

English Fever in Korea: Impacts on the teaching of English and Social issues that arise

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Abstract

This study examines how global English impacts Koreans and the teaching of English in Korea and identifies any problems or social issues that arise from English education. Data was collected to examine the questions set forth by the study. The methods used in this study are interviews (3 Korean families living in Southwest US), Internet website article analysis (more than 50 articles were reviewed representing a variety of voices from professors, teachers, politicians, and students that provided an understanding English issues in Korea), and email surveys (7 Korean English teachers in Korea). The study identifies six main themes answering the purpose of the study: Korean English education and the global society; emphasis on early English education and its effects; national examination system; economic costs; family and marital strain: "goose parents"; and public school: teachers' concerns. These themes explain how global English impacts Koreans and Korean English education.

Background

Traditionally English teaching in Korean schools has been taught mainly exclusively in Korean, and grammar-translation method has been conducted in the classroom. As a result, English instruction has been criticized, and many blame Korean students' lack of English proficiency for this, even after they have studied English for years. However, with Korea's globalization campaign in the early 1990s, the Korean Ministry of Education has stated that the major purpose of English Education is to help students develop the English language skills to enable them to communicate effectively with foreigners. Accordingly, knowing English in Korea is a major concern in all areas of government, business, and education, and students have to master the complex English language and the communication skills required by the emerging Korean global economy and society. Strong competence in English is a great advantage in order to enter and graduate from university, to obtain better jobs, to advance in companies or joint ventures, and to study abroad. Because Koreans realized that knowing English is important, many Koreans move to

English-speaking countries, such as the US, UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Among them, young children with their mothers leave Korea bound for these countries to develop their English skills and proficiency. Based on the 2003 data of the Human Resource Department of the Ministry of Education in Korea, it is estimated that about 20,000 elementary to high school students moved to the U.S. in 2003. By moving in pursuit of English education, many children's native language abilities are being threatened, and Korean mothers abroad are beginning to worry that their children are losing their cultural and national identity. This paper examines: how does global English impact Koreans and the teaching of English in Korea, and are there any problems or social issues that arise from English education? This study aims to provide these answers by analyzing data collected from interviews with Korean families in the Southwest US, email surveys of 7 English teachers in Korea, and Internet website article analysis related to English issues in Korea.

Globalization and English

The term globalization refers to those developments which are increasing levels of global interdependence and which are affecting nearly all aspects of our lives. Globalization not only relates to the level of world trade and the 'virtual economy' or electronic flow of capital, but also labor and production, information, ecology, legal and administrative systems, culture and civil society (Osler & Vincent, 2002).

With the developments of intercultural communication and the growth in international contacts, English has penetrated deeply into the cultural foundation and cultural legacy of Korea. English is central to technological and political development, and access to knowledge. It is the main language of global discussions of education and international relations (Crystal, 1997; 2003). A 1981 study (as cited in Spring, 1998) found that 85% of scientific papers in biology and physics were written in English. In medicine, 73% were written in English, whereas 69% and 67% of the mathematics and chemistry papers, respectively. In 1995, more than 90% of the scientific papers in computer science and linguistics were written in English. Recently, English also dominates the Internet. About 80 percent of the world's electronically stored information is currently in English (Crystal, 1997; 2003). Kachru also describes "English as a symbol of modernization, a key to expanded functional roles and extra arm for success and mobility in culturally and linguistically complex and pluralistic societies. It internationalizes one's outlook" (cited in Spring, 1998, p.28). With the

international dominance and importance of English, Koreans take it for granted that learning English is necessary.

Pedagogical Imperialism

According to Holliday (1994), there are two basic contexts: instrumentally oriented English language education based in Britain, Australia, and North America (BANA) and state English language education in the rest of the world (TESEP). There are many questions concerning English language education as a form of technological transfer, and “this technological transfer between two branches of the profession is problematic because the educational environment within which BANA methodologies are designed and implemented is very different from those of TESEP English language education” (Holliday, 1994, p.93).

In many cases Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has spread because of the promotion of the method by Western specialists and also because educators in TESEP countries have advocated the adoption of this method. CLT is often considered as the ideal methodology (McKay, 2003). An understanding of the term *communicative competence* 2 (coined by the sociologist Hymes in 1971) is central to an understanding of communicative language teaching (Savignon, 2001). CLT requires “the involvement of learners in the dynamic and interactive process of communication. A communicative classroom allows learners to experience language as well as to analyze it. Most effective are a combination of experiences that involve the learner in both a physical and psychological sense as well as in an intellectual sense” (Savignon, 2001, p. 237). Korea is one of the counties that encourage the use of CLT. Convinced that grammatical syllabus does not develop students’ *communicative competence*, the Korean Ministry of Education states that CLT should replace the audiolingual and translation methods used in the Korean schools. However, the issue is: can English classes in Korea, where students would naturally use their mother tongue, develop authentic communicative situations where real messages are exchanged? Some argue, “CLT, while the most productive method, is not feasible in many countries because the local culture of learning tends to promote mechanical learning and a lack of individualism and creative thinking” (McKay, 2003, p.15). Kramsch and Sullivan (1996) recommend a view of an appropriate pedagogy in keeping with the motto “global thinking, local teaching.” It means that learning occurs within local contexts, and English educators need to consider how English is embedded in the local contexts.

Critical period hypothesis

In 1997, the Korean government lowered the age at which English is a compulsory subject from 13 to 9. This age shift was based on the assumption on the part of the government and the Ministry of education that younger is better when it comes to learning a foreign language (Pyo, 1997). In other words, the critical period hypothesis (Penfield & Roberts, 1959; Lenneberg, 1967; Krashen, 1973; Oyama, 1976; Johnson & Newport, 1989; Shim, 1993) influenced Korean English education. The critical period hypothesis claims that human beings are only capable of learning language between the age of two years and the early teens, explaining "the incidence of language learning blocks rapidly increases after puberty. Also automatic acquisition from mere exposure to a given language seems to disappear after this age, and foreign language has to be taught and learned through a conscious and labored effort" (Lenneberg, 1967, p.176). It is claimed that once this critical period is over, the learner is less likely to achieve nativelike ability in the target language. However, McLaughlin concludes, based on recent reviews of the biological evidence, that "the aging of the brain during childhood does not diminish the ability to learn language and that no period of the life span is critical to such acquisition" (McLaughlin, 1984, p. 50). Also, many scholars argue that the critical period for L1 acquisition is generally accepted, but controversy arises when the critical period claim is extended to L2 learning (Lamendella, 1977; Snow & Hoefnagel-Hohle, 1977, 1978; McLaughlin, 1984, 1985; Genesee, 1987; Birdsong, 1992).

Impacts on English education in Korea

Introducing English in the third grade in 1997, the Korean Ministry of Education provides the goal statements of elementary English curriculum with developing Basic English communicative competence and developing students' interest and confidence about English. All high school graduates who wish to attend universities are required to take the national College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT), which is different from the old College Entrance Academic Proficiency Test. The characteristics of the new test are: emphasis on communicative competence, introduction of a listening comprehension test, fluency over accuracy, and emphasis on reading comprehension (Kwon, 2000). Many universities and company employers require applicants to pass the Test of English for International Communication and the Test of English as a Foreign Language for those seeking either education or employment (Nunan, 2003).

With the introduction of English in the elementary school, the Ministry of Education designed and implemented 120-hour in-service training programs to prepare teachers for English instruction since 1996 (Kwon, 2000). The basic program consists of 84 hours for developing the teachers' communicative ability, 34 hours for English language teaching pedagogy, and 2 hours for other matters. For those who complete the basic program, another 120-hour advanced program was implemented in all cities and provinces. Also, the Ministry of Education provided teachers with opportunity for overseas training. The purpose of teacher training was to produce linguistically and pedagogically competent teachers. According to Park (1999), in 1996, a total of 25,000 elementary school teachers received the 120-hour in-service training (18,000 in the basic program and 6,600 in the advanced program) and 700 teachers received overseas training.

The other significant change in English education was that native English speaking teachers were recruited through the Fulbright English Teaching Assistant Program (ETA) and the Ministry of Education's English Program in Korea (EPIK) (Kwon, 2000). The EPIK (similar to the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) program) was started in 1995 to improve the English-speaking ability of Korean students, to develop cultural exchanges and to reform English teaching methodology (with a focus on communicative competence) in preparation for the globalization of Korea (Ahn et. al., 1998). English instructors in the EPIK program were mainly used to teach English in the secondary schools. The teachers were recruited from all over the English-speaking world, including the U.S., U.K., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. Recruiting English-speaking teachers was considered less expensive than sending all the Korean students to English-speaking countries (Park, 1999).

The Purpose of the study

Koreans recognize the importance of English as an international language³. English learning has become one of their most important issues, and English is the main language in all areas, including technological and political development, education, access to knowledge, and international relations. This study accordingly examines how global English impacts Koreans and the teaching of English in Korea and identifies problems and social issues that arise from English education.

The research questions are the following:

1. How does global English impact Koreans and the teaching of English in Korea?
2. Are there any problems or social issues that arise from English education?

Methodology

Data was collected to examine the questions set forth by the study. Three methods of data collection were used: interviews, Internet website article analysis, and email surveys.

Three Korean families living in Southwest US were interviewed for this study. Each interview was recorded. Quotes from interviews are transcribed exactly as recorded. The analyzed articles were gathered from Korean and American Internet websites related to education and English issues in Korea. For this study, more than 50 articles were reviewed representing a variety of voices (e.g., professors, teachers, politicians, doctors, students) that provided an understanding of English issues in Korea from diverse perspectives. Email survey questions were sent to all seven participants who were middle school English teachers in Korean public schools. Survey questions were sent and the participants' survey answers were returned through email. Again, survey responses are cited exactly as received, without correcting or editing.

The interview questions and survey questions are provided in Appendix A and B. Addresses for the websites used are provided in Appendix C. The names of all participants have been changed to protect their privacy.

The Participants

Three Korean mothers in this study are all graduate students in Southwest US, and all have F1 visa status, international student visa that allows them and their children to immigrate easily. Their all children attend American Public Schools. Seven teachers are English teachers in middle schools in Korea.

Family 1

Sunhee has one daughter and one son. She came to Southwest US with only her daughter in 2000. The reason that she chose to come to Southwest US was that her sister lives here.

Table 1
Three family backgrounds in Southwest US

	Yrs arrived	Yrs in NM	Mother's age	Children

<i>Family 1</i>	2000	More than 3yrs	38	7th and
Family 2	2003	Almost one year	40	2nd and
Family 3	2003	Almost one year	36	Kinderg

Sunhee started her Master's program. Her daughter, Jihyun, was in fifth grade when she came to the U.S. One and a half year later, this mom brought her son from Korea. Her son, Jungwoo, was in 6th grade in 2002. The mom completed her Master in 2002, and she is currently a doctoral student. The children's father lives in Seoul, Korea.

Family 2

Sangmi came to Southwest US in 2003 with her two children. Their father is in Korea, and he is working at one of the stock markets. It is the third time for them to live in the United States. In 1996 they moved to Hawaii so that the children's father could complete a Master's degree in Business Management. Hyunsoo was three and a half years old, and Youngseo was 11 months. After their father completed his degree, they went back to Korea. They returned to Hawaii in the summer of 2001 for two months and participated in one of the programs at the YMCA. Now, they go to elementary schools in Albuquerque. Hyunsoo is in 5th grade and Youngseo in 2nd grade. The children's mother was an English teacher in the middle school in Korea. He has 10-year-teaching experiences. She is a currently graduate student in education.

Family 3

Younghae brought two sons from Korea to Southwest US on January in 2003. She is also a graduate student. Her younger son attended kindergarten, and her older son was in first grade. While they attended American Public Schools, they also went to Korean Language School. Their mom also taught Korean immigrants and Korean-American students Korean as a second language. The children of first and second families experienced schooling in Korea; on the other hand, the children in this family never have experienced schooling in Korea. Their father lives in Seoul, Korea.

Seven Teachers in Korea

Seven participants were middle school English teachers in Korean public schools. All of the teachers have 10 and 20 years of teaching experiences in Korea. Five teachers teach English in urban settings and two of them in rural contexts.

Data Analysis

Herr et al. (1994) describes triangulation of data, combining the techniques in different ways, which allows the researcher to maximize time and to see the same scene from different angles.

The study analyzed each interview, the email survey responses, and Internet website articles in order to identify themes pertaining to the purpose of the study. Based on the first coding from each interview, the email survey responses, and the Internet website articles, many codes were emerged, and the similar codes were synthesized. A few codes that emerged once or twice in the process of coding were excluded.

Findings

Eventually, from the analysis, six main themes were identified: a) Korean English education and the global society; b) emphasis on early English education and its effects; c) the national examination system; d) economic costs; e) family & marital strain: "goose parents"; and f) public schools: teachers' concerns. Each of these themes will be considered below, drawing on each of the sources of data.

Korean English education and the global society

Today, the Korean government proclaims education to be the key to success in the global economy (Spring, 1998). The present-day world status of English as the language of the global economy and society is primarily the result of two factors: the expansion of British colonial power at the end of the nineteenth century, and the emergence of the United States as the leading economic power of the twentieth century (Crystal, 1997; 2003). These factors contribute to Koreans' feeling that they need to learn English since Kim Youngsam's government emphasized the policy of "globalization" in 1993, and English education in early education has been booming. Korean society always has placed a premium on an American (or Western) education, with the English skills and global experience it brings. Due to the government's pressure for English education, many Koreans have moved to English dominant countries for a short period time in an effort to enhance their English skills (Moonhwa Newspaper, 8/27/2003). Due to the 1997 financial crisis (Korean economy was bailed out by the International Monetary Fund) in Korea, the Korean government has worked to develop well-trained 'human capital'. In the competitive global economy, the Korean government also stresses "moral and nationalistic education to create a work ethic and economic nationalism" (Spring, 1998, p. 6). As Spring shows,

education is a social investment that prepares human resources (students) to contribute to economic growth. Thus, students have to master the complex English language and the communication skills required by the emerging global economy and society.

The families that were interviewed wanted to stay temporarily in the United States and intended to return to Korea. One of the reasons that the families came to the US was to prepare for their future, and for the global and information society. *"I wanted to give my children an opportunity to learn English for their future"* (Family 2, 11/07/2003). For these families, English was very important because they believed it gave them more possibilities for jobs, and also would help their children become more competitive in the job markets around the world. *"Because the world is gradually becoming globalized, knowing English gives my children more choices of getting jobs"* (Family 1, 11/16/2003).). According to Park's (1998) survey asking parents in Korea why their children need English tutoring, 51.7% of the participants answered that English is very important for their children's future. For them, knowing English is a way of obtaining their 'hope', for 'social mobility' and 'stability' for surviving in an unstable society. *"Knowing English equates with the concept of "survival"* (Teacher 4, email survey). The other reason for learning English was that English is required in specialized areas, such as science, medicine, physics, and biology. Thus, it seems that English is the main language of global discussions of education. *"As you know, English is a common and global language, and more than 80% of books and papers are written in English. So they have to learn English"* (teacher 1, email survey).

Emphasis on early English Education and its effects

The impact of English as a global language contributed to a policy change regarding English education in the Korean government: lowering the age at which English is a compulsory subject. As a result, there is a concern that early introduction of English will have a negative impact on students' cultural and national identity. In Nunan's study (2003), several informants were concerned that introducing English language literacy to students before they had attained literacy in Korean would have a negative impact on their L1 literacy. Especially, in the Southwest US where small population of Korean live and there is not much social interaction with Koreans, Korean children might lose their primary language easily. Due to the No Child Left Behind Act, which is administered by Bush administration and emphasizes English only, minority languages (including Korean) can be threatened. In the interviews conducted for the present study, the Korean mothers were concerned that their children would lose

their first language during the years of their stay in the United States. *"In fact, I worry that because they have to learn all subject matters with their first language in Korea, they will have a negative influence on their academic success if they don't speak Korean very well"* (Family 2, 11/07/2003). At the same time, the mothers were concerned that their children would lose the English that they have acquired when they return to Korea. These two language issues, stagnation in Korean development (L1) and loss of English competence (L2), make it difficult for the Korean families to decide when they should return to Korea. They believed the length of residency in the U.S. is an important decision because they do not want their children to lose their first language; at the same time, they want them to fully develop their second language.

Recently, the most striking news on AP Correspondence was that Korean parents have their newborn babies undergo tongue surgery to help them distinguish pronunciation of "l" and "r". In addition, pregnant Korean mothers play lullaby songs in English to their babies (Kyongnam Domin Newspaper, 01/05/2004). One of the informants on the Internet expressed, *"it is an international shame"* (Internet Informant, 01/04/2004).

Economic Costs

The changes in the expectation for English language competence in Korea brought about by the government, especially in early education, have economic costs. A tremendous amount of money is spent by families on teaching and learning English (Lee, 1995). On average, Korean families spend one third of their income on private lessons for their children in English, art, and music (Nunan, 2003). *"I have three children, 5, 11, 17 years old, respectively. All of them are learning English at school as well as at private language institutes. My 11-year-old son used to learn English from a native speaker, but he didn't want it. So now he is learning it from a Korean English teacher. My 17-year-old son gets tutoring for college entrance exam. I feel a lot of financial burden"* (Teacher 2, email survey). Increasing numbers of *Hawk-won*⁴ are also beginning to appear, and the largest of these have student enrollments running into the thousands. According to surveys of 22,500 students in 125 schools conducted by the Korean Educational Development Organization and sponsored by the Ministry of Education, 66.6% of the participants said they are currently receiving tutoring or had previously attended *Hawk-won* (Juongang Newspaper, 9/16/2003). Additionally, the total national expenditures on English education are increased by the fact that tens of thousand of people are moving to English dominant countries. Recently, the Korean government implemented a National Cyber Instruction system

through satellite broadcasting (since April 1, 2004) for high school students wishing to attend universities, under the policy of reducing private educational costs. The government encouraged students to watch TV instruction, which is less expensive, compared to attending *Hawk-won* and receiving tutoring. However, it is reported that the government's new policy is not very effective (Chosun Newspaper, 07/23/2004).

Family and Marital Strain: "Goose Parents"

Recently, the article "What's good for the Goose...," a story about *Father Goose* in Korea, was published on MSNBC News (09/29/2003). *Father Goose* refers to men who remain in Korea while their families can be educated in an English-speaking country. The name is taken from the birds that are famously devoted to raising their young. The stories of Korean "father geese" became an issue on national TV as well as international news.

This formation of the *new global family* was caused by Korean parents' high value on education, and by the fact that the center of the family is the children. *"I think it is related to Korean culture. This kind of family formation is not going to take place in the United States. Korean parents will do everything for their children's success and future regardless of their sacrifice, such as family separation"* (Family 3, 12/04/2003). Although *new global families* arrived in their new English speaking country with good intentions, they struggle to adjust to their unfamiliar environments. According to the *mother geese* in Vancouver, Canada, the most difficult pains that they face every single day are their loneliness and language barriers (Chosun Newspaper, 09/29/2003). One mother, living with her three children, in the East coast of America feels burden of multiple parental roles as she is both full-time mother and father, saying "the maintenance of the minivan, which is 'man's job,' is my responsibility" (Washington Post, 1/9/2005).

The children of the three families interviewed for this study were having a hard time learning English and experiencing US culture. Some of the children struggle with understanding what goes on at school, and they also had trouble understanding their homework. The most serious problem identified was that one child was having psychological traumas caused by not understanding the language. Not understanding the language of instruction made this child lose confidence and become shy. *"My second son was active in Korea, but he became shy because he never learned English in Korea, and he doesn't understand English"* (Family 3, 12/04/2003).

Academically, the children struggled with learning social studies in school. The fact that the children need to know American culture and history within a short period of time, and that they lack background knowledge of American culture makes it difficult

for them to learn the subject. The children were also not very motivated to learn American culture, history, and government systems because they believed that U.S. society does not relate to them, and they will return to Korea after staying in the U. S. for a few years. *"They think social studies about America has nothing to do with their cultures. So, I tried to motivate them that learning other cultures and histories are also important for their life"* (Family 1, 11/16/2003).

Additionally, without knowing the standard or proper rules of conduct in American schools, the children were struggling with different ways of behaving and different styles of speaking. They were confused with going between home and school cultures. *"I wanted to point out behavior differences. Teasing each other between students is not a big deal in Korea, but here it matters although they do it consciously or unconsciously. My son was punished because of that"* (Family 3, 12/04/2003). The quote implies that it might be a problem if the Korean ways of behaving are applied to the American school system. Moreover, the teacher's indirect way of communication might make the Korean students confused. *"When I observed my son's class, he didn't take what the teacher said seriously. For example, the teacher was supposed to say, "Don't do that", rather than "it is not a good way to do"* (Family 3, 12/04/2003).

Furthermore, the families had to learn a new school system. They described American school systems as employing more active ways of teaching, such as requiring more projects and presentations, and giving students chances to visit the library for their needed information. The mothers described American schools as demanding more tests and more homework, and that the rules are stricter. These families discovered that school districts provide different curriculums, while in Korea they were used to a national and standard curriculum. These families have to put in more time to take care of their children because of their extra curricular activities. They have to take them to where they do an activity and then pick them up again. In Korea, this is not an issue because *Hawk-won* provide extracurricular activities and offer transportation. In addition, their children need more help from their parents for their schoolwork in US schools because students are assessed by their performance, meaning that their homework and schoolwork are very important to keeping good grades. On the other hand, in Korea, the students are usually evaluated by written tests, and students' homework and their performance are rarely reflected on their evaluation.

Even though they were struggling with many issues, such as language, culture, and a different educational system, all three families were satisfied with the American

educational system, and they didn't want to return to Korea. *"I am satisfied with the ways of their teaching" (Family 2, 12/04/2003). "My children like here" (Family 1, 11/07/2003).* They were afraid of returning to Korea because they know their children will have to deal with the Korean educational system once again. *"If they go back to Korea, they can't adjust to Korean educational system. I think they will have a difficult time adjusting there" (Family 1, 11/16/2003).*

Although the population of *new global families* is growing, many informants on Internet website articles criticized this new family trend. Most of the participants were opposed to moving to English-speaking countries because they knew that they would have to make a lot of sacrifices, such as family separation. *"I strongly oppose 'new global family', but I recommend them to immigrate to English-speaking countries" (Teacher 3, email survey).* Many extremely undesirable situations that occurred due to family separation have been introduced on TV news, including stories about love affairs and suicides.

National Examination System

Within the Korean educational system, there is no choice but to learn English because the Korean national examination stresses three subjects, English, math, and science, which are fundamental elements for the global economic needs. *"In Korea, English is considered as an important subject as well as counts as a lot of percentage in terms of grading or taking the National exam" (Family 2, 11/07/2003).* The National exam is crucial for Koreans because Korean society recognizes people who received education from prestigious universities, such as some of the universities in Seoul. *"Everybody thinks education is most important, and society doesn't recognize people who didn't get education from good universities" (Family 2, 11/07/2003).* Attendance at prestigious universities determines students' future success or failure in the labor market. Failure to enter a university condemns the individual to low-income and low-status occupations (Spring, 1998).

Based on the present study, the desire to learn English was not the sole cause of the formation of the *new global family*. Many people in the literature review expressed multiple concerns about the public educational system in Korea because the Korean education system is geared toward the National College Entrance Exam. The Ministry of Education nationally develops school curriculum. Accordingly, teachers have to follow the national curriculum, and are forced to teach to the test. However, the curriculum does not satisfy parents' overall desires for their children's education, and

it places a lot of social pressures and parental expectations on the students to gain college admission. The system of testing also places tremendous pressure on students. A mother quoted by Internet website article, Youngran Oh, who visited "2003 Expo for Studying Abroad," held in Korea, expressed the reason that she wanted to send her son, a high school student, abroad to study. *"I don't want to see my child to have pain from Korean educational system. My son always comes back home 12 in the morning exhausted because of after-school study and make-up study in the school. Even if he studies very hard, there is no guarantee to go to a good university"* (Juoungang Newspaper, 09/08/2003).

Many participants in both the interviews and informants on Internet website articles criticized the Korean educational system, complaining that its focus on the National College Entrance Exam prevents students from thinking creatively and critically and also from active learning. *"There are many problems in Korean educational system. Among them, the biggest problem is schools prevent my children from creative thinking, and active learning"* (Family 3, 12/04/2003). The Korean national curriculum stresses rote memory-based instruction that can help students obtain better scores on the National Exam. Thus, the major problematic factor in Korean English education, asChoe (1995) describe, is that Korean students' motivation to learn English is primarily instrumental; in other words, their motivation is very test-oriented.

Public school: teachers' concerns

Due to the impact of English as a global language, Korean people are suffering from 'English fever' at school as well as outside school. In school, teachers in this study were concerned that their students are learning English against their will. Because they are obliged to learn English, many students have difficulties in learning English, and many have already lost interest in learning. *"My students have a lot of burdens from learning English. Some students don't like English class at all"* (Teacher 5, email survey).

Another issue teachers pointed out was that there are two extreme groups of students in terms of the levels of proficiency. The proficiency gaps among them were created by students' different access to English. *"Some of my students already have experienced studying English abroad. Many get tutoring or go toHawk-won (English-based private schools)"* (Teacher 4, email survey). Students' different levels of proficiency in English make it difficult for the teacher to design their curriculum. In

the classroom, students' attitudes toward learning English somewhat differ. On the one hand, students with higher English levels believe that the quality of English language education in the public schools is poor (see also Nunan 2003), and they prefer to learn English at private or after-school language classes. On the other hand, students with lower English levels were marginalized from most of their peers, and so they resist learning English. *"My lower levels of students try to avoid learning English; in contrast, they are looking for their success in a different way. Higher levels of students are looking for their success and future in English"* (Teacher 3, email survey).

Not only do students have unequal access to English knowledge, but also access gaps exist geographically between the cities and rural areas. Based on teachers who participated in this study, students in the rural areas do not have much access to English resources, and they are not motivated to learn English in comparison to the students in the cities. Most students in the rural areas are not given the chance to attend *Hawk-won* or obtain tutoring outside school. *"My students' language proficiency are very low because they are not motivated to learn English. Their parents also don't care much about their children's English education because they are not well educated"* (Teacher 1, email survey).

Furthermore, the teachers also criticized students' private English education. *"I wish they are more focused on English conversation. Even if they go to Hawk-won (English-based schools), they study for obtaining higher scores on National entrance exam"* (Teacher 6, email survey). Teachers' biggest concern was that students study new knowledge in the *Hawk-won* before the class deals with it. Thus, students do not pay attention to the class because they already learned it in *Hawk-won*.

Another worry that the teachers had to face was their own language proficiency. Since the Sixth National Curriculum adopted a communicative, grammatical-functional syllabus in 1995, the Ministry of Education has emphasized English teacher training or English teacher workshops to produce linguistically and pedagogically competent teachers. It has been stressed that most teachers should receive this training course during the winter or summer vacation. In 2001, the Ministry of Education adopted a policy of teaching English through English, which encourages the use of English in English classes (Nunan, 2003). Because unfortunately many teachers do not have the necessary proficiency to carry out teaching English through English, they felt unprepared to teach their students. *"I am not confident of speaking English. For successful foreign language teaching, I think teachers have to provide learners with the rich and authentic input needed"* (Teacher 7, email survey). As also shown in

Park's study, "in order to meet the needs and expectations from the society they belong to, many teachers feel that they should start from the beginning. Some take it as challenging, but others as frustrating and helpless" (Park, 1999, p. 5). Teachers in this study indicated that there exists a disconnection between the government's curriculum policy and teacher's pedagogical reality (Park, 1999; Nunan, 2003). Although the Ministry of Education changed the policy and textbooks to a communicative orientation in 1995, most teachers in public schools were not confident of implementing a communicative teaching method; thus, they could not stay away from grammar-translation approach.

Implications

It is true that not all Koreans have access to English education, and not all of them are interested in learning English. However, it is also true that English is a priority in the areas of government, business, and education. With the importance of English, Korean's identity is shifting in accordance with changing social and economic relations.

Their identity relates to "desire; the desire for recognition, the desire for affiliation, and the desire for security and safety. Such desires, as West asserts, cannot be separated from the distribution of material resources in society. People who have access to a wide range of resources in a society will have access to power and privilege, which will in turn influence how they understand their relationship to the world and the possibilities for their future. Thus the question 'Who am I?' cannot be understood apart from the question 'What can I do?'" (Norton, 1997, p.410).

The question of what Koreans can do to fulfill global economic needs is not the only important one. Also as Koreans, we must establish our own language and culture as the center of our education. Because Koreans are beginning to worry about losing our own cultural and national identity, the government and educators must emphasize the importance of our language and culture, so that Korean education comes first. The schools should work to educate who we are, meaning that children should have pride in their Korean cultural foundations and cultural legacy. The role of parents also is very important to help children find their foundation, develop their identity, and express both their heart and mind. Without this pride, they may lose their cultural and national identity and lose themselves. It does not mean that the Koreans do not need to learn English, but they should have their own choice about whether they want to learn English or not. Therefore, the government and the society should not just

push to learn English; rather, they should explain why people need to learn English, because Koreans have a right to know. By understanding the reasons, the people can become active participants in the learning process. It is a shame that English as a foreign language is more emphasized than our own language.

Pedagogically, it is dangerous that the Korean government simply accepts CLT that was developed by Western specialists in English-speaking countries, without considering it is feasible to Korean contexts. Korean educators need to be aware that Koreans learn English as a foreign language, which is different from learning English as a second language in the English-speaking countries where there are many chances to interact with native English speakers. Rather than accepting English teaching methodology from English-speaking countries, the Korean government and educators need to create our own methodology that fits to Korean contexts and can apply to classroom practices.

Conclusion

This study shows that English in Korea is not only a national issue, but also a global issue. Spring also agrees and says, "The purpose of education in Korea is economic growth. Education is controlled to produce students that contribute to economic growth. The combination of economic and education language is linked to the needs of a free market global economy" (Spring, 1998, p. 185). The Korean government considers students as human resources or human capital, so it provides the curriculum and policy for human resource development. For human resource development, the Korean government emphasizes two policies: an early English education and the National Examination system.

The political intention to prepare for the global economy has caused the boom in English education in Korea, called "English fever". As symptoms of English fever, tremendous money has been spent on teaching and learning English, and the numbers of *Hawk-won* are increasing at an incredible rate. Additionally, a new family formation called the *new global family* (goose father and goose mother) has been created. Nationally, Korean students are struggling with learning English for the purpose of preparing for examinations because the national examination system also puts great emphasis on English language skills.

Koreans are busy looking out for their individual future and success; at the same time, they are trying to accomplish both national and international needs and goals. However, a serious problem of the government's policies for the improvement of

human capital is that students are ranked according to their score on the national exam and their English fluency levels. In other words, the national examination and English proficiency levels determine students' chances for individual success and for social mobility.

Depending on wealth, geography, and social class, students' access to English is different, and this unequal access to English outside school causes students' proficiency gaps in English. These gaps also created difficulties in teachers' designing their curriculum. The other problem that teachers face is that most of them are not ready for a communicative teaching approach, and they are not confident about teaching English through English. Thus, the situation creates gaps between the government's curriculum policy toward globalization and the teaching practices in schools. In short, the government's adoption of CLT conflicts with teachers' grammar-translation method. Accordingly, the school has difficulties in implementing the government's curriculum to meet its goals that it expects schools to produce fluent and proficient English speakers. Although there is widespread awareness of more communication approaches, it is obvious that in reality, there are some difficulties in their application.

Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Questions:

1. Why do you think your children need to learn English?
2. Even if there are many opportunities to learn English in Korea, why are you willing to bring your children and get them to learn English in the United States? I mean, do you have any reason to bring your children in a different country to get them to learn English?
3. In your opinion, what are the reasons that the "New Global Family" appears? "New Global Family" means the new trend of family structure, where fathers work in Korea and support mothers who bring their children to the countries where English is a dominant language.
4. If you want your children to be fluent speakers of both Korean and English, do you have any reason that you want them to be bilingual?
5. I believe there are certain times for children to develop or acquire their first language by interacting with peers and people around them. They might miss some periods that they can develop or acquire their first language while they stay in other countries, where English is dominant. Have you thought about how it

- affects your children's academic success when they go back to Korea? If so, what might be the effects?
6. Do you encourage your children to speak in Korean at home? If so, why do you want them to?
 7. What difficulties have you experienced so far? In what aspects have you experienced difficulties while you were adjusting to a new culture or environment?
 8. Do your children have any problem with dealing with academic, linguistic, cultural issues? If so, could you explain what issues they have experienced so far?
 9. Could you describe background knowledge about American educational system before coming to the United States?
 10. Could you compare the differences between what you thought about the American educational system before coming here and what you have experienced here?
 11. Are you satisfied with different educational systems in the United States? If so, what made you satisfied? If not, why not? Can you explain what your children think about the American educational systems? Do you like being here?
 12. How long do you plan to stay here? If you want to stay here, why? If you go back to Korea, why? If you can't decide whether to go back or stay, what makes you unclear about your decisions?
 13. 13. If your children go back to Korea a while after staying or being exposed to a country where English is spoken, what changes would they experience? Do you think a more successful or better life will be guaranteed for them?

Appendix B: Email Survey Questions

1. Do you think why you need to learn English?
2. What drive the Koreans to learn English?
3. Do you think every Korean need to learn English?
4. How do you understand social issues caused by Korean English education? Especially, what do you think about the formation of "New Global Family"?
5. If you have a chance, do you have any idea of bringing you children to the English-speaking countries? If so, why? If not so, why not?
6. Do your children go to English-based private schools? Or do they receive tutoring?
7. If so, don't you have any financial difficulty?
8. I know you are currently teaching English in the middle school. Do you have any difficulty in teaching? If so, could you describe what difficulty do you have?

9. Do you feel English booming within the school? If so, could you describe the examples? If not, where can you find this English booming?
10. Could you describe students' responses to English booming and Korean English education?
11. Could you explain your feeling about the impacts of English education?

Appendix C

More than 50 articles were collected from the following sites. Based on the research questions, the answers were founded from the sites, which reflects Korean's voices concerning about English issues in Korea.

Websites

- <http://www.monthly.chosun.com>
- <http://report.jinju.or.kr/educate>
- <http://news.media.daum.net>
- <http://www.chosun.com>
- <http://www.yahoo.co.kr>
- <http://www.kbs.com>

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According to Crystal (2003), more than a thousand million people throughout the world engaged in learning English---approximately 750 million first-and second-language speakers, and an equivalent number of speakers of English as a foreign language. Given that world population passed the 6 billion mark during late 1999, approximately one in four of the world's population is now capable of communicating to a useful level in English.

2 *Communicative competence* includes knowledge of sociolinguistic rules, or the appropriateness of an utterance, in addition to knowledge of grammar rules. The term has come to be used in language teaching contexts to refer to the ability to negotiate meaning—to successfully combine knowledge of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse rules in communicative interactions (Savignon, 1972, 1983).

3 Kachru (1982; 1992) suggests current sociolinguistic profile of English as three concentric circles; the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle, and the Expanding Circle. In this model, Korea belongs to the Expanding Circle that recognizes the importance of English as an international language. In this circle, English is taught as a foreign language. The Inner Circle refers to the traditional cultural and linguistic bases of English, where it is the primary language. It includes the USA, UK, Canada, Australia,

and New Zealand. The Outer Circle involves the earlier phases of the spread of English through colonization in non-native settings, where the language has become part of a country's chief institutions, and plays an important 'second language' role in a multicultural setting. This includes Singapore, Ghana, India, Kenya and over fifty other territories. These regions have passed through extended periods of colonization by Inner Circle powers.

4 English-based private institutes are run by the individuals. They are totally separate system from the public education. In Korea, there are a variety of private institutes providing instruction for languages, art, math, and so on. Generally, they are called *Hawk-won* in Korean.