

# **DISCOURSES OF ENGLISH AS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE IN A MONOLINGUAL SOCIETY: THE CASE OF SOUTH KOREA**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

With the advent of globalization, the emergence of new national and international orders has posed linguistic challenges at various levels. Three competing trends—homogenization, heterogenization, and hybridization—are reshaping language situations within and between nations. At a national level, in some Western multilingual countries, linguistic justice has been increasingly argued for by minority groups, whether indigenous or immigrant, against the centripetal forces of the ideology of ‘one nation one language’, as is clear in the recent English-only movement in the US. In the multilingual third world, many countries have been struggling to create linguistic identities out of their ethnic languages and former colonizers’ languages. On the other hand, at a global level, the phenomenal spread of English is considered by some to be a major threat to other ethnic languages in the world and by others to facilitate participation in international communications.

In this context, South Korea has recently witnessed recurrent proposals for English as an Official Language (EOL) as a language policy for meeting the demands of globalization. In response, another competing force, nationalism, has formed strong reactions to these proposals, thereby opening up heated debates in the media and publications. Considering that South Korea is a ‘monolingual’ society, not a ‘multilingual one’, that enjoys a very high degree of congruity as a speech community (Coulmas, 1999) and that it is an Expanding Circle country (Kachru, 1989), where English is learned as a ‘foreign’ language, the proposal for EOL in South Korea is an extreme case that focuses only on the need for international communications without critical consideration of its potential effects on domestic language situations. Thus, exploration of this case is valuable to an understanding of how the pressures of global communications within the process of globalization are so powerful as to threaten an already established national language even in a monolingual society.

By critically examining public discourses surrounding the issue of EOL in the South Korean intellectual community, this paper attempts to reconceptualize ‘linguistic nationalism’, the ideology of ‘one nation, one language’, in a monolingual country, within the discipline of language planning and policy (LPP).

Also, it explores several general theoretical questions in LPP. First, by discussing the tone of mass media coverage of the issue, it attempts to show how dominant ideologies of globalization and English as a global language are reproduced and opposed in media discourse, a potentially powerful manager of public opinion. Second, it attempts to conceptualize a democratic language policy-making process from the bottom up, while attending to public opinion formulation processes reflected in public opinion polls on the issue.

### **POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITATIONS OF LPP IN RELATION TO LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY**

According to Ricento (2000), LPP as a subfield of sociolinguistics underwent paradigm shifts from its beginning stage of asserting the Western notion of positivism and neutrality in the structuralist tradition, to its later stages with the critical and poststructuralist perspectives. During its shifts, the research focus moved from the description and process of a ‘universal’ version of LPP to the analysis of how and why a certain LPP was enforced in relation to broad social, economic, and political contexts, and the analysis of its ‘effects’. A similar distinction is made by Tollefson (1991) in what he terms the ‘neoclassical approach’ and the ‘historical-structural’ approach to language planning. In addition, there emerged the ‘ecology of languages paradigm’ (first coined by Tsuda, 1994, and elaborated by Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000, etc.) that promotes ‘linguistic human rights’ (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1998, 2000; Skutnabb-Kangas, Phillipson & Rannut, 1994) in view of discourses of ‘linguicism’ (first coined by Skutnabb-Kangas, 1986) and ‘linguistic imperialism’ (Phillipson, 1992). At the same time, however, poststructuralists problematize the essential notion of language in LPP. For example, Pennycook (2002b, p. 108) argues for the need to “move away from an understanding of language policy as the imposition or denial of particular languages” to viewing “language policy in terms of governmentality”, and warns against an assumption that more ‘enlightened’ language policies would necessarily entail less control, even though it does not imply that state

intervention needs to be denied. Hence, the issue is “how debates around language, culture, and education practice produce particular discursive regimes” (Pennycook, 2002b, p. 92) in relation to LPP, while being aware of the political nature of LPP.

This change in the LPP research tradition points to possibilities and limitations of LPP in reorganizing relationships of power for social justice. Specifically, concerning the role of LPP in dealing with the global spread of English, responses seem to vary. To most liberal linguists, the dominance of English in the era of globalization is a ‘done deal’ outside the control of LPP. For example, in his book, *English as a Global Language*, Crystal (1997, p. 139) asserts that “the English language has already grown to be independent of any form of social control”. Wright (2004) is also skeptical of the capability of LPP to relocate power and resources by saying that “whether or not the desire to learn English is the product of ‘hegemonic’ processes or the outcome of ‘rational’ choice it will be impossible to deflect people’s determination by legislation and policy” (p. 170, emphases in original).

By contrast, to critically motivated researchers such as Tollefson and Phillipson, LPP *could* and *should* transform preexisting power differentials within and between nations. To Tollefson, “while language planning reflects relationships of power, it can also be used to transform them” (1991, p. 202), and to Phillipson, “for English to be a force for democracy and human rights ... [l]anguage policy *could* and *should* play an important role in such a transition” (2000, p. 102, emphases added).

Although it is debatable which ‘description’ or ‘judgment’ does LPP justice, it is axiomatic now that LPP is intrinsically connected to existing power relationships and has dual potentials to be constrained by external forces to a great degree and to create new power relationships as well. In this context, Pennycook’s (2001, p. 56, emphasis added) call for “a critical view of language in relation to a critical view of society and a political and *ethical* view of change” for critical applied linguistics is well taken.

For an ethically driven language policy, it is important to explore how democratic decision-making procedures can be accomplished in LPP. Although language policy has been inherently repressive and undemocratic because of its tendency to change behavior top-down, as Brumfit (2002) points out, it does not invalidate the necessity of democratic LPP; rather it seems important to explore to what extent democratic procedures are possible in LPP. Also, as Scholte (2000) points out for policy in general, bottom-up democratic policy making may not be

impossible any more with the help of the technologies of globalization, e.g., electronic communication for public debates.

Two kinds of concerns can be discussed for democratic decision-making procedures in LPP: concerns for “the inclusion of a broad participation base” (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997, p. 55), and concerns for “explaining how individuals manage language in communication” (Jernudd, 1993, p. 134) for bottom-up approaches to LPP.

However, it is in question whether the inclusion of broad participation and actual language use automatically leads to democratic procedures in decision making in LPP. From the vantage point of critical social theory, people’s needs and behaviors need to be critically examined in relation to preexisting power relationships in broad social, economic, and political contexts. The reason is that ‘false consciousness’, ‘hegemony’ as domination by consent (Gramsci, 1971), or ‘ideological power’ constituted by taken-for-granted practices (Fairclough, 1989) may operate among people in supposedly democratic decision-making processes. In other words, the constraints of social structures and dominant ideologies on individual choices cannot be dismissed as completely irrelevant. Having said that, Tollefson’s (2002) argument can provide insights into how to address the issue. He argues that “scholars and students in language policy studies should develop their ability to critically “read” language policies, that is, to understand the social and political implications of particular policies adopted in specific historical contexts” (p. 4, emphasis in original). This ‘critical eye’ can apply to individuals at local levels who can participate in the decision making process of language planning. Possibly, educational settings are the best site where the ability to read discourses in policy debate and where the ability to assess potential effects of a language policy can be fostered. Critical pedagogies of English (Pennycook, 1994) may be good candidates for developing a ‘critical eye’ for discursive intervention into LPP on the part of students at local levels. Perhaps it is after this pedagogical intervention from the bottom up is guaranteed that a democratic policy-making process can be achieved.

## A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF LANGUAGE SITUATIONS IN SOUTH KOREA

### *Development of Linguistic Nationalism in Korea*

In many multilingual third world countries, the European model of linguistic nationalism, ‘one nation, one language’ for creating an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1983) was adopted as a homogenizing strategy for nation building to increase domestic communication with one or two western ‘colonial’ languages as official languages (refer to Wright, 2004 for further explanation).

In Korea, however, ethnocultural nationalism was kindled and maintained through resistance against Chinese influence and Japanese imperialism during nation building, and “language has played a crucial role in this endeavor” (Coulmas, 1999, p. 408). In addition to Korean in general, *Hangul*, the Korean writing system, in particular, has played an essential role. Although *Hangu* was invented in the 15th century to break away from dependency on Chinese characters, it was not promoted actively and used extensively until the present century (Coulmas, 1999) because of strict class stratification in the past with the nobility favoring the use of Chinese characters. It was not until the early twentieth century, the period of Japanese rule in Korea, that the use of Korean, especially the use of *Hangul*, became a visible symbol of resistance to Japanese linguistic assimilation policy (Coulmas, 1999; Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003). As Kaplan and Baldauf Jr. (2003) mention, “Japanese rule became a catalyst for Korean cultural and linguistic nationalism” (p. 32).

In short, the invention of *Hangul* to break away from dependency on Chinese characters, and the active use of Korean and *Hangul* against Japanese imperialism contributed to the formulation of linguistic nationalism in Korea to a large degree. Hence, Korean linguistic nationalism can be said to have been reinforced by inner forces rather than adopted from outside as in many multilingual third world countries. The present language situation in South Korea is that it is a monolingual society that enjoys a very high degree of congruity of speech community (Coulmas, 1999).

### *The Status of English in South Korea*

Some literature provides a starting point for guessing the status of English in South Korea. South Korea is an ‘Expanding Circle’ country (Kachru, 1989) along with China and Japan, in

which English is learned as a foreign language and has no official role. It does not belong to the group of ‘countries that give special status to English’ (Crystal, 1997) but is a country where English is learned as the global lingua franca (McArther, 1998). The increasing importance of English in South Korea as an Expanding Circle country is implied by McKay (2002, p. 11), who says that the Expanding Circle is “where there is the greatest potential for the continued spread of English”, although the status of English in the Expanding Circle is lower than the Outer Circle. However, South Korea still does not belong to a group of countries that is in transition from an EFL context to an ESL context (Graddol, 1997). In short, the literature shows that English is still a foreign language in South Korea, but its importance is presumably rapidly increasing.

However, all the categorizations above do not refer to the specific historical context of South Korea. It is said that the influence of English in South Korea has become salient because of strong dependency on the U.S. for international politics and economy since its independence in 1945 and the Korean War in the 1950’s (H. Shin, 2004). English even enjoyed the status of an official language in government business in South Korea during the presence of U.S. troops from 1945 to 1949.

The importance of English in South Korea is reflected in language policy for foreign language education. Since the second national education curriculum was proclaimed in 1963, English has been the first foreign language (Shim & Baik, 2000), which is also true for Japan, Indonesia, and Taiwan in the Pacific Basin (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003). In the early 1990s, proliferating discourses of globalization have increased the importance of English as a ‘global’ language. The Kim Young Sam Administration articulated a national globalization project, *Segyehwa*, part of which is the promotion of English for national competitiveness through English education (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003; Shim & Baik, 2000). Consequently, in 1994 extra-curricular English education started for 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> graders in elementary school, and in 1997, English became a mandatory subject for 3<sup>rd</sup> graders in elementary school in the national educational curriculum (Shim & Baik, 2000). In 2001, with the launching of the seventh national education curriculum, the Ministry of Education recommended an English-only policy in English education for third and fourth graders in elementary schools and seventh graders in junior high school with the policy affecting one higher grade each year (H. Shin, 2004).

However, while the recent language policies in foreign language education seem to reflect the growing importance of English in the age of globalization, varying degrees of resistance are

also reported. Jung and Norton (2002) reported difficulties in the school implementation of the elementary English program policy and some negative sociocultural impact of it on other subjects, especially Korean, from teachers' points of view. H. Shin (2004) also reported teachers' resistance, this time against the English-only policy in English education, and argues for the need for critical pedagogy, while challenging the 'native speaker myth'.

## DEBATES ON ENGLISH AS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE IN SOUTH KOREA

### *Emergence and Recurrence of Proposals for English as an Official Language in South Korea*

Since the government-initiated *Segyehwa* drive in the early 1990s, discussions of the possibility of enacting English as an official language (EOL) in South Korea have become active. Based on a review of mass media coverage and publications surrounding the issue, I present a time-line for the development of EOL discourses as follows.

**July 1998: The publication of 'Ethnic Languages in the Age of a Global Language' (Bok, 1998), and a subsequent review of the book in *The Chosun Ilbo* newspaper that triggered heated debates in the media and publications.** In the year 1998, a self-described liberal and novelist named Bok wrote a provocative book entitled *Ethnic Languages in the Age of a Global Language*, which contains a proposal for English as an Official Language (EOL) in South Korea. Bok's main argument is that ethnic languages will die out soon because people have realized the power and prestige of English as the present global language, and therefore, that the South Korean government should take the initiative to adopt English as a co-official language with Korean for the time being and, in the long run, establish English as the one and only official language in South Korea. Thus, his proposal for EOL was based on 'subtractive' bilingualism. On July 3, 1998, Bok's book was reviewed in *The Chosun Ilbo*, a Korean newspaper company that enjoys the largest sales in South Korea (21% in 1998; S.W Kim, 2004), which triggered heated debates on the issue of EOL among intellectual communities in the media and publications.

**December 1999: Novelist Conference on EOL co-hosted by National Economic Association affiliated Liberal Corporation Center (LCC), and Korean Novelist Association (KNA).** It was around the turn of the century that the issue of EOL in South Korea received revived attention from the media. In the 'Novelist Forum' on EOL, co-hosted by LCC and KNA,

UI Byung Jung, president of KNA, asserted, “Throughout history, Korea has been a country with a lack of information, and without diplomacy, and this has much to do with the pain that foreign-language-insensitive countries are likely to suffer ... we need to learn from Singaporean bilingualism” (Seoul/Yonhap News, 1999).

***January 2000: Japanese Prime Minister, Obuchi’s advisory board ‘21st Japanese Project’ proposed EOL in Japan, which rekindled the debate on EOL in South Korea.*** At the beginning of a new millennium, Japan’s consideration of EOL in Japan as one of the strategies for globalization fueled the EOL debate in the media again. The apparent similarity of Japan to South Korea, both as relatively monolingual countries and economically competitive countries, provided another rationale for EOL in South Korea. However, the proposal in Japan was different from that in South Korea, in that it was more focused on ‘additive’ bilingualism, rather than the replacement of Japanese by English (Funabashi, 2001).

***2001 to the present: Recurrent announcements of government-initiated economic development plans, part of which is the active promotion of English in designated areas.*** Since 2001, there have been moves to actively promote the use of English by the central and regional governments. In May 2001, the government announced a plan to adopt English as an official language in Cheju Island as an international duty free city. In April 2002, the government announced the ‘Korea as the Business Center of Northeast Asia’ project with ‘Special economic zones’, where English will be used as an official language. In March 2004, the Seoul metropolitan government announced the ‘Daily use of English in Seoul’ project. Arguments and counter-arguments have flooded the media on each move, and so far no proposals or announcements have been successfully implemented because of opposition from many fields, especially from the academic and cultural worlds, and nongovernmental *Hangul-related* associations.

### ***Summary***

It is questionable whether all the four phases of EOL discourse can be grouped under the general term ‘EOL debates’. For the present, there is much confusion that needs to be cleared up about the debates, e.g., the notion of ‘official language’ especially in a monolingual country, the scope of applicability in implementation, etc. However, one common thread of the proposals is a call for the realization of the rapidly growing importance of English in the era of globalization.



On the other hand, counter-arguments to the proposals also seem to converge on one general stance, which is deep rooted in the essential notion of nationalism and the importance of an ethnic language in Korean nationalism. Therefore, it can be said that opinions have been polarized into two extreme positions, a globalization camp versus a nationalism camp, while sometimes the two ideologies intersect with other ideologies, and middle grounds are sporadically found. This phenomenon demonstrates that the issue of ideology may affect the process of the formulation of a language policy in relation to larger environments.

### **COMPETING DISCOURSES ON EOL IN THE INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY IN SOUTH KOREA**

It is found that there are considerable parallels between the debate in the intellectual community in South Korea and the one in applied linguistics on the politics of English in general. To understand the complexities of the debates surrounding the issue and how different ideologies underlie each debate point, I will present and discuss pro-EOL discourses one by one along with anti-EOL discourses. I translated all of the excerpts from Korean publications in the following sections.

#### ***Globalization is Real, and Nationalism is on the Wane (Globalization versus Nationalism)***

One of the rationales for EOL in South Korea that proponents of EOL provide is the rise of globalization. Bok (1998a, 1998b, 2000, 2001, 2003) consistently argues that globalization as ‘homogenization’ and ‘standardization’ is real and that, even if it is US- initiated, accommodation to this phenomenon is a minimum survival skill. Other proponents of EOL equate globalization with ‘cosmopolitanism’ and reject nationalism as inherently ‘closed’ (Y H. Kim, 1999; Ko, 1998).

However, nationalist opponents of EOL (Y Choi, 1999; Y Han, 1998; D. Jeung, 2001; Jin; 1999; Y M. Kim, 2001; Nam, 1998; Sung, 1999; Yun, 2001) criticize the widespread discourses of ‘neo-liberal globalization’, and highlight the positive effects of nationalism in Korea. What they argue in common is that the ideology of a neo-liberal market economy should not provide a rationale for a language policy such as EOL and that power disparities among nations in the contemporary globalization as a homogenizing process should be critically understood.

***The Spread of English is Natural, Neutral, and Beneficial (Reproduction of Discourses of English as a Global or International Language Versus Resistance to It)***

To demonstrate that the global spread of English is inevitable, Bok puts forward ‘Metcalf’s Law’, which he explains is that “the value of a certain network is proportionate to the square of its users” (2001, p. 129). Bok argues that every language forms such a network and that once a certain language starts to enjoy the largest network of users, its users will keep multiplying until it becomes a global language. Bok further argues that “the dominance of English is due to globalization ... this means that English is relatively independent of the political clout of the US or the UK that speaks it as a national language, and that the future of English is bright” (2003, p. 29). However, many opponents of EOL (e.g., Y M. Kim; 2000; Yun, 2001) criticize the position of the EOL proponents as naive and blindly assimilationist, and argue that what seems to be ‘natural’ to them is in fact the result of power differentials among countries.

This sharp contrast between the two camps demonstrates a dramatic instance of the discourse and counter-discourses that many critical linguists have provided in relation to the global spread of English. To those critical linguists, Bok may be seen as blind to the deliberate efforts of the UK and the US to spread English not only as a commodity, but also as an ideological tool to disseminate their values to newly independent countries (Phillipson, 1992). In addition, he perhaps ignores the historical process by which English has become associated with neutrality and modernity as part of colonial discourses (Pennycook, 1994, 1998). Y M. Kim (2000) aptly points out that English is not only a ‘global’ language but also the ‘American’ language.

In addition, Bok’s application of ‘Metcalf’s Law’ to a language issue seems to parallel a liberal position on the spread of English in that “English is achieving a hegemonic critical mass” (Wright, 2004, p. 156) and reinforces his assumption on language in terms of economy and efficiency only. On one occasion he admits that he chooses not to make value judgments while following the frame of economy (1998b). It can be inferred that Bok thinks that any value judgment will make the issue ‘ideological’ rather than ‘neutral’, not admitting that any assertion of neutrality is already political. In this sense, Bok’s position can be labeled as what Pennycook (2001) calls ‘liberal ostrichism’.

***Individuals Will Choose English over Korean Because They Know the Power of English (Individual Choices as the Outcome of ‘Rational’ Choice versus the Product of ‘Hegemonic’ Processes)***

Bok asks a mind-blowing question: “If you have a new born baby, and if he or she can choose between English and Korean as a mother tongue, which would you recommend?” (2001, p. 146). Bok assumes that every Korean will answer ‘English’ if they are ‘true’ to their hearts without being misguided by romantic nationalism. What is interesting is that Bok’s conclusion seems to agree with general sentiment on EOL. Since Bok started a debate on EOL in the media in 1998, public opinion polls have been conducted on the issue by the media, the results of which show that agreement with EOL increasingly exceeds disagreement over time (see p. 22). Bok interprets this tendency as the result of more and more people realizing the importance of English as a global language.

To most of the EOL opponents, however, those individual choices are the result of ‘voluntary colonialism’ (Yun, 2001) through a process of American hegemony. In this interpretation, the ‘laissez-faire liberalism’ (Pennycook, 2001) of the EOL proponents shows instances of ‘colonization of the consciousness’ (Fanon, 1967) and ‘hegemonic’ processes (Gramsci, 1971), and reproduce part of colonial discourses without considering any possibilities of ‘articulation of counter discourses’ (Pennycook, 1995) that potentially helps to reorganize the existing power structure.

“[W]hether or not the desire to learn English is the product of ‘hegemonic’ processes or the outcome of ‘rational’ choice” (Wright, 2004, p. 170, emphases in original), H. Han (2000) and Y. M. Kim (2000) find a logical flaw in Bok’s argument, which they think misleads public opinion. Their point is that even though individuals realize the importance and power of English for globalization, they do not realize the fact that EOL does not guarantee the improvement of their English proficiency. Therefore, the most serious problem with Bok’s point is his unfounded belief in the causal link between EOL and English language proficiency.

***Globalization Calls for ‘One’ Global Language at the Expense of Ethnic Languages (The ‘Diffusion of English Paradigm’ Versus an ‘Ecology of Languages Paradigm’)***

Bok’s understanding of languages as operating on the Darwinian principle of the survival of the fittest is clear in the following statement: “Ultimately English as a sole international language

will be used everywhere in every society in the world. The rise of English will shrink space for ethnic languages, which will make them lose their vitality and be out of daily use. Finally, ethnic languages will disappear ... and remain as a *museum language*" (2003, pp. 30-31, emphasis in original).

In fact, it is this particular view of language that first triggered all the EOL debates because it presupposes the disappearance of Korean. That is, Bok's version of English as 'an' official language is just an interim policy for English as 'the' official language in South Korea in the long run. This position is in contrast with a proposal for EOL in Japan that emphasizes peaceful coexistence of Japanese and English as co-official languages by promoting complementary bilingualism (Funabashi, 2001). These arguments fit well into two contrasting language paradigms, termed by Tsuda (1994), the 'Diffusion of English Paradigm' and an 'Ecology of Languages Paradigm' (see also Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

This debate is analogous to the classic debate of translatability across languages or the incommensurability of languages in Whorf's linguistic relativity principle. According to Kramersch (1993), both of the arguments are extreme, but a weak version of Whorf's hypothesis, especially concerning cultural differences in semantics, is generally accepted nowadays. Kramersch explains that "the theory of linguistic relativity does not claim that linguistic structure constrains what people *can* think or perceive, only that it tends to influence what they routinely *do* think" (1993, p. 14, emphases in original).

Therefore, what seems to be one of the most serious problems with Bok's proposal for EOL is that it is based on 'subtractive' dominant language learning, not the 'additive' one that is defended by Skutnabb-Kangas (2000). With this said, the productive mode of English as a language of opportunity can be justified as long as it does not subtract from one's mother tongue. Additionally, the active promotion of foreign languages other than English in educational settings that S. Jeong's (2000) advances deserves attention because of its potential to break taken-for-granted Anglicist cultural values as well as to reflect one's cultural bias in a more balanced way.

### ***EOL is Possible in South Korea (Possibility of EOL in an EFL or Expanding Circle Country)***

In order to demonstrate that EOL as a replacement of Korean is possible, Bok (1998, 2003) takes the linguistic shifts of the Jews and the Irish as examples, and interprets them as implying

that people can often decide on their language on the basis of utility. According to S. Jeong (2000), however, they did not change their languages ‘voluntarily’ several times; rather they had no other choice in order to survive. Sung (1998) also says that the instances of language shift cannot ‘justify’ the loss of a mother tongue if we think back to the oppressive situation of the Japanese language assimilation policy in Korea. These counterarguments echo Skutnabb-Kangas’ (2000) comment on the relationship between linguistic and cultural diversity in the cases of the Irish and the Jews:

That language loss has happened on a large scale (even if the languages themselves are still alive), and people survived, does not mean that it is something that should be recommended. Many of those people who have themselves experienced this ... bear witness to possible negative effects (p. 253).

Another related discussion centers around the notion of ‘an official language’. While examining language situations in many other countries, S. J. Kim (2001) explains that an official language is a notion that is required only in multilingual countries and that, since Korea has been a monolingual society throughout history, there has been no need for the discussion of an official language. Rather, the only concern in language policy in Korea has been the standardization of the Korean language. The exceptions were Japanese as the official language that was enforced during the Japanese rule and English as a co-official language under the US administration from 1945 to 1949. Therefore, one or two conditions should be met to enact EOL in South Korea: changing South Korea into a multilingual country, admitting that South Korea is a colony of an English speaking country, or both. S. J. Kim goes as far as to say that EOL is practically impossible without the genocide of all Koreans. Hong (1999) also clarifies this point by saying that EOL is a daydream unless English keeps being ‘imposed’ upon Koreans as Japanese did in the colonial period. H. Han (2000) also points out that EOL is impossible without the backup of quality English education. .

***EOL Will Provide Equal Opportunities to Learn English (‘Democratization of a Formerly Elitist Resource’ Versus ‘Social Inequalities Exacerbated by a Linguistic Hierarchy’)***

Bok (2000) asserts that EOL will promise linguistic equalities by providing equal access to English with exposure to it outside of the classroom, which will in turn help to solve the problem of existing societal inequalities in South Korea. In response, some EOL opponents (Chae, 2000;

S. Jeong 2000) assert that EOL will aggravate the present inequalities because the English divide will be institutionally legitimized by EOL. In other words, the link between material conditions and English proficiency will be strengthened because of the upgraded status of English, while serving the interests of already socially and economically dominant groups.

According to H. Han (2000, p. 30), however, whether or not ‘English ability’ for everybody may entail the ‘democratization of a formerly elitist resource’ (Fishman, 1996, p. 7), the point is whether or not ‘EOL’ as a language policy will lead to English proficiency for everybody in South Korea. It can be said that as long as the latter is not clear, EOL cannot democratize the situation. In this sense, the possibility of EOL contributing to social and economic equalities in South Korea is closely related to the question of whether EOL is ever possible in South Korea as an Expanding Circle country.

Another related issue is whether EOL will lead to bilingualism, and if so, what kind of bilingualism it will be. Ko (1999) predicts that if EOL is enacted, the language situation in South Korean will be close to a diglossia where Korean is used for private purposes and English is used in public domains, but he does not bother to consider the ideological implications of “liberal complementarity” (Pennycook, 2001, p. 56) or “an ideological naturalization of sociolinguistic arrangements” (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994, p. 69) in an asymmetric diglossia. Although Ko’s version of EOL is more moderate than Bok, this sentiment is still in sharp contrast with the proposal for EOL in Japan in 2000.

In Japan, Japanese Prime Minister Obuchi’s advisory board for the ‘21st Japanese Project’ in 2000 was specific about the status of English: “In the long run, English as a *second* official language needs to be considered, but consensus among people is necessary. At the moment we need to do all we can to make English as a practical language” (cited from Yi, 2001, p. 302, emphasis added). In a similar vein, Funabashi (2001), one of the members of the board and active proponent of EOL in Japan, expresses his proposal that “English should be a second official language ... upgraded in status from a foreign language... . Here, a fundamental task is *not to make Japan a victim of an English divide*” (p. 217, emphasis added).

Once again, as long as it is not decisive whether EOL will guarantee full English competence for ‘every’ Korean speaker, the designation of an equal or higher status to English is not likely to achieve socioeconomic equality. This echoes Sung’s (1999) argument that government

intervention to support a ‘powerless’ language is needed more, the assumption of which parallels the ‘linguistic human rights’ paradigm in LPP.

**MEDIA DISCOURSE AS A POWERFUL MANAGER OF PUBLIC OPINION<sup>1</sup>**

Despite all the competing discourses on EOL in South Korea by the intellectual community in the media and publications, public opinion polls on the issue show a different picture of the situation as follows.

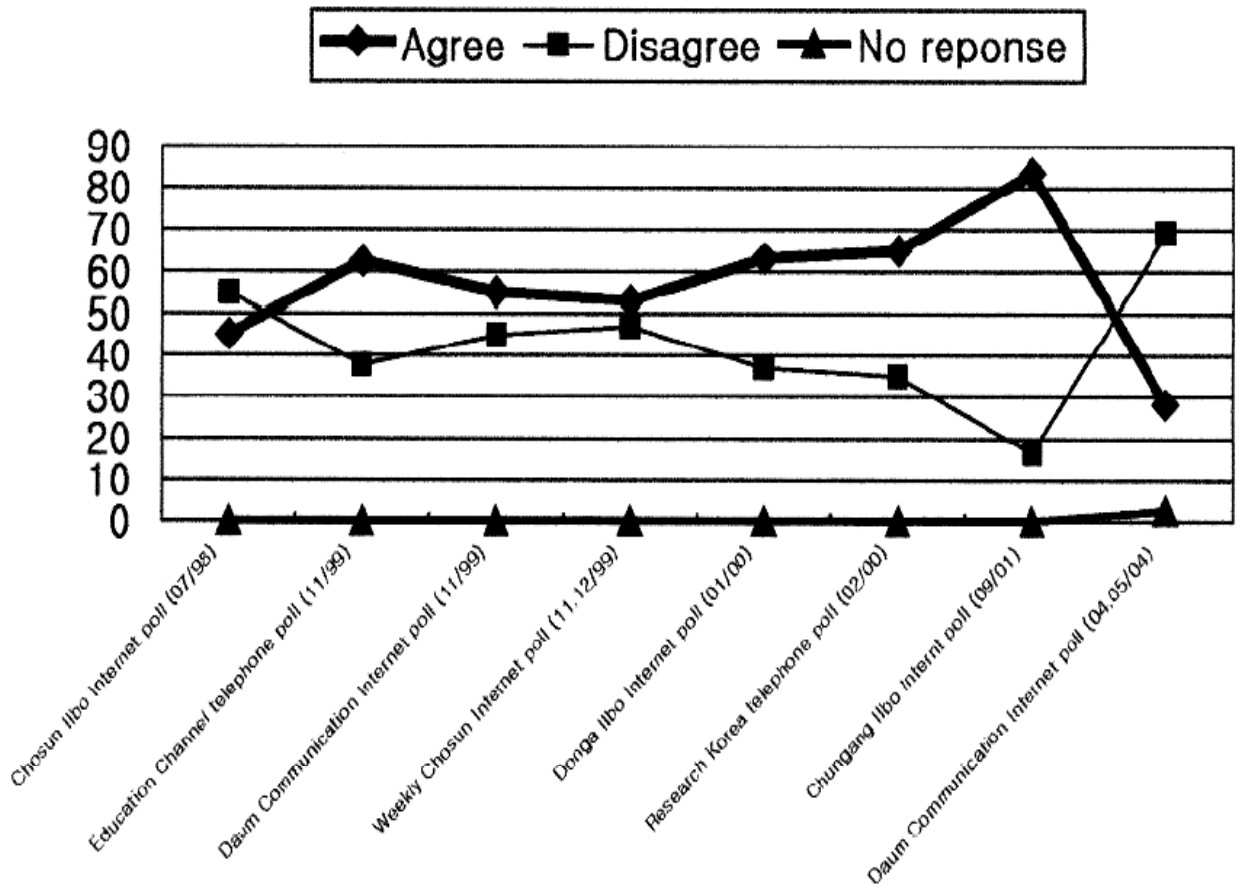


Figure 1. Results of Public Opinion Polls on EOL from July 1998 to May 2004

Generally, the proportion of anti-EOL opinions has exceeded that of pro-EOL ones in public debate, especially in publications, but public opinion polls from various sources indicate that

<sup>1</sup> Sources of the newspaper articles in this section are attached as an appendix.

public sentiment has been increasingly favorable to EOL, except at the last poll on the ‘Daily use of English’<sup>2</sup> project proposed by the Seoul Metropolitan Government in 2004.

Concerning the general increase of the percentage of agreement, different interpretations followed. Bok (2000) says that this turnover to more than fifty percent agreement is a reflection of Koreans’ realization, as a result of the economic crisis of the IMF intervention into Korea in 1997 and the rapid spread of the Internet, that English has been consolidating its status as a global language. However, H. Han (2002) argues that most of the results of the polls do not reflect the point that EOL will not automatically lead to the improvement of English proficiency. Also, he adds that if people polled had been informed of this point, the results would have been different. That is, the results show the growing needs of individuals to acquire English proficiency, but they do not justify EOL. Thus, the missing link between EOL and English proficiency is not clearly reflected in the opinion polls.

In addition, many other EOL opponents (e.g., Y M. Kim, 2000; H. Han 2002) point out the sensational journalism of *The Chosun Ilbo*, a newspaper company that fueled the EOL debate in July 1998 by making a favorable review of Bok’s book, *Ethnic Languages in the Age of a Global Language* (1998). The newspaper also drove the “English is competitiveness” campaign in 2000, when Japan started to consider EOL. Considering the status of *The Chosun Ilbo* as a newspaper company that enjoys the largest sales in South Korea (21% in 1998, and 26.8% in 2003; S. W. Kim, 2004), it is very likely that they have exercised a potentially huge influence on the formation of public opinion since they have powerful media discourse control that “may lead to ‘preferred models’ (as persuasion can be understood)” (van Dijk, 2000, p. 78, emphasis in original). In this context, the anti-EOL camp suspect that behind their aggressive promotion of English and EOL lurks a profit-making motive because they have been marketing a Korean-made English test called ‘TEPS’ (Test of English Proficiency developed by Seoul National University). In short, the ‘hidden agenda’ of a leading newspaper company made a happy rendezvous with the discourses of English as a global language in the age of the dominant market ideology-driven globalization.

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<sup>2</sup> One possible explanation for the outlier is that the aggressive development-oriented administration of the Seoul Metropolitan government is extensively criticized in the media (e.g., Y. J. Kim, 2004).



### ***Discourses of EOL in The Chosun Ilbo***

To demonstrate how the ideology of neo-liberal globalization is manifested in line with the discourses of English as a global language in *The Chosun Ilbo*, I will present an analysis of articles that represent the tone of the *The Chosun Ilbo* in promoting English, mostly in the ‘English is competitiveness’ campaign in 2000, while taking the assumptions of Critical Discourse Analysis that “discourse is both socially *constitutive* as well as socially shaped” (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 258, emphasis in original) and that “ideology is the prime means of manufacturing consent” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 4). I translated all of the articles in the following sections, and tried not to change the general tone of each article while editing it for the clarification of its gist whenever necessary. I also italicized words or phrases that are the focus of discussion.

In *The Chosun Ilbo*, more than anything else, as the following headlines of articles show, the association of English and individual and national economic growth, and the importance of English for cross-national business transaction in globalization (Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992) is celebrated as a matter of course, while other competing issues such as potentially negative influences of English on the Korean language, cultural identity, social equality, etc. are never addressed.

- “Want *growth*? Speak English!” said an American leading economist Paul Krugman in *Fortune* in April, 1999. (*The Chosun Ilbo*, 1999, December 31)
- “English raises your *salary*” (*The Chosun Ilbo*, 2000, January 2)
- “Faltering English often spoils *business transactions*” (*The Chosun Ilbo*, 2000, January 13)

The general economic message penetrates most of the articles while it is intricately related to other specific issues. In the following article, English is considered a major contributor to economy-oriented national interests.

- “The low English proficiency of Korean elites leads to huge loss in *national interests*” (*The Chosun Ilbo*, 2000, January 2)

In the evening on December 24, 1997, when the IMF crisis in South Korea just began, there was a conference, ‘The economy of Korea and her financial standing’ at AEI in Washington... . A New York Times reporter asked one of the Korean government officials, “The Korean government reportedly asked IMF to provide *20 billion dollars*.”

Do you think this will be enough to alleviate the crisis?” The official answered twice, “I don’t know”. Yim, the then Minister of Finance and Economy, had already announced the request of the aid of 200 billion dollars from IMF four days before. The official ended up lying because of the miscommunication.

Another reporter asked, “How is it possible that you don’t know? I don’t understand”, and added, “How do you believe the IMF intervention would change the status of the Bank of Korea?” The official gave an irrelevant answer by saying, “I have never thought of my power”. *This demonstrates one of the examples where lack of English proficiency destroys trust in the Korean government.*

In the above article, the low proficiency in English is directly connected to the loss of trust. While it is acceptable that better or ‘perfect’ English proficiency would have made the communication better, it is questionable to what extent the miscommunication destroyed trust because part of the communication breakdown was due to misinformation, i.e., *20 billion dollars*. More than that, it also needs to be asked why the officials did not consider relying on interpreters for better communication. However, these questions are never asked in the article. Accordingly, the message that *lack of English proficiency destroys trust in the Korean government* is naturalized as a matter of ‘common sense’.

One specific theme in the campaign is ‘to learn from other countries’ as in the following examples.

- “English is a living language in *Taiwan*. Taiwanese speak English without difficulty”: Taiwanese elites lead the miracle of English. (*The Chosun Ilbo*, 1999, December 31)
- “Even *France* explores the possibility of English-French bilingualism.” (*The Chosun Ilbo*, 2000, January 4)
- (Editorial) It is time to learn from *Japanese* move to adopt English as an official language... . The reason for the move is that it is absolutely necessary as one of the 21 century national strategies for Japan... . Only when English is enacted as an official language or spoken as a practical language will English proficiency follow. (*The Chosun Ilbo*, 2000, January 19)

Here, cross-national comparisons are made to provide justifications for the global status of English and EOL in South Korea. However, whether the comparisons are based on ‘facts’ or not, no reference is made to other countries where EOL is exercising negative effects, especially

many multilingual third world countries. Moreover, even in the three countries, Taiwan, France, and Japanese, EOL is yet to be enforced. France just *explores the possibility* and Japan just made a *move*. Just the ‘possibility’, however, gives *The Chosun Ilbo* opportunities to promote the importance of English and EOL.

Another salient pattern is the reproduction of colonial discourses of English, i.e., dependency on native speaker’s norms (Amin, 1997; Auerbach, 1993; Canagarajah, 1999a; Cook, 1999; Phillipson, 1992; Rampton, 1990) and the self-stigmatization of the values of nonnative English speakers.

- “Early English education needed”

*The Chosun Ilbo*’s “English is competitiveness” campaign is becoming more convincing with the recent proposal for EOL in Japan... . The younger a student is, the more chances they need to have to learn from *native speakers*... . *Koreans’ lack of etiquette* derives from that of the understanding of foreign languages. (*The Chosun Ilbo*, 2000, January 23)

This article shows a dramatic instance of dependency on the native speaker ‘myth’ or ‘fallacy’, i.e., “the ideal teacher of English is a native speaker” (Phillipson, 1992, p. 193) for early English education slides into the stigmatization of Koreans as non-civilized (*Korean’s lack of etiquette*). This mechanism is consistent with Skutnabb-Kangas’ (2000, p. 196) identification of the reproduction of unequal power relationships through the ‘glorification’ of the dominant group, the ‘stigmatization’ of subordinated groups, and the ‘rationalization’ of their relationship. Moreover, the native speaker myth and the self-stigmatization is generalized and reinforced by a reference to the case of Japan as follows.

- Professor Toshiko Marx is saying, “Japanese people at international meetings are famous for three Ss: Silence, Sleeping, Smile... . Japanese prime minister speaks Japanese often without clear subjects. He says a lot, but except some meaningful words, there is *nothing to translate*... .” (*The Chosun Ilbo*, 2000, March 2)
- “Japan sets out to construct English infrastructure”  
Suzuki Akita, a dean of a Japanese university said, “Japanese people’s low English proficiency is parallel to the wonder of Egyptian Pyramids.” ... In Japan, it is almost impossible to find a McDonalds’ in its *authentic pronunciation*. Many Japanese people do not understand it unless pronounced as ‘Ma-ku-do-na-ru-do’... . (*The Chosun Ilbo*, 2000, January 13)

All the stigmatization of nonnative speakers points to ‘colonization of the consciousness’ in Fanon’s (1967) terms. It is also consistent with Yun (2001)’s ‘internalized colonialism’, and Y M. Kim’s (2000) ‘*Saedae Chui*’ (Serving the Great) in the previous public debate. Moreover, the connection of the ruling elites in a small country with the ‘Great countries’ discussed by Y M. Kim (2000) is evidenced by the following contributions by Korean elites:

- Contribution by Jin Seop Yeom, *President of Yahoo Korea*: “Without shift in our paradigm toward English, will our future ever exist?” (*The Chosun Ilbo*, 1999, December 31)
- “Early English education urgently needed” by Yun Dae Eo (*Dean of Korea University*): “Learning English hard and using it as a daily language does not threaten the subjectivity of a nation” (*The Chosun Ilbo*, 2000, January 20)
- “It’s time to actively consider English as a second official language” by Su Gil Yang, *DECD Emissary*: “Generally, Korean public employees are inexperienced in free discussions and lack English ability” (*The Chosun Ilbo*, 2000, February 16)

In addition to the ideological control of English as described above, the glorification of native speaker norms is also closely tied to market ideology, which shows one aspect of English itself as a world ‘commodity’ (Phillipson, 1992).

- “English is a living thing. Listen and repeat all the time!”, advises *Dr. Cornelius*, who has recently visited Korea... . During an interview, he said, “There was an interesting study in *Congo*. A person who had never learned English before mastered English in *three months*. *He sounds like a native speaker*”, and concluded “that was possible because of African oral traditions”. That implies the importance of learning a foreign language *just like children do*... . Dr. Cornelius has developed many English learning programs so far... . Now he is President of Faith, which is an *international English education corporation*. (*The Chosun Ilbo*, 2000, April 20)

Here, Dr. Cornelius gives a rather exaggerated and disputable example that may not be applicable to ‘average’ English learners in other contexts. However, his position as a native speaker expert helps to give much more credibility to the case than his nonnative counterpart, since his judgment of nativeness is considered as such. Accordingly, the discourse of ‘English success’ (*He sounds like a native speaker*) within a ‘short’ period of time (*three months*) with the help of a magic ‘method’ (*just like children do*) promoted by ‘native’ experts (*Dr. Cornelius*) are

not problematized, but reproduced and naturalized in the article. Moreover, the words *international English education corporation* indicate how market ideology is easily connected to an extreme version of ‘English success’ stories.

All of the above examples reveal how ideologies as “particular ways of representing and constructing society which reproduce unequal relations of power” (Faircough & Wodak, 1997, p. 275) are manifested in *The Chosun Ilbo*. The case of *The Chosun Ilbo* shows seemingly contradictory aspects of media discourse. On one hand, *The Chosun Ilbo* is ‘passive’ in that “the media so seldom take the initiative for social change” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 282) by reflecting and confirming the dominant market ideology in globalization. On the other hand, it becomes ‘aggressive’ as long as dominant ideologies fit their private interests, i.e., selling the English test, TEPS. Although we still need to be careful in deciding to what extent the discourses in *The Chosun Ilbo* might have affected the public opinion polls and in considering the possibility of “different discourse interpretations” (Widdowson, 2000, p. 22) on the part of discourse participants, the newspaper readers, the dominance of market ideology in neo-liberal globalization in the media, and the profit-making motive of *The Chosun Ilbo* cannot be dismissed as irrelevant in the discussion of the process of the public opinion formulation in EOL in South Korea.

### ***Counter-discourses to EOL: Focus on the Case of Hankyoreh***

In contrast to *The Chosun Ilbo*, some other competing newspaper companies show a varying range of resistance to EOL in South Korea and provide more diverse perspectives, as the following headlines indicate.

- “EOL is a crazy idea” (*Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 2003, December 26)
- “Take off a white mask, blind reverence for the West” (*Hankyoreh*, 2004, February 23)
- “English imperialism in the Internet era” (*The Donga Ilbo*, 2000, February 24)
- “Making Seoul ‘a republic of English?’” (*Hankyoreh*, 2004, April 25)
- “The power of English and English imperialism” (*The Hankook Ilbo*, 1999, August 24)
- “Communication skills determine English proficiency” (*The Hankook Ilbo*, 2000, November 30)

Among the newspaper companies, *Hankyoreh* has been consistently the most critical about the sensational journalism of *The Chosun Ilbo* in the promotion of English in relation to EOL. It debunks the hidden agenda of *The Chosun Ilbo* as follows:

- “Much Ado about EOL”

The mass media is now making a fuss about EOL in South Korea, arguing that we need to learn from the Japanese 21st century project... . Lack of English proficiency is due to its uselessness in Korea... . Behind EOL lurks *a profit-making motive* in the guise of globalization... . *The Chosun Ilbo* has already made a big profit out of TEPS, and now is trying to make the whole nation an English school by the promotion of the ‘English is competitiveness’ campaign... . (*Hankyoreh*, 2000, February 8)

Specifically, in reporting the issue of EOL in Japan in 2000, the tone of the following article in *Hankyoreh* is in sharp contrast with that of *The Chosun Ilbo*.

- “The debate of EOL in Japan getting hotter... . Disagreements heard in the academic and cultural worlds”

Despite the wide acceptance of the importance of English as a practical language, disagreements are expressed in various fields in Japan... .” The reason why Singapore, Philippines, India, etc. adopted EOL is that they needed English as a governing language because they were English speaking countries’ *colonies* and *multilingual* settings. Japan has no reason to adopt EOL” said Sato Tadashi, who is an educator and used to be a preliminary school English instructor... .” It is hard to understand why discourses of EOL are widespread in a monolingual society like Japan. The government should give its *English education* a top priority” said Okino Ana, a French literature expert... . There is no advanced country with *unique culture* that considers EOL, which is a flippant expression of *lack of subjectivities*” said Professor Yoshida Yashihoko... . (*Hankyoreh*, 2000, February 21)

The article is focused on voices that were unheard in *The Chosun Ilbo*, who had reported only the voices in favor of EOL in Japan, taking the power of English for granted and stigmatizing Japanese values. This shows that although there are competing voices on the issue, *The Chosun Ilbo* and *Hankyoreh* are very selective in making the voices of Japanese people heard by the public, which suggests the importance of a ‘critical eye’ to reading media discourse on the part of readers. Meanwhile, the voices that were missing in *The Chosun Ilbo* are

foregrounded in the *Hankyoreh* article. The need for contextual considerations of the issue is expressed in *colonies*, and *multilingual settings*, while the importance of *English education* as a top priority is provided as an alternative other than EOL to improve English competence among Japanese people. Also, strong national sentiment is clear in the phrases *unique culture* and *lack of subjectivities*. This essential notion of cultural nationalism echoes Kubota's (2002, p. 17) discussion of *nihonjinron*, "a discourse that celebrates the uniqueness of Japanese culture and people".

The critical stance that *Hankyoreh* takes is extended to the "There is something the matter with EOL in 'Special economic zones'" series, which critically examines the government's plan for 'Korea as the Business Center of Northeast Asia' with 'Special economic zones', where English would be used as an official language.

- "*English is just a lingua franca*"... According to Jo Dong II's definition, a lingua franca is 'a language that people with different mother tongues speak widely for interaction' ... It is nonsensical for a (monolingual) country with a national language to adopt English as an official language when *English does not enjoy the status as an official language even in the US...* . Even China, the first in making special economic zones ... has not ever considered EOL in the area... . (*Hankyoreh*, 2002, April 7)
- "Place for Korean": In the recent report of 'World map of dying languages', ... UNESCO pointed out that ... the *disappearance of languages* means losing human intellect and knowledge embedded in it... . (*Hankyoreh*, 2002, April 8)
- "Competitiveness comes within": ... *Korean specific English education* should be developed... . Competitiveness should be based on one's unique culture, art, traditions, and creativity, and language is the key foundation. (*Hankyoreh*, 2002, April 9)

From the ways that various issues are addressed above such as a definition of official language (*lingua franca* in 2002, April 7), language ecology (*disappearance of languages* in 2002, April 8), and a localized pedagogy (*Korean specific English education* in 2002, April 9), it is clear that *Hankyoreh* is more critically oriented to the issue than *The Chosun Ilho*. Particularly in addressing English education, they advance its importance as a better 'alternative' to EOL, while *The Chosun Ilho* thinks of it as 'part' of EOL as the following articles (previously introduced) imply.

- “Early English education urgently needed” by Yun Dae Eo (Dean of Korea University): “Learning English hard and using it as a *daily language* does not threaten the subjectivity of a nation” (*The Chosun Ilbo*, 2000, January 20)
- “Early English education needed” *The Chosun Ilbo*’s “English is competitiveness” campaign is becoming more convincing with the recent proposal for *EOL* in Japan... . The younger a student is, the more chances they need to have to learn from *native speakers* ... Koreans’ lack of etiquette derives from that of the understanding of foreign languages. (*The Chosun Ilbo*, 2000, January 24)

Moreover, in conceptualizing ‘good’ English education, *Hankyoreh*’s espousal of a localized version of English education is in contrast with *The Chosun Ilbo*’s over-emphasis on the importance of exposure to English (*a daily language*), which Phillipson (1992, p. 185) terms ‘the maximum exposure fallacy’, and on native speaker norms (*native speakers*). This difference is deep rooted in different assumptions about the relationship between language and power, the former envisioning a shift in power relations potentially through ‘a pedagogy of possibility’ (Peirce, 1989) and ‘pedagogies of appropriation’ (Canagarajah, 1999b) and the latter taking preexisting power differentials for granted and thereby perpetuating the status quo through what might be called ‘a pedagogy of assimilation’.

Generally speaking, *Hankyoreh* is much more critically concerned about the issue of EOL than *The Chosun Ilbo*. However, the strong nationalist tone of *Hankyoreh* as opposed to the neo-liberal globalist position of *The Chosun Ilbo* sometimes falls back into an essentialist notion of Korean culture and the Korean language, something similar to *nihonjinron* as cultural determinism (Kubota, 1999) as the following articles indicate.

- “Competitiveness comes within”: ... Korean specific English education should be developed... . Competitiveness should to be based on one’s *unique culture*, art, traditions, and creativity, and *language is the keyfoundation*... . (*Hankyoreh*, 2002, April 9)
- “Making Seoul ‘a republic of English?’” ... the Seoul metropolitan government is planning to carry out a large scale project of ‘Daily use of English’ for Seoul citizens and government workers, until 2006 when the percentage of proficient English speakers in Seoul reach up to 70 percent as in Singapore ... the Seoul metropolitan government says that ‘Daily use of English’ is a prerequisite for Seoul to become a central city of Northeast Asia, and attract much foreign investment ... however, it still asserts that it is



different from ‘English as an foreign language’ in Seoul ... In response, *Hangul Academy* recently made a statement ‘Stop EOL in Seoul’, protesting, “... the policy would be to admit to the world that *we are an incapable people*. What is more important is to make good guidebooks, good things to enjoy, and hospitality”. (*Hankyoreh*, 2004, April 25)

To sum up, the discourses in *The Chosun Ilbo* and *Hangkyorae* show contrasting tones in dealing with the issue of EOL in South Korea. Just like the debate by the intellectual community, different ideologies permeate discourses and counter-discourses in each newspaper company’s ways of addressing the issue, and compete for acceptance among readers in the process of the formation of public opinion. While a direct causal link cannot be claimed between the tone of each newspaper and the formation of individual opinions on the issue of EOL, it is very likely that *The Chosun Ilbo* has exercised much more influence than *Hankyoreh* and other newspaper companies, recalling that the former enjoys the largest sales, and that their private interests fit perfectly into ‘already dominant’ discourses of English as a ‘global’ language in the neo-liberal globalization era.

### FURTHER DISCUSSION

The analysis of the debates on the proposal for EOL in South Korea in the present study demonstrates how language itself is implicated in power and how various ideologies come into play in the discussion of a particular language policy. While dominant discourses of neo-liberal globalization and colonial discourses of English are manifested in the government’s promotion of globalization and in the tone of a giant newspaper company with a private motive, counter-discourses mostly based on critical perspectives on language are also made by other newspaper companies and the intellectual community in publications. Since EOL in South Korea is just a proposal rather than an actual policy, it is impossible to precisely depict its potential effects through the debate at the moment. However, the case of EOL poses some important questions that need exploration on the basis of contextual understandings of a given situation and provides implications for ways to conceptualize the democratic language policy making processes on the basis of “a critical view of society and a political and ethical vision of change” (Pennycook, 2001, p. 56) as part of the whole project of critical applied linguistics.

### ***Strategic Use of Linguistic Nationalism***

As indicated in the discussion of the EOL debate, the overriding controversy derives from the globalization thesis versus the nationalism one. While globalization and nationalism can be defined in various ways, the EOL proponents and opponents take particular views to their advantage. Paradoxically enough, even the globalists are not free from nationalism when they argue for ‘open nationalism’ or ‘pragmatic nationalism’ and national interests. However, this seeming tension can be explained when we heed Seo’s (1998) remark that nationalism is not necessarily the antithesis of globalization and Appadurai’s (1990, p. 295) comment that “[t]he central problem of today’s global interactions is the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization”. At the same time, the specific historical context of Korea as a nation-state based on ethnicity that strived to break away from Chinese influence and Japanese imperialism shows a reason why strong nationalism has been developed in South Korea. Here, it seems important to distinguish between the nationalism by big powers that developed into imperialism and the nationalism of those countries which were invaded by imperialist powers (Y Shin, 2000).

A similar argument can be made about linguistic nationalism in Korea. The use of the Korean language, especially *Hangul*, as a ‘resisting’ symbol against the Japanese colonial assimilation language policy calls for considerations of the contexts embedded in the development of Korean linguistic nationalism. However, one of the biggest challenges to this argument is that the notion of linguistic nationalism, i.e., the ideology of ‘one nation, one language’ in LPP is much criticized for its potential threat to linguistic diversity of languages and/or dialects with its centripetal force (May, 2001; Piller, 2001; Woodlard, 1998; Wright, 2004). In terms of its homogenizing tendency at the cost of linguistic diversity, there are considerable similarities between linguistic nationalism at a national level and English linguistic imperialism at an international level. For example, while inferring that Phillipson’s linguistic imperialism seems to propose linguistic nationalism as a combating strategy, Wright (2004, p.171) mentions that “[in] the contest between the evils of (linguistic) nationalism and the evils of (linguistic) globalisation, the choice would not seem to be as clear cut as Phillipson’s solutions suggest”

However, it seems problematic to equate linguistic nationalism to linguistic imperialism across all contexts because the extent to which the repressive power of linguistic nationalism is exercised varies across contexts. To illustrate, English-only movements in the U.S. are an

exemplary expression of the ‘one nation, one language’ ideology to the detriment of language rights of numerous linguistic minority groups inside the country, which shows that linguistic nationalism in ‘multilingual’ countries is inherently oppressive. Also, even highly linguistically homogeneous countries such as Germany with romantic linguistic ethnic nationalism “adapted to support the Nazi philosophies” (Wright, 2004, p. 59) and Japan with the *Kokugo* (national language) ideology of ‘one nation, one language, and one people’ developed during the Meiji period (Yi, 2001; Coulmas, 2002) provide historic examples in which linguistic nationalism exercised oppressive effects on neighboring countries when its ‘uniqueness’ was connected to imperialism. However, the linguistic situation in South Korea is that it is a ‘monolingual’ society, and its linguistic nationalism developed as resistance to external forces to foster the security of its people rather than having been imposed by the European model of LPP. Therefore, the manner in which power relations are manifested in the formation of linguistic nationalism must be considered.

Another possible counter-argument to the ‘uniqueness’ of Korean linguistic nationalism is that, in either seemingly ‘multilingual’ or ‘monolingual’ countries, linguistic nationalism is an ideology (from the false consciousness view of ideology) and not a ‘fact’ of life. It is true that the essential notion of a monolingual nation is a social and political construct because LPP as a political enterprise usually intervenes into actual language use to promote ‘one’ language that is ‘unique’ to its people during nation building (Wright, 2004). Also in the case of South Korea, it is true that in addition to resistance to imperialist powers, linguistic homogeneity is achieved partly because of political efforts to create an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1983), which prevented dialects from diverging into different languages. In this sense, the distinction between dialects and languages is fuzzy, which in turn makes the essential distinction between multilingualism and monolingualism at a national level untenable.

However, once again, the rejection of linguistic nationalism as an ideology does not mean that it is equally oppressive in every context all the time. In some contexts, it can be less oppressive and rather strategically used as a counter-discourse to colonial discourses. During the Japanese rule in Korea, it was used as a counter-discourse to discourses of the Japanese assimilation language policy that derived from discourses of ‘the Great East Asian Co-Prosperty’ (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003). What is important here is how power *is* organized, resisted, and reorganized in and by discourses. In this sense, linguistic nationalism can be

conceptualized as a ‘discourse’ in a Foucaultian sense rather than an ‘ideology’ from the false consciousness point of view.

Thus, the argument that I advance here points to the reconsideration of the specific historical contexts of South Korea on the basis of power operations instead of the simplified rejection of linguistic nationalism as false consciousness. Linguistic nationalism can be strategically used as a counter-discourse to discourses of the spread of English as a global or international language in some contexts<sup>3</sup>.

However, the strategic use of linguistic nationalism in Korea also means that we need to be aware of the inherent problems that are discussed above. Thus, “there are times to strategically essentialize, and times to strategically problematize” (Pennycook, 2002a, p. 25) linguistic nationalism for “a political and ethical vision of change” (Pennycook, 2001, p. 56). A language situation in any country is not fixed, but is ever changing with its speakers actively engaging in its transformation. For the present, South Korea can be said to be a ‘monolingual’ society, but the increasing flow of globalization will pose more linguistic challenges at various levels. Domestically, a steady increase of language minority groups, foreign workers, and immigrants, will challenge Koreans’ firm belief in monolingualism. At the same time, increasing participation in international communications at individual and national levels will accelerate the use of a ‘global’ language, English, and possibly other foreign languages. This kind of change in a language situation is detected in Japan, and its recognition is reflected in the offering of languages other than English in more and more secondary schools (Kubota, 2002). Therefore, Korean linguistic nationalism should be defended as long as English exercises oppressive power, but should be problematized for possibly ever increasing linguistic and ethnic diversity domestically, and for the growing need for global participation.

### ***Pedagogical Intervention into Language Policy-Making Process***

Through the analysis of the debate on the issue of EOL in South Korea by the intellectual community, the extreme aspects of the proposal have been unraveled in several ways. While most of the debaters on the issue seem to agree that English is important in meeting the demands

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<sup>3</sup> Another rationale for the strategic use of linguistic nationalism in South Korea is implied in Sung’s (1999) argument for a need to maintain the same national identity with North Koreans for the preparation of the reunification of the two Koreas.

of globalization, some opponents point out the potentially negative effects of EOL, and others question the supposed causal relationship between EOL and English proficiency and emphasize good English education as a possible alternative for the improvement of English ability. Here, a big challenge is presented to English education in relation to a language policy: a pedagogical need to help students take up their subject positions among competing discourses on English-related language policies that will affect them, while improving English proficiency at the same time.

However, although the need for ‘good’ English education is widely discussed in the EOL debate, it seems that it still remains at the level of the discussion of ‘language proficiency’, and the necessity of discussing the ideological implications of a language policy in education settings is unheard even among the critically oriented debaters of EOL. H. Han (2000), for example, aptly points out that English education is the key to the improvement of English proficiency, and argues that the agreement rates in most of the public opinion polls are just a result of the sensational journalism of *The Chosun Ilbo*, which made individuals believe that EOL would automatically lead to English proficiency. In addition, he proposes a reform of English education through the development of ‘Korean-specific’ English education and through quality control of English teacher’s language proficiency, e.g., on the basis of TOEFL scores. However, his concern is still confined to the question of how to improve English ‘proficiency’ only without additional considerations of the politics of English. This is clear in his proposal for the Korean specific English education that focuses on the contrastive analysis between ‘native’ speakers’ norms and ‘Korean’ learners’ deviations that derive from the Korean language system, and in his emphasis on TOEFL scores only for ‘good’ English teachers.

With that said, H. Shin’s (2004) call for the reconceptualization of English education in South Korea is well taken: “what kind of English Koreans need to learn and what kind of English education Korea should strive for” from the perspective of critical pedagogy to actively engage in the demands of ‘globalization’ (Robertson, 1995) that globality and locality is in a synergic relationship. Indeed, the present trend, globalization, challenges ELT professionals to actively and critically address issues surrounding ELT in broader social and political contexts. For the present study, language policy is no longer separable from ELT, and critical discussions of a particular language policy in school become important in order to help students develop their ability “to critically ‘read’ language policies, that is, to understand the social and political

implications of particular policies adopted in specific historical contexts” (Tollefson, 2002, p. 4, emphasis in original).

This kind of pedagogical intervention into language policy-making process on the basis of critical pedagogy of English may be expected to make the process more democratic. Although we should be careful not to jump to the conclusion that people polled on the issue of EOL in South Korea are ‘duped’ by the dominant ideologies of global capitalism and ‘manipulated’ by the media, the caution does not seem to invalidate the justification for critically oriented pedagogical intervention. A democratic language policy-making process is more likely to be implemented by individuals at the grass roots level who have become critically aware of the implications and potential effects of a language policy than by those exposed to a limited number of dominant discourses only.

It is in this respect that critical pedagogies of English can intervene in the process of making English-related language policy democratic. Here, being democratic not only means involving all the parties in the process of decision-making, but also incorporating their voices into it. The notion of ‘voice’ in critical pedagogy summarized by Guilherme (2002) is in sharp contrast with Bok’s ‘liberal’ one.

...voice is not in essence a singular or unitary expression of a particular individual entity, be it the individual or the nation. On the contrary, it reflects the interaction between several elements in transitory positions. Informed by this notion of voice, empowerment consists of the critical awareness of the ongoing power relations and the critical capacity to challenge them, and therefore, constitutes an indispensable element for the exercise of a critical citizenship (pp. 50-51).

Bok’s assertion of EOL on the basis of the liberalist notion of voice as ‘individual’ choice fails to capture its connectedness to existing power relationships within a broad social structure, and thereby makes a democratic language policy-making process less likely to happen.

In addition to the need to help students find their voices by providing alternatives, ‘postcolonial performativity’ (Pennycook, 2000) framework for understanding the global role of English also provides pedagogical implications. While not taking ‘the structural power’ of English as irrelevant, Pennycook argues

it (postcolonial performativity) also acknowledges that English may have effects in terms of the cultural baggage that comes with English, but it suggests that this can have no absolute or

necessary effects, that it will always be *changed, resisted, twisted* into other possibilities.

And it asks not merely whether ideology is imposed or resisted, but what is produced in such relationships (p. 118, emphases added).

This concern with the ‘discursive effects’ of English presupposes that students actually exercise agency against the potential manipulation of consent by dominant ideologies in public discourse, and suggests that we need to critically examine students’ actual language use at local levels to inform macro-level language policy-making process from bottom up.

### ***New Roles and Responsibilities of English Teachers***

The need of pedagogical interventions into language policy-making process points to new roles and responsibilities of English teachers. Eggington (1997) cogently advances the new roles of ESL teachers in implementing, developing, evaluating, altering a language policy, and informing students of its potential effects on them. As Ricento and Hornberger (1996) point out, “[o]ne way or another, all ELT professionals play a role in reaffirming or opposing language policies that affect not only our students’ future lives but the lives of our communities and nations as well”. Beyond simple involvement, as change agents in language policy-making process, English teachers need to be ‘transformative intellectuals’ (Giroux, 1988) beyond ‘technicians’. They need to inform students of potential effects of a particular language policy in relation to larger social and political contexts, and help them to articulate their voices while being aware of forces that may affect their choices in participating in public debate on a language policy. At the same time, teachers themselves need to actively and critically participate in language policy-making process with knowledge of their students’ language use at local levels as ‘ethnographers’ and ‘action researchers’ in the classroom (Nunan, 1989).

With the pedagogical interventions discussed so far, ways to increase English teachers’ critical involvement in language policy-making process should be explored. More than anything else, English teacher education needs to be reconceptualized in accordance with English teachers’ new roles and responsibilities as critical educators in order to help them to be ‘culturally and critically empowered teachers’ (Kanpol, 1994) who can articulate their multilayered ‘voices’. At the same time, it is essential for teachers themselves to find ways to make themselves heard to language planners. In the EOL debate in South Korea, English language teachers’ voices are almost absent in the media and publications. This absence of voice

is strange, given that English teachers are likely to be most affected by EOL, but it is also *natural*, considering that “differences of power between different groups are reflected in their differential access to public discourse” (van Dijk, 2000, p. 73). In other words, teachers in South Korea have far more limited access to media and scholarly discourse than government officials, company owners, scholars, etc. because they are yet to be empowered. In this situation, a grassroots teacher development group can be a good candidate for ‘power together’ of English teachers. Cho (2001) witnessed the empowerment of English teachers in the Korean English Teachers’ Group at a grassroots level, and this possibility for empowerment is potentially likely to make English teachers’ collective voices heard in public discourse if the empowerment is connected to the role of ‘critically reflective teachers’ (Barlett, 1990) as members in a larger society.

### CONCLUSION

The competing discourses of EOL in South Korea that are examined in this paper show how LPP is intricately related to the issue of language and power and how ideologies underlie the process of language policy-making. Provided that English in the era of globalization exercises the ‘dual modes of power, oppressive and productive’ (Tew, 2002), on non-English speaking countries like South Korea, the point at issue is how to take full advantage of English while being aware of its ideological implications. Most of the pro-EOL arguments based on technocratic rationality and laissez-faire liberalism close down possibilities for a democratic language policy-making process because they lack a critical understanding of the politics of English and contextual considerations of the language situation in South Korea. By contrast, many of the anti-EOL arguments also provide potentially problematic interpretations of the situation in that they tend to romanticize the mother tongue while disregarding the productive mode of English in globalization. Still other arguments present a middle ground between the two extremes, but fail to conceptualize the importance of English education as a site to reconstruct an alternative language policy-making process.

In this paper I have argued that considerations of specific historical language contexts are indispensable for the language policy-making process and that, for that reason, the strategic use of linguistic nationalism in South Korea cannot be rejected as inconsistent with the discussion of EOL. I have also argued that in addressing the ideological implications of English in



globalization, LPP at a macro level and critical pedagogy of English at a local level should inform each other to meet the demands of globalization for ‘a political and ethic vision of change’.

Critical pedagogy of English provides insights into democratic language policy making processes. Students that are critically informed of the politics of English are expected to voice informed opinions in English-related language policy making from bottom up rather than being swayed by the influence of dominant ideologies, and being, passively polled on the issue without a critical understanding of its implications. These critical perspectives can be applied to other English related policies in various settings at various levels such as in workplaces, in schools, and in nationwide public domains.

It seems impossible to precisely predict how English will challenge the future of ethnic languages in each country in the future. However, rather than assuming that English will be or will not be ‘the’ global language, or assuming that ethnic languages will persist or disappear, we need to strive to discover implications within broader contexts, as well as the effects of a related language policy on individuals involved at local levels in order to inform alternative language policy-making.

## Appendix

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