

Globalization and Language Education: *English Village in South Korea**

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Discourses of globalization are incorporated into an ambitious South Korean English language education project called *English Village*, which promotes a unique participation-reinforced English immersion edutainment space for general masses within Korea. Its objectives and visions feature three dominant ideological constructs: (i) global Koreans (ii) economical education alternatives (iii) experiential learning. The findings of the study suggest that English Villages are rhetorically promoted by the language ideology that Koreans need to improve in English to participate in the global economy and that English serves as a practical linguistic tool, not a purpose, to fulfill South Korea's global ambition. This paper argues that English Villages are part of both processes and discourses of globalization in South Korea.

Keywords: globalization, English language education, *English Village*, English language ideologies, South Korea

1. Introduction

Language ideologies and policies are closely intertwined. They are not just abstract ideas or noble plans envisioned and executed only by authorities or institutions. Their involvement in an everyday language user's life can be fairly concrete and specific. Speakers' perceptions are easily influenced and frequently shaped by language ideologies, and individuals subscribing to certain language ideologies often rationalize their personal education decisions. The formidable power of language ideologies affecting language practices and beliefs is articulated by several scholars (see e.g., Kubota 1998, Seargeant 2009, Silverstein 1979, Woolard & Schieffelin 1994). Language ideologies are often recycled in the form of uncontested folk beliefs and their influence can be quite irresistible. Currently no language shows a more revealing ideology than English, which approximates blind faith. The power of English

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language ideology is vividly articulated in Kachru's (1998: 96) idea of "a linguistic albatross around the necks of the users." He argues that "the mythology about English as a language, its curriculum, its research agendas, and its pedagogy, continue to be constricted and imposed in a deliberate and planned way as a loaded weapon" (Kachru 1998: 95).

English language ideology in contemporary South Korea is closely related to the concept of globalization. In promoting globalization ideologies, it is challenging to conceive a more appropriate example than English Villages, simulated English speaking theme parks designed for domestic language immersion experiences within Korea. According to Jong (2008), "South Korean students have been able to immerse themselves in a close-to-natural English speaking environment, without leaving the country." The establishment of these villages presents a robust exemplar of a particular Korean stance on globalization and its significant bearing on English language education policy nationwide. Therefore, the movement in support of English Villages in Korea needs to be understood as representative of Korea's English language ideology with much broader implications than the usual pedagogical concerns and consequences.

When the idea of English Villages was first introduced, it attracted much attention from the media. Among the newspaper articles I have read regarding English Villages, Mitchell's (2006) description below is arguably the most intriguing one, presenting a factually accurate portrayal of the Paju English Village with a slightly dramatized political flair.

Imagine going for a stroll down the street of any quaint little English town, with its characteristic pubs, restaurants and red brick terraces and, as in every U.K. town or village, everybody says hello to you in English. But just then, you notice something typically uncharacteristic, reels of barb wire and warning signs in the distance reading "landmines nearby." You quickly realize that this is not in the U.K.; this is Paju, South Korea, also known as the closest city to North Korea and the infamous DMZ.

Apparently even an ever-threatening North Korean presence and the military tension in the nearby area do not discourage enthused parents from sending their children to the Paju English Village for "experiential" English learning.

Discussions on globalization and studies on English education are not scarce in linguistic research, but a close examination of the connection between the two is not readily available. Most of the discussions tend to be highly abstract and theoretical, failing to empirically show the connection between theory and practice. In this paper, I attempt to provide what is inadequately done in earlier research by covering both the discursive and the

practical, focusing specifically on a case study which reveals a fascinating connection between a broad, national globalization initiative and tangible, concrete English education practices. This study departs from earlier research on globalization in that it does not discuss globalization merely from a theoretical perspective and treat it mainly as an abstract concept; rather, this study views globalization as an ideology and a process affecting linguistic and pedagogical issues in a “real” sense. Thus, in contrast to highly conceptual previous studies, this study empirically shows how ideas rationalize and normalize actual practices. Globalization studies discuss issues related to economy, politics, and culture, generally not treating language as a main object of investigation. However, I argue that globalization has a profound impact on language and education too, particularly in the form of promoted and accepted ideologies regarding language policy.

Another insight this study foregrounds is that globalization does not paint a unified picture around the world—how globalization is imagined and discussed can be highly localized, the center and peripheries of globalization reacting differently. As a country not at the center, South Korea approaches globalization as a top down process and sees it as an opportunity to make the nation greater. In other words, globalization in South Korea has an undoubtedly nationalistic undertone. In addition, globalization and improvement of English proficiency nationwide are considered to be ultimately good for the economy. This paper presents a case study of globalization directly influencing language education and argues that globalization can be a compelling rationale for educational reform especially if it is understood to have concrete social and economic advantages for those who participate and disadvantages for those who do not.

J S Lee (in press) observes that in this day and age it is not uncommon for Koreans to have metalinguistic discourses about English; that is, the English language is “talked about,” which indicates that English has now, welcomed or not, penetrated into the South Korean public’s awareness and has become part of discourse. Fairclough (2006: 5) discusses the complex interplay between “processes” of globalization and “discourses” of globalization, emphasizing how discrete they are in concept yet how closely they influence each other. He argues that discourses of globalization not only represent but also help to create processes of globalization. He recognizes the polyphonic nature of discourses of globalization, constructed by different “agents.” Fairclough lists five main sources of “voices on globalization”: academic analysis, governmental agencies, non-governmental agencies, the media, and people in everyday life. In this paper, I attempt to include several voices on globalization in relation to English Villages.

The data in this study consist of written texts on *English Village* in the public domain mainly from its home page (both in English and Korean versions),

newspaper articles, and blogs as well as photos and brochures personally collected during my visit to the largest Gyeonggi English Village, Paju Campus, including a follow-up observation log. My aim is to include both professional and non-professional voices and official and unofficial texts in discussion. The majority of data sets come from the Gyeonggi English Village main website. In addition, using one of the most popular search engines in Korea, *Naver*, in September 2009 I conducted the keyword search for *Yenge Maul* (English Village) and selected the first fifteen hits in the categories of news and blogs. The blogs in the data were maintained by ordinary citizens, but I noticed that news item postings were often imported from reputable newspaper websites.

Drawing upon textual and discourse analysis (Fairclough 2003) often utilized in the analysis of public written texts, this study examines language ideologies embedded in various texts regarding *the English Village* (EV hereafter) and related discourses about *seggyehwa* (globalization) available in the public domain. In addition to written texts, I also view the physical set up (setting) of the English Village itself as a manifestation of English language ideology; to be specific, English submersion ideology, referring to the belief that English can be learned best only in an English saturated environment in which everything, not only the language spoken but also buildings and signs, represents foreign elements. For this reason, I discuss the physical environment as well in this paper.

2. Contextualizing English Education Policy in South Korea

There is no sign of the power of English — perceived or real — dwindling in South Korea. Empowered by repeated discourses on globalization in the media, the momentum of English is so evident that some even argue that it is no longer a language of choice for Koreans but a language of necessity. For instance, JM Nam (2005) asserts that English in South Korea is in transition from a tool for social advancement to the indispensable language for survival.

Park and Ablemann (2004: 651) present a brief history of the past 30 years of education policy in South Korea. Some of the milestones include the Chun Doo Hwan regime's "equality of educational opportunity" prohibiting "all kinds of private after-school education" in 1980 in an attempt to reduce the gap between haves and have-nots and the Kim Young Sam regime's "seggyehwa, extending English education to elementary school (grades 1-6)" in the mid 1990s. Kim Young Sam viewed seggyehwa as "the main pathway to the country's development and national prosperity" and proposed "turning South Korea into a center of global management and reforming institutions

and people's thinking in order to promote globalization" (B Koh 2000: 197). The Kim Young Sam Administration (1992-1997) formed the Presidential Segyehwa Promotional Committee in January 1995 (Cherry 2007) and promoted segyehwa "to brace the nation for cascading developments and sweeping changes in the world to build the Republic into a first-rate nation in the coming century" (JK Oh 1999: 147). The South Korean government's ambition to emulate a first world country was viewed by some as "a national ego trip" (Cherry 2007: 51), but was rhetorically presented and justified in the name of segyehwa as "a national goal" to meet "a global standard of excellence in all areas" (JK Oh 1999: 149). Among a few areas, education was identified as one of Kim Young Sam's globalization priorities (B Koh 2000).

Kim Young Sam's segyehwa-oriented education initiative has been consolidated by the current Lee Myung Bak Administration's public English education vitalization policy, which is part of Lee's well publicized *yenge kyoyukyuy tapyphenhyek* ('a dramatic overhaul of English education'). President Lee was reported to deplore Korean college graduates' inability to communicate in English. According to the dramatic overhaul education reform Lee Myung Bak proposed in January 2008 before he took office, (i) most English classes will be taught entirely in English beginning in 2010 (ii) 23,000 new English teachers will be hired by 2013 and (iii) 4 trillion won (\$4.2 billion) will be injected into English education over the next five years. Lee Kyung Sook, the head of Lee's transition team, was reported to say that "national competitiveness is directly related to English education," echoing President Lee's position (K-t Kim 2008).

Lee Myung Bak's education reform centers on enhanced English education in public schools, greater autonomy of schools, and more intense competition among students (J-j Hwang 2008). He proposes reducing exorbitant private education expenses by significantly improving the quality of public education and making a far-reaching shift from grammar and reading centered English instruction to speaking oriented "silyongcek" ('practical') education (S-b Ahn 2009). Considering burdensome expenses for private education reported in the media—21 trillion won (approximately \$17 billion) with the biggest increase (11%) in out-of-school English programs (J-j Hwang 2008), Lee's plan to strengthen public education to release the economic pressure on the average household appears to be sensible at least in its conceptualization, but whether it will stop the practice of relying on private tutoring and out-of-school lessons all together is highly questionable.

English education, which used to be provided only from junior high onward, is now available in elementary school due to a 1997 reform. In evaluating the general efficacy of these newly implemented English classes, Whang (2000: 29) claims that "the average English proficiency of Korean children

has obviously improved over the past three to four years since the introduction of English as a regular subject.” He does not provide specific empirical evidence. However, my own personal observations, albeit sketchy and anecdotal, suggest that this claim has some validity.

In addressing English language pedagogical issues, J S Lee (2007) notes that many believe that grammar-translation oriented English education in South Korea has produced so-called book-smart English readers but not street-smart English speakers who can “get things done” in real life. P Whang (2000: 28) raises concerns for overemphasizing only “shortcuts” and “hardships” involving “mastering” English and under-representing an “adventure into a whole new world by means of English.” He asserts that there is “a dire need for fundamental reform in English education” and emphasizes the need to incorporate practical English expressions into teaching (2000: 200).

Despite the broadly acknowledged importance of English, when it comes to *yengehoyhwa* (English conversation), many Koreans have mixed feelings. J S Lee (in press) characterizes this love/hate relationship with the English language as the coexistence of zeal and emotional distress regarding improving speaking skills. Some are concerned that the entire nation is obsessed and consumed by English. This type of claim may appear hyperbolic, but some Korean parents even consider having their children undergo an operation “snipping the thin tissue under the tongue” presumably “to sort out misplaced L and R sounds” (H Chae 2004) and couples are willing to live apart with the husband in Korea and the wife abroad for their children’s early exposure to English (H Lee 2007). Certain individual efforts to improve English appear excessive. It is understandable that some of the current English language education initiatives and policies in South Korea can be viewed as overdriven. These institutional and individual choices are indicative of agents acting in accordance with “fields” and “capital” as articulated in Silver (2005).

The following section focuses on the very first serious and unequivocally globalization-driven educational initiative, *English Village*.

3. Globalization and *English Village*

In this section, I contextualize the English Village in detail and explain how closely it is connected to globalization and English submersion ideologies by discussing overarching discursive constructs and underlying beliefs (3.1), instructional objectives (3.2), and staffing and facility (3.3 and 3.4). Official mottos and statements available on its website as well as staffing and infrastructure in the English Village emphasize the unified position that globalization is critical for Korea’s future and English proficiency is required

for “global” Koreans and English submersion — English only teaching — is the key to the success.

Studies published in the West or by western scholars often acknowledge high mobility, enhanced telecommunications, and an increasing sense of interconnected time and space as characteristic of globalization (Dutceac 2004, Giddens 1990, Harvey 1990, Kearney 1995). Although these traits are not completely ignored, globalization in Korea tends to be viewed as synonymous with self-improvement with the aim of catching up with “the first world.” For example, S Kim (2000: 3) defines it as “Korea’s unique concept encompassing political, economic, social, and cultural enhancement to *reach the level of advanced nations in the world*” (emphasis added). Park and Abelman (2004: 646) argue that English is “an index of South Korea’s and South Koreans’ cosmopolitan striving in the global order.” They further suggest that what it means to be South Korean is shifting to mean “‘South Korean in the world’—a prospect that calls for the mastery of English as an index of cosmopolitan striving,” which is defined as “the desire to become citizens capable of living at home in the world” (2004: 650). Park and Abelman’s observation that “English works simultaneously as both a local and global sign, and that nationalism and cosmopolitanism are not contradictory” (2004: 645) sums up how the relationship between English and globalization is locally conceptualized in South Korea.

Three conceptualizations of globalization summarized by Dewey (2007: 334) present predominant approaches to and attitudes toward globalization in academic discourse. The hyperglobalist position assumes that “globalization is driving a construction of new economic, social, and political world orders, leading ultimately to greater overall homogeneity,” while the skeptical position maintains that “national governments retain the power to regulate trade, commerce, and politics, and that any interdependence operates only at surface level.” The transformationalist position argues that “globalization is regarded as the driving force responsible for fundamental sociopolitical transformations” (ibid) and South Korean globalization seems to show predominantly the so-called “transformationalist” position.

Regarding globalization and its relation to English, Bianco (2003: 287) asserts that English is characterized as “connoting opportunity, supranational communication, and econo-technical modernity” and that “the massive expansion of globalization-induced pluralism makes state-centered explicit processes of LEP.”¹ Bianco’s characterization is also echoed in the South Korean Government’s globalization project *segye-hwa*, which is “a state-enhancing, top-down strategic plan” (S Kim 2000: 3). President Lee Myung

¹ This term was initially introduced to mean Language Education Policy earlier in the original paper.

Bak proposed a bill called “Global Korea,” which is an effort to “court foreign investment, make nice with old allies and step-up English language education” (*Newsweek* 2008). H Shin (2007) reports that the Korean Ministry of Education recommends an English-only policy in English education for third and fourth graders in elementary school and seventh graders in junior high school with the policy affecting one grade higher each year. Jeju, a southern resort island in South Korea, is scheduled to become a self-governing province in which English is used as an official language (H Kim 2008).

I would not argue English language ideology per se is truly unique to Korea, but the degrees to which Koreans are preoccupied with education in general are quite striking. In particular, “a near-obsessive quest” (J S Park 2009: 2) for English has received unfavorable titles such as “a national religion” (J S Park 2009: 1) and “English frenzy” (*ibid.*). Seth (2002: 1) notes that the most contributing factor to prestige and social class in South Korea is likely to be education, asserting that “education is a national obsession in South Korea.” He argues that “the preoccupation with the pursuit of formal school was the product of the diffusion of traditional Confucianism attitudes toward learning and status, new egalitarian ideas introduced from the west and the complex, often contradictory ways in which new and old ideas and formulations interacted” (J S Park 2009: 6). J-K Park (2009) suggests that this deep-rooted education fever has been turned into English fever fueled by “the process of globalization in the late 1980s and the economic crisis in the late 1990s” (2009: 52) and reinforced by “a series of governmental policies in the early 1990s” (2009: 55). In cosmopolitan Korea, English is considered “a class marker” (Park and Abelmann 2004: 646) and “a modern skill” for “higher education and the job market” (J S Park 2009: 41).

The notions such as *a linguistic handicap* (Seth 2002) and *unspeakableness of English* (J S Park 2009) are often identified as the roots of the problems weakening international competitiveness, decelerating globalization, and feeding anxiety over improving English. According to J S Park (2009: 38), “particularly since the 1980s, when Korea started to focus on gaining international recognition and economic stability within the global market, the Korean government pushed its citizens to be more proficient in English.” As long as South Korea remains a developing country, the concept of catching up with the first world will be part of various discourses promoted by the South Korean government including educational policy. Globalization, understood mostly by educated, well-travelled Koreans in the past, is now recognized even by marginalized populations such as undereducated elderly citizens because of its frequent occurrences in the media. Their understanding of the term itself might not be accurate or adequate, but the importance of English was metalinguistically highlighted particularly in relation to globalization (J

alization (J S Lee 2009b).

One of the most compelling cases in which the ideological interconnectivity between globalization and use of English is evident is *English Village*. In an attempt to actualize the idea of creating “global Koreans” through more communication-oriented, fun, economical English education alternatives, Gyeonggi English Culture Foundation (GECF hereafter) was founded in April 2003, initiating a one of a kind project. The banner (photo taken during my 2006 visit to the EV) showcases the predominant rhetoric of globalization behind this project.



Figure 1. Banner.

The phrase “Global Inspiration”, the English motto of Gyeonggi Province and its Korean motto “Seykyeysokey Gyeonggi-do” (‘Gyeonggi Province in the world’) sum up Gyeonggi’s vision and aspiration toward globalization. Gyeonggi is considered an optimal place for English Villages because of its proximity to the Seoul metropolitan area (approximately an hour away from downtown Seoul by train) and land availability. Seoul is already overcrowded and overbuilt; it cannot provide the kind of land required for mega language learning facilities resembling an actual town with the charm of an amusement park and a Hollywood movie set. I visited Paju, the largest *English Village* campus, when it just opened in 2006. In addition to on-campus

learning, its website runs an online program called *Cyber English Village*,² which is freely available; users do not have to be associated with the EV.

The main idea behind the EV is clearly articulated in the section called “concept” on its official website (<http://english-village.gg.go.kr/eng>)³ as follows:

- (1) The Gyeonggi English Villages are places where people can use the English language in a variety of contexts as well as *experience* English-speaking cultures. All this can happen right here in Korea. There is now *an alternative to traveling abroad* for this type of experience. The English Village offers a similar environment that students, families and teachers might experience in a foreign country, all right here *in our own backyard*. (emphasis added)

The idea is to provide “authentic” English speaking spaces *within* Korea where Koreans can use English in a variety of real-life contexts. The slogan “Feel and experience English in Korea!” clearly articulates the project’s emphasis on experience-based English learning and projects a sense of self-reliance, not having to rely on costly resources outside Korea.

3.1. Ideological Constructs

A textual analysis of the public relations film released by the Press Center of Gyeonggi EV reveals three main themes: (i) globalization (ii) economy (iii) and English education reform. It is asserted that “we want to instill in students a better sense of their role in the global community.” They note that “another agenda for leading the world in the establishment of English Villages is to boost our international competitiveness through globalization initiatives.” The details are as follows:

- (2) *If Koreans speak English more fluently*, the atmosphere will be more appealing to continued foreign investment in Gyeonggi Province and Korea. It is an essential. Companies and their families will be more likely to relocate to our peninsula and live for extended periods *if our citizens are true global citizens* that help make living in Korea a comfortable, culturally-rewarding experience. (emphasis added)
(http://english-village.gg.go.kr/eng/aboutgecf/vod_pr.jsp)

² For further discussion, see excerpt (7).

³ Unless different URLs are provided separately, all excerpts regarding the English Village Project in this study are from <http://english-village.gg.go.kr>. Both the English version and the Korean version are included in the data. When the Korean transliteration is not provided, it means that the original text was in English.

The *if-conditional* syntactic structure in (2) suggests that “Koreans speak English more fluently” and “our citizens are true global citizens” are two conditions which will result in creating a foreign investment friendly and foreigner welcoming environment. The idea that two conditions are argued to yield the same final outcome makes one conclude that “true global citizens” means “Koreans speaking English more fluently.” A direct ideological link between linguistic capital and economic capital in folk conceptualization of “global” is salient in this text. The overarching argument is that striving to improve fluency in English is intended to accommodate non-Koreans, but in the end Koreans will benefit from stronger economy. Similar discourses are put forth in the Korean version. The following statement addresses the main function of the EV.

- (3) Seykyeysokuy kyengkito, tongpwuka kyengceyuy cwungsimchwuk kyengkitolul mokphyolo kwuknay choycholo yengemaumul cosenghan kyengki yengemaumulun hyencay chwucincwungin cheyhem yenge hak-sup **infra** kwuchwuk saepul chacilepsi cinhayngghaye **global** incay yangsengkwa tomin yenge kwusa nunglyek hyangsangul thonghan kwukceyhwa **mind** payyangey kyeninchaka toykey ssupnita.

With the aim for Gyeonggi Province to be a world province and the central axis of North East Asian economy, we vow to play the role of a locomotive (driving force) to cultivate internationalization-minded, global human resources through improving English speaking skills of the residents of Gyeonggi Province by making steady progress on building the very first experiential English training infrastructure in Korea.

In this exclusively Korean text, three English lexical items stand out: “*infra*”, “*global*”, and “*mind*”, which are highlighted in bold. The word *global* is combined with the Korean noun *incay* (‘human resources’). The “buzz word” *global* is reinforced by the concept “Gyeonggi in the world”, not Gyeonggi *in Korea*. Gyeonggi envisions itself not simply as a province in Korea but as a supranational or superordinate space, not being subject to the usual intranational jurisdiction. In other words, the vision they have about the province is transnational, not being bound to one country.

Moreover, this text stresses that the main contributors to make this vision a reality are “English speaking” individuals with international orientations, which is referred to as “kwukceyhwa (‘internationalization’) mind” in the original Korean text. The conceptualization of *global* in this excerpt is closely related to language skills, similar to the English text in (2); that is, being bilingual, mainly with proficiency in English, is treated as the determining fac-

tor for claiming global citizenship. In addition, excerpt (3) clearly reveals an ideology of economy, echoing the English discourse in excerpt (2). Although producing English-speaking Koreans is given first and foremost importance in this project, it is not argued to be the final goal. Instead, it is seen as a *means* to the ultimate goal of Korea becoming the economic hub in North-east Asia.

As to why Koreans need to “speak English more fluently” and how the EV project fits into the picture, excerpt (4) offers an explanation.

- (4) The world is changing rapidly due to the development of transportation and IT technology. Along with these, *English has become a major influence in connecting and uniting the world*. In this global era, it is essential to help the public speak English more fluently, in order to establish an atmosphere where *foreign enterprise can do business without hindrance*, to help foreign residents to feel more comfortable, and *to facilitate cultural exchange*. For this reason, Gyeonggi Province has been putting its heart and soul into the English Village project, which provides all the residents of the province with an environment in which they can easily experience English in person. (emphasis added)

Excerpt (4) reinforces predominant English language ideologies: (1) The Korean public’s English fluency is not adequate (2) The English language has become more powerful thanks to technological advancements (3) The English language connects and unites the world (4) English is essential for successful business and (5) English is required for cultural exchange. All of these discourses present only pragmatic views on English and fail to address some of the well-known critical concerns such as the concern that English is a killer language, that English is an imperial language, or that English is a language encasing and reinforcing social inequalities (e.g., Pennycook 1994 and 1998; Phillipson 1992).

Economy-oriented arguments also drive predominant ideologies in the EV project. Pragmatists can be easily attracted to the supposed money saving idea of the EV. Most Koreans are painfully aware that so-called authentic English education in English speaking countries can be financially burdensome. It is not known whether or not many Korean parents sent their children overseas because they could afford to do so. It is quite possible that they did it even if they were in debt because they thought it would be a good “investment” for their children’s future, which raises a serious economic and social concern. Some parents consider a more long-term choice rather than temporary overseas English programs. This long-term solution, however, involves uprooting an entire family solely for a child’s education. According to *Dong-Ah Daily* (March 30, 2006), “41% of Korean parents who have ele-

mentary school students are willing to emigrate for children's education if possible" (cited in H Lee 2007: 1).

As a more economical alternative to costly overseas English education, the EV claims to provide affordable education for "all" stating that "by giving students an experience in English at a reasonable cost, the financial burden for private English education is decreased." If the EV can accomplish what it set out to accomplish, it may alleviate some financial pressure on working class Korean parents who want to arrange private English lessons for their children but simply cannot afford to do so. EV's discourses about economical education alternatives are often coupled with the rhetoric of reducing social inequalities supposedly caused by the English language, or to be more precise, socio-economic class stratification between those who have resources to improve English and those who do not. For instance, among the students from third grade through ninth grade in Gyeonggi Province and/or active members of the Cyber English Town, those from low-income families recommended by the Ministry of Education are offered free education. This is an attempt to rectify inaccessibility of private English language education to students from a low socio-economic class.

Along with economy, culture is construed as a key component in defining what "global" means to Koreans, which excerpts (5) and (6) suggest has something to do with developing keen interests in other cultures and countries.

- (5) Yengekwen kwukkauy maulkwa yusahan hwankyengeysey seykyeyuy tayanghan mwunhwalul cheyhemhamyense seykyeysimin uysikil paywuko yengeka mokceki anin uysasothongul wihan swutanilanun kesul nukkikeyhapnita.

Experiencing various cultures of the world in an environment similar to English speaking countries, students in the English Village will acquire a sense of being global citizens and come to realize that English is not a purpose but a means of communication.

- (6) In addition to learning and studying the international language, we want to instill in students a better sense of their role in the global community. We can do this by introducing other cultures and other worldviews from people all over the world.

Excerpt (6) implies that an understanding of cultures and views other than one's own can be obtained by means of "the international language" (i.e., English), and further, that an enhanced understanding of the world outside your own will ultimately lead to heightened self-awareness. Excerpt (5) shows that learning English in Korea is driven by "instrumental motivation",

a utilitarian goal to gain something practical or concrete, not by “integrative motivation”, a desire to identify with target language speakers and cultures.

Another channel through which the “global” element of the project is managed and reinforced is *Cyber English Village*. Its main purpose is described as follows:

- (7) Cyber English Village is for everyone who is interested in learning English. It is opened all year around for free to all members. Anyone can join, regardless of their residential area.

Furthermore, specific ways in which the Cyber EV can be effectively run are recommended. It is suggested that the Cyber EV is created to (1) promote and supplement the EV (2) maximize the advantages of online English learning (3) establish a spontaneous and continuous online learning space and (4) improve Gyeonggi residents’ English skills.

The mastermind of the EV Project is the Gyeonggi English Culture Foundation (GECF), whose council consists of the Governor of Gyeonggi Province and 14 board members and two supervisors. The subheading “intent” of the foundation reads:

- (8) a. Increasing need for English as a basic element of globalization and an information-oriented society.
- b. Need for building the English Village, where students can experience and learn English in everyday life.
- c. Establishment of a specialized organization, the Gyeonggi English Culture Foundation, for successful construction of the English Village.

In addition to the general intent, GECF articulates its specific objectives as follows:

- (9) a. Raising the international competitiveness of Gyeonggi Province through improvement of Gyeonggi residents’ English skills. This will allow Gyeonggi Province to become internationally competitive. Gyeonggi is promoting the English Village Project to offer residents the best learning environment and a distinctive opportunity for English education.
- b. Equipping Gyeonggi province residents with high-level English language skills by expanding opportunities for English learning and cultural experience.

- c. Contributing to foreign currency savings by studying English without going abroad.
- d. Completing and supporting the public education by providing and [sic] English practice ground for all students in Gyeonggi Province.
- e. Attracting foreign capital and promoting foreign investment by improving the globalization and competitiveness of Gyeonggi Province.
- f. Raising international competitiveness by improving Gyeonggi residents' English ability and their experience with international cultures.

Both the EV homepage and GECF website showcase similar discourses that emphasize practical motivations for learning English and urge pro-active approaches to globalization. The texts above neither depict Koreans as victims of globalization nor address problems with globalization; rather, it is implied that Koreans can benefit tremendously from globalization by actively participating in it and using it to their advantage.

In addition to overtly articulated financial benefits, positive impacts of the project EV are argued to be extensive enough to deal even with family issues. As discussed in H Lee (2007), an overzealous goal to provide English education for Korean children in English speaking countries has given birth to a new form of family called *Kirogi family* (wild goose family) since the mid 90's in South Korea. It refers to an immigrant family in which the father is left behind in Korea to support the family and the mother lives with children in English speaking countries for their education. Unsurprisingly, this unique living arrangement poses several challenges for many families due to issues from homesickness to marital break-ups. The project EV promises to ease the pain of family separation as follows: "Parents need not feel anxiety, loneliness or fear like they do after sending their children overseas for language and culture training."

A final argument appeals to the idea of addressing widely perceived performance anxiety many Koreans claim to suffer because of their insufficient English speaking skills. The mission statement of the EV identifies one of the objectives as helping students build confidence in speaking English. This particular goal is said to be reached by implementing creative alternative English education through EVs, as indicated in the excerpt below.

- (10) We want our young students to overcome their fears and anxieties when dealing with the study and usage of the English language. If

we can improve their self-confidence by exposing them to situations and teachers from around the world, then we have accomplished our mission.

3.2. Pedagogical Objectives

The discourse of English education reform is predominantly manifested in the EV's pedagogical objectives. The main instructional goal is said to “create an environment where learning English is entertaining” and to “modify current thinking and methods of English education.” They propose *the 3 E Model*, which is conceptualized as follows:

- Education: Cultivate English speaking ability through *experiential* education. Develop various educational programs that are age and level appropriate.
- Experience: Apply the programs in *real life* by role-playing different jobs and functions. Create a village which simulates different situations.
- Entertainment: Learn English in a *fun, motivating* manner. Complete education through PE, sports, leisure, culture life.

(emphasis added and adapted from <http://english-village.gg.go.kr/eng>)

As specifically articulated in the pedagogical goals above, the focus is on developing everyday applicable spoken English in a rather oxymoronic “created” naturalistic living environment.

3.3. Participating Agents

There are different participating agents in this project. According to the EV's official documents, over 700 residents (teachers, staff and students) reside on-site year round: 500 students; 200 teachers; 100 native speakers; 100 Korean instructors and employees. Three different types of agents are involved in teaching: (i) regular program teachers (ii) one-day program teachers and (iii) “edutainers.” Both one-day program teacher and edutainer positions require “various artistic talents (acting, singing, dancing etc).” The faculty in the EV project are assigned to work as an employee such as a café owner, a book store clerk, a cashier in a convenience store, a doctor in the EV, and so forth. These assigned jobs are not their real-life professions; rather, they simply “play” one in the EV. Therefore, a certain level of acting is involved. The main purpose is to provide a variety of opportunities for visitors

and trainees to conduct their daily routines in natural environments albeit quasi.

Different programs are offered in the EV. Students can either enroll in short-term residential programs ranging from a weekend to a summer or participate in various non-residential programs during a day trip to the EV with reasonable general admission fees,⁴ approximately \$5 for non-adults (ages 4-18) and \$6 for adults. Initially residential programs in the EVs were designed to target young learners, mainly accommodating elementary and junior high school students. However, some campuses now offer short residential programs from 2-3 days to 3 weeks for professionals such as teachers and civil servants. Non-residential programs are open to the general public with no age limit with the purchase of a daily admissions ticket. Visitors can participate in many of these programs with no additional fee.

In principle, both teaching staff and administrative staff, interacting with students enrolled in residential programs and visitors, are supposed to have roles to play and tasks to perform. Whatever they do, they are there to provide as many opportunities to use English as possible for visitors and residential program students. After the Immigration area, the first building that catches visitors' attention is the information center where they are greeted by English speaking administrative staffers who distribute brochures and maps and recommend some free programs people can take advantage of while visiting the EV. These employees do not have regular teaching hours but serve as quasi teachers to offer help in English. Visitors need to communicate with the EV employees in English to complete business transactions in various stores in the EV. The underlying assumption is that visitors' actual participation will lead to informal but experience-oriented learning.

Job announcements for English teachers in South Korea often contain potent gate-keeping texts. It is not uncommon that they specify who's "in" and who's "out" even for application eligibility. A blunt wording such as "only wenemin ('native speaker') can apply" appears in recruitment notices more often than not. A telling example comes from a posting with the title "Teachers Wanted" dated April 30, 2007 on the Gyeonggi EV website (<http://english-village.gg.go.kr/eng/recruit/jobs.jsp>).

The heading "qualifications" reads:

Positions available for only Native Speakers of English — US, UK, Canadian, Australian, New Zealand, South African teachers.

⁴ When I visited the Paju Camp in 2006, the rates were \$1 for non-adults (ages 5-18) and \$ 2 for adults. Now it is free for everyone after 6:00 PM and children under 4 and senior citizens over 65 are admitted free. It is open 9:30 AM-10:00 PM Tuesday through Sunday.

No subtlety is found in the wording “only Native Speakers of English.” It clearly states that only speakers from English as a Native Language (ENL) countries will be considered for positions. Native speaker favoritism is a recurring rhetoric related to advertisements about instructors in the English language teaching industry (J S Lee 2009a). This ad, however, has an extended notion of native speakers of English. The addition of South Africans to the category of eligible native speaker teachers is a noteworthy new development. In the past, there has been a strong preference for North American teachers (i.e., Americans and Canadians) even though British, Australians, and New Zealanders are equally considered to be “native speakers.” Gate-keeping ideology in teacher hiring is most salient in the dichotomy between “native” and “non-native”, but is also seen in the favoring of North Americans over non North Americans — not all native speakers are treated equal.

The EV seems to depart ever so slightly from this traditional approach and attempts to include native speakers other than North Americans. However, when it comes to the division of labor and who can do what, the age-old native vs. non-native issue is still there. Excerpt (11) demonstrates *wenemin* ideology by valorizing *only* and *all* native speaker teachers as “kind” and “detailed oriented”. These *wenemin* teachers are seen as the sole agents who facilitate students’ success in the program.

- (11) Chincelhako caseyhan **wenemin** sensayngnimuy citolo yengeey tayhan hungmiwa oykwukinkwaay tayhwaey tayhan casinkamul sime cwue susuloka thoyso hwu culkepkey haksupey imhal swu isstolok hapnita.

Under the guidance of kind and detail-oriented **native speaker teachers**, students will be more interested in English and build their confidence in conversations with foreigners, which will enable them to enjoy studying (English) on their own after completion of the program.

The main factor in the division of labor between “native” and “non-native” seems to be related to how much speech is involved, how routinized a task is, and how complex an interaction may be. My observations during the visit to the Paju Camp in 2006 indicate that native English speakers are normally assigned to handle residential programs involving heavy instructional duties or play characters in theatrical productions necessitating delivery of scripted dialogs as well as impromptu conversations that elicit audience participation. Non-native English speakers and Korean nationals tend to work in places that deal with more or less predictable or formulaic conversations such as the information center, the immigration desk, video kiosks, ice cream stalls, and so forth.

As of September 2008, 70 native speaker instructors and 40 Korean instructors are featured in the Paju Campus website's instructor section (english-village.gg.go.kr/paju/about/fteacher.jsp). According to a recruitment announcement for native speakers (dated April 30, 2007 <http://english-village.gg.go.kr/eng/recruit/jobs.jsp>), they must have a Bachelor's degree or above; ESL teaching experience and TESOL certificate (teaching related certificates) are not required but preferred. On the other hand, hiring practices for Korean nationals seem more selective. A recruitment notice⁵ posted on the Korean website (dated June 28, 2008 http://english-village.gg.go.kr/customer/notice/notice_view.jsp) shows similar requirements; a Bachelor's degree is a must and English literature or Education majors are considered favorably and TESOL certificate holders are preferred. Unlike Korean teachers, there is no major-related preference for native speakers as long as they are college graduates. On the other hand, Korean nationals have to take a written test subsequent to an initial paper screening and prior to an interview, from which native speakers are exempt.

3.4. Physical Set-ups and Infrastructure

According to its website public relations material, the EV in Paju "is designed to realize the same atmosphere as a town in England. It will create an authentic environment so that participants can learn and speak English in a natural setting". Considering that American English is valued and North Americans are preferred as English teachers in Korea, it is intriguing to note that the EV replicates "a town in England". The website does not have an official explanation or rationale for this. Arguably, this has to do with the assumption that England represents the old Western world and America epitomizes the modern West. Visually speaking, modern city buildings do not offer a uniquely foreign experience to Korean visitors since skyscrapers are very common in Korea as well. On the other hand, a quaint little European town is something Koreans are not familiar with and certainly has a "foreign" feel. The physical set ups in the EV play a role in reinforcing English language ideologies. For instance, Western physical environments in the EV endorse the idea that "native" is better than "non-native". That is, not only teachers but also buildings and learning spaces should look like the ones in ENL countries.

The facilities in the EV are supposed to be used mainly for education purposes; these are spaces to provide English language learning experiences for visitors and residents in the EV. However, unique physical set ups and infra-

⁵ The main data collection was completed in 2006, and this type of recruitment notice for Korean teachers was not available at that time.

structure in the EV enable visitors to experience more than language learning. The EV is quite a versatile space serving multiple purposes. My impression during my visit to Paju Camp in Summer 2006 is that the EV is a combination of a movie set, an amusement park, and a language school. In fact, depending on the individual visitor's level of interest and participation, the visit could be either a field trip to a Hollywood movie set or a fun day at an amusement park, or potentially an "English-only" class. Both public and commercial facilities are available in the EV. In addition to music, science and other content-area classrooms, outdoor facilities such as an amphitheater, theme plazas and a performance hall and a gymnasium are available. Moreover, places one will be bound to come across as a tourist or an immigrant outside Korea, such as immigration and customs at the airport, a bank, a post office, a police station, a clinic, a convenience store, a book store, and restaurants are in full operation, creating a feeling of "authenticity" of living and working environments in ENL countries. The first place all visitors have to go through in the EV is immigration at the "mock" airport with departure and arrival signs (Figure 2).⁶ Here visitors fill out a form before their passport is issued to them. The honor pledge page inside the passport (Figure 3),⁷ in particular item 1, shows EV's English only policy.



Figure 2. Airport.

⁶ This is a picture taken during my visit to Paju Camp in Summer 2006.

⁷ I was issued a passport during my visit, but the photo of the honor pledge inside the passport was taken later.

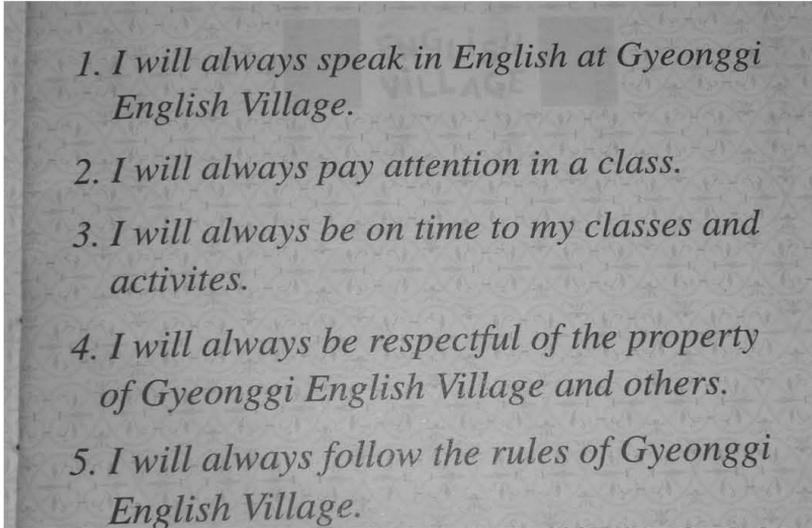


Figure 3. Honor pledge inside the passport.

The participant-oriented flexibility in the EV has advantages and disadvantages. It caters to different types of visitors, which is an advantage. If a visitor is serious about learning English, the entire day can be spent accordingly. Motivated visitors can take advantage of many non-residential daily programs in which transactions and conversations should be carried out only in English. The EV mainly offers opportunities for Koreans to use English in a variety of real-life simulations, but participation in these programs is voluntary. Since the EV is a hybrid space between a school and an amusement park/movie set, visitors who are not in regular residential programs can either be active participants or passive spectators. Less motivated visitors may simply observe what others do and still gain some new experience of being exposed to an English immersion environment which can be both linguistically and visually quite interesting and unfamiliar.

3.5. Voices of Concerns

The EV has its attractions; it projects a certain charm as a novelty and as the very first example of an entertaining, experience-oriented, mass catering, reasonably priced English only speaking zone *within* Korea. However, it has generated a fair amount of criticism as well. I highlight some of the representative arguments against the EV. Concerns range from purely educational to political. The fact that politicians discuss the EV as part of their campaign agenda indicates that English education has become a main issue to capture the South Korean voters' attention. It is a strong indication that English edu-

cation is highly politicized and anything related to the English language is not just a linguistic issue.

I Kim (2006) reports the candidate Kim Yong Han staged a demonstration demanding the immediate closing of the EV and criticized Son Han Kyu, the board director of the Gyeonggi English Culture Foundation, for his initiative, the EV project. Kim's main argument hinges on the observation that Gyeonggi EV serves only "2.5% of the 19.4 million students in Gyeonggi Province" and that Son allegedly used it as "a tool to satisfy his own selfish desire in regards to his political ambitions."

Also, the Deputy Minister of Education Kim Jin Pyo is reported to have insisted that "[w]e should stop building English Villages" due to outrageous expenses involved. He states that "it costs 200-300 billion won to build and maintain one" and that it would be more cost effective if three *wenemin* (native speaker) teachers were hired for 100 million won per school (*Gyeonggi Shinmun* 2006).⁸ In reaction to Kim's remark, an opposition political party leader counterattacks, "It is nonsense to demand an immediate stop to the English Village Project. I cannot think of a better educational facility for regular citizens who cannot afford expensive private English lessons and overseas language programs." The politics involving English Villages are discussed in J S Park (2009). He suggests that "the intersection of class anxiety and pursuit of English is saliently demonstrated in the politics surrounding the recent boom in the construction of English Villages" (2009: 46). Whether you are pro- or anti-EV is part of the political debate.

According to a poll conducted by *Empas* (www.empas.com) cited in *Weekly Hanguok* (2006), 58% of 3700 respondents support the idea of expanding EVs, while 42% oppose. Anti-EV citizens argue that EVs do not provide a permanent solution to increasing social inequalities triggered by the English language. They note that the gap between haves and have-nots in terms of accessing private English lessons may not be resolved because there are students who cannot even afford to go to an EV. Instead, they assert that schools should be responsible for quality English education, not EVs. The pro-EV respondents in the poll suggest that EVs offer practical alternatives to grammar translation-oriented English education and enable many Koreans to reduce their education expenses for private English lessons, both domestic and overseas.

4. Conclusion

This paper identifies the English Village as a fascinating sociocultural site

⁸ The article was originally written in Korean and these quotes are my translation.

in which political, economic, pedagogical, and linguistic instantiations of globalization coexist. The discourse of globalization has found its way into an ambitious project called *English Village*, which offers a participation-reinforced English immersion *edutainment* space for the general masses in Korea. Its objectives and visions feature three dominant ideological constructs: (i) global Koreans (ii) economical educational alternatives (iii) experiential learning. As a case study of English *necessitation* ideology, to borrow J S Park's (2009) term, the project *English Village* is particularly worthy of discussion in connection with globalization. The project *English Village* emphasizes mainly pragmatic and economic approaches to globalization and English language education, and its benefits and problems have not been thoroughly examined yet.

The main goal of EVs is to produce Koreans who are proficient in English, which is argued to be an important quality to facilitate, if not determine, participation in globalization. Both the idea of economical educational alternatives and the notion of experiential English instruction are pedagogy-related ideologies. However, the former is based on an economy argument and latter a teaching method. Economical educational alternatives are closely related to the idea of making private English programs more accessible to the general public at a reasonable rate. In other words, they refer to economically sensible domestic educational options that can discourage Koreans from going overseas and paying excessive fees for English immersion programs and consequently reduce the existing inequitable educational opportunities between haves and have-nots. On the other hand, the ideology of experiential English instruction advocates language learning through real life experiences, devaluing textbook-oriented, grammar translation infused instruction.

However unnatural and "fake" it may appear, all business transactions (e.g., ordering a meal at a restaurant) are supposed to be conducted in English even when they deal with fellow Korean national working staff in the EV. This could be construed as unnatural since it is undoubtedly the Korean language that is used as a means of communication in interpersonal communication outside the EV. By providing a close replica of a town in English speaking countries in Korea, the EV is supposed to enable average Korean citizens to experience what it is like to travel and live outside Korea. The project certainly emphasizes both experiential and entertainment elements in English education.

Native speaker preference is overt in recruitment ads. However, not all working staff in the EV are native speakers of English. There is a division of labor between native speakers and Korean nationals in the EV. The project at least makes it possible for both native and non-native teachers to engage in informal and quasi-real instructional processes in their own capacity. The instructional staff in the EV assume a unique hybrid identity with three roles

combined – worker, actor, and teacher. Visitors demonstrate different degrees of participation in various theme-based activities in the EV.

Although the EV project is significant as a one of a kind initiative for English education reform, it is not without limitations or criticism. The anti-EV camp is concerned because it is a costly operation benefiting only a fraction of the general population. EV proponents are optimistic that it will help Koreans improve *yengehoyhwa* ('English conversation') skills in Korea without spending an outrageous amount of financial resources on overseas English programs, which has been argued to be detrimental to the domestic economy. I am critical of the uncritical pursuit of English-is-the-answer-to-all-our-problems ideology in South Korea, but at the same time there is a need to see if the idea of realizing economical, public-centered, home grown English education opportunities can succeed or not.

The project *English Village* stresses mostly pragmatic and economic approaches to globalization and English language ideology. In South Korea, as in Silver's (2006) study, "the teaching of English was consistently defended with utilitarian, economic justifications rather than cultural, or other reasons" (2006: 54). The entire nation, from the president to average citizens, is emotionally and discursively invested in globalization and English language education. The idea is that Koreans need to improve English speaking skills to participate in the global economy and English simply serves as a practical linguistic tool, not a purpose, to fulfill South Korea's global ambition. The concept "global" means bilingual with English fluency and an international outlook. English Villages are part of processes and discourses of globalization in South Korea and represent a compelling instantiation of economy-driven language ideologies.

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