing theory itself invoked at least the possibility of questioning the field of SLA and the various places people took new ideas. Yet the impact of deeper epistemological shifts proved resistant to much of the critique that came up throughout the course.

In a way, the practical problem that emerges is not concerned with 'traditional schooling' at all, as that term becomes quite meaningless in an international setting. The issue here is the professional application of policy mandates justified by abstract theoretical principles. More specifically, the target is the tendency to view such principles as axiomatic truths. The nature of education and the ways that we learn languages remain obscured in the light of effectiveness and efficiency models, within which the quality of a teacher is not based on the capacity to ask deeper questions but on the ability to apply principles in practice, without questioning or interfering with deeper unspoken assumptions upon which those principles are based.

One therefore reaches a place where one has to select a point where theoretical thought ends and axiomatic thought begins. A pedagogical problem emerges. What can we assume to be 'true' and what is up for debate? Can we just assume that the descriptor “EFL” accurately refers to Korea and all its language learning settings and all its English language learners and users? Can we assume that English itself, the object to be acquired, is in fact a homogenous knowable thing? My personal response is a resounding No! Though simply questioning 'everything' in an arbitrary way is also seems to be pedagogically ineffective.

Many participants expressed a need or desire to learn 'theory'. Though our department head repeatedly described SLA as a theoretical course (opposed to 'practical' courses such as Teaching Methods), it increasingly dawned on me that there is a little consensus on what

theory can do, what values it has for language teachers, and what it has to do with teaching. Most interestingly for me, participants' conceptions of 'professionalism' showed the capacity to bridge theory-practice divides in ways that directly challenge the status of theory, and the university representatives who embody theoretical knowledge. There is a need to challenge the blind acceptance of 'professionalism' in an increasingly global world. If we are in the midst of a paradigm shift, then it is crucial that we rethink many of the key concepts that have guided language teacher education so that we may become more responsive to new problems, dangers, and possibilities. One of the key needs is for the academically oriented forces in teacher education to grasp the consequences of market driven, evidence based forces in education at large, and to engage with teachers in ways that give rise to new ways of understanding knowledge and knowledge production, as well as new ways of developing tools that invoke thoughtful resistance to the blind acceptance of such changes. The material conditions of teacher education have changed. Binaries such as theory-practice, researcher-teacher arose in response to specific problems and specific conditions, and it is our responsibility to abandoned them once the problems they initially addressed are no longer socially salient.

In the material conditions of contemporary teacher education modern theories are gaseous by nature—though paradoxically, these gases have the capacity to impose the most rigid of structures on specific people and places and can reach into infinitely more places than ever before. Modern theories do not have an object in the way a traditional work or art, a painting, a sculpture, or an assembled good might have. Theory emerges in language and/or signs, on paper, in mass produced books, in charts, and statistical tables. None of these would be, according to anyone's common sense, resistant to reproduction in any way. There is no aura in Benjamin's (2008) sense—its materiality becoming essentially redundant. Chomsky's Language Acquisition Device is transferred via books, academic papers, films,



power point presentations—perfectly transferable from one place to the next. Theory 'itself' contains cultural traces, perspectives, assumptions, blind spots, but the medium of communication becomes redundant and thus lends itself to a sense of transferability and relevance across contexts. This leads directly to the notion one participant expressed, “I just want to know what each theorist said” (Personal communication, April, 2010). As stated in a classic essay, “by replicating the work many times over, it substitutes a mass existence for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to reach the recipient in his or her own situation, it actualizes that which is reproduced” (Benjamin, 2008, p. 22). Thus, the paradoxical situation emerges where a theory takes on truth in itself, an abstraction, to be applied and adapted to various places. Theory meets practice. But theory meets practice as a smog settles upon a landscape, conforming to the particularities of the place yet coloring everything in its own hue. Theory meets practice as pollutants from New York city meet Lake Ontario. This seems to be a predictable effect of a center/periphery relationship upheld by the material conditions of the SLA field. These conditions, such as the importation of books and products, teachers, professors, embodiments of expertise consistently flow from center to periphery. The call for a paradigm shift, and the particular theoretical points intended to act as the foundation for such a shift, were much less central to our course discussions than the simple matter of presenting the field itself as unstable, uncertain, and void of scientific truths. The material conditions of SLA practice (on the level of knowledge production) were more salient than the nuances of sociocultural theory or dialogism. Perhaps what is needed is not a new theory but a theory that becomes other-than-theory, something that imposes itself upon what is generally considered axiomatic. The field is changing regardless of whether Vygotsky or Chomsky serves as the intellectual figurehead. The emergence of market models of teacher education and the sensibility of what good teacher education entails ensure that whatever the academic model might be, the conditions of teaching and learning are changing.

This brings about new possibilities, new problems, and most importantly a need to develop new weapons that do not conform to traditional academic notions of theoretical knowledge or simplistic syntheses of theory and experience.

## Chapter Seven: Overcoming Deficits

### (Progress)

This chapter presents narrative data primarily collected in participants' personal autobiographies and inquires into the manner in which participants described their own experiences as both English language learners and language teachers. A narrative approach to personal reflection had a number of consequences, and it is worth some effort to understand the ways that these personal narratives work with concepts of professionalization and reflection (concepts that have become cornerstones of teacher education). I consider the potential of narratives and narration as a means of resisting the generalized theories upon local teaching practices. Personal narratives effectively fused language learning theory and teaching practice in a variety of ways, but that there were major limitations in the manner and scope of critique afforded by narrative frameworks.

### Professional Trajectories

Jiwon is currently a successful graduate student and elementary school teacher whose own accounts of her professional journey begin with some of her earliest memories. Many of these memories include experiences with the English language. Jiwon described herself as “a curious girl” enamored with “exotic sounds” (Course paper, June, 2010). In one reflection, she recalled listening to an audio recording of a single children's story over and over, casually imitating sounds she “didn't recognize as a language... it was fun, like play, [the language was] a toy to me” (*ibid*). As she grew into the Korean public education system and embarked on the blurry transition from Korean English student to Korean English teacher, her experiences and her interpretations of those experiences became considerably more complex

and more ambiguous. She followed a heavily scripted path of development, and yet her experiences paradoxically mirrored those around her *and* became more singular—more her own. At any rate, she learned quickly that English would not remain her 'toy' and that success would require much more than 'play.'

Beginning her English studies at seven years old in no way ensured that she would have a significant advantage over her peers. Jiwon's early start simply positioned her to begin the race in a time and place not yet swimming in an information age. In her own words, "it was not easy to access English materials, a few people who had relations in America or had a trading job could obtain them. My mother who devoted herself to her children's education got a story tape from a kindergarten teacher" (*ibid*). Jiwon recognized early the value of English and the commodities that represented it, and in some senses, she attributed her professional success to the pursuit and attainment of such commodities. Yet as she grew, story tapes gave way to much larger commodities no longer in the shape of plastic goods but instead took the shape of experiences. Additionally, Jiwon situated her exploration of theoretical concepts in SLA within such experiences. This makes for quite a complex story where one can postulate that various theoretical constructs became hurdles to be overcome via hard work, determination, and the proper sets of experiences.

The events in the narrative Jiwon created are presented alongside her pursuit of a variety of competences that are familiar to the field of SLA. Jiwon's early experiences with the English story tapes and English songs in elementary school coincided with her slow but steady acquisition of grammatical competence in English. Grammatical competence was a concept introduced early in the SLA course as an alternative to the behaviorist perspectives that preceded it. According to the course readings, grammatical competence was part of Chomsky's (1965) framework which juxtaposed competence and performance.

Jiwon presented her own story of development along these same lines. She described

the process of learning to pronounce the English 'L' sound while singing English children's songs. Though she described this learning as habitual (via the behaviorist framework), it seemed likely to her that an “inherent ability allowed her to obtain some grammatical rules” with the English songs acting as a “trigger” (course paper, June, 2010). It is clear that she was able to think about her experiences in terms of theoretical concepts presented in our course. Her interpretation of these experiences conformed to debates between cognitivism and behaviorism in language learning. With this interpretation, the song from her childhood memories became a 'trigger', and her ability to retain grammatical patterns alongside of her ability to distinguish the 'L' sound moved along with the larger SLA narrative that took the field from behaviorism to innatism. Yet this was only the beginning of the parallels between Jiwon's accounts and the theoretical narratives in the course.

After expressing this movement from behaviorist parroting toward the acquisition of grammatical competence, Jiwon further intertwined her language learning experiences with a theoretical narrative. She emphasized a sharp contrast between teaching methods used when she was a child and methods currently used. She began her formal schooling in English during junior high school via the grammar translation method—a method of language teaching which focuses on the memorization of grammatical patterns and vocabulary. Jiwon, as well as many other Korean participants in our course, expressed frustration with the realization that the memorization of these words and grammatical chunks did not equate with the ability to use English naturally. In Jiwon's case, she recalled learning with an American soldier who periodically visited her elementary school to teach English. She felt the discrepancy between grammatical knowledge and the ability to communicate when she began trying to convey meaning to this native English speaker in class. This breakdown in communication represented the onset of a new need, beyond memorizing phrases and words. That is, communicative competence ( Johnson, 2004) was presented in her work right

alongside with the introduction of her first experiences trying to communicate with an American.

It is curious to think that even years later, Jiwon attributed the difficulties she experienced trying to communicate with this soldier/teacher to her own lack of ability rather than asserting the difficulties in the class to insufficient training on the part of the soldier employed to teach her. We can see a new deficit alongside a new social situation/ social need accompanied by a new language learning theory that could explain how to overcome the problem? Jiwon goes so far as to describe “the missing part” of her linguistic competence which she only became aware of after interacting with the soldier. It is impossible to tell if this lack is explained by the theoretical construct 'communicative competence' or if it was created by it. However, it is clear that, according to her narrative, the experience trying to communicate with the American soldier presented her with a new conception of 'success' in terms of English learning, and communicative competence served as a framework which explained her lack of ability in communicating in that situation, and simultaneously offered a framework for pursuing such abilities. Though this may have presented her with a new model of language learning, she was quick to admit that “it provided some knowledge of... use, but it was just another task for me. The final purpose of English learning was to get a high score on [the university entrance exam], so I thought the end of language acquisition was to enter a reputable university” (Course paper, June, 2010). It was not until she achieved this goal and entered a university that she was able to focus more specifically on what she called 'use'.

'Communicative competence' replaced test proficiency for Jiwon once she entered university. She enrolled in a conversation class taught by a native English speaking teacher expecting to finally attain the competence that had been lacking. While the purpose of the class was to help students gain an ability to use English in authentic situations, she recognized a disconnect between such a goal and the classroom environment. Jiwon stated

that structural problems stemming from the large class (30 students) and a lack of face-to-face time with the native speaking instructor meant that her studies had only shifted from memorizing grammatical forms to memorizing idealized dialogs in hypothetical situations. Even into the time when she received her teaching certificate and began teaching English, 'communicative competence' (as she described it) remained out of reach. She would have to resort to new measures in order to attain it.

This persistent 'lack' was a serious professional concern for Jiwon when 'communicative competence' became the curricular goal of the Korean education system (Jeong, 2001). For a practicing teacher, this meant new demands. She had to teach the elusive communicative competence, that which she felt had been lacking in her own English education. This lack both justified new policies and placed practicing teachers in the precarious position of teaching a subject matter that they had not explicitly 'learned' in their own English studies. After university, she reasserted a commitment to finally acquire what had so far eluded her.

Jiwon enrolled in English conversation classes taught by native English speakers, and after getting a job as an elementary school English teacher she applied for a variety of government training courses. She eventually entered an intensive six month training program which involved five months of English immersion while sequestered in a Korean dormitory and concluded with a one-month trip to California. Jiwon described this as an incredible opportunity and as a "final solution for improvement of communicative competence" (Course paper, June, 2010). Though during her stay in the dormitory, she was forbidden from speaking Korean, and she described this as "torture" (*ibid*). Program participants were not even permitted to watch television programs in Korean, read Korean newspapers, use a Korean/English dictionary, nor interact with anyone in any way via the Korean language. Jiwon successfully completed the program and felt quite confident in that she was able to

understand nearly everything the native English speaking instructors said in class.

Jiwon's success meant that she had earned a one month trip to California, and she felt she had finally achieved the communicative competence she had pursued for so long. Yet she explained that “it turned out to be a disaster right after I got out of the classroom” (*ibid*). Put simply, she was unable to understand and fully participate in her community in California, and once again she blamed herself. Jiwon was disheartened, and this perceived failure led her to ask “what else besides communicative competence do I need for full English use” (*ibid*)? It also carried her narrative to another theoretical framework we explored in the SLA course, Bakhtin's (1981) dialogism.

Jiwon concluded that the EFL environment is an insufficient place to cultivate authentic English use, as her own experiences in ESL environments in both the United States and England led her to realize this goal herself. She claimed that Korea remains insufficient for accommodating sociocultural and dialogic theories of language as curricular foundations. Thus, the theory does not match the EFL setting she described in her narrative, and the EFL setting was likewise insufficient for fully accommodating the theory.

### **Mapping Trajectories**

This is one story among many, and it is only one of many possible stories this single participant could have told. I am hesitant to treat this as Jiwon's 'story' and more inclined to think in terms of what this story does, and how the narrative structure of the paper impacts her trajectory of development. From this view it is quite striking how certain tendencies in her work resonated throughout the course and in a number of final autobiographies. In presenting a narrative of her development as an English teacher, Jiwon wrote a paper that was more or less structurally identical with one other participant's autobiography and was strikingly similar with several others. The ways that a number of participants handled the final



assignment, and the ways that the narrative structure subsumed both theory and experience into logical developmental trajectories, led me to consider ways that the narrative format of the assignment imposed itself upon the various events that participants chose to explore.

An obvious aspect of Jiwon's narrative is the progressive movement. This is a story of accomplishment—a success story. Her earliest experiences with English accompanied a description of behaviorism. Beginning language learners require behaviorism and the iconic stimulus/response tactics associated with it. The English language and authentic learning opportunities were scarce. She was unable to engage in 'genuine' conversation and needed to rely on various storybooks, tapes, and other English materials as substitutes. English took the form of concrete commodities and in her case, it was a “devoted mother” who gave her the chance to access these materials from a young age. But this very lack, this scarcity of materials and opportunities for authentic communication, created a setting where more contemporary learning theories were ultimately deemed impractical and ineffective. Learning words and structures through repetition and habit formation, and developing a foundation, became reasonable goals. Using language in relevant and authentic ways became a goal delegated to future times and places. Most important was the foundation, and the foundation was something structural and habitual that was well served by the basic premise of behaviorism.

The simple parroting that Jiwon associated with her first learning experiences shifted into a more formal notion of grammatical competence as she began studying English in institutional settings. Interactions became 'triggers', and her progress moved from habit formation to cognition. In a sense, the formation of habits became problematic with the need to grasp underlying linguistic structures, which in turn became problematic with the need for authentic communication (in her story this problem emerged in the interactions with the American soldier who taught her middle school English class). This problem had a significant

impact on Jiwon's early career, as she was expected to teach her students communicative competence—participating in a public English curriculum that was extremely different from the grammar-based curriculum of her past. Her eventual acquisition of basic communicative functions, that which she attributed to a six-month intensive language strategy, became problematic when she traveled to the United States and had trouble communicating with locals. Basic communicative competence became distinct from the ability to speak. The basis of progress, at least in this narrative, depended on a fusion of learning theories with language learning experiences, and her personal ability to overcome new barriers and problems she discovered along the way.

The experiences fit nicely into the model of theoretical progress in the field of SLA more generally. We started with behaviorism, we passed through cognitivism, and now we have come to dialogism or 'real communication' in all its social complexities. We have overcome our out of date theories and have reached a greater plane. As it is with the trajectory of the field, so it was with Jiwon's progress as a learner. In the words of one participant, “first I had to learn words, then I learned grammar. Later I learned communication, then I finally acquired authentic speech” (Class discussion, May, 2010). The difficulties and frustrations of learning a new language merged seamlessly with theory. Yet the understanding of theory and the structuring of experience are both problematic. Theory becomes scientific fact, and experience becomes evidence of these facts. As with the *externalization of sense* I discussed in Chapter Three—wherein one translates the fluid nature of experience into stable and identifiable categories (Olkowsky, 1999), events in this narrative of progress take on definite forms. They become evidence of theoretical concepts, and the trajectory of development hardens into a scripted set of steps. Explanations situate disparate events into a structure that gives them academic value. This suggests that coherent narratives invoked a severe narrowing of possible explanations with the potential of reducing the individual learner to a

strict model of professional progress and an embodiment of scientific facts. Once theories became facts of linguistic and social behavior a trajectory of progress emerged and gave meaning and cohesion to these various events. I picked up linguistic habits, I achieved linguistic competence, I learned basic communicative functions, then I finally gained proficiency in real speech. Narrated events stood at the verge of succumbing to the rigidity of their interpretive lenses.

Theoretical structures, more than simply imposing themselves upon interpretations of individual progress, showed a potential to delegate disparate places of learning into more stable geographies of space. The most blatant move to formalize a geography of learners and learning arose with the concept of EFL (English as a Foreign Language). The concept of English as foreign, and the unique needs that arose in so called EFL contexts incited a recognizable set of needs and an identifiable territory. Though EFL is a theoretical proposition from the field of World English from the early 1980's (Kachru & Nelson, 2001), and though this theoretical framework has been challenged in light of major demographic shifts that have occurred since that time, the concept itself remained entrenched in the everyday vocabulary of participants. It was often used to refute ideas deemed inappropriate for the unique needs in EFL settings. The theory (EFL) becomes axiomatic, a fact of the matter that gave participants a foundation for resisting ideas formulated outside of their direct teaching contexts. In particular, the EFL and ESL distinction (English as a Foreign language designating countries where English has no official status, and English as a second language designating countries where it does), became foundations for the ways participants understood themselves, their jobs, and the limitations and needs of their students. Korea as 'EFL setting' invoked a certain lack that dictated the conditions of teaching and learning:

When it comes to grammar, Krashen says that there is no need to teach

grammar deliberately because it can be acquired subconsciously with assistance of the internal language processor and enough comprehensible input. However, the problem is that in EFL situations, enough comprehensible input is almost impossible, so as we have been doing, we have to teach grammar in an appropriate way (Class Wiki, April, 2010).

EFL settings, in other words, cannot accommodate the demands of Krashen's theory of comprehensible input based on an inherent lack of opportunities for proper input. This same move occurred in response to sociocultural theory later in the course:

Fundamentally, it is very important to interact with sociocultural context according to Vygotsky. Then how can language teacher connect language teaching to the context especially under EFL circumstance? It seems to be almost impossible under current Korean context (Class Wiki, May, 2010).

The EFL designation allowed for the conflation of various schools, students, interactions, and language learning events into a single lack. The generalization of various places of learning into this single concept (English as *foreign*) showed the potential of territorializing Korea under the umbrella of a single unifying idea, while giving teachers the opportunity to resist or to critique imported learning theories. In fact, a stable identity of English as foreign in the Korean setting often appeared as a groundwork for participants' resistance to theoretical concepts and a fundamental attribute of their teaching environments. "As teachers we are faced with EFL classrooms that really don't allow the input hypothesis to guide curriculum design" (Response paper, April, 2010). EFL classrooms take on a metonymic quality and themselves prohibit teachers' use of one theory. As neither a classroom itself, nor the EFL

designation could themselves disprove an abstract theory, it is fair to assume that the utility of the theory is what is at stake here. And the environment itself, complete with a generalized *Korean EFL* label, shuts down the possibility of particular theories as active components of curriculum design. Another statement goes further in connecting the identity of Korean EFL to a theoretical realism in stating that “in EFL like Korea, it is not easy to give the children enough numbers of mentors to help them cross the zone of proximal development” (Response paper, May, 2010). Again the EFL designation works as a generalization that opposes the utility of an abstract theory. In this case 'EFL' becomes the identifying feature of the classroom and the theory itself, the zone of proximal development takes on a spatial dimension—as if a mental territory that the EFL setting is incapable of populating.

While this realist view of theory frequently accompanied a 'lack' inherent to Korean English learning, it also served as a means of critiquing the concepts we discussed throughout the course. The double movement here is that one's teaching experience becomes unique in juxtaposition with the general theories of North America and Europe yet does so through the conflation of experiences within this EFL space—through a more fundamental acceptance of a particular theoretical framework. Keeping in mind the powerful influence that North American and European research has had on English education and teacher development in so-called peripheral nations (Wright, 2010; Yeom & Ginsburg, 2007), it would seem important to address and interrogate the value and effect of theories such as the EFL/ESL distinction. However a danger persists in challenging a framework that has afforded teachers a more or less stable identity in this context. One must be careful that challenging axiomatic readings of 'EFL' not undermine teachers' capacity to use this concept as a means of resistance and/or foundation of critique.

The lack of EFL or peripheral settings, as well as all those within it, suggests a fundamental 'lack' in the Korean territory that invokes images of a center or source in North

America and Europe. This notion of a 'lack' in Korean English education and general English proficiency continually rested within the geography of the EFL designation. But more than just a geographical territory, Korea, as a space where English remained *foreign* involved a notion of national character, also imposed itself upon language learners. In such a setting learners typically were described as “shy” and “embarrassed around native speakers” (Response paper, April, 2010). In the same way that Jiwon described her tentativeness the first time she tried to communicate with a native speaker, other participants invoked a general sense of uneasiness when they were asked to speak English in a “real life situation” (Response paper, May, 2010). In the course assignments the designation of shyness was continually associated with a fundamental attribute of Korean learners within an EFL setting rather than as a natural response to awkward situations. Thus a primary challenge for teachers in such contexts was to counter this fixed learner identity. In many senses it presented itself as a unique and more or less unchanging attribute of formal Korean English teaching and therefore worked as a foundation for the resistance or critique of any number of language learning theories. Indeed, the behaviorist theories I discussed in Chapter Six were defended on these grounds a number of times.

A realist and geographical reading of theory seems both limiting and potentially empowering. In light of Jiwon's narrative of progress, however, such a view becomes much more problematic. Particularly with the parallel structures of personal development according to the accumulation of scientific truths in the SLA field, the learner embarks on a linear path of progress that is not only marked by predetermined frameworks originating in Western theory, but also requires a movement away from the periphery (the foreign) toward the origin. As with Jiwon's narrative, numerous final papers displayed a real geographical movement of this sort—away from Korea where language was habitual and synthetic toward the source where both learning and language could finally become theoretically and experientially 'real'. Thus, a

realist reading of theory (taking a theoretical framework as an axiomatic truth) offered the conditions for a rigid path of development by which the success of English learners is invariably measured.

This is of course only one reading of Jiwon's account of herself. The possible effects of her story are limitless. This reading, however, suggests that there are potential dangers in making a synthesis of theory and experience a primary curricular objective. In this sense, the parallel structure of theoretical progress and personal development adjoined Jiwon's personal narrative to a basic SLA narrative moving from behaviorism, to cognitivism, to sociocultural theory. Development of habits, development of thought, then a more unified development of one's connection to one's environment suggests shifting loci of control. Via this synthesis, one can speculate about a syntax of the body which accompanies a movement from the control and investigation of linguistic behavior to a broader corporeal activity (from the brain to the whole of the social realm). The sociocultural tendency to focus on social activity and social meaning as opposed to language itself (Freeman & Johnson, 1998) could be understood as an introduction of new codes that instill a new set of demands upon individuals who seek recognition as qualified English teachers with the proper forms of proficiency. Rather than exhibiting correct linguistic behavior or a general competence regarding the underlying structures or typical communicative patterns of a language, the sociocultural model potentially demands a set of codes which address a much broader scope of activity. 'Knowing' the structures and functions of a language is no longer sufficient. The use of sociocultural theory invokes a syntax of the body where one's learning is embodied not only in the self but also in the context of learning. Decoding language no longer rests in the language but in the use of the language, in the context of use, and in the very bodies of the people that use them—out of the geography of *foreign* into authenticity. The source becomes “another world that I only saw in a book or TV” opposed to the “artificial English circumstance

in Korea” (Response paper, May, 2010). Shifting from 'know that' to 'know how' (Turnbull, 1998) does not determine a freedom from idealized knowledge as much as it demands a new set of skills. This is the theory of the global par excellence. One wherein the body itself, and its experiences and tendencies gently and inevitably become geographies of space.

This line of thought throws into question the effects of realist readings of sociocultural theory and the dangers of experience/theory syntheses via cohesive narratives. There is, however, some evidence in participants' work that suggests that shorter response papers and exchanges via the class website afforded reflections upon experience and theory that led to more nuanced readings of the nature of SLA theory. It is encouraging to see participants' statements that call the very notion of theory into the scope of their inquiry. After repeatedly interpreting similar experiences via SLA theories, one participant stated that “there is no perfect theory to explain the language acquisition. Every theory tries to explain logically, but language acquisition carries too many variables and the learners' ability can't be generalized in only one way” (Response paper, May, 2010). Another response paper reflected on a particular set of teaching practices and conceded that “my reason for doing this could be explained a number of ways depending on which theory you choose to believe” (Response paper, April, 2010). Others described theories as 'metaphors', as 'notions', or as 'points of view'. It is difficult to determine if these descriptions necessarily led to cogent or thoughtful critiques to the overall concept of theory—theory itself. It is worth noting, however, that informal writing tasks and oral classroom discussions were consistently full of these less precise yet more fundamental inquiries into the practice and the function of SLA theory. It is striking how quickly these discontinuities and speculative inquiries seemed to collapse into cohesive and somewhat predictable structures once the mode of expression was a sustained personal narrative.

A set of events which conform to a scripted and predetermined trajectory seems to be



the principle issue here. Wallin (2010) addressed the concept of linear progress that permeates institutional models of education,

[t]he image of the track has come to constitute a homogenizing territory.... If the course to be run is taken as a truth that exists outside of experience, then the potential for thinking difference is prone to become entwined or marginalized by this elevated external power (Wallin, 2010, p. 3).

The track of progress, the path to more—more educated, more proficient, more successful, more qualified becomes hardened when ideals and theories take on the status of scientific truths that have molded individuals' personal development. Difference becomes defined by a more fundamental and unquestioned sameness (Deleuze, 1968). The exploration of experience is prevalent in teacher education practices, and these trends coincide with larger shifts toward sociocultural models of language development and human activity. As a whole, the field of SLA is moving away from the psycholinguistic models that focus on technical knowledge in favor of research on teacher beliefs and teacher reflection (Wright, 2010). Yet as Jiwon's autobiography suggests, the goal of fusing theory with experience, of using formal knowledge to interpret oneself, potentially acts as a hardening of developmental trajectories. The events of a life can so easily be subsumed into a rigid cartography if the underlying status of scientific theory remains unchallenged.

Thus, neither sociocultural theory nor narrative forms of inquiry necessarily provide a challenge to the imposition of theoretical concepts as facts to be understood and appropriated by teachers. In some senses these were optimal means of ensuring that teachers internalize language teaching and learning principles by organizing their own narratives according to formal principles. The adaption of local practices to abstract principles or ideal structures

seems to run counter to notions of local knowledge as singular and emergent in a particular place. 'Korea', 'EFL', even categories such as 'middle schools', 'high schools', 'low level', 'high level', serve to work against the singularity of local places of learning in favor of local as a point within a territorialized space. The place then only exists within an abstraction—a grid which purports to contain all possibilities and all possible points (Massumi, 2002). This is local in terms of space and has little or nothing to do with a place-based knowledge that is singular and rooted in ways that elude the reductive tendencies of the grid.

In light of recent trends toward both standardization and reflection in international teacher education, it is crucial to realize that teacher education practices based on personal reflection, and the fusion of a dialectic of theory and experience, potentially align perfectly with larger trends. In what now reads as almost prophetic, Dewey (1999) warned of the impending influence of American standardization in what he called the “quantification of life” (p. 12), which problematized the very notion of individuals. “Quantification, mechanization, and standardization: these are then the marks of the Americanization that is conquering the world” (Dewey, 1999, p. 12). Yeom and Ginsburg (2007) confirmed the trend toward greater centralized control over teacher education and a more general reflection of United States educational policy in Korean policy. Other researchers have continued to call for teacher education design that is based on general criteria based on what has worked in other settings (Peacock, 2009). In other words, a best practice approach to teacher development in language teacher education seems to be emerging, and within this approach the quality of a program seems to at least partially depend on the degree to which it conforms to the preconceived needs of teacher education programs in other places. I would not argue that there is nothing that we can learn from the success of other programs, but such trends point to the assumption that teacher education programs in diverse places are comparable via a set of recognizable and generalizable criteria. Neither the reflection upon experience via theory

nor socially oriented approaches to language teaching inherently challenge such trends. If I wish to encourage challenges to the importation of general theoretical knowledge then I will have to work against this potential of narrative accounts of the self to reduce one's experience to points on a linear trajectory of development verified by scientific truths from far away and unrelated places.

## **Chapter Eight: Conclusions**

### **(Local Knowledge and Narration)**

By all accounts my intention from the start of this project was to produce good news. I was to be the socially conscious White, American, male in Korea developing a pedagogy for teacher education that opened new possibilities for Korean and international teachers of English. Moreover, my inquiry was supposed to conceptualize a pedagogy that afforded participants the chance to engage with and resist imported SLA theories on their own terms. I was seeking to counteract or at least to neutralize the privileges I had perceived to be bestowed on me. After teaching the fifteen week course and spending many months reading through and analyzing participants' work, my goals have become more modest. I have created no grand scheme and no revolutionary new pedagogy. It seems that the work I am currently doing in Korean TESOL is, in the most simple terms, an effort to instantiate a working formula for a socially conscious mode of teacher education in international English teacher education—or at least to provoke new discussions on the topic. This has been a personal inquiry that has attempted to move beyond subjectivities and identities that brought me to this inquiry in the first place. The result has been a personal account of an SLA graduate course full of Korean and international students, taught by an American in a frantic attempt to move past the molar identities that had locked him into a theoretical trap.

I imagine one could argue that the absence of identity as a locus of inquiry was in some senses a way of avoiding the issue. Leaving out names and nationalities certainly has consequences, and an analysis of identity issues that arose in this course is another direction that my work certainly could have taken. Yet the very notion of identity as a starting point is much more problematic than my simple hang ups about being identified as privileged or my

reticence to identify others. One of the primary issues in dealing with identity is that even concepts of hybrid or postmodern identities (Calhoun, 1994; Norton-Peirce, 1995) tend to begin with the concept of *idem* or sameness rather than a concept of simple difference. Identity becomes the corporal instantiation of *space* and invokes the subtle sameness that permeates conceptions of difference. I would argue that this notion of sameness works against a concept of local knowledge where difference and singularity precede sameness (Deleuze, 1968). Philosophically I faced the challenge of turning this around, of working out an ontology of difference rather than an ontology of sameness. Pedagogically I have confronted the task of experimenting with ways these concepts might impact both teaching and research. I have organized this conclusion into two sections. The first section deals with the social and philosophical ramifications of a concept of local knowledge based on singularity. The second section explores ways that a concept of *narration* might serve as a pedagogical principle with the possibility of engaging new concepts local knowledge within institutional places of learning. In other words *local knowledge* emerges as my working philosophical concept and *narration* emerges as my working pedagogical concept.

### **Philosophical and Social Movement**

Control societies, a concept created by Deleuze (1995) over twenty years ago, is quite a useful one for contemplating a relationship between participants' use of narratives and larger political and social phenomena. The basic idea espoused by Deleuze (1995) is that Foucault's (1977) notion of disciplinary societies has given way to societies of control. While the industrialism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries relied on social organization based on the control of enclosed spaces (the family, the school, the factory, the hospital, the prison, and so on), the twentieth century saw the general breakdown of these enclosed spaces and the emergence of more fluid systems of control (Deleuze, 1995). The term *societies of*

*control* refers to new distributions of power that no longer rely on these enclosed spaces—molds wherein individuals become subjects of a particular sort. Instead power takes on a quality of continual modulation. Enclosed spaces of hospital treatment open into preventative medicine, factories open into corporations, schools open into continuing education, the prison opens into alternative forms of punishment (Deleuze 1995). In terms of English teacher education one might see evidence of this in the rapid rise of perpetual training and lifelong learning, which have the tendency of handing traditional schooling over to corporate interests under a neo-liberal logic of global efficiency. Once they have completed four-year university, Korean educators move on to certificate programs, they go on for graduate degrees, they accumulate points within an elaborate system of promotion that is ongoing and defines persons in terms of professional development. As in Jiwon's autobiographical account, her development as a proficient English speaker and capable teacher consisted of a series of steps: through the accumulation of English learning commodities, to face to face exchanges with 'authentic' English speakers, to intensive programs forbidding her to use her first language for months at a time, to a short stay in the United States, finally to a graduate program where she met me—her American professor. Her learning has been continuous, and becoming a competent teacher has required personal modulation over many settings—only partially attached to closed university settings. As Deleuze (1995) observed, in disciplinary societies one is always starting over, one leaves the family and moves on to the school, one graduates from the school and moves on to the workplace; in control societies one never finishes anything. Learning is continuous and never complete.

A model of learning emblematic of disciplinary societies is the hierarchical belt system in East Asian martial arts (particularly modern taekwondo) that accompanied a rapid expansion in their worldwide popularity. One begins with a certain color belt (usually white) then progresses through a given system based on the mastery of predetermined movements

and skills. Learn the prescribed moves for one level and move on to the next until eventually earning a black belt and recognition that you have mastered the art. Conversely the quintessential martial art of control societies is undoubtedly Mixed Martial Arts (MMA), now among the most popular fighting sports in the world. As the name suggests, fighters come to the sport with an eclectic set of skills. It's necessary to mix traditional martial arts so that one can counter a wide range of possible fighting styles an opponent is likely to employ—from wrestling and submission holds to stand up skills like boxing and karate. The very essence of MMA is a synthesis. The champion fighter has mixed and matched any number of forms, making the mastery of the disciplinary path of the belt system less important than a pragmatic application of a variety of skills that can match those of a given opponent. They call it 'real' fighting. It is supremely practical rather than traditional or hierarchical. This puts it in opposition with modern martial art systems that adhere to purity of form through the strict application of a predetermined path of development. MMA remains in perfect harmony with the more fundamental assumptions of control societies via a mastery of pragmatics—a never ending trajectory of development propelled by competition. It is the ultimate expression of 'know how' relating to the knowledge of how to respond to a particular situation.

The MMA model seems to offer a breaking open of the more closed and prescriptive methods of modern hierarchical models. But the pragmatics of MMA incites a more fundamental sameness within its model of learning. This is the model of efficiency and effectiveness. One is successful based on one's effectiveness in the MMA competition. Though the fighter mixes and matches any variety of fighting systems one is judged according to a single criteria—the ability to win the fight. A critique of specific systems comes to the forefront (is jujitsu is more effective than wrestling? Is Thai boxing more efficient than capoeira? Which stand up system compliments which ground system?). What remains outside the realm of critique is purpose. Does this work in a 'real' fight? Is this applicable to

the competition? If so, the fighter embodies a useful set of movements and learning is good. What is sacrosanct is the game in which the fighters engage.

Any working philosophy of local knowledge must resist a transparent unifying sameness expressed by the competition itself. Drawing on traditional knowledge offers new possibilities but must maintain a flexibility that allows for confrontation with new problems specific to new modes of control. In other words, cultural conservatism is insufficient. Drawing on Bateson (1994), perhaps following a cultural tradition does not so much require mirroring the practices of prior generations so much as it involves grasping the purposes which accompanied the emergence of new cultural practices. Rather than mimicking, for example, the farming techniques of our ancestors, one might benefit from understanding how the purposes of a community meshed with a particular environment at a particular time. Invoking concepts produced by generations past in light of singular problems is quite a different mode of conservation than thoughtlessly mirroring the specific practices of past generations in the name of cultural preservation.

The current environment of teacher education and English language teaching around the world requires teacher educators to consider the reach of these subtle notions of sameness that populate superficial notions of hybridity, and serve as a foundation for globalization and the standardization of both knowledge and practice. This represents new problems and requires concepts that move beyond local/global dialectics. Within the institution and the modes of knowledge I am capable of producing, it is important to remember that the best I can do here is build a *concept* of local knowledge. My intention is not to create a pedagogy that reduces local knowledge to a set of identifiable practices, nor is it to utilize a concept of local knowledge as a metaphor for the ways a group of participants build knowledge in academic institutions. Though the institutional setting where my work has taken place seems far removed from the material knowledge that develops between life and the



conditions of its existence, its evolved understanding of itself as expressed through the synthesis of earth, bodies, sensations, and molecules—this does not mean a concept of local knowledge becomes mere metaphor when life unfolds beneath the fluorescent lights of a classroom. Personal narratives in the social science tradition do not take the place of oral traditions via analogy. Instead there must be some potential in exploring the expressions themselves. The key question is how a concept of local knowledge can work against the territorializing of teacher knowledge via professionalization and the importation of foreign theories and practices as foundations for professional knowledge—a pragmatics of teaching that is gas-like and boundless.

In this inquiry I have experimented with the concepts of expectation, beliefs about learning theory, and concepts of progress (the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters respectively). I have placed events and expressions alongside of one another in an effort to find out what kinds of possible meanings could emerge. Participants continually invoked the need to develop more efficient and effective teaching practices in tandem with a desire build accurate knowledge of scientific theories. This might suggest two sides of the same coin where professional practices that conform to the unquestioned value of efficiency rely on the principles of scientific discoveries. Precise 'knowledge of' becomes a foundation of 'knowing how'. In light of worldwide trends in both teacher education and education more broadly, such views seem consistent with the values of neo-liberalism—efficiency and effectiveness according to worldwide standards which themselves remain beyond question. We can argue over the accuracy or validity of scientific theories but never the pursuit and purpose of efficiency itself. It seems to be a truism that we are undergoing a convergence in “educational ideologies, structures, and practices across countries” and that “many scholars, educators, and practitioners have promoted the ideas that the occupation of teaching is undergoing professionalization and/or should strive to professionalize” (Yeom & Ginsburg,

2007, p. 299). Reviews of teacher education point toward a convergence of practice and policy concerning teacher education and formal education systems more generally. A unified field of teacher education delegates knowledge to a 'field' in the same way that *space* consumes *places*, where space becomes defined by a common purpose and a common grid that reduces places to points within. Identity precedes difference. The field is a set of practices, sure, but the representative knowledge of the field maps a territory of knowledge that describes grand trends, that argues for certain responses to common problems, or offers projections for new shifts that cannot exist without this conflation of places into space. Teaching and teacher education practices thus fall into a cartography of types which adhere to a more fundamental philosophy of sameness. In other words, whether trends in teacher education incorporate reflective practices, theoretical knowledge, technical expertise, the underlying issue I see is the adherence to a professional model wherein difference succumbs to more a fundamental and subtler sameness across space.

There is an underlying call to further draw together, connect, and prolong educative experiences for teachers that holds sacred the doctrine of 'more treatment', and this 'treatment' is increasingly introduced as the regulation of a set of practices that can be measured empirically according to standards and purposes of a global system of English education. The stated goal of English education as an entryway for Koreans into global markets and global discourses (Shin, 2004) reinforces notions that the survival of Korea and its people depends on its capacity to participate in neo-liberalism and globalization. In such a space who would dare ask if it is in our best interest *not* to be efficient English teachers?

The danger I see here is the potential of such standards to deteriorate singularity in the name of sameness. It is this notion of singularity where Berry (1990) and Deleuze (1968) are in conceptual harmony. Where Berry (1990) expresses a deep appreciation for local communities and Deleuze (1968) describes the singularity of any event and the

incompleteness of any object. The 'thing' is always a thing in becoming—in a process of synthesizing with its environment. Working with any event or object (say a theory, a personal interpretation of a theory, or a teaching technique) requires one to recognize that any sense of wholeness or completeness is to reduce one's analysis to “the ideal part of the object, which participates with other parts of objects in the Idea... but never constitutes an integral whole as such. What the complete determination lacks is the whole set of relations belonging to actual existence” (Deleuze, 1968, p. 261). I see an immediate challenge to international English teacher educators to formulate a philosophy that confronts subtle and not so subtle dangers in the tendency to territorialize sites of teaching and learning under a pragmatics that remains situated in the realm of general theory and policy and a basic ontology of sameness.

Though it is tempting to reduce participants' experiences to those of a control society, doing so is presumptuous. Notions of progress that emerged in participants' narratives are too complex to simply attribute to a grand narrative of social change. A critical distance from straightforward explanations must be maintained. I must also carry on efforts to unblock the concept of control societies lest it becomes a too comfortable foundation that situates all material events according to an internal logic. It is not a set of Western academic discourses as such that concerns me so much as the use of blocked concepts which serve as representative knowledge of any given event or set of events. Concepts derived from Gilles Deleuze, Wendell Berry, Noam Chomsky, or Lev Vygotsky do not themselves change anything. They can only be understood on the level of how they function in their immediate circumstances. As Johnson (2004) said time and time again in our course book, there is a need to rethink the flows of knowledge in the teaching of English and in our orientations toward teacher education more generally. But those who are reconceptualizing teacher education must be aware that their new frameworks carry multiple and unforeseen potentials when implemented in the real worlds of teachers, learners, and users of language.

On the final day of class I asked participants, “at the beginning of our course book the author promised to give us a new theory of SLA that will empower teachers, does she fulfill her promise?” One participant responded, “I don’t think so. She gives us a new theory but it’s really the same thing. She is the master of this new difficult theory and we’re still in a position of having to learn it” (Classroom discussion, June, 2010). If we are genuinely interested in rethinking the relationship between technical/theoretical knowledge and the teachers who are expected to learn/apply/do this knowledge, then it is necessary to think outside of the model of theoretical progress where sociocultural theory or dialogism represent the new paradigm of teaching and learning to teach. Conceptual and idealist principles that continue to serve as the foundation of teacher education research need to be challenged. We are not lacking the proper signifiers or accurate categorizations in our pursuit of greater understanding. It is the nature of the pursuit that we need to rethink. The ‘social’ sphere (sociocultural theory and dialogism) might afford us new insights, and the insistence of one set of theoretical principles over another may afford practitioners new choices. That said, it is not a *new theory* so much as a rethinking of our theory of the ‘new’ that we need if we are to challenge global trends in teacher education and conceptualize a truly local knowledge. Or as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) are fond of saying, the task is not to stutter in language but to make language stutter. Blocking concepts in order to produce representative knowledge is a limited way of thinking research. Whether these concepts are concepts of empowerment, of standardization, of global efficiency, remaining in the game of blocking concepts and asserting these concepts as the represented knowledge of the field means to continue to stress human constructs at the expense of a more tenuous material world where the overwhelming complexity of events will always undermine human constructs.

## A Pedagogy of Narration

It was more than a little disheartening to find myself giving a power point presentation on Chomsky's language acquisition device by the fifth week of class. I had sworn off power point and lecturing in hopes of developing a pedagogy that focused on participants' personal accounts of their language learning and teaching. To lecture, it felt, meant to promote North American and European theories as viable and universal properties of a blocked concept called 'language learning'. I became concerned that I may have been participating in banking education (Freire, 1970), that dreaded term that marks the death of anything revolutionary or radical in the classroom. After several weeks of working through personal vignettes in small groups, after subtle and not so subtle signs of frustration, and a couple of direct confrontations I decided to implement a lecture component for the first hour of each class and moved on to guided discussion and planned activities for the second hour. The mood and the discussion were markedly lighter. As one participant explained "I want to understand exactly what a theory says, then later I can interpret it" (Personal communication, April, 2010). Spending some time working through the theories and the arguments laid out in our textbook afforded the participants a degree of confidence and led to more complex conversations than a sustained focus on participants' written weekly vignette assignments did.

I can only speculate but I would guess that investing a little time in class clarifying SLA concepts gave participants the opportunity to engage in shared information. By coming to a rough consensus as to how we understood theories like 'universal grammar' or 'the zone of proximal development', and discussing strengths, problems, and potential applications of the *theory itself*, participants began to show some comfort in speaking of their experiences. It seems that some common ground was necessary to frame experiences and to structure explanations of these experiences. Indeed there was a good deal of evidence in the final

course evaluations that participants appreciated the time we spent clarifying theories and arguments in the course readings. In fact, I was surprised to see that a number of evaluations called for more emphasis on the theories themselves and a more teacher centered environment. “We need some lecture before discussing”, and a need for “more outlined lectures” (Course evaluations, June, 2010). One participant explicitly addressed the balance between lectures and discussions, saying “discussion is a very good way to learn SLA, however, if professor used a little bit more lecture it would be helpful” (Course evaluation, June, 2010). This is not surprising given that statements such as “the course readings were too difficult” (Course evaluation, June, 2010) repeatedly came up in the course evaluations. I was very surprised to see so many direct requests for more lectures when I had previously felt that I had lectured too much and had been too quick to change my basic approach. It is impossible to tell if these calls for more lecture time suggest a desire for more of a banking model where the lecture material itself made up the content of the class and students' duties were to grasp such material, or if participants simply wished that they had come away from the course with a better understanding of the theories. I could argue that lecture or presentation techniques do not necessarily signify 'banking education'. Rather than reducing analysis to the format of the class and kicking myself for lecturing and giving power point presentations, I think it is more useful to think about the specific context and the purposes for engaging in certain activities—thinking in terms of where we ended up rather than where we began. In this case, it was clearly necessary to spend some time clarifying the readings before participants felt confident situating the material into their own experiences and reflections.

That said I also found that I lost my blind faith in narratives and the practice of situating theoretical knowledge in personal experiences via narrative writing. The tyranny of form was something that I confronted repeatedly over the semester. I felt that the pedagogical

concepts I developed in the pre-active stages of the course, concepts such as narrative, situated learning, reflection, student-centered, were inherently good. I quickly recognized that on another plane, an interactive plane that emerged once classes began, adhering to these concepts entailed its own sort of dogmatism. It was necessary to challenge my own static conceptions of how a class should look and the forms that activities took in order to approximate a responsive pedagogy. It seems that exploring the ways such concepts emerge in the inherently dynamic interactive plane is something worth paying more attention to, both pedagogically and in terms of research methods.

Pedagogically there remains the challenge of conducting classroom inquiry into general concepts (such as the concept of 'EFL' or English as foreign) in ways that clarify the *theory itself* yet undermine a realist interpretation of the theories (theories as scientific fact) that repeatedly rooted themselves in an ontology of sameness. This is a particularly tricky idea in classroom activities that stress experience, because challenging theories and their status of scientific fact carries the potential of attacking the basis for which English teachers have come to define themselves and their students. *We are EFL!* Such problems require a willingness on the part of educators to see any knowable concept as 'blocked'. It is therefore necessary to follow unforeseen trajectories that partially 'unblock' these concepts through the creation of new concepts. Pursuing a concept of local knowledge becomes a social project wherein the goal is to "foreground the social environment of the institution as the critical variable" (Evans, et, al., 2004, p. 335; Guattari, 1989). The institution ensures we must recognize we're dealing with concepts of local rather than the local itself, but offers the opportunity to rethink the institution in local terms. One must not confuse the concept of local knowledge with local knowledge itself. But the creative process must be allowed to do its work of unblocking even the concept of institution—through disrupting and remaking the meaning of the institution.

In an interview conducted at the end of the course, one participant (a Korean elementary

school teacher) claimed that one of the greatest benefits of taking the course was witnessing the ways that I, as the instructor, handled the course content and the students. She explained, “seeing you let us to turn in our final papers a few days late, watching how you structured our activities, and how you adapted the class during the semester made me think a lot about my teaching” (Personal interview, June, 2010). She went on to ask “how can I be flexible like you?” (*ibid*). This invokes another level of engagement and suggests that the immediate context of engagement could be understood as a significant pedagogical and didactic force. It also means that it is likely that my own predetermined content and teaching methods are potentially subverted in ways that I would be unable to predict or plan. During an interactive phase of teaching and learning, predetermined goals, forms, and methods have the potential to perform on multiple levels. This participant's statements reference interactions themselves. Topographies become secondary, and so there is a level of interaction that is potentially ripe for exploration.

It is reasonable to suggest that an increased focus on individual development via narrative interpretations of theory and constant personal reflection are pedagogical techniques which move the locus of control to the individual—provided one's narratives and reflections conform to the more fundamental sameness which makes individuals recognizable as professionals in the field. The narrative structure of participants' autobiographical reflections became a unifying force. As was discerned many years ago, it is feasible to interpret any number of research processes within a narrative framework (Newkirk, 1992). Doing so leads to new insights about trajectories of knowledge production and interpretation, but when taken as a foundation for inquiry the imposition of academically sanctioned narrative structures upon human thought and action is as limiting as it is liberating. Is it possible that a shift away from the forms our interactions take can cede to the purposes and the erratic syntheses of our exchanges? Is it possible to make *narrations* (the physical and material



expressions themselves) the locus and the mode of inquiry and basis of a pedagogy? This would mean explorations of work which subsist on the level of the telling, on the level of the immediate interaction, on the local functions and impacts of thought, speech, and action in place of a preoccupation with the mode of expression. Narrative does not equate with autobiography and seems to have the capacity to impose itself as a determining structure that fixes thought, speech, and action into manageable academic categories. Conversely, narration is a language event that both adheres to and undermines typological explanations.

Deleuze and Guattari (1986) made a distinction between music and “pure sonorous material” (p. 8) that seems to work here. It is the term 'music' that names/conceptualizes sonorous material. The concept 'music' gives edges, definition, and a framework to sound. It imparts a frame that tells the listener “listen to these sounds in this way”. Composer John Cage's 4'33” consisted of nothing but rests. The audience found themselves listening to the sounds around them, the sounds of the theater, of people shuffling in their seats, coughing, breathing (Kostelanetz, 2003). The composer was able to incite a new listening experience among the audience—simultaneously using listeners' accepted understanding of the concept 'music' in order to unblock the concept and open the possibilities of what the concept could express. The sonorous material (our designation for the sound itself) both resists and concedes to the boundaries incited by the concept of 'music'. *Narrative*, as an academic construct, is akin to the naming of sound (linguistic and corporeal events) under the banner of an agreed upon intellectual category. *Narrations* are mixtures of sounds and bodies. To say “all life is understood narratively” or conversely “all life escapes narrative interpretation” are two different ways of conceiving the self—either through the fusion of bodies with language (narrative) or the experience of the pure corporeal language events (narration).

One would have to wonder, then, what such insights can do for the act of formulating a narrative or the possibilities of incorporating narrations into pedagogical practices. It is clear

that one must face a number of new questions and problems in terms of how to deal with narratives methodologically, pedagogically, and philosophically. Narratives as a form of discourse do not hold any privileged space. The concept 'narrative' would be a mapping out, or a territorializing of language events. Whether structural or functional narratives would designate a territory of language. The way a story is told and the person to whom it is told play on the level of signification. They can tell the informed researcher *about* the teller and the context of the telling. They signify certain types of narrators, certain types of stories, certain recognizable functions that allow the researcher to converge upon a meaning. But following the possibility of unblocking the concept of narrative, narration is where the telling is itself the significance of the narrative act. There is no meaning or interpretation of stories. There are stories which function alongside and between bodies through the force of language. Interpretation here becomes secondary. Narration requires divergence, and divergent thinking, as of yet (and perhaps intrinsically) eludes formal thinking that can be correct or incorrect.

As I said at the outset of this conclusion, I cannot claim to have achieved a mode of research or a set of classroom practices that take full advantage of these concrete narrations. I can only experiment with the concept via my inquiries and interactions with participants' stories. Though I intended to create a productive piece, I have clearly become caught up in critique. The dangers and shortcomings of both narrative research methods and of sociocultural models of teacher education and language acquisition become obvious when the potential of narration comes to the forefront. What I am after are pedagogies which seek out not a new theory but a theory of what counts as new. Singularity and local knowledge are concepts here that warrant further experimentation and will no doubt engage with the molar and structural tendencies that arise with narrative inquiry and sociocultural frameworks, as well as the codes that emerge within efficiency models of teacher education and language

acquisition.

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I become increasingly confident that I have embarked not in social science research here but in a philosophical inquiry. The difference I see is a simple one, where the former theorizes about *what happened* and the latter speculates as to *possible ways of thinking events*. Taking singularity as a starting point, every line in this paper becomes a response to a set of conditions, every concept is a response to a singular problem, and every concept contains a potential of becoming partially unblocked and following a virtually infinite set of trajectories. As stated in the Rumi quote at the start of this paper all of this quickly becomes overwhelming. If my questions focus on the tyranny of cohesion or the potential dangers of interpretation itself then of course the shape of the work comes into question. Perhaps it is less a matter of cohesion and/or resisting cohesion and more a matter of embracing the contingent nature of all events. As I have attempted to show with this inquiry, a single concept and a particular event can take any number of potential trajectories. To subsume these into a single path marks a limiting of possibilities along with the tendency to converge upon an interpretation. To believe and to advocate certain trajectories is possibly my personal shortcoming and possibly a condition of what it means to be human. Perhaps the second quote at the start of this paper by Henri Bergson (1913) deserves a bit more consideration. “[A] wholly dynamic way of looking at things is repugnant to the reflective consciousness [that] delights in clean cut distinctions, which are easily expressed in words...” (Bergson, 1913, p.8). Speaking as a materialist, this “way of looking at things” is rooted in both human thought and in the material world. He describes an orientation towards the world that places thought within the world itself while alluding to a reality that transcends the human tendencies to

impose order, structures, and categories upon events. This is transcendent insofar as it references that which is experienced but not represented. Yet perhaps this single quotation fails to address the possibility that reflection and the ordering of events are inevitable human activities—that the dynamic way of looking at things is itself contingent upon the reflections themselves. The unblocked concept is perhaps an impossibility, as we have to understand and grasp our own stories and the stories of others according to a chosen trajectory. The complexity of each event and every story, and the conditions which make them possible, are far beyond the capacity of human thought. One cannot grasp the entirety of the universe any more than one can grasp the entirety of that which makes up any singular place or eternity any more than the intensity of a given instant. So we go on blocking concepts—understanding one another in the limited ways that we can yet always retaining the capacity for further creation and unblocking. Along this line of thinking I cannot claim *to be* a materialist in any complete sense. Rather, this work is an exercise in the possibility of *becoming-material* and is as much a response to the idealist tendencies of the academy as it is a testament to my own ontological beliefs. The key point I wish to acknowledge is the limitless possibility of unblocking the concepts we construct in new places and new instants. If this still eludes the boundaries of a well articulated pedagogy that is perhaps necessarily the case and is perhaps the seeds of new concepts of local knowledge to move in new trajectories in other times and other places.

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