

Linguistic Imperialism and the English-learning Boom in Korea: A Case Analysis of Weekend Korean Schools in the U.S.¹

Hyu-Yong Park

This paper critically reviews the issue of the overheated English-learning boom in Korea, and investigates how such a boom affects public education in Korea and the learning of Korean children. This issue is analyzed with two theoretical frameworks: linguistic imperialism (Phillipson 1992) and social capital theory (Bourdieu 1991). As a case analysis, this paper focuses on the cases of both 'the newly arrived' Korean children at an English-immersion program and 'the residing' Korean children as linguistic minorities in the U.S. These two groups of Korean children gather around weekend Korean schools founded by Korean community churches, and both groups learn their heritage language and revive their heritage identities. It is found that the weekend Korean schools work as language shelters and ethnic strongholds where the Korean children's ethnic culture, language, and identity are respected, revived, and maintained. By investigating the issue, this paper highlights the unequal relationship between languages and the impact of linguistic imperialism on the learning and lives of both domestic Korean children and Korean linguistic minority children in the U.S.

Keywords: English-immersion, heritage language learning, linguistic imperialism, social capital, linguistic minority children, weekend Korean schools.

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1. Introduction: The English-learning Boom in Korea

In South Korea (henceforth, Korea), English competence is considered the most influential factor in schooling and career building. Since it is believed that English competence is highly correlated with success in society, parents put enormous efforts and investment into ‘English-learning projects’ for their children. Today, the expectation of Korean parents that English counts as social capital is unconditional: they want their children to learn English by any means and at any cost. Though Korean parents’ high expectations on education - which is called ‘education fever’ (Seth 2002)- has been an important driving force for the development of Korean society, the overheated English-learning boom, which is driven by the trend of globalization,² is problematic in many aspects: the incredibly high and consumptive household expenditure on the private education market (Choi, Kim, Yu, Kim, and Lee 2003)³ and the indeterminate foreign language policies that make the parents and the students confused and exhausted.

This paper investigates the English-learning boom in Korean society from the perspective of postcolonial criticism of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson 1992; Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 1994) and Bourdieu’s (1991) social capital theory as the theoretical framework for the analysis. Under these frameworks, this paper analyzes the impact of linguistic imperialism on the language learning of Korean children and their academic journey by highlighting the fact that linguistic imperialism can introduce very distorted ideological discourses to the field of educational practice and shake the foundation of the local education system.

To investigate the issue, this paper tracks Korean parents’ commitment to, and their children’s arduous expeditions into, English-learning projects in English-speaking countries. This paper focuses on the case of weekend Korean schools (henceforth, WKSs) in the U.S. where ‘newly-arrived’ children and ‘residing’ Korean linguistic minority children (henceforth, LMC) gather to learn

2. Park (2006) argued that such a phenomenal English-learning boom is related to both the recent trends of globalization and the neoliberal movement in Korean society.

3. According to the Korea Educational Development Institute (KEDI), it is estimated that the gross household expenditure on private tutoring was \$13.6 trillion (2.3% of Gross Domestic Product) in 2003, which is double of 10 years ago (Choi, Kim, Yu, Kim, and Lee 2003). Meanwhile, the expenditure on *yuhak* (study abroad) for learning English amounted to \$2.5 trillion in 2004 and \$3.3 trillion in 2005, which is a 35% increase (Bank of Korea 2006).

their heritage language and revive their ethnic identity. This analysis of the WKSs will show how serious the issues of linguistic imperialism and unequal power relationships between languages are and how Korean students are struggling under the pressure of an English-learning boom.

2. Theoretical Review: Postcolonial Criticism of Linguistic Imperialism

This paper stands on the perspectives that regards power as the driving force that constitutes a hierarchical relationship between peoples, classes, or ethno-linguistic groups (Kress 1989; Moraes 1996; Norton 2000) and language as a symbolic power that constructs society and controls social agencies (Bourdieu 1991). The following discussion will show why and how linguistic imperialism and the unequal power relationship among languages (and their speakers) have unfavorable effects on the educational journey of children who are situated in a post-colonial condition where their mother tongue is marginalized by the power of a dominant language.

1) Power, Linguistic Imperialism, and Globalization

The unequal power relationships among languages and the peoples who speak them create ‘language ideology,’ which Woolard (1998:7) termed “power-linked discourse about language.” Such language ideology makes people appreciate differently languages according to the languages’ social value as linguistic capital⁴ (Bourdieu 1991; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992) and affects the ways people use language (Martínez-Roldán and Malavé 2004). This power-driven, unequal social relationship among various ethnic-language speakers is one characteristic of U.S. society, whose dominant use of English disregards the immigrant or linguistic minority children’s heritage language learning and speaking (Shannon 1995). In such ways, the language in power is valorized, while the other languages are stigmatized (Dahlberg and Moss 2005; Hamers and Blanc 2000).

4. Many times Bourdieu used the terms ‘power’ and ‘capital’ as synonyms, e.g., “the kinds of capital are powers which define the chances of profit in a given field” (1991:230). He (1986) used the term ‘social capital’ to delineate how the position of an agent in the social space can be defined by the distribution of powers that are active in each of the fields.

The domination⁵ of English is not only the case in the U.S., but is a huge drift toward globalization. Edwards (2003:41) explicitly describes this reality as “the big languages [are] everywhere, their penetrative power is ubiquitous. English and globalization marches arm-in-arm around the world.” In the same vein, Bretcher (2000) noted that linguistic and cultural homogenization has been accelerated by globalization and it might take away the idiosyncrasy of national, regional, and cultural differences. Because English is the dominant language of the U.S., an international superpower, English is regarded as ‘the international’ language,⁶ and the global use of English invites the Americanization of consumer culture, values, and everyday life (Cho 2001; Phillipson 2000). Under these circumstances, education tends to be operated as a core device for imperialistic reproduction through its ideological, economic, and repressive functions (Phillipson 1992). As a consequence, children in the world spend a lot of time learning English as a means of survival or success, rather than learning their heritage language.

This domination of English over all other languages (Zou and Trueba 1998) has been termed ‘linguistic imperialism’ (Phillipson 1992). Linguistic imperialism yields the domination of minorities by elites by means of languages (Haugen 1987), and threatens the maintenance of minority children’s mother tongues (Skutnabb-Kangas 1999).⁷ Ultimately, it will hierarchize various languages and cultures of indigenous ethnic groups across the world (Nettle and Romaine 2000) and alienate them to extinction (Salzmann 2004).⁸ This is a growing concern for language educators since it is the most essential problem in mother tongue education of each country and the heritage language education for LMC in multilingual societies.

5. In this paper, I prefer to use the term ‘domination,’ rather than ‘dominance,’ to highlight the hidden ideology of linguistic imperialism going beneath the socio-cultural and politico-economical power of English.

6. Skutnabb-Kangas (1988) argued that English enjoys its prestige as ‘the international language,’ while the U.S. uses its power in world politics, the economy, and culture.

7. The issues of the increasing domination of hegemonic languages and the disappearance of minority languages has been well-documented and criticized in Phillipson (1992), Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1994), and Skutnabb-Kangas (1999).

8. Nettle and Romaine (2000) warned that only 100 languages, out of the currently remaining 6,000 languages, are used by 90% of the world’s population, which means that the other ‘lesser used’ languages are in peril of perishing in the near future. Salzmann (2004) argued that the extinction of language is due to the economic and cultural influence by imperialistic and hegemonic nation states.

2) Linguistic Capital and the English-learning Boom in Korea

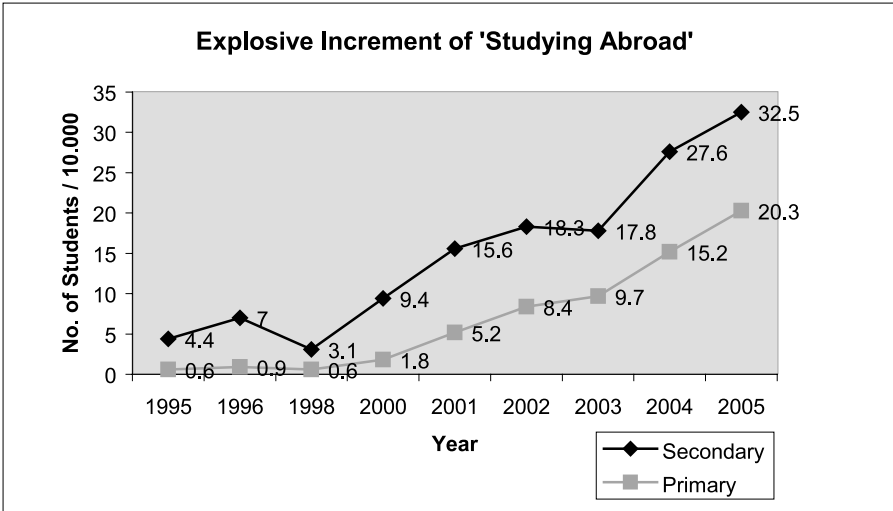
According to Bourdieu's (1986, 1991) social capital theory, English has grasped an exclusively valued social status as linguistic capital, and it affects the learning of children in most countries (Crystal 1997). Since language use and learning occur in social, cultural, and political contexts, "language structure, acquisition, and use are the processes that are shaped by socio-historical, socio-cultural, and socio-political processes" (Watson-Gegeo 2004:334). Watson-Gegeo's comment implies that linguistic imperialism could affect substantially the schooling of local children in the world and LMC in a multilingual society.

The English-learning boom is not free from post-colonial criticism because of its origin and its present condition. The inception of English education in Korea is related to the modernization of Korean society in the early twentieth century: English education at that time was promoted for elite education, religious propagation by American missionaries, and the reestablishment of Korean society by the U.S. military government (Choi 2006). Meanwhile, the present state of the English-learning boom is closely connected with the social discourses that aim "globalized Korea" in the twenty-first century. For example, Park and Abelmann (2004) investigated the narratives of three mothers regarding their English teaching projects for their children in terms of 'cosmopolitan striving' in the globalized world. In fact, the recent English-learning boom in Korea has been driven by neo-liberal globalization,⁹ which triggers the discourses of meritocracy, marketization, and rivalry as well as other things in education (Park 2006). Under these circumstances, English is unquestionably regarded as the most important subject in school among Korean parents and students.

The emergence of English as 'the' international language has made Korean children and parents panic to learn English (Park 2006). Moreover, Korean parents and students do not trust public schools for English education, and spend a considerable amount of money on English *gwa-oe* (private tutoring) or leave their homeland for English *yuhak* (study abroad). Since studying abroad was legalized for middle school graduates in 2000, there has been a significanti-

9. Monbiot (2003) argued that the driving force of neo-liberal globalization is the by-product of Western capitalism and linguistic- and cultural-imperialism orchestrated by the U.S.

Figure 1 Explosive Increase of Studying Abroad



Students accompanying their parents on overseas dispatch or family emigration are excluded.

ncrease in the number of secondary school students leaving to learn English (MOE and KEDI 2005), as shown in Figure 1.

It is noteworthy that, as Figure 1 shows, the inclusion of English in elementary school curriculum has made elementary students join the procession of English language learners.

WKSs, which are the specific target of this paper’s analysis, are the places where many, if not all, of the elementary school and preschool children from Korea eventually join. Those WKSs are places where Korean LMC in the U.S. attend to socialize, get information, and also learn their heritage language. By focusing on the WKSs, this paper tries to juxtapose two different issues, the distorted English-learning boom in Korea and Korean LMC’s struggle to learn their heritage language (Shin 2005). This juxtaposition reveals that language learning is a politically charged and power-laden social practice and the English-learning boom is a result of linguistic imperialism, which will yield harmful effects on the learning of children and the maintenance of a heritage language.

3. The Study

WKSs in the U.S. Weekend Korean schools, organized by Korean community churches, are the most common community-based institute for teaching and learning Korean. There are over 1,000 community-based Korean language schools in the U.S., and over 60,000 students are enrolled in these schools (Overseas Korean Foundation 2006). Since the Korean Ministry of Education announced that English would be taught in the first grade of elementary school starting in 2008 (MOE 2006), parents have started to send their children out of the country for English-immersion programs as early as possible.¹⁰ Currently, the WKSs are filled more and more with newly arriving students who left Korea to learn English.¹¹ For example, Table 1 provides brief demographic statistics of Korean students enrolled in the three WKSs used for this study.

Table 1 Brief Demography about Korean LMC in a mid-sized¹² U.S. city

Weekend Korean Schools (Spring 2007)	Number of Classes	Total Number of Students (N=108)		Grade Distribution		
		'Residing' LMC (n=87)	'Newly arrived' (n=21)	Pre-school (n=32)	K1-K4 (n=51)	K5 & up (n=25)
Church A	9	52	12	18	32	14
Church B	4	22	6	9	11	8
Church C	3	13	3	5	8	3

Especially, younger children who haven't mastered Korean literacy enroll in the WKSs,¹³ while they attend preschools or public schools for English immersion at the same time.

10. Recently, according to KEDI (2005), Canada (20.6%) and New Zealand (10.8%) have emerged as popular countries for studying abroad, especially for elementary school students, because these countries are regarded as cheaper, safer, and easier to access than the U.S. (23.0%). Compared to the previous year's ratios (U.S., 37.4%; Canada, 12.3%; New Zealand, 4.4% (2003)), this is a sharp increase.

11. According to the author's observation, in 2006 there were only 10 or so newly arrived students. By spring 2007, 21 students out of a total of 108 students were newly arrived students. In fact, many of the young students who left Korea gathered around Korean community churches and the WKSs in them. As part of the author's doctoral dissertation, he, as a Korean teacher, has taught in all three of the WKSs for two years in turn.

12. The population of this university town is estimated around 200,000, though it is growing rapidly.

13. Among the newly arrived Korean children, those in higher grades (above the third grade) tend not to enroll in WKSs because their parents think they have already mastered Korean literacy.

Table 2 Participant Information

“Newly arrived”	Child	Child’s Age	Arrived	Korean level	Plans to Stay
Sumi’s mother (44)	Sumi (F)	7	Dec. 2006	Advanced Low	Permanent
Daren’s mother (36)	Daren (F)	9	Mar. 2007	Advanced High	2-3 years

Two ‘newly arrived’ mothers, who left their husbands in Korea, are the participants of this study

Participants. The students in WKSs can be largely divided into two cohorts. The “residing” LMC were born in the U.S. or moved there at an early age; by attending a WKS they want to maintain or revive their Korean literacy skills. The “newly arrived” students are Korean children who have recently moved to the U.S. to attend English immersion programs; they also want to develop Korean literacy skills, if they have not yet mastered their heritage language. The parents whom the researcher interviewed are the mothers of students whom the researcher had taught.¹⁴

Method. Seeking a case study with qualitative analysis, this paper adopts critical discourse analysis (henceforth, CDA) as a methodological framework. CDA explores “hidden power relations between a piece of discourse and wider social and cultural formations (Corson 2000:95), and creates a politically engaged form of linguistic discourse analysis (Weiss and Wodak 2003).” Furthermore, CDA also explicitly addresses social problems and seeks to solve them through emancipatory and participatory social and political action (van Dijk 2001).

For data collection, two major semi-structured interviews were conducted with “the newly arrived” mothers from May to July 2007, in addition to some data obtained from personal communications with the target WKS faculty in 2006. This paper’s data analysis includes only a portion of the interview data gathered from children-participants, their mothers, and faculty. All interviews with the mother-participants were conducted in Korean, audio-recorded, and transcribed.

1) Korean Children: Lost in Both Language and Education

Globalization for diffusion of English? For both “residing” Korean LMC and

14. Because the site of this study is a mid-sized city that has a well-known state university, many Korean children come to the city to take advantage of its English-learning resources: good public schools, competent human resources, and pleasant living environment.

“newly arrived” Korean children, the issues of linguistic imperialism and the significance of the language as social capital are salient. For the residing Korean LMC, however, even more prominent than these two issues are the issues of the loss and cultural fragmentation of their heritage language. Their living in the U.S. makes their native language and culture diasporic because they cannot but experience linguistic and cultural “hybridity, displacements and ruptures” (Jo 2001:26). Due to these displacements and ruptures, the maintenance of their heritage language and culture is at risk during their journey to survive in the mainstream English-speaking society. In fact, as long as ethnic language and culture are marginalized, the preservation of ethnic language and identity is the Achilles heel for any immigrant group that tries to successfully adapt to U.S. society.

On the other hand, the cases of “newly arrived” Korean children disclose how desperate they are to learn English ‘in the era of globalization.’ For example, the following excerpts are Daren’s and Sumi’s mothers’ sentiments about why they think their children should learn English.

I think learning English is a must in the era of globalization. Whatever our children will do in the future, speaking English is inescapable... Staying in Korea is like a frog in the well who doesn’t know the ocean. English is necessary whichever country they work in in the future... Anyway, it is no doubt that learning English is a must in the era of globalization. (Daren’s mother)

English is regarded as a common language internationally. Wherever you go, people speak English; therefore I feel English is necessary... because children have to learn English, it is necessary to learn it as early as possible. (Sumi’s mother)

Learning English to prepare for globalization is a must for them; however, it is not only the parents’ discourse; a teacher at the target WKS responded as follows, when asked her opinion of the Korean school’s role:

First of all, because it’s a global age, speaking many languages is very advantageous for a person’s career. But I also believe that language holds a nation’s culture and spirit. Nationalism is double-faced: although it has negative aspects, it is also necessary. (Personal communication, July 7, 2007)

As I understand, what she meant here is that, although she agrees with the significance of nationalism in terms of its role in maintaining ethnic culture and identity, it is important to become multilingual to be prepared for a global age by learning the languages of the nations in power, such as English or French. In fact, many parents who have just arrived in the U.S. with their children have expressed the motives for their resolution, and have conveyed the reasons Korean parents give for the English-learning boom: “Now, all parents are so crazy about sending their children abroad;” “I’m so afraid that our children might be left behind. I feel helpless [against this trend];” “Look, all parents are doing it;” “Money is the only problem. Everybody will do it if they have money!” (Personal communications, October 12, 2006). This being said, the most popular wording of Korean parents regarding the English-learning boom is actually the phrase “*Echapi youngenun kkok hay yahanika*,” which means “because [we] must learn English after all.”

For Korean parents, learning English is a destiny; no one can easily dispute it or persuade them against such a belief. This belief is a powerful source of all Korean parents’ actions vis-à-vis the English-learning project. Where does this belief come from?

English as social capital. English proficiency is the flagship of social capital in Korea: English proficiency as linguistic capital, American culture as cultural capital, or the images and identities of English-speaking people as symbolic capital. Consequently, the significance of English as a subject in school curriculum keeps growing.¹⁵ In fact, English has been the most important subject in school curriculum and examinations since the American occupation of South Korea in 1945 (Oh and Choi 1993). Universities encourage and increase the number of lectures taught in English, and more and more colleges adopt official English scores as a requirement for graduation. In addition, English skills are a usual qualification for new business employees. In Korea, English-speaking skills are considered the most significant faculty of human resources in a global economy. For example, a job consulting company asked 1,232 salaried men in Korea, “What is the most necessary faculty for your career?” The respondents replied, in order, “foreign language competence” (47.2%), “social skills” (16.6%),

15. Since English was added to the elementary school curriculum in 1997, the first year for English education has gotten earlier. In 2008, English will be taught starting in the first grade of elementary school (MOE 2006).

“computer skills” (12.4%), and “presentation skills” (8.8%). It is also said that English proficiency makes a 20% difference in annual salary among securities market employees (Chung 2005). Under these circumstances, whether a person can speak English well defines his competence in education and determines his career success.

The phenomenal English-learning fever in Korea and young children’s exodus to English-immersion programs abroad expose how the issues of language as social capital and linguistic imperialism influence the education of Korean children. Korean parents’ post-colonial identity is highlighted in their contradictory attitudes vis-à-vis English: their appreciation of English skills and their disdain for Korea’s English education. For instance, the following excerpt is Daren’s mom’s comments about English education in Korea’s public schools.

The teachers are not well trained [in teaching English], there are not enough programs, and the teaching materials are only something like using flash cards to learn vocabulary. Rather than using textbooks... you know, children can learn from the Dora videos... they can learn something by mimicking the songs, “Back pack back pack~.” They will learn from this what a “backpack” is. I want such approaches. Schools still insist on the old teaching style, and I don’t like the fill-in-the-blank exercises at all! (Daren’s mother)

What Daren’s mom wants, on the surface, is effective teaching of English in Korea’s public schools; however, what Korean parents are really interested in, at a deeper level, is that their own children are more competent in English than other children. This is how English is popularized and consumed by the logic of competition (what I can do and you can’t), rather than by the logic of cooperation (what all of us can do). Therefore, Korean parents trust public schools less than private institutes or *gwa-oe* (private tutoring), which are good at teaching English. In Korea, English skills¹⁶ are symbolized as a way for people to distinguish themselves from others in academia and in their profession, not as a way to communicate with others. Consequently, for Korean children and their par-

16. Here “English skills” refers to “knowledge of English” rather than “English for communication,” because English is seldom used for communicative purposes among Korean people. English is more like social capital than a means of communication (Bourdieu 1991), combining the features of cultural, linguistic, and symbolic capital.

ents, acquiring English skills denotes securing success in their career. The following excerpt shows how desperate this expectation is.

When she had a hard time adjusting to her school here, I told her seriously once, “If it is so hard like this, we can go back to Korea. It is not wise just suffering from this.” Then she replied, crying...“please don’t take me back to Korea.” Then, I asked, “Why?” She said, “Then I will be the only one who can’t speak English. All Korean kids there will speak English much better than I will.” That’s how she responded. These days in Korea, no children say, “No, I don’t want to” when their parents suggest that they go to the U.S. They are all compliant in learning English, compared to learning the piano or something else. I really mean it. (Daren’s mother)

Nowadays it seems that every Korean agrees that English is important. This is why Korean parents are so enthusiastic about ensuring that their children are prepared with English skills. For Koreans, English competence is not simply a foreign language used as a tool for communication or a medium for learning; it is, rather, a symbol of a means for success.

Mistrust of public schools and “all-in betting” on English. Korea’s social, cultural, and economic dependence on the U.S. and English’s status as *lingua franca* aggravate Korean people’s reliance on the effect of English as social capital. In the critique of cultural and linguistic imperialism (Tomlinson 1991), this phenomenon, the popularity of English and American culture and the English-learning boom as a consequence, is one of the major current issues of Korean education: e.g., swaying foreign language educational policy, mistrust of public education, and soaring family expenses for private education. That is, the overheated English-learning boom is the kernel of these issues. Language education in Korean public schools is very unstable and is always under debate; parents no longer trust public education to teach their children English:

They learn English one hour per week [at school]. Their teachers have not majored in English; they only got some training. Children do not review what they learn...they learn by rote memorization, and they never have a chance to have a real conversation. What they learn from school seems not to be useful, because they basically learn most of it from the private institutes. At school they just review some parts; that’s all. Except for a few students, all the students attend private institutes. (Sumi’s mother)

As Sumi's mother mentioned, Korean parents do not trust the English lessons from school. However, what Korean parents suffer most from is not the quality of teaching, but their financial problems. The following excerpt is Daren's mother's explanation of her family's expenditures.

Middle-class Korean families spend about \$500-600 for private lessons per child. Of this, English lessons cost about \$250 per month. That's very expensive. That's the maximum for our family's budget...But wealthier families spend \$1000 per month: Monday thru Friday, \$50 for one visit, \$250 for a week, thus a total of \$1,000 for a month.

(Question: Are you sure that those are real cases and not just rumors?)
Many of Daren's friends are taking such lessons. I mean, in Seoul. Neighboring parents also urge me to join because we live near wealthy neighbors. There are about 30 students in her class. I think at least 10 students spend the money for such expensive tutoring.

What the mothers told me in the interviews shows exactly how much financial pressure Korean parents feel regarding the expenses for English tutoring. After she moved to the U.S., Sumi's mother seemed very satisfied with the way her children learn English: "I like that they can learn English freely here. I pay about \$200 to the school, and they can learn English until 4 p.m. every day. It must be effective."

It seems that Korean parents are betting on English "all-in." Horrible competition, unreliable school programs or teachers, and unbearable financial burden of private education are what Korean parents actually feel about Korean education. As a breakthrough, some parents decided to send their children abroad to attend English immersion programs, though such a choice is also available only for the parents who can afford such a big expense. Among the many English-speaking countries, the U.S. is the most popular destination, and received 37.4% (in 2003) and 25% (in 2004) of all students who left Korea to study abroad (KEDI 2005).

2) WKSs for Korean Students as Education Vagabond

Generally speaking, WKSs play two significant roles for both the 'residing' Korean LMC and the 'newly arrived' Korean children in the U.S.: language

shelters for a short-term perspective and ethnic strongholds for a long-term perspective.

WKSs as language shelters. For both the newly arrived Korean students in the U.S. and the residing Korean LMC, WKSs are safe houses where they can learn or revive their Korean language, maintain their heritage culture, and share their ethnic identity.

I'm afraid she will forget her Korean. I don't worry about her English because she will learn it from now on, but her Korean...it is ironic to learn Korean after we have moved here to America...she has already forgotten some Korean during the summer break. When she went to Korean school, there was homework, she did it, and it seemed that she maintained her Korean. Now she has begun to forget easy Korean expressions that were not a problem before. She can communicate with the family in Korean, but she feels difficulty in writing and she doesn't like to try.
(Sumi's mother)

For young Korean children who haven't yet mastered Korean, WKSs provide an opportunity to revive their competence in their mother tongue. The mother is more concerned with her child's Korean than English because, without WKSs, the chances of learning Korean in the U.S. are very limited. Meanwhile, WKSs also work as shelters for the residing Korean children whose language and culture are marginalized from mainstream society. For example, when a mother of residing children (John and Silky; nine and eight years old, respectively) brought her children to my class, I simply asked her why she wanted to send them to the school. She answered:

I want to send them to this Korean school because they seem to have been discouraged in their schools. I feel that they are a little bit alienated...I don't know... in some ways. I just want them to redeem their confidence from the Korean school experience, which might be familiar and easy for them. (Personal communication, September 5, 2006)

Even though the two children's Korean proficiency (speaking and writing) was fairly good and the class level was lower than their current competence, their mother insisted on enrolling them in the Korean school. In fact, her concern was

more about restoring the children's self-confidence from the experience at a WKS than about learning Korean. According to Lopez (1999), such a decision may reflect the reality that the social and cultural web of mainstream U.S. schools remains foreign or hostile to the LMC.

Tse (2000) argued that when a subordinate culture and language interfere with the dominant culture and language, ethnic/linguistic minority children may develop negative feelings toward their heritage language. However, it is also argued that children can maintain a strong ethnic identity when they are tightly connected to their ethnic groups (Cho 2001; Jo 2001) or ethnic languages (You 2005). Whichever case the Korean children are situated in, Korean LMC will show diasporic cultural identities, which are characterized as hybrid, vulnerable, and fluid (Jo 2001). This is why the role of WKSs as Korean children's language shelters is significant, because such WKSs can be ethnic strongholds where the identity of LMC is formed by a dynamic and interdependent "process" through networks of cultures and languages (Calhoun 1991; Snow 2001).

WKSs as ethnic strongholds. Skutnabb-Kangas (1999:43) argued that LMC have often been "ignored with indifference in school curriculum, segregated from the mainstream and merged into main groups to learn the 'official' language." If their home-based values are ignored and disrespected, LMC do not feel that they belong to the school (Gee 2004). For the residing children, WKSs are ethnic boot camps where their ethnic heritage, cultural aspects and identities are collected, empowered, and preserved. The role of the Korean school as an ethnic boot camp is evidenced by a brief survey.¹⁷ According to the survey, it is not only Korean language that Korean parents want their children to learn from the WKS; they also want their children to learn Korean culture, morals, customs, and arts from the school. The following are the subjects, which are listed from higher points to lower points:¹⁸

Reading (28) / Conversational Korean (27) / Korean history (25) /
Korean Customs (19) / Writing (18) / Korean literature (traditional fairy

17. This survey was conducted by the weekend Korean school to ascertain the parents' opinions about what they wanted their children to learn from the school. It was administered in July 2007, and 12 parents participated in the survey.

18. The parents were asked to give each of the subjects a score (1 = least important to 5 = most important), then a total score was calculated for each subject.

tales, folk poems, children's verses, etc.) (16) / Korean morals (12) /
 Korean etiquette (10) / Korean geography (4) / Korean pop culture (4) /
 Social rules (2) / School culture (1) / Grammar (0)

Note that Korean history, customs, morals, and etiquette are highly ranked as subjects that the Korean parents want their children to learn.

According to Lopez (1999:160), there is a "collision of discourses" between the mainstream school's culture (including its curriculum and teachers) and the LMC marginalized from it. What the Korean LMC usually turn to in this situation are the Korean ethnic churches and WKSs. In Popkewitz and Lindblad's (2000) sense, Korean LMC can be the subjects of "exclusion" in English dominant public schools, but "inclusion" in WKSs. WKSs are not only for learning Korean literacy; they are for learning and reviving Korean culture, heritage, and identities. For example, the principal of the target WKS explicitly commented about this role at the school's opening ceremony: "I want this school to teach them 'the spirit of Korea,' to make them not forget who they are, where they originated from, or how they live as descendents of Korea" (Pastor Jin, personal communication, February 13, 2006). The strong solidarity of Korean people based in community churches is a reaction to their exclusion from mainstream American society.

For both the newly arrived Korean children who move to the U.S. for English-immersion programs and the residing Korean LMC who are maintaining or reviving their heritage language, WKSs play an important role as language shelters in the short-term perspective and as ethnic strongholds in the long-term perspective. Although their family backgrounds, the history of their bilingual learning and their motivation for staying in the U.S. differ, both cohorts of Korean children and their parents view WKSs as places where they can meet brethren, enjoy their heritage cultures, and feel who they are.

4. Conclusion

Linguistic imperialism and the dominance of English, as a consequence, are two forces that drive the English-learning fever, which brings about very detrimental effects on language education in Korean public schools. In the perspective of post-colonial criticism, this paper criticized this phenomenal English-learning boom in Korea where English as *lingua franca* commands its prestige as highly

valued social capital. Since English competence is regarded as the most influential social capital in schooling, job training and career building, many Korean parents urge their children to join the 'English-learning project' by any means.

For the case analysis, this paper investigated WKSs in the U.S., where Korean 1.5 generation and newly arrived children gather for learning their heritage language and reviving their heritage cultures and identities. WKSs work as language shelters and ethnic strongholds for those two cohorts of Korean children, and as places where their ethnic culture, language and identity are respected, revived, and maintained. The analysis of the WKSs and the voices of Korean parents disclosed how serious the educational exodus is and how Korean LMC are struggling from the linguistic imperialism and the dominance of English. In short, the over-heated English-learning boom has resulted in highly distorted ideological discourses regarding foreign language education and shaken the foundation of the public elementary school system in Korea. By deliberating the case of WKSs in the U.S., the linguistic hegemony of its dominant language can be challenged, and the consequent issues of subtractive bilingualism of LMC and their identity struggle can be critically examined.

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Hyu-Yong Park has recently finished his Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in bilingual education. His research interests include bilingual education for linguistic minority children, language policy, and national curriculum for foreign language education. He is also interested in his twin daughters' language development.