

The interplay of teacher resilience and professional development: The case of two beginning EFL teachers in South Korea

YOUNGMI KIM

Chung-Ang University, Seoul, South Korea
ORCID: 0000-0001-5630-0297

TAE-YOUNG KIM (Corresponding author)

Chung-Ang University, Seoul, South Korea
Email: tykim@cau.ac.kr
ORCID: 0000-0002-2022-3566

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ABSTRACT: This qualitative study explores teacher resilience among two Korean EFL teachers during teacher professional development. Although the positive psychology movement has drawn attention to teacher resilience in education, its importance remains undervalued in English language teaching. This research investigates the challenges that one male and one female beginning teachers in their twenties face in maintaining resilience, including those that arise from intrapersonal, interpersonal, and environmental factors. Intrapersonal factors hinder teachers' ability to bounce back from adversity, while inadequate teaching skills and the burden of emotional labour negatively impact in-service teachers' resilience. Interpersonal challenges involve interactions with students, parents, and colleagues, and environmental factors relate to the rigid national curriculum and assessment plans. However, this study found that positive self-reflection and support from students, colleagues, and the teaching community can help teachers withstand adversity. This study suggests that to promote resilience, pre- and in-service programmes should offer effective classroom management skills and coping strategies to manage emotional labour and support teachers' professional growth.

Keywords: teacher resilience, motivation, professional development.

La interacción de la resiliencia docente y el desarrollo profesional: Casos de profesores principiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera en Corea del Sur

RESUMEN: Este estudio cualitativo explora la resiliencia docente entre dos docentes coreanos de EFL durante el desarrollo profesional docente. Aunque el movimiento de la psicología positiva ha llamado la atención sobre la resiliencia de los docentes en la educación, su importancia sigue infravalorada en la enseñanza del idioma inglés. Esta investigación investiga los desafíos que enfrentan un docente principiante y una docente de veintitantos años para mantener la resiliencia, incluidos los que surgen de factores intrapersonales, interpersonales y ambientales. Los factores intrapersonales obstaculizan la capacidad de los docentes para recuperarse de la adversidad, mientras que las habilidades docentes inadecuadas y la carga

del trabajo emocional impactan negativamente en la resiliencia de los docentes en servicio. Los desafíos interpersonales involucran interacciones con estudiantes, padres y colegas, y los factores ambientales se relacionan con el rígido currículo nacional y los planes de evaluación. Sin embargo, este estudio encontró que la auto-reflexión positiva y el apoyo de otros pueden ayudar a los maestros a sobrellevar la adversidad. Este estudio sugiere que, para promover la resiliencia, los programas previos y en servicio deberían ofrecer habilidades efectivas de gestión del aula y estrategias de afrontamiento para gestionar el trabajo emocional y apoyar el crecimiento profesional de los docentes.

Palabras clave: resiliencia docente, motivación, desarrollo profesional

1. INTRODUCTION

With the emergence of the positive psychology movement, teacher resilience has started to receive attention in teacher education (Derakhshan, 2022; Wang et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2022). Teacher resilience refers to the constructive ability of teachers to sustain their optimal performance in the face of professional difficulties (Hiver, 2018). As teacher resilience is a factor that assists L2 instructors in achieving pedagogical progress (Derakhshan et al., 2022), it plays a pivotal role in helping teachers participate in teacher professional development (TPD)¹ programmes (Jia & Derakhshan, 2023; Qi & Derakhshan, 2023). However, this concept has been undervalued in English-language teaching. In addition, only a few studies (e.g., Pang & Kirkpatrick, 2023; Wang & Wang, 2023) have investigated the challenges teachers face in remaining in the profession during Teacher Professional Development (TPD) and how they overcome them by exercising resilience. Notably, the burden of emotional labour required by the school and the system increases the difficulty of pursuing professional development (Golombek & Doran, 2014). When language teachers' burdens and challenges are not adequately addressed, these language teachers tend to leave the profession. As an illustration, the attrition rate is increasing among teachers within the first five years of teaching experience (Worth & De Lazzari, 2017). Considering the role of resilience in enabling teachers to bounce back and promoting psychological wellbeing (Wang et al., 2022), it is necessary to investigate the obstacles that hinder resilience and how it can ultimately function for beginning teachers and enable them pursue TPD. To be specific, beginning Korean teachers experienced regret due to their inability to fulfill their responsibility of improving their students' English proficiency through engaging lessons, exacerbated by a lack of adequate resources to cultivate resilience (Kim & Kim, 2022). Consequently, this predicament has resulted in a notable decline in confidence among these teachers, raising social concerns about their continuity in the profession. Despite facing such challenges, the critical issue of providing assistance to these teachers remains inadequately addressed, particularly within the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context where learners' motivation for English learning is notably low (Kim, 2011). This underscores a significant gap in the research, emphasizing that Korean teachers are grappling with challenges but lack sufficient support to overcome these difficulties.

¹ Teacher professional development (TPD) is defined as “a process that begins with teachers' college; continues throughout a teacher's professional life; and is affected by a teacher's characteristics, teaching contents (what they teach), and teaching strategies/methods/approaches (how they teach).” (Sancar et al., 2021, p. 8).

To close the gap, in this case study, we investigate the challenges of exercising resilience and how to support teachers in maintaining their resilience in the context of Korean EFL teachers in South Korea (hereafter “Korea”) in terms of TPD. Our research questions are as follows:

- RQ1: What obstacles do Korean beginning EFL teachers face in exercising resilience and hinder their TPD?
- RQ2: What resources do Korean beginning EFL teachers use to exercise resilience in pursuing TPD?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Beginning language teachers’ perceived difficulties

As the role of teachers undergoes a transformation from traditional instruction to facilitation, there is an increasing expectation for educators to get involved in TPD. Confronted with this challenge, some teachers show resistance in this respect (Tamah & Wirjawan, 2022). Previous studies have revealed that teachers’ difficulties in sustaining their commitment arise from intrapersonal, interpersonal, and system-related factors (Mansfield et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2022). Intrapersonal factors include beginning teachers’ cognitive and emotional challenges (Beltman, 2020). The cognitive challenges faced by beginning language teachers include their inadequate teaching skills in managing their (homeroom) classes (Melnick & Meister, 2008), and motivating uninterested students (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). When beginning teachers recognize that their teaching skills are limited, they experience a sense of unpreparedness for the practical challenges in the language classroom, which might lead to their insecurity (Sulis et al., 2023). Another cognitive challenge that beginning EFL teachers experience is insecurity stemming from their non-native speaker status. This perception leads to self-doubt and concerns about not appearing professional (Liu, 2016). In addition, the discrepancy between their initial career motives and the teaching reality has been identified as one discouraging factor. To be specific, language teachers experience a reality shock when faced with the discrepancy between theory and reality in L2 teaching (Song, 2021).

An emotional challenge that beginning language teachers experience is the burden of emotional labour, which hinders teachers’ recovery from adversity and the pursuit of TPD. Emotional labour refers to “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display” (Hochschild, 1983, p. 7), highlighting the adjustment of emotional displays in professional settings. Indeed, language teachers perform a huge degree of emotional labour in the classroom (Gkonou & Miller, 2019). Language teachers may engage in emotional labour to attain professional objectives including effective teaching and preserving strong relationships with students (Benesch, 2017). To achieve their professional goals, language teachers may exaggerate or repress certain emotions (King, 2015). Beginning teachers endure the stress of emotional work when they find it difficult to hide or exaggerate their emotions (Kocabaş-Gedik & Ortaçtepe Hart, 2021).

Interpersonal factors entail teachers’ challenges in relation to students, parents, and colleague teachers. Student misbehaviour (Granziera et al., 2021) and a low level of trust

from parents (Jang & Kim, 2019; Kim et al., 2014) are known to discourage language teachers. When teachers observe parental skepticism regarding EFL teachers' ability to teach and interact with students, it negatively impacts teacher motivation (Kim et al., 2014). In particular, disrespect from parents regarding the outcomes of internal tests was found to be a source of frustration for English teachers working at junior high schools in Korea (Jang & Kim, 2019). In addition, a lack of support and trust from more experienced teachers regarding the teaching methods beginning teachers employ was found to be a discouraging factor, leading to a sense of loneliness (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013).

Environmental factors are related to the rigid national curriculum and assessment plans (Wang et al., 2022). In addition, inadequate induction programmes, a lack of mentoring (Mason & Poyatos Matas, 2016), and a large number of students with diverse language proficiencies (Mason, 2010) pose challenges for beginning language teachers. The status of English in the national curriculum also influences the degree of burden that EFL teachers are expected to carry. Specifically, EFL teachers are expected to gain competencies and responsibilities that differ from those of other language teachers given the EFL context where English is one of the core academic subjects (Cammarata & Tedik, 2012).

2.2. Language teachers' resilience

Positive psychology has become an influential approach in seeking and encouraging factors that foster TPD and teacher wellbeing (Greenier et al., 2021). This can be achieved through cultivating balance in various aspects of a teacher's career. Teacher resilience stands out as a construct contributing to maintaining this balance (Hiver, 2018; Wang et al., 2021) and helps teachers actively engage in TPD programmes (Tamah & Wirjawan, 2022). According to Mansfield et al. (2016), teacher resilience is a dynamic process involving the interaction of personal and environmental resources, aiding teachers in recovering from adversities and challenges in their classrooms. Despite facing challenges in their respective contexts, beginning language teachers can withstand adversity and pursue TPD by exercising resilience through various resources, including intrapersonal, interpersonal, and environmental factors. Regarding intrapersonal resources, beginning teachers' adaptability and emotional competence help them bounce back from adversities (Granziera et al., 2021). In addition, the ability to self-reflect helps them recover (Peet et al., 2023). Interpersonal factors include positive relationships with students (Aldrup et al., 2018; Roffey, 2012; Xie & Derakhshan, 2021) and support from colleague teachers (You et al., 2017), administrators (Granziera et al., 2021), and teaching community members (Zheng et al. 2019). Especially, colleague teachers can help beginning teachers learn how to deal with the demands of the profession and familiarize themselves with the school culture by providing guidance and a sense of belonging (Le Cornu, 2013; McCallum & Price, 2010). In addition, teachers can perform better when they are cared for by others and enjoy strong relationships with their peers (Hargreaves, 2019). The role of administrators is also vital for language teachers' resilience (Granziera et al., 2021). This is because administrators' compassion can affect teachers' motivation and work performance (Eldor & Shoshani, 2016). Teacher resilience can also be strengthened with a school culture of openness and respect (Kidger et al., 2016).

Considering environmental factors, interaction with the members of the teacher learning community can also help beginning teachers seek professional development. To be specific, teachers can exchange constructive ideas to design and refine their teaching skills and assessment methods (Farrell, 2016). Discussion with community members can also include how to engage learners who are not interested in L2 learning and might be reluctant to complete tasks assigned in the classroom (Zheng et al., 2019). Furthermore, teacher resilience can be enhanced by interacting with other teachers in Professional Learning Networks (PLNs). PLN refers to “a network of people, information, and resources that an individual strategically develops using social technologies to access informal learning” (Oddone et al., 2019, p.104). By joining PLNs, language teachers can connect and cooperate with other educators (Prenger et al., 2021). PLNs can also prevent feelings of isolation and advance teachers’ pedagogical knowledge and practice (Oddone et al., 2019).

3. METHODS

3.1. Participants

Two beginning teachers at junior high schools in the public sector participated in this study. Case studies with a small number of participants involving purposive selection can yield in-depth information and provide a basis for formulating hypotheses and theories (Yin, 2009). The beginning teachers in this study were individuals in their mid to late twenties who, at the time the data were collected, had less than a year of experience working as in-service teachers in the public sector. We utilized purposive sampling to recruit participants with one year of teaching experience. Both participants had passed the National Teacher Employment Exam and were employed at public schools. The exam involves two stages: a written exam and an interview with a teaching demonstration. The exam assesses pedagogic knowledge, curriculum understanding, and education policy (Moodie & Nam, 2016). The selection process for English teachers in secondary schools in Seoul is highly competitive, usually with a competition rate of 10:1 (Kim, 2022). Because of the intense competitiveness, 2–3 years of preparation is required.

The two beginning teachers had different English learning and teaching backgrounds. To ensure their privacy, the participants were assigned pseudonyms. ‘Sunwoo’ had majored in English education and wanted to be an English teacher in the public rather than the private sector because he expected that teachers in the public sector enjoy societal acknowledgment and respect from students and parents. In addition, he wanted to teach how to learn English effectively. During the pre-service training period, he stayed in one English-speaking country as an exchange student.

‘Hayoon’ attended an international junior high school and high school where English was the main language. She majored in English literature. During her teaching practicum, she witnessed how the theories she learned in the pre-service teacher training can be implemented in the actual teaching site. The two teachers’ profiles are presented in Table 1

Table 1. *Participant Teacher Profiles*

VARIABLE	PARTICIPANTS	
	SUNWOO	HAYOON
Gender	Male	Female
High school type	General high school	International school
Major	English education	Education/English literature
Previous teaching experience	Private tutoring	Contract teacher
Teaching hours/week (grade)	21 (1)	21 (2, 3)
Homeroom class	1st graders	2nd graders
Wellbeing	3.5598	172

3.2. Data collection

We conducted semi-structured interviews with each participant using Korean, their native language. The questions concerned obstacles to exercising teacher resilience such as intrapersonal (Cowie, 2011; Kim & Kim, 2018), interpersonal (Granziera et al., 2021), and environmental factors (Mason, 2010). In addition, resources for teacher resilience were also touched upon (Farrell, 2016; Granziera et al., 2021). A pilot stage was conducted with two beginning EFL teachers to improve the comprehensiveness and appropriateness of the content in the initially formulated interview guide (Kallio et al., 2016). Based on the results, modifications and adjustments were made to the interview questions (Chenail, 2011). Before conducting in-depth interviews, we first collected the participants' background profiles. Then, the main interview (see Appendix) was conducted which lasted from one and a half hours to two hours. During data analysis, we conducted additional interviews to gain detailed information or confirm the results of the analysis. All the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, and the transcription was sent to the participants to confirm the results. Afterwards, the transcription was translated into English by the first author and reviewed by the corresponding author.

3.3. Data analysis

We analyzed the interview data using Strauss and Corbin's (1998) three levels of coding (open, axial, and selective) in grounded theory. Initially, we iteratively read the transcribed data and labeled the elements to develop the emerging themes for open coding (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Subsequently, we selected portions of the data specifically related to the obstacles to resilience and the resources for enhancing resilience using selective coding.

In the axial coding stage, we referred to previous studies dealing with obstacles to exercising resilience and the resources for enhancing resilience to refine the coding scheme (e.g., Beltman, 2020; Wang et al., 2022). Finally, we compared the coded portions with the findings of prior studies and incorporated new elements into the coding scheme to enhance understanding of the participants' cases (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The themes and coding schemes that emerged are presented in Table 2.

Drawing upon the illustrative case of Sunwoo, the coding process unfolds as follows: in the initial open-coding stage, the theme “Need to devise creative activities to encourage class participation” was identified. In subsequent stages, it was classified into a cognitive factor on the third level. This, in turn, was placed under the broader category of intrapersonal factors on the mid level. Given its relevance to the challenges Sunwoo faced in exercising resilience, it was ultimately designated as an obstacle to exercising resilience on the top level, thereby establishing a hierarchy.

To ensure the reliability of the analysis, the first author coded initially, and validation was carried out by the corresponding author. When disagreements arose, discussions were undertaken to reach a consensus. Additionally, member checking was implemented by sharing the analysis results with the participants via email (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Table 2. *Coding Scheme*

TOP LEVEL	MID LEVEL	THIRD LEVEL
Obstacles to exercising resilience	Intrapersonal	Cognitive, affective
	Interpersonal	Students, parents, colleague teachers
	Environmental	Rigid national curriculum and assessment plans
Resources for exercising resilience	Intrapersonal	Self-reflection
	Interpersonal	Students, colleague teachers
	Environmental	Teaching community

4. FINDINGS

In this section, the obstacles two beginning teachers experienced are presented first. In addition, the resources they used to exercise resilience are shown in terms of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and environmental level.

4.1. Obstacles to exercising resilience

In this section, we outline the challenges encountered by two beginning teachers experienced are presented first. The intrapersonal domain encompasses cognitive and affective aspects, focusing on motivating students and managing emotional expression. Interpersonal challenges extend to challenging interactions with students, parents, and colleagues. Furthermore, environmental factors involve the constraints imposed by the rigid national curriculum and assessment plans.

4.1.1. Intrapersonal factors

In this section, the obstacles two beginning teachers experienced are presented in terms of cognitive and affective areas. Regarding When it comes to cognitive factors, Sunwoo and Hayoon stated specific challenges that EFL teachers experience regarding their insecure position as EFL teachers (see Excerpt 1). As Sunwoo was an EFL teacher, he needed to put continuous effort into his language skills, which represented a burden to him:

Excerpt 1

I struggle with speaking English now, and the thought of having to study it for the rest of my life is quite burdensome. Being a non-native speaker adds a lot of stress, especially when it comes to grading open-ended answers. I don't feel qualified for it. Whenever I'm marking those responses, I find myself frequently turning to Google or a corpus to look things up. (Sunwoo)

The parents of one student complained about why their child didn't receive a full score for the open-ended question. I consulted with native speakers regarding the answer. They mentioned that while the expression isn't commonly used formally, it's acceptable in informal contexts. So, we decided to give them a partial score. (Hayoon)

The anxiety and stress were intense when marking the open-ended answers. Excerpt 1 demonstrates how both the teachers felt anxious, insecure, or inferior because of their own and parents' perceptions of their limited language skills as non-native speakers.

In addition, motivating EFL learners was another challenge, as they were not interested in English learning with the advancement of machine translation technology:

Excerpt 2

My students ask why they have to learn English, especially when translation tools perform better. Even as a teacher, I nod along with them. Most students are learning English just because there's a test requirement. Besides that, it's tough to find any other motivation. So, I'm always brainstorming ways to make my lessons more enjoyable than the other subjects. (Sunwoo)

"How can I help my students to use the language or learn it in a fun way?" are the questions I have when I design my lessons. It's hard to consider those things and include these parts in the actual lesson. (Hayoon)

In the presence of these challenges, beginning EFL teachers often face difficulties due to their limited practical skills in inspiring and engaging learners. Consequently, individuals may perceive their competence as restricted and doubt their capacity to successfully handle the current circumstance.

Lastly, another cognitive challenge faced by beginning EFL teachers is the discrepancy between the ideal image and the teaching reality. Hayoon experienced the mismatch between her ideal image and the reality in terms of students' proficiency level:

Excerpt 3

When I first started, I wanted to teach English well because I was an "English" teacher. I thought, "I want to be a really good English teacher to my students," but they couldn't keep up with the textbooks. I wanted to keep up with the textbooks a little bit, because textbooks are based on the national curriculum and have what they're supposed to learn. I was like, 'It'd be great if they got this,' but, honestly, it was just impossible. (Hayoon)

Hayoon aimed to teach following the textbook the whole school used in accordance with the national curriculum, but the English levels of her students were not sufficiently high enough to comprehend the textbook. The gap between the proficiency level the textbook required and her students' English proficiency became a stressor for Hayoon.

Moving on to affective factors, the participants mentioned that they had experienced the burden of emotional labour while delivering lessons in the classroom. Both the participants

tried to restrain their anger resulting from students' misconduct because it ineffectively disciplined the students and negatively impacted their emotional health:

Excerpt 4

Getting angry doesn't really solve the problem, but it only works at the time. ... But after I get angry, I feel very bad, and when I feel better, I regret that I shouldn't have done it next time, and I think, "Oh, I should have just put up with it" ... I agree 100% that I perform emotional labour in front of students who cause problems, so if I don't have a sense of commitment, I wouldn't be surprised if I quit this job tomorrow. ... I think, "Am I a person who accepts students' problematic behaviour? Am I a trash can?" (Sunwoo)
It's pointless to get all worked up in class even though some students did something wrong. When you're angry in front of all the other students, they do not reflect themselves. Rather, it's like, 'Why are you doing this to me?' Getting angry doesn't really fix the students' disruptive behaviour. (Hayoon)

Additionally, Sunwoo struggled with deciding to what degree he should restrain his emotional outbursts in his role as a teacher. With students interfering with his lessons, Sunwoo felt uneasy because he did not have suitable means to punish students who were hostile toward, which resulted in extreme dissatisfaction and disillusionment that worsened his displeasure.

4.1.2. Interpersonal factors

One of the most important interpersonal factors involved students. Teachers felt demoralized because of their deteriorating relationships with students. Sunwoo specifically highlighted the challenges involved in reestablishing this rapport when students encountered disciplinary issues:

Excerpt 5

My students and I were all close in the beginning of the year, but there was an incident that messed things up. One of them is going through that whole adolescence drama right now. I notice that she was avoiding me, so rebuilding the connection isn't going to be easy. I'm just doing my best to keep things good. (Sunwoo)

In addition, beginning teachers struggled with parents. Sunwoo thought that he needed to show politeness and respect when interacting with parents, rather than adopting an assertive approach. This situation highlights the expectation for teachers to maintain a courteous and accommodating attitude toward parents, potentially impacting the dynamics of teacher–parent relationships:

Excerpt 6

Senior teachers always say that we don't have authorities any more. Parents and students have authorities. We should really care their satisfaction. (Sunwoo)
Before meeting the parents of that troublemaker, I had this whole list of things I wanted to say. But in the end, I didn't. I really wanted to be like, 'Look, there's not much I can do about your kid,' but obviously, I couldn't say that to the parents. (Hayoon)

Hayoon pointed out that she cannot deliver her honest opinion to the parents regarding student misbehaviour. Instead, she cooperated with and consoled the parents who were strug-

gling with their child's lack of discipline. Hayoon also mentioned the challenges regarding parents' complaints regarding marking:

Excerpt 7

We had a complaint regarding the grading of the open-ended question. The parent strongly insisted that, to secure a spot in the prestigious foreign language school, their child must achieve a top grade. As a result, we decided to reduce the deduction from 2 points to just 1 point. (Hayoon)

When the parents significantly emphasized the importance of test scores, teachers felt pressurized to consider their feedback seriously. As a result, the teachers chose to decrease the point deduction on exams from two points to one point. This adjustment enabled them to allocate more points to students whose parents had lodged complaints.

Another interpersonal factor included colleague teachers. Those who prove to be unsupportive seemed to be an obstacle to teacher resilience. Sunwoo mentioned that his colleague teachers helped him only when he asked:

Excerpt 8

Teacher culture is very individualistic. We don't really care about other teachers' work. We help each other only if we are asked. We often have dinner together, but we do not really care. (Sunwoo)

Because of diverging views on what an ideal English lesson should look like, Sunwoo did not discuss how to deliver the lesson with his colleague teachers:

Excerpt 9

I have to collaborate with my colleague to figure out these performance evaluation criteria, but it's a bit of a struggle because we've got different ideas we want to prioritize. When we have argument, I usually just follow whatever my colleague thinks. My colleague got like 6 or 7 more years of experience than me. (Sunwoo)

When Sunwoo disagreed with his colleagues on how to evaluate performance tests or the rubric, he did not offer arguments and did not stand his ground. He thought that he was not qualified to argue with his colleague teachers because of his comparatively short teaching experience.

4.1.3. Environmental factors

Environmental factors are related to the rigid national curriculum and assessment plans set by the school. As assessment plans had been developed prior to being assigned to the school, the beginning teachers had no choice but to follow these plans. Moreover, those plans were far from what the beginning teachers had learned during their pre-service teacher training and the teaching practicum. In this situation where their autonomy was severely limited, it was challenging for them to seek learning opportunities and participate in the TPD programmes to design their own assessment plans.

Excerpt 10

I have done several performance assessments throughout the year, but all of them assessed

the product, rather than the process. ... I really want to do process-based assessment. I know the concept of assessment for learning very well, but putting it into action in the classroom is a whole different story. From my junior high school to university, I have been assessed based on the product, so I have no idea how process-based assessment is applied in practice. (Sunwoo)

I feel a little guilty because we don't do process-based assessment at my school because it doesn't fit with the current education policy. In fact, when I was a contract-based teacher in the high school, I saw my mentor teacher doing process-based assessment successfully. The students in the mentor teacher's class did their own research and presented the results in the project. Based on this experience, I know how it can be done. But, you know, even though it's a middle school, it's a shame that we just make our students memorize scripts for performance assessments. (Hayoon)

Both participants believed that the purpose of tests should be to measure students' progress. However, they did not believe that the current evaluation procedures could properly reflect this progress. Consequently, they expressed dissatisfaction with the current evaluation methods.

4.2. Exercising resilience

In this section, we delve into the demonstration of resilience by two beginning teachers through the lenses of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and environmental factors. Intrapersonal factors include self-reflection, while interpersonal factors involve rapport with students and colleagues. Environmental factors encompass joining TPD programmes.

4.2.1. Intrapersonal factors

Regarding intrapersonal factors, beginning teachers engaged in self-reflection to exercise their resilience. Hayoon spent time reflecting upon what was causing difficulties in her teaching:

Excerpt 11

At first, I was really struggling with the lower grader students. So, I took a step back and wondered why I was struggling. I think the reason I was struggling was that I was expecting too much from my students. I intended to teach English no matter what, but they don't know how much I was stressed or I care about them. I thought that if I force my students to learn English, they would get annoyed and end up hating English even more. So, I changed my mind. If my students pick up even a single word, it is more than enough. (Hayoon)

When she pondered the reasons behind her students' misbehaviour during her lessons, she managed to figure out how she should adjust her expectations. Through this reflective process, she acknowledged that even if her students grasped just a single word, she would consider this a significant achievement. This adjustment in perspective, achieved through self-reflection, not only assisted her in managing the misbehavior during lessons but also contributed to her overall well-being.

4.2.2 Interpersonal factors

Interactional factors involving students were also resources for beginning teachers to exercise resilience. Hayoon described her positive experience with students:

Excerpt 12

When I'm teaching second graders, I think "Okay, there are good students not like the third graders I am struggling with." Thanks to the good students, I can forget about my struggles and feel comforted. With these good students, I've been able to do a lot of things that I've always wanted to do, like using mobile games and pop songs. (Hayoon)

In addition, colleague teachers and teaching community members helped beginning teachers withstand adversity. To be specific, colleague teachers who are supportive and willing to provide practical guidance can be a source of resilience for beginning teachers:

Excerpt 13

My colleague teacher is one year older than me, and her office is right next door to mine. She's really helpful as she gives me all of her lesson plans and materials she used last year. In addition, she told me how she did this or that ... And if I say, "I have this weird kid in the third grade," and my colleague teachers, who already know the kid, sympathize with my struggle. It's nice to have someone right next to me who can sympathize with me. (Hayoon)

Additionally, sympathetic assistance offered by someone with more experience was often helpful to the teachers. Furthermore, the presence of a supportive administrator was crucial in reducing stress levels among the two participants. In Hayoon's case, the administrator at her school made genuine efforts to provide encouragement and boost the morale:

Excerpt 14

Since the beginning of the school year, the administrator has been telling us that happy teachers make happy kids ... He always tells me to leave early if I'm working after the working hours. ... I feel lucky to have the immediate administrator who doesn't make me feel stressed at all, who takes care of me and treats all the teachers well. (Hayoon)

Administrators' care for the welfare of teachers helped the two participants feel respected and supported, which served as a foundation for their resilience. This thoughtful consideration was essential in preventing teacher burnout.

4.2.3 Environmental factors

Regarding environmental factors, teacher networks beyond the school level can assist beginning teachers in overcoming challenges. To overcome challenges and learn from more experienced teachers, Sunwoo decided to join TPD programmes outside of his school. In the second month of his teaching, he found one community composed of English teachers at the public school:

Excerpt 15

The advice I got at the teacher community meeting was very helpful, especially the ones from the senior teachers with like 30 years of experience. Based on their answers, I am shaping my own teaching style. (Sunwoo)

Sunwoo obtained useful teaching advice from experienced teachers by joining the TPD programmes provided in the teacher community and successfully interacted with the members. He was able to use their experiences as an inspiration to alter his teaching methods and incorporate fresh resources. Through these interactions, he began to develop his own teaching approach.

5. DISCUSSION

In this section, obstacles to exercise resilience and resources of resilience are discussed in relation to previous studies. Each of these aspects is examined in connection to intrapersonal, interpersonal, and environmental levels.

5.1. Obstacles to resilience

The results reveal that the beginning teachers had difficulties in exercising resilience in sustaining their commitment and pursuing TPD due to intrapersonal, interpersonal, and environmental factors (Mansfield et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2022). The intrapersonal factors encompass cognitive and affective aspects. One cognitive challenge is the EFL teachers' perception of their insecure positions as non-native speakers, as discussed by Liu (2016). (see Excerpt 1). Non-native English-speaking teachers often encounter challenges to their legitimacy and credibility as stakeholders raise concerns regarding their language proficiency and authority in the classroom (Floris & Renandya, 2020). With their lack of experience and low self-confidence as non-native speakers (Liu, 2016), it may be difficult to confidently use personal resources to overcome adversity. According to Liu (2016), non-native EFL teachers expend extra efforts to appear competent and suppress their anxiety. As the teachers were non-native speakers, they encounter challenges in establishing authority, particularly when assessing open-ended questions. Sunwoo and his colleague teachers received complaints about the possible answers, and they needed to defend themselves by citing external, authoritative sources instead of relying solely on their own expertise. This skepticism from parents and students towards the evaluation and marking of open-ended questions by non-native teachers reflects a lack of trust in their judgment and results.

Another cognitive challenge is the burden of developing interesting tasks to motivate learners who are uninterested in English learning (see Excerpt 2), as indicated in a previous study (Melnick & Meister, 2008). Beginning teachers' anxiety is exacerbated by a feeling of being unprepared for practical difficulties in the language classroom (Sulis et al., 2023). Additionally, the challenges in motivating students, particularly considering the advancements in AI-based machine translation (refer to Excerpt 2), act as a deterrent to pursuing TPD.

In addition, the dissonance between beginning teachers' initial career motives and the teaching reality, especially students' low proficiency level, hindered their resilience (see Excerpt 3). According to Song (2021), language educators experience a reality shock when confronted with the disparity between ideal expectations and the practical realities of EFL teaching. Faced with this reality shock, beginning teachers often adhere rigidly to their initial, idealized vision of strictly following the national curriculum instead of adapting their lessons based on an accurate assessment of their students' English proficiency and difficulties. Despite recognizing this challenge, Hayoon hesitated to adjust the difficulty of her lessons,

as she was inclined to adhere to her initial idealized image rather than acknowledging the reality and adapting her teaching approach. When faced with the reality shock, her initial concern was, “Why don’t they follow the national curriculum?” rather than considering, “How can I modify my lessons to better support my students’ understanding?” This highlights the tendency of beginning teachers to grapple with the dissonance between their idealized teaching image and the practical adjustments necessary to address the actual needs of their students. The failure to diagnose and modify their teaching approach in response to this dissonance can lead to an exceedingly demanding course, resulting in student demotivation and disengagement during lessons. The low level of participation and interest exhibited by students also negatively impacts teachers’ motivation.

In terms of affective aspects, the participants indicated that the burden of emotional labour made it difficult to exercise their resilience. In particular, the suppression of anger in response to students’ misconduct, as emphasized by Gkonou and Miller (2019), added to the emotional labour burden experienced by the beginning teachers, consequently undermining their resilience. When this burden becomes overwhelming, it depletes teachers’ energy and may lead to burnout, making recovery extremely challenging.

Among the interpersonal factors, interactions with students, parents, and colleague teachers played an important role, as discussed in the previous studies (Benesch, 2017; Granziera et al., 2021; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013). With respect to students, the participants recounted their efforts to both rebuild relationships with students who had misbehaved and maintain an appropriate emotional distance (see Excerpt 4), which highlight the delicate nature of teacher–student dynamics and the need for finding the right balance between approachability and maintaining authority in the classroom.

Additionally, interactions with parents posed challenges to the beginning EFL teachers. Particularly, the expectation to demonstrate polite and respectful manners towards parents (see Excerpt 6) hindered the beginning teachers’ ability to manifest resilience, as discussed in a previous study (Kim et al., 2014). When beginning EFL teachers perceive a lack of trust from parents regarding assessment and are unable to disregard parental complaints entirely, the burden becomes even more challenging.

Lastly, relations with unsupportive colleague teachers were identified as challenges for beginning teachers, as shown in previous research (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013). When beginning teachers feel that their theoretical knowledge, acquired through pre-service programmes and preparation for secondary English teacher employment exams, is not acknowledged or respected, it can lead to demoralization and discouragement. The challenge of unsupportive colleague teachers was evident in Sunwoo’s case when he sensed pressure to align with senior teachers’ opinions on assessment plans (see Excerpt 9). Despite having solid theoretical knowledge, beginning teachers may find it disheartening if their expertise is not recognized, which has a negative impact on their motivation and enthusiasm.

Environmental factors included pre-determined assessment plans that deviated from theoretical perspectives as discussed by Wang et al. (2022) (see Excerpt 10). These rigid structures created additional challenges for the participants in their pursuit of TPD. Even though the beginning teachers were equipped with the theoretical background regarding learning assessment, this theoretical knowledge was difficult to implement when the teachers were surrounded by uninterested colleagues.

5.2. Exercising Resilience

This study's findings highlight the resources that beginning language teachers utilize to withstand adversity and exercise resilience (Hiver, 2018; Wang et al., 2021). Peet et al. (2023) identified intrapersonal resources, such as teacher self-reflection, as significant factors in this respect. In Hayoon's case, when she shouldered the heavy load of handling students' misconduct during the class and struggling with managing her own emotions, she engaged in deep introspection (see Excerpt 11). Through extensive contemplation, she was able to form hypotheses about the reasons behind students' disruptive behaviour. These assumptions proved to be valid, resulting in a positive response, contributing to her well-being.

Moreover, in this study, interpersonal factors emerged as particularly influential even though previous studies have emphasized multiple resources across intrapersonal, interpersonal, and environmental factors. Specifically, the presence of supportive colleague teachers and administrators was significant, as evidenced in Hayoon's case (see Excerpt 13). Colleague teachers are vital in supporting the resilience and growth of beginning teachers, as they are an inherent part of the immediate teaching context of beginning teachers (Granziera et al., 2021; You et al., 2017). When colleague teachers provided teaching materials, emotional support, and a sense of community within the school, beginning language teachers were able to easily adopt to the new context and explore alternatives when faced with adversity.

Additionally, we noted that the teacher community's contribution is crucial in assisting beginning teachers and their well-being. Farrell (2016) and Zheng et al. (2019) have highlighted the importance of teacher communities in promoting resilience and professional growth beyond the school level. A lack of proper guidance from the colleague teachers within the school may prove highly discouraging. However, assistance and support provided outside of the school may diversify the resources accessible to beginning teachers, providing them with practical tips and expertise to navigate.

When considering environmental factors, it is crucial to acknowledge the shared responsibility of all stakeholders involved in the educational system in building beginning EFL teacher resilience and help them pursue TPD. Placing the burden solely on one group is insufficient; rather, a collective effort is required. Environmental factors include pre- and in-service training programmes that explicitly prioritize cultivating language teachers' resilience, as emphasized by Wang (2021). These training programmes can incorporate various strategies, including problem-solving skills, help-seeking behaviours, setting emotional boundaries, and emotional regulation, as suggested by Mansfield et al. (2016). By providing comprehensive support and training, the educational system can empower beginning teachers to effectively navigate challenges and maintain their effort to professionally thrive by exercising resilience.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study examined the obstacles faced by two Korean beginning EFL teachers in terms of TPD and explored the resources they utilize to exercise resilience and thrive in the teaching context. Our findings reveal a range of obstacles encountered by Korean beginning EFL teachers, including an insecure position as non-native teachers, limited prac-

tical knowledge, unsupportive working environments, and institutional constraints. However, the participants exhibited resilience by utilizing various resources, such as self-reflection, supportive colleagues, and PLNs. These resources were crucial for them to overcome obstacles, enhance their pedagogical skills, and foster resilience.

This study's practical implications highlight the importance of creating supportive teaching contexts and promoting collaborative networks among teachers. Educational institutions should provide opportunities for mentorship, peer collaboration, and professional development activities. Supporting beginning teachers in addressing their specific needs can contribute to their overall TPD (Aarts et al., 2020). Our results further indicate that pre- and in-service programmes should provide beginning teachers with effective classroom management skills and coping strategies to manage the burden of emotional labour and enable them to thrive professionally (Tang et al., 2022).

This study's theoretical implications arise from the identification of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and environmental factors that influence the resilience and TPD of Korean beginning EFL teachers. Understanding these factors provides insights into the complex dynamics of teacher development and highlights the need for comprehensive support mechanisms incorporating intrapersonal, interpersonal, and environmental aspects (Beltman, 2020). This study is not free from limitations due to its nature as a small-scale qualitative inquiry using a retrospective approach (Derakhshan et al., 2023). Future studies could benefit from employing panel studies to longitudinally trace changes over time. Longitudinal studies can explore the evolving challenges and resources over time, assessing the effectiveness of interventions aimed at promoting teacher resilience and professional growth. Moreover, considering that teacher resilience is a dynamic process shaped by the interplay between personal and environmental resources, the adoption of a nested ecosystem model, as proposed by Derakhshan et al. (2023), could prove advantageous, offering a more comprehensive framework for future investigations.

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8. APPENDIX

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Intrapersonal Factors

Do you think that your current teaching site is the same as what you expected before? If it is not, how big is the gap? What kinds of efforts have you put to decrease the gap?

Are you experiencing pressure in your teaching activity? If so, could you tell me some causes or sources of pressure?

Do you have any instructions or rules in the school that tell you to act differently from your feelings? Do you believe that you engage in emotional labor as a result of explicit expectations imposed by the school?

Interpersonal Factors

What do you think about your teaching site?

Are your school's administrators and colleagues supportive?

Do the learners' parents show a lot of interest in their children's English learning?

Environmental Factors

Are you satisfied with the current curriculum and textbooks you are employing?