

**The impact of playing a transnational on-line game
on Korean EFL learners' L2 identity
and their offline learning dispositions**

Submitted by

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Abstract

The rapid growth of computer-mediated communication (CMC) which has become available through the development of new communication technologies provides many English learners with relatively more opportunities for exposure to international communicative activities in English than they had in the pre-digital era. This phenomenon has attracted research attention to the question of the use of digital literacy practices as a means of second language education. There have been many studies on CMC and second language education, however, little is known about EFL learners' L2 identity (second language identity) development in online gaming communities and its possible significant effects on L2 learners' motivation and learning success.

Through narrative interviews with 10 Korean EFL learners in their twenties, this research explores how young adult Korean EFL learners' online communication experiences in English while playing a massively multiplayer online game, *League of Legends*, influenced their L2 identity evolvment and how their constructed L2 identity impacted their offline learning attitudes. Narrative interviews were conducted and the interview data were processed with a thematic analysis in order to identify thematic patterns while trying to allow categories which could be identified from the data as well.

The findings indicated that the participants had realized important factors of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) paradigm through text-based interactions in online gaming contexts. They realized that English is used as a contact language in a global community, that there are varieties of English as well as so-called native English speakers' in the community, and that pragmatic use of English focusing on intelligibility rather than on accuracy is important for efficient

communication. Their realization of some concepts of ELF paradigm was helpful for them to be confident and motivated in using and learning their target language not only in online communities but also in offline situations. Although it is a small-scale study, it has been able to fill some gaps in knowledge into what sort of factors can positively influence EFL learners' L2 identity construction and how out-of-class virtual activities can affect EFL learners' overall learning dispositions such as their confidence and motivation in using and learning the language.

Even though adverse effects stemming from the addiction to video games have caused social problems around the world, the insights gained from this study could demonstrate that there are a number of potential qualities of online gaming communities. The characteristics of the online gaming community that were found to positively influence EFL learners' learning attitudes might be conducive to the classroom practice or utilized as out-of-class learning activities, especially for young adult learners. For example, the egalitarian relationship among the gaming community members might be an important factor that English teachers could reflect on in terms of creating a constructive learning environment in their classes. Also, EFL learners might utilize the opportunities of using English in various online communities according to their interests to enhance the overall construction of their positive L2 identity and ultimate learning success.

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List of terminology and abbreviations

BICS: Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills

CALL: Computer-Assisted Language Learning

CALP: Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

CMC: Computer-Mediated Communication

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

EIL: English as an International Language

ELF: English as a Lingua Franca

ELT: English Language Teaching

L2 identity: Second Language Identity

LOL: League of Legends

MMOG: Massively Multi-player Online Game

MMORPG: Massively Multi-player Online Role-Playing Game

MOBA: Multiplayer Online Battle Arena

NS: Native Speaker

NNS: Non-native Speaker

WTC: Willingness to Communicate

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introductory Overview

Given the digitally-networked nature of 21st century life, the sorts of out-of-class learning opportunities created by the growth of computer-mediated communication (CMC), such as social networking sites, email, fan fiction and participation in multi-player online games have emerged as a particular focus of research interest for language development (Harrison & Thomas 2009; Lam, 2000, 2004; Thorne & Black, 2011; Thorne et al., 2009). In fact, advanced technologies make it possible for global language learners to have informal, out-of-class learning opportunities which many SLL researchers noted for their effects upon successful language learning (Ellis, 2008; Krashen, 1985; Swain, 1985; Benson & Reinders, 2011). When we look into this virtual space as a potential context which can provide positive learning opportunities for language learners, all the possible effects of the opportunities which influence their learning success are worth exploring.

As learning contexts are not only for knowledge construction but also for the establishment of a sense of self, how learners construct their identities within learning contexts is as important as how they build up their knowledge and skills. The process of constructing one's identity as a learner in a learning situation requires subjective experience in context, and how a learner perceives his/her educational experience within their social relations is relevant to the achievement level of learning (Coll, 1988). As for language learners, there is a growth of interest in identity in accounts of second and foreign language learning. It is an awareness of the role that language identity plays on its outcomes such as

learners' attitudes towards their target language community and motivation for learning and using the language (Schumann, 1978; Acton, 1979; Schmidt, 1983).

As Norton argues, identity constructs and is constructed by language, being marked by relations of power (2006), I think second language learners' identity (Second Language (L2) identity) also needs to be understood in relation to other members of the target language community when they learn and use the language. When an individual regards their membership within the target language community and relations with other members as significant to him/herself, he/she will invest further effort to become a more fully fledged member of the community (Norton, 2000, 2001; Pavlenko, 2003). Also, how a second language learner feels power relations with other members of the target language community can affect his/her confidence in using, motivation for learning, and willingness to communicate in the target language (Arnold, 1999; Norton, 2000; Yashima, 2002, 2009), all of which are closely linked to his/her success in learning a second language.

As for power relations in a global community where English is used for communication among the members, the ownership of the language must be reexamined. In the sense of English as a global language for the international communication, the target language community, its culture, and norms are no longer confined to the native countries where English originated from (Gnutzmann, 1999). Indeed, the concept of English as an international language (EIL) or English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) empowers non-native English speakers because it acknowledges the wide variety of English among its users and does not exclusively rely on the monoculturalism of western English speaking countries (Sharifian, 2009).

As there are lots of global communication opportunities provided by the Internet, I think it is worth conducting a study on how CMC can afford English learners with out-of-class learning opportunities while communicating with people who do not necessarily speak English as their first language, how these experiences can lead them to change their understanding of themselves in the relations with the target language community, and how their newly constructed sense of themselves influences their offline learning attitudes and L2 linguistic competence.

As the majority of English speakers across the world are non-native English speakers (Crystal, 1997), CMC tends to adopt English as the Lingua Franca of the Internet, using English as a contact language. In this context, online content writers do not expect the majority of readers will understand complex sentence structures, idioms, and less common vocabulary (Baron, 2004). They recognize ELF as a shared resource, developing pragmatic strategies to facilitate communication (Canagarajah, 2007). Therefore, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, who do not have many opportunities to use English outside their classrooms, may be able to think themselves as legitimate members of the imagined global community through CMC, providing motivation for learning and confidence in using English, resulting in more engagement with learning opportunities (Kanno & Norton, 2003).

As a growing number of world population is engaged in online communicative activities and lots of English educators are interested in utilizing these for their language education, exploring what is going on in this virtual space from various perspectives would be meaningful. In this context, I would like to explore what EFL learners experience when communicating in English with other global English users while playing a multi-player online game with the lens of 'identity'

and what sorts of changes they experience in their off-line learning situations.

As an English teacher and English program developer for Korean young learners, I have thought about how to improve Korean EFL students' confidence and motivation for using and learning English, which are especially challenging for them. I have observed young Korean EFL learners for about 10 years of my teaching and researching career and have always thought of the above-mentioned issue – the deficiency of confidence and motivation – is, in my opinion, the main problem that should be prioritized for their learning success. While I was looking for ways how to create a low-anxiety learning environment for them, I found many CMC channels have been researched, and many beneficial factors have been found for language education. Among them, what has attracted my interest the most was utilizing online games for in-class teaching materials in order to improve students' interactional participation. For example, Wi & Kim's research (2010) on utilizing a commercial multiplayer online game in a high school English classes found that some modified games could improve the students' participation in collaborative class activities. However, I also found the conversations in the games which were modified for English classes were not authentic communication in the target language community, which is especially needed for EFL learners. So I became interested in some commercial online games and thought it would be meaningful to explore their usefulness for English education.

The reasons why I am interested in multiplayer online games among various CMC channels are not only that they are the ones comparatively many people identify as their favorite leisure activity in Korea, but also that there are some outstanding features which I believe are helpful for language learning purposes.

Among the beneficial features are being a task-based, goal-oriented activity which requires collaboration with others through discursive interactions, facilitating real-time authentic communication with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and allowing relatively more freedom of taking linguistic risks thanks to anonymity while playing with their game avatars.

1.2. Rationale for the Study

Classroom-bound English Language Teaching (ELT) pedagogy has limits in its input and practice through working with an idealized partial representation of social reality. Therefore, any attempt to experience the realistically appropriate language use in authentic contexts would be meaningful due to its self-instructed, non-instructed, and naturalistic learning opportunities (Leung, 2005; Benson & Reinders, 2011). From my experience as an EFL learner myself, I think that the opportunities to use learned English knowledge in real situations are very important. Interacting and socializing with other English speakers would have a significant influence on a learner's second language identity construction and learning attitudes regardless of whether it happens online or offline.

EFL learners, like Koreans, who have been significantly influenced by the native speaker fallacy and western countries' cultural imperialism would find a way to evolve positive conceptualizations of the self as global English users while communicating with English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) speakers in the global community. Furthermore, pragmatic and culture-specific strategies to facilitate communication that is based on negotiation can be developed through engagement and practice with ELF communication. Regarding ELF speakers' linguistic competence, grammar receives less significance than language awareness, strategic competence, and pragmatic competence, which cannot be

helped by explicit formulas. They are achieved by other sensory dimensions of ad hoc strategies, versatility, and agility that can be developed in the actual contexts of language use (Canagarajah, 2007). Because ELF is intersubjectively constructed in a specific context of interaction, English learners gain pragmatic competence which cannot be found in textbooks through actual interactions.

This study aims to explore the following: how Korean EFL learners experience using ELF for transnational communication while participating in one of the CMC channels, a Massively Multiplayer Online (MMO) game; how this experience can affect their language identity evolvment, which manifests in its outcomes; how their evolved second language identity developed in virtual space can ultimately influence their off-line learning attitudes.

Many EFL learners in Korea find learning English is boring and speaking in English is stressful because they have learned it in confined educational settings focused on getting high scores in official standard English tests without many opportunities for real communication outside their classrooms. Therefore, this study was conducted for the sake of suggesting how EFL learners can have increased authentic opportunities for using English in transnational communication outside of a class structure via selected online Computer-mediated Communication (CMC) channels and how they would help influence on their overall sense of self as English speakers and learners.

To explore EFL learners' experiences of identity construction and its influence on their learning, I collected the participants' accounts of their perceptions of how their experiences impacted their sense of themselves as L2 speakers and how their newly constructed identities influenced their learning attitudes. The findings

of this study rely on the storytelling of their experiences and their evidential episodes in their accounts of events that reflected their feelings, thoughts, attitudes, and performance.

1.3. Significance of the Study

A growing number of educators and researchers argue for a need to develop a better understanding of the ways in which the L2 identity acquired in learners' on-line encounters transfers and informs their off-line encounters with their target language, including their formal in-school learning (Thorne & Black, 2011; Turkle & Salamensky, 2001) on the premise that language learners can use virtual experiences to enrich their real life selves (Bargh et al., 2002).

While there have been some studies on ELF interactions and transformation in self-perception in offline circumstances (eg. Llorca, 2008; Kalocsai, 2009) and second language learners' language use and identity development in cyberspace (eg. Lam, 2000, 2003; Black, 2005, 2006), to the best of my knowledge, there has been none which has researched on how the virtual experience of using ELF while playing an online game influences EFL learners' L2 identity constructions as legitimate English users of English in an imagined global community and its effects on their offline learning attitudes.

Also, I believe this research would contribute to a greater understanding of TESOL pedagogy as it focuses on the fact that learning contexts are not only for the improvement of knowledge and skills but also for the construction of identities that affect the success of language learning in a rather different way from traditional theories which emphasize only cognitive outcomes.

Furthermore, there is also a methodological significance to this study. Since it is about the construction of the sense of oneself, I believe the participants' feelings and thoughts are the primary concerns of making sense of an argument for my thesis. Even though it is uncommon to ask people for their perspectives and use their narratives as the only data of a study, I think they are valuable on their own because the focus of this study is not to prove a "historical truth" of whether the events actually happened but to seek "narrative truth" about the personal meaning of the life events experienced (Spence, 1982). Therefore, how the narrators recall, select, and organize significant experiences and events of their lives, positioning themselves for their audience, and what kinds of discursive resources they choose are all meaningful data that are related to the presentation of self (Goffman, 1969; Mishler, 2000).

1.4. Outline of the Study

This chapter presents an introductory overview of the research topic - the importance of the concept of second language identity for language education, the rationale, and purpose of carrying out this inquiry, as well as the significance of the study. Other than this introductory chapter, this thesis consists of another six chapters.

Chapter Two is the background to the study. In this chapter, I present some background information that helps to contextualize this study, including a general account of the growth of computer technologies which have a potential for language learning opportunities, some information about the ELT education system in Korea, and computer software, including online games utilized for English language learning materials in Korea.

Chapter Three is the review of the literature. Here, I discuss the theoretical frameworks of identity construction, the concept of second language identity (L2 identity) and the significance of its associated outcomes, and the concept of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), and review some previous studies on these issues. The research questions of this study are introduced at the end of this chapter.

Chapter Four is the research methodology where I discuss the theoretical frameworks for the methodology employed in this research as well as the details of the data collection and analysis process, including reasons why I chose this data collection method, details of my participants and data analyzing techniques.

Chapter Five is the presentation of findings from my data collection. How the themes are produced by the coding process is discussed with some screen captures in the beginning, and the details of the findings are presented.

Chapter Six is the discussion of the findings where I present how the findings answer the research questions and what issues and themes emerged while collecting and analyzing the data.

Chapter Seven is the conclusion where a summary of findings and their implications is discussed. It includes the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will provide some background information to contextualize this study. First, I will present a general account of the growth of computer technologies and the language learning opportunities they provide both in and out of class. Also, how computer-mediated-communication (CMC) tools including online games can have potentials for language learning opportunities and attract research attention will be discussed. This is then followed by some information on the ELT education system, the status of English, and general learning attitudes towards English language in South Korea. Finally, how computer technologies, including online games, have been utilized for English language learning materials in Korea will be introduced.

2.2. Computer technologies and language learning

2.2.1. The effects of CALL for L2 education

While Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has evolved over the last 40 years, its trend has shifted; from structural CALL in the 1970s and 1980s, which emphasized drill and practice; to communicative CALL in the 1980s and 1990s, which emphasized communicative tasks; to the 21st century's integrative CALL which emphasizes authentic discourse (Warschauer & Healey, 1998). The first mode of CALL programs informed by the behaviorist' learning model focused on repetitive language drills and viewed computers as mechanical tutors which did not allow for students' individual work pace. When personal computers were introduced, communicative CALL, which corresponded to cognitive theories, encouraged students to generate original utterances rather than repeat

prefabricated patterns, trying to teach forms implicitly (Ibid.). Until integrative CALL, which is the latest trend, became available, using computers for realistic communication for Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was not possible due to technological limitations. The advent of CMC channels has made that possible (Bax, 2003).

According to a recent review of the growing body of research undertaken into CALL programs, the development of language skills is apparent when the authentic use of ICT technologies and materials are available for language-based interactions (Macaro et al., 2011). A lot of research interest has been generated in particular by the out-of-class learning opportunities afforded by computer-mediated communication, such as in the effect of e-mail interactions on vocabulary acquisition (Sasaki & Tekeuchi, 2010) and Wiki for collaborative writing skills (Mak & Coniam, 2008; Kleine Staarman, 2011).

Since L2 uses of the Internet and network communication technologies began emerging, there has been a shift in research approaches. Once a number of pedagogical benefits of CMC such as social networking sites, email, Second Life, Wiki, and participation in on-line games were proven, a pedagogical shift from cognitivist assumptions about knowledge and learning to contextual, collaborative, and social-interactional approaches to language development has been suggested (Warschauer & Kern, 2000). The communicative interaction created by linking target language users with networked computers provides opportunities for textually mediated social interaction for L2 learners. Because the features of computer-mediated contexts are not fixed but are often negotiated by their users (O'Rourke, 2005), socio-cultural dimension and interactional approaches are prevailing in recent studies on the language learning effects of

using ICT technologies (Thorne, 2003).

The effort of integrating CALL activities in language classrooms and course syllabus has required not only the technological development mentioned above but also changes in teachers' attitudes, approaches, and practices (Bax, 2003). The introduction of CALL programs in class has positively changed the role of teachers and learners. Generally, classes have become more learner-centered; learners are expected to be active participants in their learning process through decision making and being responsible for their work more independently than in conventional classes; teachers are to be facilitators and counselors rather than the only decision-making authority in class (Brown, 2007; Lam & Lawrence, 2002). Research found pedagogical benefits of using CMC programs in class, such as increased production of language output of foreign language students (Kern, 1995) and more participation by students who had not previously participated actively in conventional face-to-face classroom discussions, which indicates they impact positively on their motivation for language learning (Sullivan & Pratt, 1996).

2.2.2. CMC use for English education

Computer technologies and the Internet provide various communication channels for authentic language use and learning through interactive practices with people from diverse global backgrounds. Language learners can try out creative and exploratory ways of communication in this alternative environment where individuals' social interactions and engagement in relationships are possible through communicative activities.

Since English is the key medium in the majority of the practices of communication in cyberspace, English learners can find ways to develop their L2 competence

through some of the CMC channels by using their learned L2 literacy skills that go well with their interests and learning styles. In fact, various CMC channels provide learners with opportunities to communicate in English with a global community of those with shared interests who may be speakers of English as a first language as well as others engaged in learning English as an additional language (Warschauer, 1996; Kern, 2006)

Therefore, there is a need to recognize that in an era of globalization that English learners in the classrooms in EFL circumstances will potentially have access to a wide range of language learning opportunities through the Internet and English educators need to identify what sorts of things they are doing in cyberspace in order to find a way to incorporate these into our classrooms, which is likely to impact positively on our students' motivation for in-class formal learning.

2.2.3. Online gaming and language learning

Online games, one of the CMC channels, have merit for language practice because they provide language learners with opportunities for communicating in their target languages. In online games, players can live, learn, and act through their new identities and careers that they select and then through interactions with NPC (Non-player character) which react to the players' in-game practice and other players who talk back to the players. Especially in multiplayer online games, lots of people can access the cyber space simultaneously and interact with each other and collaborate to build new scenarios. While playing games, players need to build alliances through chatting, discuss game strategies with other team members (also called as the guild, clan, or club members), and contribute their distinctive skills to the team so that they can accomplish game quests (also called mission or battle), which are not possible to be done by themselves but only

through virtual infrastructure for conversational social interactions (Bryant, 2006; Thorne, 2008). Therefore, while playing games, language learners can have opportunities to communicate in their target language with many, unspecified individuals in real contexts of dialogue (Gee, 2008).

Also, online gaming can provide L2 learners with opportunities to try out their target languages more confidently, adapting new, different identities from their real-world ones while their private selves are not being threatened by using cyberspace characters like avatars (Ushioda, 2011). Thanks to the game characters, in online games, players are not judged by their race, class, ethnicity, or gender. In a research of EFL learners' social interaction in Second Life, the participants who chose conspicuous avatars whose appearance reflected something different from their real-life personality said that the appearance of the avatar helped them to have more confidence in communicating with their interlocutors using their target languages (Blasing, 2010). Because the avatar's name and appearance can act as a mask, players can have a sense of freedom and take more linguistic risks (Ibid.).

Furthermore, there are additional factors which can help people feel safer and braver in their behaviors, including using their target languages. Because players can play again and again, not being seriously damaged by the consequences of failures in their previous games, they do not fear making mistakes. Rather, they can find ways to progress and solutions through the failures they have done previously. Therefore, players do not fear making linguistic errors, taking risks, exploring, and trying out new things in an online game (Gee, 2003). In addition, many studies have proven virtual space communication creates a non-threatening, less-stressful, democratic learning environment compared to

traditional language learning environments (Hudson & Bruckman, 2002; Kern, 1995; Schwienhorst, 2002; Satar & Özdener, 2008). Researchers analyzed communications in online games and found that the online game players felt more solidarity with and experienced more encouraging socio-emotional expressions than task content messages. This phenomenon is more prominent among more experienced players, even though their games' ostensible goal is to fight against other players (Peña & Hancock, 2006; Thorne et al., 2009; Peterson, 2011).

In this regard, it is certain that online games allow language learners a situation which connects affect and cognition, providing learners with opportunities of active participation and ownership (Benson & Reinders, 2011). Therefore, online game players can develop their motivation for learning a second/foreign language and improve their linguistic competence which comes not merely from cognitive process as passive receivers of knowledge but from interpersonal practices which require voluntary participation and autonomy as active generators of knowledge (Ibid).

2.3. Korean ELT Context

As I mentioned in 1.1. and 1.2., Korean English learners learn English as a Foreign Language (EFL), which is fundamentally different from ESL learners' learning situations in English speaking countries. In order to enhance understanding of EFL learners' learning context and their perception of English language learning, especially in the South Korean situation, it would be helpful to learn about Korean ELT context.

2.3.1. Korean ELT and Standard English

South Korea has had close political, military, and economic relations with the United States since the Korean War in 1950 and has amicable relations with the US ever since. A survey showed 74% of South Koreans believe that the influence of America is favorable (2011 Gallop Poll). Owing to this generally agreeable impression of the US, Korean people have a preference for American products including ELT teaching materials and course books.

Also, Korean people's enthusiasm for studying abroad is high. Korea ranked third among nations that send their students to universities in the US. Also, it has the third largest number of TOEFL test takers in the world. According to The Korea Times (2009), a total of 149,027 Koreans took the test in 2009, accounting for 20 percent of the total test takers around the world and the number of Korean test takers has been increased by some 34,000 year on year. Considering the top two countries are China and India, which have the largest populations in the world, it is assumed that South Korean people's enthusiasm for studying abroad and learning English is really high.

To be sure, it can be presumed that not all TOEFL test takers took the test for the purpose of gaining admission to American universities. In many cases, Koreans present their TOEFL or TOEIC scores to prove their English proficiency. Most organizations in Korea recognize those scores as valid because they are standardized tests that are made in and come from the United States, where so-called "Standard English" is used. However, there are also many Koreans who achieve high scores on those tests but do not have communicative competence in English for the global contexts where varieties of English are used because they have focused only on cram test scores and test-taking skills generally based on American English (Cho, 2004; Yoo & Namkung, 2012). Most of the

international English proficiency tests like TOEFL, IELTS, and TOEIC foster the inclination of pursuing native-speaker models. Those tests which intend to evaluate proficiency level in the inner circle¹ Standard English have made English learners to be more interested in getting high scores on those tests than in improving communicative ability in the global contexts because those tests are (supposed) to assess so-called Standard English proficiency (Canagarajah, 2006; Jeon, 2013).

Indeed, the scores of English proficiency tests are important for them because they are supposed to prove their English proficiency level, which is regarded as a kind of symbolic capital or a must-have skill for acquiring successful social positions in the contemporary world; it is a marker of social, intellectual, and professional identity (Lee et al., 2010; Song, 2011). Furthermore, those who have standard or native-like English proficiency may be recognized as preferred for highly qualified, superior positions in schools and workplaces (Ibid.). In this context, many Korean EFL learners feel inferior to fluent, native-like English speakers and have considerable foreign language anxiety in using English due to the gap between their English proficiency and the social pressure (Trang et al., 2013).

On the basis of the prevailing tenet of native speaker fallacy or comparative fallacy (Bley-Vroman, 1983) which emphasizes native speakers' proficiency as the norms of a language and judges all aspects of learner language by comparing them with native speaker norms, there is a general perception of English learners

¹ According to Kachru (1985), regions of world English can be categorized into three sectors: the inner circle, the outer circle, and the expanding circle.

in Korea that native speakers' English, especially American or British, has been the norm to follow for international communication (Cho, 2004; Yoo & Namkung, 2012). In this context, prevailing trends emphasize native speakers' proficiency as the norms of ELT. One of them is Teaching English in English approach,² which claims the use of native languages in English teaching hinders successful English learning, has been widely accepted by Korean ELT professionals (Jeon, 2009). Following this tenet, many English classes prevent students from using the Korean language as their axiom. Another trend of Korean ELT is early-childhood English education for the purpose of achieving native-like proficiency (Kwon, 2002). Even though formal EFL instruction in schools starts when children are 9 years of age in Korea, private English kindergartens which use an English-only teaching policy beginning at 4~5 years of age are popular in Korea due to the belief that only learners who have begun learning a second language in early childhood can achieve native-like mastery of the languages,³ which shows Korean parents' excessive enthusiasm for English education (Park, 2009).

2.3.2. Using technology for ELT in Korea

Since the Ministry of Education in Korea implemented educational reform plans in 1997 which include providing every school with ICT-equipped classrooms, computer labs, and digital libraries in order to allow students the ability to cope with the challenges in an era of high-technology, technology-enhanced learning environments have been constructed in schools (Park & Son, 2009). Now, nearly

² A policy of "Teaching English in English (TEE)" was proposed by the Korean Ministry of Education in 2000.

³ Many SLA researchers integrated this theory in order to explain critical period hypothesis (CPH), which claims only learners who have begun learning their second languages before puberty can achieve native-like mastery of the languages (Patkowski, 1980; White, 2003).

all schools in Korea have multimedia-capable computers, software programs, and high-speed Internet connections for their educational practices in class (Ibid.).

There have been various attempts to develop CALL-related technologies and software tools in Korea from basic computer programs for class as video and audio aids to personal mobile Flash games for vocabulary learning using tablet PCs and computer applications for teaching conversational English, and even intelligent robots which perceive the utterances of learners and provide corrective feedback to erroneous utterances (Kwon et al., 2010).

In order to implement CALL programs effectively in school classes, not only ICT equipment but also language teachers' readiness to use those technologies is required. They need to be familiar with the equipment and confident in using various functions of CALL applications and managing computer-based activities in their classrooms. However, many Korean EFL teachers have found it difficult to use CALL programs in class due to several reasons: They encounter unexpected problems caused by insufficient computer skills, technical problems with Internet connections, limited class hours, and lack of appropriate teaching materials (Lee & Son, 2006). Some researchers found that teachers' actual use of Web-based lessons was limited, frequently delayed, avoided or withdrawn. They encountered some unexpected difficulties or barriers due to lack of sufficient computer skills, lack of experience, insufficient time, computer anxiety, and lack of confidence, although all student participants in the study had positive attitudes toward the use of technology and strong intrinsic motivation such as personal curiosity and interest (Kim, 2002).

2.3.3. Online games for ELT in Korea

In the Korean media, online games have been the focus of a lot of criticism, with concerns being voiced, amongst other things, about the effect of the time that young people spend for these games rather than on their school studies (Choi 2007). This trend confirms my experience as a primary and secondary EFL teacher with many of my students indicated they engaged in these despite their parents' concerns. However, there is also an emerging recognition of the language learning benefits these offer. In recognition of the motivational pull, these games have for young people and the language learning benefits they can offer, efforts have been made in recent years to develop online games for use in English classes in Korea (Suh et al., 2010; Wi et al., 2009).

There has been some research on educational games for ELT purpose in Korea, focusing on objective comparative results shown in pre and post test scores. The previous studies undertaken have concentrated on demonstrating the linguistic benefits to primary and high school students when using multi-player online role-playing games developed and adjusted for ELT in-class activities (Suh et al., 2010; Wi et al., 2009; Wi & Kim, 2010). The findings suggested that online games can be useful for English education because the students who studied the same content with online games showed higher scores on the post-tests than those who studied it with conventional class instruction. However, these projects were conducted in classes, and the participants could communicate only with their classmates within limited lesson plans under teachers' circumscriptions, which cannot be described as real 'authentic' communication that is available in off-the-shelf commercial games (Peterson 2012).

In this context, I tried to explore how commercial online games for entertainment purposes (game-enhanced) which are not educational or learning-purposed

games (game-based) for gaining the insights for better understanding of L2 teaching design and learning environments (game-informed).⁴ In order to see what people experience in a commercial online out-of-class activity, I chose one of the latest and most popular multiplayer online games worldwide and in Korea, *League of Legends* (LOL) (more details about gaming genres are discussed in 3.7. The main genres of games), and contacted a Korean online community that has the biggest population. The participants are the members of this community, and they voluntarily participated in this research.

2.4. Summary

There has been a great improvement in communication technologies and constant trials to utilize those for education because many found that there are potential benefits. Many researchers have paid attention to the effectiveness of using CALL programs and found positive results from them. However, most of them only focus on cognitive effects, not so much on socio-cultural or socio-affective benefits.

In Korea, where enthusiasm for English education has been at all-time high, there already has been a profound effort to utilize ICT technologies for English learning materials (Park & Son, 2009). Despite that effort, however, it has not become fully fledged (Ibid.). Among many reasons that may cause difficulties in using CALL programs in EFL class are the lack of appropriate teaching materials, computer facilities, technical support, adequate teacher training, and inflexibility of curriculum and textbooks (Lee & Son, 2006; Shin & Son, 2007; Park & Son, 2009).

⁴ Reinhardt & Sykes categorized the research of digital games and play in L2 teaching and learning: Game-enhanced; Game-based; Game-informed (2012).

In addition, teachers' arguably insufficient technology skills compared with those of their students, who are generally called "digital natives,"⁵ might hinder the smooth application of the technologies in language classes (Ibid.).

In this context, this study aims to explore how Korean EFL learners experience using English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) for transnational communication while playing an online game, how this experience can affect their L2 identity evolvment; that is, their understanding of themselves as English users and other English speakers, and how this change through these online, out-of-school learning opportunities can influence on their off-line learning including their learning attitudes, competence, and other positive effects in their formal learning situations.

⁵ Some might not agree with the concept of 'digital natives,' the term coined by Prensky (2001). The term has been used to explain the needs of modern students who were born after 1980 and raised in a more media-rich environment compared to the older generations. Even though it is hard to draw a clear distinction between the ones who are digital natives and the others who are not just by their ages because there are many exceptional cases, what I refer to here was based on the general situations of Korean students and teachers who I have observed throughout my teaching career.

CHAPTER 3: PREVIOUS SCHOLARSHIP

3.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a literature review. Since this study aims to explore EFL learners' L2 identity construction while participating in one of the popular online activities through CMC, with the view of ELF paradigm, all the related issues will be discussed. In the first part, what sorts of perspectives on identity construction have been discussed by previous scholars will be discussed. In the following part, the concept of second language identity (L2 identity) construction and the significance of its associated outcomes will be discussed. Finally, the growing interest in L2 identity construction in relation to the concept of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), intercultural pragmatic competence, and the use of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) will be discussed by reviewing some previous studies on these issues.

For discussing the conceptual framework of this study, first of all, I will discuss the different ways that identity has been understood and how they were adopted by some of the researchers in applied linguistics and second language learning for the study of language learning, language socialization, and multilingual language practices. Those approaches could foster a better understanding the individual's process, impact, and causes of learning a second language because they could explore how individuals construct their learner identities, which is closely related to a learners' motivation, investment, and performance in their target language (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton 2000; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009).

Then I will discuss issues of how globalization has impacted L2 identity, focusing on computer-mediated communication practices, on-line learning and gaming

specifically, and second language identity construction from the perspective of ELF. I will discuss these issues critically, concerning the understanding of identity underpinning my study, considering particular conditions for identity construction this provides and the potential to transfer shaped identity off-line.

3.2. Identity and identity construction

3.2.1. Identity as a project of the self

Globalization and ICT growth have strengthened civil society and improved individuals' quality of life along with the groundswell of all kinds of organized international groups and global citizens' growing participation in them. As a result, an infrastructure of global civil society has been built, and the number of non-governmental organizations has continued to increase. In this context, the modern human agent is consistently defined in relation to this newly organized social structure, which is different from that of the past (Giddens, 2000). Giddens' model (1990) of a 'reflexive project of the self' is related to the concept of individuals' agency in which a person's self-identity is a continuous work of reflexive understanding and beliefs of their own biography, which is not a set of traits or characteristics. He defined a person's identity as that which "continually integrates events that occur in the external world, and sorts them into the ongoing 'story' about the self (Giddens, 1991, p. 54)." This concept admits that individuals' identities are not essential but constituted by 'coherent, yet continuously revised, biological narratives (Giddens, 1991, p. 5).' In other words, this reflexive formation of identity is an ongoing project that individuals have to create continuously, maintain, and revise within their own biographical narratives, which are conditioned by external frameworks, like cultural symbols, which are available to

them (Ibid.).

Many scholars have argued that language practices play an important role in constructing one's identity (Weedon, 1987/ 1997; Holland & Lave, 2001; Kramsch, 2009; Davies & Harré, 1999). They used the terms like 'subjectivity' or 'positioning' in order to conceptualize individuals' identity as what can be the subject of and also subject to social relationships. By reflecting the positions given by social relationships and obtained with individual struggle, individual agents can negotiate and constitute their own sense of self which is not static in particular positions categorized by a particular aspect, such as gender, race, or religion but changing over time and space through discursive practices in discourse (Norton & Toohey, 2011).

3.2.2. Identity as a product of the social

The concept that identity is not entirely freely or autonomously constructed but intersubjectively shaped was addressed by Hegel (1977). Through participation in social life, individuals recognize that they exist in relationship to others. In the same vein, Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of Community of Practice also acknowledged social structures to some extent because the 'legitimacy' of becoming a peripheral member of a community requires some sort of 'capital', what Bourdieu (1977) used for metaphors for power – economic, cultural, and social. Without certain required capital for being admitted as a potential member, it is impossible for a newcomer to gain legitimacy and begin participation (Block, 2007).

According to the concepts mentioned above, identity in the relationship between the context and the individual can be understood in two different approaches.

One is the process determined by regulations from context and the individual's responses to them. The other is the process of the individuals' inner efforts of shaping and revising their perceptions of self, accompanied by constant negotiation with the community's identity regulations (Handley et al., 2006). In this regard, identity can be viewed as "both self-generated subject positioning as well as subject positioning that is imposed on individuals by others" (Block, 2007, p. 26), being negotiated between reflective positioning by oneself and interactive positioning by others (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). This positioning is an ongoing process for individuals which takes place during conversational interaction with other people (Davies & Harré, 1999). Similarly, Norton (2000) defines identity as "how people understand their relationship to the outside world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future (p. 410)".

With regard to language, many scholars (Bakhtin 1981; Bourdieu 1977) viewed it not as an independent entity but as situated utterances that are affected by social positions in specific speech communities. So they recognized using or learning a language as a social practice of participation in particular language interactions to which speakers have the different right of access according to their social positioning. As an ongoing process, individuals constitute and reconstitute their identities in social interactions through conversational discursive practices while continuously imaginatively positioning themselves in some categories and developing a sense of belonging in the world through certain ways and perspectives for which the categories of their selves are positioned (Davies & Harré, 1999).

3.3. The significance of identity to accounts of learning

3.3.1. Mutual relationship between learning and identity

Learning contexts are not only for knowledge construction but also for the establishment of a sense of self. The concept of communities as, “a set of relations among persons, activity, and the world (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 98)” in which “learning occurs through centripetal participation (Ibid.,100),” shows how learning and identity construction have close relations, participation in communities of practice allows learning to take place and learning enables construction of identities in the communities. Both learning and identity constructions occur in the relations between those who are more experienced and knowledgeable members and newcomers who want to become like old timers (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In a community, the gradual process of engagement to become full practitioners from legitimate peripheral participation shows how identity construction is related to the learning process.

Identity construction and learning builds upon each other. Identities are constructed through learning, and learning forms identities. How individuals are recognized in a community determines how much they are considered and consider themselves belonging to the context. Indeed, it is easier for a person to have a sense of belonging in a community when he/she is recognized as a well-qualified member of the community. Therefore, it is required that a person learns and constructs his/her identity in a context through a process of learning (Coll & Falsafi, 2010). Furthermore, identities constructed in the process of learning influence participation and learning, and the appropriation of learned knowledge affects the individuals' sense of self in a context (Ibid.).

3.3.2. The sociocultural perspectives on identity and learning

The sociocultural perspectives on learning have paved the way for the issues of identity construction and learner identity in relationships, interactions, recognition, activities, and discourse (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Coll & Falsafi, 2010). Individuals construct their identities while participating in activities and recognizing themselves and others in social relationships, using discourse as the primary mode of identity construction (Coll & Falsafi, 2010).

The sociocultural concepts of identity construction have been increasingly drawn attention in the educational studies. They tried to prove that the process of becoming a learner, in other words, how one's identity as a learner in a learning situation is constructed, requires the subjective experience in context (Coll, 1988), and how a student perceives his/her educational experience in their relationships with the school, the teachers, their parents, and peer learners is relevant to the achievement level of learning (Ibid.). In this regard, a learner's previous learning experience affects new educational experiences and the construction of meanings of the new experience and knowledge (Coll & Falsafi, 2010). This educational experience includes the situated construction of a learner identity in a new learning situation which is constantly reconstructed through situated narratives (Bruner, 1996; Hall, 2005), and the learner identity constructed through past learning experiences in both formal and informal educational situations influences the present and future learning experience and his/her formation of meanings about oneself (Coll & Falsafi, 2010). In other words, identity construction is not a fixed but ongoing (becoming, evolving) process 'within and across a range of sites at different points in time (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 417).'

A recognition which occurs through discursive interactions in learning situations also affects the construction of learner identity. One can get recognized as a

certain kind of person, being tied to specific discourses (Gee, 2000). If a learner is recognized as a good learner, he /she can be motivated and get engaged in future acts of recognition that will reinforce previous experiences, even in a different learning situation (Coll & Falsafi, 2010). Therefore, the exposure of learners to diverse learning situations provides learners with new experiences to reshape identities in their learning career (Bloomer & Hodgkinson, 2000; Lemke, 2002). In this regard, as a sense of identity and learning is inseparable (Lave & Wenger, 1991), educators should pay attention to the significance of shaping learner identity which can either motivate or demotivate learners to participate in their learning situations.

3.4. Identity construction and second language (L2) learning

The issue of learner identities in language and literacy education has attracted a considerable degree of interest in discussions and underwent a shift in conception from conventional ones which viewed identity as psychological, static, uni-dimensional entity to dynamic, multiple, to the formative, struggling ones (McKinney & Norton, 2008). Many authors in the SLA area have adopted the understanding that the L2 identity is dynamic, evolving, and the negotiated outcome of an individual's own reflection on their sense of self as well as on those obtained through interactions with others (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004).

3.4.1. Discourse and second language identity

Recent research on language learner identity adopted post-structural views, which are different from the previous ones that saw language learners' identities as fixed personal characters or styles. While language learners are in different positions that may offer diverse opportunities to access to their target language

communities in many inequitable social contexts, language learners as human agents do not need to be confined to particular positions but can negotiate or struggle for identities that they desire to acquire through language and discourse (Norton & Toohey, 2011).

Norton developed the sociological construct of 'investment,' which is distinguished from the psychological notion of motivation. She found that even highly motivated language learners could be unsuccessful in learning by not engaging in language practices due to unequal power relations between target language speakers and the learners in social contexts (2000/2010). The reason why language learners are silent in class might be that they are not invested rather than they are not motivated in the language practices of the classroom.

In this context, Norton mentioned five characteristics of the socio-cultural conception of identity when discussing language learners' identity (Norton, 2006, p. 503): 1. Identity as dynamic and constantly changing across time and place; 2. Identity as complex, contradictory, and multifaceted; 3. identity constructs and is constructed by language; 4. Identity is marked by relations of power with respect to larger social processes; 5. Identity linked with classroom relations.

On the basis of the above-mentioned theoretical framework (i.e. Norton), 'discourse' plays a significant role in identity formation. Among socially constructed features, positive L2 contact experience which occurs in interpersonal relations helps construct positive L2 identities, resulting in an increase of self-confidence and willingness to communicate, which is the main condition of motivated language learners (Gardner, 1985; Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). Furthermore, Gee

expanded the notion of discourse with a capital 'D' as "ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes and social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes" (Gee, 1996, p. 127). Through discursive practices in the ongoing engagement with other interlocutors, the individual positions themselves and are positioned continuously, defining and redefining who they are. Therefore, opportunities to have communication in the target language play a significant role for L2 identity formation and successful L2 learning.

3.4.2. Community of Practice and second language identity

Even though Lave & Wenger's concept of communities of practice did not explicitly discuss the issue of second language identity, it helped to make it possible to consider learning itself as a social practice, not just an individual cognitive activity so that many SLA researchers could be led to explore the issue of the interrelationship between L2 learning and identity with social/sociological/sociolinguistic approaches (Block, 2007). Therefore, it is important to discuss the concept of the community of practice in order to understand the significance of L2 identity.

According to Lave & Wenger, a community as context plays a fundamental role in constructing and developing individuals' identity and self. Learning is situated in the context of the experience of participation while the whole process of becoming active participants in the practices of social communities enables individuals to construct their identities and adopt, each time, subject positions constantly in the relationship with the communities via mutual engagement with other members (Wenger, 1998).

3.4.3. Relations of power and L2 identity

Second language learners can experience unstable and ambivalent feelings while crossing geographical or socio-cultural borders. To be an accepted member of a community of practice, a second language learner needs audibility in the target language, such as the 'right to speech' and the 'power to impose reception' (Bourdieu, 1977). In other words, a second language identity is about the degree of audibility, which is about intelligibility, and authentication as an accepted member of a community of practice. Therefore, if second language learners recognize themselves as legitimate users of the language, it means they have evolved their positive L2 identities in the target language community (Block 2007).

There are different ways for marginalized individuals to develop power in a community. They can establish 'hybrid' and 'third place' identities to negotiate the difference (Bhabha, 1990). Also, they can overcome essentialized notions of identity and gain agency over the structure by framing identity work and learning as situated participation in a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Or a learner can achieve an identity in the community that is not inhabited but achieved by acquiring cultural capital, which is necessary for being a fully functioning participant (Block 2007).

While sociopsychological research on language attitudes has not dealt with learners' attitudes towards varieties of English, they are regarded as important factors of a major determinant of behavior by sociolinguistic perspective. From this perspective, it should be considered significant for ESL/EFL learners to claim the ownership of the language (Widdowson, 1994). According to the conventional Standard English paradigm, which is deeply rooted in ELT professions so far, integrating the language and its culture is confined to a monolingual community.

Therefore, the speakers of English have been thought to be under the same identity label, having a common culture and speech acts. However, when speakers view the variety they use as legitimate in a social, political, and economic sense, they can claim the ownership of the language and the learners' attitudes may change positively (Higgins, 2003).

In this era of globalization, in which English is used as an international language, the target community of English learners can be reconsidered. When English learners in the expanding circle countries learn English not to integrate into native English speaking communities but to assimilate more fully into the international global community, it is suggested that the level of the individual's openness towards diverse cultures and languages would be a more reasonable determinant of the level of achievement (Yashima, 2009; Yashima et al., 2004). For this issue, Pavlenko (2002) also argues that sociopsychological theories have not recognized the fact that the majority of the population in the modern world consists of the bi/multilingual and English is just one of their language skills.

Sociolinguistics has also considered language attitudes as a major determinant of behavior (Carranza, 1982; Labov, 1984; Friedrich, 2000). Especially, the attitudes of English language learners for the varieties of English stressed in sociolinguistic research. This comes from the prominent status of English as an international language and the evolving perspective of searching the relationship between the notion of power and attitudes (Friedrich, 2000). From this point of view, it would be recognized as evidence of constructing positive L2 identities that English learners see themselves as legitimate users of English.

Norton's study (1995) on 5 immigrant women in Canada who often found

themselves silenced in day-to-day interactions with their bosses, co-workers, and landlords because of their marginalized positions in the communities as immigrants and language learners shows how the learner's social identity in relation to the social world brings about a learner's investment in the target language and how speakers' investment in the target language results from their presumed ownership and legitimacy as a speaker.

Therefore, today's English language learners' identity, especially those of EFL learners, may be worth being discussed in relation with ELF in order to find ways to empower non-native English speakers.

3.4.4. L2 identity and its outcomes

Identity is increasingly recognized as an important variable underpinning foreign or second language learning success (Block, 2007). The growth of interest in identity in the accounts of second and foreign language learning can be seen to reflect an awareness of the role that L2 identity plays on its outcomes such as motivation and self-confidence. For example, Schumann's Acculturation Model (1978) claimed that second language learners may choose to learn a language when they feel equality and mutual respect with the target language community while they are not likely to learn the language when the host community is of too great or of lower status than their own. Also, Acton (1979) found that language learners who maintained a balance between their L1 culture and L2's were good at learning their target languages. Schmidt's study (1983) found that when a language learner saw himself/herself as not inferior to the target language community and was not positioned as inferior by the community, he/she could have a positive attitude towards the host community and be confident in using the language. Even though there were limitations in methodology and lack of

development in detail, those studies illustrate how the individual senses themselves in the relationship with the target language community influences whether they opt to learn the language and also can affect their ultimate language learning success.

Among many possible outcomes of positive L2 identity construction, I will discuss motivation and self-confidence which can be shown as the willingness to communicate because I believe that motivation for learning a second language and self-confidence in using the language are probably the most desirable and demanded features for EFL learners. However, it is to explore an open-ended inquiry to conduct narrative interviews in this research so I expect other possible outcomes can be found from the collected data.

3.4.4.1. L2 identity and Motivation

Many authors in SLA have suggested that positive L2 identity construction can enhance L2 learners' motivation for learning. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009), for example, has made an explicit link between motivation and identity in the development of his L2 Motivational Self System. It describes the way in which a sense of the internally conceived ideal L2 self, externally generated ought-to self, and the language learning experience in actual learning contexts and process work in conjunction to generate an evolving motivation towards the L2. When we can imagine ourselves as fluent L2 speakers, we will make the effort to reduce the discrepancy between actual selves, the sense of who we are, and ideal L2 selves, the ones we desire to be like, and this imagination will work as a strong motivator (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009).

Depending on the construction of our sense of ourselves and our “subjectivity”

which are always socially and historically embedded through language, language learners can have differential investments (Weedon, 1987). On this basis, Norton developed the notion of “investment”, which indicates “the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language, and their sometimes ambivalent desire to learn and practice it (Norton, 2000, p. 10).” Norton also combined the notion of imagination with second language learning, focusing on the relationship between imagination and investment in communities of practice; the ongoing process of positioning the past speech acts’ influence on the present, and on the basis of present experience, language learners adopt imagined positions in imagined communities of speakers of their target language (Kanno & Norton, 2003).

The affiliation with an imagined community can affect learners’ investment in the target language and learning trajectories as we can see the learners’ nonparticipation in second language classrooms when they found there was a disjuncture between their imagined communities and their classes’ curriculum goals (Norton, 2000, 2001). It is also shown in the difference of how non-native English speaking student teachers engaged with learning opportunities, according to the condition in which they imagined themselves as legitimate or peripheral members of the TESOL community (Pavlenko, 2003). Those examples explain the relationship between imagined communities, L2 identities, and the second language learning trajectory. How a learner envisions an imagined identity in an imagined community can impact how he/she would engage with learning practices (Ibid.).

Furthermore, when learners invest in a second language, they expect to acquire symbolic and material resources which will increase the value of their cultural

capital. When the value of their cultural capital rises, learners' identities which can be defined as learners' senses of themselves and their desires for the future can be shifted (McKinney & Norton, 2008). All in all, we can see that language learners' motivation to give effort to learn the target language is highly related to how they construct their L2 identities.

3.4.4.2. L2 identity and self-confidence

In a similar way, there is a growing awareness of how learners' self-confidence and levels of anxiety that is reflected in their willingness to communicate (WTC) are closely related to their sense of self in relation to others in a given setting. L2 learners who have constructed positive L2 identities in their relations with other people can develop their self-confidence in using an L2 to communicate with others. For example, as Miller (2003) has observed, when L2 learners have the experience of being discriminated against due to their L2 competence by their teachers and classmates, they can develop a negative self-image as a deficient communicator. This negative self-image can lead them to have strong negative feelings toward the target language, and as a result, their motivation to learn the language can be limited. On the other hand, when L2 learners have a pleasant experience interacting with others, this contributes to the building of a positive L2 identity and self-confidence shown in the level of WTC.

Different from WTC in L1 communication which is regarded as a static trait of an individual, WTC in an L2 can change, influenced by interpersonal variables such as the desire to communicate with a specific person and a state of communicative self-confidence (MacIntyre et al., 1998). The reason why a second language learner can be willing to speak in one place and remain quiet in another situation must be related to the circumstances and the experiences the learner has had in

those contexts. For example, if L2 learners have pleasant L2 experiences in a second language classroom, they would have more self-confidence and less L2 anxiety in class; consequently, these students are likely to volunteer answers in the class. In a sense, therefore, WTC can be one of the indicators of the L2 anxiety level in social communication context (Macintyre & Charos, 1996).

Various personal and interpersonal sources such as low self-esteem, identity, fear of others' evaluation, and social interaction can affect the constructs of foreign language anxiety which decreases learners' self-confidence (Arnold, 1999). Whether an L2 speaker feels comfortable or not can highly depend on his/her interlocutor's L2 proficiency level and the social power relations in the community (Norton, 2000). This kind of anxiety is identity-based anxiety which is different from competence-based anxiety in that it is based on individuals' desire for maintaining recognition, affiliation, security, and safe relationship with particular groups and avoiding ridicule from their peers rather than concerning teachers' evaluations on their language competence (Stroud & Wee, 2006).

3.5. L2 identity in the context of globalization

3.5.1. ELF and L2 Identity

All aspects of contemporary global life, not only politics and economics but also the realms of social and cultural dimensions exist at an international level and are interconnected worldwide possibly partly as a result of increased globalization and advanced new technology.

In this era of globalization, English serves as a Lingua Franca internationally. Even though there have been other international languages, the contemporary role of English as an international language differs in several ways: "for the extent

of its diffusion geographically; for the enormous cultural diversity of the speakers who use it; and for the infinitely varied domains in which it is found and purposes it serves (Dewey, 2007, p. 333).”

As one-third of the world’s population speak English (Crystal, 2008) and the number of non-native speakers of English has already outgrown that of native speakers of English, the tendency of English language dominance in the world is expected to continue more significantly into the future (Graddol, 2000). Indeed, unlike other foreign languages, English is more often used for communication among the non-native rather than between native and the non-native speakers, which means English should be treated as a contact language for international communications; “A lingua franca means a contact language used among people who do not share a first language and is commonly understood to mean a second (or subsequent) language of its speakers (Jenkins, 2007, p.1).”

Originally, it does not include native speakers (NSs) of the language in the definition. However, Seidlhofer argued that English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) should not exclude interlocutors of NSs of English from the Inner and Outer Circles (2004), and Jenkins indicates her stance on this as follows: “ELF does not exclude NSs of English ... and when they take part in ELF interactions, they do not represent a linguistic reference point (2007, p.3).” For this matter, Norton (1997) suggested that English in the era of globalization may be better expanded if English belongs to the people who speak it regardless of being native/non-native, ESL/EFL and standard/nonstandard.

In expanding circle countries,⁶ however, most schools and institutions regard

⁶ According to Kachru (1985), regions of world English can be categorized into three sectors:

inner circle English, especially American or British English, as their target of instruction in the classrooms. When Selinker (1972) explained his SLA theories with terms like ‘fossilization’ and ‘interlanguage’ to indicate non-native English speakers’ defective output which is deviant from the target language norms, he acknowledged that native-speaker model is indispensable in SLA process. Long (1981) also emphasized the role of the native speaker model as a crucial condition for acquiring second language proficiency, claiming that to have conversations with native speakers is an essential condition for learning a second language. All those assumptions of monolingualism are based on the premise that all second language learners’ ultimate goal of learning is to achieve native speakers’ proficiency.

In this context, to choose the ELF paradigm can be a way to empower non-native English speakers because it acknowledges the wide variety of English among its users and does not exclusively rely on mono-culturalism of native English speaking countries (Sharifian(ed), 2009). Smith (1976) discussed the relationship between international language and culture: 1. Learners of an international language do not need to internalize the cultural norms of native speakers of that language; 2. The ownership of an international language becomes “de-nationalized”; 3. The educational goal of learning an international language is to enable learners to communicate their ideas and culture to others.

Indeed, the concept that English no longer belongs to native English speakers but all English-speaking people in the world has begun to spread widely. Following Bourdieu’s claim, all learners of English should claim ownership of the

the inner circle, the outer circle, and the expanding circle.

language and consider themselves legitimate speakers (Bourdieu 1977 cited in Norton 1997) now that the majority of English users in the world are non-native English speakers and native English speakers have become the minority in the world English speaking community (Crystal, 1997; Kachru, 1985).

Widdowson argued (1994) that NSs do not have the sole authority to decide which forms are grammatically correct ones because norms created by communities of native speakers are no longer the only standards to measure speakers' proficiency, advocating the flexibilities of the English language and the pluricentricity of norms by saying, "You are proficient in a language to the extent that you possess it, make it your own, bend it to your will, assert yourself through it rather than simply submit to the dictates of its form"(p. 382).

In addition, the purposes of the ELF communication are generally different from those of immigrants to English-speaking countries who will eventually use English as their sole or dominant language which will replace their first languages. While the initial spread of English was due to speaker immigration which results in large monolingual communities, the current one is mainly owing to the individuals who learn English as an additional language for international/intranational communications, resulting in large-scale bilingual societies (McKay, 2003). Considering the usage of English largely among increasing populations of 'expanding circle countries,'⁷ the purpose of learning ELF is different from that of traditional English education in that the latter emphasized the concerns and cultures of native English-speaking countries which Kachru terms 'Inner Circle countries' (McKay, 2003). Indeed, many ELF learners use the language in

⁷ Kachru's model of World Englishes classifies three concentric circles of the language: the inner circle, the outer circle, and the expanding circle (1992).

multilingual contexts for the purpose of sharing information about their own countries' economy, trade, tourism, scholarly exchanges, and so on.

In this context, the target of obtaining native-like production of English is no longer realistic or necessary for the ELF learners (Seidlhofer, 2004). Their target is not to approximate native speakers but to have effective communicative abilities including linguistic, discourse, pragmatic, sociolinguistic, and sociocultural competence (Littlewood, 2004; Jenkins, 2006). Furthermore, ELF speakers can be termed not as learners but as users of English for various purposes in diverse contexts in their daily lives (Firth & Wagner, 1997), adapting the language to suit their own communicative purposes and settings (Mufwene, 2001).

All in all, in the sense of ELF as the international medium of communication, the target community culture and norms are no longer confined to the geographical or ethnographical boundaries, the so-called native English countries where English originated from (Gnutzmann, 1999). Also, the target community to which users of ELF desire to belong has shifted from the one where all non-native English speakers can be inferior, marginalized and in a disadvantaged position to the 'third space (Bhabha, 1990)' where they may feel more inclusion, acceptance, and equality by creating their new, alternative, and hybrid identities (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004).

There has been research that explores how ELF users make their own speech communities. The process of language socialization into the new communities of practice using ELF among European exchange students who were studying temporarily at universities in Hungary and Prague was researched (Kalocsai, 2009). Interviews and observations were conducted for this study and it was

found that students from various countries across Europe, whose first language varied from German to French, experienced language socialization via ELF and felt pride and satisfaction when they created a shared repertoire for communication through adapting and adopting English with strategies of accommodation and negotiation as a new way of interaction. This kind of ELF interactions might result in being apart from those of standard English, but they actually worked within the community and were used to signal their belonging to the multicultural group while developing new aspects of ELF identities. However, they also felt dilemmas and regret when they found that native English speakers in the group not only were lacking in the skills needed for ELF communication but also did not want to belong to the ELF community. Furthermore, the participants could hardly make opportunities to gain access to local social networks outside class because they had difficulty in achieving legitimacy among the local peers. As a result, they were finally in a third space apart from their L1 culture and the local university community.

3.5.2. Intercultural Pragmatic Competence and L2 identity

Having been chosen by its users for the purpose of conducting various intercultural communicative tasks, ELF has its priority on communicative effectiveness over lexico-grammatical correctness which follows ENL (English as a Native Language) forms. ELF speakers who come from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds have to manage and negotiate differences in conversation by adapting or altering their speech patterns to adjust to those of their interlocutors in order to facilitate mutual intelligibility. While doing so, these ELF speakers develop complex pragmatic, culture-specific strategies to facilitate communication. They choose a kind of communication that enables them to 'get

business done' and avoid potential breakdowns in communication by adopting various strategic means such as negotiation, repetition, code-switching, and borrowing to establish mutual intelligibility in interactions successfully (Murray, 2012).

Indeed, for ELF speakers' linguistic competence, grammar is regarded as a less significant skill for communication than language awareness, strategic competence, and pragmatic competence which can be developed through interactional or collaborative communication practices with other interlocutors (Cogo & Dewey 2006). Since ELF speakers have a mutual willingness to compromise (Ibid.), they operate efficiently in order to find out how to negotiate and manage differences in conversation, resulting in surprisingly few communication failures (Cogo, 2009). While engaging in collaborative talk with other ELF users, they can gain pragmatic principles such as notions of presupposition, inference, and politeness through authentic communicative experiences, according to neither a list of expressions and dialogues to memorize and drill nor native speakers' norms (Murray, 2012).

A number of empirical studies have investigated ELF communication and found ELF speakers' typical ways of accommodation. Jenkins (2000) investigated ELF phonology and found that the speakers needed to adjust their pronunciation according to the situations and interlocutors they talk with rather than imitating native speakers' pronunciation. Mauranen (2007) found ELF speakers use adaptive strategies such as self-rephrasing, negotiating topic, and discourse reflexivity to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers and make communication as intelligible as possible to their interlocutors in the situation, rather than resembling the native speaker ideal.

In fact, researchers found that miscommunication is rare in ELF communications, despite their limited resources, thanks to developing consensual interactional styles (House, 1999; Firth & Wagner, 1997). Cogo and Dewey (2006) found that ELF conversations have less problematic moments than expected in spite of presupposed difficulties in communication caused by diverse cultural differences of interlocutors because they use various strategies for fluid conversation. Cogo (2009) examined code-switching in ELF communication of language teachers in higher education and suggests that it is used for several functions: to offer an extra tool in communication; to ensure understanding beyond cultural differences; to signal solidarity and membership into the same community of multilingual speakers, indicating their social identities as ELF community participants. Metsä-Ketelä (2006) found that ELF speakers use a vague expression, 'more or less', for minimizing rather than other functions such as 'comparing similarities' and 'approximating quantities' which native English speakers use it for, which indicates that ELF speakers can develop innovative ways of using the language, not resulting in any communication breakdown but by rather negotiating new meanings for old words. Firth (1996) found ELF users often use the strategy of 'let it pass' for some unclear utterance and wait for the meaning to become clear in the course of communication. Hülmbauer (2007) investigated how ELF users tend to use other interlocutors' language in the course of ongoing interaction to enhance mutual intelligibility and co-create a common ELF repertoire, without considering standard English grammar rules or native-likeness as long as it does not cause any communication breakdown.

In terms of ELF speakers, the communicative competence which is confined with a particular native-speaker variety of English and textbook-bounded idealized

social rules are no longer desirable because language learners can encounter much more complex contexts and rules for social interactions outside the classroom (Leung, 2005). Therefore, non-pedagogical interactions in everyday contexts can be utilized for the unintentional acquisition of multilingual competence, which cannot be helped by explicit formulas such as formal grammars and dictionaries of words. This kind of competence requires help from other sensory dimensions for ad hoc strategies, versatility, and agility, which are hard to develop in schools but achievable in actual contexts of language use and practice (Canagarajah, 2007).

3.5.3. Computer-Mediated-Communication (CMC) and L2 identity

One of the reasons why CMC is typically adopted for ELT is that these provide learners with opportunities to communicate in English with a transnational global community of those with shared interests who may be speakers of English as a first language as well as others engaged in learning English as an additional language (Thorne & Black, 2007). Given this, some authors have become interested in the ways in which participation in these communities can enable learners to evolve new forms of identities as speakers of English. A growing number of educators argue for a need to develop a better understanding of the ways in which the L2 identity acquired in learners' on-line encounters transfers and informs their off-line encounters with the target language, including their formal in-school learning.

3.5.3.1. Previous studies on CMC and L2 Identity

As the times change, the context of SLA research has broadened and it is not confined to formal, off-line settings but has extended into virtual spaces. Digital

literacy practices have been examined to investigate if Internet-mediated tools such as blogging, fan fiction, social networking sites, and online games can provide L2 learners with opportunities for both linguistic and non-linguistic development. Numerous studies on text-based CMC chat tools and interactions in various online communities have explored the potential space for L2 identity construction beyond classrooms (ex. Chen, 2013; Klimanova & Dembovskaya 2013; Kim & Brown, 2014).

Lam (2000) conducted a case study and examined how electronic textual experiences in an ESL context can help identity formation and literacy development of an ESL learner. With ethnographic and discourse analytic methods including participant observation, in-depth interviews, and textual documentation, she explored a student's computer experience and activities, his personal background, and his schooling experiences, examining how language was involved in the production, maintenance, and transformation of social relations and identities. The results show how an immigrant teenager discursively constructed his L2 identity on the Internet, in which identity is understood as a reflective and generative process for constructing alternative social networks and subject positions.

Lam's another case study (2004) explored how two young Chinese immigrants' language practices in an online community provided them an additional context for language socialization. Data collected with participant observation, in-depth interviews, and textual documentation show how these young teenage girls adopted and developed a mixed-code variety of English including writing in Romanized Cantonese which served to create a collective ethnic identity for the girls and their peers around the globe as bilingual Chinese emigrants and how

this new identity influenced their social positioning as ESL learners and their relation to the English language.

CMC exchanges in online discussion boards were also explored in order to understand how students positioned themselves through the construction of their messages (Nguyen & Kellog, 2005). The authors collected data from ethnographic observations and electronic message board postings by 19 students from Japan, Korea, and Hong Kong, and one American teaching assistant (TA), as they discuss issues of gender discrimination and homosexuality as part of an ESOL course. In order to understand how the students positioned themselves through the construction of their messages, they used discourse analysis (Schiffrin, 1994) informed by Goffman's (1981) notion of participation frameworks. The results show the emergence of a community of practice and the language socialization process took place in the virtual space, which demonstrates that L2 students do not simply acquire new language forms, but they learn to construct selves/identities of their second languages in cyberspace.

Black (2005, 2006, 2009) examined an online fan fiction site to understand how English-language learners used the site for constructing themselves as legitimate members of the community by exploring a Chinese teenage immigrant second language user's socialization process, using traditional ethnographic and discourse analysis through focused participation observation, data from artifacts such as fan texts, reader reviews, and public interaction from the site, field notes, and interviews with focal participants. She took a sociocultural approach to language and literacy learning which views reading and writing as dialogic meaning-making processes that are available in specific social contexts (Bakhtin, 1986; Gee, 1996). She also employed NLS (New Literacy Studies) framework to

explore how the digital medium is used as an integral part of the literacy and meaning-making practices and the notion of hybridity to understand how English Language Learners (ELLs) publicly perform their identities and affiliate themselves with the fan community. The results show that online fan fiction communities allow English language learners to construct identities as successful writers and establish a legitimate social position as accomplished writers within the community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and fan fiction participants' constructive feedback and encouragement make a safe, accessible space for ELLs to practice their writing.

Online social networking was also investigated (Larsen, 2007) to explore how youngsters (13-17 years of age) construct their identities through sociocultural practices in an online social network, Arto, and how it can be as a continuation of their offline lives, based on Mediated Discourse Analysis (MDA, Scollon, 2001). Data were collected with participant observation and experiences in field notes and several hundred screen shots of the site, a media-content-survey, a public opinion survey, press coverage on the site, and lots of informal conversations with users both on the site and through MSN messenger. Results show that a postmodern identity construction is available on the Internet; in the virtual space, young people talk about their offline lives and friends, which shows the boundary between online and offline is blurred and an online network can be an alternative space for young people to develop friendships and identities which are thickly interwoven; the online social networking site is a continuation of their offline lives; there is both an element of self-construction and co-construction of identity with highly positive commentary on each other; the participants do not have another personality online because they dislike fakers who pretend to be someone else

and want to be accepted as they are.

Harrison and Thomas (2009) explored how young adult language learners use Livemocha.com, which is an online language learning community that provides language learners with opportunities of encountering and communicating with their target language users. They discussed how mediation available in online contexts could be constructed in different ways depending on learners' attitudes towards their own identity and social relationship, and concluded when users were active in making new social networks and having social and cultural interactions with others, the use of a growing range of Web-based tools could offer a participatory framework for personal and active learning environment for language learners who work on their own initiative.

Thorne and Black (2011) argued that ontologically new language and literacy practices through Internet-mediated communication enables language learners to develop situated identities through interaction due to the fact that most of the significant language development and socialization occurs in community and leisure contexts rather than in classrooms and, in recent days, community and leisure increasingly take place in Internet-mediated social contexts.

Chen (2013) explored L2 identity evolvement of two Chinese participants through communication with people from different cultural backgrounds in a social networking community. They developed their identities as English users and multilingual writers rather than as English learners that they used to think of themselves through literacy activities and social interactions in the online community.

The studies of Vandergrif (2013) and Kim & Brown (2014) explored how L2

learners negotiate their identities while communicating with native target language speakers in online spaces. Through using different address terms, humor, and emoticons, L2 learners negotiated their preferred identities in various CMC contexts.

On the basis of the results of the above-mentioned studies, it is presumed that identity and community are often constructed through text-based interactions in online contexts. Internet-mediated interactions provide L2 learners with opportunities of self-representation and positive identity construction as capable communicators, which are unlikely to be available in their offline situations due to their physical characteristics and language ability (Thorne et al., 2015). Furthermore, as Thorne and Black's (2011) study tended to emphasize, the social interactions in online settings that interpenetrate and amplify offline selves in that language socialization.

3.5.3.2. CMC and ELF

There are two directions regarding language choice in Internet communication. One is the use of languages other than English which pose translation issues; even though English is a dominant language on the Internet, the use of other languages has rapidly expanded so that it poses serious translation challenges. The other trend is the adoption of English as a lingua franca with the assumption that many of the Internet users are non-native speakers of English, which facilitates the notion that modern English language belongs to all users neither as a foreign language nor as a second language for anybody so that all of them can have the ownership of the language (Jarvis, 2006).

The Internet has fueled the growth of the English language and developed as an

English-based network. Indeed, about 55.5 % of the information stored on the Internet is in English.⁸ As the majority of English users in the world are non-native speakers of the language (Crystal, 1997), Internet content writers should bear in mind that the most of the readers are non-native users of English who have difficulty understanding complex grammatical structures, idioms, less common vocabulary and native English-speakers' usage conventions of written English and culture (Baron, 2003). In this regard, the Internet has changed the English language in terms of the language variants and its usage conventions; there are emerging new vocabulary and usage of existing words for different meanings; Internet communication tools such as email and online chat do not emphasize the conventions of punctuation and spelling but cause a diverse evolution of the language, which brings up the issue to what extent ELT should allow its influence on the classroom teaching (Jarvis, 2006).

On the other hand, the proliferation of international CMC interactions among the various online CMC application users from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds provides English learners with the opportunities to learn and use English outside classrooms for the communicative purpose, which facilitates the adoption of ELF and informal language learning. Jenks' research (2009) on the voice-based Skype casts shows how participants demonstrate an understanding of the appropriate way of engaging in the online chat. When a participant responded a getting-to-know-you exchange in a textbook way, answering "fine, thank you" to another participant's question, "how's it going?" his utterance was subjected to other participants' laughter. It indicates CMC informal

⁸ <http://w3techs.com/technologies/overview/contentlanguage/all>

communication differs from formulaic classroom interactions, which can expand participants' communicative repertoire, not being fixed to predetermined structures and norms.

The outcomes of language socialization in virtual communities may be less transferable to educational or other contexts because they are different from conventional L2 competencies and norms but specific to particular community norms and repertoires (Thorne et al., 2009). Even though the expected linguistic outcomes are different from those of in-class education, language learners can acquire language awareness, multiliteracy and pragmatic competence while participating in freely chosen activities within Internet-mediated non-institutional environments which enable personally relevant engagement (Thorne, 2003; Kinginger & Belz, 2005). While engaging in various communication activities in virtual space, language learners can have opportunities to participate in intercultural communications and personal relationships, which are highly meaningful for the participants' potential learning trajectories (Thorne, 2003).

Because the concept of community formation through participatory engagement exists not only inside classrooms but also beyond classroom settings including Internet-mediated networks, participants engage in the activities toward a shared object of interest in online communities. Thorne and Reinhardt (2008) suggested "bridging activities"⁹ to combine learners' digital vernacular interests with formal education, furthermore, to strengthen the connection between competence

⁹ *Bridging activities* focus on "developing learner awareness of vernacular digital language conventions and analyzing these conventions to bridge in-class activity with the wider world of mediated language use (Thorne & Reinhardt, 2008, p.562)", which are "not intended to be a replacement for standard texts or reference grammars. Rather, they are meant to provide a realia counterweight to the prescriptivist versions of grammar, style, and vocabulary in foreign language texts that typically are not based upon actual language use (Ibid.)"

developed in instructional L2 settings and pragmatic abilities of living language use acquired in the plurilingual world beyond formal learning settings. They argued the increase of participation in Internet information and communication technologies has rapidly transformed conventional analogue-normative literacy practices which rigidly adhere to the mechanisms of high-stakes testing. This challenges the gap between analogue-normative textual conventions which tend to emphasize literature and grammar forms and actual, communicative language use which are based upon actual language use. CMC channels make language learners aware of new media literacies and the importance of interpersonal relationship and community building for the development of advanced foreign language proficiency and new media competencies which are practically needed for full participation in other contexts.

3.5.4. The Impacts of Online participation on Offline Life

As Wellman and Gulia (1999) noted, most research on virtual culture treated the Internet as isolated without concerning how the online interactions are relevant to other aspects of people's lives. However, traditional dichotomous perspectives which viewed online and offline as separate worlds has been replaced by the view that Internet networking transforms mundane routines and real life practices (Jones & Kucker, 2001).

We often have experiences in virtual spaces which are different from those of real world situations. Then, as we develop different identities while having different experiences online, do they change our offline selves, attitudes, and behaviors in turn? This leads to a question about 'lateral connectivity,' whether changes in the values or attitudes of a person evolved in one place can influence on one's

identity in other parts of his/her life (Bloomer, 2001). It makes it possible that a learner's personal and social life that commonly exists outside schools causes changes in the person's educational careers and attitudes to learning in schools, which means that transformation of their person and identity has taken place (Ibid.).

Assuming that negotiation of an individual's identity occurs not only between the person and others but also within himself/herself for taking up one's subject positions in places where different demands and values are placed upon him/her according to the contexts, the person may develop strategies to cope with this situation and create a sense of his/her present and future images in order to form an identity which is coherent across contexts (Rich & Davis, 2007). A study of bilingual young learners in the UK (Ibid.) shows that even a year one student could make a decision to extend his use of English in school to his home for the sake of investing in his multicultural identity. It indicates an identity formed in one place can impact the identities in other communities where a person has developed.

The identity used to imply oneness, but life on the Internet is different from the real life. Individuals on multi-user domains (MUD) experience a collective self, not feeling they need to choose this or that aspect of themselves for conformity. As for the ways of self-construction in virtual communities, Turkle (1995) argued that participants construct new selves through the social interaction of writing activities because others make assumptions neither by the writer's appearance nor by their accent but only through the words he/she writes. Turkle (1997) also saw that the multiple selves which exist in different virtual contexts do not need to be integrated, emphasizing the flexibility of using diverse selves depending on

the situation. Life in computer windows is multiplicity and heterogeneity as windows make it possible for us to live in several contexts with various personae simultaneously. From this point of view, multiplicity is not a negative but rather a positive because it refers a flexible self, which can serve as an intellectual and developed capacity to negotiate fluid transitions of different aspects of the self in different contexts (Turkle, 1999).

By creating online personae that they adopt in virtual space, people can sense diverse states of selves such as fragmentation, relief, self-discovery, and even self-transformation. It is evident in the statement from an interviewee who has shared months of virtual intimacy with a man in an online chatting channel who said, "I feel very different online. I am a lot more outgoing, less inhibited. I would say I feel more like myself. But that's a contradiction. I feel more like who I wish I was. I'm just hoping that face-to-face I can find a way to spend some time being the online me (Turkle, 1995, p. 179)." In the same vein, many studies explored individuals' presentation of selves in online spaces and found that people tended to present different selves from their real-life ones, revealing more of their true selves or being strategic in their presentation of selves, which affects their offline interpersonal relationships (Bargh et al. 2002; Whitty 2008).

Psychological studies on online behaviors (Suler, 2004; Rosen et al., 2008) argue that the reasons why people behave differently in virtual space results from the state of 'de-individuation' which may lead to 'disinhibition'^{1 0} owing to the degree of anonymity. When people are in a state of de-individuation, the normal

^{1 0} Disinhibition here indicates the difference in behavior of people which is not equivalent to those in offline situations (Joinson, 1998).

constraints on their behaviors are reduced and the awareness of the possibility of being evaluated in public (public self-awareness) may be reduced as a result of interactions via CMC. Some studies found that shy users of an online social network may feel the self-presentation on the website which is their detached self as different from their real inner self, thereby reducing their social anxiety (Zarghooni, 2007). For example, the results of research on Facebook (Zhao et al., 2008) found that identities constructed on the site are different from those constructed in anonymous offline contexts or anonymous other online spaces; the online setting provides the users the opportunity to create the hoped-for possible selves which can serve to enhance their overall self-image; the socially desirable identities which have not been actualized offline or which are unable to establish in the offline world can have a real impact on the individuals. This means that people are provided with plenty of room to express unexplored parts of themselves thanks to the characteristics of online communities, which can help enhance better identity construction.

However, studies on the effects of online experience in offline life argued that there can be both positive effects and negative effects which seriously play out in real life (Turkle, 1995; Al-Saggaf, 2004; Preece, 2000). Positive effects on offline lives can include becoming more confident, more open-minded, and less shy (Markham, 1998; Al-Saggaf, 2004). For example, the study on the effect of online community on offline community in Saudi Arabia (Al-Saggaf, 2004) found that participation in online communities made participants more open-minded towards those different from themselves and more aware of the world, less inhibited about the opposite gender, and more self-confident, which are unusual attitudes among the people in the country due to the culture. Critics have expressed fears of online

social networks' negative effects on in-person contact, fearing that the Internet will lead people away from meaningful, real-life human relationships (Wellman & Gulia, 1999) such as becoming addicted to virtual environments, becoming more likely to express negative feelings towards others, and withdrawing from family and friends in real life (Turkle, 1995; Preece, 2000; Al-Saggaf, 2004).

Regardless of the positive or negative effects, research proved whether and how virtual life affects real life. Yee and Barton (2007) proposed the Proteus effect which indicates the effect of online avatar's features on the participants' self-perception and behaviors both online and offline. It proved that the participants who were assigned better-looking avatars, which were taller and more attractive than others, behaved more intimately and confidently in both online and offline tasks. The findings of Fox et al. (2013) supported the same phenomenon by proving how participants who were assigned sexualized avatars were different in their online and offline thoughts and behaviors from those with non-sexualized avatars as they demonstrated greater rape myth acceptance^{1 1} and more body-related thoughts which may develop into negative attitudes towards women and the self in real life. The study on Ersner-Hershfield et al. (2011) shows that people who interacted with realistic computer renderings of their future virtual self-image exhibited an increased tendency to make more future-oriented decisions which will cause them to save more money for their future retirement. This demonstrates how the experience of immersive virtual reality can help the participants imagine their future selves and enhance their beliefs in later monetary rewards so that

^{1 1} Rape myth acceptance (RMA) is the endorsement of false beliefs that make people blame rape victims for their assault such as regarding the victims do something to deserve getting raped (Fox et al., 2012).

they can change their thoughts and behaviors in the present.

3.6. Recent studies on digital game-based L2 learning and teaching

3.6.1. Using educational games for L2 education

Using games for education has been researched for many years, and its positive effects such as increasing learners' motivation, engagement, cognition, skills have been found (Gee 2005; Shaffer 2007). Not only commercial games developed for entertainment but also educational games explicitly designed for pedagogical purposes have been researched to explore the efficacy.

Serious games, designed for educational purposes, were utilized for language education in online platforms like *Mingoville*, and their efficacy in English education for young children was examined (Hansbøl & Meyer 2011). The study found that the platform supported self-directed learning and children's engagement in learning.

Mini-games in the Wiring Pal (W-Pal), an intelligent tutoring system (ITS), was researched to investigate L2 learners' improvement in writing performance, engagement, and perceived learning gains, and found there was a significant effect of using games for language education (Allen et al., 2014).

A case study conducted in a Greek public primary school with a plot-driven, web-based detective game, *Whodunit*, proved that the young learners could gain significant benefits from the collaborative, problem-solving activities in a geography game-based learning environment (Doura, et al., 2014). The results through pre- and post- test and questionnaires showed that the students' vocabulary and reading skills in English, as well as their learning strategies and

content knowledge, were improved significantly (Ibid.).

3.6.2. Playing commercial online games and its effects on L2 learning

There have been a growing number of studies which explored how and what factors of commercial online games which are not designed for pedagogical purposes can facilitate gamers' second language development. Some found that this self-directed, out-of-school leisure activity can promote their learning autonomy as well as their incidental and informal lexical learning (Sylvén and Sundqvist, 2012; Benson & Chik, 2011). For example, Chik (2014) explored how playing popular commercial online games which are played in their target languages can afford second language development, especially for vocabulary and reading skill while reading in-game texts and found there are positive correlations.

Peterson's study (2011) explored how some Japanese EFL learners' interactions and attitudes were affected by the real-time, collaborative social engagement while playing an MMORPG, *Allods online*. Even though there were some variations among the participants who have different prior gaming experiences and proficiency levels, the participants' feedback shows that there several benefits for second language learners such as exposure to new vocabulary and reduced anxiety. Another research of Peterson (2012) also explored Japanese university students' linguistic and social interactions in the *Wonderland* MMORPG while fulfilling quests. This study also found that communication with native English speakers enhanced EFL learners' vocabulary, fluency, and a socio-cultural account of language development.

Studies on the most popular MMORPG, the *World of Warcraft* (Thorne, 2008;

Rama et al., 2012; Thorne et al., 2012) also confirmed the benefits of playing the game for the second language development. The task-oriented role playing game which requires social actions and language exchanges for playing the game facilitates second language learning environments and opportunities that are authentic and natural. The positive relationship while engaging in collaborative target language interactions with native English speakers with humor while playing the game resulted in improving the EFL learners' motivation in using their target language.

3.6.3. Utilizing commercial online games for in-class L2 education

Even though there have been not so many trials of utilizing commercial online games for in-class activities for L2 education, some researchers have discussed and suggested ideas on this issue.

Reinders (2009) suggested some ideas of using computers and games for English writing classes such as having students investigate or describe online game characters, analyzing students' chat logs for language analysis, and having them create their own games and present them in class.

deHaan (2011) also conducted an action research with some Japanese EFL students who are interested in online games and suggested two ideas of utilizing online games for English education; having students create a role-playing game and design a game magazine. While fulfilling the two projects, developing an English language role-playing game and designing an online game magazine, students used English for communication for sharing ideas with other classmates and the instructor. The projects provided EFL learners with opportunities of having authentic discussions in their target language.

Reinders and Wattana (2012) researched how a pedagogically modified online

game could positively influence L2 learners' willingness to communicate. They modified a popular commercial MMORPG game, *Ragnarok Online*, for an EFL curriculum in Thailand and found that willingness to communicate with the students who used to be reluctant to speak in English improved significantly over time.

3.7. The main genres of online games and *League of Legends*^{1 2}

3.7.1. Main genres of computer & video game

3.7.1.1. Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA)

In a Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) game, a player controls a single character in one of two teams. The objective is to destroy the opposing team's main structure. Players can choose their own characters which typically have various abilities and advantages that contribute to a team's overall strategy.^{1 3} Interactive player collaboration among team members as well as individual player's control skill is vital in MOBA games (Kim et al., 2014; Reuter et al., 2014). *League of Legends* and *Heroes of the Storm* belong to this game genre.



Retrieved December 21, 2015, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multiplayer_online_battle_arena#/media/File:Vainglory_Halcyon_Fold_map.tif

^{1 2} For the case of explaining genres of current online games, I think citing some websites like *Wikipedia* would be an appropriate source for referencing because it is hard to find comprehensive and scholarly literature that provides the up-to-date data on this topic.

^{1 3} Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (n.d.). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved December 21, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multiplayer_online_battle_arena

3.7.1.2. First Person Shooter (FPS)

First Person Shooter (FPS) is a video game genre centered on weapon-based combat through a first-person perspective of the player character. Games in this genre involve a character, weapons, and a number of enemies. While some focus on narrative, problem-solving, and logic puzzles, most of them are fast-paced action play with bloody fights.^{1 4} Custom maps allow players to repeat testing of the core aspects of FPS play, and players shoot at an opponent and move through the virtual environment (Claypool & Claypool, 2007). These games which take place in 3D environment are more realistic than 2D shooting games. *Battlefield* and *Call of Duty* belong to this game genre.



Retrieved December 23, 2015, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First-person_shooter#/media/File:Halflife_ingame.jpg

3.7.1.3. Real Time Strategy (RTS)

Real-time Strategy (RTS) is a game that includes strategy with base building and resource management in a real-time setting (Adams, 2006). In an RTS, players position and operate structures under their control, secure areas of the map, create additional units and structures and damage their opponents' property.

^{1 4} First Person Shooter (n.d.) In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved December 21, 2015, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First-person_shooter

^{1 5} Players of RTS prefer to play against other players in a multiplayer environment (Cheng et al., 2006). *StarCraft* and *Dune II* belong to this game genre.

3.7.1.4. Role-playing Game (RPG)

A Role-playing Game (RPG) is a game in which a player plays the role of a character through a point of view of a character that interacts within the game's imaginary world generally in a fantasy or a science fiction setting (Heliö, 2004). The game of the genre shares i) levels or character statistics that could be improved over the course of the game, ii) A menu-based combat system, and iii) a central quest that runs throughout the game as a storyline. Also, according to a type of gameplay and online support, the genre is broadened to include MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online), ARPG (Action), SRPG (Strategy). *Dungeons and Dragons Series* and *World of Warcraft Series* are popular examples of this genre.^{1 6}

3.7.1.5. Action

The action genre includes any game where the majority of challenges are physical tests of skill. In an action game, the player controls an in-game character like the avatar. The avatar must navigate a level, collecting objects, avoiding obstacles, and battling enemies until the player runs out of lives. By collecting objects and defeating enemies, the player can maximize their score. *Super Mario Series* and *Dungeon & Fighter* belong to this game genre.^{1 7}

^{1 5} Real-time strategy (n.d.). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved December 21, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Real-time_strategy

^{1 6} Role-playing Game (n.d.) In *Techopedia*. Retrieved December 21, from <https://www.techopedia.com/definition/27052/role-playing-game-rpg>

^{1 7} Action game (n.d.). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved December 21, 2015, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Action_game

3.7.1.6. Simulation

A simulation game attempts real life activities in the form of a game. Usually with no strictly defined goals, players can control a character freely. Simulation games are played for diverse purposes such as training, analysis, or prediction. There are war games, business games, and role-playing simulation games in this genre. *Sims Series* and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* belong to this game genre.^{1 8}

3.7.2. *League of Legends (LoL)*

League of Legends is a MOBA (Multiplayer Online Battle Arena) game, developed and published and released in 2009 by Riot Games. It is one of the most popular game titles in the world, having had millions of registered users (67 million people play LoL per month, 27 million per day, 7.5 million during peak hours) (Sheer, 2014). While playing the game, players have to form 2 even teams of Champions which consist of 3 or 5 players so that they have to collaborate to compete against the other team. It launched the Korean version in December 2011 and ranked at the top in the Korean online game market. Before its Korean version was released, lots of Korean gamers had used the North American server to play the game.^{1 9} Among *League of Legends*' online communities in Korea, the biggest one that has about 70,000 active members supported this research by volunteering for the survey and interview

^{1 8} Simulation video game (n.d.). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved December 21, 2015, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simulation_video_game

^{1 9} *League of Legends (LoL)* (n.d.). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved December 21, 2015, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/League_of_Legends

Players can select a character (Champion).



Retrieved December 23, 2015, from <http://www.leviathyn.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/League-of-Legends-Character-Select.png>

A player plays a single character and plays as a team. Team members interact with text chat system while playing to discuss strategies and in-game tactics.



Retrieved December 23, 2015, from <https://i.ytimg.com/vi/AHcmDf9UMxg/maxresdefault.jpg>

A team destroys the opposing team's main structure, Nexus.



Retrieved December 23, 2015, from <http://apollo-pbe-loads.s3.amazonaws.com/1408198286459/Screen10.png>

Team members discuss the game results via the text-based chat system.



3.8. Conceptual overview

I think identity is a combination of subjectivity constructed by the individual through language and positioning ascribed by social relationships and structures in a given time and space. Therefore, it is not fixed but can be negotiated and constituted in a given historical and cultural context by the individual.

Also, I view learning is not only an activity of accumulating knowledge but a social process of participating in the sociocultural practices of a community. While participating in a community, transformations in the concept of self, thoughts and behavior, and learning take place. This identity position of a person which can be acquired in the socialization and relationship with other community members can have a great impact on his/her learning (Toohey, 2000). Furthermore, identity positions that were taken up in different learning contexts can have lateral connectivity so that learners may “develop strategies to create a sense of personal coherence in their identity across different setting (Rich & Davis, 2007).”

On the basis of above-mentioned views, I will research ‘lateral connectivity.’ It refers to the fact that changes in the values or attitudes of a person evolved in one place, a part of one’s identity transformation, can influence one’s identity in other parts of his/her life (Bloomer, 2001). Lateral connectivity makes it possible for a learner’s personal and social life that commonly exists outside schools to cause changes in the person’s educational arc and the attitudes towards school learning, which means that transformation of their person and identity as a whole has taken place (Ibid.).

There have been some studies that explored how English learners’ online experience could influence on their self-concepts and attitudes so that they could

create a new sort of collective identity and affiliation with other English learners while improving their English skills in the virtual space (Black, 2006; Lam, 2004). However, I have not been able to identify any studies which explore how the online experiences of English learners' new identity construction can influence their offline identities and learning attitudes, focusing especially on EFL learners' identity construction from the perspective of ELF paradigm.

The understanding of the Korean context of English education and my previous studies on issues of CMC and L2 identity (Jeon, 2014), which worked as a pilot study, formulated the following research questions:

- (i) What sorts of interactions and relationships are available in a transnational multiplayer online game for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners?
- (ii) How does the online experience affect EFL learners' second language identity (L2 identity) construction?
- (iii) How do their evolved L2 identities affect their offline learning attitude?

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

This chapter will discuss the theoretical frameworks for the methodology employed in this research as well as the details of the data collection and analysis process. I will begin with a brief discussion of my philosophical stance for this study. I will go into detailed explanation of the interpretive paradigm. Then, I will discuss the method of narrative research that I employed to explore EFL learners' L2 identity evolvment while playing online games using English, going into a detailed explanation why I made this methodological choice and the validity issue raised for this method. Having done this, I will discuss my research procedure, including details of my participants, the schedule for data collection, and data analyzing techniques.

4.2. Philosophical Stance

4.2.1. Research paradigms

Research is the process of raising questions and providing answers to the questions. While some paradigms' ultimate goal is social change, they are also premised on the profound knowledge and understanding of an issue. Therefore, the aim of the research is to advance knowledge (Shuttleworth, 2008) and increase understanding of an issue or a topic (Creswell 2008), which is common for all kinds of research regardless of the paradigms. However, the methodologies of approaching knowledge can be different according to researchers' philosophical frameworks, represented in their ontology and epistemology. People view reality and knowledge in different ways so that it is inevitable to adopt different methodologies to answer research questions and to search for reality. A research inquiry can be conducted in any of the paradigms according to the type

of inquiry and researchers' philosophical views on the nature of social reality and meaning (Hesse-Bier & Leavy, 2004), which is influenced by the researchers' view of ontology and epistemology.

Even though categorizing research paradigms in a few types is considered an oversimplification by many researchers these days, there has been a continuous debate about the paradigms of social science research. What is commonly referred to in textbooks like that of Crotty is a divide of two major paradigms in the nature of social science research (1998). One is the positivist paradigm that includes post-positivism, and the other is the interpretive paradigm, which also shares commonalities with constructivism (Guba, 1990). This kind of divide of research paradigms has been claimed on the basis of the differences in their philosophical assumptions, not in their techniques.

Positivism views society as something that can be researched scientifically, just like physical facts, so that it can provide a causal explanation (Pring, 2004). In order to prove causal links, positivists make the empirical assumption that "the best way to acquire reliable knowledge is to obtain evidence by direct experience" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 13). This direct experience is the experiment that tests researchers' "imaginative preconception of what might be true" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 18), that is, a hypothesis. By testing the hypothesis, confirmation or rejection is accomplished.

Some researchers claimed that the research approaches in this paradigm are the ones that clearly distinguish researchers from what is researched so that they are to be viewed as value-free and absolutely valid (Pring, 2004). However, being independent of any values is an unacceptable assumption. The value neutrality

that Max Weber originally referred to was about the principle that positivism seeks for factual conclusions by minimizing researchers' judgments and views about how things ought to be (Hammersley, 1992). As research only produces one of many accounts of a phenomenon selected by a researcher, not one absolute true representation of a phenomenon, a researcher's values and perspectives naturally influence the selecting of a particular focus and purpose of research (Hammersley, 1992).

The interpretive paradigm takes the meaning of a social world as its focus. The researchers look for people's perceptions, attitudes, and feelings. The main focus of interpretivism is to understand the subjective world of human experience (Cohen et al., 2007). It views human experiences as selective and intentional so that objects in themselves are not important but how they are experienced and constructed by a person's subjectivity is meaningful (Pring, 2004). The subjective interpretation of experiences from the participants' point of view is the key to the approach, and through constant interpretation, underlying themes or categories emerge from the particular context inductively (Cohen et al., 2007). In this way, interpretive approaches do not pursue one normative, universal theory, but multifaceted ones supported by various situations and contexts because they do not believe context-free generalizations in the study of social science. What is understood as legitimate or true knowledge in this paradigm is not separable from the discourses that make it reasonable and true (Ceci et al., 2002). Therefore, detailed, rich, and thick descriptions of contexts, events, and the individuals are characteristics of the interpretive study.

One issue that arises is that subjective interpretation, which relies on the understanding of individuals' intentions and perceptions, may be misleading and

incomplete (Cohen et al., 2007). In some respects, scientific procedures of verification and discovery of useful generalizations about human behavior might be worth pursuing adjunctively for a better understanding of people and society. While the positivist approach may miss the individual's uniqueness and their specific understanding of the social world, there is another risk in an interpretive approach because it can narrow down the perspective and confine the research only to a parochial subjective and individual scope. Therefore, different methods are needed to answer different types of questions.

Another paradigm that has different goals from interpretive research, critical theory, is occluded when the two-fold paradigm division is accepted. The critical theory focuses on uncovering and identifying false consciousness inside a social situation that brings its members unequal power and freedom. By interrogating the behaviors and relationships that are illegitimate and repressive, critical research casts questions on the existing situations from the researchers' critical point of view and ideological critique (Habermas 1968). So it is far from the positivism that stands in the value-free stance, but it is strongly value-laden in its argument. It is also different from interpretivism because it tends to understand a situation with the particular lens of an ideological agenda. Therefore, the description and interpretation of a situation within critical theory is different from the interpretive methodology from the first stage of research.

Just like the positive and the interpretive research, the critical approach also has not gone without critique. Among those claims of criticism, I agree especially with the point that critical researchers are only confined to political and ideological agendas so that they act only ideologically (Cohen et al., 2007). I think this fact may make the critical research overly weighed towards one side and limited to a

typical stereotype. Another critique is that action research, which is often used by critical research, empowers participants as researchers, but in reality, it is not a simple and easy mission for classroom teachers to perform. They do not have that much freedom and power of making decisions in their classes. Furthermore, even if they might be able to exercise some power within the schools, it is hard to extend the effect to society by and large (Cohen et al., 2007), which is an undeniable fact in the field of education.

This study neither seeks to establish causal links to explain social phenomena nor aims to emancipate individuals or groups by changing the behaviors in society, but it intends to give an account of a group for a better understanding of a social phenomenon. In this regard, I chose interpretive paradigm for this study.

4.2.2. Interpretive research

In this part, I will discuss the characteristics of interpretive research paradigm including some critiques and adequacy of this research paradigm and how they influence the methodological choice that I make for this study to answer my research questions. Further explanation of the methodology of the narrative interview will follow.

4.2.2.1. Generalization of interpretive research

Due to the subjective nature of interpretive research, the issue of generalization of research results needs more explanation and discussion than that of scientific research. Different from positivist research that focuses on testing theories for generalizations, interpretive research aims to explore and understand the deeper structure of a phenomenon that influences and is influenced by a social context. The understanding of phenomena can be adopted to inform other settings, but

basically, interpretive research does not intend to seek generalizations in a nomothetic way (Rowlands, 2005). This issue is discussed in three categories, as follows.

First, whether the findings in the research sample can be generalized to the parent population is discussed in the term of 'representational generalization' (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). There are some arguments that the particular attributes of interpretive research hinder its capability of representational generalization. The base of the argument is the fact that qualitative research, in general, involves small samples, compared to quantitative research, and the samples are not statistically representative of the population (Ibid.).

Furthermore, for qualitative research, what researchers record as data can be different depending on the researchers. However, it can still be regarded as what actually occurs in the natural setting of the event (Cohen et al., 2007) because all researchers can observe different things in the same setting. Basically, interpretive researchers do not believe that there is ever a single, simple objective account of events or phenomena because there is no unsituated point of view (Ibid.).

Second, whether the research findings can be inferred to other contexts is called 'inferential generalization' (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The findings of qualitative research are not rationalistic and law-like because they are based on the experience and feelings of the participants and researchers in context. Therefore, thick description of the researched context should be provided so that the readers can understand the meanings that are attached to the context and assess the transferability of the findings to other settings (Ibid.). Ontologically, nomothetic

and definite reality apart from context does not exist from the qualitative perspective.

Third, whether the principles or statements from the findings of a study can be of wider or universal application is called 'theoretical generalization' (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). It requires a different interpretation of qualitative research because interpretive researchers do not expect fixed and immutable theories from it. Rather, it is needed to access the generalization by examining how the data from a study support the existing theories and how far the theories can explain what is observed in the study (Ibid.).

4.2.2.2. Validity and credibility of interpretive research

The way that validity is addressed varies depending on the paradigm of the research. There cannot be a general rule for assessing validity for interpretive research because it is rather complicated compared to natural scientific research due to the varying methods and underpinning philosophy (Ceci et al., 2002). For example, while scientific researchers view history and maturation as threats to internal validity, interpretive researchers, especially ethnographic researchers, take them naturally and accept the change over time as their data (Cohen et al., 2007). For this reason, interpretive researchers tend to use a different term credibility rather than internal validity (Perry, 2011).

To demonstrate validity and credibility, triangulation can be a powerful method. Triangulation is the process using multi-method data collection approaches in research. For triangulation, researchers use multiple sources to show that the same patterns and themes are repeated in various data. In this way, researchers can confirm the findings with more evidence, and as a result, their arguments can

become stronger (Perry, 2011). While one research method may be biased providing a limited view on a complex human behavior, a multi-method approach can provide a richer explanation and make researchers more confident about the findings (Cohen et al., 2007).

However, there is some debate about the triangulation for interpretive research as a means of the verifying process (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Some criticize it as useless to attempt to validate qualitative research findings with multiple sources because there is no single reality from their ontological view. Also, they argue that all methods produce specific data so that they cannot generate perfectly concordant evidence (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Other researchers view the triangulation as a process, not for validating but for the deepening and widening of understanding research subjects with multiple readings (Ibid.).

Regardless of how to understand triangulation of interpretive research, researchers should be able to explain how data from different sources contribute to the convergence of the findings and how the combination of data works for the credibility of the research in order to inform readers how and why triangulation is used (Perry, 2011). Then, the credibility will be increased in the conclusions of a study.

All in all, on the base of the philosophical assumptions of an interpretive research paradigm that understands reality to be complex and socially constructed, I undertook this study. Above all, its concerns for individuals and their perceptions, attitudes, and feelings, focusing on the subjective world of human experience are most relevant to my research interest, that is, a kind of human social experience; identity change. I think language learners' L2 identity is evolving, complex, and

subjective rather than static, simple, and objective. Also, individuals' subjective experiences influence their individual perceptions of the world and themselves. My goal is to gain an understanding of the meaning of the change in the individuals' perceptions and actions in a particular social context while interacting with their social world, rather than to find out a norm or a causal link that can be generalized in other contexts nor to change unfair social situations for the participants. Therefore, I believe my research questions are best answered using the sort of methods developed and used within an interpretive research tradition, adopting the constructionist epistemological position, which views meaning and truth as constructed by subjects on their own, in different ways so that there can be multiple, various accounts of the same phenomenon which are equally valid (Gray, 2009).

4.3. The Method of Analysis

The method of Thematic Analysis is chosen for this study because I believe it is well suited to exploring and describing individuals' experiences through the lenses of existing theories and inductively discovering theoretical propositions within the collected data.

4.3.1. Thematic Analysis

Both content analysis and thematic analysis share similar process of analyzation, but the difference between content analysis and thematic analysis is that the latter allows the identification of theory which had not been specified previously. The methodology of content analysis is a deductive data analysis methodology that begins with decided themes of preexisting theories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The predetermined categories developed from the preexisting theories are tested and

confirmed by empirical data (Ezzy, 2002). On the other hand, thematic analysis is rather inductive because the specific categories that are to be used for presenting data are not fully determined beforehand but are induced later on during the coding process. Therefore, it is different from the content analysis in its way of process, level of coding, and theoretical flexibility, although it also starts from the understanding of previous theories and issues related to the research interest.

In addition, thematic analysis is different from grounded theory that aims to generate a new theory to explain the findings. Since it starts with a different philosophical stance from the thematic analysis, it emphasizes that preexisting theories should not work as biased perspectives that restrict any possibility of developing new concepts evolved from collected data. So it is important to set them aside while collecting and analyzing data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), whereas thematic analysis does not necessarily focus on generating a theory in purpose. It focuses more on identifying thematic patterns and summarizing the data based on the understanding of the preexisting theories while allowing categories which are identified from the data inductively, not constrained by prior theory.

4.3.2. Method of data collection: Narrative Interviews

Since personal narratives are the primary form that makes episodic human experience temporarily meaningful (Polkingthorne, 1998), they are used to illuminate “individual and collective action and meanings, as well as the social processes by which social life and human relationships are made and changed” (Laslett, 1999. p. 392).

The stories that the narrators choose to talk about, regardless whether they are

real or imaginary, show us some aspects of the experience in which specific situations, actions, and people are involved and the changes that occur in the people's thoughts and actions (Gallie, 1964). A person's story of his/ her own experience in life is linked to the person's identity, which is a socially constructed and constantly evolving sense of self (Polkinghorne, 1988).

In this regard, I chose narrative interviews as the method of this research to capture both the participants' specific episodes that indicate their perception at the moment of the events and their experienced meanings developed over a period of time.

Different from all conventional questions-and-answer type interviews for which interviewers set agendas and control what information is produced (Mishler, 1986) by selecting the theme, imposing interviewer's language forms, and ordering the questions (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000), the basic idea of the narrative interview is to reconstruct social events directly from the narrators' perspectives (Ibid.).

The researchers' role is very important for its validity when conducting narrative interviews. Interviewers need to be aware of the fact that people are often resistant to revealing an essential self to others as much as they negotiate how they want to be known by their stories performing a preferred self (Riessman, 2000). Therefore, participants often project a positive self-image to interviewers. However, they are more open to sharing the self-explorations of their feelings and understandings when they trust that the interviewer accepts their felt meanings without judgment (Polkinghorne, 2008). Also, while interviewers need to assist participants to use figurative expressions in describing their experienced meaning because interviewees' own metaphorical and analogical expressions can make

interview data unclear, it is important for interviewers to assume an open listening stance to ensure that the participants' own voices are heard (Ibid.) since the representations and boundaries which are influenced by researchers disciplinary preferences and research questions can infiltrate participants' stories (Riessman, 2000).

For eliciting less imposed narratives, some strategies are recommended. First, the interviewer should focus on the immanent themes, topics, and the language which appear in the narration of the informants during the interview (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). While listening to the informants' narratives, the interviewer needs to follow up themes and construct questions to elicit further narratives, following the sequence of the story they tell and using the words and phrases they use (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008). Therefore, the questions based on the researcher's interests should be translated into immanent questions using the language the narrator uses (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000).

Furthermore, questions should be carefully selected; interviewers should use open-ended, not closed questions, use questions that can elicit stories not a one-word answer, and avoid 'why' questions which elicit an intellectualization because informants can answer them with something abstract that is disconnected from their actual lives (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008). In addition, the interviewer should abstain from any comments during the narration other than non-verbal signals of attentive listening and paralinguistic support of showing interest to encourage continuing the narration (Jovchlovitch & Bauer, 2000). Rather than being a visible asker, the interviewer should be an almost invisible facilitator to assist narrators to say more about their lives (Hollway & Jefferson, 2008). Finally, at the end of the interview, interesting discussions can develop in a relaxed mood as the tape

recorder is switched off. In this phase, the interviewer can use why-questions because the theories and explanations of the narrators hold about themselves can be the entry point for the data analysis (Jovchlovitch & Bauer, 2000).

4.3.3. The process of coding for Thematic Analysis

In order to identify, analyze, and report patterns within data, thematic analysis tries to identify themes from the data. For this, the process of several coding phases is needed. The descriptions of the coding procedure vary depending on who is making it. Among them, the most widely accepted phases of coding are the three steps: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

As the first step in analyzing data, open coding procedure is described as a step “the data are broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, compared for similarities and differences, and questions are asked about the phenomena reflected in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 102).” In this step, constant comparison is the major rule. All the data need to be divided into units, which are called indicators, concepts, or labels, and the researcher compares them, continually asking questions to identify categories within the data.

Then, the next coding phase is axial coding procedure, defined as “a process of relating categories to their subcategories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.123). It requires intense analysis to find out subcategories of paradigms such as causes, conditions, and consequences which explain the phenomena and conceptual linkages between and among variables (Glaser, 1992). In other words, it is a process which is to appreciate the dynamic interrelationship of concepts, on the basis of the belief that the theoretical significance of a concept is found in the relationship to other concepts and its relationship to the whole paradigm

(Goulding, 1999).

The final step is to decide a core category for the researcher to offer a story the phenomena under study tells us, which is the basis of the emergent theory (Goulding, 1999). For its theoretical significance, it should be “lucid, understandable, and hopefully compelling (LaRossa, 2005),” which is traceable back through the data and integrated with existing theories (Goulding, 1999). When selecting a theoretically saturated core category from all present, it should be considered whether it has analytic power and the ability to pull the other categories together to make an explanatory theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

When selecting main theme categories, I think my own theoretical values in relation to my research questions have an inevitable influence. Many of the categories are the most prevalent in the data, but I did not necessarily depend on the quantity of data items, that is, how many times the themes were mentioned by the participants, but on the significance of the data set regarding the overall research questions and my theoretical values. One of the characteristics of thematic analysis, flexibility, makes it possible to determine themes through the researcher’s judgment (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4.4. The Research Procedure

4.4.1. Research Setting

In order to explore Korean young adult EFL learners’ experience of having international/intercultural communications in English and evolving views towards their L2 identities while playing an English online game, I chose an online game which is the most popular among South Korean young adults, League of Legends (LOL). Since the Korean version of the game has just recently become available

(in December 2011), it is easy for me to contact Korean people who had played the game in English using North American servers while the Korean version was not available.

LOL is one of the very latest and most popular games in Korea and in the world, having had millions of registered users since it was released by Riot Games in October 2009. It is played by over 67 million users all over the world as of January 2014 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/League_of_Legends), having over 27 million players per day and over 7.5 million peak concurrent players worldwide. It is the most popular e-sports game in South Korea as of 2013 (Prell, 2013). As of 2015, it is served in five languages including English and Korean.

It is a free-to-play multiplayer online battle arena video game. While playing the game, players have to form 2 even teams of Champions which consist of 3 or 5 players to collaborate against the other team by sending messages to other players through the real time player-vs.-player (PvP) messaging overlay. There are over one hundred champions (game characters each of which has different role in combat) from which its players can choose one. Players often form groups with friends or strangers in order to accomplish the common goals of their guilds. When the opposing team surrenders with 70% of the team agreeing to use a voting system, victory is attained. The winning players are rewarded with gold that can be used for purchasing game items for their champions.

4.4.2. Research Participants

There are many LOL online communities in South Korea, and the biggest one has about 70,000 active members. I contacted the leader of the biggest LOL

online community Korea and asked them to put up a notice to recruit volunteer participants on their community web board (See the Appendix 1 and 2.).

In order to qualify as the participants, some factors like diversity in gender, periods of playing the game, and academic backgrounds were considered. The notice informed prospective volunteers that they should be LOL players who have played the game on the North American server for more than 6 months, whose ages range from 20 to 29, and who were taking English classes currently. 118 people from various areas in South Korea and North America sent emails to the community leader to inform them of their interest in volunteering in 2 weeks. I limited the participants to the ones who live in South Korea and, among the 57 volunteers who live in South Korea, I chose 9 male participants randomly and one female player intentionally. As there was only one female volunteer among the 57 volunteers, I included this person for gender diversity. She might be atypical of her gender, but I think she might have shown the fact that LOL is played by female players as well. The reason I chose this age category is that they are the major demographic, making them the most likely volunteers of any age group. Also, it was the most responsive group for a survey that I conducted in 2012 for a small-scale study (Jeon, 2014). In order to see the changes in their offline learning attitudes through their LOL experiences, I limited the participants to the ones who had played LOL in English in North American server for more than 6 months and currently attend English classes in any forms including attending private institutes, university classes, and e-learning or telephone English classes. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, and each interview lasted one to two hours from July to August 2014 (See Appendix 3 for detailed interview schedule).

4.4.3. Data Collection Strategies

Data collecting methods are the means for answering research questions. Even if interview questions are logically derived from research questions, therefore, they would be no help when the collected data are not contributing to answering the research questions. For this, conducting pilot interviews with various questions as well as having creativity and insight on the actual research situation is needed for collecting appropriate data in qualitative research (Maxwell, 2005). I conducted a pilot interview and found it was helpful to see some questions were appropriate and others were not. The interview lasted longer than I had expected, so I tried not to ask unnecessary questions in the following interview. Later, I found the interview data (Kim's) were meaningful for this study, so I included them to analyze.

I chose the interview as the main method to collect data. In this study, I intended to understand the participants' experience in cyberspace while playing an online game. Since I cannot observe participants' past experience, I thought an interview, especially a narrative interview, to be the best way to collecting data. From their episodes told in their narratives, how they participated in interactions with other gamers in English, and their feelings and thoughts about themselves were shown. As I expected, diverse perspectives and experiences were revealed in the participants' narratives.

Even though I had some standard questions in mind which had been driven from my research questions and some common issues related to the topic, which had blurred the distinction from structured interviews, I tried to elicit less imposed narrations and perspectives of the interviewees, minimizing the influence of the interviewer's questions and comments as far as possible. I also tried to listen to the themes which were newly identified across the interviews that I had not even

thought of. For example, some participants talked about how they feel differently according to the interlocutors' nationalities both online and offline and some talked about the fact that there was a kind of hierarchical system within the game.

Interviews were conducted in Korean, and each interview lasted 1-2 hours. I allowed participants to choose the time and place for the interviews and allowed for a break or a change in an interview setting according to their wishes. Some of them were conducted in a café and the rest was done on their university campuses in the afternoon. Also, they were given the opportunity to undertake a telephone interview or via online chatting tools if that was preferred, in order to minimize stress for the participants even though no one actually refused conducting face-to-face interviews. Once the interviews have been transcribed, these were passed back to the participants for commentary and any additions or omissions they would like to make. Then, some interviewees added some comments or elaborated on their own statements. Sometimes, I asked them by email or via online messenger tools whether some parts of their statements in the interviews meant this or that to confirm my interpretations of their narratives.

Despite my effort to make the interview less stressful, I admit there was a kind of tension during the interviews since the interview questions were to look for the participants' personal experiences and feelings, which can be quite private. Also, some questions were unfamiliar to them, about which they had never thought, so the participants might have been stressed to answer those questions. In order to reduce stress as much as possible, whenever they expressed embarrassment or confusion, I changed the topic or recast the questions, using some examples or different terms that could sound more familiar to them in order to make them more at ease. I did not make notes or look into memos of interview questions while

conducting the interviews in order to make the conversations more natural. Also, this synchronous face-to-face communication was helpful to draw the participants' spontaneous narratives, without an extended reflection. Compared to my previous research (Jeon, 2014) in which I used MSN messenger for the interviews, I found myself freer from predetermined interview questions and could concentrate on the interviewees' answers.

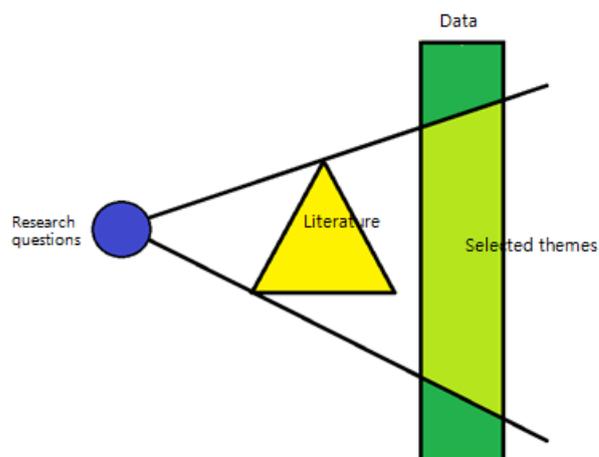
4.5. Data Analysis

For interpretation of qualitative analysis of interview data, it is natural to have different interpretations with the same verbatim texts according to the interpreters, who have different perspectives on the texts (Kvale, 1994). Therefore, I did not try to obtain the objective, scientific interpretations, but instead to keep the clarification of my research questions and perspectives towards the interview text which I had gained from my literature review. Different from the solely logical content analysis that works down deductively from only preexisting theories and restricts the extent to predefined categories, which are to be tested against empirical data (Ezzy, 2002) however, I tried not to be constrained by prior theory but allowed categories of themes that are latent in the data inductively.

The way of thematic analysis that I adopted for this study can be both deductive and inductive, in a way. The analysis was guided by the research questions initially, even though I tried to code for as many potential codes as possible. The research questions were in mind to code around when approaching the data at first because the broad themes which are contained in the research questions have formed the theoretical framework for this study. It is natural that the theoretical and epistemological stance of a researcher influence on analyzing data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). On the other hand, I coded to identify interesting

aspects and patterns across the data, which had not been determined previously. Therefore, the subcategories were identified from the data inductively. Furthermore, the themes which have been identified through the analyzing process are not identical to the research questions but refined and specified. From extended data, I selected themes that were related to and explained with the understanding of the theories and findings of previous studies that I reviewed for this research. The data that are not directly relevant are not used for the analysis in this study but mentioned as suggestions for further research. The following diagram (Figure 1) may help in understanding the process of selecting themes for analysis.

Figure 4.1. A diagram which shows analyzing process



4.5.1. Transcribing

Following each interview, I transcribed all the recorded interview data in Korean and then translated that into English. While translating the transcripts, I tried to listen to their voices for meanings between the lines, focusing not only on the actual events but also on their narratives and the nuances of their stories. The translated interview data were checked by a colleague who is fluent both in Korean and English for accuracy.

After transcribing the recorded interview data verbatim, I sent these transcripts to the interview participants by e-mail for validation. Some of the interviewees made some adjustment and returned them to me while the rest confirmed that they were fine. Also, whenever I had queries about some of their statements, I used email and chatting tools to communicate with some of the participants to clarify what they had meant during the interviews.

4.5.2 Coding

To explore the themes that are in the data, I basically followed the principles of thematic analysis and grounded theory (Ezzy, 2002) and the steps of Kvale's analysis method (1996) for identifying significant themes and patterns of themes within the data. In the initial process of analyzing each interview transcript, I looked for the themes and sub-themes which were not decided prior to the stage of analysis across all the participants' stories while reading through the interview data several times. The preexisting theories played the role of sensitizing to orient my research questions, but while translating the interview scripts, I tried to search for the commonly emerging dimensions of the participants' experience that can lead to inductively generated theories as grounded theory suggests (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I could identify some themes²⁰ at this point, but I did not include all of them when presenting the findings because they are not directly relevant to the research questions. However, I discuss some of them such as feeling differently according to the interlocutors' condition and status, which I think

²⁰ such as having prejudice about fluent English speakers, believing that they are intelligent or belong to high social level (regardless whether they are native or non-native English speakers), lacking confidence in speaking in spite of having relatively good scores in official English tests, and feeling more comfortable with non-native English speakers when having English conversations than with native English speakers (regardless of being online or offline)

valuable for further research interest, in the discussion chapter.

Initially, I scrutinized the interview scripts after translating them into English and summarized each “natural meaning units” (Kvale, 1996, p.194) of the scripts into a sentence or a few words on the right side of the interview transcripts. This process followed a stepwise procedure as many researchers have recommended for the analysis of narrative interviews (Bauer, 1996); firstly the meaning units were paraphrased into summary sentences and then further into a few keywords, arranging the text in three columns: the first column for the interview transcript, the second for paraphrased summary sentences, and the third for keywords. Even though the terms and expressions the participants used varied, they could be classified into the summarized categories of themes. Then, as I read through the summaries and keywords, I tried to find thematic patterns emerging from them for further development of conceptual labeling.

There were found to be a variety of conceptual labels during this “open coding” process to ‘generate an emergent set of categories and their properties’ (Glaser, 1978: p. 56; Ezzy, 2002) as grounded theory suggests. I tried to vary diverse units and all the possible codes because I believe it is an important strategy of open coding that helped me to explore not only the issues in which I had been interested but the ones with which the participants were concerned. I tried to listen to the participants’ utterances without any restrictions and prejudice when developing codes, but I believe my analysis is driven from both the concepts developed by consulting existing literature and the interview data themselves.

This process of developing and identifying codes was not simple but required considerable experimentation. I had to compare them constantly to discover

similarities and differences of the participants' statements in order to develop codes and groups. The constant comparison process forced the original categories and sub-categories to rearrange and reshape. A participant's statements that had been originally grouped in a category had to be moved to another or grouped in both. During this process of creating, refining or amalgamating codes, I could also eliminate the superfluous lines such as repetitions and digressions and save only the relevant passages, which made the data amenable.

After summarizing the thematic codes into categories, I marked significant parts by highlighting them with different colors to generate patterns using Microsoft Office Excel. With these patterns, I tried to find out central categories related to the research questions that would be used as the axes around which all the codes would be grouped and integrated with, following the strategy of axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Ezzy, 2002).

Once I categorized the data into groups of themes manually, I planned to use the NVivo software package for further analysis. This computer program can be useful for making statistical analysis, which provides quantitative results such as frequencies of some key terms and phrases, showing how the participants have emphasized and regarded some of the issues and experiences as important. Analyzes using scores and statistics to capture the commonalities across individual experiences can support the validity of a claim (Polkinghorne, 2007) as long as a transparent account of how the software program processed the data is provided (Bringer et al., 2004). Also, data management, including coding of themes and categories can be rather effective and efficient when using computer software packages than manual handling with cut and paste methods (Tak et al.,

1999, Jemmott 2002).

However, I was not certain whether I could go beyond mere word counts with NVivo package because I was not confident of this program. Based on my shallow understanding of the program, that is, it is just for quantifying the qualitative data, I thought it was not needed to use it. Indeed, as this study intended neither to test a preexisting theory nor to standardize the results, the data were not necessarily to be quantified. Moreover, quantifiable measures do not indicate the importance of a theme; the fact that a data item is articulated more often by different participants across the entire data does not mean it is more important than less referred items (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In order to discover underlying meanings of interview data, what I needed was the process of interpretation of the interview data through a close reading of the text and continuing revision of categories of themes. This process allows a unit of text to be included in more than one theme category. For this, I thought manual methods using the Microsoft Excel program could be better to search for “the relations to other codes and to context and action consequences (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 227),” which is the purpose of coding the data for qualitative analysis.

For the final phase, I chose the core category – the main story- of this study, which is centrally relevant and most connected to other categories. When there was no more new evidence emerging from the data, the core category was found. The preexisting conceptual frameworks could have restricted truly inductive theory building at this stage. However, they also could work to support and be integrated with the emerging theory so that new interpretations could be done in

an organized way, considering the relationship with preexisting theories to analyze the data as a whole.

4.5.3. The Different Stages of the Coding Process

In order to identify patterns and integrate the thematic patterns, the data were analyzed through several stages of the coding process. The first steps that I took included open coding and axial coding, which were proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1990).

➤ Open coding

- All the data were divided into units, conceptualizing all the incidents in the data, which yields many concepts.

➤ Axial coding

- By comparing data, constantly modifying, and sharpening the growing theory at the same time, the researcher found out subcategories which explain the phenomena and conceptual linkages between and among variables.

4.5.3.1. Open Coding

In order to undertake the open coding process, I took two steps. Each step was carried out in the order I describe in the following. I have consulted Ezzy's (2002) coding procedure for thematic and grounded theories.

Step 1

1. All the data were divided into units. "natural meaning units."^{2 1}

^{2 1} A natural meaning unit is " ...a statement made by an individual which is self-defining and

2. The units were paraphrased in summary sentences.
3. The sentences were further summarized in a few keywords.
4. Then, I wrote my interpretation of each unit on the last column.

Figure 4.2. A screen dump of a part of a table that I made for open coding step 1

	A	B	C	D
1	Transcript	Summary	Key words	Interpretation
2	Q. Has gaming English helped at your work life?	Thanks to getting used to abbreviations in the game, he could easily get accustomed to using indexes used by his company.	What learned from LoL helps his work	influence on another area
3	The terms used only in the game, especially the indexes, helped to lower the barriers to entry.			
4	Q. Are you relatively good at English?			
5	My TOEIC score is around 950 and I studied hard at school. Working at a foreign company creates a lot of opportunities to use English and I'm also taking phone English classes three times a week. I try to work hard at my English.	He makes lots of effort to improve his English, having high TOEIC score and attending phone English class.	high TOEIC / phone English	He has made lots of effort to improve his English.
6	Q. Were there any incidents where you made a mistake or where a misunderstanding occurred in the game while talking in English?	I've made lots of mistakes which caused misunderstanding. However, because there are many people who are not from English speaking countries, they don't even know if I make mistakes.	Non-native speakers don't notice my mistakes.	The fact mistakes are not noticed can help him relieved.
7	Too many. And just because it's a North America server doesn't mean that the users are all from North America. There are a lot of people like me from Asia, Africa, or the Middle East. But people from countries in which English is not the native language, like me, don't know which is the "correct" English.			
8	Q. Tell me about any incidents you remember.	He asks other players' nationality in order to learn correct English from native speakers.	Correct English from natives	still has comparative fallacy
	Usually, to check if there's a person to use as a reference for English expressions, I ask people what country they're from during the time before the minions come out. If there's			

Step 2

1. While I read through the keywords that I had written in the table above, I tried to find patterns of themes identified from them for further development of conceptual labeling.

self-delimitating in the expression of a single, recognizable aspect of the individual's experience..." (Stones, 1988, p. 153).

2. As I found a category identified from the data, I highlighted the related units in the same color as can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 4.3. A screenshot of a part of the table which shows open coding step 2

Transcript	Summary	Key words	Interpretation
Q. Then, can you tell me some memorable episodes that had to do with English communication?			
In LoL, players need to chat while playing the game.	LoL players need to chat with others while playing.	Interactions are necessary in LoL	Good learning opportunity
So players need to use acronyms.	They use acronyms	Acronyms	CoP, developing collective identity
At first, I did not know what "WTF" meant when I first played the game.	At first, he did not understand acronyms.	need acronyms to communicate	
I looked it up on Naver and found out that it meant "What the fuck."	He looked up the words in the internet.	searched words' meaning	LoL experience has motivated him to study. Self-directed learning effort
Because the game play is busy, I didn't have enough time to ask someone else about all the expressions used by other players that I didn't understand.	Not enough time to ask others while playing	busy playing and chatting	Let-it-pass strategy: pragmatic competence Good learning opportunity
Also, I didn't want to show other players that I was not good at English, so I didn't ask the other players	He didn't want others to know his poor English.	Don't want to lose face	What is common to Korean English learners - English nausea little willingness to communicate
but just looked them up after finishing a game.	So he searched the expressions after a game.	searched words' meaning	LoL experience has motivated him to study. Self-directed learning effort

4.5.3.2. Axial Coding

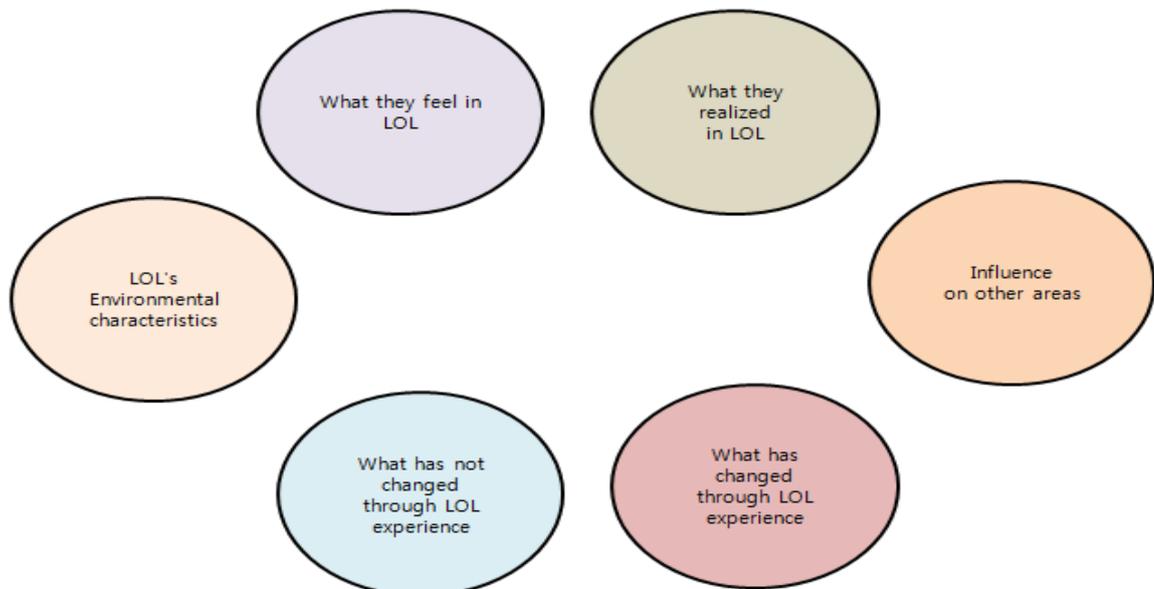
Step 1

1. The units highlighted in various colors were assembled according to their colors.
2. The title of each category was named according to its theme.

Figure 4.4. A screenshot of a part of the table that shows axial coding step 1 (See the Appendix 6)

	A	B
52	What they realize in LoL	They realized English is a language, a method of communication.
53		They realized English is a global language.
54		They realized why they need to learn English.
55		They realized fluent English speakers are not always knowledgeable.
56		They realized that native speakers also make many errors while chatting.
57		They realized English is not that difficult.
58		He had thought fluent English speakers were intelligent and belonged to high social level.
59		He had thought he had to be perfect for successful communication in English.
60		They realized other varieties of English are also good.
61		They realized there are varieties of English.
62		They realized they don't need to be like native speakers in English.
63	What has changed through LoL experience	They got used to situational English.
64		They became not to focus on grammar rules.
65		Their English styles are changed to casual, colloquial, and natural.
66		They became to study voluntarily.
67		He became to start speaking voluntarily in class.
68		They became to try to use new words in conversations.
69		They began to try other channels to learn English.
70		He uses chances to ask others when there is time while playing.
71		The became motivated in learning English.
72		They became confident in using English.
73		Their stress with English has reduced.
74		They came to overcome hesitancy in speaking out.
75		They became to talk more in LoL.
76		He uses chances to ask others when there is time while playing.

Figure 4.5. The six themes identified in axial coding step 1



Step 2

1. By comparing data, subcategories that explain the phenomena and conceptual linkages between and among variables identified.
2. According to the identified subcategories, I took out the summaries of related code units and put them together. Then, I put the subcategories together under bigger categories of themes. These categories are named according to the theme.

Figure 4.6. A screenshot of a part of the table that shows axial coding step 2 (See the Appendix 7)

	A	B	C
	Category	Subcategory	Summary
1	LoL's Environmental characteristics	ELF	Only English is used as a contact language.
2			There are both native and non-native English speakers.
3			Chances for communication are given.
4		English only zone	Only English is used as a contact language.
5			It is a busy game, so spontaneous/ simultaneous interactions occur.
6			Communication plays an important role to play well.
7		A unique community	Communication plays an important role to play well.
8			Special terms are used: acronyms and game terms
9			Game skills are the key criteria.
10			There is a kind of hierarchy, which is different from real world one.
11			They don't need to meet the same people again.
12			There are recognizable labels for each clan.
13		Hierarchy	There is a kind of hierarchy, which is different from real world one.
14			Game skills are the key criteria.
15			There are recognizable labels for each clan.
16		CoP	After 6th month, he could lead a game.
17			His communication skill has improved through participating in conversations.
18			He is asked to explain his game skill.
19		Favorable mood	The list of expressions he made became new players' reference.
20			People make friends.
21			They help each other.
22		CMC	People are tolerant to others.
23			They share various things.
24			Anonymity helps.
25		Equal relationship	They don't need to meet the same people again.
26			Texting is used for chatting. Texting is easier than speaking.
27			Demographic criteria, such as race and age, are not concerned.
28		Pragmatic Competence	Nobody is judged with English.
29			There are people from various countries.
30			

The following figures are the organizers that were used for thinking about the relationship between codes and themes. The main theme categories (oval),

basically the research questions, are divided into several subcategories (square, purple for upper subcategories and white for the lower ones which belong to the purple ones). They were identified during the process of axial coding step 2, and extracts of data are coded in relation to the subcategories.

Figure 4.7. Thematic map for the theme of research question 1 which shows axial coding step 2

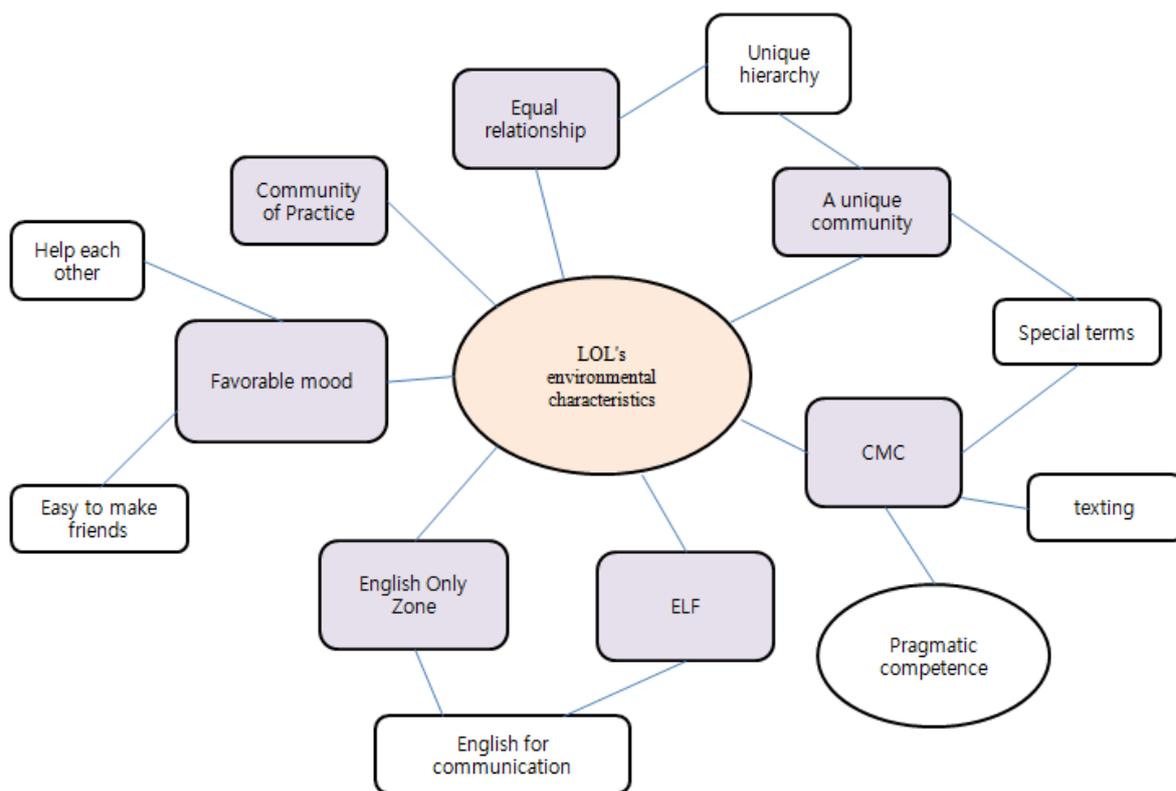


Figure 4.8. Thematic map for the theme of research question 2 which shows axial coding step 2

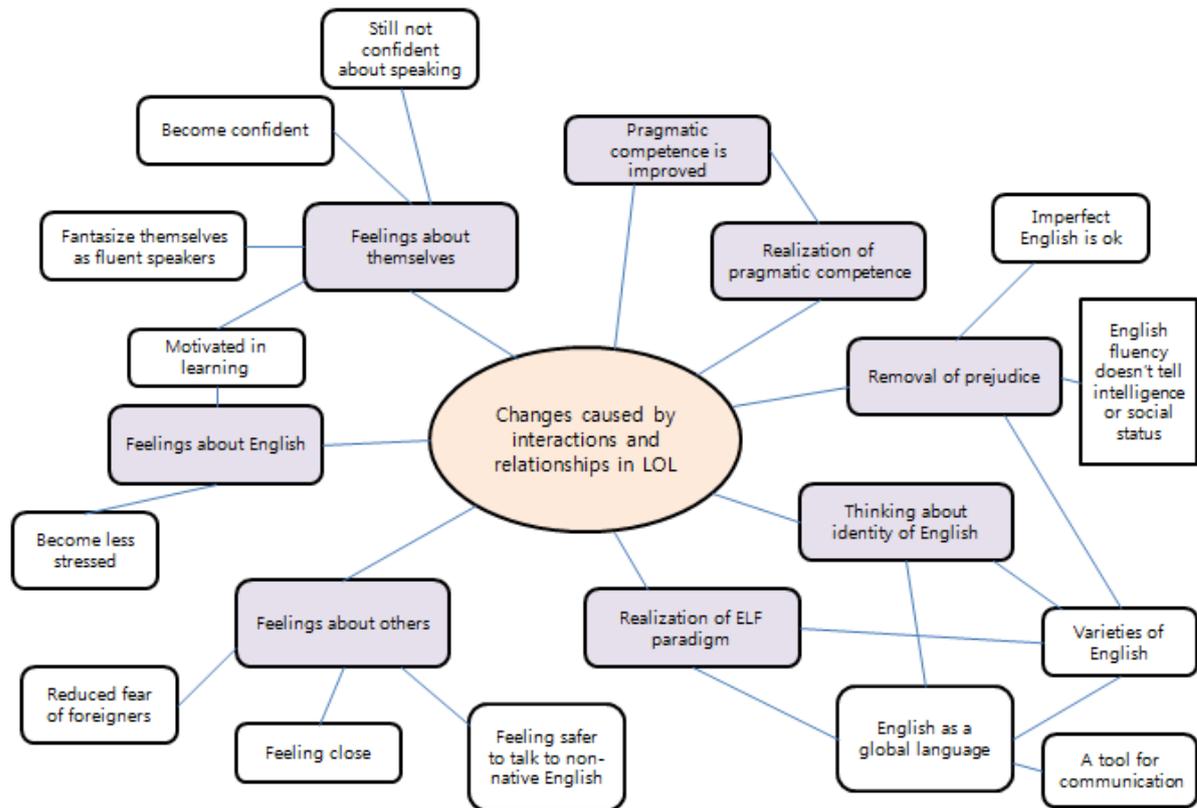
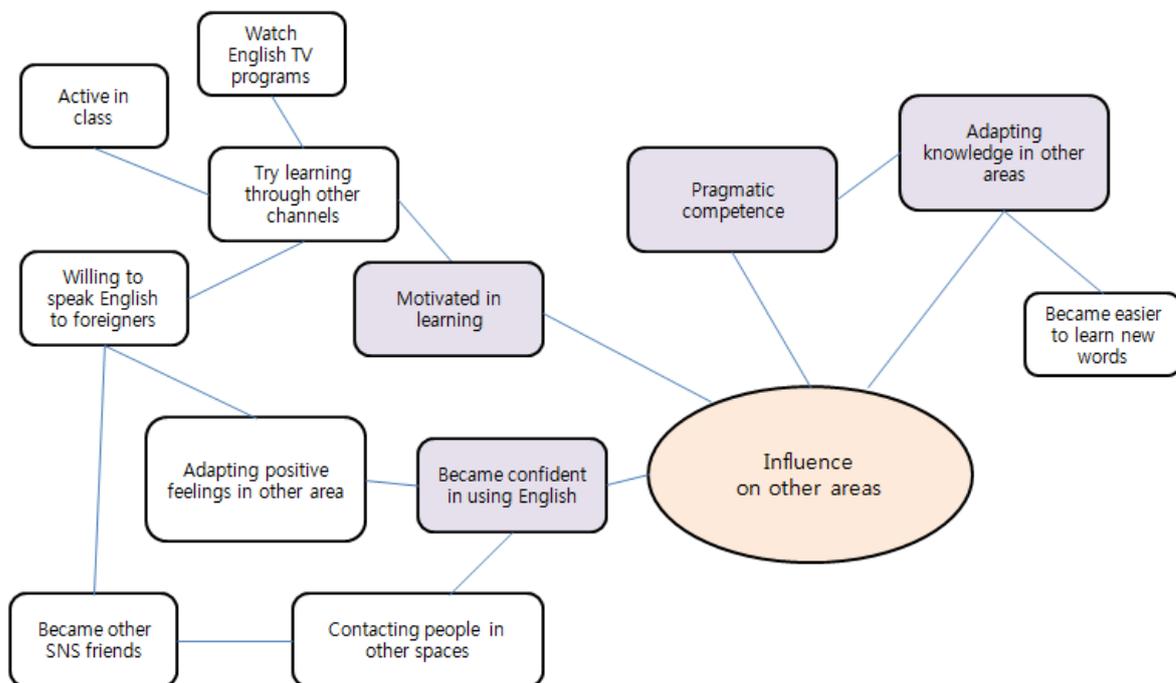
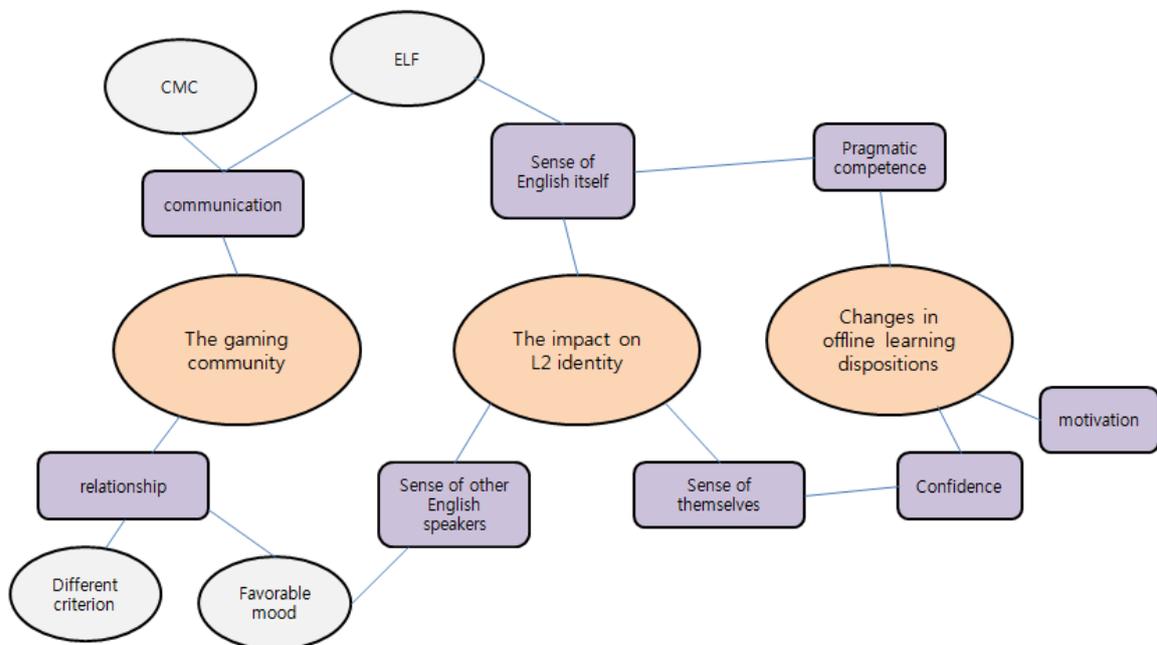


Figure 4.9. Thematic map for the theme of research question 3 which shows axial coding step 2



By comparing all the candidate themes that were collected during the coding process, the categories were refined, combined, and discarded while reviewing. The following is the finalized thematic map to present the findings in the next chapter. Some of the themes are interconnected in a sense, so they were linked to two different subcategories as the lines show. The main theme categories (oval, peach), the upper subcategories (square, purple), and the lower subcategories (oval, sky blue) were interconnected with lines that show the relationships between them.

Figure 4.10. Summarized thematic map



4.5.4. Meaning interpretation

For making deep and critical interpretation of the data beyond what is directly said, there are various approaches such as multiple interpretations, a hermeneutic approach, and meaning interpretation in relation to a researcher's questions to the interview text (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). First, the approach of multiple interpretations allows many possible interpretations of an interview. A

perspectival subjectivity makes it possible to produce multiple arbitrary interpretations. Second, a hermeneutic approach involves “continuous back-and-forth process between parts and the whole (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p.238),” which is used for the interpretations of religious, legal, and literary texts for searching for a valid and common understanding of a text. This approach also admits the plurality of interpretations according to the perspectives. For example, the text can be differently interpreted when reading a text from the view what the author originally meant and what the text says to the readers now can be different. For making this subjective interpretation as unbiased as possible, it is required to clarify the perspectives that are adopted for the interview and specify the questions that are asked to the text, which makes sure different hermeneutic interpretations are all legitimate (Kvale 1994). Third, meaning interpretation is an approach to search for truly fixed meanings, believing in there are certain rules of interpretation of interview statements and true basic meanings of them. This approach has been central to the qualitative research analysis for decades (Ibid.).

As I believe there is not only one true meaning of a statement, I basically adopt the hermeneutical approach which acknowledges a plurality of interpretations for this study. Hermeneutical analysis can be criticized due to the fact it allows different interpretations of the same interview texts which Brinkmann and Kvale claimed of making the method unscientific (2015). As qualitative research does not aim to find an objective, correct answer, however, I think it is the appropriate stance for this research. From this perspective, I tried to pose various questions to a statement with explicit theoretical perspectives, which can lead to not only diverse and subjective interpretations but also the meanings which sound unbiased and comprehensible to readers. Also, I looked not only for meanings

which are explicitly expressed but also for the ones behind what manifested in their narratives with a critical stance. Based on the fact that this study explores the participants' personal meanings or accounts that they have to their particular life experiences and events, assuming what people talk about connects to what their emotional state is like, the research approach and methodology of this study can be categorized as interpretive phenomenology (Smith & Osborn 2003).

4.6. Ethical Issues

The aim of interview research is for “researching private lives and placing accounts in the public arena (Birch et al., 2002, p.1), so ethical issues are particularly emphasized. Social researchers must recognize that the research can influence participants, so they need to exercise utmost care to preserve participants' dignity as human beings (Cohen et al., 2007). As this research aims to explore participants' experiences and feelings, which can be very sensitive information to them, I had to make sure that the data collecting process should not cause any harm or embarrassment to the participants. For this, I followed the advice and guidelines suggested by many researchers as follows.

4.6.1. Informed consent

As it has been defined as “the procedures in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions” (Diener & Crandall, 1978, p. 57), informed consent implies that participants have the right to freedom and self-determination and this right has to be protected and respected (Cohen et al., 2007). It is to ensure that they have the right to choose whether they take part in the investigation or withdraw from it. Also, this is for ensuring the data collecting method and analysis

would not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress.

I provided the written consent, confirmed by Ethics Chair of the school of education, University of Exeter which explains how the interviews would be conducted, for how long it would last, and what kinds of right they have, for example, they can have a break, change interview location and time, or withdraw from it whenever they feel like. Also, it explains the process of analysis that their interviews undergo once transcribed, and that they would be passed back to them for commentary and any additions or omissions they would like to make. The consent form can be seen in Appendix 4.

When I first contacted the participants, I explained the nature of this study and how their interview data would be used. Then I had them read the consent form thoroughly and decide whether they would participate in this study or not. Once they understood what was written, they signed the agreement form. Also, I requested the interview participants to allow recording the interview, and they permitted.

4.6.2. Confidentiality

Different from surveys with which confidentiality is assured by being processed with computed averages, interviews which provide individuals' personal information can threaten participants' privacy because the information they provide, which can potentially be identifiable, may appear in public (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Even though the participants agreed on the use of the narratives they provide in the private interviews in public, issues of anonymity which ensures that participants' real identity will not be revealed are considered crucial for interview research. For this, I used pseudonyms for each participant and did not

mention the real names of their schools, institutions, communities or companies which they belong to in the study. However, the name of the game, *League of Legends*, all the participants play in common, is used because I do not believe it to be considered private.

4.6.3. Consequences

There are consequences of qualitative research that researchers should be aware of. One of the consequences is the influence of participation in the study, which can be either harmful or beneficial to the participants. It should be reflected by researchers when they decide to carry out the research because the consequences can affect not only the participants but also the larger group they represent (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

Another possible consequence is that the participants can come to regret what they disclose during the interview. As I have sent the interview transcripts to each participant for validation and notified them that they could withdraw or make adjustments to the parts of their statements, I regard their confirmation as their permission of the data to be published in public solely for the purpose of this research project, which may include publications or presentations at academic conferences.

Having these possible consequences in mind, research should be conducted when the expected benefits and knowledge are considered to outweigh the harm it can cause (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). In this regard, I believe this study is worth conducting and followed the steps I have explained in this section to secure the participants' right for freedom.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will present the findings I have obtained from the thematic analysis of the data which have been collected through the interviews with Korean EFL learners who played a multiplayer online game in English. From the data, I found the experience of communicating in English through the text-based chat system with people from various countries while playing a transnational online game, *League of Legend*, has helped them construct positive L2 identities which can ultimately affect their English learning success. The findings which have been processed through several stages are categorized and presented in order, according to the themes. Under each category, there are several subcategories which were found during the thematic analysis procedure. Before presenting the findings of thematic analysis, each participant's background information and key features are summarized, which would help readers' understanding of further discussion of the findings. Then, thematic analysis data are presented in three overarching categories that are based on the research questions. Firstly, I will focus on the research question 1 which explores the experience and relationships that the participants have had while playing a transnational online game and communicating in English with other players in cyberspace. Then, I will move on to reflect on how they have experienced has affected their L2 identity evolvment which is the focus of the research question 2. Following that, how the evolved online identity has influenced their offline learning attitude is addressed. I concluded the chapter by summarizing the overall findings.

5.2. Profile of the participants in the study

To help readers understand better, brief descriptions of each participant will be provided before presenting the thematic analysis data. Also, brief demographic information of all of the participants is seen in the Table1. In order to get this information, I asked the participants to describe themselves at the beginning of each interview. Their English level and LOL level were decided mainly based on their official scores and their own judgment, which can be rather more subjective than the other factors.

Table 5.1. Brief demographic information of the participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Length of playing LOL	LOL level*	English level**	Status	Experience of studying abroad	Attending Formal English class
Kim	22	M	1 year	High: Gold level	low	student	No	Yes
Lee	24	M	3 years	High: Platinum level	high	student	Yes	Yes
Park	25	M	2 years	High: Gold level	high	intern	Yes	Yes
Roh	21	M	6 months	High: Silver level	high	student	No	Yes
Choi	23	M	1 year	High: Gold level	low	student	No	Yes
Hyun	24	M	3 years	High: Gold level	low	student	No	Yes
Shin	25	M	6 months	Low: Silver level	high	worker	No	Yes
Yoon	24	F	1 year	Low: Bronze level	high	student	No	Yes
Bae	22	M	3 years	High: Gold level	low	student	No	Yes
Joe	25	M	3 years	High: Gold level	low	worker	No	Yes

*LOL level

(based on LOL level)

high

Gold level ↑

mid

low

Silver level ↓

**English level

(based on official English scores and self-evaluation)

high

TOEIC 785 ↑

IELTS 7.5 ↑

mid

low

400 ↓

3.5 ↓

LOL levels^{2 2}



English Test Scores^{2 3}

TOEIC	TOEFL Paper	TOEFL CBT	TOEFL IBT	IELTS	VEC Online Score	Approximate VEC Level
0 - 250	0 - 310	0 - 30	0 - 8	0 - 1	0 - 34	<u>1A</u>
	310 - 343	33 - 60	9 - 18	1 - 1.5	35 - 38	<u>1B</u>
255 - 400	347 - 393	63 - 90	19 - 29	2 - 2.5	39 - 45	<u>2A - 2B</u>
	397 - 433	93 - 120	30 - 40	3 - 3.5	46 - 53	<u>3A - 3B</u>
405 - 600	437 - 473	123 - 150	41 - 52	4	54 - 57	<u>4A</u>
	477 - 510	153 - 180	53 - 64	4.5 - 5	58 - 65	<u>4B - 5A</u>
605 - 780	513 - 547	183 - 210	65 - 78	5.5 - 6	66 - 73	<u>5B - 6A</u>
	550 - 587	213 - 240	79 - 95	6.5 - 7	74 - 81	<u>6B - 7A</u>
785 - 900	590 - 637	243 - 270	96 - 110	7.5 - 8	82 - 90	<u>7B - 8A</u>
905 - 990	640 - 677	273 - 300	111 - 120	8.5 - 9	91 - 100	<u>8B</u>
Top Score	Top Level					
990	677	300	120	9	100	<u>8B</u>

1. Kim

General Background: Kim is a 22-year-old university student, majoring in Sociology. He wants to be a researcher after graduating. In order to get a job he wants, he needs a high TOEIC score. So he attends a TOEIC preparation class

^{2 2} Retrieved from <https://i.ytimg.com/vi/KvkA4jQBnt4/maxresdefault.jpg>

^{2 3} Retrieved from <http://www.cambridgeinstitute.net/en/tests-de-nivel-ingles/test-nivel-ingles-i/nivel-ingles-test-ingles>

these days. He said he has no experience of staying in an English speaking country and has never been confident in using English, but he played LOL on the North American server for about one year because it is fun.

Online experience and realization: He said he has realized and experienced English as a language for transnational communication first hand for the first time thanks to the interactional experience in LOL. He feels more comfortable using English in LOL than in formal English classes because other people in LOL do not judge him on his English competence. He said, "After playing LOL in English, I realized for the first time that English is a language which is needed to understand others and to be understood. Now I think the reason why I study English is not only to get good grades on a subject but to communicate with others."

Impact on offline learning disposition: He still feels uncomfortable with English itself because he must achieve high scores on formal English tests to get a good job after graduating university. However, he realized there is another goal of learning English: to communicate with people from other countries, which helps him voluntarily talk to foreign exchange students at his college using English for communication.

2. Lee

General background: Lee is a 24-year-old university student, majoring in international trade. He went to a foreign language high school and went on an English study program in a university in the US for one year, which he believes has helped his English improve a lot. He has a high TOEIC score and is interested in improving his English skills because he wants to work at a company which

requires a high level of English skills. He thinks he is an introverted and shy person, but he finds himself braver and more confident when speaking in English than speaking in Korean. He takes English classes taught by a native English speaking teacher at school.

Online experience and realization: Through his LOL experience, he realized that he does not need to speak perfectly correct English for communication. He began to think that the ability to communicate efficiently and effectively is more important than the knowledge of grammar rules. He said, “LOL made me realize that speaking perfectly was not important, communication was. Even if you don’t follow the subject, verb, object format, as long as you communicate quickly and effectively, you’re using good English.” He also finds making mistakes in LOL is not so embarrassing as in formal classrooms because he does not think of how other people perceive his English in LOL.

Impact on offline learning disposition: His LOL experience made him fantasize making a perfect presentation in English at a company. He said, “Yes, fantasies of me finishing a perfect presentation. They started as I began getting ready for employment and LOL did help.” He also became able to focus more on vocabulary than on grammar and pronunciation. This change reduced his hesitation in speaking out. He said, “I used to ask myself if I had the pronunciation right, mumbling it to make sure. I’d also write sentences in a mental chalkboard to see if there were any mistakes in the grammar. It has not entirely disappeared, but I realized that it wasn’t necessary once I started LOL.”

3. Park

General background: Park is a 25-year-old university student, majoring in

Business. Since it is his last semester, he has interned at a foreign company. He has played LOL for more than 2 years. He has studied in the UK for 6 months as an exchange student and has achieved a high TOEIC score. He said he has studied English hard at school and currently takes phone English classes three times a week to improve his English skills.

Online experience and realization: He realized that the content of the conversation is more important than using correct English, having seen many native English speaking people make errors and use sloppy English in LOL. He said, “If I didn’t follow the right spacing, I thought it was wrong. But Americans don’t really pay much attention to it... I thought that you had to use perfect English to have a conversation. But after LOL, I realized that content was the key, the solution.” Also, he said he gained confidence since he has played LOL. He said, “There was a big change in my confidence. As I play more and the knowledge stacks up, I seem to become more relaxed as well. I feel that I could carry on a conversation about other topics as well.”

Impact on offline learning disposition: Since he realized that the content of the conversation is more important than using correct English, he began to use other channels to improve his English related to his interests. He said, “I’m watching ESPN.com to watch NBA games a lot these days. This causes me to look up words in the dictionary a lot as well. Because I think the content is important, I think that I need to approach the NBA with English like I did with LOL. That’s how I’ll be able to have conversations and get used to the related vocabulary.”

4. Roh

General background: Roh is a 21-year-old university student. He plans to go to

a law school in the US after graduating university, so he has prepared for the TOEFL and LSAT. He has played LOL on the North American server for only 6 months, but he is very good at the game (top 5 % in the rankings). He has high English scores but still is not confident about his spoken English. He tries to have a lot of conversations in LOL because he believes having many conversations helps improve his English. He attends TOEFL speaking test preparation class these days.

Online experience and realization: He made an American lawyer friend in LOL and joined a clan that consists of lawyers. Through this clan, he gained useful information about law schools in the US from other clan members. Communicating with his clan members helped him fantasize hanging out with them in New York. He realized how useful English was as a global language while communicating with foreigners in LOL, which he had not known when he had learned English at school. Also, he realized that he does not need to be perfect in grammar and pronunciation for successful communication. He said, “Native English speakers make typos and grammatical mistakes all the time while chatting in English. Thinking about it, I do the same with Korean. It’s the same thing. And so I felt that I didn’t have to be so stressed out over trying to speak perfectly.”

Impact on offline learning disposition: He has heard from his English teacher that his English style became more casual than before, and he took it to be a compliment. He said, “It (his English) was probably more academic, as my instructor said. I can’t really tell the difference between academic and casual English, but after what my instructor said, I felt like that my English had gone up a level.” Also, he began to feel more at ease with his English competence. He

said his ultimate goal of learning English became clear; “I don't think I need to achieve native speakers' level in English for my career. My final goal is to reach the point where I don't have any problems with English as an American lawyer.”

5. Choi

General background: Choi is a 23-year old college student, majoring in mechanical engineering. He has played LOL for about a year and is good at playing the game. He worries about his low TOEIC score. He has been taking an English class taught by a native English speaking instructor, but he had never volunteered to speak in class because of his queasiness with English. He does not expect to have a job which involves English communication with foreigners, but he thinks it is necessary to raise his TOEIC score to get a job in the future.

Online experience and realization: He had had difficulty in initiating conversations because he was not sure how to say it right, but before long he found that he could communicate with some key expressions. He said, “At first, it was so hard that I'd get irritated... But after about 3 months, I realized that the expressions used weren't that varied in the game.” Also, he found that other players were indifferent to accuracy when communicating in English, which makes him feel at ease when using English in LOL. He said, “In my opinion, foreigners who use English in LOL are pretty tolerant towards grammatical mistakes or typos.”

Impact on offline learning disposition: He feels that his phobia of English which caused him stress with English has lessened thanks to his LOL experience. He described his feelings about English, “I think the biggest change is that my queasiness with English has lessened. Now I'm not hesitant about using English.

Before, I couldn't use it at all... I felt exasperated every time I saw English. There were too many words I had to memorize, and I had to get a good TOEIC score. It felt like a wall. That feeling has lessened somewhat." Furthermore, his attitude towards learning has changed, "because my queasiness with English is gone, I often consider volunteering to talk or respond to the instructor, and now I speak in class more. It's something that I would have never thought of in the past."

6. Hyun

General background: Hyun is a 24-year-old university student, majoring in tourism management. He has played for 3 years on the North American server and 2 years on the Korean server. Now he plays on both servers. He is pretty good at playing LOL. He was not interested in English at all and did not like to study English in school. He has a low TOEIC score and attends a conversational English class at school.

Online experience and realization: He felt more comfortable with using English in LOL than in the real world and listed some reasons why he feels so, "With real conversations, you generally look at each other's faces, but in LOL you can't see each other... Because no one can tell if I'm Asian or how old I am, I can use English with more confidence"; "I'm not embarrassed because there are people from various countries whose English is also not perfect. Actually, nobody cares about English competence as long as they can communicate"; "I've met people from Russia, Thailand, and other countries, but we can all communicate in English. In that way, English isn't America's language."; "When I do badly in the conversation class, I feel stupid. This doesn't happen in LOL."; "When I thought of it as their language, I wondered why I had to learn the language of another country and felt uncomfortable with it. But as I began to realize that this wasn't

true, I began to like English. It's also good that instead of feeling resistance or fear towards foreigners, I now feel familiarity towards them."

Impact on offline learning disposition: He began to feel closer towards foreigners and began to like English itself. Also, as he uses the English expressions he learns for real communication, he makes an effort to learn more about them, and they are learned easily; "Interestingly, it's easy memorizing them, maybe because I actually use them in the game. And because new words and expressions come out often, I write them down right away on a Post-it and stick it on the monitor."

7. Shin

General background: Shin is a 25-year-old company worker. He works for a Korean company in its foreign business team, so he has many chances to use English because he has to make a lot of conference calls with co-workers in foreign branches. He takes 50-minute-English classes offered by his company after work. He has a high TOEIC score but feels that his spoken English is weak. He has played LOL for 6 months. He is not so good at playing LOL.

Online experience and realization: He found similarities between chatting in LOL and the conference calls at work; "There are similarities in that they both require improvisation. To be more accurate, there's no time to think and then talk. You just have to listen and respond. In LOL, you don't have time to spare as well while you chat in the game. You need to respond immediately and express your intentions. It's a similar feeling as with a phone call when I think back." Also, he found that he does not need perfect grammar for successful communication in LOL; "In LOL, you talk to win. No one obsesses over the grammar and uses

complete sentence structures in an accurate format.” He also realized that some varieties of English other than American Standard are efficient. He said, “Our clan has a lot of people not only from North America but also from Singapore and Hong Kong. Of course, these people are good at English as well, but I had had the preconception that American English was the best English. I realized that the English of these players from Hong Kong and Singapore was also very effective and good English.”

Impact on offline learning disposition: He has heard that his English became more natural from his co-workers, which made him feel greater confidence in speaking English than before. His feeling of oppressive stress when making conference calls has lessened, and he became more willing to communicate in English. He found it interesting to learn not only English but also other people’s different styles of humour and emotional expressions.

8. Yoon

General background: She is a 24-year-old graduate school student, majoring in business. She is the only female participant in this study. She is writing her thesis in English and has a high score in TOEIC. Her thesis supervisor is from India, so she has to use English when communicating with him. She is good at academic English writing but feels a lack of confidence when speaking English. She has played LOL for 1 year.

Online experience and realization: In LOL, she has made many foreign friends who became her Facebook friends as well. She found it to be more fun chatting with other players than playing LOL. She shares her knowledge, thoughts, and emotions with them like real friends. As she feels close to other players from

various countries, she began feeling more at ease with English as well. She said, “Looking back, it has gotten rid of the vague anxiety I had held toward foreigners and English conversations, and as a result, this has made it easier to approach English itself.

Impact on offline learning disposition: She feels that she has become more natural at speaking English when she talks to her professor. She feels that it has become easier to have casual English conversations, using more natural expressions than the stereotypical ones that she learned from textbooks. Also, she became more willing to communicate in English. She initiates more questions and makes more eye-contact with her supervisor.

9. Bae

General background: Bae is a 22-year-old college student, majoring in computer engineering. He needs a TOEIC score of at least 750 to graduate from college but has not achieved it yet. So he attends a TOEIC test preparation class these days. He has played LOL for more than 3 years on the North American server, and he made lists of game terms and translated them into Korean. He posted the data he made in a Korean LOL community website and Korean beginner users of LOL learn from them.

Online experience and realization: He has played over 10,000 games on the North American server and met people from around 40 countries. He found it more comfortable talking to people from non-native English speaking countries because their English was not native-like level, either. He thinks he is not judged on his English but his game skill, which makes him feel equal. He found that using English with sophisticated vocabulary is not always good for communication.

Since having the pleasant experience of English communication through LOL, he has started to study English and speak to foreigners voluntarily.

Impact on offline learning disposition: He became confident in using English thanks to communication experience he has had in LOL. He made friends with many foreign exchange students in his college. He thinks his English has improved a lot and his English nausea he used to have has disappeared.

10. Joe

General background: Joe is 25 years old. He has run a car repair shop since he graduated high school. He had given up English for a long time before he decided to prepare to emigrate to Australia. He is taking IELTS preparation classes these days. He has played LOL for 3 years on the North American server since the game launched in the US. He does not focus on winning but likes to enjoy the game.

Remarkable online experience and realization: He made foreign friends and felt that they are close to him. He said, "I hadn't thought that I would ever have a conversation or become friends with them during my lifetime before I played LOL. Now, I think they're not that different from my neighbors." Also, he realized that English is a universal language, "Before LOL, I had thought of English as the language of the US or England, but now it seems like a universal language. On the North American server, people from Russia, China, and Indonesia all talk in English."

Impact on offline learning disposition: He feels that his immediate aversion towards English has disappeared and felt energized to restart his English studies thanks to his English experiences for communication in LOL. He used to direct

his Filipino workers in Korean, but now he has become willing to talk to them in English. He was complimented by his British instructor because he makes an effort to say more in class.

5.3. The opportunities available in the gaming community

In order to present the findings that are about my first research question, “What sorts of interactions and relationships are available in a transnational massively multiplayer online game (MMOG) for EFL learners?”, I grouped subcategories into two topics under the first category: 1) The participants’ experiences of the nature of communication in LOL; 2) The participants’ experiences of the characteristics of the relationship with other players in LOL community. Since this research data is based on the participants’ narratives of their own experience, there are not only descriptions of the events and the conditions available but also the participants’ own feelings and thoughts about the circumstances and the interactions that they experienced in the gaming community. Based on the participants’ narratives about their experiences, I will interpret what the environment is like and what engages them in the process of a reflexive formation of identity.

5.3.1. The participants’ experiences of the nature of communication in LOL

Since communication plays an important role while playing LOL, I tried to find out what sorts of interactions are available and how they can influence the evolvment of EFL learners’ L2 identity and learning. I categorized the data about the nature of communication into four themes that I think are related to their L2 identity and English learning dispositions; English only communication, the essential role of communication, the characteristics of computer-mediated

communication (CMC), and ELF communication. I will discuss this in the discussion chapter in greater detail.

5.3.1.1. English only communication

When I asked what the participants have experienced while playing LOL on the North American server, all the participants talked about their experience of using English for communication with players from various countries. As communication plays an important role in this game and all conversations are made only in English on the North American server, they have to use English for necessary interactions required for playing the game. Since “Languages other than English aren’t supported in the game at all (Park),” even players who are not good at English have no other choice but to use English for playing this game. This made the participants who were not confident in using English try English communication in spite of having difficulty due to their perceived poor English competence and foreign language anxiety. Hyun, who had not been confident in using English, talked about how he had felt when he first started playing LOL in English.

I used to be severely bad at English. When I first started playing after my friend introduced me to the game at an Internet café, because conversations are key to this game, I was very stressed initially. It was too difficult for someone who had pretty much given up on English at an early age. It was nerve-wracking playing a game that was completely in English (Hyun).

Five participants out of ten (Kim, Choi, Hyun, Bae, and Joe) whose official English test scores were relatively low (around 500 to 600 out of 990 in TOEIC / 4.0 out

of 9.0 in IELTS) said that it was quite stressful to start to play a game only in English because they were not confident in their English. Even though it was hard to use English at first, however, they tried English conversations because they were interested in this game and found it pleasing to communicate with other players in English. When I asked Joe, who said he had been especially ignorant of writing and speaking, about how he felt when he first played the game on the North American server, he answered with the following:

At first, it was stressful because everything was in English. But the game was fun, and as I played the game, I was able to talk to foreigners, making it even more fun. In this way, I just ended up continuing to play on the North American server. (Joe)

Joe found it interesting not only to play the game itself but to communicate with others in English even though it was not easy to start playing an English game at first. Also, Choi, who said he had never spoken to his native English speaking teacher in class due to his lack of confidence, said he had been worried about whether his English would be understood by other players at first. He said,

It was so hard that I'd get irritated. I'd want to say something, but I wasn't sure how to say it right. And when I spoke, my team wouldn't understand. I had a really hard time at first.... but it was just really fascinating that foreigners understood my English for the first time." (Choi)

In addition, there are plenty of participatory opportunities for English conversation while playing LOL on the North American server. They said that they tried to participate in chatting with others when opportunities were given, and they felt having English conversations with others improved their English skills. They

make an effort to learn more expressions because people have to use English and learn new English expressions that are useful for playing this game.

As you know, it's a team game. So people need to communicate in LOL. In particular, teams are given time to strategize before a game starts. It's just for about one minute, but players communicate a lot during this short time... and I guess chatting after games helps me improve my English. I chat with my friends about the game such as "I think this strategy is not appropriate for this character. Let's play in a different way next time." (Kim)

Their successful communication experiences made them want to have more conversations with other players and helped them to learn English expressions on their own and from other players while interacting with them. They make an effort to learn more English expressions in order to play well.

I was fascinated how, when I said "MIA,^{2 4}" the other person would say "Thanks" in response. I think of this as a conversation. The one, two words I said increased to three or four words, and I started talking more often. I started wanting to be able to state clearly what I want to say... but this is something in another dimension. It's too hard. I don't know how to make sentences. I observe what others say but can't tell what they are saying so I have to figure it out through their actions in the game. (Hyun)

Blogs and communities have a collection of the English words commonly used in LOL. I printed them out and tried to memorize them. They're words that you have to know while playing the game. But interestingly, it's easy

^{2 4} It is an acronym for "Missing in Action".

memorizing them, maybe because I actually use them in the game. And because new words and expressions come out often, I write them down right away on a Post-it and stick it on the monitor. (Hyun)

In this regard, the virtual space of the online gaming space in the North American server is an environment which provides EFL learners with an English-only zone and opportunities for a less stressful English experience. This fact is relevant to the findings of previous studies on Internet-mediated activities such as communicating in their target languages through fan fiction (Black, 2005, 2006, 2009) or social networking sites (Lam, 2000, 2004; Nguyen & Kellog, 2005).

5.3.1.2. Computer-Mediated-Communication (CMC)

The interactions among players in LOL are computer-mediated ones, so there are found some different characteristics from those of offline conversations, which makes the participants feel equal and safe.

One of the characteristics of the CMC through online games is that they use special terms such as acronyms and game expressions. This meant even the participants whose English competence is quite high (950 in TOEIC/105 in iBT TOEFL) had to make an effort to learn the special terms used in LOL in the beginning.

It was worse in the beginning, but even now I still ask about the abbreviations or slang used all the time. These expressions often aren't in dictionaries, so I have to Google them, but even through Googling, it's difficult to find out what they really mean. So when people use them, I always ask them what they mean. (Roh)

I think this fact puts everybody on an equal footing. Also, when I asked them how they felt when they used English in the game, Kim, Hyun, Shin, and Yoon talked about how different their feelings were, compared to those they had in their English classes. One of the reasons why they thought they felt different is because they could be anonymous in cyberspace.

In the game, other people cannot see me and usually I will not meet them again after the game. In (English) classes, I need to keep meeting my classmates. So, it's embarrassing to show my poor English to them. (Kim)

With real conversations, you generally look at each other's faces, but in LOL, you can't see each other. And in conversation classes, you know who everyone is but in LOL people don't even know what country I'm from. The biggest advantage of talking in LOL is that you can talk without holding any bias. Because no one can tell if I'm Asian or how old I am, they can talk to me when we first meet without any bias, and so I can use English with more confidence. (Hyun)

When meeting foreigners in LOL, before I befriend them, they're just unspecified individuals. Even if you reveal personal information you don't necessarily trust them, and you're less concerned about making mistakes.

In that way, it's a lot easier than talking face-to-face. (Yoon)

Not only do they feel no bias from others, but they also feel themselves have no prejudice towards other people they meet while gaming. One of the participants said he felt different towards people from different ethnicities, but he wouldn't feel this in an online setting.

While my attitude is different in how I treat my Filipino staff at work and my British instructor, in the game people are just fellow gamers, regardless of whether I meet a British person or a Filipino. (Joe)

Another reason why they feel that it is easier to use English in LOL is that the communication is text-based, not spoken.

In LOL, I chat by typing, while in class, I speak. It's a completely different dimension. Writing it isn't that hard, but speaking it is a lot harder... Foreigners who use English in LOL are pretty tolerant towards grammatical mistakes or typos. (Choi)

They also talked about how LOL players focus on effective communication, not on accuracy in the language.

In the game, the focus is on being able to communicate quickly, while in class, it's about whether you're right or wrong. (Park)

In LOL, people understand what you're saying even if you only use a few words in any order. But it's not like that when you're speaking in class. (Hyun)

If my ally can understand the content and meaning of what I'm saying, it doesn't really matter if I get the grammar a little wrong or use unsophisticated vocabulary. These things aren't as important as conveying the meaning accurately. In LOL, you talk to win. No one obsesses over the grammar and uses complete sentence structures in an accurate format. (Shin)

The participants who are accustomed to trying to write correct, full sentences said that they have to express their opinions without too much thinking in LOL because spontaneous, simultaneous interactions are a prerequisite to play this game.

There is no time to write in my mind and then talk. In LOL, you don't have time to spare while you chat in the game. You need to respond immediately and express your intentions... Before, I used to worry over even speaking a single phrase, putting words together in my mind. Now, I feel like I just blurt English out. (Shin)

On the basis of their statements, it is found that all of the participants feel equal and safe while communicating in cyberspace compared to how they feel in offline situations. Kim, Park, Roh, Choi, Hyun, Shin, and Bae mentioned the usage of special game terms, which are equally new to all the novice players regardless of their English competence, as one of the reasons. Also, Kim, Roh, Hyun, and Yoon said they felt no bias from or toward other players and less embarrassed when using English thanks to being anonymous, which is consistent with previous studies (Joinson, 1998; Wallace, 1999; Zarghooni, 2007). Furthermore, because text-based communication in online games, by nature, focuses not on accuracy but efficiency, Lee, Choi, Joe said they could feel free from the pressure of using correct English with perfect grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation while having CMC interactions.

5.3.1.3. ELF Communication

They meet people from various countries in LOL. While playing LOL, players use English for communication instead of using their first languages. While communicating with each other, they reflect on the ownership of English; English

does not only belong to a few native English speaking countries but is a universal language.

Before LOL, I had thought of English as the language of the US or England, but now it seems like a universal language. On the North American server, people from Russia, China, and Indonesia all talk in English. (Joe)

Although it's a North American server, there actually aren't that many Americans. I met people from Russia, Thailand, and other countries, but we can all communicate in English. In that way, English isn't America's language. When I thought of it as their language, I wondered why I had to learn the language of another country and felt uncomfortable with it. But as I began to realize that this wasn't true, I began to like English. (Hyun)

While communicating with people from various countries in English, they found that there are some other varieties of English, other than those of a few inner circle countries (Kachru 1985).

Our clan has a lot of people not only from North America but also from Singapore and Hong Kong. Of course, these people are good at English as well, but I had had the preconception that American English was the best English. I realized that the English of these players from Hong Kong and Singapore was also very effective and good English. (Shin)

They said they had realized pragmatic English usage among non-native English speakers is useful. As English is used as a contact language for both native and non-native English speakers, people do not use difficult expressions but simple

ones. This makes them feel more comfortable using English.

I find it more comfortable talking to people from Japan, Indonesia, or Thailand. Because we're both bad at English, it just feels more comfortable... I've started to think that speaking English like Americans do doesn't necessarily mean you are good at English. I think speaking in a way that anyone can understand you easily is speaking good English. I've seen a lot of Americans speak in a way that makes it easy for me to understand them. (Joe)

I'm particularly bad at English, but I'm not embarrassed because there are people from various countries whose English is also not perfect. Actually, nobody cares about English competence as long as they can communicate. LOL has made approaching and attempting to use English easier. (Hyun)

One of the characteristics of both CMC and ELF communication in the online gaming space is that people tend to communicate very economically, making their expressions as simple as possible. This makes EFL learners feel more at ease when using English because they do not worry about grammar rules that are a cause for concern when making full sentences.

Gradually, I found that they understood what I meant when I used just a few keywords, not full sentences. So I realized that I just needed to use a few core words to be understood. Speaking English became more natural after this realization... I'm not sure my English is correct or not, but when I chat with a few simple words, other players understand me. (Kim)

People don't talk in long sentences. They just use the minimum words necessary needed to communicate. They seem to talk efficiently. (Lee)

What I found interesting is that their simple, pragmatic use of English in LOL results in few miscommunication problems.

Q. When they talk like that, does everyone understand each other well?
Is there any miscommunication?

A. Yes, I think everyone understands each other because we all have LOL in common. I've rarely experienced any miscommunication. (Choi)

Overall, I found that the participants experienced ELF communications and had chances to reflect on the issue of English ownership while playing LOL. They have directly experienced and felt that English is a global language that they had previously known only as knowledge. They found that there is a variety of Englishes (Kachru, 1992) rather than American or British English. Furthermore, simple, pragmatic use of English is useful and efficient for successful transnational communication.

5.3.2. The participants' experience of relationships within LOL community

5.3.2.1. Different criterion is considered when socializing

In this gaming space, demographic criteria, such as race, age, and language competence, which are generally regarded as important factors to consider when socializing with others in the real world, are not counted as such. This helps make social relationships different from that of the real world. What is significant is that this made the participants feel confident in using English to communicate with other players.

Because no one can tell if I'm Asian or how old I am, they can talk to me when we first meet without any bias, and so I can use English with more confidence. (Hyun)

I don't think others will judge me as being smart or stupid based on how good or bad my English is. I'm like that too. (Joe)

They felt that game competence is the only criterion which is regarded as important while socializing with others in LOL. When Kim and Choi were asked to explain their game techniques by other players, their perceived poor English competence did not discourage them from having conversations with others thanks to their good game skills.

I wasn't confident with my English, but I didn't hesitate when chatting... Actually, I'm quite good at this game. I felt proud because I could teach my game skills to others. Even though I wasn't as good at speaking in English as him, I could teach him what I knew. My English competence does not really matter as long as I can play LOL well... I think that in-game, we feel equal. Everybody is equal, and the only criterion in this space is game playing competence, not English. (Kim)

I'm judged more by my game talent than my English, people generally acknowledge and follow you if you're good at the game, even if you're bad at English. If you're good at the game and lead others well, even if you speak sloppily in English, people say "Yes, sir" and "Gotcha." That helps raise my confidence, regardless of what I say in English. (Choi)

Being good at the game means that, regarding the game, no one looks down upon me or ignores me. In the game, being good at the game is the most important. (Bae)

I found there were player specific hierarchical markers in the gaming community. They are labeled and belong to different groups according to their game competence, which is different from the real world ones. Therefore, they are not criticized by their races or languages but judged by a different criterion, that is, their game competence.

All guilds have qualification requirements to join. My guild master only allows those with a point ranking above 1800 to join. Honor points are looked at as well... At the end of a game, you can award points to the teammates who you think displayed good manners. These points are accumulated to become your reputation points, and IDs with high reputation are respected by the other users. (Lee)

According to the participants' accounts, it seems to indicate it is a unique community where game competence is considered to be an important factor, more so than any other general demographic criteria such as race, nationality, or language when socializing. This fact made the participants feel comfortable using English.

5.3.2.2. Favorable mood among players

I found people often make friends with others in this game space and keep in touch afterward. They become friends easily and share their personal interests with each other in other online spaces.

People who play together are able to send friend requests to each other after the game. If the player accepts your request, the person is added as a friend to your chat messenger, and you can talk to your friend privately. (Lee)

He gave me his email address and told me to look him up on Facebook. We became friends, and he's helping me out choosing a law school and studying for the bar exam. (Roh)

After talking for a while or if our play styles match well, we tell each other our Facebook or Twitter IDs to become closer friends and check if the information we told each other is true. I met a Hong Kong lady... her research had something in common with mine. (Yoon)

I've played for about 6 months, and my clan meets together once a month to chat. The people who can meet up in the US get together and Skype, like an online party. Last month I joined it for the first time. (Shin)

Also, I found that most of the players in the gaming space are generally nice and helpful to others. Some participants who are weak at English told me that they felt comfortable when other players tried to understand their poor English. Sometimes, other players corrected their English, and they found it helpful.

My team members sometimes good-naturedly teach me some expressions. And sometimes, my team members say, "He's Korean. Let's understand even if he's a little bad at English" and correct my English. After that, I'd be able to use the right words, according to the situation. (Choi)

Once, when I met an Australian, I said that I had a car center. However, he asked what a car center was, and when I said it was a car factory, he asked me if I was kidding. I looked it up on the Internet and found out that “car center” was Konglish. Gamers on LOL were the ones who told me that I had to refer to my job as being a mechanic. I found it interesting that most of the words I used in my daily life weren’t actually used by people in English-speaking countries. (Joe)

Lee and Hyun compared the feelings he has in the LOL space with those in his English classes when they use English, explaining the reasons.

The native instructors are actually very friendly, but they understandably get a little frustrated when talking with students who don’t understand what they’re saying. And that’s why they end up talking only with the students who are good at speaking in English. And even people like me judge the English of others, that their pronunciation is bad or that they used the wrong words. When I think that others will judge me as I judge them, I become increasingly scared of talking. (Lee)

Q. Do you assess other players’ English then? Like in English class?

A. No, all that matters is that we understand each other. (Lee)

I’m bad with grammar. In LOL, people understand what you’re saying even if you only use a few words in any order. But it’s not like that when you’re speaking in class. I’m usually embarrassed when I talk in the class. In LOL, there’s nothing to be ashamed about even if I’m bad at English.

There's a pretty big difference. I'm not embarrassed because there are people from various countries whose English is also not perfect. (Hyun)

When asked about how they feel in class and how different their feelings are from the ones they have had in LOL, Hyun and Joe told me a significant thing.

I feel that showing the level of my English depreciates my overall capability or social standing. Even though I'm bad at English, I do well at school and am pretty smart. But when I do badly in the conversation class, I feel stupid. This doesn't happen in LOL. No one cares if I'm good or bad at English. (Hyun)

I've always thought that being bad at English made you look dumb or slow. If you can't speak, you can't express what kind of person you are or what you think. But because LOL is a game, even if you can't speak English, as long as you're good at the game there's no problem. (Joe)

Generally, they think other players are nice to each other and become progressively more comfortable when communicating with others in LOL.

At first, I was afraid of not being understood. So I was hesitant when I used English. I thought I might be ignored by others when my English was not understood. But now I think people are not that mean to me. (Kim)

Furthermore, people in LOL help each other by teaching and learning from others. Things like game techniques and special terms used in the game are explained, which reinforces the relationship in a Community of Practice, that is, the one between those who are more experienced and knowledgeable and newcomers

who want to become like old timers (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Block, 2007; Coll & Falsafi, 2010).

Sometimes, I teach other players my game skills when they ask me. Then, I feel proud of myself and feel that I am acknowledged by foreigners. Sometimes, there are expressions that are not found in dictionaries and search engines. Then, I visit Korean LOL community sites and leave questions on the websites, and other community members answer them for me. (Kim)

3 years ago, when LOL first went live, I had to study about the game itself because there was no one to teach me. It was a completely new game. I played the game while consulting an Internet dictionary. When I posted some information I had personally translated and compiled on a LOL café, many new users to LOL directly learned from and memorized it. My interpretations and terms became a sort of manual for Korean users. I feel somewhat proud about this, as well as a little embarrassed. (Bae)

In this favorable atmosphere, they learn not only English expressions related to the game itself but also about other people's various cultures.

As I continued to listen, watch, and imitate, I became accustomed to English expressions I had never known and had fun learning their styles of humor and emotional expressions. (Shin)

I felt that, as a Korean, by playing the game with foreigners, I could learn about their culture. The biggest thing to learn is accepting an apology when someone admits their mistakes and apologizes. I think foreigners

are more accustomed to showing consideration for others than Koreans are, and instead of rebuking others, they try to encourage people and develop together. From what I've experienced on the North American server, foreigners are more focused on just having fun in the game while Korean users excessively obsess with winning the game. (Hyun)

When I go into LOL these days, I chat more than I play the game. The conversations are diverse. It ranges from talk about the game, strategies, and tactics, to talk about the company and badmouthing our bosses.

Americans seem to have the same troubles as us. (Shin)

The interview data may indicate that people in this community were helpful and friendly to each other. In this favorable atmosphere, they help and share with others by correcting each other's English, teaching game techniques, and sharing their different cultures, which may help them develop positive self-images. This result resonates with that of a previous study that observed a language learner who had experienced unpleasant relationships in the classroom developed a negative self-image and a low motivation level (Miller, 2003).

5.4. The impact of the interactions and relationships in LOL on L2 identity

The findings of the second research question, "How do the interactions and relationships in LOL affect EFL learners' L2 identity construction?" are presented in three categories: 1) The impact on EFL learners' feelings; 2) The impact on EFL learners' thinking; 3) The impact on EFL learners' online behaviors. As second language identity issues deal with how second language learners understand their relationship with the social world and how they view their own future possibilities (Norton, 2000), I think the participants' accounts of the

progressing changes in their feelings, thoughts, and behaviors while experiencing interactions and relationships with other community members can address their evolving identity in the community.

When viewing identity as something negotiated between reflective positioning by oneself and interactive positioning by others (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004), it should be explored on both the internal and external sides. However, due to the limitations of this research, it was possible only to explore the first dimension, and the latter could be inferred from the participants' statements of the first.

Based on the understanding of identity discussed in Chapter 3, the issue of identity is about how people sense, perceive, or position themselves in their relationship with the community, being negotiated between reflective positioning by oneself and interactive positioning by others (Norton, 2000; Block, 2007; Handley et al., 2006; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). According to Cambridge Dictionaries Online^{2 5}, 'sense' means 'an ability to understand, recognize, value, or react to something,' or 'general feeling or understanding' as a noun and 'to feel or experience something without being able to explain exactly how' as a verb. All these definitions include feeling, understanding, and reacting to something. In addition, keeping Norton's definition of identity in mind, "how people understand their relationship to the outside world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future (Norton, 2000, p. 410)", I interpreted the "outside world" as English and other English speakers and "their possibilities" as themselves as English speakers for this study. In sum, how they think and feel about themselves as English speakers,

^{2 5} <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/sense>

other English speakers, and English itself indicates how they construct their L2 identity in an English speaking community.

5.4.1. The impact on EFL learners' thinking, feeling, and behavior about themselves as English speakers

Most of the participants told me that their feelings about themselves as English users have changed positively thanks to their experience of having rewarding English communication experiences in LOL. The more experience they have, the more positive feelings about themselves they have. The most common feeling that the participants mentioned about was their confidence in using English.

Q. Did your feelings about yourself as an English user change?

A. There was a big change in my confidence. As I play more and the content stacks up, I seem to become more relaxed as well. (Park)

I think I became more confident in using English compared to before. At first, I was worried about not being understood. But now, sometimes I think the people who do not understand me are the ones who are strange. (Kim)

I feel that I could carry on a conversation about other content as well. Yes, although it'd be different if I were to meet them in person, I definitely have gained confidence. (Park)

I wasn't very confident. But after playing LOL, I seem to have gained a little confidence. I wasn't confident... maybe because I never had used English before... maybe because I'd be embarrassed if I was wrong...

reasons like these. (Choi)

The confidence that LOL gave me is confidence about English itself.

Realizing that I can use English caused me to want to be better at it. (Hyun)

Furthermore, Lee and Roh talked about their positive future selves. They said that they had begun to imagine themselves as fluent English speakers since playing LOL in English. I believe this phenomenon indicates that their second language identity is evolving positively. As their imagination relates to their concerns and hopes for their careers, they could have had such fantasies before. However, they said the interactional experience in LOL definitely helped.

Q. Do you imagine yourself speaking fluently at your job?

A. Yes, fantasies of me finishing a perfect presentation. (Lee)

Q. When did you start fantasizing about these scenarios?

A. They started as I began getting ready for employment and my experience with LOL did help. (Lee)

Q. Do you imagine yourself talking to your foreign friends in person?

A. Yes. My clan members are all lawyers in New York and they sometimes meet up to have clan matches. I imagine going there. (Roh)

Q. Going where?

A. Meeting my clan members somewhere in New York, gaming, drinking beer, and partying together. Things like that. (Roh)

Some of the participants mentioned that their good game skills in LOL helped

them to have confidence in this English-speaking community. They said they could be recognized by other players thanks to their game skills, which made them feel confident in using their sloppy English.

I am really good at this game. Whenever my team wins because of me, other players tell me “How excellent you are!” “How do you play so well?” etc. I never feel small or intimidated in the game. (Kim)

Because I’m judged more by my game talent than my English in the game, people generally acknowledge and follow you if you’re good at the game, even if you’re bad at English. If you’re good at the game and lead others well, even if you speak sloppily in English, people say “Yes, sir” and “Gotcha.” That helps raise my confidence, regardless of what I say in English. (Choi)

It seems that all the participants could have become confident and comfortable using English thanks to having successful communication experiences collaborating with other team members in the online game. Their good in-game skills also might have helped their confidence. The construction of positive self-images seems to help the two participants imagine their future selves as fluent English speakers, which might work as a strong motivator (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009).

5.4.2. The impact on EFL learners’ thinking, feeling, and behavior about other English users

Communication experience in LOL helped not only their feelings about themselves as English speakers but also affected those about other English

speakers. Kim, Roh, and Yoon said that their vague fear of foreigners disappeared. I believe this shows positive evolvement in their social relationship in an English-speaking community.

I thought I would be ignored by others when my English was not understood. But now I think my English is generally understood by others, and people are not that mean to me. (Kim)

Before LOL, I held a vague fear about them, but that has disappeared. (Roh)

As I met my Hong Kong friend and made chit-chat, I became curious about Hong Kong and found it more fun chatting with her than playing LOL. And because this friend is really positive and funny, she makes a lot of jokes and she just finds it funnier when I can't react right away. Looking back, it has gotten rid of the vague anxiety I had held toward foreigners and English conversations, and as a result, this has made it easier to approach English itself. (Yoon)

When they saw that other English speakers, even native English speakers also made errors, they began to feel more comfortable communicating with them. They may have thought other English speakers would understand only perfect English and have had vague fears about them before having real communication interactions, but the fear lessened thanks to the experience of real-time English chatting.

If I didn't follow the right spacing, I thought it was wrong. But Americans don't really pay much attention to it. Among the people I met as I played

the game, there were people from MIT and Caltech. These people would write like this as well. (Park)

Americans make typos and grammatical mistakes all the time while chatting in English. Thinking about it, I do the same with Korean. It's the same thing. And so I felt that I didn't have to be so stressed out over trying to speak "perfectly." (Roh)

I'm particularly bad at English, but I'm not embarrassed because there are people from various countries whose English is also not perfect. (Hyun)

Also, they said that they became to feel close to other English users thanks to LOL experience, which made them feel comfortable with using English.

Feeling closer to foreigners is a good experience, and I think that chatting in a game involves a much smaller psychological burden than does speaking in real life. (Choi)

It's also good that instead of feeling resistance or fear towards foreigners, I now feel some familiarity towards them. (Hyun)

If you're referring to foreigners when you say English users, I hadn't thought that I would ever have a conversation or become friends with them during my lifetime before I played LOL. Now, I think they're not that different from my neighbors. It's just that the words are different, making communication difficult. Even if I use bad English, if foreigners understand it and respond, I feel a sense of closeness with them. (Joe)

One thing I found interesting while interviewing them was that they feel different according to their interlocutors. Although they became more comfortable to communicate with other English speakers in general, some of the participants stated that they feel safer talking to the non-native English speakers among them. The 9th interviewee, Bae, mentioned this feeling while he was communicating in the game.

I find it more comfortable talking to people from Japan, Indonesia, or Thailand. Because we're all bad at English, it just feels more comfortable. When I meet Americans, it's a little... They speak at length and use a lot of words with apostrophes. It's easier talking with Asians than with Americans. Because I'm bad at English, I feel somewhat embarrassed.

(Bae)

Kim and Lee mentioned the same issue during the interview, but they talked about what they felt in offline situations. So, I asked the 10th interviewee, Joe, about this and he told me it was true in his offline situations but not in LOL. I think this issue can be examined in future studies.

Q. Do you feel different towards people of different nationalities or ethnicities?

A. I don't really know because I don't have the chance to meet them very often, but I heard that the Philippines is also an English-speaking country and I don't think I've ever felt inferior to Filipinos. On the other hand, at the private institute where I take classes, when I talk with my British instructor I do feel a little intimidated. I guess I'd say that I feel different toward Caucasians, African-Americans, and Asians. (Joe)

Q. As you played LOL, was there a change in how you perceive people from English-speaking countries and those who are not?

A. Because you don't know unless you ask. While my attitude is different in how I treat my Filipino friends at work and my British instructor, in the game people are just fellow gamers, regardless of whether I meet a British person or a Filipino. (Joe)

Based on the participants' statements, it seems to indicate that there were some changes in their feelings and thoughts about other English speakers. Their vague fear of foreigners disappeared and they began to feel closer to other English users while having real conversations with them. They realized that other English speakers also make errors when having real conversations. This made them feel safer when using English. One interesting additional finding is that some participants felt more comfortable when talking to non-native English speakers than to native speakers, which might be in the line with Norton's study on the right to speak of a linguistic minority (Norton, 2000) as discussed in the literature review chapter (3.4.4.2. L2 identity and self-confidence).

5.4.3. The impact on EFL learners' thinking, feeling, and behavior about English itself

Most of the participants, regardless of their English competence, said that they had been under pressure to use perfect English sentences because they had learned to do so in their English classes, which made them uncomfortable with English. While having instant communicational experiences in an online game, they began to shrug off that pressure and to feel gradually more comfortable with English. They also realized the importance of pragmatic competence for natural

communication.

In the beginning, I tried to use sentences, not just words. I thought I had to use correct sentences to be understood by other players, especially those from English speaking countries. But gradually, I found that they understood what I meant when I used just a few keywords, not full sentences. So I realized that I just needed to use a few core words to be understood. Speaking English became more natural after this realization.

(Kim)

LOL made me realize that speaking perfectly wasn't important, communication was. Even if you don't follow the subject, verb, object format, as long as you communicate quickly and effectively, you're using good English. (Lee)

Most of the participants whose English level is relatively low told me that they had had a sort of repulsion toward English itself before playing LOL in English. They said that they began to have positive feelings about English thanks to the experience of using English when playing their favorite leisure activity, rather than for taking exams.

Q. Explain what you mean by "queasiness with English" in detail.

A. Feeling exasperated every time you see English? There were too many words I had to memorize, and I had to get a good TOEIC score. It felt like a wall. That feeling has disappeared somewhat. After playing LOL, my queasiness with English has disappeared, and I have become more interested in studying English. Now I'm not hesitant about using English.

(Choi)

Before LOL, I had a sort of “English nausea.” The English alphabet would feel like math formulas to me. But when I first started LOL, I really studied hard. When I was in junior high, I was obsessed with Japanese animation, so I studied Japanese really hard. I think it’s similar to this. My English nausea has disappeared. I go out for a meal with my South African friends.

(Bae)

I used to feel an immediate aversion towards English, but I no longer do so. Even this is a great development. (Joe)

Despite relatively good English competence, Lee and Yoon also talked about how much stress they had had with English as an EFL learner and how differently they feel about English in the online space while playing an online game.

Q. What meaning does English hold for you? Did the meaning change as you played LOL?

A. Before, it was like homework I couldn’t solve. In LOL, it’s a language. Of course, it’s still homework outside of LOL. (Lee)

To me, English is something that has to be studied. It’s the language in which I have to write my thesis. So it was always a little frustrating. I had to read 800 pages of a textbook in the original English version. But as I played LOL, it’s true that I started thinking of English as easier than before. The words used in LOL aren’t all that easy. (Yoon)

Some of the participants mentioned that they truly realized that English was a tool for communication not merely a subject to study, and this made them feel less stressed and motivated to learn English.

I did realize that there can be another goal for learning English rather than getting high scores on English tests. It's for communication. (Kim)

I began to feel that it was like Korean. Before, English was like a subject, like a test. But after using English to talk in LOL, I found out that English was a language as well. As a result, I began to treat it differently and made an effort to study it. I tried to find out the meanings of words, went through dictionaries, made notes, and took a conversation class, even though it didn't seem to help. (Hyun)

Before LOL, I didn't really think anything of English. After playing it, I just think of it as a language like Korean. As I played the game, I talked with other players, asked them about things I didn't know, and made friends. It's a method of such communication. (Joe)

Furthermore, they found that English is a universal language that does not belong to a particular country. It means that they have realized that they also have the ownership of the language. What makes this realization meaningful is the fact that it made them feel better about the language.

I've met people from Russia, Thailand, and other countries, but we can all communicate in English. In that way, English isn't America's language. When I thought of it as their language, I wondered why I had to learn the language of another country and felt uncomfortable with it. But as I began

to realize that this wasn't true, I began to like English. (Hyun)

Before LOL, I had thought of English as the language of the US or England, but now it seems like a universal language. On the North American server, people from Russia, China, and Indonesia all talk in English. (Joe)

Regardless of English level, the participants told me that they had been stressed about English because they had to study the language for exams. Thanks to having pleasurable communication experience in English, they seemed to begin to feel less stressed by English. In addition, while having conversations with people from various countries, they said that they realized English is a tool for transnational communication and it belongs to everybody who uses it, which may indicate they have realized the significance of the ownership of English (Bourdieu, 1977; Higgins, 2003; Jarvis, 2006).

5.5. The impact of evolved online L2 identity on offline learning dispositions

When evolvment of positive L2 identity results in the improvement in a learner's learning attitude, it should be acknowledged that L2 identity plays an important role in second language learning. Based on the data it seems that the participants have experienced some changes in their offline learning dispositions and attitudes not only in the cyberspace but also in their formal learning.

The participants talked about positive changes in their learning attitude after playing LOL in English. Since all of the participants are enrolled in formal English classes and are involved in some sorts of activities for studying English, they could tell the differences in their learning attitudes from before and after having

the experience of communication in LOL.

5.5.1. Improved confidence and motivation in learning English

Many of the participants stated that their motivation for learning English has increased after playing LOL in English. It seems that their positive communicational experience while playing LOL impacted their feelings about and improved their motivation for learning English and made them put forth the effort to learn voluntarily.

While I did not look up words I didn't know in the past, now I am used to looking them up and trying to find the meanings of new words. (Kim)

After playing LOL, I have become more interested in studying English. (Choi)

Preparing for the IELTS was difficult, but LOL has acted as a motivator. (Joe)

I often watch American soap operas. I used to watch them with Korean subtitles, so I did not care or try to listen to the English dialogue and expressions. But now I listen to the dialogue and I often find some expressions I use in LOL come up in many lines. When I only watched them, I did not think I could use the expressions for real communication, but I try to use the new expressions I am learning lately. I think that this is the difference. (Kim)

Kim said that he found why he needed to learn English, which he had not previously had. Because of the communicational experience in LOL, he began to

have one more reason for learning English. Even though he still considers his English test scores to be an important reason as to why he has to study English, he began to regard gaining communicative competence as also an important goal. This new goal made him want to learn English.

After playing LOL in English, I realized for the first time that English is a language that is needed to understand others and to be understood. Now I think the reason why I study English is not only to get good grades on a subject but to communicate with others as a language. (Kim)

Hyun also found himself motivated to learn English thanks to the realization that English is a global language. The realization of the ownership of the language made him like the language and motivated him while learning it.

When I thought of it as their language, I wondered why I had to learn the language of another country and felt uncomfortable with it. But as I began to realize that this wasn't true, I began to like English. (Hyun)

Since they began to be more motivated, they try to participate in their English classes more actively and make the effort to utilize other available English learning opportunities to improve their English competence. Park talked about the changes in his learning attitudes in class and at home.

Q. Your attitude in class seems to have changed?

A. Yes, even if I say so myself. Before LOL, I didn't participate at all. When the native instructor asked a question, I'd just drop my head. In case he'd look at me and address me. But now, I can make eye contact... my queasiness with English is gone, I often consider volunteering to talk

or responding to the instructor, and now I'm speaking in class more. It's something that I would have never thought of in the past.

Q. Were there any changes in your attitude towards studying English or English itself in real life?

A. Because of the issue with the content, I'm watching ESPN.com - NBA a lot these days. This causes me to look up words in the dictionary a lot as well. Because I think the content is important, I think that I need to approach the NBA with English like I did with LOL. That's how I'll be able to have conversations and get used to the related vocabulary. (Park)

One of the changes in their offline learning dispositions is that they became willing to speak English when a chance is given. When they talked about this change, they looked confident and satisfied with how they had changed and what they had done.

There are two foreign workers at my repair shop. The two are Filipinos. I used to direct them in Korean, but these days I'm trying to talk with them in English. (Joe)

I was the first of my Korean peers in my department to talk to the South Africans (exchange students in his college). I asked where they were from. (Bae)

Some said that the confidence they gained from LOL had improved their spoken English in other areas as well.

Q. How are your phone-in English sessions? Did anything change?

A. Being able to apply the confidence and the importance of content that I learned from LOL to real communication, maybe? (Park)

There are similarities in that they both require improvisation. To be more accurate, there's no time to write in my mind and then talk. You just have to listen and respond. In LOL, you don't have time to spare as well while you chat in the game. You need to respond immediately and express your intentions. It's a similar feeling with phone calls. (Shin)

Q. Your experience with LOL seems to have helped a lot with your business calls?

Yes, it has. I used to think that it was extremely awkward for Koreans to use the body gestures that second generation Koreans use, shrugging as they say simple but extremely natural expressions like "I don't know," "You know," or "No way." But because I use them so often in LOL, I'm accustomed to them now. (Shin)

I had never asked my professor a question first, and during lab meetings I had always tried to avoid making eye contact. I usually just listened without saying anything because I felt awkward using English. But these days, greeting him and asking how he is has become a little more natural. (Yoon)

In sum, it seems that the participants became confident and motivated in using and learning English. They seemed to become more active in learning English, which is shown in their class attitudes and their personal learning practices. They have come to utilize other possible opportunities of learning English and seem to

be willing to speak English when chances are given. This change might indicate a positive influence of their evolved L2 identity for their learning success, as reported by other researchers (Block, 2007; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009; MacIntyre et al., 1998).

5.5.2. Improved pragmatic competence

Since they had realized they do not need to use full sentences for actual conversations in LOL, their English became more natural and casual. They said that this change had been noticed both by others and by themselves. This change has happened to the participants regardless of their English competence.

I'm taking TOEFL speaking classes. One day while I was talking with my instructor, he asked me where I had learned the expression that I had just used ... he said that it must be why my English had become a lot more casual than when I had first started taking the classes. (Roh)

Yesterday when I was alone in the lab, and the professor walked in and asked, "How's it going?" I was able to respond naturally, "I'm good, Thanks. How about you?" When the professor had greeted me before, I had always said, "I'm fine. Thank you, and you?" as I was taught in the textbooks at school. I could feel that I had become more natural at speaking English. (Yoon)

Two weeks ago, there was a call for all North American offices, for senior-level employees... After the call had ended, I called my friend separately, and he asked me if I was studying English these days... he said that my speech had gotten a lot less literary. I told him that I didn't know, and he

said that I had definitely changed. Looking back, I think that as I talked hectically in LOL, almost rambling, my English expressions have gotten lighter. Before, I used to worry over even speaking a single phrase, putting words together in my mind. Now, I feel like I just blurt English out. I think I have changed if I say so myself. (Shin)

They said that they got used to using authentic English expressions and abbreviations thanks to using such expressions in LOL, and when they used those expressions in real-life conversations, they heard from others that their English became natural.

My roommate was from Dallas, and he told me that I spoke like a textbook. I'd use expressions that people didn't really use colloquially. (Lee)

The gameplay is rapid and every second counts, so people only use the most necessary words. You wouldn't learn these words anywhere other than in real-life. Would you learn the expression, "cover me" in class? You'd only learn it in games. I didn't look up these kinds of expressions and start to use them. I just saw other people using them and followed suit after understanding which expressions were used in certain situations. (Lee)

Q. Has gaming English helped in your work life?

A. The terms used only in the game, especially the indexes, helped to lower the barriers to entry. (Park)

Q. What do you mean by barriers to entry? Getting adjusted to working at your company?

A. Yes. There are some indexes used by companies such as PCU, Peak Concurrent User and UP, Unique Players. (Park)

According to the data, it seems that their realization about pragmatic competence freed them from the obsession that they should use English accurately for successful communication, and this consequently helped their English become more natural and adaptive, which may be consistent with the results of previous studies (Mauranen, 2007; Murray, 2012).

5.6. Summary of the findings

Based on the participants' statements about their experience in LOL, I found that there is an online environment in which only English is used for communication. While using English for communication with other players, which is required for fulfilling collaborative tasks in the game, they had experiences of using English for CMC. Thanks to the special characteristics of CMC, that is, using special terms for communicative efficiency, being anonymous, and little emphasis on accuracy in grammar, vocabulary or pronunciation, the participants felt at ease using their target language.

In addition, they had experienced ELF communications, which made them realize English is a global language and reflect on the ownership of the language. They began to realize that there were varieties of English, and it was not the language of a few countries. While participating in EFL communication, they realized the simple and pragmatic use of English helped successful communicate within transnational settings. This realization helped them construct a positive L2 identity.

Setting aside the issue of ELF, there was another factor that made the participants feel confident in using English and equal in making relationships in this English-speaking community. They found that it was the world in which different criteria were considered important beyond just demographic criteria when socializing with others. They felt that nobody judged them by their language competence but by their gaming skills, so they did not feel inferior to other fluent English users because they were relatively good at playing the game.

The interview data show that their feelings, thoughts, and behaviors pertaining to themselves as English users, other English speakers, and English itself had undergone meaningful changes. Furthermore, these changes that occurred in an online space affected their offline learning attitudes such as confidence levels and motivation for using and learning English. As an additional benefit, they said that their improved pragmatic competence had been noticed by themselves and others, including their instructors and colleagues.

In the next chapter, I will discuss how these findings answer the research questions and how the answers fit in with existing theories and other previous studies on the topic. In addition, what meaning can be drawn from the findings and what makes this study different from other previous studies will be discussed.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

6.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the meaning of the results that are presented in chapter 5, implications of these for an understanding of the relationship between L2 identity and SLL and the impact of the findings on English education, especially for the development of EFL pedagogy.

The discussion is organized around the research questions that are presented in Chapter 4. First, I will reflect on the results for the research question 1, which explored the available experience of interactions and relationships that the EFL learners could have in a transnational online game community through the participants' statements. For this, I will discuss what kinds of conditional factors could have influenced the EFL learners' L2 identity construction and how these are consistent with previous studies or theories in order to answer the research question 1. To explain the distinctive environmental conditions of the online community in terms of the interactions and relationships, I will discuss how different they were from those of ordinary EFL classrooms that the participants described during the interview. Then I will move on discussing how the experience of EFL learners in the online community could have influenced their L2 identity construction, which is the focus of the research question 2. As shown in the findings, the changes in their views regarding English helped their emotional, cognitive, and behavioral changes that might ultimately affect their learning success. In the core of their perspective shift was the ELF paradigm, which they realized through direct experiences in social interactions, not learned as academic knowledge. Factors such as the awareness of varieties of English,

which indicate that they have experienced the ELF paradigm, will be discussed. Last, this will be followed by a discussion of how their evolved L2 identity affects their offline learning dispositions. This will be accompanied by some previous studies and theories on out-of-class learning and the pedagogical interpretation of lateral connectivity. Having reflected on my research questions, then, I will discuss how different this research is from other studies that dealt with the issues of L2 identity and online activities.

6.2. Conditional factors

The environmental conditions of the gaming community were identified to be somewhat different from formal language classrooms as some of the participants indicated. Findings indicated that the characteristics that the EFL learners encountered in cyberspace could be divided into two categories: interpersonal relationships and socio-affective conditions. The following is the discussion of each category.

6.2.1. Interpersonal relationships

In the gaming community, it seems that there are relatively positive interpersonal factors for learning a language. It was found that there were relatively equal relationships among the players regardless of their ages, nationalities, races or languages, which were identified in the participants' statements about the experiences of relationship within LOL community. I will discuss some interpersonal factors identified in an online gaming community that might affect EFL learners' positive L2 identity construction.

The unique characteristics of interpersonal relationships found in the gaming

community seemed to make the participants feel in an equal relationship when using English in the transnational gaming community. Some of the participants explained those characteristics by comparing them to those of their formal classrooms. One of the differences that they identified was that they were not discriminated against due based on any demographic criteria, including their English competence, by other players. It might be due to anonymity, one of the characteristics of CMC, or its typical hierarchy, which gives weight exclusively to gaming competence. Or it might be so because of the fact it is an ELF context where all players from various countries use English as a contact language. In formal classes, in contrast, it might be possible to have a greater risk of being part of an unfair hierarchy, which was shown in Choi's statement, "I take them (English classes by native instructors at school) but the instructors only talk with the students who are good at English. I'm the type that just sits in the back and watches." It must not be true for all the EFL classes, but it seems that the participant has experienced discrimination in his English class and, as a result, he felt anxiety speaking in the class and just "sits in the back and watches," not actively participating in class. It might be partly due to internal factors such as his personality, but interpersonal factors such as social relationships in his class must have affected his learning attitude because he mentioned the instructor's discrimination based on the students' English competence.

Another difference that seemed to make relatively equal relationships in LOL comparing to English classes was mentioned by Park. He said that English is used for assessment in English classes while it is used for communication in LOL. He felt tense because the English used in class was assessed by his teachers. However, he felt relaxed when using English in-game because it is not judged by

the same criteria by other players in LOL. Regarding the fact that a person who evaluates another person is in a higher position, there are unequal relations in English classes. Even though it is a normal condition in any class between teachers and students, it is also a matter that merits our reflection because whether an L2 speaker feels comfortable or not in using their target language may depend on the characteristics of speakers to whom he/she talks and the relationships which exist in that context, such as social power relations in a community (Norton, 2000).

There have been studies on social interaction using L2 in online communities through CMC. They argued that the online space provided L2 learners with a learning environment which helped L2 learners to participate in L2 social interactions with confidence and, as a result, helped both their positive L2 identity construction and literacy development (Blake & Zyzik, 2003; Blasing, 2010). While those studies treated all second languages equally without distinction, the experiences of identity and self-construction in learning English are different from those of learning other languages like Spanish or Russian because of the dominant status of English as a global language. For EFL learners, as English proficiency is more or less regarded as a symbolic capital for acquiring successful social positions in our contemporary world (Bourdieu, 1999), it can be a marker of social, intellectual, and professional identity in non-English speaking countries like Korea (Park, 2009). Therefore, those who have standard or native-like English proficiency may be recognized as highly qualified for superior positions in schools and workplaces. In this context, EFL learners who have lower levels of English competence can feel inferior to fluent English speakers due to their English proficiency and feel anxiety when they have to speak English in front of

others. In this vein, the findings of this study might be meaningful because the participants could establish positive L2 identity when they realized ELF paradigm in cyberspace through their English communication experiences without any bias against social power relationships in the community. Therefore, I think English learners' identity should be examined in a different dimension from that of other language learners.

In this manner, the findings of this study also confirmed that many cases of second language learning experiences are related to not only individual cognitive and psychological factors but also social relationships with others and language anxiety is also affected by interpersonal factors (MacIntyre et al., 1998; Arnold, 1999). The issue of social relationships has been an essential topic in the pedagogical discussion of the motivation for learning a language because interpersonal conditions are what can be created by educators, different from individual capacity.

6.2.2. Socio-affective conditions

The findings indicated that the LOL gaming space provided the EFL learners with opportunities for less stressful experiences where they could use English for real communication. The participants said that they found English could be amusing thanks to the experience of using English without anxiety, in order to enjoy their favorite leisure activity and the sharing of different cultures with other people, which seemed to be in contrast with the statements about their in-class learning experiences. Indeed, many of the participants mentioned that they felt learning English in their classrooms was stressful and tense because they had studied English mainly with the grammar translation method or test-oriented pedagogy

rather than with a communicative approach since their secondary school days. They said that they were under pressure to use grammatically perfect sentences and getting high scores on exams. On the other hand, the findings of this study show that online games provided the EFL learners with a less stressful environment where they can have pleasant L2 contact experiences and chances for using their learned English skills for real communication. Indeed, there was a relatively generous attitude among gamers so that the EFL learners could feel less stressed and free to make any linguistic attempts that may further help them build up their self-confidence and consequently increase their motivation for learning their target language. Although the peculiarity of the situation could confine their language use to a limited range of vocabulary, having the experience of feeling safe in using English itself can be meaningful for EFL learners' positive L2 identity construction.

Indeed, many L2 educators have researched how to facilitate learners' motivation and improve participation by creating low-anxiety learning environments at interpersonal levels (Arnold, 1999; Young, 1991; Tóth, 2010; Gardner, 1985; Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; Dewaele et al., 2008). According to previous research, when L2 learners have the experience of being discriminated against due to their race or language competence by their teachers and classmates, they can develop a negative self-image and experience a decrease in motivation to learn the language (Miller, 2003; Kanno & Norton, 2003; Pavlenko, 2005). Therefore, the opportunities for using English without being judged on English competence or any other demographic criteria online can provide meaningful chances for EFL learners to construct positive self-images.

Foreign language anxiety has been studied by many researchers; while some found that it can have both positive and negative effects on learners' performance (Speilberger, 1983; Scovel, 1991), many of them (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Ellis, 2008; Gardner et al., 1997) have argued it works as a key negative factor that reduces self-confidence and motivation. Research found that positive L2 contact experience decreases learners' anxiety and increases self-confidence, which is the main condition of motivated language learners (Gardner, 1985; Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). The findings of this study are consistent with previous studies on L2 anxiety and motivation because most of the participants said they could experience using English without anxiety online and that the experience made them motivated to learn.

It was argued that cyberspace can provide L2 learners with opportunities for attempting new and different identities from their real lives because they can be anonymous game characters or avatars and have less serious consequential effects on their behaviours in virtual spaces (Ushioda, 2011; Blasing, 2010; Gee, 2003). Some of my participants (Kim, Hyun, Yoon) also mentioned the fact that they could feel safer because communication online was not face-to-face and nobody knew who they were. However, being anonymous is not the only factor that makes people feel different from how they do in real-life situations. As many researchers found (Peña & Hancock, 2006; Thorne et al., 2009; Hudson & Bruckman, 2002; Kern, 1995; Schwienhorst, 2002; Satar & Özdener, 2008), the findings of this study also confirmed that people use encouraging expressions and give cheerful feedback to each other, which creates a non-threatening environment in virtual communities.

In addition, most of the participants of this study mentioned the special jargon and acronyms that were commonly used in LOL, and it was reported that it took a while to get used to those terminologies. The participants said they could consult online community sites for help with game jargon and useful expressions because some people who learned them first posted the explanations to the sites. They found it fun to learn and use the terms to communicate with other players. It can be interpreted as a community of practice in which the members experience mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998). Also, the findings show they could have built a community that can be interpreted as 'hybridity,' 'third space (Bhabha, 1990/1994)' or "non-hierarchical, interest-based 'affinity space'" (Gee, 2005) in a shared virtual social space. This is in common with other previous research that examined the network-mediated communication practices and found the fact that international social interactions within a technological infrastructure had great affiliation power among the digital generation, which can make L2 learners feel safe and comfortable in using their target languages (Bryant, 2006; Hanna & Nooy, 2003; Kern, 1995; Lam, 2000, 2004; Thorne, 2003, 2008).

In this regard, L2 educators might consider how to facilitate learners' motivation and improve participation by creating low-anxiety learning environments that provide L2 learners with positive L2 experience and close rapport with others. For this, various personal and interpersonal sources such as low self-esteem, ambiguity, competitiveness, fear of others' evaluation, tests, culture shock, and social interaction should be considered (Arnold, 1999). Then, the environment would become more like "one encouraging co-operation and collaboration rather than competition between learners, one which is a place for learning rather than

just demonstrating knowledge (Tóth, 2010, p.190)” regardless of students’ L2 proficiency level.

6.3. Empirical knowledge about ELF paradigm and L2 identity

The results show that one of the characteristics of communication in the online game is that English is used as a contact language among the players who are from various countries. While communicating, they are able to realize some important factors about the ELF paradigm, even though they did not know about the concept.

6.3.1. English as a contact language

One of the factors of the ELF paradigm most of the participants realized is the fact that English was used as a contact language among people from various countries, and they used English pragmatically for efficient communications in this community. According to the findings of this study, when communicating in a contact language, people tend to communicate very economically and simply. As English is used for both native and non-native English speakers, they do not use complex, difficult vocabulary, culturally specified idiomatic expressions and structures (MacKenzie, 2014). This phenomenon of English usage is common in the cases of international communication in the era of globalization and has been proved in previous studies (Firth, 1996, Meierkord, 1996). The findings of this research confirm that players of a transnational online game also use ELF because effective communication is critical for playing a game in which team members have to collaborate successfully to win against the other team.

What makes ELF communication interesting is that there is not much

miscommunication even though their English is not native-like. This phenomenon has been identified in previous research (House, 1999; Firth & Wagner, 1997; Cogo & Dewey, 2006). The participants mentioned that players of the online game had some shared repertoire among the members of the community such as special terms and acronyms for communication while playing the game in order to make communication more effective, which is an effort to make their speech more intelligible to their interlocutors. Having specific repertoire within a community is another characteristic of ELF usage (Hülmbauer, 2007). While communicating effectively in a rather simplified usage of English, they could have many experiences to communicate successfully in English with other players, which made the participants build up positive self-concepts as English speakers and even imagine their future selves as fluent English speakers in English speaking communities. This is significant because conceiving positive future selves has significant meaning for their learning motivation according to Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009) as discussed in the section 3.4.4.1. L2 identity and Motivation.

6.3.2. English varieties and the ownership of English

The most significant realization that the participants had through interactional communication in LOL was that they found there were not only so-called native English speakers but also varieties of English. When they were aware of the fact that English was used by both native and non-native English speakers from various countries, they realized that they were also legitimate English speakers in an English-speaking community even though their English was not perfect. In other words, they found they were not marginalized but had equal status regarding the ownership of the communal language, English. What is significant

is that they realized this not through explicit imparting of the knowledge but through their own experience of participating in ELF communication.

Indeed, when they realized this ELF paradigm, they could become confident and feel safe using English, being free from the pressure of adherence to the native-speaker model and standard English proficiency. Unless they experience this ELF paradigm, I found the EFL learners have some degree of an inferiority complex towards native English speakers and hardly any confidence in English. It might happen that EFL learners regard native English speakers' English as their norms and as sources of authority, not considering their local sources as possible models as previous research claimed (Jenkins, 2007; Tsui & Bunton, 2000; Sifakis, 2004).

When considering the fact that even English teachers could have negative self-concepts about themselves and, as a result, their teaching practices could be negatively affected when they are influenced by the native speaker fallacy, which views native English speakers' English as a perfect model of English use (Jenkins, 2007; Llurda, 2005), it seems to be apparent that the only way to empower EFL learners to be fully confident in using English is to choose ELF as their paradigm to aim for because it acknowledges the wide variety of English among its users and does not exclusively rely on native-speaker model or monoculturalism of western English speaking world (Sharifian(ed), 2009).

Furthermore, the participants realized that English does not belong to just a few countries, but is more of a universal language. It means that they found English belongs to the people who speak it regardless of being native or non-native. When they realized this fact, they became to feel not only better about English

but also motivated to learn the language. They said they found another reason why they had to study English. Even though they acknowledged that they could not ignore their original goal of getting good English test scores for their future, their realization about the ELF paradigm seemed to be an active motivator for self-motivated learning.

However, d. One of the participants (Kim) mentioned that he asked people's nationalities while communicating in LOL and asked those from US or Canada if their English expressions were correct or not when he wanted to learn. Another (Lee) said that their English fluency had to be assessed only by native speakers because he thought only Korean people could judge foreigners' Korean level, which indicates he did not understand the status of English as a global language in the world that is different from other languages.

6.3.3. Pragmatic competence

The participants found that the experience of ELF pragmatics changed their English style to be more natural and casual, which they perceive as a positive indicator of language improvement. They started to use colloquial expressions that were learned in real communication, not from textbooks in appropriate situations and got used to the flow of conversations, which made their English sound natural. They said this change had been noticed by others such as their instructors and coworkers. I think this phenomenon could happen because they began to focus not on correctness but intelligibility while they were communicating with other players and it helped their communicative proficiency. When English learners focus on intercultural pragmatic competence rather than on formal grammars and native speakers' pronunciation, it can indicate that they

have evolved L2 identities as ELF speakers (Seidhofer, 2004).

The same phenomenon has been identified in a previous study. Even though Schmidt's study (1983) focused on causes of grammar fossilization of a Japanese immigrant in the US, I think this study is illustrative as to how the construction of a positive identity as an ELF speaker leads to language development in pragmatic competence. Even though he did not make very much progress in grammar, he improved socio-pragmatic appropriateness that was needed for his particular social context. Also, thanks to his improved intercultural pragmatic competence for communicating, he could have a positive concept of himself in his relations with the communities he belonged to. He might have no intention to be like a native English speaker but might want to be a successful English user. It indicates that positive sense of oneself helps language learners have confidence in using the language. Furthermore, setting reasonable language learning goals makes them motivated to improve appropriate competence which is required for their own contexts. Therefore, English learners can evolve positive L2 identities while they develop intercultural pragmatic competence which may make their relationships with other community members better and improve learning attitudes such as motivation and confidence in using and learning the language.

One of the interesting facts that I found was that even the participants, who were relatively competent in English according to their official English scores, had not been good at having casual conversations with foreigners and had felt it to be difficult to improve their speaking proficiency. This is the same phenomenon as what was identified in a previous study which argued for the need of explicit teaching pragmatics in language classes even to learners with high grammatical competence because of their low pragmatic competence (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001).

Even though some research found the explicit instruction of pragmatics could have a positive effect on the learners' pragmatic competence development (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Rose & Ng Kwain-fun, 2001; Takahashi, 2001), I do not entirely agree with it. As communicative pragmatic competence includes speakers' implicit knowledge of a speaker (Schmidt, 1993) which is not easy to be explained, having experiences of real communication with others would be an appropriate way to achieve it as this study found. As Canagarajah (2007) claimed, complex pragmatic proficiency to facilitate communication would be enhanced through social practice, and non-pedagogical interactions can be a better way to develop pragmatic competence such as ad hoc strategies and agility than through formal language lessons with explicit formulas.

6.3.4. Just a tool for communication

6.3.4.1. Content matters

The findings indicated that the participants could feel confident in English communication in cyberspace thanks to their game competence. Because game competence is an important condition for socializing in this community, the participants who have good gaming skills could feel they were equal to or superior in status to other players, which freed them from an inferiority complex about English. In contrast, one of the immigrant women to Canada in Norton's (2000) case study, Eva, was in a less empowered position compared to her Canadian coworkers in her workplace. The woman who was often prevented from participating in English conversations in her workplace due to her low English proficiency and social status as a Polish immigrant and could not help but feel that she was marginalized in her community. Since she did not have any special skills or language proficiency that could be recognized in the restaurant, she was

just tasked with physical labor. Furthermore, she was assumed to be stupid by native English speakers whom she worked with because of her weak English. This fact affected Eva's motivation to engage in English conversations, which ultimately resulted in learning failure. This case is in contrast with that of a Japanese immigrant in Schimdt's study (1983) which is mentioned above. A successful professional photographer, Wes, who is from Japan, one of the wealthiest countries in the world, did not see himself inferior to the target language community and was not marginalized by the community members. With confidence and willingness to communicate with other community members in English as a comfortable conversationalist, he could become a good storyteller and immerse himself in the target language community. In this regard, we can assume there are many social factors that may affect language learners' motivation and confidence in using their target language.

What I found in this study is that the participants could be confident in the English speaking community because there were factors other than English about which the participants could feel confident. Their gaming skills made them feel they were on an equal footing with others in the community in which English skill is not as important as gaming performance. Indeed, while playing the game, English was used just as a tool for delivering messages, not contents to learn or study about. They realized the communicative function of English through direct experience of communicating with people whose first languages vary. In order to make their messages get across rapidly and effectively, they do not place emphasis on accuracy and are thereby less stressed about making grammar or spelling mistakes.

Also, in this networked space, the EFL learners were not judged by others on

their English competence. As in Norton's study (2000), people who are weak in English can be regarded as dull because of their English competence. This is a similar phenomenon about which Hyun commented. He said,

I feel that showing the level of my English depreciates my overall capability or social standing. Even though I'm bad at English, I do well at school and am pretty smart. But when I do badly in the conversation class, I feel stupid. This doesn't happen in LOL. No one cares if I'm good or bad at English.

Similar to this, Kim stated,

I had tended to think fluent English speakers were more knowledgeable than me. If I saw someone who was very fluent in English, I thought he or she must be at a high social level, a well-educated person.

It seems that the bias they had about the relationship between English competence and intelligence or social status influenced their sense of self and made them feel uncomfortable in speaking in English in their English classes.

Based on the participants' statements, it is assumed that they were afraid that their level of knowledge or social status was judged according to their English competence. It can be assumed that the participants might have felt anxiety when using English in class because of the discrepancy between their mental and English capability. When the participants, especially university students, found that they could not express their thoughts and knowledge in front of others, they might have felt frustrated and lost confidence and interest in English as identified as one of the Korea EFL students' problems in the previous study (Cho, 2004).

6.3.4.2. Revised learning objectives

When the participants of this study realized that other varieties of English, rather than American or British, could be effective in ELF circumstances, their motivation for learning English increased. One of the motivations for learning English is that their realization about the ELF concept provided them with a realistic goal to achieve. They found they did not need to use perfectly correct English sentences for successful communication. What counts is mutual intelligibility among ELF users rather than the approximation to native-speaker models (Jenkins, 2000). I think their revised goal would help their learning motivation because they could set a realistic future plan. If all EFL learners have possible future self-images as the ones who possess native English speakers' competence, their conceived goal would not effectively help the learners' motivation because they are not realistic future possible selves which they can (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). This assumption seems to be on the basis of Medgye's statement; "for all their efforts, non-native speakers can never achieve a native speaker's competence" (1992, p.342) even though there are some exceptions.

There has been a prevailing tenet which emphasizes native speakers' proficiency as the norms of a language (Bley-Vroman, 1983; Long, 1981). Even though Chomsky's theory, Universal Grammar, was not argued for second language acquisition, many SLA researchers integrated this theory in order to explain critical period hypothesis (CPH), which claims only learners who have begun learning their second languages before puberty can achieve native-like mastery of the languages (Patkowski, 1980; White 2003). When Selinker (1972) explained his SLA theories with terms like 'fossilization' and 'interlanguage' to indicate non-native English speakers' defective output which is deviant from the target

language norms, he acknowledged that native-speaker model is indispensable in SLA process. Long (1981) also emphasized the role of the native speaker model as a crucial condition for acquiring second language proficiency, claiming that to have conversations with native speakers is an essential condition for learning a second language. Different from this tenet's argument, the findings of this study might indicate that there could be an improvement in EFL learners' English proficiency through communication with other English users who were not necessarily native English speakers, even though the aspect of proficiency could be different from what was aimed for in the above-mentioned conventional tenet.

On the basis of theories and assumptions mentioned above, the English Only Movement claims using native languages in English teaching hinders successful English learning and has been widely accepted by ESL educators. In fact, many ESL/EFL classes prevent students from using their L1 as their axiom even though there have been many researchers who opposed this tenet (Auerbach, 1993; Phillipson & Skutnabb-kangas, 1996). Another trend of emphasizing native-like proficiency is early-childhood English education which is popular in many countries. Research found that students who had had an early start in learning a second language could achieve native-like mastery which was indistinguishable from native speakers (Johnson & Newport, 1989). I think the research findings of Johnson and Newport would be meaningful if learners' goal of learning a second language is to achieve native-like mastery of the language.

However, considering the usage of English among largely increasing populations of expanding circle countries, the ability to communicate in transnational circumstances would be a reasonable and meaningful goal for most of English learners in an EFL context. Indeed, it is assumed that the participants became

confident and motivated in learning by abandoning unrealistic goals to pursue native-like accuracy. In this regard, I think EFL learners' realistic goal has something in common with Canagarajah (2007)'s statements for lingua franca English communication: "language learning involves an alignment of one's language resources to the needs of a situation, rather than reaching a target level of competence (p. 928)."

Some might argue that the strong focus on content and meaning rather than accuracy may lead to stunting L2 learners' accurate use of their target language because the learners' errors may receive little attention in order to keep communication going without interruption (see Genesee & Lindholm-Leary, 2013 for a discussion of content-based language education). I believe this is a controversial issue that should be considered depending on the learners' priorities and goals. When communicative proficiency is the goal of learning in a language class, I think it is good to consider the findings of this study that indicated that communicative competence might be improved when the focus of communication was more on content rather than accuracy. In this regard, I agree with what McKay (2002, p.127) suggested; Ensuring intelligibility rather than insisting on correctness; helping learners develop interaction strategies that will promote comity (friendly relations) (as cited in Seidlhofer, 2004).

6.4. Changes in learning dispositions

6.4.1. Confidence in using English

Although small in scale, the findings of this study suggested that the EFL learners' L2 identity seemed to be positively enhanced by the opportunities to interact with other English users, which allowed them to

see themselves as legitimate users of English. Furthermore, their positive self-concept constructed online led them to have increased confidence in using English in offline circumstances as well. The participants who had been passive and stressed in learning English seemed to become active and autonomous in learning, which was shown in their classroom attitudes and their personal learning practices.

The participants said they tried using English in offline situations. For example, they found the courage to speak to some exchange students in the college (Bae) and started English communication with his foreign co-workers (Joe). The fact that they were more likely to try to use English when any chances were given both in-class and out-of-class circumstances may indicate their positive state of communicative self-confidence which is shown in their enhanced willingness to communicate (WTC) (MacIntyre et al., 1998). Regarding the fact that people learn a language when they use it, the use of the target language can be an indicator of successful second language learning (Seliger, 1977; Swain, 1998). Research found that learners who participate more in language classes and produce more output gain better L2 proficiency compared to those who are passive in language interaction (Ibid.).

WTC in L2 can be influenced by the circumstance and the experience the learner has had in the context. Research found that L2 learners tended to have more self-confidence and less L2 anxiety in a second language classroom when they had pleasant L2 contact experiences in the classroom, and, as a result, they would more actively participate in the class (MacIntyre et al., 1998). What is new about this study is that the enhanced state of WTC was not confined to the

circumstance where the EFL learners had had pleasant L2 contact experiences but was transferred to other areas. While previous studies had argued that online identities are different and separate from real life ones, as Turkle described life as a screen with many windows (1995). As there can be many windows on a screen, different identities in other windows could exist thanks to the power of anonymity (Ibid.). Compared to this, my research found the changes that were developed online could amalgamate into enhanced self-perception as a part of an ongoing process of individuals' holistic identity construction by exploring the possibility of whether the EFL learners' identities constructed in an online gaming space can affect their offline learning dispositions beneficially. The participants who had developed a positive WTC online in my study felt they became more confident in using English and willing to communicate with foreigners when chances were given in their workplace, campus, and a foreign country while travelling. This result corresponds to the previous research on modified MMORPG for EFL curriculum and students' willingness communicate in conversations (Reinders & Wattana 2012).

Regarding the fact self-confidence is the main condition of motivated language learners (Gardner, 1985; Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009), the result of this study indicates how developed L2 identity works for the EFL learners' own affective conditions, attitudes, and further learning success (Block, 2007; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009; MacIntyre et al., 1998).

6.4.2. Motivation and learning

Most of the participants said they became motivated to learn English after a realization of the ELF paradigm through interactional experiences in the gaming

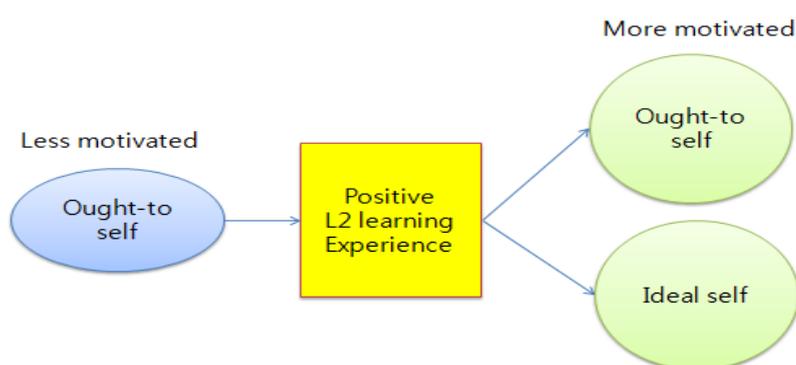
space. Thanks to their newly developed positive L2 identity, they begin to feel better about English and their English community and, as a result, learning English became meaningful to them. This phenomenon can be explained through previous research. The reason the immigrant women in Norton's case study (2000) were not motivated in learning English is that they had built negative L2 identity due to some unpleasant relationship and experiences in her target language community. As L2 learners' attitudes toward their target language community influence their motivation and success in learning the language (Baker & Macintyre, 2000), having pleasant interactions with target language speakers is meaningful for their ultimate learning success. If learners lose motivation through negative learning experiences, their short-term success of learning some linguistic forms and codes would have little meaning comparing to their long-term success in achieving a communicative proficiency of the target language.

When learners are motivated in learning the target language, they use their L2 more frequently, which would positively affect their L2 proficiency level (Gardner et al., 1987). Whether a learner uses an L2 or not depends on the learner's decision that is driven by his/her learning motivation that follows how Dörnyei discussed motivation; "perhaps the only thing about motivation most researchers would agree on is that it, by definition, concerns the direction and magnitude of human behavior, that is: the choice of a particular action; the persistence with it; the effort expended on it" (2001, p.8). People are likely to take actions and give continuous effort when they are motivated.

According to Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System, the participants had had only their ought-to self, which can be identified as more like extrinsic rather

than intrinsic motivation, driven by outside rewards such as success to meet others' expectations or avoidance of negative outcomes. They said they had studied English only for getting high scores in university entrance exams or TOEIC test for getting a good job, which shows that they had only the ought-to self. Thanks to their positive L2 learning experience in the online gaming space while communicating in ELF, they could conceive an ideal L2 self, which can be classified as the traditional concepts of integrative and internalized motivation (Ibid.) They became to be motivated in learning English in order to communicate successfully with other English speakers as a member of both currently engaged online spaces and offline global communities in the future, which might be interpreted as their ideal self. However, their ideal self did not replace their ought-to self because many of the participants who prepared for TOEIC test or IELTS said that their goal of getting high scores in tests still remained. As a result, they began to have both an ought-to self and ideal self through the positive L2 learning experience (See the figure 11 below).

Figure 6.1. The participants' L2 motivational self system



6.4.3. Effect of out-of-class activities on L2 development

As English has emerged as an important medium for global communication in the

21st century, an array of informal learning opportunities for learners of English as a foreign language has been created outside of traditional face-to-face classroom settings through the advance of mass media and technology. In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the need to better understand how these out-of-class activities influence the language learning process and to incorporate these into the development of more comprehensive accounts of second and foreign language teaching and learning (Benson & Reinders, 2011). Given the digitally-networked nature of 21st century life, the sorts of out-of-class English learning opportunities created by the growth of Internet-mediated communication such as through social networking sites, email, fan fiction, and participation in multi-player on-line games is emerging as a focus of research interest (see for example, Thorne et al., 2009).

There are negative views about utilizing out-of-school online activities for language learning. First of all, as a young learner educator, I share many teachers' concern about the amount of time their students spend in uncensored on-line activities in Korea. I agree with the opinion that it is problematic for young students. However, if it is with proper guidance, it seems that online gaming can provide a number of benefits that language teachers need to consider. Even though the participants themselves had not expected any educational benefits from their leisure activity, the results of this study have suggested that joining an on-line transnational gaming community appears to help EFL learners' positive L2 identity construction and their offline learning dispositions. Another negative view is about utilizing online activities for language learning. The competence that can be achieved through language interactions that use specific communities' terms and repertoires might seem to be inappropriate to transfer to educational

contexts to some extent because they are different from those of conventional institutions aim for (Thorn et al., 2009). However, my study focused on nonlinguistic outcomes rather than explicit cognitive competence. My findings indicated that a stress-free out-of-class learning arena for interactive practices can be helpful in order to enhance confidence and motivation for engaging in English communication especially for Korean EFL learners who used to learn English in an assessment-focused, extremely competitive in-class environment that emphasizes mainly reading and grammar.

When considering language learner goals not to be learning a language itself, but as situated usages of a language, as viewed by Bakhtin, which does not see language as an independent entity but as situated utterance about some contents (1981), communities regardless of whether they are online or offline can be places for language development if there are concrete situations where people use the language in order to deliver their own meanings to others. Furthermore, I agree with Thorn and Black (2011)'s argument that most significant language development and socialization occurs in leisure contexts rather than in classrooms because they are the places where real situations for language use are available. In this regard, language learners can develop situated identities through socializing interactions in new language and literacy practices even in online gaming spaces where transnational communications and relationships exist. For taking advantages of the out-of-class learning opportunities, however, individuals should exercise their own autonomy to engage in the activities. The findings of my research indicated that the learners who once had tried to engage in the transnational community in spite of their English complex gained confidence and motivation in English communication and additionally began to

be autonomous in their off-line learning situations including in the classrooms.

It is also consistent with the notion of “bridging activities” (Thorne & Reinhardt, 2008) which suggested that language learners’ digital vernacular interests and pragmatic competence acquired in online settings can be connected to formal education by enhancing the learners’ competence developed in formal institutions. This pedagogical proposal admitted the importance of students’ communicative activities outside the classroom by involving Internet-mediated literacy texts that students themselves find and select on the Internet within advanced foreign language syllabus. It is a significant attempt to complement conventional in-class learning because it integrates literacy practices in naturally occurring contexts with a formal pedagogical framework in order to develop learners’ awareness of new literacy genres and intercultural competence that is needed in actual communicative practices outside of their classrooms. The findings of my study might confirm the possibility of the pedagogical suggestions of “Bridging Activities” in a sense because my study is also an attempt to utilize the outcomes of out-of-class learning opportunities for learners’ overall language development.

Some my participants who have relatively high-level English proficiency (Park, Lee, Shin, Yoon, Roh) mentioned about pragmatic competence that they had gained through CMC experiences in LOL, which made their English more natural and casual than before and more confident in using English. Even though they had high official English test scores, attended university's major classes in English-speaking countries, and wrote a doctoral thesis in English, they were not confident in everyday conversations. It might be interpreted as the concepts of the distinction between basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1979). However,

different from previous research findings of immigrant students for different time periods required to attain BICS/CALP (see Cummins, 2008), the EFL learners in my study seemed to gain English competence that is more like CALP earlier than conversational fluency (BICS). It might have been caused by the fact that they had learned literate English through in-class instructions and had experienced English communication mainly in academic settings. Although it is hard to argue this here with my small-scale study, it might be worth conducting further research on this topic.

6.5. Implications of the study

This research started with a consideration of the ways in which increased globalization particularly via technology has increased the amount of exposure to informal English learning opportunities for EFL learners. My previous small project (Jeon, 2014) helped me to realize that there is a need to recognize that EFL learners in an era of globalization potentially have access to a wide range of English language learning opportunities. I found more about what sorts of things EFL learners were doing and what benefits they could get from their online experience through this research. In this regard, I argue that this research can contribute to the advance of EFL/ESL pedagogy including practice and theory and further research.

6.5.1. For practice

Even though adverse effects stemming from an addiction to video games cause lots of social problems in Korea, where they are prominently popular, there seem to exist some benefits. First, EFL learners could share the typical peer-based popular culture that made them feel an affinity and rapport with other English

users from various countries. Second, they improved their English competence while communicating with other players. Third, they realized the ELF paradigm and constructed a positive L2 identity their pragmatic competence developed. Fourth, their confidence and motivation in English increased. Regardless of whether they had intended or not, both linguistic and non-linguistic learning took place while they were using English out of necessity and taking part in a kind of social activity through practice and participation beyond their classrooms.

I argue that the insights gained from this study have demonstrated that there are a number of potential qualities of on-line gaming communities that might be conducive to classroom practice for enhancing overall construction of students' positive L2 identity. Firstly, the findings indicated that there is a tendency towards equitable relationships and pleasant affective conditions in the online LOL community that made the EFL learners feel comfortable using English. Many cases of L2 learning experience are related to social interactions with teachers and peers that are different from those of the online space. In language classes, as the participants stated, students may need to speak in L2 in which they do not yet feel comfortable, being afraid that their overall capacity would be judged by their English competence and treated unfairly according to their shown competence by their teachers. In this regard, language teachers can consult the findings of this research to reflect on how to consider their students' affective conditions and how to improve their classroom atmosphere.

Secondly, the findings of this study identified that there were activities and contexts in which English was used as a tool for interactions and communication in the gaming community, which made the participants feel confident and in which

they engaged. This kind of learning through interactions might be interpreted as ecological model (Kramsch, 2002), Content-based learning (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989), or Task-based Language Teaching approaches (TBLT, Ellis, 2003), which emphasizes social interactions and relationships for language acquisition and using the language as a means of real communication. Those approaches are different from traditional concept and pedagogy that views teaching and learning to be a linear direction of transmission and reception. As many studies explored, using online games for language education provides lots of benefits. One of them is that online games can provide language learners with task-based/content-based learning opportunities because “games are not necessarily about memorizing or providing correct answers (Sørensen & Meyer, 2007: 561).”

Especially, TBLT, which involves tasks for meaning-focused language use and is intended to attain targeted language aims (Ellis, 2003) is often associated with game-based language learning environment (Cornillie et al., 2012). TBLT was originally introduced to improve interaction, negotiation of meaning, and authentic language that contrasts to the prevalent SLA curriculum that focused on instruction of linguistic forms (Van den Branden, et al., 2009). Furthermore, different from form-focused language use, meaning-focused language use does not require learners to use specific linguistic forms for accomplishing tasks (Ellis, 2003). In this regard, a case study in the 3D virtual world of Second Life explored the potential online environment that provides second language learners with opportunities learning a language with a TBLT approach (Thomas 2012). As this study explored, in order to make digital game-based language learning to fulfill its original goals, learners should regard the outcomes whether it is outperforming

others or mastery of the game goals, most important value. Otherwise, they can focus on displaying their language skills rather than using language meaningfully (Ibid).

Regardless of which theory or methodology is chosen, language teachers should reflect on their teaching practices in order to reproduce the interactive conditions of the on-line gaming community in their classrooms. Some activities that require communicational interactions for making their messages about some non-linguistic objects to be delivered to each other would be helpful for their students to try out their imperfect English on without too much fear or embarrassment. In this vein, English-only programs and content-based immersion programs have been adopted recently in Korea, but there have been so many problems in practicing them in the field due to the imbalance between the policy and reality (Jeon, 2009). Teachers are not prepared for the new programs, and the test-oriented system hinders implementation of the practice. Therefore, EFL teachers might utilize out-of-class activities for their curriculums or get some hints on how to offer EFL learners online/offline activities that engage them with not merely cognitive process as passive receivers of knowledge but through some interpersonal practice that requires voluntary participation and autonomy as active generators of knowledge. Then, their classes will become different from the ones which feed students with pre-determined dialogue patterns that are provided in textbooks.

Finally, the results of this study also point to the ways in which these EFL learners' L2 identities were positively enhanced by the opportunities to interact with other users of English, both learners of English in other countries as well as those who speak this as their first language. Although small in scale, the findings of the study

suggest that the opportunities allowed the participants to see themselves as legitimate users of English and to gain a greater ownership of this global medium of communication. This has highlighted for me how important it is to offer opportunities for EFL learners to communicate with other users of English worldwide. This might be achieved via joining online community programs for meeting international pen pals or participating in international activity clubs like Toastmasters or English cafes outside institutions. Also, when proper guidance is provided, playing international online games might be recommended. I think they are worth being utilized for pedagogical purposes and can assist language teachers' endeavour to promote learners' autonomy and motivation in learning their target language. This suggestion might be appropriate for adult learners rather than for young learners due to the problematic issues related to some online games such as addiction and violence.

6.5.2. For research and theory

Recent SLA studies take the view that learners' motivation should be examined with the notions of identity and self-situated in a "more dynamic, emergent, and socially constructed vein" (Duff, p.4). The issues of identity and the agency of L2 learners, which traditional SLA research has paid little attention to, have emerged and have been explored in the interactions with other users of the same target language (Wenger, 1998; Block, 2003; Norton, 2000; Pavlenko, 2002). While research on identity and language learning used to focus on in-class relationships or ESL learners' identity in immigrant countries, recently the attention has moved to ontologically new language and literacy practices through Internet-mediated communication that enables language learners to develop situated identities through text-based interactions in online contexts (Thorne & Black, 2011).

Moreover, the internet and computer technology provide opportunities for creating and presenting alternative identities that are transportable and negotiated (Thorne et al. 2015).

To that end, this research also focused on the issue of EFL learners' L2 identity construction through interactional experiences with other English users and how their evolved identity affects their learning. Even though it is small scale research with a self-selected sample, which is based on the participants' narratives about their experiences of period ranges from 6 months to 3 years, it could show the positive changes in their concepts and behaviors. It can be questioned whether the self-report narratives of the participants could be the evidence of L2 identity involvement because they do not always draw factual information. However, it is not about to prove if the stated experiences, personal feelings, and behaviors are true or not but to explore if there were changes in their aspects of their own sense of self. Therefore, narrative interview which is not confined to preselected agenda (even though there were some predetermined key interview questions) in order to capture the participants' specific episodes is enough to elicit the information which is needed to explore the participants' perception at the moment of the events and their experienced meanings (Jovchelovitch & Bauer 2000).

There has been some research that has explored the L2 identity construction process online (Lam, 2000, 2004; Thorne & Black, 2011; Gee, 2004), but I have not been able to identify any research that looks at the issue of EFL learners' identity development from the perspective of the ELF paradigm and its influence on the learning dispositions of learners of English as a foreign language who are physically in a circumstance where English is not used commonly in their real life contexts. The global community where English is used as a lingua franca that the

EFL learners realized and felt belonging could be realized through their 'imagination' with which they could have prolonged the sense of ownership of the global language in their local communities. This has something in common with Wenger's (1998) argument about the affiliation of imagined community, which Norton extended for the relationship between imagination and investment in the communities of practice (Kanno & Norton, 2003). In this sense, I think these research findings can be meaningful to the advance of research and theory on the themes of L2 identity, the ELF paradigm, and out-of-class learning pedagogy altogether. I know the findings of this research may not represent all EFL learners' or Korean English learners' experience because it is just a small scale research. It will help us gain a wider and deeper understanding if research is conducted with a bigger sample and longitudinal methods. (Jovchelovitch & Bauer 2000).

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.1. Introduction

This study was set out to explore the impact of playing a transnational Massively Multi-player Online game on Korean EFL learners' L2 identity and has identified some characteristics of the gaming community that could affect EFL learners' positive L2 identity construction and changes in their offline English learning. For this, this study sought to find what sort of changes happened through the online experiences to the EFL learners' feelings, thoughts, and behaviors towards English itself, other English speakers, and themselves as English users and how the changes could influence their offline learning such as their confidence and motivation that could ultimately help their language learning success. While the issue of L2 identity has been discussed in many of previous studies from various perspectives, this study explored the issue with the view of ELF paradigm in an out-of-class, online community in which international social interactions are available through real-time CMC in order to answer the following questions: 1. What sorts of interactions and relationships are available in a transnational multiplayer online game for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners? 2. How does the online experience affect EFL learners' second language identity (L2 identity) construction? 3. How do their evolved L2 identities affect their offline learning attitude? I could identify some typical aspects of online gaming community that might be helpful for EFL learners' positive L2 identity construction through the narratives of 10 Korean EFL learners' experiences.

In order to briefly integrate the issues covered in previous chapters as the conclusion of this study, this chapter will reflect on the empirical findings

according to the research questions, discuss the contribution of these study findings, and conclude with my personal reflections on the study.

7.2. The empirical findings

The empirical findings that answer the first research question are presented in Chapter 5 (in the section of 5.3. The opportunities available in the gaming community) in two sub categories; one (5.3.1.) is about the characteristics of communication in the gaming community and the other (5.3.2.) is about the nature of relationships among the members of the community. The findings for the first research question indicated that there was a unique environment in which the EFL learners had opportunities to experience pleasant transnational communications without others' bias or their own complex about English (5.4.1.) and having equitable relationships with other English speakers (5.4.2.), which made them realize the ELF paradigm. These opportunities helped them to evolve a positive L2 identity as legitimate members of an English-speaking community. I presented the findings that answer the second research question in three categories, that is, the participants' perceptions about themselves (5.4.1.1), other English speakers (5.4.1.2.), and English itself (5.4.1.3.). The reason I presented the findings in those three categories is based on the understandings of identity by previous research (Norton, 2000; Block, 2007; Handley et al., 2006; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004) and the dictionary definitions as discussed in the section of 5.5.1. The impact on EFL learners' thoughts, feelings, and behavior.

The findings indicated there were changes which show EFL learners' positive L2 identity construction. In terms of the effects of evolved L2 identity, the findings for research question 3 showed the increase of their confidence and motivation in using and learning English as well as their communicative competence that can be developed through social interactions. The result shows that the online space provided the EFL learners with an English-speaking environment in which they felt more comfortable and confident in using English than in their English classes thanks to the realization of the ELF paradigm they could develop in the virtual space. Furthermore, it shows that the changes in their sense of selves affected their offline learning attitudes that are not confined to a particular community.

7.3. Contribution to knowledge

I believe this study that explored L2 identity construction in an online gaming space has been able to fill some gaps in knowledge into what sort of factors can influence EFL learners' L2 identity construction positively and how out-of-class virtual activities can affect language development, especially for EFL learners. Moreover, as this study was conducted with the perspective of ELF paradigm, it would provide insight of the relationship between EFL learners' identity and ELF concept.

This study made an important contribution to an understanding of a group of young adult Korean EFL learners' perspectives on English and their significance. By examining the participant's statements, through this study I could identify some conditional factors which could influence the EFL learners' feelings, thoughts, and behaviors such as whether they feel discrimination against their demographic criteria, whether they feel close to other English speakers, whether

they have some skills that other community members take seriously, whether they realize the varieties of English, and whether they realize that English can be a tool for communication. This can suggest how to utilize the conditional factors found in an out-of-class activity for improving EFL learners' language learning environment for positive L2 identity construction.

Also, the research on a real-time interactional activity through online gaming made a useful contribution to understanding the ways in which online activities for EFL education can be utilized. As the EFL and ESL environmental condition is different, the meaning of out-of-class activities might be different. For many Korean learners, there are few chances to engage in interactive activities in their target language outside of classrooms for EFL learners due to their circumstances. Unlike ESL learners in English speaking countries, opportunities for using English for the authentic purpose and receiving live feedback from a real audience are not common for EFL learners in Korea. Indeed, most of the out-of-class activities are for receptive skills such as reading books and watching videos. In this context, by exploring EFL learners' experience of international English communication through one of the online activities whose original purpose has nothing to do with any educational functions, it may extend the view of out-of-class learning opportunities for EFL education and provide SLA researchers with an insight into the educational effect of informal CMC. Supposing online games are used for education, there are also many problems, such as non-standard English usages, risks of game addiction and frequent use of violent expressions. Basically, I do not think that commercial online games can be used in schools without modification. Nonetheless, I chose one of commercial battle games, League of Legends, in order to explore a potential aspect of young

generations' peer-based popular culture to be utilized for an out-of-class learning activity. If educational games had been chosen for this study, it would have been difficult to distinguish the beneficial factors that this research found from the intended effects of the educational games.

I think the approach that I have taken to explore how EFL learners could realize ELF usages and concepts can provoke a debate over the awareness of the ELF paradigm in TESOL research areas. The participants could become aware of the ELF paradigm not by receiving an explicit education but by direct experience of it, which was identified by analyzing their statements about the changes in their thoughts about English. While I agree with the researchers (Sifakis, 2004; Sifakis & Sougari, 2005), who recommend explicit teacher education about the ELF paradigm, the findings of this study suggest that there can be another possible way to establish L2 identity as ELF users and transform the learning and teaching practice of EFL learners and teachers.

7.4. Personal reflections on the study

The context of SLA research is not confined to formal, off-line settings but extended to virtual space as the times change, because there are opportunities in digital literacy practices. Since there are communities in which people have relationships and interactions, the networked international environment can provide people with contexts to construct the concepts of themselves, others, and their interrelations. In this context, online gaming, one of many CMC activities, drew my attention.

As an EFL educator, I have used various teaching materials. For example, audio tapes or CDs for teaching listening skills, play scripts for role-playing activities,

international pen pals for writing activities, movies and American drama clips for conversations. These days, various channels that have not been used for education have been used by Korean EFL learners, such as telephone conversation lessons, e-learning programs, tablet PC and language teaching applications. Lastly, using serious educational games that have been developed for the purpose of language education are booming in Korea. Games designed for educational goals, however, tend to be simplified in content due to developers' technological (financial) limitations and their educational goals, leading learners only to specific conversational repertoires that are predetermined by the programs (Purushotma, 2005). In Korea, some commercial MMORPG games were modified for English education and were applied in some public school curriculums by altering in-game contents in order to teach textbook lessons (Wi et al., 2009; Wi & Kim, 2010; Suh, et al., 2010). Scientific research has been conducted, and test results of experimental groups and control groups demonstrated positive effects to using online games for young learners, showing that experimental group students performed better in tests of English skills like listening, reading, and writing than those who were taught in traditional face-to-face classes. This shows that commercial online games have a potential to be modified for formal education. However, these programs were conducted inside classes, and the participants could communicate only with their classmates within limited lesson plans under teachers' circumscriptions, which cannot be described as 'authentic' communication.

When I was thinking about my doctoral thesis topic, I came across commercial online gaming through my acquaintance who works for one of the biggest worldwide game companies. He introduced me to some games, and I found there

was a huge gap between the technology used in institutions and lucrative commercial games which consist of relatively abundant in-game contents and globally approved entertaining merits that can attract learners who are bored at simple educational games. Since then, I have become interested in online games. I was fascinated not only by the advanced technology but also the method and contents in them. There were real-time interactive communications among unspecified people for an authentic purpose, which is different from stereotyped educational games based on pre-determined scripts. My research interest came out of curiosity whether there was anything related to LOL could be utilized for English education. While conducting this study, I found some interesting issues about EFL learners' identity in the global era and some causes of Korean EFL learners' English inferiority complex that need to be considered by English teachers in EFL contexts like Korea. There have been many changes in ELT fields and trends over the decades, and I think this study explored many of these current perspectives in this fields. One of the major trends is that English educators realized the significance of English as a lingua franca in the era of globalization (Jenkins, 2007). As obtaining native-like production of English is no longer realistic or necessary for English learners (Seidlhofer, 2004) from the perspective of ELF, teaching approaches and methods have been changed. With awareness of the notions of English as a contact language, the importance of the pragmatic use of English, which focuses on intelligibility rather than on accuracy, has been recognized by English educators (McKay, 2002; Jenkins 2007). In this regard, ELT trend has been moved from grammar translation methods to communicative, content-based approaches, "away from an association with drills, grammatical explanations and translation tests, into more communicative based

contexts where task-based, project-based and content-based approaches are integrated (Sørensen & Meyer, 2007: 561)". Furthermore, the dimension of communicative competence emphasized in this trend has been expanded to the intercultural communicative competence, which is needed to communicate effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds (Korn, 2013). Nowadays, advanced technology provides second language learners with lots of opportunities to communicate with people from different countries in online spaces via various CMC channels. While participating in communicative activities in virtual spaces, English learners can recognize themselves and others and develop their L2 identity. This study explored how Korean EFL learners could positively construct their L2 identity while playing an online game and how their evolved L2 identity could influence their offline learning dispositions. As L2 identity has been increasingly recognized as an important variable underpinning foreign or second language learning success from the sociocultural perspective on learning (Block, 2007), the findings of this study are in accordance with current ELT trends.

7.5. Limitations of the study

I admit the process of L2 identity construction and its influence on learning success could have been better investigated in different ways. Also, the research could have been conducted with different data collecting methods such as collecting their online conversations or observing their classroom behaviors with permission from other game players and faculties of institutions. There is not only the method but also some additional factors which I can identify as limitations of this study:

- Even though there were reasonable criteria for me to select LOL for this study; it is the most popular online game in South Korea; there had been no Korean service till recently; it is a strategy game that requires team play, the game itself is not so educational because it is a battle arena game whose goal is to destroy the opposing team with rather violent ways.
- Only 10 participants were involved in this study so that it might be viewed a limitation for generalization of the research findings from the quantitative stance.
- Even though the participants were all volunteers for this study, I had to select 10 out of 118 volunteers both randomly and intentionally (as explained in 4.4.2. for the purpose of regional and gender selection). Therefore, this sampling might not represent a certain population nor be free from bias.
- Due to its characteristics, it is more favored by male players. So, the most of the participants (9 out of 10) were male. Different from social games like The Sims, which is played regardless of gender, LOL is a multiplayer battle arena game that is usually played by males. When I surveyed Korean 1081 players of MMOGs including LOL in 2012 for a study, 97.48% of the volunteering participants were male (Jeon, 2014).
- I used only one method for collecting data, i.e. narrative interviews so that it may be evaluated as a lack of triangulation. When considering that any changes in their identity are shown in their feelings, thoughts, and behavior, it would be worth observing their behavior in their classes or their online chat logs while playing the game to confirm if their stories

correspond to their actual behavior.

- What the participants told me might be influenced by what they thought the purpose of the interview was. As I have told the participants that this is for academic research, they could have told me more about positive effects of playing the game.
- As the participants were the volunteers for interviews, they might be more active people than others who did not volunteer. Also, they may be more interested in English learning.
- For the convenience of the participants, I conducted the interview in Korean and translated it into English. Even though the data of the interview were proofread by someone else who is good at English, there is a possibility that the original meaning of the interview data could be misleading unintentionally.
- Even though the participants did not mention about, there are some possible limitations of being involved in the game: They can use casual expressions in formal situations such as writing official e-mail and business reports at work because they have not learned level of formality in English usage; Game players who do not have good gaming skills can be discouraged when using English due to bad feedbacks from other players; The participants who gained confidence in communicating through text-based system can feel difficulty in using English via speaking device in games; Players can be silent without communicating with others while playing a game because frequent miscommunication can discourage them.

In hindsight, there are some aspects of this study I could have done differently. Firstly, I think ethnographic longitudinal case studies would be able to provide the deeper understanding of EFL learners' L2 identity development and its influence on their learning dispositions by comparing before, while, and at the post stages of changes in learners' concepts and behaviors. Furthermore, observing authentic interactions and follow-up interviews both with Korean EFL learners and their interlocutors could provide deeper insight into EFL learners' L2 identity, on the basis of the concept of identity as "both self-generated subject positioning as well as subject positioning that are imposed on individuals by others" (Block, 2007, p.26), being negotiated between reflective positioning by oneself and interactive positioning by others (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). Lastly, while this study focused on text-based interactions in an online game, further study can investigate how oral communication through voice-chat systems would affect EFL learners' L2 identity and language development. Through this, we could learn how different or similar their experiences are depending on the methods of communication.

Despite those limitations mentioned above, I think it was meaningful that I have been able to learn that there were significant changes in the EFL learners' feelings, concepts, and behaviors through the participants' own statements about their experiences because this study is about identity issues that are hidden aspects of individuals. In addition, compared to the time that I embarked on this doctoral course, more attention has been paid to the ways of utilizing Internet-mediated communication for L2 learning and teaching. However, EFL learners' L2 identity evolution in online gaming communities from the ELF perspective has not been the focus of much attention yet. Therefore, I hope the findings of

this research could provide the better understanding of EFL learners' identity development and their overall foreign language learning success.

7.6. Suggestions for further research

This thesis has highlighted several issues on which further research would be beneficial. Even though I think the narrative interview was an appropriate data collecting method for this study, an ethnographic longitudinal case study on a few participants might lead to a deeper understanding of how and when L2 identity change happens and how it would affect other parts of their learning activities. If their feelings, attitudes and behaviors are observed or recorded in their diaries from the very first day of having English communication online, the data will show the process of their identity development in detail. As identity construction is not a fixed but ongoing (becoming) process, the evolved (developed) identities at the time of episodes that the participants talked about must have been different from the ones at any other point of time and space. Another area for further research is related to the relationship between BICS and CALP. Whether either of them might be developed through communicating experience while they play English online games and how the two different skills may influence each other would be an interesting topic to explore for the better understanding of EFL learners' learning process. Finally, the findings of this study indicated that not all participants felt free from native speaker fallacy while some realized the ELF paradigm through the virtual experience of interacting with other English users. In order to find out what factors might influence the changes in their perception of English and its legitimacy, research on larger population for a longer period of time would provide a better understanding of the issue.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: E-mail of introduction to the research project to the LOL community leader

This following email was sent on 30th of June, 2014.

안녕하세요?

저는 University of Exeter 에서 영어교육학 박사 과정에서 수학하고 있는 전상아라고 합니다.

다름이 아니오라, League of Legends 를 대상으로 하는 영어교육 관련 연구를 하려고, 협조 가능 여부를 문의 드리고자 이메일을 드립니다.

설명을 드리자면, 저는 한국 게이머들이 영어로 구성된 온라인게임을 플레이하면서, 글로벌시대에서의 자아정체성 및 영어에 대한 의식의 변화, 온라인게임의 영어교육 활용 잠재력에 관한 주제로 연구를 진행 중입니다. 해당 연구 대상 게임으로 근래 한국어 서비스를 진행하여 한동안 영어 환경에서 플레이를 해야만 했던 리그오브레전드를 선택하고 본 게임을 플레이해본 경험이 있는 유저들을 대상으로 인터뷰를 계획했습니다. 비록 현재는 LOL 이 한국어로 서비스되고 있지만, 카페 내 상당수 회원들이 북미판을 즐겨온 만큼 조사 대상은 충분하다고 판단됩니다. 이에 가능하시다면 운영자분들께서 해당 사항 검토하신 후 공지사항과 전체 회원들을 대상으로하는 쪽지(메시지 또는 이메일) 발송 가능 여부에 대한 회신을 부탁 드리고자 합니다. 상기 사항 검토 후 진행 가능 여부 회신 주시면, 뉴스 및 쪽지로 발송해주실 공지 사항 및 설문조사 시트 등을 발송해드리도록 하겠습니다.

답변 기다리겠습니다. 감사합니다.

2014. 6. 30.

전상아 드림

Appendix 2: Notice for recruiting interview volunteers

인터뷰 참가자 자격 요건:

1. 나이: 만 20-29세
2. 북미서버에서 영어로 LOL을 6개월 이상 해 본 경험이 있는 자
3. 현재 영어수업을 받고 있는 자: 대학교 수업이나 사설학원에 참석 중인 자

인터뷰는 1-2시간 정도 소요될 것이며, 사전조율을 통해 본인이 원하는 시간과 장소에서 진행될 것입니다. 가능하신 분은 saj209@exeter.ac.uk로 이메일 주시기 바랍니다.

Conditions:

1. Age: 20-29 years old
2. Period of playing LOL: more than 6 months in North American server
3. English learners: who study English in formal institutions including universities and private academies

Interview will last 1-2 hours and you can choose time and place. If you are interested in volunteering, please send email to saj209@exeter.ac.uk.

Appendix 3: Interview schedule

14/Jul/2014: Kim

18/Jul/2014: Lee, Park

22/Jul/2014: Roh, Choi

24/Jul/2014: Hyun, Shin

07/Aug/2014: Yoon, Bae

22/Aug/2014: Joe

Appendix 4: Interview questions

1. Tell me about yourself: age, educational background, how long have you been playing LOL in English, which character they like to play and why...)
2. Tell me any episodes of online interactions you think have impacted on yourself, your sense of self, and your feelings about other English speakers...
3. Do you think the answers for the following questions have changed since you played LOL in English? How is the difference?
 - What does English mean to you?
 - Why do you study English?
 - What is your ultimate goal (level) of learning English?
 - What do you think of the power relations between native English speakers and non-native English speakers?
 - How do you feel about yourself as an English speaker?
 - How do you feel that other English speakers think of you?
4. Tell me about any effects of LOL experience on your offline life/ study/ attitudes towards English (willingness to communicate/ motivation for learning)
5. How different is your English usage (or learning) in online gaming space and in formal classrooms?
6. Is there anything you want to talk or ask more?

Appendix 5 : Consent form

CONSENT FORM

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation and may also request that my data be destroyed

I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me

any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications or academic conference or seminar presentations

if applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project in an anonymised form

all information I give will be treated as confidential

the researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

.....

(Signature of participant)

.....

(Date)

.....

(Printed name of participant)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher(s)

Contact phone number of researcher(s): 82-10-8814-9775 Email: saj209@exeter.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

Prof. Rupert Wegerif. Email: R.B.Wegerif@exeter.ac.uk / +44 (0) 1392 724708

or Dr. Sarah Rich. Email: S.A.L.Rich@exeter.ac.uk

Appendix 6: Sample interview script

Interview 1

Tell me about yourself. (Kim)

- I'm 22, male, and a university student majoring in sociology. I've never studied abroad. I want to be a researcher in the future. Playing LOL is my hobby. I've played it for about a year on the North American server.

Among the characters of LOL, which one do you like most?

- I like Teemo. Because you play in teams in LOL, teamwork is very important. But the fact that I like playing Teemo shows my preference for playing solo.

Tell me any episodes of online interactions you think have had an impact on yourself, your sense of self, and your feelings about other English speakers...

- Hmm... what's your question, again? What do you mean by "sense of self"? Do you mean it.. hmm... as an English speaker?

I mean your feelings about yourself.. how you feel about yourself.

- Do you mean it as an English speaker?

It can be not only as an English speaker... but also anything else.

- Umm.....

Is my question too difficult?

- Yes.. it's hard to understand your question.

Hmm.. ok then.. I will change my question.

When you play on the North American server, do you always use English to chat with other players?

- Yes, basically all the players use English to communicate. There are not only Americans, but also English users from Asian countries like Hong Kong and Singapore.

Don't you have any difficulties communicating in English?

- When I first played on the North American server, of course I couldn't communicate very well in English.. but as time went by, I started to realize which expressions to use in each situation. So I have become much better at communicating in English compared to when I first started.

Then, can you tell me some memorable episodes that had to do with English communication?

- In LOL, players need to chat while playing the game. So players need to use acronyms. At first, I did not know what "WTF" meant when I first played the game. I looked it up on Naver and found out that it meant "What the fuck." Because the game play is busy, I didn't have enough time to ask someone else about all the expressions used by other players that I didn't understand. Also, I didn't want to show other players that I was not good at English, so I didn't ask the other players but just looked them up after finishing a game.

Was there a moment when you felt you made good communication with others?

- In the beginning, I tried to use sentences, not just words. I thought about the grammar rules that I learned in school.. such as subject, verbs, and so on. I thought I had to use correct sentences to be understood by other players, especially those from English speaking countries.. but gradually, I found that they understood what I meant when I used just a few key words, not full sentences. So I realized that I just needed to use a few core words to be understood. Speaking English became more natural after this realization.

Then, due to the experience you mentioned, have you come to feel about yourself differently? I mean as an English speaker, how do you feel about yourself, compared to before this experience?

- Do you mean how I feel about my English competence?

Anything you feel about yourself.. feeling about yourself as an English speaker among other English users.

- I don't know what to say... hmm... it's a hard question. Well... I think I became more confident in using English compared to before. I'm not sure my English is correct or not, but when I chat with a few simple words, other players understand me. At first, I was worried about not being understood. But now, sometimes I think the people who do not understand me are the ones who are strange... because I use the same words and expressions in the same occasions... and most of the time my words are understood by other players. So if there are people who do not understand my words, I think it's not my fault but theirs. Now I can lead games and suggest to others how to play... in LOL, we need to plan how to assign team members to their positions.. I couldn't lead a game before but now I can because I became more confident in communicating with others..

When was the first time you felt confidence in communicating in English? From when were you able to lead games?

- About 3 months after I started playing LOL in English.

How often and how long do you play LOL a week?

- I play about 2 hours a day. It means I play about 3 games a day. I was able to lead games

from the 6th month. In about 2-3 months, I wasn't confident with my English but I didn't hesitate when chatting.. Actually, I'm quite good at this game.

You said you are good at this game. Do you have any memorable games where you played well?

- Once, my team won thanks to my game performance. And one of the opponent team members, who played the same character as me, sent me a friend request (the same kind of friend request as in other social utility sites) and I accepted it. He asked me about how I had played in the game. He wanted to learn from me. I tried to explain how I had played, but it was not easy explaining it. He realized that I felt difficulty in explaining and he asked me with sentences like "You did ..., right?" and I would respond with "yes" or "no." In this way, we could communicate. I understand what he said, but it was hard for me to make sentences to explain myself. However, I felt proud because I could teach my game skills to others. Even though I wasn't as good at speaking in English as him, I could teach him what I knew. My English competence does not really matter as long as I can play LOL well.

Do you know his nationality?

- He is Canadian.

Did you ask him about his nationality?

- No, but he gave me his Facebook info. So I checked it out and found out he's from Canada. I have a few LOL friends from Hong Kong, too. They are my Facebook friends as well.

Have you ever felt inferior to other fluent English speakers while playing the game?

- Not really. Because I'm good at this game... I think that in games, one's English skill is not a standard to judge others. Game skills are more important than English skill. So nobody would feel inferior to others as long as they are good at playing the game. English is not as important as game skills.

You mean that bad English never causes problems when playing LOL?

- Hmm.. Sometimes there are players who do not communicate at all. As you know, it's a team game. So people need to communicate in LOL. In particular, teams are given time to strategize before a game starts. It's just for about one minute, but players communicate a lot during this short time. For example, we say directions like "Where will you go?", "I will go to the mid", "I will go to the top, you go to the bottom" or things like "Let's go for it!" "Cheer up!".. But sometimes, there are players who do not communicate at all. Then I think it's because they cannot communicate in English. Although it's just an assumption, if someone chats a lot in short time using difficult vocabulary and long sentences, then I think he/she is good at English and from an English speaking country like America or Canada. If someone keeps using only very simple expressions, like "go," "look back," "watch out," then, I guess they are not that good at English.. I guess they might be from Asian countries. But I never judge other players by their competence with English.

Then, have you never had an experience where you were discriminated against or blamed by a good player, who is good at English as well, due to your mistakes in English?

- Sometimes players of opponent teams blame me, but team members usually do not blame nor use bad words to players in the same team. Of course when there is a really bad player, then we do blame him.

Someone who is bad at playing the game or someone who is bad at communicating in English?

- Someone who is bad at playing the game.

Then, poor English never causes problems in LOL.. right?

- Sometimes it causes problems. For example, when a player does not respond to other team members' requests, such as "Don't go that way" or "Come this way".. Then, it's a problem for the team.

You never feel inferior or superior to others because of other players' English competence?

- I think that in games, we feel equal. Everybody is equal and the only criterion in this space is game playing competence, not English. I've never given much thought to players worse at the game being better at using English than me. English is just a tool for communication which is required for playing games. Good communication helps the game play go more smoothly. Because it's not an individual game but a team game, the five players need to communicate well. We need good teamwork to beat the opponent team.

Do you communicate well in LOL now?

- At first, I could use only a few simple expressions but now I use various expressions. I became more confident than before. However, I'm not sure whether my English is proper or not. In-game expressions are rather simple. But I chat with my friends about the game such as "I think this strategy is not appropriate for this character. Let's play in a different way next time." I guess chatting after games helps me improve my English.

Has this experience of using English changed your thoughts or feelings about English or other English users?

- When I am understood by other players, I feel great. For example, when someone says "Let's start our combat at 5:17" and I say "No, at 17 is too early. Let's start at 18." Then, others say "ok" "ok" "alright," and I feel confident. I also feel that I have acted successfully.

Now, let's talk about how you have changed since you played LOL. The following questions will be on how you have changed since you played LOL in English. Explain the difference between how it was then and how it is now for you. OK?

- OK.

What does English mean to you?

- I think the meaning of English has not changed for me. English is something like a burden that I need to deal with well. You know, I have to get good scores on English tests to get a good job. Also, I have to take English classes at school. I think it is the same for all Korean people that we learn English in elementary school, middle school, and high school, but few of those who have studied only in Korea are really confident in English. The meaning of English to me has not changed after I started playing English games.

Why do you study English?

- Hmm...

Has the reason why you study English changed?

- I had never thought about why I studied English before. The question is not that different from "Why do you go to school?" It's like a duty that I cannot deny. But I started to think about the fact that English is a language. I had never thought of English as a language. English had been a difficult subject that I had to study hard. But after playing LOL in English, I realized for the first time that English is a language

which is needed to understand others and to be understood. Now I think the reason why I study English is not only to get good grades in a subject but to communicate with others as a language.

You had never thought of English as a language?

- No, I had never thought so because I had never used English for real communication.

What is your ultimate goal (level) of learning English?

- A TOEIC score of 900. This hasn't changed. It was and is my goal. I have learned that English is for communication and I communicate with other players in English. However, I am not sure if I can do so in the real world. In the game, I can communicate using only simple expressions. But I'd never had real experience communicating with foreigners. I've never been to an English speaking country.

Never? You said you take English classes, didn't you?

- Yeah, but I take a TOEIC preparation class. So it's not for communicational skills but for learning test taking skills. Even in English classes taught by foreign teachers, I don't get many chances to talk with the teachers because there are too many students in a class. I attend test preparation class to achieve a score of 900.

So your goal to study English has not changed, huh?

- No, but I did realize that there can be another goal for learning English rather than getting high scores on English tests. It's for communication. The difference is that I realized that English is also a language, not only a subject.

What do you think about the power relations between native English speakers and non-native English speakers?

- I don't understand your question. What do you mean by 'the power relations'?

The social level. Do you feel that we have equal social level to native English speakers or that we are superior or inferior to them? Have your thoughts or feelings about this issue changed?

- I had tended to think fluent English speakers were more knowledgeable than me. If I saw someone who was very fluent in English I thought he/she must be on a high social level, a well educated person. But now I don't think so. Just like how fluent Korean speakers are not always knowledgeable people on a high social level, fluent English speakers are not always knowledgeable. For example, in LOL, there are many players who are fluent in English but can't play well. I am really good at this game. Whenever my team wins because of me, other players tell me "How excellent you are!" "How do you play so well?" etc. I never feel small or intimidated in the game. Fluent English is helpful for a team, especially when playing as an operator. When there is a good operator who communicates well, it's really good for a team. To be an operator, communication skill is necessary. But simply being a fluent speaker does not always make a good operator. If he speaks in his own style which makes it hard for other players who are not that good at English to understand, his fluent speaking is not helpful. Therefore, he should use simple and clear expressions so that everybody can understand what he says. I've seen players who communicate well. They are very fluent but they don't use difficult words. I think those who have this kind of English competence are truly good English speakers.

How do you feel about yourself as an English speaker?

- How do you feel that other English speakers think of you?

What about how you feel that other English speakers think of you?

- At first, I was afraid of not being understood. So I was hesitant when I used English. I thought I could be ignored by others when my English was not understood by others. I thought I might have made some errors when my words were not understood. But now I think my English is generally understood by others and people are not that mean to me. And I don't feel upset or disappointed even if I am not understood. I just think people who don't understand my words must be bad at English because usually my English is understood by others. Hahaha. I do not care as much about other people's reactions. Sometimes, I teach other players my game skills when they ask me. Then, I feel proud of myself and feel that I am acknowledged by foreigners.

Tell me about any effects your experiences with LOL had on your offline life/ study/ attitudes towards English.

- While I did not look up words I didn't know in the past, now I am used to looking them up and trying to find the meanings of new words. Sometimes, there are expressions that are not found in dictionaries, such as MTC which means "mid to concentrate." These kinds of expressions are not found in dictionaries and search engines. Then, I visit community sites or ask other players while playing a game. When my character dies, I have to stay for one minute. For this one minute, I can't do anything but wait. During this time, I leave a question on the chat window, and other players who have died as well and are waiting often answer my question. Or, I leave questions in the community websites and other community members answer them for me.
- I often watch American soap operas. I used to watch them with Korean subtitles, so I did not care or try to listen to the English dialogues and expressions. But now I listen to the dialogue and I often find some expressions I use in LOL come up in many dialogues. When I only watched them, I did not think I could use the expressions for real communication, but I try to use the new expressions I learn lately while playing LOL. I think that this is the difference.

Has your goal for learning English changed after playing LOL?

- I'm not sure. My goal is still getting 900 on the TOEIC. If my future job requires communicative English skills, then I have to learn communicative English. For example, if I get a job in an international company in which I have many opportunities to use English, I think I need to prepare for it. However, if my job does not require communicative English skills, then I would not need to do so. It's up to what kind of job I can get in the future. But TOEIC scores are required by all kinds of jobs, so I concentrate on TOEIC preparation to get a good job.

How different is your English usage (or learning) in online gaming space and in formal classrooms?

- I have attended English classes which are taught by foreign teachers, but there are usually too many students in a class and I'm too shy to speak out in front of many people. Playing LOL is different from classroom activities. In the game, other people cannot see me and usually I will not meet them again after the game. In classes, I need to keep meeting my classmates. So it's embarrassing to show my poor English pronunciation to them. I'm not that active in participating in such classes. If the topic of the class lesson is about games like LOL, then there will be something that I can talk about because that's a topic I've experienced and I know expressions about it better than any other subjects. As I want to be a researcher which does not require much conversational English, I do not think I will try to force myself to participate in English classes. In English classes, I feel inferior to other people because in those classes English competence is the criterion by which I am judged. But in LOL, I do not feel inferior to others because I am good at playing the game. These days, I play basketball on campus with exchange students from China. We use English to communicate. In such cases, I don't feel so nervous in

speaking in English. I think I feel so because we use simple expressions to communicate and they are also non-native English speakers.. and also maybe because I play basketball well. While playing basketball with foreigners or while playing LOL, I feel English is a global language, but in class it's still a kind of school subject that I need to study to get a good grade.

Appendix 7 : Excel file for axial coding step 1

Category	Summary
LOL's Environmental characteristics	Only English is used as a contact language.
	There are both native and non-native English speakers.
	Chances for communication are given.
	Only English is used as a contact language.
	It is a busy game, so spontaneous/ simultaneous interactions occur.
	Communication plays an important role to play well.
	Communication plays an important role to play well.
	Special terms are used: acronyms and game terms
	Game skills are the key criteria.
	There is a kind of hierarchy, which is different from real world one.
	They don't need to meet the same people again.
	There are recognizable labels for each clan.
	There is a kind of hierarchy, which is different from real world one.
	Game skills are the key criteria.
	There are recognizable labels for each clan.
	After 6th month, he could lead a game.
	His communication skill has improved through participating in conversations.
	He is asked to explain his game skill.
	The list of expressions he made became new players' reference.
	People make friends.
	They help each other.
	People are tolerant to others.
	They share various things.
	Anonymity helps.
	They don't need to meet the same people again.
	Texting is used for chatting. Texting is easier than speaking.
	Demographic criteria, such as race and age, are not concerned.
	Nobody is judged with English.
There are people from various countries.	
Basic English is enough to communicate in LOL.	
Miscommunications rarely happen.	
It is a busy game, so spontaneous/ simultaneous interactions occur.	

	People use pragmatic/practical English.
	There is flow of conversations while playing.
What they feel in LOL	Feeling their English has improved.
	Feeling confidence in using English.
	Being proud of their game competence.
	Feeling equal relationship with others.
	Feeling safe.
	Feeling less embarrassed/stressed in using English.
	Feeling comfortable with English.
	Feeling motivated in learning English.
	Feeling more relieved with non-native English speakers.
	Their vague fear about foreigners has disappeared.
	They feel great/fun/fascinated to communicate with others.
	They feel close/familiar with other players.
What they realize in LOL	They realized English communication is possible only with key words.
	They realized English which is easily understood is good English.
	They realized good communicators use simple and clear expressions.
	They realized content of conversations is important than using correct English.
	They realized English is a language, a method of communication.
	They realized English is a global language.
	They realized why they need to learn English.
	They realized fluent English speakers are not always knowledgeable.
	They realized that native speakers also make many errors while chatting.
	They realized English is not that difficult.
	He had thought fluent English speakers were intelligent and belonged to high social level.
	He had thought he had to be perfect for successful communication in English.
	They realized other varieties of English are also good.
	They realized there are varieties of English.
They realized they don't need to be like native speakers in English.	
What has changed through LOL experience	They got used to situational English.
	They became not to focus on grammar rules.
	Their English styles are changed to casual, colloquial, and natural.
	They became to study voluntarily.
	He became to start speaking voluntarily in class.
	They became to try to use new words in conversations.
	They began to try other channels to learn English.
	He uses chances to ask others when there is time while playing.
	The became motivated in learning English.
	They became confident in using English.
	Their stress with English has reduced.
	They came to overcome hesitancy in speaking out.
They became to talk more in LOL.	

	He uses chances to ask others when there is time while playing.
	Their stress with English has reduced.
	They became to try using English in the real world.
	They became to fantasize positive future selves as fluent English speakers.
	They became to feel familiar with foreigners.
Influence on other areas	He became to pay attention to expressions used in LOL while watching American soap operas.
	Preparing for the IELTS was difficult, but LOL has acted as a motivator.
	Because he realized the importance of content, he started watching American basketball games in English to learn related vocabulary.
	He began to talk to his Filipino workers in English.
	Getting used to abbreviations, he could easily get accustomed to using indexes in the company.
	He can apply what he learned from LOL in his phone English class.
	He heard from his TOEFLspeaking teacher saying that his English became very casual.
	Different games use different terms, but it's getting easier to start (another English games).
	He heard that English has improved from his coworkers while making a business call.
	He met clan members through Skype.
	They share their facebook or twitter info.
	He met a lawyer while playing LOL and became facebook friends.
	He makes eye contacts and says "pardon?" when he doesn't understand.
	He thinks he became comfortable to call his American coworker.
	He could take courage to talk to foreign exchange students in his campus.
He makes effort to say more and makes eye contacts in his IELTS speaking class.	
LOL made him strike up conversations in English in NZ.	

Appendix 8: Excel file for axial coding step 2

Category	Subcategory	Summary
LOL's Environmental characteristics	ELF	Only English is used as a contact language. There are both native and non-native English speakers. Chances for communication are given.
	English only zone	Only English is used as a contact language. It is a busy game, so spontaneous/ simultaneous interactions occur. Communication plays an important role to play well.
	A unique community	Communication plays an important role to play well. Special terms are used: acronyms and game terms Game skills are the key criteria. There is a kind of hierachy, whih is different from real world one. They don't need to meet the same people again. There are recognizable labels for each clan.
	Hierachy	There is a kind of hierachy, which is different from real world one. Game skills are the key criteria. There are recognizable labels for each clan.
	CoP	After 6th month, he could lead a game.

		His communication skill has improved through participating in conversations.
		He is asked to explain his game skill.
		They help each other.
		The list of expressions he made became new players' reference.
	Favorable mood	People make friends.
		They help each other.
		People are tolerant to others.
		They share various things.
	CMC	Anonymity helps.
		They don't need to meet the same people again.
	Texting is used for chatting. Texting is easier than speaking.	
Equal relationship	Demographic criteria, such as race and age, are not concerned.	
	Nobody is judged with English.	
Pragmatic Competence	There are people from various countries.	
	Basic English is enough to communicate in LoL.	
	Miscommunications rarely happen.	
	It is a busy game, so spontaneous/ simultaneous interactions occur.	
	People use pragmatic/practical English.	
	There is flow of conversations while playing.	
What they feel in LOL	Feeling about themselves	Feeling their English has improved.
		Feeling confidence in using English.
		Being proud of their game competence.
		Feeling motivated in learning English.
		They fantasized positive future selves as fluent English speakers
		Feeling equal relationship with others.
	Feeling about English	Feeling safe.
	Feeling less stressed in using English.	
	Feeling comfortable with English.	
	Feeling motivated in learning English.	
	Feeling about others	Feeling more relieved with non-native English speakers.
		Their vague fear about foreigners has disappeared.
		They feel great/fun/fascinated to communicate with others.
		They feel close/familiar with other players.
What they realize in LOL	Pragmatic competence	They realized English communication is possible only with key words.
		They realized English which is easily understood is good English.
		They realized good communicators use simple and clear expressions.
		They realized content of conversations is important than using correct English.
	Identity of English	They realized English is a language, a method of communication.
		They realized English is a global language.
		They realized why they need to learn English.
	Remove prejudice	They realized fluent English speakers are not always knowledgeable.
		They realized that native speakers also make many errors while chatting.
		They realized English is not that difficult.
	He had thought fluent English speakers were intelligent and belonged to high social level.	
	He had thought he had to be perfect for successful communication in English.	
	They realized other varieties of English are also good.	
ELF paradigm	They realized there are varieties of English.	
	They realized they don't need to be like native speakers in English.	
What has changed	Improving pragmatic competence	They got used to situational English.

through LOL experience		They became not to focus on grammar rules.
		Their English styles are changed to casual, colloquial, and natural.
	Motivated in learning	They became to study voluntarily.
		He became to start speaking voluntarily in class.
		They became to try to use new words in conversations.
		They began to try other channels to learn English.
		He uses chances to ask others when there is time while playing.
		The became motivated in learning English.
	Evolving confidence	They became confident in using English.
		Their stress with English has reduced.
		They came to overcome hesitancy in speaking out.
	Growing willingness to communicate	They became to talk more in LoL.
	He uses chances to ask others when there is time while playing.	
	Their stress with English has reduced.	
	They became to try using English in the real world.	
What has not changed through LoL experience	Still feeling stressed with English	English is still a big burden to him.
		He can communicate in English in LoL, but wonders if he can do so in real situations.
		He is still hesitant in speaking out in class.
		He feels speaking is much more difficult than text chatting.
		LoL helped with confidence but not with vocabulary.
		He has good TOEIC score but feels weak at speaking,
	Still focusing on test scores	His ultimate goal is still TOEIC 900.
	Still being trapped in monolingualism	He wants to improve his English to be judged as impressive by native speakers.
		He thinks English is the language of English natives.
		He asks other players' nationality in order to learn correct English from native speakers.
	But he still think Filipino English is not authentic.	
	I wouldn't learn English from a Filipino.	
Still feeling inferior	He feels more relieved when he talks with non-native speakers.	
	He feels no inferiority to his Filipino workers but intimidated toward his British instructor.	
	He still feels inferior to other fluent speakers in English classes.	

Appendix 9: Ethical Approval Form

MSc, PhD, EdD & DEdPsych theses.



Graduate School of Education

Certificate of ethical research approval

MSc, PhD, EdD & DEdPsych theses

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, and then have it signed by your supervisor and finally by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: <http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications> and view the School's Policy online.

READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER (the form will expand to contain the text you enter). **DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND**

Your name: Sang Ah Jeon

Your student no: 600058238

Return address for this certificate: Daejang dong 382-8, Dugyang gu, Goyang si, South Korea

Degree/Programme of Study: EdD TESOL

Project Supervisor(s): Dr. Sarah Rich/ Prof. Rupert Wegerif

Your email address: saj209@exeter.ac.uk

Tel: 82-10-8814-9775

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given overleaf and that I undertake in my thesis to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed:.....  date:..... 10/01/2014.....

NB For Masters dissertations, which are marked blind, this first page must not be included in your work. It can be kept for your records.

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
updated March 2013

Certificate of ethical research approval

TITLE OF YOUR PROJECT:

The impact of playing on-line commercial games on Korean EFL learners' L2 identity

1. Brief description of your research project:

Through interviews and observation, this research explores how EFL learners' online communication experience in English through playing commercial multiplayer online games influences their evolving second language identity and how this impacts on their offline learning attitudes and experiences.

2. Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):

10 participants who are from 20 to 25 years old will be recruited from a transnational online commercial gaming community in South Korea where communication is mediated through English.

Give details (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) regarding the ethical issues of:

3. **informed consent**: Where children in schools are involved this includes both headteachers and parents). Copy(ies) of your consent form(s) you will be using must accompany this document. a blank consent form can be downloaded from the GSE student access on-line documents. Each consent form MUST be personalised with your contact details.

See the appendix attached which I will adopt to obtain consent from participants to take part in the Study. This will be translated into Korean. I will inform them that they have the right to withdraw from participating in interviews if they decide to after completion of this form.

4. **anonymity and confidentiality**

Anonymity and privacy will be respected. I will use pseudonyms to protect participants identities, and will ensure that they are made aware that the data will only be used for this study and not released for any other purposes.

5. Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:

Face-to-face narrative interviews will be conducted. There will be 10 interview participants and interview will last 1-2 hours each. I will notify the participants of the maximum interview time once I have trialled the interview. If the participants want to have a break or change interview place because of their feelings, I will allow them to choose time and place for the rest of the interviews. Also, they will be given the opportunity to undertake a telephone interview if preferred in order to minimise stress for the participants. Once the interviews have been transcribed, these will be passed back to participants for commentary and any additions or omissions they would like to make.

6. Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project - e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires

I will keep the interview data safely in my personal computer using a password protection program and never release it. Also, I will reassure the participants that I will have sole access to this. I firmly guarantee that the data will be securely stored and no one else can access them.

7. Special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.

N/A

8. Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):

I do not anticipate that there will be any issues of this nature arising from this study

This form should now be printed out, signed by you on the first page and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's Research Support Office for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.

N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor

This project has been approved for the period: July 2014 until: August 2014

By (above mentioned supervisor's signature):  date: ...18/01/2014

N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occur a further form is completed.

GSE unique approval reference:D/13/14/13.....

Signed:  date: 0/6/14
Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

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