

An English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Teacher's Identity Transformation Process

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This longitudinal study examined how an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teacher transformed her teacher identity over time. Hinging on the close relationship between teaching and identity construction, this study was grounded on the notion that teaching a language is becoming a person who teaches it (Benson, 2017). Data were collected through six face-to-face interviews and six electronic interviews with the teacher during a four-year period. Findings demonstrate that becoming an ESP teacher is a complex process of constructing and negotiating identities. The teacher started ESP teaching as a scared general English teacher, and then negotiated her identities as a struggling but hard-working collaborator and learner. Later, she positioned herself as a novice ESP teacher, and then finally constructed her identity as a competent, helpful ESP teacher. Significant factors affecting identity transformation include needs analysis, enhanced subject matter knowledge, capacity to develop teaching materials, and teacher agency. Based on these findings, this study suggests implications for ESP teacher education programs.

Keywords: ESP, ESP teacher, teacher identity, teacher agency

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1. INTRODUCTION

Currently, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has been widely adopted in English programs, and more specifically, since the late 1970s, ESP has become a significant area in the field of English language teaching (Hyland & Jiang, 2021; Rahman, 2015). ESP aims to meet the needs of learners in specific domains as related to their occupations or interests. With popular adoption of ESP programs, an increasing number of research studies have examined various issues surrounding ESP.

It is reported that ESP teachers assume a wider range of roles than general English language teachers (Basturkmen, 2019; Belcher, 2006; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Robinson, 1991; Waters, 1994). In addition to regular roles of a language teacher, ESP teachers take care of other multiple tasks, such as content familiarization, curriculum design, pedagogical selection, and administrative issues. Furthermore, ESP teachers may severely struggle when working with students who have more content knowledge of the field (Tsou & Chen, 2014). This frequently results in ESP teachers' identity struggles, which deserves attention considering the fact that teachers can play a very important role in the educational process and outcomes.

Meanwhile, in the field of education, teacher identity has drawn much attention (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). A significant number of applied linguistic research studies, for example, have been conducted to explore language teacher identity (e.g., Duff & Uchida, 1997; Farrell, 2011; Gu & Benson, 2014; Johnson & Golombek, 2011; Johnston, 2003; Park, 2012; Simon-Maeda, 2004; Tsui, 2007). The need for this work arose from a recognition of the fact that what teachers think and value, who they are, and how they relate to learners are truly important in education. Teachers are not neutral players but social beings who are heavily affected by sociocultural dimensions of their teaching contexts (Kubota, 2001; Pennycook, 2001). It then becomes obvious that it is necessary to understand language teachers, particularly language teachers' identity, in order to better understand the current status of language teaching and to suggest better ways of language education. This idea is well reflected in Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, and Johnson's (2005) words, "in order to understand language teaching and learning, we need to understand teachers: the professional, cultural, political, and individual identities which they claim or which are assigned to them" (p. 22).

In spite of increasing interest in ESP, empirical studies directly concerning ESP teachers and teaching are few (Basturkmen, 2019). Furthermore, far less research has been carried out to investigate ESP teacher identity or professional development (Basturkmen, 2019; Chang, 2017; Tao & Gao, 2018). Considering the role of teachers as crucial players of ESP education and their identity struggles, there is an urgent need for studies exploring ESP teachers' identity struggles and identity formation process. Besides, to my knowledge, there

is no longitudinal research on ESP teachers' professional development in relation to their teacher identity construction and reconstruction. To investigate the complicated process of teacher identity transformation, a longitudinal study is necessary.

In order to fill these gaps, the present study explores how one ESP teacher, who was teaching English for presidential security purposes in Korea, created and negotiated her teacher identity. Furthermore, this study takes a longitudinal approach conducted in a four-year period. As regards the value of longitudinal research, Ortega and Ibarra-Shea (2005) claimed that the investigation and explanation of change over time requires a longitudinal approach but, unfortunately, there is a dearth of longitudinal L2 studies. The aim of this paper, therefore, is to examine the ESP teacher's lived experiences in which she constructed multiple identities over time, and to illuminate the complicated process of her ESP teacher identity formation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Identity

The present study draws on a poststructuralist perspective of identity to illuminate the multi-faceted, evolving nature of identity development of an ESP teacher. Identity has been defined in various ways, but, more recently, an increasing number of studies have adopted a poststructuralist approach to identity. This study follows Weedon's (1997) definition of identity as "the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world" (p. 32).

This poststructuralist approach highlights a couple of significant features of identity. First, identity is multiple and variable over time and space (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Weedon, 1997). In other words, identities are not fixed, unitary entities of an individual, but are constantly recreated and negotiated over time. This view is similar to Erikson's (1968) understanding of identity as something that develops during one's whole life, not something that a person has for all. Second, identities are contradictory in the sense that different identities are co-existing in conflicting ways within a single person. As a result, identities are perceived as a site of struggle in which individuals try to negotiate their identities by resisting undesirable identities imposed upon them by others and appropriating positive identities. Finally, identity is situated in a context in which an individual exists. Identity is always socially embedded, not context-free, and identity construction is therefore influenced by a great variety of experiences situated in context.

Another notion worth noting is agency, which has become an important theoretical

construct of identity (Ahearn, 2001; Duff, 2012; Larsen-Freeman, 2019; Norton & Toohey, 2011). According to this view, we human beings do not simply remain passive in the course of action. Instead, we actively participate in the process of meaning negotiations to varying degrees by, for example, resisting unfavorable impositions, exerting influence, or making informed choices. In relation to teachers, teacher agency has a significant impact upon instructional practices and the negotiation of teacher identity (Benson, 2017).

Taking this poststructuralist position, teachers have multiple, dynamic, and conflicting identities. Teachers' identity formation is influenced by various factors, including previous experiences, life stories, institutional settings, and broader social, educational, and political conditions. Teacher identity thus derives from the teachers' personal backgrounds and also external sociocultural environments where they are situated. Teacher identity construction is, indeed, not just an individual endeavor but a social process co-constructed through interactions with others and social environments. Besides, it should be noted that teacher agency can play a role in teacher identity construction. By exercising their agency, teachers can thus change their access to resources and practices, and make better use of available resources. Teachers are also able to position themselves more favorably, which eventually may enable them to reframe their relationships with others and claim more powerful identities from which to teach and interact with students (Benson, 2017; Norton & Toohey, 2011). In sum, teachers' professional identity is a crucial element in education, having a profound impact upon classroom landscapes including instructional techniques and interactional processes (Beijaard et al., 2004; Nias, 1989).

2.2. ESP Teachers

What roles ESP teachers play has received interest in the literature. It is recognized that ESP teachers usually carry out additional tasks that teachers of general English may not be required to manage (Basturkmen, 2019). According to Belcher (2006), ESP teachers are specialists who are "often needs analysts first and foremost, then designers and implementers of specialized curricular" (p. 135), which eventually imposes a challenging burden on them. Similarly, Anthony (2018) described ESP teachers' roles in terms of the four pillars of ESP: conducting needs analysis, establishing learning objectives, deciding on teaching methods and materials, and evaluating their ESP instruction. As regards needs analysis, Hutchinson and Waters (1987) characterized ESP "as an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reason for learning" (p. 19). ESP should therefore start with the question 'Why do these learners need to learn English?' (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

Additionally, roles of content knowledge in ESP have attracted attention in the ESP field. How much subject knowledge ESP teachers need to have has been a controversial issue

(Basturkmen, 2019; Lesiak-Bielawska, 2015; Master, 2005; Starfield, 2016). In a review of studies of the role of content knowledge in ESP, Master (2005) claimed that there is a continuum of views on this matter. At one end of the continuum, there are views highlighting the importance of subject knowledge. Findings from Basturkmen's (2019) study reported on the need of the very high levels of content knowledge for ESP teachers. At the other end, there are views that content knowledge does not matter a lot. Taylor (1994), representing this extreme, argued that what matters for ESP teachers with a solid of ELT experiences is attitude and interest, not content knowledge. Schachter (1981) went further to claim that subject knowledge is a potential obstruction to the ESP teacher's true role since the primary objective of ESP teaching is to enhance students' communicative competence. Although the extent of subject matter knowledge needed is still a controversy, Robinson (1991) argued that the chief value of sufficient content knowledge lies in its potential to enhance teacher's confidence.

Empirical studies of ESP teachers investigated multiple issues, including strategies that ESP teachers use to compensate for their weaknesses in content knowledge (Wu & Badger, 2009), products of ESP teaching, such as the syllabus and the materials that ESP teachers developed (Bosher & Stoker, 2015), and processes of ESP teaching, such as how teachers developed their courses and materials (Basturkmen, 2019; Kuzborska, 2011).

As regards ESP teacher identity, it is indicated that there is a dearth of literature on ESP teacher identity or teacher development (Basturkmen, 2019; Chang, 2017; Tao & Gao, 2018). Among the few published studies of ESP teacher identity, existing literature mostly focused on the types of identity that ESP teachers had at a certain point of time (Guihang & Miao, 2019), while two studies explored ESP teachers' identity struggles and how they grew professionally. One of the two studies is Chang's (2017) study examining how one Taiwanese teacher developed her teacher identity while making a transition from English for academic purposes to ESP instruction, and illuminated the shifting and multiple features of her ESP teacher identities. Due to the multi-dimensionality of identities, Chang (2017) highlighted the need for ESP teachers to negotiate and renegotiate their multiple, contradictory identities for better ESP instruction. Another study is Tao and Gao's (2018), which explored the identity creation of eight ESP teachers at a Chinese university. The findings demonstrated that the teachers engaged in a complex process of transforming their instructional practices and negotiating professional identities. Overall, the teachers experienced a sense of achievement by helping their students to acquire the ESP skills needed to meet the societal needs and to promote their socioeconomic development. At the same time, however, the teachers struggled to construct positive teacher identities because the disciplinary status of ESP was marginalized at the institution dominated by traditional language-teaching courses. The findings revealed how differently the societal and institutional facets mediate the creation of ESP teacher identities.

These two studies contribute to an understanding of significant aspects of ESP teachers' identity development, such as dominant identities and identity conflicts. In spite of the contributions, however, the studies have some limitations in their research design. Chang's (2017) study explored one ESP teacher's identity development for about nine months, which is quite a short period of time to examine such a complicated issue of *identity development*. Tao and Gao's (2018) study conducted life history interviews for data collection, which relies only on research participants' retrospective reconstructions of their experiences. Possible memory loss or inaccurate memory may interfere with researchers' gaining a complete, valid understanding of the participants' identity trajectory. In that regard, data collection which takes place while identity is actually being transformed is needed. These limitations point that there is a dearth of longitudinal studies that keep track of identity transformation over an extended period of time. The current longitudinal study aims to contribute to research on ESP teacher identity by investigating how one practicing ESP teacher constructed and reconstructed her teacher identity for four years while professionally growing. This study also intends to illuminate significant factors shaping her identity transformation process.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participant and Setting

Misun (a pseudonym) started her ESP teaching career in 2014 without any prior English teaching experiences. During her college years, Misun as an English major invested much time in improving her English skills with a belief that achieving high levels of English proficiency would help her to gain social, economic, and cultural benefits. Partly due to her advanced English proficiency, she had an opportunity to work at a financial company in America for one year. Misun then joined an administration team for an intensive in-service English teacher training program at the university that she had graduated from in Korea. The main purpose of this six-month program was to provide a group of in-service teachers with an opportunity to develop a better understanding of theories and practices of English education and to enhance their English skills. As part of the program, teachers visited an English-speaking country for one month to improve their English competence and intercultural sensitivity. While accompanying the teachers for a short-term overseas study, Misun often observed some teachers facing communication problems originating mainly from their low confidence in English skills and fear of communication failures. These observations led her to apply for a TESOL M. A. program at the university that she was working for with a desire to assist people in English learning. Upon approval of the

university, Misun studied for her M.A. degree while still working for the in-service teacher training program, and then went further on to study for a doctoral degree, again at the same university, after quitting the job. Table 1 shows Misun's academic and professional background in a chronological order.

TABLE 1
Participant's Academic and Professional Background

Background	Period	Place
B.A. in English	4 years	Korea
Working at a financial company	1 year	U.S.
Working for a teacher training program	3 years	Korea
M.A. in TESOL	2 years	Korea
Working for the ESP teaching	4 years	Korea
Starting Ph.D study in English language education		Korea

In the meantime, the university where Misun was working was contracted with the presidential security service (PSS) office of Korea for developing and implementing an ESP program, specifically English for PSS purposes (hereafter PSS English). Due to an increase in the number of international security service events, Korean PSS agents were required to have higher levels of English skills than before. They had many opportunities to communicate with their foreign counterparts in English when a Korean president made official visits to foreign countries or when foreign leaders visited Korea. Against this background, the PSS office decided to adopt an ESP education approach, recognizing that its traditional general English programs proved ineffective for its agents.

In this context, three faculty members with expertise in TESOL, one of whom is the author of this paper, were involved in designing a PSS English program and textbooks, which entailed several meetings with PSS agents. After an overall curriculum was established, a speaking proficiency level test using a nationally certified English test tool was administered among the agents, who were then placed in one of the four levels according to their test scores. About 20 agents were in the lowest and highest levels respectively, and about 60 agents in the low intermediate and high intermediate levels respectively. A total of six courses in four proficiency levels were arranged – one for the lowest level, two for the low intermediate, two for the high intermediate, and one for the highest. The PSS agents were required to attend their level-appropriate one-hour class at their workplace early in the morning or late in the evening twice a week. In addition to these regular classes, some of the agents, particularly those in low proficiency levels, were sometimes exempt from their job duties for a designated period of time and instead attended a two- to four-week intensive PSS English program tailored to their needs.

At first Misun was not involved in the PSS English program, but about one year after the program was launched, she joined the team, first as a teacher, and, then, one and a half years

later, as a program coordinator. As a program director, I supervised and closely worked with six teachers, including Misun. As mentioned earlier, Misun had no English teaching experiences prior to PSS teaching, but she gradually earned a reputation as the best, most reliable teacher from the students. Besides, through sustained interactions, I came to recognize that she was going through the most striking identity changes, which led me to invite Misun to the present study as a research participant. Power differentials in relationships between Misun as a teacher and me as the program director had the potential to affect the research process, particularly interview processes, which may distort understanding of identity issues to some extent. It should, however, be noted that both interviews and other mechanisms, such as extensive, sustained interactions with Misun in a four-year time frame and rigorous program monitoring process involving class observations and student evaluations, complemented each other, so that I could gain a holistic understanding of her teacher identity transformation.

3.2. Data Collection

Data collection was carried out during a four-year period between 2016 and 2020. I conducted six semi-structured interviews with Misun in my office, which took half an hour to two hours each. The first interview was conducted about six months after Misun started her teaching. During each interview, I first relied on pre-planned questions, but, as the interview evolved, I asked many impromptu questions, whenever necessary, to further delve into issues worth investigating. After one interview was completed, I formulated questions for the subsequent interview while hearing the recorded interviews. In that sense, the preceding interviews informed the subsequent interview sessions by providing useful input for the next ones. Besides, when I needed some more information on the topics covered in the previous interviews, I sometimes contacted Misun via emails or social network service (SNS) messages, and then she sent me written answers. This type of data collection occurred six times. Both working relationships and deep knowledge that I had about the PSS English program as the director helped me to build the common ground with Misun for the interviews and elicit in-depth responses from her. Taken together, a total of twelve in-depth interviews were administered for data collection. Table 2 presents information about the interviews.

Primary purposes of the interviews were to explore various dimensions of Misun's self-identities as a teacher, the process of identity construction and reconstruction, and factors affecting the process. Interview questions include 'Did you have any difficulties while teaching PSS English? If so, what types of struggles were they?' 'What strategies did you use to deal with those struggles?' 'How did you identify yourself at different stages of ESP teaching?' 'Were there any critical moments in your identity transformation?' 'What factors affected your identity construction and negotiation?' and 'How would you define ESP

teaching?

TABLE 2
Details of the Interviews

No.	Type	Time	Length
1	face-to-face	Jan., 2016	1.5 hours
2	email/SNS	Jan., 2016	
3	face-to-face	Nov., 2016	2 hours
4	email/SNS	Nov., 2016	
5	email/SNS	May, 2017	
6	email/SNS	Dec., 2018	
7	face-to-face	Jun., 2018	2 hours
8	email/SNS	Jun., 2018	
9	face-to-face	Nov., 2018	0.5 hour
10	face-to-face	May, 2019	2 hours
11	face-to-face	Jan., 2020	1 hour
12	email/SNS	Feb., 2020	

In addition to the interviews, informal observations that I made of Misun, who was working as a teacher and program coordinator turned out valuable data for this study although I did not write down field notes. Those observational data served to understand and interpret her interview responses more clearly.

3.3. Data Analysis

I analyzed the data in an iterative and evolving process, following general qualitative data analysis procedures (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the initial stage of analysis, I read the data multiple times in order to gain an overall understanding of Misun's identity creation and recreation process, and significant issues surrounding the process. This stage was followed by a closer analysis of the data in which I paid attention to Misun's recurrent, notable identities and also factors affecting the transition between them. At the end of this stage, I ended up identifying four salient themes, that is, identities that could characterize Misun's self-identity as a teacher at different points of her ESP teaching career. With those salient identities in mind, I then segmented the data into four sections that match the four identities respectively, and carefully coded each section in order to identify its distinctive features. Meanwhile, I also closely attended to significant events that helped to characterize each stage and noticeable factors that influenced the shift from one salient identity to another. In the next stage, I labeled each identity and identified quotes that could be most representative of each identity.

Worth noting is that the data analysis procedure was iterative in the sense that I often moved back and forth between data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation. Whenever I had ambiguity surrounding data interpretation, I contacted Misun to clarify

uncertainties and to probe for more information. As indicated earlier, after an interview was finished, I roughly analyzed the participant's responses, and preliminary findings served as useful resources for the next data collection procedure. To be more specific, preliminary analysis of previous interviews helped me to figure out what information is missing or ambiguous and thus formulate specific questions for the subsequent interviews to fill the gaps. Such analysis also often revealed some interesting themes, which I could further explore in the following interviews and relate to newly emerging themes in the next analysis process. Data analysis was kept open in such a way that it responded to new emergent themes or significant details. Finally, I conducted a member check in order to ensure the trustworthiness of the study by sharing the data analysis results with Misun and obtaining her feedback.

4. RESULTS

Through data analysis, I identified four salient identities that Misun constructed and negotiated in different stages of her ESP teaching: a scared, inexperienced English teacher, a struggling, but hard-working collaborator and learner, a novice ESP teacher growing in confidence, and a competent and helpful ESP teacher. It should be, however, noted that multiple identities, not one, were shown in each stage. Also, identities in one stage cannot be clearly separated from identities in other stages, particularly in its neighboring stages. Certain identities stood out for a while in one stage, gradually diminishing their dominance and yielding their positions to different identities that newly emerged as a result of identity renegotiation.

4.1. 1st Stage: A Scared, Inexperienced English Teacher

Even before she became involved in the PSS English program, Misun enjoyed a highly positive reputation as a smart, efficient staff member among the university faculty members working for that ESP program. About six months after the PSS program was launched, the program director, who is the researcher of this study, asked Misun to join the teaching team for a one-month intensive PSS program, and she gladly accepted the offer. That was her entry point for ESP teaching.

Misun, who had long been interested in teaching English to adults, was excited about this offer, but, at the same time, concerned about her teaching as she had no prior English teaching experiences, let alone ESP teaching. Although Misun as a proficient English speaker had abundant working experiences in English education, she had not had any opportunities to teach English to adults. For lack of teaching experiences, Misun thus entered

the teaching field with severe apprehension and low self-confidence.

What worried Misun most was the fact that she had no knowledge about security tasks and English for PSS purposes. Reflecting on the fear of that time, Misun said:

I knew nothing about presidential security services and my students were all experts in that field. I was extremely overwhelmed by a recognition that I would have to teach English words and expressions about security that I had no idea of. I had a feeling like, ‘Oh, what should I do? I’ve entered into an unknown world.’ (Jan. 19, 2016; face-to-face interview)

Misun started to engage in ESP teaching as a complete novice English teacher. Besides, she could not even afford to develop a sense of her roles. Without clear knowledge of the field, Misun was not sure about what to do as a teacher and what steps to take. All that she could think of was having a determined mind to do her best for teaching. Teaching goals that she established were simply to help her students to feel familiar with English and to motivate them for English learning, which is well reflected in the following:

Reflecting on my earliest days of ESP teaching, I didn’t have any big picture of ESP teaching, and I had no clear sense of responsibility either. I barely managed teaching. I just hoped that my students would feel more comfortable with English learning and not fall asleep during my lesson. (Jan. 19, 2016; face-to-face interview)

Obviously, these goals are not closely related to the features of ESP teaching, but, rather, reflect what any English teacher aims to achieve in general. Although she was aware of a mismatch between her teaching goals and ESP teaching, Misun had no other choice but to develop her teaching goals in association with general English education. In order to achieve those goals, she then prepared her lesson plans carefully with focus on vocabulary lessons. In the class, she tried to create opportunities for her students to memorize the target words and make sentences using them.

For the first one month in her ESP teaching journey, Misun felt that she was teaching general English rather than PSS English. With regard to this, Misun said, “I was an English teacher, not an ESP teacher” (Jan. 19, 2016; face-to-face interview).

4.2. 2nd Stage: A Struggling, but Hard-working Collaborator and Learner

Although Misun struggled quite severely during the one-month intensive PSS program, her students showed positive responses to her teaching. Misun felt that her efforts were paid

off when she received good evaluation from the students. Such positive evaluation results led the program director to offer Misun an opportunity to teach, this time, a regular PSS English course, and Misun willingly accepted the offer with a sense of achievement.

For the regular class teaching, Misun visited the security agent office twice a week and taught for one hour on each visit day. This time, Misun was given three in-house security English textbooks as reference materials, which had been developed by the PSS English program development team including me. Having PSS textbooks in hand gave her a sense of relief as she could rely on those materials for class teaching. She then designed her lesson plans based on the textbooks and tried to implement the lesson plans as faithfully as possible in the classroom. She made the following comment on the main teaching practices of that time:

I had no idea about the details of the security field, and my confidence as a teacher was very low. All I could do was to follow an established curriculum and use the given materials, so I studied the in-house textbooks as much as possible. That was the only way to prepare for my class. (Nov. 13, 2016; face-to-face interview)

With time, Misun started to feel that her teaching was depending too heavily on textbook-based routines, whose recognition allowed her to look for supplementary materials in the internet. Due to limited content knowledge, however, she often ended up with having materials that proved irrelevant to the students and thus could not be used for teaching. Misun reflected on those failures while saying, “I was not sure whether I found the right materials. As I had no idea of the field, I didn’t know what key words to use for searching information in the internet, so much of the information that I collected proved to be useless in class. (Nov. 13, 2016; face-to-face interview)

As regards content knowledge, Misun had an extremely low self-confidence but sought to make up for her lack of ‘content’ knowledge by positioning herself as an English expert. She thus diligently identified vocabulary words or phrases that seem related to her students’ job and sometimes explained the origins of those expressions in the class. In return, she came to learn more and more about specific security tasks from the students. In the meantime, Misun felt that she was being engaged in collaboration with her students for ESP teaching. Regarding such collaborative experiences, she commented, “Collaboration was taking place between me and my students. They were content experts and I was a language expert. It seems like we were working together for a class” (Nov. 13, 2016; face-to-face interview). Misun started to view herself as a *collaborator* with her students.

Nonetheless, being required to teach ESP without subject knowledge imposed severe burdens on Misun. While struggling to design and teach lessons, she felt as if she were blindly looking for something in a hazy weather. Misun described her agony when saying,

“I didn’t know for sure what to teach and what to do. Everything was unclear. I felt confused and emotionally stifled. Though I was in that situation, I couldn’t ask any questions of my students because I was their teacher” (Nov. 15, 2016; email correspondence). The last sentence of this quote reveals serious identity conflicts that she was going through. On the one hand, she had an envisioned identity of teacher who is an expert with sufficient subject knowledge, and, on the other hand, she had a genuine identity of herself as a stumbling, struggling teacher. What worried Misun most was that her students might question her qualifications as a teacher and challenge her vulnerable teacher identity. Identity was truly a site of struggles for Misun.

As a way to resolve these identity conflicts, Misun studied a lot about security tasks and also PSS English. She searched the internet and visited bookstores to find information about security written in English. She labeled those actions as strategies for survival, when saying, “Studying hard was my survival strategy. I had to study and prepare a lot because I didn’t know what to teach” (Nov. 13, 2016; face-to-face interview). In this stage, Misun viewed herself as a learner too.

In the meantime, Misun started to become aware that her students had varying needs for ESP learning as reflected in the following comment:

I came to recognize that my students had a variety of motivations for English learning. Some students desired to learn English for performing security-related tasks more skillfully while some others hoped to enjoy casual talks with their foreign counterparts in informal contexts. It then occurred to my mind that it is most important to identify my students’ diverse needs and to address them appropriately. (Nov. 13, 2016; face-to-face interview)

This awareness became a turning point in her ESP teaching career. Struck by a recognition of the students’ diverse needs, Misun started to identify their needs through individual conversations with them. She then put the individual students’ needs identified in a data profile and used them for class activities.

Although she made some progress in her ESP teaching, Misun did not perceive herself as an ESP teacher yet. Regarding this, she commented, “I didn’t have a clear idea of security English. I was not an ESP teacher yet” (Nov. 13, 2016; face-to-face interview).

4.3. 3rd Stage: A Novice ESP Teacher Growing in Confidence

With a help of intensive self-study and continued teaching, Misun developed a better understanding of security tasks and English expressions for security purposes. Importantly, she started to identify herself as a novice ESP teacher, not a general English teacher any

more. Increase in the knowledge base allowed her to renegotiate teacher identity and claim more favorable positions while serving as a change agent.

In alignment with this new identity, Misun critically reflected on her instructional patterns, which led her to make some changes in her lesson planning and teaching. Above all, she decided not to use the in-house textbooks but to use various external materials instead. Misun said, "I realized that relying on the same in-house textbooks was not effective considering different proficiency levels and needs of my students. I found it necessary to use diverse external resources because they could better address my students' varying needs" (Jun. 15, 2018; SNS message). Misun then sought for teaching materials more actively through various channels, such as newspapers, online resources and movies, and obtained useful resources quite successfully. As regards the reasons for this progress, Misun mentioned:

I think I could find materials more skillfully because I got to know much more about the field. I knew what key words to enter for searching information in the internet, and so I could access more useful information than before. I used the materials more frequently than the textbooks. (Jun. 3, 2018; face-to-face interview)

Unfortunately, however, Misun often found that many of those materials were not greatly helpful for her students as the materials, which were written primarily for native speakers of English, were generally incomprehensible to the students, particularly those in low proficiency levels. This led her to revise some external resources into simpler, manageable versions. Meanwhile, Misun's accumulated competence in materials development helped to promote her instructional competence, and, at the same time, shape her positive professional identity in her. She gradually started to view herself as an ESP teacher with a growing competence.

Furthermore, Misun kept herself updated with the latest news on institutional affairs by joining SNS of the institution. She kept track of security events, and when she made reference to upcoming events, her students were pleasantly amazed at her knowledge. Eventually her efforts to keep up with significant security affairs helped to boost Misun's reputation among her students, who then started to establish trust in Misun as a teacher. After then, Misun felt that the psychological gap between her students and her was gradually narrowing.

Another significant change is that Misun became comfortable about asking her students questions about security services or security English. This was made possible by her growing confidence in ESP teaching. With regard to this change, Misun commented:

Earlier, I was afraid that if I ask my students questions about the content, I might lose my face and it would be a serious threat to my teacher identity. However, as

I gained some confidence as an ESP teacher, that fear was gradually removed, and I could ask my students questions to check whether my understanding was correct. (Nov. 3, 2018; face-to-face interview)

A newly constructed ESP teacher identity allowed Misun freedom to be flexible in her ESP teaching career. She was not controlled by her vulnerable teacher identities any more, but, instead, Misun actively renegotiated her identities and positioned herself as a learner who was willing to ask questions about security tasks. This learner identity did not pose a threat to her ESP teacher identity, which had already taken roots in her. On the contrary, it enabled Misun to gain deeper content knowledge and to further grow as an ESP teacher.

4.4. 4th Stage: A Competent, Helpful ESP Teacher

Misun's confidence as an ESP teacher continuously grew as her ESP teaching became more principled. Her growing competence in ESP teaching was unveiled in various dimensions. For instance, Misun used both linguistic and content knowledge to prepare effective lesson plans, and implemented her teaching skillfully. Also, she made critical reflections on the day's teaching after a class and tried to incorporate the reflections into her subsequent teachings. These practices eventually helped to strengthen Misun's teacher identity.

An interplay of various factors led to a creation of a competent ESP teacher identity within Misun, and, of course, the acquisition of content knowledge is one of them. As regards its importance, Misun made the following comment:

The acquisition of content knowledge played an important role in forming an ESP teacher identity within me. If ESP teachers don't have enough content knowledge, they may not teach confidently. I think ESP teachers should make efforts to accumulate content knowledge. I believe only after teachers acquire content knowledge sufficiently can they become genuine ESP teachers. (May. 15, 2019; face-to-face interview)

Besides, Misun's growing expertise in the material and curriculum development contributed to strengthening her ESP teacher identity. She reached a stage in which she could create materials from scratch, for example, writing articles or scripts for role-plays for class activities. Her students made highly positive feedbacks on those materials and became engaged in the ESP learning process more actively. This confirmed her belief in significant roles that effective materials play in the ESP instructional process, and, at the same time, Misun grew into a well-qualified ESP material developer.

An experience in conducting a corpus research study also contributed to strengthening Misun's ESP teacher identity. As part of requirement of a doctoral course she was taking, Misun conducted a corpus study in order to investigate the frequency and the features of security-related English expressions. This process enabled her to become a more competent ESP teacher, as shown in the following:

After I established my ESP corpus, I became able to explain the meanings and usages of security-related expressions more confidently. Before then, I regarded my students as the most reliable sources of information, but I ended up with relying on my corpus data more. I felt more empowered for my ESP teaching. (Jan. 10, 2020; face-to-face interview)

Meanwhile, Misun's students felt comfortable asking for her help, to which she reacted positively. When a student asked her questions about English expressions while involved in overseas security tasks, for example, she immediately gave him a hand. Misun even assisted in another student's application process for a master's program at an American university. Misun then earned a reputation as a trustworthy shelter for English among her students and, in the process, started to embrace a new role as a 'caregiver', as reflected in the quote, "While helping my students individually, I felt a strong sense of responsibility as a teacher. Meanwhile, I came to desire to care about my students' English needs both inside and outside the class, and so I ended up with having another identity, that is, 'caregiver'" (Feb. 5, 2020; email interview). Due to this identity as a 'caregiver,' Misun's definition of ESP teaching became more extensive and wide-ranging. In Misun's view, ESP teaching was not simply teaching English for a particular field but a humane instruction for helping people to perform various occupational tasks in English skillfully.

Misun was performing as an ESP teacher and 'caregiver' in the institution. Misun's reputation as a reliable, proficient ESP teacher spread out in the PSS office, and this allowed her to have more responsibilities in that institution, such as interviewing new applicants for the institution and writing an email or an invitation letter in English. By then, Misun was neither an outsider nor a novice in the periphery anymore, but a legitimate member of the institution with ESP competence.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The current study was conducted in a four-year period to explore how one ESP teacher went through a process of identity negotiation. Misun went through an ongoing, complicated process of teacher identity formation involving the complex interaction of various factors,

as suggested by previous studies of teacher identities (Beijaard et al., 2004; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). During her ESP teaching journey, Misun constantly negotiated her identities in response to emerging changes both internal and external to her. When she first entered the ESP teaching field without content knowledge and teaching experiences, she held a self-identity as a scared, inexperienced English teacher who simply aimed at motivating students for English learning. This identity was then transformed to a struggling but hard-working collaborator and learner. With more subject matter knowledge and teaching experiences, Misun then started to develop her identity as an ESP teacher, not general English teacher, and then eventually perceived herself as a competent, helpful ESL teacher. In line with Benson's (2017) claim, Misun's identity transformation process reveals that teaching a language is a process of becoming a person who teaches it.

Taking the lens of teacher identity, the findings of this study contribute to expanding the knowledge base of the ESP teacher identity in a couple of ways. First of all, Misun's construction and negotiation of identities reveal a complex process of becoming an ESP teacher. Echoing the poststructuralist approach to identity, Misun did not have single, fixed identities; instead, she had multiple identities, which kept changing over time (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Weedon, 1997). Her initial identity was a weak, vulnerable general English teacher, but with more involvement in ESP teaching, she could develop her identity as a competent ESP teacher.

Second, this study identified needs analysis, competence in materials development, and subject content knowledge as significant factors mediating an ESP teacher's identity construction. Indeed, a variety of factors, whether personal or situational, influenced the process of Misun's ESP teacher identity construction, but, in the beginning stage of her ESP career, Misun's efforts to understand and analyze student needs contributed to her professional development. Then in the later stages, her growing abilities to access readily available teaching materials, and, if necessary, even create new materials helped Misun to position herself as an effective, competent ESP teacher. These findings reaffirm the idea that needs analysis (Belcher, 2006; Kennedy & Bolitho, 1991) and abilities for materials development (Anthony, 2018; Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Kennedy & Bolitho, 1991) play a critical role in enhancing ESP teachers' instructional competence and also shaping their positive professional identities. Meanwhile, subject content knowledge as a mediating factor deserves special attention. As mentioned earlier, the role of content knowledge in ESP teaching is still a controversial issue, and conflicting views have thus been proposed (Master, 2005). In this context, the findings of this study support a view that recognizes the importance of content knowledge for ESP teachers (e.g., Basturkmen, 2019; Chang, 2017; Tao & Gao, 2018). Lack of subject knowledge initially positioned Misun as an unconfident, scared teacher who was constantly worried that her teacher identity might be threatened by the students. After expanding volume of knowledge, however, Misun started to renegotiate

her identity more positively. What is more, the acquisition of content knowledge facilitated the development of her professional practices by informing her preparation of teaching materials and class activities. Over time, Misun grew into an autonomous, competent ESP teacher. As suggested by Robinson (1991), an increase in subject knowledge has the potential to enhance ESP teacher's confidence.

Third, Misun's identity transformation process can be interpreted in the light of significant changes in her teacher agency (Benson, 2017; Duff, 2012; Norton & Toohey, 2011). In the initial stage of teaching, Misun was not in a position yet to exert teacher agency. She simply followed a fixed curriculum and used given teaching materials routinely. Gradually, however, Misun developed a capacity to exercise control over her teaching and served as an agent mediating the ESP instructional process. Above all, she came to figure out the core features of ESP teaching, including the importance of needs analysis and material development, and adjusted her teaching accordingly. For example, she designed lesson plans and teaching materials appropriate to her students' proficiency levels and needs. She also directed her teaching towards long-term goals of ESP teaching, which is to assist students to perform their duties more skillfully in English. These changes are products of her growing teacher agency. More importantly, achieving teacher agency bears much more significant implications than Misun's achieving an ability to teach more effectively and prepare for lessons more efficiently. It had a fundamental impact on her identity construction and transformation. While exercising her agency more and more in the instructional process, Misun, who was an outsider in the beginning, finally renegotiated her identity as a competent ESP teacher who could play a main role in the class and also in the teacher-student relationships. She was not worried about her vulnerable teacher identity anymore. Instead, she exerted strong ownership over her teaching while creating increasingly more spaces for autonomous teaching. In Glas' (2015) words, Misun achieved agency in situational contexts over time, which left traces on her identity as an ESP teacher. More specifically, while exerting agency, Misun could finally negotiate her position more favorably and claim a more powerful identity option. In line with Benson's (2017) claim about the relationship between agency and identity, Misun's identity as an effective, competent ESP teacher was partially shaped by her exercise of teacher agency in response to contextual conditions. Becoming an ESP teacher is truly a complex process of constructing and negotiating identities (Danielewicz, 2001; Tao & Gao, 2018).

It should be highlighted that the current study made unique, significant contributions to the ESP field by addressing a need for longitudinal studies of ESP teacher identity construction and professional development. The findings of this study shed light on a practicing ESP teacher's identity transformation process across time while highlighting intervening factors, such as content knowledge required and the abilities to modify or design materials.

Having such unique, significant contributions to the ESP field, this study has a couple of implications for ESP education. Above all, in line with Basturkmen (2019), who reported that provision of ESP teacher education is very limited, the findings highlight a need to provide ESP teacher education sufficiently. ESP teacher education programs can target topics, such as the types of struggles that ESP teachers are likely to encounter and the ways of overcoming them. Additionally, based on the findings of the importance of needs analysis, subject content knowledge, and materials development in ESP teachers' professional development, this study claims that ESP teacher education programs should involve pre- and in-service teachers in an educational process starting from needs analysis through the acquisition of content knowledge of a selected field to the development of instructional materials. Real engagement in the full process, instead of hearing about it, will help ESP teachers to grasp the nature of the three essential features of ESP education more effectively and to eventually get well prepared for ESP teaching. Finally, ESP teacher educators can incorporate a teacher identity framework into their teacher education programs, so that ESP teachers can be engaged in critical reflections on their identities. ESP teachers can therefore critically reflect on their current identities and possible trajectories of identity development. With an awareness of identity issues, teachers will be able to figure out factors mediating their professional development, and become empowered to navigate multiple, conflicting identities more confidently while dealing with those intervening factors. This may eventually enable them to position and reposition themselves as competent teachers. Subsequent sharing of identity issues among the teachers may contribute to the formation of a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and an enhanced sense of belonging.

In spite of these significant findings on ESP teacher identities, this study has a limitation. The findings reported are based on interview data only. Using multiple sources of data, such as document reviews and student interviews, will shed more light on various aspects of an identity creation and recreation process. This will also contribute to enhancing the trustworthiness of the findings of research studies. At the same time, future research should be conducted to explore ESP teacher identities in many different contexts. Those studies will advance an understanding of how the social context affects the ESP teacher identity construction and how the teachers respond to those contextual constraints exerting their agency.

Applicable levels: Tertiary, adults

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