



## Critical Language Pedagogy Given the English Divide in Korea – A Suite of Practices, Critique, and the Role of the Intellectual

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## Critical Language Pedagogy Given the English Divide in Korea: A Suite of Practices, Critique, and the Role of the Intellectual

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The paper presents selected aspects of critical language pedagogy that are relevant to recent developments in Korean English Education. The paper articulates the personal viewpoint of a scholar outside Korea. Particular emphasis is placed on historical background, the nature of critique, and the role of the intellectual in society. The English Divide in Korea is presented as an issue that calls for a critical perspective on English education. This is briefly analyzed from an economics of education point of view, itself an example of critical pedagogy that does not only focus on classrooms and curriculum theory. Key aspects of critical language pedagogy are sketched, with reference to precursors from Korean history and cultural forms. These precursors are also brought to bear on the role that intellectuals could play in advancing a critical perspective on English education, in Korean society, which is suggested to be a moral imperative, distinct from instrumental understandings of education.

**Key words:** critical language pedagogy, English divide, the role of the intellectual, public intellectuals

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In this overview paper, I consider selected aspects of critical language pedagogy with English education in South Korea as the framing context, in the hope of encouraging South Korean English teachers, teacher educators, and researchers who find the potential of critical language pedagogy (and its associated forms) attractive, even while recognizing the difficulties of getting started with this perspective. My view on the Korean context is that of an outsider to Korean society. However, this paper accompanies several other papers authored by Korean specialists on aspects of critical language pedagogy which particularly focus on the critical thinking aspects

of this orientation to language teaching and this paper is intended to complement and support those articles.

It goes without saying that the English education environment in South Korea (henceforth just Korea) does not appear sympathetic, at least from an outsider's perspective, to critical approaches. In fact, around the world, no mainstream or state education system is particularly sympathetic to a perspective which encourages a substantial, possibly radical rethinking of the educational and societal status quo. It is almost by definition a difficult position to take or to advance. Yet recent dramatic manifestations in Korea, this year, of sociopolitical critique and direct action for change have affected mainstream politics in Korea, and suggest the capacity of ordinary Koreans to act for change outside of the most common political channels of a representative democracy.

At a very different level, the gradual accumulation of exploratory small-scale studies of critical language pedagogy perspectives in Korean English education research publications is somewhat encouraging. When, supporting Shin, I first published on critical language pedagogy for Korea (Shin & Crookes 2005a, 2005b) we were not even aware of Sung's work (2002, 2004; see also Sung & Pederson, 2012), undoubtedly the first in this area for Korean English Education, and there was little else for the Korea context (but see Na & Kim, 2003, an early call by Korean scholars for critical literacy). Since then, however, we have a few more studies of Korea-based critical English classroom practice (e.g., Craig & Porter, 2014; Huh, 2016; Porter, 2013). Outside of studies of classroom practice, we may note the critically-oriented work of Park (2009, 2010, *inter alia*), a singularly powerful analysis by Piller and Cho (2013) of a local English language policy in Korea and its negative effects, and several studies on the English Divide (Jeong & Jeon, 2013; Noh & Jeon, 2012; Park, 2014). In addition to the foregoing, the studies accompanying the present paper which capitalize on or explore the possibilities of the recent interest in critical thinking in Korea provide grounds for cautious optimism.

In the body of the paper, I first focus on the "English Divide" as an aspect of present-day Korea which supports the need for a critical perspective on English education in Korea. Some observers might question whether Korea, with its strongly hierarchical society and exam-driven education system is capable of responding (constructively, or at all) to critique. To answer this question (positively) I briefly refer to examples of indigenous traditions of critique in Korean society and at least one alternative proposal about education in Korea in the post-World War II period. I conclude with a call for further explorations and the suggestion that English teachers make an effort to reflect on and develop their philosophies of teaching, and consider possible pre-existing critical positions previously taken up in Korean history and culture, so as to better be able to advocate, through education, for the democratic society Korea claims to be.

## 2. ENGLISH DIVIDE

### 2.1. The English Divide in Korea Should be Critiqued

Korean researchers have recently documented striking differences in average English test scores in various parts of Korea, or even across various districts of Seoul itself (e.g., Kim, 2012). It is no secret why this occurs. Socioeconomic status (SES) has always been one of the strongest predictors of educational success. In the present neo-liberal economic context, the rise of the “shadow education sector” has reached great heights and gained much influence in Korean society (cf. C. J. Lee, H. Lee, & Jang, 2010). Teachers know that the students from more well-to-do families have, in the *hagwon*, already studied the chapter the high school teachers are working through, so those students are both bored and sleepy in regular class but will do well on classroom tests, unless they are exhausted by staying at cram schools till 10 or 11 pm at night. It is ironic that the previous military dictatorships outlawed the shadow sector, for good populist reasons concerning national unity (Seth, 2002). As Korean democracy struggles against the forces of capitalism and its tendency to concentrate economic resources in the hands of a few, it is being worn down by the effects of English testing. English tests are a choke-point through which almost all middle-class Korean students and job applicants must pass. It is not sufficient that students attain generally good exam scores across subject areas in order to enter the best schools and companies; it is English scores, it seems, more than any other, that will enable this. As inequality grows, democracies deteriorate. The English Divide promotes inequality. It is insidious, a cancer eating away at the heart of Korean democracy and social development. What is to be done? At first, we must analyze and subject this and associated matters to critique, and critique and the development of critical (but constructive) educational theory is one of the functions and capabilities of critical pedagogy.

### 2.2. An Example of Educational Critique Addressing the English Divide

Critical analysis of education is the central concern of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy, as a term and a field of study and practice, does not exclusively refer to what is done inside a classroom. The word *pedagogy* as understood by Freire (e.g., 1970) and his North American followers such as Giroux and McLaren (e.g., 1986), refers to critical curriculum or educational theory, as well as practice. Thus, it extends to (and responds to) works such as that of Bowles and Gintis (1976), on the way education reproduces societal inequalities (an analysis which begins with large, quantitative, societal data sets), as well as to the matter of whether, and to what extent, education can address this problem. As Pennycook’s depiction (2001) of the quite broad reach of critical applied linguistics shows, as it draws upon and extends into other critical

social sciences, the theoretical side of critical language pedagogy meets up with critical language policy studies. Critical language pedagogues want to influence educational and social policy, to improve them.

The matter of the English Divide has already been mentioned as indicating a problem which those concerned with Korean English education who have democratic values and a concern for the integrity and flourishing of the Korean nation, in fact, should urgently address. If the continuing trend of increasing inequality continues, there is good reason to believe (on the basis of studies of inequality and social cohesion) that the nation will fall apart, as rising inequality leads to social unrest (which is quite likely to be exploited by hostile nations in the immediate vicinity of South Korea). It is a matter of national concern and it threatens national unity. Thus, it is a patriotic duty, shouldered at the moment only by a few scholars, to critique and analyze it.

Social formations are supported and indeed partially constituted by discourses (or “discourse processes”—that is, the intertwined effects of language, power, and social practices). One of the more insidious tropes accompanying English education in Korea has been that it is good for the nation, and thus good for Koreans generally. Such a view is to be found promoted in a newspaper such as *Chosun Ilbo*, which sanguinely reported (*‘English Divide’ grows...*, 2007) that language-related inequalities, such as that of Korea, are also to be found in multilingual countries such as Switzerland. This newspaper article cites the famous (and critical) researcher Grin’s studies which attribute substantially greater per capita annual income to those Swiss citizens who have a good command of a second language (cf. Grin, 2008). The implication is that Korea should not be frightened of this kind of difference, and indeed Korean citizens should be advised to acquire a second language (presumably English) so as to boost their income.

There are obvious limitations to this argument. The wider contexts seem not comparable: Switzerland has an official multilingual policy and four official languages, a remarkable and indeed unique history of neutrality among supportive neighbors, a territory potentially highly resistant to invasion (the differences indeed are too numerous to list). But more importantly perhaps, the argument ignores the economics of Korea or indeed of the globalizing world. First, any increased GNP attributable to workers’ bilingual or multilingual capacities will not in fact benefit the ordinary Korean, just to the extent that GNP is or is not equally distributed. Income inequality in nations is measured by the Gini coefficient. While it is true that in much of the post-World War II era, up until the 1990s, Korea’s Gini coefficient was around 0.25 (i.e., low), it has been increasing steadily ever since (reaching .315 in 2010: Koo, 2014). Korea is now, like many developed nations (most obviously the US), approaching levels of income inequality likely to result in social unrest. It is no longer the case that what is good for Korean industry (or Korean *jaebol*) is good for the average Korean man or woman, even if it was in the past. This is even more obviously the case if we take into account the findings of studies such as those of Koo who has shown that even the Korean working class are no longer equal within themselves; around one-third of the working class, the backbone of the Korean economic miracle, “suffer from insecure job conditions, receiving only around 60 per cent of regular workers’ wages with no medical insurance

severance pay or company welfare subsidies” (Koo, 2014, unpaginated). The whole situation has worsened recently as indicated in the high youth (or general) employment rates, reaching 10% lately. Finally, as a recent report summarized in *The Economist* documents (Decoupled, 2006), what is good for most major industries is not necessarily good for their countries of origin. As a result of globalization, or taking advantage of it, major multinational firms around the world do not employ a majority of workers from their home country, nor do they pay a large proportion of tax to their home country, being tax-domiciled in tax havens or expatriating much of their profits which they place in off-shore holding companies (for example, *Apple*). Overall, critical scholars of education should be drawing upon the findings of critical economists, sociologists, and critical policy studies experts, as resources to use to rebut the exploitative discourses that have hold of the public mind in Korea (as elsewhere).

### 3. A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE IN ENGLISH EDUCATION

There is plenty to be said about the antecedents and historical inheritances of a critical perspective (e.g., Gottesman, 2016; Schugurensky, 2011) but in short, this view asks us to question assumptions, it prioritizes a sensitivity to power, and it favors a democratic perspective oriented to social change actions. Scholars, students, teachers, and philosophers who accept the term “critical” as a descriptor of their efforts and perspective have taken much from Kant’s (1781) original impulse to develop a critique of previously insufficiently examined concepts. For social theorists, this critique became embodied in several cycles of egalitarian, democratically-oriented research associated with emancipatory social theory, arriving at the eponymous “Critical Theory” named by Horkheimer (1937) in the 1930s. This was only one attempt to improve on Marxian social theory’s failure to predict or explain social changes; successive authorities (e.g., Habermas, 1972; see Young, 1992, for a discussion in terms of language education) continued these attempts and aspects of them penetrated other social sciences. In the work of numerous critical scholars of education, critique does indeed manifest in careful and broad analyses of how education in many places and cases makes things worse not better. The work of Bowles and Gintis (1976) has already been mentioned; that of Apple (e.g., 2006) is also exemplary in this respect (and originally was independent of the figure to whom much, rightly, is attributed as the primary figure in this tradition: Freire [e.g., 1970]). Critical applied linguists have contributed at more detailed levels to this kind of investigation, as applied to the specific area of concern of this paper, namely language education. (For further references and extended discussion, see Crookes, 2013).

It is valuable to note further some details in the formulation of a critical view in applied linguistics by Pennycook (e.g., 2001). In this depiction of what a critical approach requires in our field, he emphasizes the important element of self-reflectivity or self-criticism, in absence of

which Critical Theory became a prematurely solidified or fixed and finalized theory, rather than a continual process of critique. Indeed, as Pennycook makes clear as he draws on the work of Foucault (cf. Foucault, 1988) at some point it might become a regime of truth unaware of its own powerful discourse to constitute rather than analyze. Besides his important emphasis on self-reflexivity, Pennycook (1999, as paraphrased by Lynch, 2001) definitionally specifies two other elements for critical applied linguistics: its scope and its educational intent. For the first, domains of interest are broad and include gender, class, sexuality, race, ethnicity, culture, identity, politics, ideology, and discourse, but, significantly, critical applied linguistics is *not* interested in normative responses to questions in those domains. That means that it is more interested in *how* those domains or concepts are constituted (through discourse processes, the interaction of power-laden social practices with language), rather than merely what should be done, or what is the correct political analysis of them. And second, at the same time, critical applied linguistics “embraces a transformative pedagogy [of languages]” (ibid.). The latter is another way to name “critical language pedagogy” and its associated forms, such as critical language awareness and critical literacy.

Before leaving the topic of critical self-reflexivity, I should reflect on the fact that the present paper (and the presentation that preceded it, at a KATE conference) is itself a reflection of power, and possibly power imbalance. As a BANA (“British, Australasian, or North American”) academic in TESOL (a critical term coined by Holliday e.g., 1994, to suggest undue influence), I have benefited in my career from the force originally described by Phillipson (1992) as “linguistic imperialism.” However, on the other hand, it is partly the result of (a small number of Korean) language teachers coming together to resist the dangerously oppressive aspects of English that I was invited to produce an outsider’s commentary on this topic, for Korea, of which this is the written product. Thus my small efforts join with others’ on the emancipatory side of the power of English, which like most power languages can both oppress and enlighten.

In addition to theoretical critique, a more activist orientation was also equally present from the start of critical pedagogy and as it began to be applied to language teaching, as the ideas of Freire (e.g., 1970) were taken up by the field by a few relatively isolated scholars (initially in world language education: Crawford, 1978). For Freire, the point is to educate for social change. The intent of language education-oriented critique is for individuals (students and teachers, as well as scholars) to use language learning to change matters, thus (as Freire repeatedly says) they will be reading the word so as to change the world. If they are going to be change agents outside the classroom, they must be active agents within the classroom; if language is part of the problem, problems must be posed to them in the classroom so that they can begin the process of solving them and acquire a disposition to continue in the real world. So critical language pedagogy builds on Freirean ideas to produce a suite of classroom practices and curricular and materials orientations that are actually quite simple and a logical outcome of the desire to educate for action. They are simple, and under the right conditions they appear not to be too

difficult to put into practice. The problem is that they are quite contrary to the normal ways a (mainstream) transmission model of education operates, and they certainly are antithetical to a hierarchical, exam-driven education system like that in Korea.

## 4. CRITICAL LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY

### 4.1. Restating Key Aspects of Critical Language Pedagogy and its Sister Fields

Critical perspectives on society are built on judgments of mainstream society, which attempt to assess the extent to which a society (or education system) lives up to democratic values of equality, freedom, and solidarity. If such critiques are substantial they may not only theorize the current situation in an attempt to explain what is going wrong but can also attempt to suggest moves to improve conditions (but see McLaren, 2005, as discussed by Crookes [2013, p. 205] for a dissenting view). Obviously, traditions of social critique go back a long way, both in educational fields and in wider academic disciplines, not to mention in practical politics. As already mentioned, a broad line of radical analysis and methodological and curricular proposals is associated with the Brazilian philosopher of education Freire (though similar ideas antedate his work to a considerable extent; Crookes, 2013).

For second language teachers, it is the developments of Freire's ideas by three groups of language specialists that are of most immediate impact (rather than Freire's own work, or the work of his radical or progressive predecessors, such as Dewey). These developments are what I mean by "a suite of practices." That is, there is a range of ways of doing critical language pedagogy, understood broadly. Indeed, there ought to be more than I am suggesting, as Freire said that not only was there no *método Freire*, but rather, he (or his ideas) should be reinvented for each new location. The initial manifestation of Freire's ideas for L2 teaching was in world language pedagogy, when Crawford (1978) systematized his ideas into an influential set of principles for the US "foreign" language classroom. For adult immigrant ESL in the US, first Wallerstein (1983) and then Auerbach and Wallerstein (1987, Wallerstein & Auerbach, 2004) produced influential sample materials. Under the heading of critical language awareness, Janks produced six influential textbooks used in South African schools during the end of the apartheid regime (e.g., Janks, 1993). And with increasing dominance in numbers of publications in the US not to mention Australia, a number of scholars and teachers moved Freire's focus on the adult illiterate and informal education into the formal elementary and secondary L1 and L2 sectors under the heading of *critical literacy*, constructing courses and instructional practices in a number of ways, including through responding to existing children's literature (through text decoding, using, and responding; see Luke & Freebody, 1997; Harste, Short, & Burke, 1996).



All of these approaches draw implications for practice from the final goals of critical education. If we want to foster social justice, in democracies at least, we should have forms of education that facilitate young people in schools (not to mention adults in adult education) developing their ability to take action to make peaceful changes. This plausibly depends to a considerable extent on their education enabling them to identify contradictions and problems in society as they experience them, and to become accustomed to taking action, together, through democratic, participatory, and joint processes. For this, analytic abilities and communicative abilities, primarily egalitarian (that is, through dialogue, which can include challenge and critique, a role for both students and their teachers) must be developed. This requires support for developing student agency within the classroom and school, through choice, and by means of students contributing to the curriculum and negotiating the syllabus, the learning activities, and participating in the creation of assessment processes and forms. Obviously, put together like this without consideration of specific steps and contexts, it sounds like a tall order, for any education system or school (Korean or others). It is not the case that so-called “Western” education systems inherently manifest these ideas any more than Korean ones do. However, teachers who begin to realize the necessity of such steps, given their developing critical consciousness, arising perhaps because of politicizing events, or their group-based reflections on the immediate contradictions of Korean education (such as its association with disproportionately high rates of suicide among young people in developed countries [Yoon, 2013]), may choose very simple first steps to begin implementing a critical pedagogy, as increasingly outlined in the growing practical literature on implementing critical language pedagogy, both overall (Crookes, 2013) and in the specific Korean context (see Shin & Crookes, 2005; Huh, 2016, *inter alia*).

#### 4.2. Other Aspects of Critical Pedagogy: Confucius and *Silhak* Scholars as Examples of the Public Intellectual

While general and specific accounts of critical language pedagogy (that I referenced in the immediately preceding section) are beginning to be more common and visible, there are less obvious aspects of critical pedagogy I would like to draw attention to. The first of these concerns the role and responsibility of at least some language specialists in Korea (and perhaps myself, too, in a way). Freire (1998) refers to teachers as cultural workers. All of us involved in a reconstructive pedagogic project are working on the culture we are in one way or another part of. Teachers in general have a responsibility to society because by virtue of their role (working with children and cultural content) they either conserve society as it is, or contribute to its transformation; even if it is not as good as it should be, teachers are usually not completely in a position to have no effect on it whatsoever. To the extent that conditions allow, they should be intentional rather than accidental in their effects on society.

But some cultural workers have more potential influence than others. All teachers are

intellectuals, but some kinds of teachers have particular influence, either over other teachers (then they may be teacher educators or researchers) or through their visibility in society, through their discussion of issues and ideas, appearing in written and visual media: they then are what we now call public intellectuals. Now since Korea is still, has been until recently, or was once a “Confucian” society (even though it is largely not observantly Confucian any more; but see Peters & Kwak, 2014), I believe it is salutary to present Confucius himself as a critical pedagogue, and a would-be public intellectual. (I am not the only person to suggest this; even though I have highlighted this point in workshops for Korean English teachers for many years, I can now reference Zhao (2013).) In historical accounts, Confucius can be seen as a not entirely successful courtier and junior advisor to princes of some of the Six Kingdoms (or Warring States). After leaving the service of one of them (in disgust, it seems) he was thereafter unsuccessful in attaining office, though he sought it with some persistence. Yet in the end, he retired to his home state of Lu, and set up a school for the education of young men of promise, guiding them in ritual and knowledge, and especially morality and ethics, relevant to those who would be government advisors. He did this at least partly because he was disappointed in the conditions of the times. The forms of good government, the understanding of rite and ritual had been lost, the circumstances of the people had deteriorated as ill advised and immoral rulers had become numerous, and the ways of the Dukes of Zhou had been forgotten. Although Confucius looked back (whereas Freire looked forward) and though Confucius was not a democrat, both wanted to improve the conditions of the grand masses through good government, and looked to education to do this.

Among Koreans of the past, it was not always welcome to be reminded how much the country owed to Chinese culture, even if Confucius was widely honored. So a more indigenously Korean tradition of public intellectual should also be brought into contact with critical pedagogy, if critical perspectives are to be argued for as consistent with Korean traditions. The scholars of the *Silhak* tradition (Lee, 1996; Setton, 1997) of the 18th century were intellectuals who rebelled against the metaphysics of the Neo-Confucian court scholars. They were influenced by the gradual awareness of Western science and engineering technology seeping into Chinese consciousness, and were particularly sensitive to the needs of the people. They based their criticisms and advice on empirical evidence, and though more out of office than in, and often persecuted, they published manuals of advice for administrators, and Jung Yakyong even published a reader for children to learn their characters by (*Ahakpyun*), that was an improvement on the 100-Character Classic (Jung & Cho, 2006). (Jung Yakyong has returned to general notice in Korea as a result of a TV drama; the use of his thought to critique current curriculum and educational practice is suggested by Moon, 2013.) This work constitutes a historically-located form of critical intellectual that is indigenous to Korean traditions, though no one called them by that term in their day. It would be encouraging if present-day Korean intellectuals were able to engage with the popular media in vigorous critiques of education (language and other) through the perspectives of critical pedagogy. Publishing in academic journals is part, but by no means all, of what could and should be done.

It seems that the concept of a public intellectual is perhaps an outgrowth of French state development. Though Napoleon destroyed the intellectuals of the French Revolution, he also set up the *Grande Ecoles*. In these state institutions, the state-supported professors without teaching responsibilities did research on matters of national importance and discharged their public responsibilities in various ways, and there were even those who wrote and published without state support but came to be seen as part of the conscience of the nation. Sartre is of the latter category, Foucault the former, and both received honor from France—a country that pays more attention to its intellectuals than most. Neither men were much interested in educational reform, though Foucault certainly was active in the reform of another total institution (the prison). They bravely championed all kinds of reform and spoke out repeatedly against oppression and in favor of the downtrodden. More broadly, they are examples of what Gramsci (1980) called for. As Torres (1999, p. 109) comments, “a central role of intellectuals is to create a social imaginary.... [This] implies, for critical intellectuals, a moral responsibility and a political commitment.” Further details are provided by Morrow and Brown (1994, p. 318):

Social criticism and ... policy evaluation [are] a form of knowledge in their own right... [They are] practical contextualized and empirically informed normative claims with political implications. From this perspective the strategic implications of non-empirical research methods become central...: the question of ‘knowledge for what’ thus reverses the logical priority of the empirical and normative. Although some of this type of work is and can be undertaken in university contexts, its most central context of reference is the public sphere where ‘public intellectuals’ have a particular part to play and radicalize the methodological issues otherwise hidden under technocratic notions of evaluation research... In this context public intellectuals have a strategic place to play both with the university system and on the margins of the mass media (where critical voices often can be represented), as well as the various contexts where the educational tasks of revitalization of the public sphere may be realized.

I have asked my Korean friends if the equivalent exists in Korean society, and have been told that it is rare. Politically-active professors engaged in constructive social critique are not necessarily valued by Korea public opinion, it seems. Yet it would be a manifestation of a current version of an honorable Confucian Korean tradition if Korean professors, and experts of all kinds, would speak out about such matters as the English Divide, not to mention other negative aspects of Korean education which I will turn to later. To repeat, there is an identity, honored by Korean history, which is waiting to be taken up by those advocating critical pedagogy and radical change more broadly across Korean education<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> A very recent public debate by Korean university professors, through Facebook posts, about the role of young people in critiquing the unequal and oppressive nature of current Korean society, is inspiring, though it is not perhaps as systematic an analysis as might be desirable:

#### 4.3. A Moral Rather than an Instrumental Orientation is Needed in ELT Education

Numerous commentators and observers of education, in almost all parts of the world, have noted the deterioration of welfare states, and thus state education, since the 1980s. This has been accompanied in many countries by an emphasis on the instrumental or extrinsic aspects of education at the expense of its instrumental, liberal, moral, values-based or emancipatory aspects (cf. e.g., Carr, 2000; one of many who have made this distinction). The instrumental aspects of English education had always been a disproportionate part of learning and teaching this language, visible particularly in private language schools and other for-profit educational entities, as well as in more conventional educational institutions. They are particularly obvious in present-day dominant economic contexts, often referred to as “neo-liberal” and have had a powerful effect on Korean individuals, society, and education (cf. Abelman, Park, & Kim, 2009; Abelman, Choy, & Park, 2012; Park, 2010; West, 2014). A moral understanding of the role of the teacher (as based in non-instrumental values) is not particularly available in mainstream English language teaching (ELT). It can in general be found in some of the prescriptions of ministries of education, which may or may not be effective in practice. It can be found, as exceptions, in the literature of applied linguistics and TESOL (non-critical discussions beginning with Edge, 1995; Johnston & Buzzelli, 2002; Kubanviová & Crookes, 2016; more critical ones from Pennycook, 1989, and on). However, the dominant orientation is English for passing exams, with commercially-oriented purposes also very visible—for example, English for business (and thus for economic success and competition), with English teacher training (resulting in CELTA-type qualifications) offered outside institutions of liberal education, purchased to facilitate short-term international mobility and employment particularly by native-speakers to teach non-native speakers. A recent development reflecting the increasingly-visible contradictions between rich and poor around the globe is another collection of English for Specific Purposes concerns, associated with English for undocumented and forced migration purposes. This is the English one needs to negotiate a forced trip in a leaky boat across the Mediterranean, or to negotiate with “jackals” on the homeland security-policed border between Mexico and the USA, to take just two examples. Despite the dominance of the instrumental orientation, a critical viewpoint on education and society does exist, and implies starting with a moral understanding and an ethically-based critique of (language) education and dominant societal arrangements. It is quite possible that the majority of serving English teachers would find such an emphasis unfamiliar, naive, and impractical. Only a minority will respond.

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<https://koreaexpose.com/kaist-professor-hell-joseon-debate-korea/>. But more, rather than less debate, of a public nature, by intellectuals, is what I for one would like to see, particularly if it can engage with English Education.

The first step here, and implied throughout this essay, is to consider the formation or reformation of a philosophy of teaching through which the developing language teacher (or academic, or specialist) identifies personal and social goals or aims of for their professional work, that would be reconstructive in nature. We should not (only, or primarily) ask the conventional question that language teachers at conferences, or of teachers in pre- and in-service teaching perpetually ask: “What works?” We should also ask, or indeed ask first, “What should be done?” or “What ought to be the aim?” And the answer should come from considering such matters as the nature of human flourishing, with sociopolitical context as a determining factor for this. It is not premature to pre-specify this sociopolitical context as “democratic.” Korea is supposed to be a democracy. Those of us involved in education in this country (whether citizens or not), who are democratically-oriented, should be engaged in fostering democracy. It is quite consistent with this to observe, bluntly, that there could be more democracy than present arrangements offer, and that more would be better. More democracy is a simplistic way of saying that we could all benefit from increases in equity, freedom, solidarity, and social justice, and that all curricular areas of education can assist with such changes; the international power language of English can particularly assist, though it is presently implicated in actually *decreasing* Koreans’ ability to attain some of these aims, particularly that of equity or equality within society.

#### 4.4. Roles and Identities for Teachers and Intellectuals in Korea

Obviously critical language pedagogy would like to see some educational policy changes, in the Korean education system (as indeed in others). Yet one of the notable features of language policy in Korea over the past 30 years is the lack of change—this despite much exhortation, not to mention curriculum policy proclamations, by the Ministry of Education, which has been calling for communicative language teaching for much of this time, apparently to little or no avail, at least in terms of what actually happens in most state classrooms. Factors affecting this are parental expectations, university entrance exams, the role of standardized tests, teachers’ own comfort level and capabilities, and so on. Yet if we do not have analyses of *attempts* at policy change and detailed accounts of why they failed, it will be hard to provide strategies to make even meliorative changes. Critical policy studies, as a field, exists (e.g., Orsini & Smith, 2006). Korean policy studies (e.g., Mo, 2006) should be more critical; Korean scholarship for critical language pedagogy in Korea should also draw on this area together with Korean education policies (e.g., Lee, Lee, & Jang, 2010) to have an integrated and well-grounded broad base.

Also, given the role of the media in most countries, particularly highly media-consuming countries like Korea, what *is* the role of the media in fostering, supporting, or challenging public opinion and typical expectations, in the area of English and English education? (cf. Furukawa [2014] for an analysis of the images of English for Japanese presented by popular media in

Japan.) What are the corresponding images of English in Korea and how do they shape, or distort, public opinion? (See Park, 2010.) How can media control of images of English be resisted by critical scholars or activists? If, as many observers (and students themselves) attest, it is the parents who pressure their children to pass standardized exams (in English, as in other areas) to such an extent that some of them commit suicide (cf. Hunt, 2015; Kim & Yoon, 2013), what can we do, and what can other authorities, forces, and factors (such as the media) do, to change public opinion? Does public opinion change about education, in Korea, and if so how, in what regards, to what extent? It is possible that partial answers to these questions exist in mainstream and critical social science studies, done by Koreans and published in Korean journals, but it does not appear that as yet, critical Korean English education scholars have made the necessary connections to such disciplines, or asked these questions in a sustained and analytic manner.

One problem that critical intellectuals in Korea may face is “red-baiting” (an *ad hominem* attack on an argument—an attempt to discredit it, and its proponent, by associating it with communism). This may be an understandable response emanating from the anxiety felt by many South Koreans faced with the nuclear sabre-rattling of the North Korean regime, as the last pair of Cold War client states still at war preserve the last Cold War border, frozen just a half hour’s drive from metropolitan Seoul. One of the largest armies in East Asia is mobilized, while ballistic missiles with nuclear warheads are in range of the highly wealthy but highly insecure neighborhoods of Gangnam. Not surprisingly, critical English educators will face quick reactions from conservative viewpoints claiming that critical pedagogy should be dismissed (despite the breadth of its concerns and the range of its intellectual inheritances), merely because *one* of its (many) sources (Freire) was influenced by Marxist ideas. As Freire was a Catholic Christian, the matter of his (many) influences is not simple (see Taylor, 1993); perhaps those complaining about critical pedagogy would have less to complain about if proponents of it prioritized Freire’s desires that we attempt to emancipate our oppressors and recognize the fallen nature of humanity, taking a Christological perspective on the teacher’s responsibilities.

Considering the reality that concerns about North Korea have for many South Koreans, critical Korean pedagogues may need to find other critical identities from within those positions and practices to be found within non-mainstream historical and current Korean culture, or which challenge the more materialist traditions that capitalist Korean culture has mostly imported from “the West.” Clearly Protestant Christianity has in recent decades become a position from which a critique, especially of recent military dictatorships in Korea, was exercised. For educators, the attempt by those such as O Chon-suk (e.g., 1960) to craft a new democratic education for Korea in the early 1960s should still be interesting and despite his Deweyan influences, the work of O Chon-suk is a comparatively Korean place to stand, or start from, at least compared with Freire. Going further back in time, at least one of the reformers of the period of Japanese colonialism

(Yi Kwang-Su) has been utilized (in published work in English) to criticize the long-standing position of child-oppressing Korean parents (cited in Koo, 2014). I have already mentioned the reformist anti-NeoConfucian *silhak* scholars; the responsibilities of Confucian intellectuals to give advice to bad or good kings and princes, even at the expense of their lives, is a most honorable and critical example. One final, as yet largely unexplored indigenous critical resource of Korean culture is the shaman tradition of *kut*. Its matriarchal practices could be mined for its implicit indigenous (feminist-oriented) Korean critique of patriarchy. At least one Korean scholar has advanced it as containing or offering resources for a critical Korean philosophy of education (Kim, 1987, cited in Rhi, 1993).

## 5. CONCLUSION

Critical positions have always existed in Korean society, many of them strongly connected to education (cf. Shin & Crookes, 2005a). Therefore the possibility of emancipatory change continues to exist—has always existed, in Korea as everywhere. For those of us who recognize the validity of a democratic critique of society, it is also our duty to advance the practical applications of this forward. It is to that end, and in support of accompanying analyses by my Korean colleagues, that this overview is intended to be put.

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