The International Research Foundation
for English Language Education

Title of Project:
쌤 [Ssam; teacher] I am: An (Auto)Ethnographic
Exploration of Novice EFL Teachers' Imagined
and Enacted Teacher Identities in South Korea

Researcher:
Laura Kennedy
Michigan State University
kenne420@msu.edu

Research Supervisor:
Prof. Carrie Symons
Michigan State University

Laura Kennedy

TIRF Research Topic Investigated:
Language Teacher Education

Project Summary:
This dissertation project, entitled 쌤 [ssam; teacher] I am, is a study of novice English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher identity negotiations in South Korea. I partner with 10 first-time EFL teachers to provide space and support for them to author their own stories. What started as weekly conversations over dinner has grown into a two-year study that will culminate in the writing of a collaborative autoethnography that answers the question: What does it mean to be an EFL teacher in South Korea today? Research has demonstrated time and again that novice EFL teachers experience identity-disrupting moments when their imagined identities formed as pre-service teachers (e.g., Barkhuizen, 2016; Xu, 2012) do not align with the lived realities of their classrooms; however, through reflective and dialogic practices (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011), novice EFL teachers can story their experiences and renegotiate their teacher professional identities. Blending (auto)ethnographic and case study methodologies, participating teachers and I are generating a rich data set through interviews, small-group conversations, classroom observations, and reflective writing practices. Through the collaborative autoethnography, we hope to demonstrate the complex and complicated process of teacher identity negotiation by layering the voices and experiences of multiple teachers into a single story. By making known the processes through which novice EFL teachers envision, enact, and refine their own professional identities, participating teachers and I hope that the study will stimulate a productive discussion among teachers and teacher educators regarding how autoethnographic practices can be used to support EFL teacher's ongoing identity negotiations.