

Foreign English Instructors and Orientalism: A Case Study of English Instructors in Jeonju, Korea

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(Abstract) This research examines the ways in which the ideas and mechanism of Orientalism are expressed and utilized by Western English instructors in Jeonju. Through critical and experiential analysis, I explore Edward Said's discourse on Orientalism, the most influential argument to date regarding the relationship between the East and West. This study is divided into three parts. First, I investigate English instructors' notions of the East before their move to South Korea. Second, I explore the changes in their notions after living in South Korea for a time. Lastly, I examine the way in which the ideas of Orientalism are utilized by the instructors. I conclude that even today, English instructors in South Korea are bound by the pervading notion of Orientalism. Even so, they are not consciously aware of the concept nor are their daily actions deliberately informed by it. Yet, they experience changes in Orientalism in unfamiliar situations and strategically utilize its ideas to maintain their identity and resolve conflict. In other words, Orientalism doesn't operate as a fixed system that constantly buoys Eurocentric notions; it is flexible and dynamic as its influence weakens or strengthens depending on context.

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1. Introduction

As a postcolonial theory, Edward Said's concept of Orientalism has become the most important framework for the analysis of Eastern and Western cultural exchanges. He stated that Orientalism "is not an airy European fantasy about the Orient but a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment. Continued investment made Orientalism, as a system of knowledge about the Orient, an accepted grid for filtering through the Orient into Western consciousness, just as that same investment multiplied—indeed, made truly productive—the statements proliferating out from Orientalism into the general culture" (Said 2004: 17-18). The scholarly discussion of Orientalism provides an explanation for much of the long history of cultural exchanges between the East and West. Further, it illuminates the fact that the formation of unequal dynamics between the two hemispheres was brought about not only through physical violence but also through intellectual discourse.

Said's theory of Orientalism calls for the re-examining of research outcomes on non-Western regions and the existing prejudices within researchers themselves. The field of anthropology, in particular, posed the question of whether cultural representation could truly be devoid of Orientalist views. Said not only provided a new analytical framework for knowledge systems and the relationship of power between the colonized and colonizers, but also for the re-evaluation of the purpose and legitimacy of the study of anthropology (Richardson 1990; Thomas 1991). Despite these theoretical contributions, however, Said's arguments were widely critiqued for using predominantly biased sources, inconsistent logic, and vague language (Halliday 2010; Irwin 2007) as well as for a lack of practical relevance and explanatory value (Richardson 1990; Fox 1992; Halliday 2010; Sax 1998).

For the most part, I agree with Said's viewpoint, and I believe his work contributed to a better investigation of the formation of the East-West relationship. However, I question whether his perspective still applies in the twenty-first century. I wanted to investigate whether "hegemony, or rather the result of cultural hegemony at work ... gives Orientalism ... durability and the strength ... [and whether Orientalism still] depends for its strategy on this flexible positional superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever

losing him the relative upper hand” (Said 2004: 15). In particular, by spending time with Western foreigners on a consistent basis¹ I wanted to explore how Orientalism manifested among those residing in South Korea [hereafter, Korea] and how their beliefs evolved.

Not much research has been conducted on Western foreigners residing in Korea. According to the foreign registration records as of September 2014, approximately 1,100,000 foreigners had registered in Korea. The two largest groups at that time consisted of Chinese (49 percent) and Vietnamese (10 percent). In comparison, only 2 percent of the total were Americans and 0.5 percent Canadians (The Immigration and Foreign Policy Center, 2014). Most of those in this smaller population of Westerners worked in relatively better environments than did non-Western foreigners. Most of the studies on foreigners have been conducted on unskilled workers whose purpose for entering Korea was to obtain an employment permit or a “work-and-visit” visa. Existing research mostly focuses on the discrimination these non-Western workers faced and their poor working conditions. In contrast, the little research on Western foreigners has been limited to topics of improving education and the ways in which English instructors could be best utilized.

Despite the oversight, Western foreigners are a relevant subject of study. Koreans can more easily contact and establish relationships with Westerners than with non-Western foreigners. Western foreigners have been at the forefront of teaching conversational English in Korea and some participated in various television programs that generated public interest. Even though a minority, these Westerners have had a significant amount of influence on the daily lives of Koreans and have helped create intimate ties between Koreans and the larger Western foreigner communities.

Since Western foreigners were able to find employment much more easily and worked in a better environment than foreigners from “poor” countries, they did not experience nearly as much discrimination or exclusion as their non-Western counterparts. They have been placed in a complex web of relationships in which they are simultaneously the subject

¹ In this research, Western foreigners consist mostly of North Americans (the United States and Canada) and Europeans (the UK). Because most Western foreigners work in Korea via the E-2 employment visa as English instructors, I limited my subjects to North Americans and Britons only. According to the 2014 census, of the 2,349,693 foreign entrants, 341,951 were North Americans (317,844 Americans; 24,207 Canadians) and 131,140 native English-speaking Europeans.

of Orientalism *and* subordinates to the Other, their Korean employers. Some Koreans regard Western foreigners with envy and have developed an inferiority complex due to internalized Orientalism. However, Korea's rapid economic growth and the effects of the Korean Wave have gradually diminished feelings of inferiority among Koreans. I predict that growing self-awareness of people in Asia and the economic recession in Western countries will also affect the perception and experiences of Western foreigners in Korea. The current state of international relations and the attendant changes in Westerners' perceptions of Asia provide an apt opportunity to explore the specific mechanisms of and a more updated meaning for Said's Orientalism.

For this study, I examined ten native English-speaking instructors residing in Jeonju, Korea. I investigated in depth how they perceived the East—Korea specifically—and how their views evolved while living in the country. Following this introduction and Section 2 offering background on Western foreigners and Orientalism, and a third section providing discussion of my research process, this article focuses on: instructors' perceptions of the East before and immediately after their move to Korea (Section Four); the changes in their perceptions of the East and Korea in particular after living in Korea and how Orientalism was utilized in their daily lives (Section Five); and finally the conclusion of the research and the exploration of theoretical implications and limitations (Section Six).

2. Western Foreigners and Orientalism

Most of the academic studies on foreigners in Korea have been on migrant workers. Soon after an influx of Korean-Chinese entered Korea at the end of the 1980s, foreign workers began to arrive through the Industrial Trainee System established in 1993. As the number of migrant workers increased, so did academic analysis of the phenomenon and its concomitant issues. Because the Industrial Trainee System was initially created for the purpose of bringing in those foreign workers who had been hired locally by overseas Korean firms, most of the workers who migrated to Korea through this system were from China and Southeast Asia. The system, however, betrayed its early promise to provide safe and steady work to its enrollees. Instead, the workers were placed in the so-called “3D”—difficult, dangerous, and dirty—industries in the status of temporary

trainees. They often received unfair and cruel treatment such as no pay and overwork, in addition to being exposed to accidents. Academics focused most of their research on foreigners working in the “3D” industries largely due to its urgent need. However, the scope of study expanded with the arrival of marriage migrants (foreign brides of Korean men) and the formation of bi-cultural families in the 2000s.²

Since the majority of workers residing in Korea have entered the country through the Industrial Trainee System, it is almost impossible to find research that treats Western foreigners as migrant workers. Seol Donghun (2009: 63-64) argued that migrant workers need to be categorized by the types of visa they possess and the industry they work in order to conduct proper research on their activities. Migrant workers with professional skills usually come from developed countries and are essentially exempt from the discrimination most unskilled workers face. Even though professionals have been a minority in number within the migrant population, they are not treated as inferiors. Hence, they have been traditionally excluded from the discourse of migrant workers as minorities, resulting in a dearth of study on Western foreigners.

From what perspective, then, has research on Western foreigners been conducted? First, native English speakers have become a study subject as English-language educators. With the exception of the B2 tourist visa holders, most Western foreigners, particularly North Americans, have entered the country through the E2 visa to teach conversational English. Their activities have been examined mainly from a pedagogical perspective, and the research spans the topics of teacher qualifications and educational effectiveness and results among other related concerns (Kwon Mibun 2007, 2011; Yun Yujin 2008; Yi Jongbok and Won Eunseok 2010; Yi Jongbok, Jeon Yeongju, and Kang Gyeongok 2011; Min Changyu, Na Gyeonghui, and Kim Jinseok 2013; Yun Okgyeong and Kim Byeongju 2014). Jeong Eunaeng’s research (2013) offers a qualitative analysis of the work and daily activities of English instructors, but only for the purpose of improving the effectiveness of English education. All of the studies mentioned above have been conducted with the common goal of analyzing and understanding the functions of English instructors by observing their

² In her article, Yi Hyegyong (2014: 134-142) discusses issues regarding migrant workers and the bi/multi-cultures that arose in Korea in the 2000s. She illuminates how the immigrant discourse has evolved since.

lives and experiences. The purpose of these studies is limited to finding means to improve English education and instructor management, leaving a huge gap of unexplored areas for further research.

The second type of study on Western foreigners, of which the present article is one, deals with the way Westerners are perceived as the perpetrators and agents of Orientalism. As I have mentioned earlier, Said's critique of Orientalism provides an important analytical framework for a better investigation of the East-West relationship and exchange. It would not be an exaggeration to state that Westerners maintaining Orientalist views adopt a preset perspective on an unfamiliar and disparate culture. Further, the tenets of Orientalism play an important role in constructing an identity as a migrant and forming new social relations while adjusting to a new life. In this article, I discuss Said's critique of Orientalism and how it relates to my observations of the lives of Western foreigners who are English instructors in Korea.

Existing analyses of Orientalism by Korean scholars have largely focused on the views of Westerners who visited the country during the enlightenment period of the Joseon Dynasty and did not go beyond Said's argument. The main purpose of these studies was to observe the process through which Koreans were "othered," examine both positive and negative Orientalism as was witnessed in Koreans' perception of Westerners, and ascertain how the Joseon society was grasped through the Western gaze (Yi Baeyong 2002; Jo Hyeonbeom 2003; Song Jaeyong 2004; Yi Jieun 2004; Jeong Yonghwa 2004; Kim Huiyeong 2007; Kim Eunyeong 2008; Kim Hakjun 2009a, 2009b, 2009c; Heo Donghyeon 2011). The works of Korean scholars illuminated the fact that Orientalism was manifest in a great variety of forms beyond the Middle East. These works undoubtedly made a significant contribution to the analysis of Orientalism. However, the authors regarded Orientalism as a fixed notion and embraced its theories without critical examination.

One article written by Sim Changseop and Carla Santos (2011) analyzed the Orientalist views of Western tourists in Korea and how they perceived the Other, shedding light on how these views conformed to Orientalist narrative today. However, this study adopted a similar perspective and analysis method as the existing research on the enlightenment period of the Joseon Dynasty. Critical application and analysis of Said's arguments can be found in the works of Michael Richardson, William S. Sax, Richard G. Fox, and Fred Halliday. These scholars acknowledged the

usefulness of Said's theory while simultaneously working to overcome its limits.³

Michael Richardson, one of the most vehement critics of Said, claimed that today's Orientalism signifies nothing more than Europeans' masochistic tendencies and an expression of guilt (1990:16-17). He further argued that those who criticize Orientalist narrative, including Said, were not exempt from its influence and that the "real" Orient they were seeking was an illusion. He criticized Said for failing to note the reciprocity between subject and object of Orientalism and fostering the notion that the Other was a passive party without the capability to resist. Relatedly, he denounced Johannes Fabian's reasoning which explained the process of othering through different conceptualizations of time. Richardson asserted that Said's and Fabian's arguments were "founded in dubious Nietzschean subjectivism" and failed to recognize that "truth and falsehood existed in dialogic relations to each other" (1990:19). Richardson contended that Western thought on the East was not completely determined by Orientalist views. Therefore, he argued, one must examine the agents of Orientalism in order to understand how these views are translated into action.

Richard G. Fox (1992) pointed out the limits of Said's theory by investigating how the "Orient" was affected by the Western construction of Orientalism through Gandhi's independence movement in India. Said qualified Orientalism as a rigid, standardized system of discourse. His argument implied that Orientalism was produced and consumed only insularly within the West even though it was dynamically manifest by various representations through a constant interaction with the Orient. Fox shed light on the transformation of Orientalism in the context of Eastern resistance and its effects, while indicating the absence of discussion of this in Said's theory. He acknowledged the significance of Said's theory as it brought to the surface the reality of Western cultural dominance, but asserted the need for its expansion to include the rise of cultural resistance in developing nations.⁴

Furthermore, Sax (1998) rejected the Occident (stable subject)-

³ Other scholars such as Robert Irwin (2007) and Pierre Ryckmans (1984) also criticized Said's vague usage of the terms "Orient" and "Orientalism."

⁴ Fox's research interest lay in how non-Westerners altered the effects of Orientalism. However, the purpose of this article is to illuminate how Westerners in a non-Western area construct Orientalism and how it evolves.

Oriental (negative object) binary for the case of his research conducted in Garhwal, India. The result of his fieldwork indicated that the subjects, in socio-cultural context, do not uniformly categorize the other or the self based on a fixed perspective. Halliday (1993) borrowed Karl Mannheim's argument and emphasized that all discourse was born within the context of politics, society, and culture of a particular community. He also criticized Said for underscoring the distorted views of outsiders while neglecting to point out how the misguided discourse was produced and distributed by insiders.

All these scholars recognized the usefulness of Said's Orientalism as a matter of discourse, but they also argued that the theory must be applied within a more specific socio-cultural context. Orientalism wasn't the only agent that determined the thought and experience of the Western subject. They contended that Orientalism wasn't a rigid notion but a set of ideas that could evolve and be reinterpreted through the process of reciprocity.

This article offers a critical examination of Said's theory and an extension of the efforts of the scholars mentioned above. I qualify Orientalism as a system of thought that is more flexible than rigid and through this paradigm, I observe how the Western subject is affected by Orientalism. I also attend to the process through which the Western subject utilizes Orientalism to their advantage. This study provides a starting point for fostering a greater cultural and anthropological understanding of Western foreigners. Simultaneously, it explores the analytical value of Said's theory of Orientalism.

3. The Research Process and Subject

As of October 2014, 18,000 foreigners had registered in Korea under the E2 visa, most of whom worked as English instructors. English instructors were usually recruited by the English Program in Korea (EPIK) or individually selected and invited by a local office of education. Some came through the Fulbright Program of the Korean-American Educational Commission. In addition, autonomous private high schools⁵ could independently advertise for native English speaking teachers, since the

⁵ (Translator's note) Autonomous private school refers to schools that are guaranteed autonomy in curriculum, tuition, and selection of students and teachers.

chairman of the board of directors was in charge of hiring instructors in private institutions. These schools asked for recommendations from nearby English *hagwon*⁶ or an office of education, so those teachers too were within the same pool of native English instructors. To apply for these positions, candidates submitted copies of their university diploma, passport, résumé, university transcript, criminal record, a medical report, and a photograph of themselves to the office of education or employment agency. However, in a smaller *hagwon*, the procedure was simpler and not as many documents were required. In Jeollabuk-do Province, candidates could apply in person by visiting the office of education or via phone or the Internet. They then consulted with a Korean-American coordinator, after which the results were determined. The candidates were required to have an E2 visa and at least a university degree.

As the influx of native English-speaking instructors increased in the 2000s, social issues began to surface regarding their qualifications and the crimes some instructors commit in Korea. As a result, the application procedure became more rigorous to winnow less qualified candidates. The employment contract usually included a one-year term, and the salary could be negotiated depending on the applicants' experience and ability. The selected instructors could request to be assigned to a specific area within the Jeollabuk-do education district, but not all were able to teach in their preferred locations. The total number of English instructors in Jeollabuk-do Province in 2014 was 255. Among them, 116 were placed within the local ministry of education, 60 in public high schools, and 29 in English experience centers. If two instructors in the autonomous private high school were included, the total number of English instructors working in Jeollabuk-do Province would rise to 257.

I began interviewing English instructors in the Jeonju area in 2009 in order to conduct research on Western foreigners. However, the length of my observation is much longer if I consider the relationships I formed with English instructors while working with them in the same high school many years prior. As the instructors and I became closer, we discussed various issues such as cultural differences, wage problems, educational environment, and eventually their lives. I became greatly interested in their socio-cultural experiences and decided to conduct a cultural-anthropological

⁶ (Translator's note) A *hagwon* is a private educational institute that provides supplementary study materials and instruction for students.

analysis of Western foreigners residing in Korea. Through my interactions with native English instructors, my immediate association of Westerners with Orientalism gave way to the realization that there was an urgent need for a more specific study on Western foreigners and Orientalism.

The English instructors from the school I worked at became my primary research subjects, and I was able to expand the pool of instructors by way of introduction from the ones I was already working with. Moreover, I was able to connect with English instructors from other schools with the help of Korean English teachers. The instructors I met with consistently were mostly white. This was not intentional but an organic effect of my strategy for expanding my research pool. I started with native English teachers I knew at work and was introduced to their acquaintances, who were mostly white.⁷

I often interacted with English instructors and sought opportunities to speak with other instructors in the Jeonju area by accompanying them to the restaurant they frequented. Some of them I met only once, and some others I contacted via email to conduct interviews. Additionally, I attended the classes of some of the instructors on a consistent basis to closely examine the interactions between them and the students. In the span of six years of this research, some instructors have returned to their home countries or relocated to a different area in Korea or a different country.

Of the English instructors I have met in the past six years, the ten instructors I have included in this research were ones with whom I maintained a continuous relationship. However, I also refer to the common experiences of other instructors as needed (see Table 1).

⁷ The following news articles illuminate the seriousness of racism in Korea and the English hagwon's preference for white instructors: "‘Only white’ instructors wanted for English instructors, rampant racism in Korean society" (Kim Yeoran 2013); "Black instructor interview cancelled due to his race at an English hagwon" (Kim Jonguk 2014); "Seoul elementary school rejects a black applicant" (Yi Chunghyeong 2014); "The tainted gaze of the English hagwon: The truth behind skin color" (Kim Min 2014). From my interviews with English instructors, I learned that black instructors were rare in the Jeonju area. Moreover, in the 10 years I worked as a high school teacher, only two non-white English speaking instructors were hired (a Korean-American man and a black woman). The Korean-American instructor left before I began the research, and it was difficult to maintain a relationship with the black instructor since she went on a leave due to pregnancy and giving birth.

Table 1. Basic information of English instructors who participated in the research

No.	Name	Sex	Age	Nationality	Length of Stay in Korea	Education Level	Socioeconomic Status of Family	Place of Work	Notes
1	A	F	Early 50s	Canada	7 years	Master's degree	Lower-middle	High School in Jeonju	Currently returned to Canada
2	B	F	Mid-30s	Canada	About 5 years	Bachelor's degree	Middle	High School in Jeonju	Husband (Canadian) is also in Korea as an English instructor
3	C	F	26	USA	1 year	Bachelor's degree	Lower-middle	High School in Jeonju	Planning on staying in Korea for about 2 years
4	D	F	26	USA	About 2 years	Master's degree	Middle	High School in Jeonju	Currently working in a university. Mother is Korean.
5	E	F	24	USA	10 months	Bachelor's degree	Upper	High School in Jeonju	Fulbright recipient
6	F	F	52	USA	About 3 years	Bachelor's degree	Lower	High School in Jeonju	Currently returned to USA
7	G	F	26	USA	About 1 year	Master's degree	Middle	High School in Jeonju	Currently working in Seoul as an instructor
8	H	F	31	USA	About 3years	Master's degree	Middle	High School in Jeonju	Husband (American) is also in Korea as an English instructor
9	I	M	Early 30s	USA	About 5 years	Bachelor's degree	Lower	High School in Jeonju	Married to a Korean
10	J	M	27	USA	About 1 year	Master's degree	Middle	High School in Kimjae	Currently residing in China

4. The Motive Behind the Move to Korea and Orientalism

The first problem I ran into as I began to investigate the impression English instructors had about the “Orient” was the vagueness of the term. Almost no one, despite age differences and varied socioeconomic statuses of the instructors, used the term “Orient” in my conversations with them. Some specifically asked which geographical region I was referring to and others asked if I was referring to Asia.

The word, “Orient” was not a term frequently used among Westerners. It was mostly used to refer to “exotic” cultures or styles whose images were embodied in things such as kung fu, martial arts, soy sauce, or fictional characters like Mulan as materialized forms of Orientalism.⁸ Instead of using the term, “East,” the instructors differentiated between “Southeast Asia” and “Northeast Asia.” Additionally, rather than using the words, “Western society” or “West,” they called their home country by its name or referred to it as “my country.” This suggests that the East-West binary that is so familiar to Koreans is not such a distinct idea at least as reflected in the daily language of Westerners.⁹

Upon examining how English instructors imagined the geographical location of the “Orient,” I learned that North Americans associated the term not with the Middle East, but with Korea, China, and Japan as well as the Southeastern countries.¹⁰ This suggests that the definition of the Orient is not uniform across countries or geographical regions. Admittedly,

⁸ Only Instructor E said the term “Orient” included the Middle East as well as Korea, China, and Japan. She also stated that it was a politically incorrect term and that she did not personally use it. As someone who had studied Japanese since elementary school and focused on Japanese studies in college, she was the only instructor who had a different notion of the “Orient.”

⁹ Determining the difference between space and object has long been part of an intellectual discourse on authority. Said also expressed interest in examining the process through which the space of the “Orient” is constructed. As time passed, the space that was indiscriminately called the “Orient” evolved to geographically specific locations such as “Southeast Asia” or “the Far East.” The geographical differentiation of the Eastern region also contributed to the concept of East versus West. However, it is interesting to note that the terms “Orient” and “Occident” were hardly ever used among the English instructors.

¹⁰ Great Britain and France ruled over Asia during the period spanning the early nineteenth century to World War II, after which, the United States took over power. Said asserted that during this transition of power, the geographical region of the “Orient” expanded from the Arab states in the “Far East” of Europe to Japan, China, Korea, and Indochina (Said 2004: 20).

the fact that North Americans did not use the word “Orient” did not necessarily signify that they were free from Orientalism. Regardless of how infrequently the term is used, if the object is viewed through the prism of predetermined impressions, Orientalism is certainly at play. Orientalism is a system of discipline that was produced and utilized within intellectual circles whose ideas have been solidified by a veridical discourse since the eighteenth century (Said 2004: 18-19). Therefore, it is inevitable to discuss the Western subject in Korea within the context of Orientalism. The above example, however, could at least be a basis for discussing changes in perceptions of the “Orient” to Westerners. It also reaffirms the necessity of examining the current state of Orientalism and the transformations it undergoes over time for different individuals.

(Example 1) Asians as guardians of spiritual value

Interviewer: Why did you decide to move to Korea?

Instructor I: America is a materialistic country. I grew up in a very poor family, so I had to become independent at an early age. After I entered college, I had the opportunity to think about myself more, and I realized that there was no such thing as the American Dream. America is too materialistic and has no family values. The divorce rates are high, and people have sex without thinking too much about it. I wanted to be in a different society where traditional values were honored. I wanted to live in a society where important values were respected even if that meant I had to start everything over again ... Manners are important to Asians and the elderly are respected in their culture. But in America, everything has changed.

The English instructors’ impressions of Asia usually became the driving factor behind their move to Asian countries, including Korea. Financial difficulties, clashes of values, and curiosity about foreign cultures were among the reasons some instructors decided to leave their home country. Their decisions to move to Asia were largely informed by a specific set of preconceived notions about Asian cultures. In their view, one of the unique cultural characteristics of Asia was honoring “spiritual values.” Asia was seen as a place in which traditional values and a spiritual sensibility were maintained even during rapid Westernization. In contrast, they believed family and spiritual values were discarded with the industrialization of the West. This belief played an important role in helping them choose Asia as their new place of residence regardless of what their personal reasons might have been for leaving their country.

However, it is uncertain to what degree spiritual and family values were actually cherished in the West prior to industrialization. Western foreigners' ideas and memories of Western traditions might also be a construct of history or fantasy just as the East was continuously Othered to fit the mold of their imagination. The subject-object dichotomy of Orientalism not only constructed the East but a fictionalized West as well. Yet, the English instructors nostalgically looked to Asia to recover things that were lost, or that they believed were lost, in the West.

The instructors with the intent of staying in Korea long term had the tendency to associate the West with materialism and the East with spirituality when they explained the motive behind their move to Korea. Having left the United States for life in an unfamiliar place, they expressed strong dissatisfaction and disillusionment with the materialism and secularism of the West, and for many instructors, Asia was perceived as an alternative. Some have spent a substantial amount of time in Asia as instructors due to the difficulty of finding employment in the United States. However, they stated they could return home any time they wanted to; they only "chose" to stay because of differences in their own values and those dominant in their home country.

Another factor that lured Western foreigners to Asia was the ease of finding a job. China and Japan were especially known to provide stability of employment. Instructors were able to experience a foreign culture that was more "spiritual" while enjoying the security of a job. English Instructor "B" had traveled to Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, and other Southeastern countries and described the places as the most beautiful and spiritual countries she had ever visited. However, because the demand and living conditions were not as favorable, she chose to teach in Japan.

These research results indicate that English instructors maintained a set of predetermined notions about Asia even before their move to Korea. First, the fact that Asia was under the influence of China for a long period gave them the impression that other Asian countries were societally and culturally similar. Second, they considered Asians to be a courteous people and friendly toward English-speaking foreigners since Asians were highly invested in learning English.

In addition to these beliefs, the history of the Korean War and the fact that Korea was a divided country left a strong impression on them. Kim Jong-il and Kim Jong-un were familiar names. Some family members and friends actively opposed their move to Korea because of the political

instability of the peninsula. Even so, the teachers “mustered the courage” to make the move. They shared the fear of political chaos and crisis held by their families and friends but determined that the country was relatively safe by researching on the Internet.

The unique culture, abundant employment opportunities, and friendliness of the people in Asia played significant roles in helping them shape their beliefs about Asia and ultimately in forming their decision to move. The decision was usually followed by some casual research on Korea. Younger instructors left home mainly out of curiosity about a foreign culture, and even those who moved to Korea primarily for financial reasons were not too invested in learning about ways to adapt to a new culture.

English instructors interpreted their passive attitudes as their willingness to accept challenges. To them, confronting challenges was an important character-building value. Further, they regarded cultural relativism as the basic foundation for understanding an unfamiliar culture. In their minds, the willingness to confront challenges was a most appropriate attitude in a world that was increasingly becoming more globalized. This attitude was often regarded as a Western characteristic that set them apart from Asian countries. According to this logic, they were the brave Westerners who had moved to a foreign world, living an active, fearless life. They wanted to transfer these values to the students they taught.

(Example 2) The identity of Westerners: Confronting challenges and adopting a global mind

Interviewer: Why were you not too concerned about your move to Asia?

Instructor A: My parents taught me from an early age that being willing to confront challenges was the most important thing in life. It's not easy to live in an unfamiliar place, but it's not impossible. If I were going to move to a different country, I thought it'd be better to go somewhere that has a completely different culture. It was easy to find a job in Asia, so I didn't have to worry too much about anything else.

Instructor B: I often tell my students that having a global mind is more important than speaking English well. Having a global mind means you are not afraid to try new things. I wanted to enjoy the fear and foreignness of living in a new country. Korean students lack this mentality.

English instructors who criticized Korean culture and tradition were

not well received among their own communities since such negativism deviated from the “willing attitude” they set as the standard to immerse themselves in a foreign culture. To many of them, inconveniences that arose from cultural difference were not only natural, but were seen as opportunities to experience something new. Therefore, they must be embraced and overcome.

What, then, enticed these North Americans to move to Korea if they believed Korea was a little more than a nondescript prototype of China and Japan created in the nebulous space of Asia? According to the instructors, the deciding factors were ease of finding employment, higher salaries, and safe and pleasant living conditions. Instability in China due to its socialist customs and regulations and the high cost of living in Japan steered English instructors away from finding work in those countries. Korea was deemed most favorable considering those aspects.

(Example 3) Advantages of living in Korea

Instructor C: It's true that many people don't know about Korea. To Westerners, Korea, Japan, and China are very similar. I, myself, didn't know much about Korea before moving here. But now that I've been here for a while, I realize that a lot of people prefer Korea to Japan. From an outsider's perspective, Korea, China, and Japan are pretty much the same, but the cost of living is much cheaper in Korea. Because China is a socialist country, it's unreliable. Japan would be great for travel, but it's not a great place if I were considering living there since finances are an important aspect to consider.

Instructor J: My older brother is in China right now, and he said while the culture is diverse and interesting, the country is still unstable in certain aspects. I was told Korea was safe, and since it is close to China and Japan, it would be easy to travel there.

In Korea, the Western teachers felt that they could experience an exotic culture and live a financially stable life at the same time. If Orientalism had a hand in affecting their decision to move to Asia, detailed information about individual countries played an important role in determining which country they eventually chose as their place of residence. Their main priorities were employment stability and comfortable living standards. A better understanding of the host country or its culture was not a factor in what was considered.

Asia, as perceived by English instructors, was comparable to the Asia that was constructed in the nineteenth century by Westerners and

critiqued by Said. Regarding Asia as “spiritual” and communal fell under classic Orientalism. Their decision to move to Korea without much worry revealed their impression of Asia. They set their own mode of thinking as the “global standard,” and made it their duty to help students adopt a “global mind” in addition to teaching them English. Moreover, while knowing they would be exposed to cultural differences, they did not seriously consider ways to adapt to those differences.

Admittedly, Asia is no longer the space of mystery and primitivism to Westerners as it was in the past. They now see Asia with some degree of objectivity as they consume information through various sources and try to better their understanding. It would be false to assume that their ideas of Asia are completely distorted since so much information is easily and widely accessible. Their understanding of Asia in the twenty-first century is not as abstract as it once was. The Western gaze is no longer wholly informed by prejudice and discrimination alone, and it does not dictate how the East sees itself.

In his work, Donald K. Emmerson revealed the process through which the term “Southeast Asia” came into existence and pointed out the Eurocentric nature of its geographical reference. However, he argued that whether the use of this qualifier was based on objective truth or the colonial past was insignificant (Emmerson 1984). Although the term, “Southeast Asia” was a product of Orientalism, this geographical name has shaped the self-identities of the locals. Similarly, the term “Asia” was adopted in the sixteenth century to describe a geographical region regarded as a subservient entity to the West. The countries within the region had to navigate the spectrum between barbarism and civilization in order to find their own place in the world, breaking old paradigms and creating a new world landscape.

The examples above demonstrate changes that have occurred in certain aspects of Orientalism as Westerners began to consume more “objective” information about Asia. As Fox claimed, Orientalist ideas and their meanings evolved as people interacted with locals. However, the changes were not significant enough to completely dissolve Orientalism. Orientalist views were developed over a long period of time, and it is undeniable that they are still found in Westerners’ perceptions of Asian countries and cultures. The earlier examples demonstrate that foreign spaces, namely countries in Asia, are still viewed through a set of preconceived notions. Therefore, it was important for me to examine how the relationship of

power in Orientalism operates now in the twenty-first century and how individual instructors manifest and apply Orientalist ideas.

5. Transformation and Utilization of Orientalism

1) *Changes in Orientalism*

“Discovering” Korea and Orientalism: Reaffirmation and Reconstruction of Cultural Difference

How did living in Korea change the impressions and thoughts of English instructors? One significant change was that they could differentiate Korea from other Asian countries. They acquired enough knowledge and experience to distinguish the cultural differences between Korea and China. Previously, the teachers perceived most Asian countries as nondescript cultures influenced by China, but after a period of time, they were able to identify the differences in cultures within the space of Asia.

Since, they worked at schools—a place in which more “objective” information circulated—they learned more facts about other countries than their non-teaching counterparts. Even though they had not lived in Japan or China, they knew more about those two countries than other foreigners. Through their interactions with students and other teachers, the English instructors acquired a substantial amount of historical, cultural, and political information not only about Korea, but about Japan and China as well.

The foreign teachers claimed that comparing the cultures of the East and West, the political relationships among Korea, China, and Japan, or discussing the tradition and culture of Korea were subject matters that were most effective in encouraging student participation. The topics spanned Korean entertainment such as K-pop and films; the 1592 Japanese invasion of Korea; disputes on Dokdo Island and the Senkaku Islands; China’s Northeast Asia project, and other pending issues surrounding the three Asian countries. During the discussions, the English instructors became the control group that evaluated Korean culture from a more “objective” point of view all the while introducing Western culture and values to their students.

(Example 4) English Instructors as evaluators of Korean culture and

representatives of Western culture

Instructor B: Korean students like to talk about Korean culture. I majored in biology, so I try to introduce scientific topics, but they like to talk more about things like K-pop. I usually ask them what the difference is between K-pop and American pop. I also ask them how the globalization of K-pop is related to Korean pride. I am always curious and believe Koreans should also seriously think about this.

Instructor F: Sometimes disagreement among students occurs in the classroom. When I interject, it's to help them find a balance. One time, we were talking about the age difference of couples like Demi Moore and her husband. One male student was critical of relationships like that. I told him it was natural in Asia for younger women to marry much older men. I asked him to think about why he was so vehemently opposed to the women being older. I told him in our culture, age wasn't important at all.

Said argued that Orientalism fanned the inferiority complex of the East and reinforced the idea that the East needed to be corrected by the West (Said 2004: 84). English instructors were Western teachers of Eastern students. This relationship dynamic placed Korean students as clear objects of correction—a position that was not as clearly marked in relationships with Westerners with a non-teaching job.

Through their teaching experience, instructors acquired a significant amount of information about Korea and developed ways to gauge the thoughts of Koreans. The differences of opinion between English instructors and Koreans sometimes led to debates. Instructors generally regarded the opinion of one student as the thought of all Koreans or Korean students.

Even though instructors recognized the uniqueness of Korean culture, they did not readily accept it as their own. They strongly identified themselves as instructors from a different culture and saw their role as objectively evaluating and reinterpreting the “stories” of Korean culture and history.

(Example 5) English instructors trying to maintain an objective attitude about Korea

Instructor D: When we talk about the Dokdo Island dispute, I want to tell Korean students how other countries might perceive the problem. If Koreans want the island, they have to employ a more cool-headed strategy. There is nothing to gain by being too emotional. Just because I live in Korea doesn't

mean I have to agree with Koreans.

Instructors F: I try to have a more objective and balanced point of view as a teacher. I no longer accept everything Korean people tell me ... At first, I was amazed by how much Koreans knew about history or politics [related to Japan and China], but now I try to see the stories from a more objective perspective. I don't know much about Korea, but Koreans don't know everything about their history either. Same thing applies to America.

English instructors used reason and objectivity as means to evaluate and interpret Korean culture. They examined whether Koreans were too self-centric when they described their own culture and history. Classes usually ended with the instructors emphasizing the necessity of observing one's culture from a more objective point of view. Even though they didn't directly categorize reason and objectivity as something unique to Western culture, it was clear that these were an important pair of values to them. They expressed a desire to help their students think with more reason and detachment in addition to teaching English.

(Example 6) English instructors wanting to teach students to think more critically

Researcher: How would you like to teach English?

Instructor I: I plan to stay here for a long time, so this is the question I am always asking myself. First, I want to change my students' attitude. As soon as class is over, Korean students get together in a group of two or three to talk, like they are afraid of being alone. I can see that in class too. They act shy when they talk with me on one-on-one but they get aggressive when they are in a group. In America, everything is individualistic ... Even when they talk about Japan or America, their stories are from a self-centered point of view. They cross the line from time to time.

According to Said, Europeans regarded their own race and culture as superior and imagined the East as backward in comparison (Said 2004: 27). Particularly, Said points out that Westerners saw themselves as the critical observers of seemingly all things and assumed the role of cultural arbiters.

English instructors didn't consciously view themselves as superior. However, they believed their values were more on par with reason and discernment than those of the Koreans they interacted with. Yet, their "rationality" was mostly a product of an American frame of mind. For

example, calculating overtime pay, regulating one's private life, interpreting history, or writing in certain styles were all subject to different interpretations and solutions depending on social context. Despite the many possibilities, English instructors generally thought their beliefs were most reasonable. Being placed in the role of a teacher and communicating through the medium of class discussions further solidified their Westerner identity as gatekeepers of universal truth.

Cultural differences between Eastern and Western countries were often discussed in classes, and instructors naturally became exposed to specific differences. The classes aided not only the students but also the instructors to organize their abstract thoughts about their own culture in a more schematic way. As a result of a consistent analysis and comparison, the instructors came to believe that reason, objectivity, and individualism were what set Western culture apart from Eastern culture. The vague and nebulous ideas of Western culture became crystalized through these class discussions. Unsurprisingly, these ideas were mostly congruent with Said's argument about Orientalism.¹¹

English classes became the space in which discussions of Korea's historical relationship with its neighboring countries occurred, which also revealed the preconceived Orientalist beliefs instructors harbored. They learned the complexity of the relationships among Korea, China, and Japan and began to see Korea through a new lens. Through mediating discussions in class, many instructors learned how eagerly Koreans wanted to differentiate themselves from the Chinese and Japanese. While some instructors gained a better understanding of how Koreans constructed their identity as a people and their cultural uniqueness, others expressed their discomfort with the extreme cultural pride of Koreans.

For example, Instructor "I" found it strange that although Korea was largely influenced by China historically and culturally, Koreans never readily accepted that reality. He added that no one in America denied that its culture was influenced by Europe, Asia, and Africa while Koreans demarcated unnecessarily harsh boundaries between Korean culture and the cultures of Japan and China. Instructor E expressed her surprise at how

¹¹ Said's analysis of the speeches of twentieth century British politicians such as Arthur Balfour and Evelyn Baring Cromer in *Orientalism* revealed that they viewed people of the East as irrational, inferior (morally corrupt), childish, and strange. In contrast, they believed Westerners were rational, moral, mature, and normal (2004:83).

knowledgeable Koreans were about their own history but simultaneously felt they were too sensitive when discussing historical conflicts. According to Instructor I, Koreans had too much pride and an overly heightened sense of duty to inform foreigners about their history and culture. In comparison with the Westerners' objective and rational selves, these attitudes were deemed problematic.

Even in class settings in which discussions on cultural and historical topics were replaced by regular lessons in English, instructors still structuralized cultural differences between the East and West. Many instructors did not study English education in university and did not have any teaching experience prior to moving to Korea. However, most of them gave English education in Korea a negative evaluation without hesitation. To them, the problematic aspect of the education was that it was done "the Korean way." Their beliefs about English education were usually informed by complaints and alleged grievances of students and appraising the teaching methods of Korean English instructors. English teachers from abroad were almost never included in the decision-making process and organization of teaching materials. However, they believed they were well informed and qualified enough to make those judgments about English education and overall education in Korea despite the fact that they did not have a comprehensive understanding of it. Based on the education they received in their home countries, they claimed that many aspects of Korean English education were irrational and did not help students' learning.

To foreign English instructors, the main focus of English education was to help students develop a rational and logical way of thinking. Their primary criticism of Korean English education was that instead of helping students think critically, teachers largely focused on helping students pass school or job entrance exams or evaluations. The necessity of English education as dictated by society at large was seen as irrational and its process ineffective. In their view, English education in Korea was destined to fail from the beginning. However, they lacked the understanding of why English was important in Korea and why many Koreans placed so much effort on learning it. The notion that Koreans were irrational formed the basis of their judgment of situations.

(Example 7) Criticism of English education in Korea

Interviewer: What do you think about the Korean approach to English

education?

Instructor G: I think it's absolutely crazy. When I taught at a *hagwon*, some of my students were owners of other *hagwon*. They said only one or two percent of Koreans use English everyday either at work or in their daily lives. I understand if you need to speak English in order to get a job since I've also had to go through many hurdles to get a job. But I can never understand why a company has all its candidates take an English exam or why their English exam score is considered such an important part of their résumé. I think learning a language should be a natural product of learning the culture of a country ... I have Spanish and Chinese friends and first learned about their cultures. Learning their languages came naturally after that.

The space in which the English instructors were able to discover Korea was mainly limited to their work place, the school. Hence, their perceptions of the uniqueness of Korea was acquired through limited experience. This was exemplified by their effort to differentiate Korea from China and Japan.

(Example 8) Misunderstanding and fragmented knowledge of Korea

Instructor D: Once, I went on a trip to Japan and China with the friends I made in Korea. While I was traveling, I could easily tell the difference between those three countries. If you look at the cultural relics of China, they are mostly in red. Japanese relics are mostly in black and white, and Korean relics are in earth tones. Aren't these the traditional colors of these countries? I asked a Korean friend, and he said yellow was Korea's traditional color.

It would be difficult to explain the differences between Korea, China, and Japan by reducing these countries to mere colors. Further, there was no evidence that earth tones or yellow was a color that represented Korea. It was highly likely, however, that the teachers internalized information received from Koreans who had biased views or an incorrect understanding of history or culture. Using tendentious notions as their foundational beliefs, instructors constructed their own images and thoughts about Korea. In other words, they took subjective ideas from a few select Koreans and created their impressions of Asia, particularly Korea, based on those assertions.

Orientalism became embedded in Western culture as the default narrative of the East. Ideas based on Orientalism were mainly produced, managed, and distributed by the academy. This process also helped explain the way English instructors had formed stereotypes of Koreans. Eventually

through the classes they taught, the instructors acquired more information about Korea and Asia as a whole. Their initial conviction about the existence of cultural differences between the East and West gave way to a more nuanced understanding that cultural differences existed even within Asia. After learning about the uniqueness of Korean culture, they introduced the concept of “objectivity” to their students to help them see their own culture through a less biased perspective. Through this process they also confirmed their own “objective” view through which they perceived the world.

These activities did not signal the obliteration of Orientalism but rather a reinforcement of arbitrary evaluation and thoughts about Asia. Facing Korea—a country they singled out from the rest of Asia—meant discovering a Korea as it was interpreted by its people. It also meant the beginning of a new understanding and assessment of the country, which led to a different kind of East-West comparison. This process was not unrelated to the ideas of objectification and othering Said wrote about in *Orientalism*. In Korea, English instructors had the opportunity to experience a different reality and the Orientalist ideas they had initially harbored evolved to a different level. However, this did not mean they stopped viewing Koreans as the other.¹²

In the process of discovering Korea as the microcosm of Asia, English instructors constantly found new notions about Korea. These ideas were either applauded or rejected depending on whether they matched their own values. Invariably, they continued to correct the thoughts of Koreans they did not agree with, hoping they would improve their “irrational” way of thinking. This encourages me to argue that experiencing the country first-hand or understanding the uniqueness of its culture did not mean the eradication of Orientalist views. In fact, having been placed in the position of a teacher with the privilege of being a Westerner, the classroom became the most convenient space for Westerners’ Orientalist thoughts to manifest.

¹² Many of the Orientalists Said had written about in his book had had direct contact with the Orient by visiting. However, the fact that they were capable of discerning and substantiating Orientalistic elements didn’t mean they were free from viewing Asians as the image of the other. Said clearly pointed out the fact that they also contributed to the reproduction of existing Orientalistic views (Said 2004: 299-353).

Discovery of the West in Korea and Orientalism: Twofold Views of Westernization

Many aspects of living in Korea caught English instructors by surprise, which meant they had a certain impression of Korea in their minds—that its identity was firmly rooted in being an “Asian” country. However, one of the first things they learned was that Korea was different from other Asian regions. As they discovered the differences between various regions in Asia, they found Korea to be surprisingly Westernized.

What was unique about Korea was revealed through its historical relationship with neighboring countries and its cultural traditions. In other words, what set Korea apart wasn’t discovered in the present but from the relics of the past. Most instructors were surprised to find that Korea was much more Westernized than they had initially thought. They commended Korea’s rapid economic growth through industrialization. However, it was difficult for them to experience Eastern values or certain cultural practices they had expected in their daily lives. They quickly learned that they could experience a more “Oriental” atmosphere only during a couple of national holidays or in places that preserved Korean tradition, such as the Korean Folk Village or Hanok Village. Korean society operated at the same pace as, or sometimes faster than, the society English instructors came from.

The instructors often mentioned the convenience of living in a Westernized Korea. They experienced no difficulty in obtaining the things they needed and expressed their surprise at how quickly society adapted to changes. To them, Westernization was culturally explained by the increase of rational thinking and its reflection in social systems and people’s openness to new ideas. However, in reality, they measured Westernization by how much similarity they could find between their way of thinking and that of Koreans, or how much of their own arguments were accepted by Koreans. The instructors equated the convenience they experienced in Korea with Westernization and the inconvenience and conflict they faced in certain situations with something that was uniquely Korean.

(Example 9) Comparing Korea, China, Japan by their respective Westernization

Instructor E: China is materially Westernized, but their way of thinking still isn’t rational. I experienced a lot of things I couldn’t understand. Once, the owner of the school I worked at came to my home early in the morning and said we needed to change the class time. They also held a lot of parties, and

because of that I couldn't have much time to myself ... I think it was because it was a socialist country. Japan is a developed country in many ways, but the people are very exclusive. I felt stifled because I couldn't see through what they were really thinking. I couldn't make a single friend I could openly talk to while I worked there for over a year.

An instructor who had lived in all three countries—Korea, China, and Japan—praised Korea for being most Westernized in a positive sense. Material Westernization, and the open-mindedness of people she had interacted with coincided with her own values. For the most part, the English instructors favorably viewed the people they met in Korea. Enthusiastic students, sympathetic colleagues, and the open-mindedness of the people they met in their daily lives were considered elements that made their lives easy. Moreover, these elements were deemed similar to their own culture.

Another measure of Korea's Westernization, according to the English instructors, was the degree to which English was used by Koreans. Instructors were frequently surprised by the eagerness, interest, and ability of Koreans to speak English. Since the instructors' lives were usually centered on schools, they could get away with only speaking English, especially near universities and city centers.

Although instructors criticized the way English was taught in Korea, they applauded the passion and interests Koreans demonstrated. Still, most instructors strongly held to the belief that English should be a means, not the end of learning. They sharply denounced the practice of investing an exorbitant amount of money in English-learning programs, which rarely produced results that matched the price tag. Most of their criticism targeted the grammar-oriented method that was completely divorced from the cultures of English-speaking countries.

(Example 10) The emphasis on learning English as a gauge of globalization

Instructor C: The English language is paramount in a globalizing world. The ability to speak English is an important skill to have no matter what kind of job you are applying for or application you are filling out. English is the most frequently used language in the world. Not only that, knowing English is vital if you want to know how the world operates ... In the *bagwon*, only the scores and rankings are emphasized, but we think this is very strange. Some kids come to us with an exam question about grammar, and often it's something we don't even know.

Such criticisms of the Korean system of English education were universal among English instructors. However, according to a Korean English instructor, some foreign instructors blamed the way English was taught in Korea or the educational system when they received negative evaluations for their poor teaching. Despite the many disputes surrounding English education in Korea, instructors from English-speaking countries generally agreed that the ability to speak English was paramount in today's society. They believed that the degree to which people could speak the language measured the level of a country's globalization and its citizens' abilities to communicate internationally. From this perspective, Korea was becoming Westernized in a more positive sense than other Asian countries.

However, concomitant with the affirmative aspects of Westernization was its negative side. Modern Korea had lost much of its traditional charms, which stood in stark contrast to the English instructors' expectations. One instructor who volunteered as a weekend tour guide for foreigners in Jeonju Hanok Village¹³ pointed out that the village didn't exhibit enough uniqueness. Jeonju was marketed as the city that preserved the greatest number of Korea's traditions. However, the instructor argued that it didn't provide enough substantial content to meet tourists' expectation. Discovering the West was much easier than discovering Korean tradition, she stated. She emphasized that the significance of the Jeonju Hanok Village lay not in the physical village itself but in the space in which live Korean tradition could move and breathe. While most instructors agreed that the Hanok Village was the "most Korean" place in Jeonju, they criticized its lack of substantial content.

What the instructors wanted more of was quite abstract. They seemed to want a space in which they could experience traditional culture with systematic and ample explanations. Additionally, they wanted an atmosphere that allowed them to leisurely and freely enjoy Korea's traditions. According to them, the "right" way to preserve tradition was to utilize the already commercialized cultural space to make experiencing Korean tradition seem more organic. Although the English instructors lived and worked in Korea, they did not experience Korea the same way Koreans did. Their daily lives consisted of a paradox of unconventional ordinariness. While they spent their days just like any Korean in Korea, as foreigners,

¹³ (Translator's note) Hanok Village is located in the city of Jeonju in which over 800 Korean traditional houses are preserved.

they also wanted to experience something that was uniquely Korean. Therefore, having access to traditional spaces and experiences was important to them. Their days consisted of seesawing back and forth between the familiar and unfamiliar. To pursue and satisfy their need to exist both as foreigners and residents of Korea, they needed to experience some form of tradition in a space deemed “Korean” enough by their standards. Routinely experiencing unfamiliar things rendered their lives unconventional and special. What they truly wanted was financial stability while being able to explore the mysterious and exotic Asia.

(Example 11) Korea follows the traces of Western advancement

Instructor I: It's a miracle that Korea has achieved so much economic growth in such a short period of time. I think it's amazing how they overcame the aftermath of the war, but I am also a bit sad. It's not a good thing for Korea to abandon its traditional lifestyle so quickly. We went through the same experience earlier on and discovered why that was problematic. We know the importance of tradition. I don't think Koreans know that yet.

What Instructor I said was reflective of what many English instructors felt about a Westernized Korea. As Westerners, they had already experienced the aftermath of industrialization and were retrospectively examining the process. As Korea followed in the footsteps of the West, they wanted to give Koreans practical advice. Realizing that there was something more important than material wealth was a valuable lesson they learned only after having gone through the relentless development of civilization. They saw their past in the rapid Westernization of Korea.

Certainly, Western history did not consist entirely of grandeur and success. However, it would be presumptive to assume that the English instructors' thoughts about Western civilization were products of deep introspection and “objective” analysis. Having seen the ups and downs of industrialization in the West, they were proud that other countries were emulating their progress, but simultaneously watched with regret the mistakes their Eastern counterparts were repeating.

Keeping Korea at a Distance: English Instructors' Sense of Place

Foreign English instructors generally stayed in Korea for a minimum of one year to a maximum of five years or sometimes longer. While living in Korea, they accumulated knowledge about their host country both directly and indirectly. As they gained a better understanding of the foreign culture,

they sought opportunities to confirm and reinforce their own place in society and their identity as a Western instructor. This process allowed them to keep a certain distance from Koreans and Korean culture.

In this context, “keeping one’s distance,” meant adopting a passive attitude about interacting with or adapting to the members of the society one inhabited. In the case of native English speaking instructors, some claimed they were disinterested in learning Korean because they believed knowing the language would negatively impact their teaching. They asserted that if they reacted to what Korean students said, they would be less effective in class. However, this alone did not constitute the entire reason behind their lack of attempt to learn Korean. A greater reason, I argue, is that there was no immediate need to learn since they could function comfortably without speaking the language. I further contend that Orientalist views of Korea also contributed to this lackadaisical attitude.

The instructors kept a distance from Korea to reaffirm their conviction that “Western” values are more rational. For example, the English instructors believed that in order to properly learn English, one must learn the cultures of English-speaking countries and their rational, logical, and objective ways of thinking. They actively disseminated these beliefs while teaching English. In the classroom, they emphasized cultivating a global mindset and courage while identifying with those values by distancing themselves from Korean cultural values and way of life.

They maintained their distance even during student presentations about Korean culture, tradition, or history. As previously stated, they took a neutral stance when students discussed complicated foreign relations or historical issues among Korea, China, and Japan. They felt it was their role to provide appropriate feedback since they were convinced Koreans viewed their own culture too subjectively and favorably. This attitude stemmed from the privilege that accompanied their Western identity. They gained the position of a teacher or a lecturer relatively quickly after their entry to Korea and were able to form stable social relations. These factors, in addition to the fact that Koreans were generally friendly toward Westerners, contributed to their belief that they didn’t need to modify any of their behavior or values.

Although they were enthusiastic about interacting with Koreans as a way of experiencing traditional culture, they didn’t feel the need to adapt or assimilate to the Korean way. This was true not only for short-term

English instructors but for those who planned to stay longer in Korea as well. As a matter of fact, the longer they stayed, the more distance they maintained. Those who planned to stay in Korea for a long time stated Koreans' friendliness as their reason for prolonging their sojourn, but they were concurrently critical of it. They were aware that there was a high possibility for Korean friendliness to turn into an annoyance.

(Example 12): Passive engagement with Koreans

Interviewer: What did you do to adapt to Korea when you first came here?

Instructor A: I didn't really have a problem adapting. The *hagwon* I signed with had already leased a place for me ... Students were very polite and I was able to make Korean friends easily because they were friendly.

Interviewer: Do you not have any problems communicating?

Instructor A: I mostly speak English. If I understand Korean, I would react to what the students say. Even if I did understand them, I would pretend I didn't. I've been in Korea for almost ten years, but I don't know how to speak Korean at all. All the signs in tourist sites are in English, and there are interpreting services also. At school, there are Korean English teachers so I don't have very many problems.

Interviewer: Do you have a lot of Korean friends?

Instructor A: They are mainly my colleagues from work, or students who are getting tutored and their mothers. Generally we meet for tea or share food, but I usually keep to myself. I have a cat, so I am not lonely.

Interviewer: Do you have any close Korean friends?

Instructor A: I don't have very many. Koreans are very nice, but my private life is very important to me. If I want to live here for a long time, I need to maintain my boundaries. If I don't do that, I feel uncomfortable, and it would ruin my relationship with them.

Instructor I: You don't really need to adapt to Korean culture to live here. What I mean is, it's not as difficult to adapt as you think. It doesn't matter where you live as long as you keep the rules you made for yourself. I try not to be bothered by others at work either. They live the way they want, and I live the way I want ... The only way for me to stay here longer would be if the problem of the Korean culture, such as minding other people's business or thinking that they are the best, disappeared.

What did the English instructors keeping distance from Koreans or Korean culture signify? Why did the instructors who stayed in Korea longer refuse to assimilate to Korean culture more than those who stayed short term? The instructors who stayed in Korea for a short period of time usually expressed the desire to experience Korea's "unique" culture as much as they could and spend time with Koreans. In contrast, the instructors who stayed longer in Korea emphasized the importance of retaining their lifestyle and values. They often defended how they lived their lives as part of their identity.

Pierre Bourdieu utilized Erving Goffman's idea of "a sense of one's place" to expand his theory on "social space" and "social world" to examine how one senses her status in society and the effect it has on her behavior. According to Bourdieu's theory of double social structuration, individuals became aware of their social world through resources allocated to them by an objective social structure *and* subjective awareness tailored to specific situations (Bourdieu 1985: 727-728). As people interacted with others, their sense of place either remained static or they were affected such that they maintained a certain distance from others (Devine and Savage 2005: 12-15).

In addition to their social class, the fact that English instructors were foreign Westerners played a huge role in distinguishing them from others in Korea. Living in Korea gave them continuous opportunities to affirm and reinforce their identity as Westerners. As the East-West binary became even more pronounced in Korea, their sense of place gave rise to a greater attachment to their collective identity. The stronger their identity as Westerners, the greater their need to distance themselves from Koreans, specifically students and teachers.

The English instructors who stayed in Korea for a long period of time kept more distance from and demonstrated contradictory attitudes about Koreans and Korean culture. Having lived in Korea for a prolonged period, they became better acquainted with Korean culture over time. Based on their accumulated knowledge and conflicts they experienced, they forged their own assessment of Korean culture. These experiences led them to form both negative and positive views of Korea, consisting of mixed feelings of gratitude for people who helped them adapt to Korea; curiosity about a new culture; the difficulties of living in Korea as a foreigner; and encountering culturally conflicting incidents. Since their views were based on actual experiences, they were much more consistent than the beliefs of

short-term instructors.

Long-term instructors analyzed Korean society through the criteria they had established in their constant observation of Koreans and Korean culture while evaluating their own position and how they were perceived by society. As Korea became a living space, rather than a temporary place for cultural experiences, they purposely kept a distance from Koreans in order to live in Korea longer. They believed too much adaptation to Korean culture, such as learning Korean, would mean abandoning their values as foreigners. Moreover, forming unnecessary relationships required relinquishing the Western virtue of individualism. Since most instructors prolonged their stay in Korea for financial reasons, they preferred to form more practical relationships and felt uncomfortable about making close friends.

2) *Using Orientalism Strategically*

Using Orientalism to Cope with Conflict

(Example 13) Understanding conflict through cultural differences

Instructor I: I don't think Koreans like to admit that they are wrong. Korean schools don't provide the space to talk about things that are irrational ... False pride and false patriotism are things I don't like about Koreans. I also dislike it when someone demands respect just because they are older ... I think Koreans need to be more humble. Someone told me as he was drinking *soju* that Korea was the best and that there was no better country in the world. If an American at a bar said, "America is number one!" people would tell him to shut up. If someone talked like this in America, people would think he was arrogant and ostracize him. There are checks and balances in America and if someone talked arrogantly like that, people around him would tell him to stop. But if a Korean talked like this, all the other Koreans would join him. Nobody would tell him to stop. But this is Korean culture. I don't like it, but there is nothing I can do.

As I have previously stated, the Orientalist views harbored by the English instructors were much more complex than the theory expounded by Said. It is critical to examine what kind of meaning and role Orientalism played in specific instances and experiences, and if the teachers' views and impressions of Korea operated consistently in their daily lives. When instructors experienced conflict and confusion at school or in their relationship with Koreans, the process by which they

encountered and resolved this conflict and confusion revealed how Orientalism operated in their lives.

The experiences of conflict and confusion of English instructors varied by their work conditions, age, sex, and race. The instructors were more likely to complain about their life in Korea if they were older, male, and not white. The most coveted instructors in the Korean English education market were young, white women.¹⁴ Since the instructors I had met with were either white or of mixed race with predominantly Caucasian features, no one claimed to have experienced the kind of racial discrimination that was reported in media. I was, nonetheless, aware that racial discrimination existed in Jeonju based on the communication I had with an English instructor who was of African descent. In my group of instructors, age, social class, and the length of stay were factors that most affected their lives in Korea.

Instructor A was born in a lower-working-class family. She had never experienced a stable life before coming to Korea. Although Korea provided her with a relatively stable life, her future job security remained uncertain due to her age. Schools generally preferred younger instructors. Students and Korean English instructors had communication problems with foreign English instructors not only because of language or cultural barriers but also because of generational gaps. In order to renew her employment contract, Instructor A usually agreed to what the school requested. Even when she had complaints, she believed maintaining a good reputation was more important, especially in a small community.

Instructor I had no plans to move back to the United States. Having married a Korean woman, he now had family in the country and wanted to settle down in Korea. Since he had to support a family, he chose the location and type of school based on the best financial offer he received. The longer he lived in Korea, the greater his complaints became about Koreans and Korean culture, but because Korea was now home, he generally didn't express his opinions. Regardless, he had no interest in adapting to Korean culture. For the most part, the English instructors from the middle or upper class who came to live in Korea temporarily regarded

¹⁴ In the article, "Hiring Foreign Instructors: What is the Problem?" (Bae Haegyeong 2014) an employee at Job in Korea—a company that arranges jobs for foreigners—revealed that owners of a *hagwon* usually prioritized the nationality and looks of an instructor over their abilities. He added that "pretty white women" were most preferred.

their teaching in Korea as a good life experience.

As seen by the above examples, the experiences of foreign instructors were varied and diverse. Even though the scope of this research didn't grant a more in-depth analysis of other contributing factors such as race, educational level, age, and social status, these elements nevertheless influenced their behavior and the ways in which they faced and resolved conflict. Despite these variables, however, they all agreed that the conflict they experienced with Koreans was due to cultural differences. In addition to the technical problems that could arise between employers and employees, the instructors admitted to facing situations they couldn't comprehend. They attempted to critically analyze conflictual and puzzling experiences they encountered in Korea, but ultimately, they concluded that these happenings occurred due to cultural differences. The conviction that Korean culture differed greatly from Western culture became their means to understand and resolve conflict. They believed that misunderstandings were born out of cultural differences, causing strife between them and Koreans. Perceiving and coping with friction this way resolved problems much more quickly and smoothly.

However, not all conflict arose from cultural differences. Problems occurred when different personalities clashed or when personal stakes were at risk. Instructors sought to overcome conflict by reinterpreting the real cause for discord as cultural differences and by emphasizing and stereotyping Korean culture. However, their understanding of Korean culture, which they used as the basis for understanding Koreans, was nebulous and fluid. While working as English instructors, they accumulated a certain set of beliefs in addition to the initial impression they already had of Korea. Some of these new beliefs contradicted their old assumptions. The "open-minded and friendly" Koreans became "closed-minded and miserly" in certain situations.

At times, the instructors used "cultural differences" as a mechanism to justify their mistakes. Even when the mistakes were clearly theirs, they underscored the existence of "cultural differences" to exonerate themselves. When the school opted not to re-sign with Instructor C, she sharply criticized the Korean educational system for not allowing her to teach diversely. However, her Korean colleague asserted that Instructor C was chronically late to class or came unprepared during the year she worked as a teacher.

Although foreign English instructors criticized the Korean way of

teaching English, they did not contend with those in charge because they didn't believe Koreans would react to their disagreement and criticism well. They said they remained silent out of respect for others' views. On the other hand, most schools claimed that foreign instructors were given complete control of English conversation classes and they could be run freely as long as they met certain objectives. In fact, a Korean English instructor complained that some foreign instructors ran their classes too easily without much preparation.

(Example 14) Underscoring cultural difference as a means to understanding conflict

Instructor A: I want to have a more important role as a teacher in school ... It is very hard to try something new in Korea. If I want to make a suggestion, I have to ask permission from someone above me. You also know that in Korean culture, courtesy and procedure are important. Instead of explaining everything and going through all the procedures, I'd rather just do what I am told. In America, just because you are young or rank lower in the company doesn't mean you can't do what you want. Re-signing the contract is the most important thing. If I return to Canada, I have to retire. I want to work here longer, so I can't just ask for what I want.

English instructors used their convoluted identities as foreign workers, instructors, Westerners, temporary visitors, and tourists as defense mechanisms. If it worked in their favor, they adhered to the collective identity of "Westerner" instead of their own individual political positions or financial statuses with which they more usually identified themselves. Depending on what was more beneficial, rather than siding with their specific race or country, they anchored their identity in the abstract space of the "Western" world. What they believed were arbitrary differences between the East and West suddenly became concrete when they were confronted with friction. They distinguished marked differences between cultures of the two hemispheres when they tried to resolve conflict and understand why a problem arose in the first place. Their existence was a complex amalgam of various identities: employee of an institution, outsider in a foreign place, a global subject who freely roams the world, and an objective Westerner. Hence, in the case of English instructors in Korea, Orientalism did not operate within a fixed and constant state. Yet, one consistency was found in their insistence on differentiating the cultural characteristics of the East and West, especially when they were presented

with problems.

Even though the categorization of the two cultures wasn't simply a divide between the superior and the inferior, their belief that Western thought was more rational and universal remained unchanged. Orientalism, in combination with the transnational experience of the English instructors, produced another kind of Orientalism—a contradictory mixture of the positive and negative views of the Orient. In addition, it served as an important instrument through which conflict with Korean culture was explained and resolved.

Through the mechanism of Orientalism, English instructors formed and resolved uncomfortable encounters and adapted to or distanced themselves from Korean culture. As a minority in Korea, the teachers used notions from Orientalism to protect their identity as Westerners when confronted by their “lower” status as migrant workers. Orientalism was also used strategically in favor of Western subjects when an “explanation” was needed to release them from uncomfortable situations or to resolve a cultural misunderstanding.

Utilizing Orientalism to Cope with the Negative Gaze

(Example 15) What foreign English instructors think about the negative gaze of Koreans

Instructor F: Most foreigners in Korea don't take their lives here very seriously. They just wanted to leave home and live without someone telling them what to do. They also want to be the exception, not the rule. There aren't very many people planning to build their careers based on the experience they have had here ... Most of the foreigners I know have lived here for six, seven years. They are lazy people who live the same life and do the same things day in and day out. They are stuck in a cycle ... I hear there are foreigners who do drugs and commit crimes. Because of them, employment requirements are getting stricter. Of course it's important to look at people's qualifications for safety reasons, but it makes me angry when they require you to get a blood test as part of applying for a teaching position. There are a far greater number of people who don't do drugs.

Most foreign instructors were aware that some Koreans viewed them in a negative light. However, they did not actively defend themselves against these views. Generally, it was migrant workers from developing countries who formed network associations or used counseling centers to report abuse or unfair treatment (Yu Myeonggi 1995; Han Geonsu 2003). Rather

than aggressively contending their innocence, the Westerners blamed the instructors who tainted their reputation and set themselves apart from them. While acknowledging the existence of wayward English instructors, they criticized Koreans for generalizing the crimes committed only by a few. They wanted Koreans to see them as individuals rather than using the “irrational method” of rashly generalizing them. Although they commonly defined Korean culture based on their personal encounters with individual Koreans, they wanted Koreans to regard them as individuals, not as blanket representatives of Western culture. Moreover, they believed the perpetuation of the negative reputation of foreign instructors was largely due to a unique trait of Korean society. Despite the fact that not all foreign English instructors were criminals, they argued Koreans treated them with preconceived notions—a form of irrational thinking.

Their passive response to this negative perception was reflective of their position in Korean society and identity. Since they were not the type of minorities who were oppressed or threatened, they felt no immediate need to defend themselves. Even if the negative reputation of a foreign English instructor circulated, ultimately they would not be faced with much difficulty in their jobs or severe limitations to what they could do. Hence, they remained uninvolved in efforts to dispel any preconceived notions about themselves.

They emphasized their collective identities as Westerners or as foreign instructors when they needed to fortify their position with impunity. However, they set themselves apart from the “bad” foreign instructors by underscoring individual differences based on political economic status, age, educational level, purpose of sojourn, length of stay, place of birth, and other factors.

Interestingly, the instructors who stayed in Korea long term criticized those who stayed short term and vice versa. Those who stayed longer saw those who didn’t stay long as vagrants who committed crimes. On the other hand, those who stayed short term saw those who stayed long as “losers.” The instructors who lived in Korea a long time were seen as people who didn’t have a place to return to and didn’t have other professional skills or knowledge. They believed they were in Korea because they were incompetent and could make money easily in foreign countries. They were considered the kind of instructors who contaminated the reputation of all foreign instructors. Differentiating the “types” of instructors also affected the formation of their communities. The purpose and the length of stay

played an important role in determining how the communities were formed.

When foreign instructors faced conflict with Koreans, they strategically identified themselves as Westerners or identified with Western culture. However, when they were viewed critically as a group, they stressed the differentiation within their own community. In this case, rather than identifying themselves collectively as Westerners, they wanted to be seen as individuals with varied political economic capabilities. As their stereotypical beliefs about Koreans fluctuated depending on situations, their identities also became dynamic—transitioning from collective to individual based on their surrounding conditions. From this example, it can be seen that an East-West dichotomous ideology persisted but operated fluidly.

6. Conclusion: Theoretical Implications and Limitations

For if it is true that no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances, then it must also be true that for a European or American studying the Orient there can be no disclaiming the made circumstances of his actuality: that he comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an individual second. And to be a European or an American in such a situation is by no means an inert fact. It meant and means being aware, however dimly, that one belongs to a power with definite interests in the Orient, and more important, that one belongs to a part of the earth with a definite history of involvement in the Orient almost since the time of Homer. (Said 2004: 34)

Said emphasized the pervasiveness and thus inescapability of the Orientalist narrative among Western subjects. Yet whether Westerners actively take Orientalist views and behave accordingly require an experiential analysis. The purpose of this article was to observe in what forms Westerners displayed Orientalism and how it was utilized.

Although foreign instructors in Jeonju came to Korea for various reasons, it was clear that their stereotypical beliefs about Asia motivated them to move to Korea. However, it would be difficult to claim that all their beliefs about Asia concurred with Orientalism described by Said. As global interactions became more frequent, Westerners no longer internalized the same East-West binary views as they did in the past.

Furthermore, they did not adhere to a fixed identity of Westerners who diametrically differed from Easterners or Asians.

Living in Korea altered or reified foreign instructors' earlier abstract notions of Asia. By working and interacting with Korean instructors, students, and their colleagues in a mostly homogeneous space, they were able to discover the unique traits of Korean culture alongside its Westernization. Thus their limited views of Korea and Asia expanded. This could be explained as the typical result of directly experiencing a foreign object in an unfamiliar space. However, the significance of this study lies in the argument that the process through which Orientalism was formed, maintained, altered, and utilized was much more complex than what Said had previously asserted.

Foreign instructors were not consciously aware of the concept of Orientalism nor did they utilize it consistently. Nonetheless, it was unequivocal that they—as subjects who multilaterally identified as teachers, Westerners, and foreigners—utilized Orientalism as a justification to behave in certain ways or as a basis to evaluate situations in their favor. Moreover, their various social statuses and their multiple identities affected and reinforced their Orientalist beliefs. For example, their statuses as teacher and Westerner provided them with the platform to fortify their conviction that the West equaled objectivity and rationality.

Their latent assumption of superiority rose to the surface when they faced various conflicting situations in Korea. The instructors generally pointed to cultural differences between East and West as the cause of conflict. They considered and resolved problematic situations through a dichotomous cultural schema implied by Orientalism. Orientalism never ceased to exist in their minds; it continued to operate in an ever evolving form to meet circumstances.

Foreign instructors were not able to completely change the existing stereotypes about the East, and Korea in particular, even after living in the country for a significant amount of time. It appears that they only reconstructed or altered whichever stereotypes were most relevant in their lives. When they were faced with conflict, they strategically chose and emphasized one identity over the others. For example, when they needed to resolve a contractual or employment problem, they assumed the role of a Westerner, rather than an employee. Strife and misunderstanding caused by personal mistakes or differences of opinion were attributed to “cultural differences” rather than normal business concerns. They identified as

Westerners who had been misunderstood, using identity politics to their advantage.

Said defined Orientalism as a mark of authority in the context of the East-West relationship. He claimed that Orientalism wasn't merely a construction of fiction or myth, but a reflection of a power relationship produced by the consciousness of Westerners. In other words, the cultural hegemony of Orientalism had maintained and reinforced its grip.

Within this framework, it would be extremely difficult to define Westerners as subjects completely independent from Orientalism. Even if the definition of Orientalism was condensed to a set of old beliefs formed by Western intellectuals over a long period of time, one couldn't deny that Orientalism continued to affect the thoughts and actions of Westerners today. However, in this article I sought to escape the view that Orientalism overpoweringly shaped the thoughts and actions of Western subjects and that they unilaterally embraced its effects.

I claimed that the Orientalist views of Westerners fluctuate based on context and situations, rather than remaining consistent. Foreign English instructors utilized the mechanism of Orientalism to maintain their identities, adapt to a new culture, and to resolve conflict. By doing so, they obtained security in the uncertainty of their lives. The globalized economic system drove these instructors to migrate, to become workers in Korea like migrants from non-Western countries. To them, living in Korea signified they were outsiders who had to constantly interpret and reinterpret situations in an unfamiliar culture and maintain relationships with foreign objects.

In this research, I tried to avoid schematic application of Said's argument and instead examined the mechanism of Orientalism in specific contexts. Previous research on Orientalism was mainly focused on uncovering Orientalism manifested in existing texts while this study focused on the mechanism of Orientalism through observing the thoughts and lives of Western subjects.

Despite the research results and theoretical implications I stated above, additional research is needed to supplement this study. I did not conduct an in-depth analysis of the variables of sex, age, class, and location of foreign English instructors. Therefore, a more thorough examination of how other socio-demographic variables effect the contents and perpetuation of Orientalism is needed. I also plan to supplement this research by re-examining the narratives of foreign English instructors to

further investigate the production of the East-West relationship of power as framed by Orientalism.

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