

Indigenous Critical Traditions for TEFL? - A Historical and Comparative Perspective in the Case of Korea

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The possibility of curricular innovation in English teaching in non-Western countries has been questioned on cultural grounds. However, in some cases this may be unjustified; insufficient attention may have been paid to the diversity and extent of the educational traditions that either co-exist, or have existed in the past, in a particular cultural area. Historical and theoretical analyses may suggest greater possibilities to the curriculum developer who devotes attention to these aspects of culture. In this paper, the non-mainstream curricular inheritances within Korean education are discussed, and their resources applied to the question of feasibility of critical pedagogy in a Korean situation. After considering the role of Orientalism in establishing a position of unfeasibility that is not empirically well-grounded, this paper reviews some aspects of the Confucian inheritances common to East Asian countries, which might be inhibitory. The paper argues that the Confucian tradition has more than one side, and other cultural practices, both ancient and more recent mean that critical language curriculum development possibilities could be based on these diverse cultural and historical inheritances in the case of Korea.

Introduction

The last 20 years has seen a substantial movement within second and foreign language studies, increasing in visibility in the last decade, to take up one major radical tradition of education and apply it in discussions of curriculum theory and practice—we refer to critical pedagogy (Auerbach & Wallerstein, 1987; Crawford-Lange, 1981; Pennycook, 1994; Wallerstein, 1983). This is an approach to teaching and curriculum influenced by critical social theory which aims for transformative education (cf. Cummins & Sayer, 1995) to foster the critical and active citizen, and emphasizes a commitment to dialogue between

students and teachers (Freire, 2000). Perhaps like many non-mainstream curriculum ideas, it may be "easier said than done", and though there is an increasing number of published accounts of its implementation in ESL classrooms¹ we are only just beginning to see its appearance in FL contexts (cf. Reagan & Osborne, 2000?; Ohara, Saft, & Crookes, 2000) and accounts of its implementation in EFL contexts outside the West are very few and far between (cf. Canagarajah, 1999; Kramer-Dahl, 2001).

Concurrently, a questioning and/or defensive literature (e.g., Holliday, 1994a; Coleman, 1996; including discussions in the journal *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, e.g., Hu, 2002, Sonaiya, 2002) that considers together issues of language, culture, and curriculum has grown up on the ruins of many attempts to import "innovative" curricula or pedagogic approaches to the instruction of English as a foreign language into non-Western countries. Some scholars (those following the analyses of e.g., Phillipson, 1992) would see such attempts as less than altruistic. This questioning and defensive work aids resistance to intended or unintended cultural imperialism manifested by apparently neutral professional language teaching experts, drawing on what Coleman (1996) calls "autonomous" (by which he means a-cultural) understandings of the language classroom. And one of its major thrusts would be to question the cultural appropriateness of any such importation, advising that cultural inappropriacy would lead to a lack of success. Part of this literature, however, may involve "Orientalizing" tendencies: the projection onto "Eastern" cultures of features that derive initially from Western descriptions or interpretations of them (Kubota, 1999). (Goldstein (2003) illustrates how the legacy of Orientalism and the othering of Asian people, combined with internalization of racism, still finds daily expression in North American classrooms). And the more explicitly defensive components of this literature assert that certain different approaches are not viable in specific cultures because of the essential characteristics of those cultures or their students (*contra* Holliday, 1994b).

In the present historical and theoretical paper, while recognizing the progressive intent of much of this work, we want to provide an illustration that will minimize the likelihood that these perspectives might encroach on the possibility of critical curricular initiatives for second or foreign languages in non-Western settings. More specifically, our discussion is intended to discourage resistance to cultural imperialism in language education from being based in Orientalized accounts of non-Western classrooms and educational cultures. We hope to do this by suggesting the existence of an indigenous base for such initiatives (thereby agreeing with the thrust of Holliday and Coleman's work) while providing evidence with which to question the Orientalized accounts that Kubota has identified. In particular, we take to heart the advice of Coleman (1996, p. 13) that we "examine traditional modes of behavior" and "seek to understand them".

We take as our focal case educational traditions in Korea. At the present time, this East Asian country is highly driven to learn English as a foreign language (cf. Shin, in press). By comparison with China or Japan, accounts of its

educational history and practices are less available in English-medium academic literature. It certainly has, however, as rich traditions in those areas as the other major East Asian countries, which deserve greater exposure outside a narrow specialist literature. In addition our discussion should contribute to understandings of the wider issues surrounding the "introduction" of "new" ideas in ELT. Accordingly, in this paper, we do theoretical and historical recuperative work toward the possibility of implementing critical second language pedagogies in Korea. We hope this will be seen as a small example of the interaction of language, culture, and curriculum in which we suggest a way to think towards culturally-appropriate forms of critical (language) pedagogy for nonWestern contexts. After a review of key concepts of the increasingly popular, "Western" tradition of critical pedagogy, we go on to discuss the cultures of learning in East-Asian countries and their shared philosophical background. We then look for historical and contemporary practices of (educational) activism in Korea, which we argue are congruent with a critical pedagogy.²

The culture of learning of Critical Pedagogy

It has been twenty years since the educational philosophy of Paulo Freire began to be adapted to S/FL teaching contexts (Crawford, 1978, Crawford-Lange, 1981). It is, then, a near-contemporary of communicative approaches, and shares a general interest in the importance of communication. As represented for second and foreign language instruction in Crawford-Lange's (1981) curriculum design principles, this position suggests that education aims "to develop critical thinking by presenting the people's situation to them as a problem so that they can perceive, reflect, and act on it" (p. 259). In this approach, "the life situation of the learners" (p. 262) should be the primary content of curriculum and "dialogue forms the context of the educational situation" (p. 263). Students use learning materials they themselves produced and the teacher "participates in the process of knowing as a learner among learners" (p. 266).

Contrary to the traditional *banking education*, which means transmission of knowledge from teachers to students, in the problem-posing model, the teacher "poses problems and engages students in dialogue and critical reflection" so that knowledge is "collaboratively constructed, involving the transformation of traditional teacher-student roles" (Auerbach, 1995, p. 12). During the dialogical engagement between teacher and students and students themselves, the life experiences of students are emphasized, through which the students begin to recognize each other as sources of knowledge. While producing and evaluating their learning materials, students are engaged in the decision-making process in class, which in turn leads to their own decision-making outside the classroom (Auerbach, 1995; McLaren, 1988; Shor, 1996).

A class of this kind should help students gain transformative experience by problematizing the status quo (Shor, 1996). Through critical dialogue in class, students can gain control over their learning and gain a critical view of their learning and the society. Through awareness of the link between their life issues and the macro sociopolitical, cultural context, they learn to make decisions in

and outside the classroom and can eventually engage in socially transformative action outside the classroom.

It is widely accepted among language teachers that the language class is a place where people learn new ways of communication and understanding of the world through the sociocultural framework a language provides (Wink, 1999).³ If one accepts that this sociocultural framework, like any conceptual framework, influences one's understanding of the world, then any practice of language learning and teaching is inherently political and socially constructed (Auerbach 1995; Pennycook, 1989). It would then follow that the macro social, cultural, and political contexts where the learner is situated should be embodied in the curriculum, and teachers should play an envisioning role in critical educational practice. Above all, in this tradition, at the classroom level the concept of dialogue between teacher and student seems uppermost; and at the societal level, all educators are seen as intellectuals who can and should be engaged in action and critique intended to improve society.

To develop that final point a little more: it is sometimes argued that there are two somewhat distinct lines of discussion within critical pedagogy. One is very closely connected with classroom practice, curriculum, materials, student-teacher interactions and style. (In the second/foreign language arena, the earlier work of Wallerstein, Auerbach, and Crawford-Lange would exemplify this.) The other is more connected with the work of the critical pedagogue as academic, as critic of curriculum and educational policy in general, as author and public intellectual. (Here we think of the work of McLaren [e.g., 1998], Giroux [e.g., 1983], and for the second language field, Pennycook [e.g., 2001].)

Critical pedagogy is not "single-strategy pedagogies of empowerment, emancipation or liberation" (Luke & Gore, 1992, p. 7), and thus should be able to evolve in response to the local contexts and needs. As we outline in the immediately following section, the local contexts of East Asian classrooms have been presented in some of what we earlier referred to as defensive or Orientalizing literature in a way that makes one wonder whether they could accommodate a critical pedagogy (given the features we have just sketched). Specialists in this area, and those interested in progressive (but culturally-appropriate) change in second and foreign language instruction, might ask themselves "Could a critical pedagogy of any kind, or one concerning language, be done in East Asian classrooms"? One could answer the question in two ways, perhaps: through empirical test (see [present authors], submitted), or through theoretical and historical analysis, as follows.

Cultures of learning in East Asian countries: stereotypes, questioning, and change

The stereotype

Asian countries with a Confucian heritage are stereotypically assumed to have school systems uncongenial to questioning the status quo (cf. Kubota,

1999). Discussions about *indigenous* educational traditions and practices in those countries exist of course, but their applications to language in education have until recently been quite rare,⁴ have tended to draw on the context in Japan or China (e.g., Gorsuch, 2001; Rao, 1996), and in many cases have failed to move away from the discourse of "Orientalism" (cf. Said, 1979). It is often assumed that the students in East Asian countries are submissive and obedient and the teachers are authoritative and authoritarian; therefore, the classrooms are supposedly rigid, hierarchical, which in turn makes discussion between students and teachers difficult (cf. Kubota, 2001). One important counter-example is Korea, which offers many practices of activism and innovative and dialogic educational practices both in the past and the present (cf. Cho, 1992; Kim, J., 1995; Kim, K., 1996; Kim, Y., 1998; Yang & Lee, 1998).

There has long been a stereotypical dichotomy of teacher-centered, static, and authoritarian classrooms in the East and student-centered, namic, and egalitarian classrooms in the West (Kubota, 1999, 2001; Reagan, 2000). That is, the West has been essentializing Asian classrooms as places where obedience and conformity to social norms are highly valued, where debate or discussion is not common particularly across status boundaries, and where authoritarian teachers are concerned with transmitting knowledge rather than being engaged in dialogue with the students (Duppenthaler, Viswat, & Onaka, 1989; Liggett, 1989; Katchen, 1989; Kubota 2001).⁵ Bracey (1997) is an example: "The goal of Asian education systems (and all authoritarian and totalitarian education systems) is obedience. In Japan it used to be obedience to the emperor; now it is simply obedience to the state and authority in general" (p. 21, as cited in Kubota, 2001, p. 22).

Kubota (1999) and Pennycook (1998), in particular, trace this distortion of the cultural image of Asian classrooms back to colonial discourse, which constantly tried to discover "differences" between the superior Western Self and the illogical, exotic, and inferior Other (cf. Said, 1979). Similarly, Reagan (2000) and Kim (1997) claim that this represents a general Western ethnocentrism. Goldstein (2003) reports that such a colonialist and racist discourses are still prevalent in North American classrooms: in her critical ethnographic study in a Canadian high school, the quietness of students from Hong Kong in classes was considered as "burdensome and resented" by some of their non-Chinese and Canadian-born Chinese classmates (p. 59). The silence of the Hong Kong born Chinese students, often associated with the label "Orientals"⁶, was equated with "a lack of understanding and passivity" and "inability to work at a grade 12 level" (p. 64) and therefore considered as a threat to quality public education by their classmates who manifest dominant Western notion of speech and silence. While it may be the case that many Asian classrooms have many unfavorable conditions for "dialogue" between teachers and students, at least in the ways as this term understood in the West, different cultures value different ways of communication and have different understandings of good teaching and learning style based on their own philosophical, historical, and socio-cultural backgrounds (Coleman, 1989; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996; Kim, 1997; Liggett, 1989;

Reagan, 2000; Willet, 1987).

More broadly, there are major problems of overgeneralization in this literature, as was pointed out by Holliday (1994b) some time ago. He refers (p. 126) to "regional cultural profiling" as providing only the most limited insights into what can or does go on in classrooms, and calls instead for attention to "more precise uses" of the term "culture", noting that educational projects, methodologies, and certainly classrooms, students or teachers can have their own micro-cultures, which may or may not be congruent with some perhaps quite dangerously stereotypical concept of "regional culture".

Questioning the stereotype: (1) the role of the student concerning questions

We hardly need to point out that the same communicative act, mode, or style can be interpreted differently across cultural contexts. Kim (1997), for example, remarks that what some (particularly Westerners) might call "assertiveness" in interpersonal communication competence can often be interpreted as aggressiveness or arrogance in Korea. Arguments can disturb friendships in any country, but what is an argument, or the lengths a person might go to avoid one, differ across countries, with Japan being (stereotypically) averse to more open expressions of interpersonal conflict. In some Asian countries, reluctance to ask questions may be a signal of sensible respect for others and group work in school classrooms may not be as highly valued as teacher's explanations as the best use of limited class time in large classes (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). Accordingly, interpreting students' preference for listening to the teacher in these countries as lack of independence or orientation to grades is often misleading (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). Goldstein (2003), citing Asian-American scholar King-Kok Cheung (1993), also provides an alternative understanding of the silences: attentive silence is "a form of silence in which there is acute listening, empathy for others, and awareness of even the subtlest signs from a speaker" and is therefore "a quiet understanding," which is "the antithesis of passivity" (p. 65). Likewise, Malcolm & Hongjio's (1989) discussion on different ways of information organization and argumentation styles in different cultures leads us to reflect on different understandings of being "logical" in different cultures.

In light of this, the different function and nature of questions in Eastern and Western classrooms warrants a better recognition. Cortazzi & Jin (1996) report a counter-example of the common view of Asian students as passive and reluctant to ask questions. In their study, Chinese students valued independent study and chose being active, asking questions in class, and having one's own view and expressing it, although different from the teacher's, as characteristics of good students (p. 191). However, they favored thoughtful questions after reflection and further reading over spontaneous questions in class, out of their sensitivity to limited class time or out of their reluctance to stand out in front of others. As a result, many Chinese students prefer asking questions after class, so as not to interrupt the whole class, in contrast to the Western interpretation of asking questions as a discussion-promoting device in class (pp. 194-198). Cantonese-

speaking students in Goldstein's (2003) study, worried about being perceived as "showing off" or "whitewashed" by their Chinese peers, were reluctant to speak up (in English) in class. In addition, some Asian students are reported to think that "there is no need to reiterate an opinion that has already been aired by another students" (p. 66). Kim (1997) contends that, while being active in class was often related to showing a strong verbal communication ability in American schools, the importance of listening and learning from others was often emphasized over verbal communication in Korea.

Questioning the stereotype: (2) the role of the teacher

Cultural values affect the expectations of a good teacher and a good student as well. Characteristics of a good teacher listed by Cortazzi & Jin's (1996) Chinese students included being a role model, a friend, a parent, and being strict (p. 188). Cortazzi & Jin argued that Western teachers value interaction, creativity, self-expression, and experiential learning, while Chinese teachers emphasize the importance of discipline and providing necessary knowledge in the classroom (p. 177). This provides a different interpretation of the teacher-student relationship in East Asian countries from often-believed authoritative one. Students in these countries often expect teachers to listen to their personal issues even outside the classroom and consequently "expect the teacher to realize" their problems, while "the Western teachers will usually assume that any students with problems will ask for help." (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996, p. 190).

At the same time, cultures of learning in East-Asian countries have drastically altered in response to rapid social change, especially among young people (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). As a result, in present-day China, Japan, and Korea, young people are not particularly shy. Their non-expressiveness in foreign language classrooms may only result from their lack of English proficiency or may be due to institutional constraints such as large classrooms and fixed curricula, which can be changed and are changing (cf. McVeigh, 2002). In sum, we join with those scholars who have argued that East-Asian students are actually active and independent, but the way this independence manifests is different from that of Western students. There is a compelling need to consider the diverse cultural and historical backgrounds of a given cultural context in which we are attempting to apply a pedagogical idea.

The Confucian background of East Asian cultures of learning – another-stereotype?

The dominant aspect of this image

Chinese influence in East-Asian cultures, mainly through Confucian educational thought, implies common philosophical foundations for East Asian cultures of learning (Reagan, 2000). In contemporary Korea, for example, although Confucianism as a dominant state ideology has disappeared, Confucian values and practices are still pervasive in Korean family, educational, and other social practices (Kim, 1996; Koh, 1996), working as "a civic culture rather than a re-

ligion" (Kim, 1996, p. 216). In Confucianism, self-cultivation through learning and practice is highly valued, and it is through education that people reach the target of the "ideal person" (Chinese: *chün-tzu*; Korean: *kunja*) and the ideal society (Kim, 1996; Reagan, 2000; Wyatt, 1990).

Yum (1987) argued that Confucian value on propriety in human relationships affected communication behaviors in Korea: accommodation is favored over confrontation, revealing emotion in communication is discouraged, and, consequently, indirect communication is preferred. This in turn leads to the emphasis on communication outside of the verbal realm. She went on to argue that Buddhism reinforced the Confucian distrust of verbal communication; in other words, many schools of Buddhism conceived of verbal communication as incomplete and illusory. As such, the importance of silence in communication increases and communication without words, or communication "transcending the limitation of words" (p. 83) is valued as the highest level of communication.⁷ In China, traditional education emphasized filial piety, loyalty, and politeness and respect for elders; therefore, children are often taught not to talk back to their elders (Gernet, 1982, as cited in Reagan, 2000, p.110). The following excerpt from the *Analects* (*Lunyu*) illustrates of the disregard of verbal expression in Confucian thought:

When a gentleman is ignorant of something, he should offer no opinion. If terms are not correct, then what is said will not accord with what is intended. If what is said does not accord with what is intended, affairs will not achieve success....The thing about the gentleman is that he is never careless where speech is concerned. (Confucius, as cited in Wyatt, 1990, p.40)

The other side of this image

As examined so far, Confucianism, along with Buddhism, has significantly encouraged implicit communicational behavior in East Asian countries. Although Confucianism, with its emphasis on loyalty to the state and filial piety to parents, served to reinforce existing social structure, a somewhat democratic characteristic in Confucian educational thought was embodied in the Chinese civil-service-examination system. In its early implementations, for example, the examination was employed as a political device to allow some degree of social class mobility based on meritocracy (Reagan, 2000).

Wyatt (1990) disputed the common belief that Confucian scholars indulged heavily in abstract investigation of the world, disengaged from the real world issues. Contrary to the distinction between "the philosopher's logic and the politician's rhetoric" (p. 60) in ancient Greece, Confucian philosophers, who were often also politicians, concerned themselves with social engagement and believed that knowledge should be practiced in society and should affect action directly. In addition, they conceptualized language on this premise: unlike the highly specialized descriptive language of classical Western philosophers, Confucian scholars conceived of language as a tool to "affect conduct directly, by inculcating proper attitudes" (p. 58), which should be easily accessible to com-

mon people⁸. Consequently, how to use language “became emblematic of one’s social worth” (p. 59). The strong attachment to social practices of Confucianism is also reflected in Zhongyong, the Doctrine of the Mean: “Only the man who places himself in the midst of worldly affairs is capable of transforming other men” (Confucius, as cited in Wyatt, 1990, p. 36). It is to this innovative nature of Confucianism and activist practices in Korea that we now turn.

Activist practices in Korea: The past and the present the past

Confucianism produced many innovative practices of activism in Korean history with its commitment to social engagement. In addition, its emphasis on consistency in one’s behavior and words and a close relationship between theory and practice has been incorporated into rich traditions in modern critical scholarship in Korea. The adverse political situation in Korea up until the fall of the recent military dictatorship in the early 1990s have obliged authors to be circumspect in putting forward their ideas in this area, however (Lee, 1996; Yang & Lee, 1998). Lee (1987) illustrates, further into the past, that communication in politics even across status barriers was very active during the neo-Confucian *Chosun* Dyanasty (1392-1910). During this time, for example, a group of autonomous Confucian scholars called *Sarim* worked as the main communication channel between the common people and the king to incorporate public opinion into the national policy. With their belief in the democratic political philosophy of the Confucian position that government should exist for the people, they pointed out injustice, often at the expense of their lives.

One of the most valuable indigenous progressive lines of scholarship in Korea was established by a group of critical scholars in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who developed an approach known as *Sirhak*⁹. The *Sirhak* scholars advocated the claim of Wang Yangming of China: “knowledge is the beginning of action and action is the completion of knowledge—that they are, in effect, one” (Lee, 1996, pp. 213-214) and criticized formalism, lack of national identity, and compliance with the ruling ideology of Korean Neo-Confucianism at that time. They advocated political, economic, social, and educational reforms for human equality—reforms of the landholding system and the abolition of class barriers and of slavery—and agitated against social injustice and the corrupt feudal ruling class, *yangban*. They criticized the examination-oriented education at the state institutes and developed the *sowon*, a private higher education institute, where young scholars learned the indigenous knowledge of Confucianism mainly through discussion (ibid., p. 209). Chong Yakyong, one of the most prominent *Sirhak* scholars, criticized the decontextualized language teaching that relied on traditional Chinese texts, prevalent at the time, and published a new textbook for Korean children (Yu, 1994).

Confucian critical activism culminated in vigorous independence movements during the Japanese colonial occupation (1910-1945), involving violent resistance against Japan and military operations against the Japanese army under Korean government-in-exile in China, and through military operations against the Japanese army. Buswell (1998) illustrates that Buddhism was also influential

in nationalistic activism during the colonial period. Han Yongun, engaged in the progressive reformist movement in Korean Buddhism during the colonial period, wrote *Choson Pulgyo yusillon* (Treatise on the Reformation of Korean Buddhism). He conceptualized Buddhism as the “ideology of equality” and “ideology of saving the world” (p. 93) and applied Western liberalism to a Buddhist context.

Examples of Koreans using education as a means of liberation are found in nationwide innovative educational movements during the Japanese colonial period (Kim, 1995; Kim, 1996). Many Koreans, deprived of opportunities for decent education due to the Japanese colonial educational policy, established private schools and organized non-institutionalized education, such as *yahak* (night classes),¹⁰ to inspire national identity. Korean traditional education was transformed into a more democratic and innovative one during this time, including education for women and others who had been excluded under the feudalistic class system (Kim, 1995).¹¹ Kim (1998) writes that students have always been extremely active participants in these oppositional movements in Korean history, which significantly contributed to the formation of a culture of student political activism in Korea. Korean students have developed “a uniquely active culture of expressing their dissatisfaction towards things in and outside the university classroom” (p. 400), through raising issues from democratization of Korean society to more recent issues of campus-democratization related to educational policy.¹²

Student political activism after the Japanese colonial era is traced back to the April 19 student revolution in 1960 against the dictatorship of President Lee Seungman of the First Republic. The huge demonstration initiated by students witnessed the establishment of the democratic government and has subsequently been a symbol of people’s power in Korea. Students played a major role in the civil uprising in Kwangju, a city in southwest Korea, against the new military regime in 1980, which resulted in the massacre of many students and citizens. The mass protests in 1987 finally terminated the long period of military dictatorships and the first democratic presidential election system by direct voting was introduced. Student activism in Korea gained strong public support and was closely related to other civil movements, particularly the labor movement. Students are often seen as having a responsibility for preventing social and political corruption and required to take actions against injustice in Korea (Kim, 1998). One example of this linkage is found in the continued existence of *yahak*, in which, in its current form, students teach laborers or other people who have not acquired a decent education in the institutionalized school system. Student reading groups on campus, providing a critical perspective toward society through debating sociopolitical issues in Korea, have operated as organizational units of the student movement.

Tangherlini (1998) identified *minjungjuui*,¹³ or *minjungjuui* nationalism as an underlying philosophy of the student movement in contemporary Korea (p. 135). *Minjungjuui* focuses on the struggles of *minjung*, the oppressed urban and

rural poor, for “the overthrow of military authoritarianism and the establishment of a government of ‘*minjung* democracy’... [and] the elimination of foreign influence” (Dong 1987, p. 247, as cited in Tangherlini, 1998, p.135). Tangherlini (1998) went on to argue that *minjungjuui*’s emphasis on *minjung munhwa* (the culture of the *minjung*) has interestingly incorporated Korean Shamanism into student activism through traditional cultural performances during student demonstrations. The transformation of the patriarchal power relation during the shamanistic ritual, *kut*, is particularly noteworthy: although the purpose of *kut* is to ensure established order, the role of the female shaman as the central authority during *kut* may be perceived as subverting the patriarchal order of the larger society (p. 133). (Christianity, a foreign religion in Korea, also promoted the radical spirit. Baker (1998) argues that Catholics and Protestants in Korea have pursued social issues in Korea along with their religious missions. It is not uncommon to find a Christian activist on the front lines of demonstrations against dictatorship in Korea. Catholic churches in Korea have often been used as shelters for antigovernment activists.) The co-existence of these traditions is described by Callahan (1998) as a *heterotopia*, where Confucianism, native Shamanism, and the Western religion of Christianity sometimes co-exist and are sometimes transformed into new indigenous ideas. The rich traditions of critical activism in Korea have been inherited by contemporary educational and feminist movements, which we discuss in the next section.

The present

There are many non-traditional, innovative voices in contemporary Korea as well, especially concerning feminism and in education and there have been a wave of “feminist” movements. Shim (1998) describes cases of lesbian women creating organizations to voice their own rights, and groups of women, though still small in number, that reject established approaches to marriage. In addition, the women’s movement in Korea has worked for the abolition of sexual discrimination in employment. The “Another Culture” Movement, organized in 1984 by foreign-educated progressive female intellectuals, is particularly noteworthy among these various movements (Shim, 1998). The “Another Culture” group critiques the present patriarchal ideology in Korean society and seeks an alternative model or pattern for of women’s lives which would eventually transform society.

One of their members, Cho, active in Korean higher education, presents a pedagogy close to critical pedagogy. Her educational perspective is illustrated in the preface to one of her works

This book is about ‘teaching’ and ‘learning’, that is, about ‘thinking about pedagogy.’ My decision not to lecture led the students to ‘learning’, and the student voices, which filled this book, ‘taught’ me as a teacher....This first volume ‘shows’ how to read the word and the world, based on the discussions and self-reflection in the real classroom.¹⁴ (Cho, 1992, p. 7)

With her interest in knowledge and colonialism as a sociologist and feminist, she tried an experiment in her 'Munhwa Iron' (Cultural Theories) class in spring 1991, under the theme of "reading words and life". Her interest in relating literacy to real world issues is reflected in the course syllabus:

The instructor does not want the students to be theoretically knowledgeable. In fact, we will discuss in this class how meaningless it is to be theoretically knowledgeable in the current situation. I hope that the students enter the class to make meaning themselves in this era when being theoretically knowledgeable is possible only by preserving the colonial framework (p. 28).

She chose Korean texts instead of those of common Western authors such as Gramsci, Derrida, Bourdieu, Foucault, Habermas, and Giddens to help students gain real knowledge. The class was conducted through discussion, with both the instructor and the students sitting in a circle. The dialogue extended to students' written weekly journals on the readings and feedback from the instructor. Participation in class was voluntary¹⁵ and grades were decided through self-assessment by the students. Cho describes her experiment as a success and reported that she "could teach *Munhwa Iron* properly by not teaching the existing *Munhwa Iron*" (p. 35).

At the level of elementary and secondary schools, there has long been a strong struggle by teachers to establish and gain legitimacy for the National Teachers' Labor Union in Korea. Since the hunger strike by 1,900 teachers in 1960, despite the government's strong repression of its members through dismissal, imprisonment, and prosecution, and through expulsion and suspension of the students who supported the union, the teachers and the students believed that students, teachers, and parents, not the government, should be agents of education and should actively participate in educational reformation by *Cham-Kyoyuk* (true education), their upholding slogan (Ahn, 1996). More recent activities of the union involve development of curriculum, materials, methodology and evaluation, as well as publication of their own textbooks, along with expressing their concern over the crisis of public education. Within the area of second/foreign language teaching, the Korean English Teachers' Group, under the Union, has been very active in organizing workshops and conferences, providing materials for English teachers. They also conducted teach-ins concerning Japanese history textbooks that distorted historical facts concerning the colonial period, and organized anti-war demonstrations.

In contemporary Korea, dialogue between teachers and students is active in such ways as publishing classroom journals and school newspapers full of students' real world issues and students' posting their opinions about educational issues on school web-pages and those of the Board of Education or the Ministry of Education. The rich multi-media resources in many Korean classrooms (cf. Jung & Norton, 2002) and nation-wide use of the Internet and cellular phones are also

creating alternative types of communication.¹⁶ Innovative educational practices are more visible at the extra-curricular level, some course offerings of which include social studies often focussing on youth culture and women's culture. Some recent government policies such as making entrance exams less difficult, diversifying the qualifications for admission to college, and emphasizing performance-based tests allow more room for teachers to introduce innovative ideas into curriculum.

Conclusion

Would-be non-mainstream educators in all countries are always likely to be challenged by a lack of models and a lack of descriptions. The hegemonic nature of history-writing, and the usually marginal, evanescent, and poorly-documented character of educational institutions and programs that are not mainstream, mean that a continual activity of "memory-work" is needed to preserve and make available those alternative traditions. Many Korean teachers are not aware of the full range of their educational inheritances, any more than most teachers in Western countries like the U.S. or the UK know much about alternative schools in general, the free schools of the 1960s, or the socialist summer camps of the 1930s. Even long-standing libertarian educational institutions like Summerhill or its Japanese equivalent, Kinokuni, are unfamiliar to most.¹⁷ But educators who work with the currently-dominant international language are in a particularly difficult situation. At least in the recent past, Western experts in ES/FL teaching have not always followed the advice offered by Coleman (1996, p. 13), to "examine traditional modes of behavior" and, for that matter, "to explore the possibility... of exploiting current patterns of behavior" in developing ELT practices. Particularly in the field of S/FL curriculum, non-Western specialists may feel the pressure of discussions (and discourses) which present a particular picture of, for example, how Korean students are; which specify the nature of Chinese learning practices (consider Gardner, 1991); which write into existence the author's conception of Japanese students; and do so, in each case, as the dominant depiction. Conservative indigenous educators are willing to join this account, and together they constitute a discouraging, demoralizing tide to swim against.

The history of education, and comparative education, are fields not usually appealed to in studies of language and curriculum; the history of alternative education even less so. Yet even minor initiatives, such as communicative approaches for example, constitute alternative education from the point of view of presently existing practices in many countries. Accordingly, many ES/FL specialists do actually need to access these somewhat buried histories. And so long as these histories are not even available in the dominant language of international academia, substantial spade-work must be done. Go-ahead indigenous innovative educators in EFL will con-

tinue to turn to the literature of applied linguistics for guidance. It presents a range of alternative challenges, none of which will be taken up if indigenous educators believe that there is nothing equivalent in the histories of education they are heir to. We would like to suggest, however, that such histories do exist. It was this sort of excavation that encouraged one of us ([senior author]) to go on to empirical investigations ([authors, submitted]). We hope that the present piece will encourage other such studies.

Notes

1. Although Pennycook says that overall "there is still a lack of studies of its implementation in classrooms (Pennycook, 2001, p. 130).
2. We are aware of just one paper (Sung, 2002) which introduces the ideas of critical theory and pedagogy into the Korean literature of ELT, addressing a mainly Korean readership. This is a useful discussion of the Western mainstream (non-ELT/FL) critical pedagogy literature, but does not attempt to address questions of implementation, cultural appropriateness, and so on.
3. Or in older, liberal variants of this tradition, through the literatures of the foreign language.
4. As Holliday (1994, p. 131) noted, admittedly ten years ago.
5. For a couple of examples of didacticism in European education, see Duff (1995, on Hungary) and Sharpe (1992, on France).
6. The interview data from Mina, a Canadian-born woman of Indo-Caribbean ancestry, illustrates how silence is often associated with being Asian: "In this class, there are more Orientals and Orientals I find to be quieter people, like, you know, maybe that's why" (Goldstein, 2003, p. 62).
7. Yum (1987) and Tsujimura (1987) describe "*i-sim jun-sim*" (Korean) or "*ishin-denshin*" (Japanese) as the highest level of communication. Both of the phrases are originally from the same Chinese expression, which literally means "convey mind, by mind", that is, the instantaneous meeting of two minds without using language. Therefore, in Asian cultures, the listener, not the speaker, is often more responsible for communication.
8. The special argumentation patterns in Confucianism include "the rhetorical 'chain argument,' argument by appeal to antiquity, and argument by analogy" (Wyatt, 1990, p.40). This appeal to antiquity suggests another interpretation of plagiarism or the ownership of text and the perception of a text and a teacher as a model in Confucian Asian countries. Wyatt (1990) relates "the desire to cite precedents in the revered past for present-day actions" (p. 40) to the Confucian view of "the past as adumbrating the present and the future" (p. 41). Consequently, this is not a simple imitation but a very complex work "because it demands detailed historical knowledge on the part of the formulator" (p. 41). This resonates with memorizing common texts to prepare for the civil service exami-

nation in ancient China as “a broad and deep common intellectual base for each generation of Chinese officials” (Reagan, 2000, p. 112).

9. This term literally meant “a substantive, true science, as opposed to an idealistic, pseudo-science” (Lee, 1996, p. 207).

10. The *yahak* was voluntarily organized by the community people and was very progressive. The curriculum reflected local needs, spanning Japanese language, English, writing and math as well as Korean language (Kim, 1995, p. 251).

11. Though the tremendous institutional constraint and lack of autonomy in the school system is one of the biggest concerns to many contemporary Korean educators, the nationalistic educational movements during the colonial period were often voluntarily organized by the community people and were quite progressive and radical. The curriculum reflected the local needs, spanning Japanese language, English, writing and math as well as Korean language. Women’s movements emerged in Korea in the 19th century, with a new group of Korean women with higher education, and also played a major role in independence movements. Marxism, introduced by students who had studied in Japan and later formed socialist organizations in Korea, had an enormous impact on the independence movement in Korea during this time. Korean Communists’ collaboration with the Bolsheviks in their fight against Japan in Manchuria and Siberia was followed by the establishment of the Korean communist party in the 1920s (Yang & Lee, 1998, p. 372).

12. Accordingly, it is necessary to further explore, as Kim (1998) rightly points out, how to incorporate the student political activism in Korea to the classroom environment in constructive ways.

13. Defined by Baker (1998) as “a politically loaded Korean term for the oppressed and underprivileged members of society” (p. 121).

14. All the excerpts from this book translations from Korean into English by the first author.

15. However, she reported that there was no serious problem with participation, as “out of 35 who were enrolled to the end of semester, there were always around 25 students attended and participated in discussion, and when they missed classes, students submitted their journals and sometimes listened to tapes of the lesson” (Cho, 1992, p. 35).

16. The importance of communication between teachers and students outside classrooms in Asian countries was mentioned earlier in this paper. The exchange of personal letters between teachers and students has traditionally been popular in Korea and modern technology expands this with e-mail and text messages of cellular phones. It is not uncommon these days for both universities and secondary school students and teachers to use an Internet café for class (as well as social) purposes.

17. Alternative schools: Smith, 1974, *inter alia*; Free schools: Mercogliano, 1998; Summerhill: Neill, 1993; Kinokuni: Potter, 1994, 1997, [//www.cypress.ne.jp/kinokuni/](http://www.cypress.ne.jp/kinokuni/).

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