DEMYSTIFYING THE POPULAR NARRATIVES OF ENGLISH FEVER
IN SOUTH KOREA: FROM MOTHERS’ PERSPECTIVES

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by
Suyoung Kang

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The dissertation of Suyoung Kang was reviewed and approved by the following:

Jamie Myers
Professor of Education
Dissertation Advisor
Chair of Committee

Patrick Shannon
Professor of Education

Mariko Haneda
Associate Professor of Education

Meredith Doran
Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics

Rose Mary Zbiek
Director of Graduate Program
Department of Curriculum and Instruction

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School
ABSTRACT

While some scholars look at the spread of English as a global language a neutral or positive process in the history of English language (Crystal, 1997; Graddol, 1997), other scholars see it differently (Canagarah, 1999; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Pennycook, 1998, 2007; Phillipson, 2002; Rassol, 2007; Watts, 2011). Some see it as linguistic imperialism (Philpson, 1992), as an extension of colonial discourse (Pennycook, 1998, 2007), as colonial and imperial projects (Kumaravadivelu, 2003), or as the spread of English through commodification (Watts, 2011).

In South Korea, gaining the name of English fever, English language education has been integral part of education fever for the last two decades. When the Kim Young Sam administration (1993-1998) ignited the globalization project, emphasizing the English communication skills as the silver bullet in global competition, it happened to engineer English fever in South Korea, which is often criticized as "collective neurosis" (Y. M. Kim, 2002), "fever ruining the nation" (D.R.Lee, 2010), and "social fraud" (Nam, 2012).

English fever positions mothers, who are popularly considered in charge of children's education, to be responsible for children's English language education, while access to quality English language education is not equal to all, let alone the uncertainty of what it is. Hoping children would succeed and thrive, mothers experience pressure, struggles, and frustration in teaching children English. Drawing on mothers' stories, this multiple case study investigates mothers' challenges and struggles, which constitute their motherhood in the prevalent rhetoric of 'Wise Mother, Good Wife' in South Korea.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Every journey accompanies its own excitement, discovery, fatigue, and frustration, wandering around places. My journey in the PhD program has proved it is no exception. Strong resistance and lack of sense of belonging repeatedly reminded me that I am a temporary sojourner here. I've struggled, like a fish out of water, out of culture and language, but my stay away from home all these years might make me a stranger there—to some extent—when I go back to my home country. Excitement or struggles, what has made my journey possible in this program is people I've met and the relationships we've built together. I'd like to express my gratitude to them, although my words never can deliver it enough.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Contextual Narratives of English Fever

Education has been highly valued and considered as a gateway to upward mobility in Korea, especially during the fast economic development since the 1960s. However, in recent years, Korean education has become more competitive. The changes in education have reshaped roles and expectations of the stakeholders in education including students, teachers, and parents—especially mothers who are assumed to be responsible for children’s education. The center of the competitive education has become English language education, as the commonly used phrase, English fever, implies.


Some of the widely discussed topics include: tongue surgery in order to perfect R and L sounds in English (Chae, 2004), English immersion programs in English villages (Failoa, 2004; Krashen, 2003; J.S. Lee, 2012; Troitter, 2008), EPIK and the practice of hiring "native English speaker teachers" (Heo, 2006; M-Y. Jeon, 2009; M-Y. Jeon & Lee,

English fever, which illustrates English language education practices in South Korea, emerged with the neoliberal economy in South Korea. Where once speedy economic development, known as “Miracle of Han River,” surprised the world, the politics of the neoliberal economy changed the society at many levels. Changes in domestic economy included shifts from an closed to an open economy, from state-regulation to deregulation, and from public management to privatization. It mirrors the neoliberal world economy, emphasizing “competitiveness,” “(economic) globalization,” and “internationalization.” Those changes in the economy soon prevailed in education, as well, as evidenced by the self-perpetuating private-market education. English has played a central role in the neoliberal education, causing social issues and concerns.

**Issues Relevant to English Fever**

**English as a Commodity**

Rassol (2007) argued that languages are saleable commodities that clients invest in and in return expect to be exchangeable in the global labor market. The cost spent in private-market English education for elementary, middle, and high school students
evidences that English is a saleable commodity in South Korea. English as a commodity is enjoying prime status in South Korea; one of the major challenges in learning English as a foreign language in South Korea is also its high economic cost.

Statistics Korea reports that in the year of 2012, 6.4 trillion won (approximately 6.4 million USD) was spent on private-market English language education, paid directly by the students' parents. The total cost spent in private-market education was 19 trillion won (approximately 19 million USD) in the same year, close to half of the national educational budget. The Statistics Korea also reports that 80% of elementary school students, 70.6% of middle school students, and 50.7% of high school students participate in private-market education. It is known that private-market English language education costs account for the highest percentage of private-market education up until the second grade in middle school.

**English as a Gatekeeper**

English acting as a gatekeeper drives mothers to spend so much money in children's English language education although many other factors constitute English fever. English is considered to be a gatekeeper because it is a screening filter in education as well as in the job market. English is one of the three major subjects in college entrance exams; the other two are Korean and math. In many universities, English scores are used as a graduation requirement. Many workplaces require job applicants to submit English exam scores where English has nothing to do with job skills. In recent years, large conglomerates like Samsung or LG have adopted English interviews for job applicants. So, those practices make mothers believe that English scores are extremely significant for
a child's future success. Under the circumstances of English as a commodity and gatekeeper in South Korea, its unique English language-education practices make English a socioeconomic marker (S-J. Park & Abelmann, 2004).

**English Divide**

English divide results from the English language education practices based on English as a commodity and gatekeeper. With the prevalent rhetoric of English benefiting its learners, English language education in the private sector has been a race to compete with one another. A race of learning English where people with more resources monopolize the winning tickets makes English language education an emblem of neoliberal education. The increase in early study abroad among pre-college students from 2,000 in 1995 to 30,000 in 2006 (Zagier, 2012) demonstrates that the English-language education race goes beyond the national boundary. In doing so, English divide has caused English language education to contribute to the cycle of social reproduction via education.

English divide has led to systematic discrimination and other social issues. Workplaces, even where English has nothing to do with the required job skills, favor people with higher proficiency of English. In higher education, for example, those who can teach in English—regardless of their area of study—have a better chance of getting hired. English medium instruction in higher education reveals underlying problems of English divide, for example (Kang, 2012; Piller & Cho, 2013). Anecdotal evidence shows that English medium instruction in some higher educational institutions lowers the quality of education. With English proficiency overemphasized, English divide causes unfair discrimination to many members of Korean society.
The Cost of English Fever

The total cost that South Korea pays for learning English constitutes economic cost, opportunity cost, and other social issues such as English divide, cultural and linguistic influences, or cultural toadyism. This cost cannot be fully estimated, neither can its return. The English language influences the various members of Korean society in different ways, ranging from unborn children, toddlers, and their mothers to school children, college students and professors, and office workers. The influence on motherhood is due to mothers’ efforts to ensure that their children learn English.

When asked about educational cost, this usually refers to private-market educational cost. Elementary and middle school education is mandatory and free in South Korea. Parents pay no tuition except for those with students attending the 76 private elementary schools (two private elementary school were in the research site) out of 5,913 elementary schools across the country and one special middle school out of the total number of 3,173 middle schools in 2013 according to Korea Educational Statistics Service, as outlined in Table 1-1. At all except private elementary schools, usually parents pay for miscellaneous costs as school lunch, books, and activities for their children's school.

Table 1-1

The Number of Elementary Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>National Schools</th>
<th>Public Schools</th>
<th>Private Schools</th>
<th>Total Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5,821</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>5,913</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics Korea
Besides the economic cost, Koreans pay a high opportunity cost for learning English. Since English acts as a gatekeeper, parents would like to ensure their children to learn English from an early age. However, children spending hours learning English lose the opportunities to learn something else, which they might like more or be better at. Many college students and job seekers spend a lot of time to improve their English scores. The opportunity costs of English fever is probably beyond calculation.

Cultural toadyism among younger learners of English and linguistic influences on the Korean language is a concern for many Korean scholars. The linguistic and cultural influences of English and American culture are very noticeable on the street signs, in company names, TV commercials, and pop culture such as K-pop and TV.

The generation gap is distinctive in South Korea when it comes to English proficiency. English language has become a new determinant for literacy skills in some sense. The level of English that was required for older generations (those more than 40 years old) is different from that for the younger generation. Watts (2011) argued, citing Preisler (1999), that "it is simply not true that almost everyone [in Sweden, Norway, Netherlands, and Denmark] can communicate in English with ease. (p. 282)" Preisler (1999) reported that those (mostly older than 40) who lack English knowledge feel discriminated against when Danish advertising and public notices were introduced in English. Watts (2011) and Preisler (1999) also argued that it is wrong to take it for granted that people who learned English as a foreign language would utilize it freely at their convenience. It is the same in Korea's case.

Another social concern is the consequences of learning English early on. With the popularity of English kindergarten and early study abroad to learn English, more and
more children started to learn English. Some were exposed to English instruction before 
Korean instruction. Some scholars argue that learning English so early like in South 
Korea is detrimental for young learners. The overall impact on children's linguistic, 
cultural, and psychological development through early English language education either 
domestically or internationally needs to be better understood.

All those social issues and impacts of learning English as a foreign language with 
such pressure are part of the societal cost of learning English in South Korea. The price 
that Koreans pay for their belief in the capital of English as a global language and for 
learning it is the societal cost of learning English as a foreign language.

**Rationale for This Study**

**Why Mothers?**

Although women's social involvement in South Korea has now considerably 
broadened, child rearing and education are still considered women’s responsibilities. As 
one mother in this study illustrates during the interview, "wise mother, good wife is the 
best career for women" has been a central rhetoric of motherhood as she grew up. The 
reason to choose mothers instead of fathers or parents to better understand English fever 
is based on this assumption that child-reading and education are popularly women's 
responsibilities.

**Overview of the Three Generations: Grandmothers, Mothers, and Children**

The aim of this overview is to help readers understand the rapid cultural, social, 
and economic changes in South Korea that have influenced and shaped the Korean 
society. The focus, however, will be on the current mothers.
One of the major differences in motherhood between the mothers in this study and their own mothers is that they carry very different collective memories. Their mothers, born sometime between 1930s and 1940s, spent their childhood under Japanese colonial regime, when brutal oppression, exploitation, and poverty were prevailing. After liberation from Japan in 1945, another social and political turbulence awaited Korean society with ideological conflicts between the North and the South. The North came under control of USSR while the South came under control of the United States. Three years later, in 1948, the North and the South established separate governments: the communist Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the North and capitalist Republic of Korea in the South.

In 1950, the divided Koreas faced another social disaster: the Korean War, which lasted for three years until the truce was signed in 1953. Both Koreas were very completely destroyed by this war. Poverty was ubiquitous, threatening basic livelihood. People nearly starved to death and relied heavily on international aid. Education was a fancy word for the majority of the commoners. When parents could afford to educate their children, education for boys was prioritized over that of girls.

Discrimination against women and girls was taken for granted. Women were understood as subordinate to men, sacrificing themselves for the family instead of pursuing their personal potential or wellbeing. Mothers in this study recall what their mothers used to tell them about their childhood. One of the mothers illustrates that her mother was scolded by her grandfather because she won a prize at school when a girl was supposed to stay home and take care of the family. Eventually, her mother was forced to
stay home to take care of her younger siblings. Most of the participants' mothers did not get primary schooling.

The participant mothers in this study were born between late 1960s and early 1970s, when the Korean economy slowly grew out of the absolute poverty. Their parents had witnessed the social changes along with the economic growth and more opportunities for education with the expansion of public education in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. These drastic changes lead to contrasting education to the two generations.

Five out of seven participant mothers have college degrees; of those five, one has two college degrees. The other two mothers have high school degrees. One of the two has wanted to continue her higher education after marriage, but this has never materialized due to lack of time and support while raising children. All the mothers in this study have more education than their own mothers but still had to fight for it. Sometimes they had to convince their parents or other family members to support their education. With the secondary or tertiary education degrees, these mothers grew up in the dominant patriarchal ideology of motherhood as an ideal womanhood: "Wise mother, good wife."

Women's role in taking care of children and husband is more emphasized than their career or dream, even though economic growth in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s allowed more families to educate their children, be they boys or girls.

The participant mothers' children, born in 1990s or in 2000s, have had very different childhood experiences compared to those of their mothers or grandmothers. They have grown up in a more affluent time. This is not only the materialistic affluence that economic development has brought to the children's generation, but also the speedy changes in informational technology make it hard to predict life 10 or 20 years from now.
Their children live in the world where technology as well as economic globalization has unprecedentedly increased the intra- and international connectivity and mobility.

With the small size of a modern and nuclear family, the mothers in this study illustrate that intensive mothering is normalized in the rhetoric of their motherhood. Intensive mothering is an ideology of a “child-centered, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor intensive, financially expensive (Hays, 1996:8)” mothering practice. In intensive mothering, mothers take primary responsibilities for the nurture and development of children (Johnson & Swanson, 2006). Mothers’ stories in this study show the pervasiveness of this ideology in South Korea. Their stories illustrate how the intensive mothering ideology makes their roles of teaching children English overwhelming and arduous.

**Research Significance**

English fever positions mothers to be responsible for the future of their children in a narrow way. If their children’s English is not judged to be “good,” then their life prospects are diminished. Yet, the paths to “good” English are not clear or available equally to all. This study seeks to understand how mothers deal with these pressures.

Pertaining to English fever, there have been some studies done about mothers, especially “goose mother,” who has traveled to English-speaking countries accompanying children for the sake of the child’s English language education (Chow, 2012; H-K. Lee, 2010; Zagier, 2012). However, often “goose mothers” generally belong to a higher socio-economic class than those who teach children English domestically.
Despite the implication of English divide, there have been very few studies done about the mothers who teach children English back in South Korea. In order to understand mothers' roles in teaching children English, it is necessary to do research about mothers of different socio-economic classes.

This study, drawing on the mothers' stories, investigates mothers' roles in teaching children English in South Korea. It will broaden the understanding of mothers who teach their children in South Korea either because they cannot afford to send children abroad or they choose not to.

**Contribution to the Field of Foreign Language Studies**

Trying to understand mothers' pressures and challenges in children's English language education, this study demands a better awareness of the local construction of English as a global language in English as a foreign language education. It brings attention to the English language educational policy and planning in such EFL contexts, as well.

**Research Questions**

1. How do Korean mothers perceive the importance of English in their children's English language education?

2. What would they like to gain by investing in the capital of English language?

3. What do they do in order to materialize their desired goals?

4. What do they ultimately gain by investing in their children's English language education?
Chapter Overview

Chapter 2: "Literature Review" reveals relevant issues with respect to English fever and English language education as a global language, as described in the literature. Chapter 3: "Methodology" explains the research method adopted in this study. Chapter 4: "Stories of Seven Mothers" illustrates the seven mother participants of this study. The ensuing six chapters (Chapter 5-10) are analysis chapters. Data analysis entails three major themes, namely "mothers' perception of the English language education", "mothers' involvement and investment in their children's English language education", and "mothers' dilemma, struggles, and regrets". The first three analysis chapters (Chapter 5, 6, and 7) are about mothers' perception of the English language education. The fourth analysis chapter (Chapter 8) is about mothers' involvement and investment in their children's English language education. The fifth and sixth analysis chapters (Chapter 9 and 10) are about mothers' dilemma, struggles, and regrets in teaching their children English. Chapter 11: “Discussion” includes discussion, future studies, and implications.
Chapter 2
Literature Review

The Spread of English as a Global Language

Kachru (1992) categorized English speakers into three: Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circles. Speakers of English as a mother tongue belong to the Inner Circle, such as Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. ESL (English as a second language) speakers fill the Outer Circle such as India, the Philippines, South Africa, and Singapore. EFL (English as a foreign language) speakers account for the Expanding Circle such as South Korea, China, Japan, and Germany. As shown in Figure 2-1 below, the number of ESL and EFL speakers is estimated between 250 to 1300 million, while whose who speak English as their mother tongue speakers numbers approximately 320 to 330 million.

Figure 2-1. Kachru’s Three Circles

Crystal (1997) argued that EFL and ESL speakers outnumber that of English mother tongue speakers and that English is a global language. He went on to argue that it
was just “in the right place at the right time” coinciding with the historical, socio-economic, and cultural circumstances. Despite the numbers of ESL and EFL speakers he presented, English as a global language has a relatively short history. No one can deny that the British Empire brought English language and culture to its colonies across the globe. But when America’s powerful economy emerged after the Second World War, English started to be more widely used and eventually picked up the title as a global language.

English as a global language has been used, enabling diverse, linguistically mixed groups of people to communicate for science, international business, education, and pop culture online and offline in the Inner Circle as well as in the Outer and Expanding Circle communities. English is claimed as international language (Jenkins, 2000; McKay, 2002) or lingua franca (Seidlhofer, 2005), being used as a mutual language among speakers of other languages. English, used as an international language or lingua franca, has given a birth to world English (Brutt-Crieffler, 2002) or world Englishes (Jenkins, 2003), which refer to the local varieties of English used in numerous communities across the globe.

**Colonial Discourses of English as a Global Language**

The spread of English as a global language has invited controversial standings of many scholars. Graddol (1997), for example, argued that English becomes the language of ESL speakers to "express their own values and identities, create their own intellectual property, and export goods and services to other countries” (p. 3). English language is used throughout the globe these days, regardless of the linguistic background of the local. However, some other scholars debunk his argument.
For example, Kumaravadivelu (2003) contended, citing Krishnaswamy and Burde (1998), that Indian English has not "made any serious inroads into the social customs, ceremonies connected with births, marriages and deaths, religious functions and rituals that go with festivals, worships in temples, intimate interactions in the family and in their peer group - even in urban areas" (p.15). Even though India is one of the most representative ESL countries after several hundred-year-long British colonial histories, Kumaravadivelu argued that English is not 'their' language yet. Instead, English in India today plays a key role dividing the privileged small elite group and the underprivileged majority, which is likely determined by the access to English-medium education (Ruddy, 2008; Sonntag, 2003). It continues dividing people in India, not necessarily by the caste alone but by the linguistic, cultural, and symbolic capital, which is likely to grant the opportunities for better education and upward mobility.

When Graddol (1997) argued that English is used to create ESL speakers' intellectual property, he raises a highly contentious topic. Since English is a main medium of publication in academia, for example, the voices of thousands of scholars are simply smothered or buried under their poor English proficiency. For his third point—again very contentious—he questions how many local products actually cross the regional border, let alone the question of whether they should, and also how many products produced by multinational companies actually cross borders of lots of countries, which are not local products. More and more products made by multinational companies produced with cheaper labor should not be confused with the global connectedness, which it is not, and which can be called local or global dominance by a powerful economy rather than connectedness.
Historically, language has been associated with power and used as a mechanism to give or restrict privilege to certain groups of people. Tollefson (2002) argued that "when language is perceived as a marker of group identity and a determiner of access to political and economic resources, then the probability of language conflict increases" (p. 6). During the Choseon Dynasty (1392-1910), the last kingdom period of Korean history, there was a conflict between Hangeul, Korean written language, and Hanja, the classic Chinese characters. It had been more than 1,000 years since Hanja was used as a writing system among small group of educated elite. At the beginning of Choseon Dynasty, the Korean writing system was created and promulgated but never fully approved by the educated elite throughout the dynasty. By doing that, Hangeul was looked down upon as a literacy skill of commoners, women, and girls who had very limited access to the privileged form of literacy skills during that time, Hanja. The educated elite were able to keep their privilege in the time of social class system through Hanja, which was almost the only channel of social mobility through which to become government officials and wield political power.

Recent language conflicts that occur in Korea is between English and Korean (Bok, 1998, 2003; J. S.Y. Park, 2009; Yoo, 2005). For example, there was a long debate between people who propose and agree to English as an official language in South Korea and those who denounce it. Simply speaking, the main reason of those who advocate English as an official language in South Korea is that it would increase Koreans’ international and global competitiveness. English language education in South Korea over the last half century shows that it will be very difficult for Koreans to be able to speak in English any near to the level of using it freely for daily communication even
though English language policy has been putting excessive, heightened emphasis on English language education and oral communication. The other side of this issue is that had English been an official language already, many Koreans would be lost in the middle of their daily life for simple things without leaving their own home, as the Danish case Preisler (1999, as cited in Watts, 2011) elaborated. In spite of the assumption that English is a global language, the majority of people over 40 in Denmark had very little or no English language skills and reportedly felt discriminated when English was used for advertising instead of Danish, the local language. The spread of English as a global language at the local level brings up many conflicting issues including language conflicts, language rights, human rights, and language-in-education issues.

It is believed that the spread of English as a global language connects people regardless of their regional and linguistic origins. However, it should be questioned whether the current global language, English, keeps its status because the global language increases connectedness among people in the global communities in general or whether it is due to the connectedness among privileged people who have better access to the target language in the first place, either innately or via education. If English plays a role of “a marker of group identity and a determiner of access to political power and economic resources, (Tollefson, 2002: 6)” the spread of English as a global language is perpetuated and reinforced with the attempt to achieve the advantages. Then it can cause many linguistic, social issues including social justice and linguistic economy in the global scale.

Phillipson (1992) criticized the promotion of English through ELT (English language teaching) profession in a global scale as linguistic imperialism. He argued that
English is sold through the imperialistic discourses of English as "innate power, resource power, and structural power" (Galtung, 1980:62, as cited in Phillipson, 1992, p. 272).

Pennycook (2007) conceptualized the relationship between ELT and colonialism as historical, political and economic, and cultural, and he criticizes the colonial discourse of ELT in the global scale. He argued that the continuing relationship between English and the discourses of colonialism in Hong Kong makes it difficult to call it a real end of colonialism in Hong Kong even after the retreat of Hong Kong from the British Kingdom. In spite of the British colonial expansion for several centuries, the massive explosion of English on a global scale sparked during the decline of the British colonial power and the rise of the United States as the new global power. Under the British colonial regime, English education in British colonies was limited.

With the contemporary spread of English as a global language, he criticized that “the spread of English, teaching methods, and textbooks can be seen as a recapitulation, if not an intensification, of (neo-)colonial relations” (p. 13). He continued: “The conjuncture between ELT and colonialism has had long-lasting effects on the theories, practices, and beliefs on ELT: From classroom practices to beliefs about the cultural makeup of our students, many aspects of ELT reproduce cultural constructs of colonialism” (p. 13).

Kumaravadivelu (2003) maintained that there has been awareness that global status of English language “was aided and abetted by colonial and imperial projects that trampled upon the political, cultural, and linguistic heritage of millions of people across the globe” (p. 539). He challenged the prototypical methods of English language teaching as a colonial construct and calls for the need to pay attention to the pedagogic methods of
English language teaching because methodological means to decolonize English language teaching in the classroom have not been systematically examined.

**Globalization and the Global Spread of English**

**Overview of Globalization.** Globalization today increases the dynamics of interaction among people more than any other time of the human history. In particular, information technology enables people to share local and world news and knowledge beyond time and space and do business with others from different ethnic, linguistic, cultural, social, economic, and political boundaries without leaving their physical home. However, globalization has existed throughout human history with a form of migration either for dominance or colonization for “better” conditions of living and livelihood (Young, 2001). Traces of Arabic, such as the number zero, or new inventions such as paper, printing skills, and gun power evidence human beings’ mobility from place to place. The move of spices and local crops native to one place into other parts of the world gives another example. Later, European colonization from the 15th century and the need of new markets from industrialization in the 19th century boosted the mobilization of human beings. Advanced technology in aviation and information science allowed a number of people to move across the globe in the 20th and 21st centuries in an unprecedented way. In addition, the new phase of globalization during this time period features increased global connectivity and interdependence with rapid changes inviting controversial debates among many scholars.

Lechner and Boli (2006) made efforts to put diverse arguments on globalization in one place called *The Globalization Reader*. This book illuminates globalization in many
aspects dealing with economic, cultural, and political globalization as well as the impact of INGOs (international non-governmental organizations) and NGOs (non-governmental organizations), and the local resistance to issues pertaining to globalization using scholarly debates of pro- and con-globalization. They concur with the complexity of globalization and urge the readers to see both sides (pro as well as con) of the globalization debate to understand the ongoing process better.

Sen (2006) emphasized the danger equating globalization with Westernization. The agents of globalization have changed over time. There was a time when a lot of knowledge and technology moved from East to West. Now modern technology and economic interrelations are moving from West to East and to all corners of the world. As the West would not have been able to develop the modern technology without the knowledge and technology from the East in the first place—which became the foundation of further development in modern technology—it would be a mistake for the other parts of the world to simply resist the globalization as the continuum of Western imperialism. International and intranational unequal distribution of the benefits of globalization remains the main issue that needs to address, Sen (2006) argued.

Gary (2006) asserted that economic globalization neither replicates the American free market globally nor promotes the global laissez-faire. Instead, economic globalization has spawned diverse local, indigenous free markets and proved that nothing can stop the uneven economic development within and between the world’s diverse societies. Besides, new technologies have made the traditional employment malfunction, which causes a new politics of economic insecurity to be universal. Global democratic capitalism is not realizable as worldwide communism failed to be, he argued. Appadurai
(1996) illustrated that “the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization” (p. 32) is the major dilemma of global interactions. The flow of global capital moves so tremendously, in terms of quantity and speed, but never has been a one-way stream. The politics of global cultural economy is only disjunctive, he argued.

**Globalization and the spread of English.** Sonntag (2003) argued that global English is associated—culturally, economically, and politically—with globalization. What makes English as a global language is not just the numbers that indicate the geographical spread of English. English as a global language becomes part of globalization itself as part of the cause, the process, and the product of globalization. In addition, local politics of English as a global language are interconnected with globalization. As English spreads as a global language, the loss of linguistic diversity as well as cultural homogenization become concerns of those who are interested in the spread of English as a global language.

On the other hand, Mufwene (2010) questioned if English is becoming a global language as it is claimed to be, drawing on the cases of Africa including Cameroon and South Africa, as well as many other Asian cases. For example, in Cameroon where English and French are both official languages, French and Francophone areas are more dominant and flourishing than English and Anglophone counterparts (Feral, 2007, as cited in Mufwene, 2010). In South Africa, English usage is primarily associated with the socio-economically privileged classes but not so much with the majority who speak vernacular languages. Mufwene (2008) further argued that it is a myth to claim English is taking over other languages and causing loss of local languages because English is far removed from a lot of vernacular speakers in many parts of the world. Mainly it is
because English has spread unequally across the regions and communities; it is the same with the global connectedness and interdependence. Borrowing Blommaert (2010), he continued, The spread of English is very much constrained by these inequalities, aggravated by many more at the level of national or local socioeconomic structure.

**Commodification and Spread of English as a Global Language**

“Languages constitute a saleable commodity with regard to business and marketing, whilst for the clients they represent an investment in cultural capital which can then be exchanged within the global labor market.” (Rassol, 2007, p. 148)

John Rogers (1982) problematized EFL teaching in the global scale with his insights from his own EFL teaching experiences in many other countries. He questions whether we should continue teaching English to a great number of children with the belief that learning English will give them better future when only a small number of children might actually use English for international communication. He continued: “A lot of English is being taught, and a lot of textbook writers (publishers) are making money out of English teaching. One wonders, though, how much English is learnt” (p. 148). This is especially true in EFL countries where learning English yields high profits for some people and creates high costs for the others, Rogers' concern sounds very reasonable to delve into.

In fact, it is a chicken-or-egg question to ask which comes first: does the status of English as a global language sparks the spread of English as a global language or does the spread of English across the globe make English a global language. Either way, the more English is taught in the global scale, the more it will spread as a global language. That is
called structural spread of English language. One thing is certain: As Rogers questions
the global scale EFL teaching above, ELT brings a myriad of issues.

Watts (2011) argued that English as a global language is a myth, which represents
the beliefs that commercialization of English spurs further spread of English as a global
language. Holliday (2005, 2006) argued that native-speakerism is in the center of global-
scale ELT. According to him, "native-speakerism is a pervasive ideology within ELT,
characterized by the belief that ‘native-speaker’ teachers represent a ‘Western culture,’
which carries both the ideal English language and the English language teaching
methodology” (Holliday, 2005). Either English is taught on a global scale because it is a
global language, which will give benefits to the speakers of the language, especially from
EFL and ESL settings, or the global scale of ELT is actually the contributor to create the
belief of English as a global language. Both possibilities equally perpetuate native
speakerism through ELT.

The ELT in the global scale is grounded on the assumption that language is a
commodity and so is English (Rassol, 2007). As a saleable commodity, consumers can
invest in it, expecting to exchange it into economic and cultural capital in the global labor
market. As English is taught widely in the European countries as a global language,
Rassol (2008) pointed out that many countries in Europe increase the investment in
English as a foreign language while the United Kingdom reduces its investment in
foreign language education, raising questions of economic unfairness and injustice on top
of the questions of language choices and language rights. To get the benefits of
'convenient' global communication, language policies of English as a foreign and global
language makes learners suffer from abrupt implementation or excessive expectation.
One good example is English-medium instruction in higher education in the Expanding Circle countries such as South Korea (Piller & Cho, 2013; Dioz, Langabaster, & Sierra, 2012).

**English Fever in South Korea**

**Globalization, Internationalization and Neoliberal Economy in South Korea**

The Neoliberal economy in South Korea has been infiltrated over time from the beginning of 1980s. Until the late 1970s, Korean economic plans prioritized economic revival of the nation under the leadership of former president, Park Junghkee (1962-1979), who is credited with his pivotal role of economic planning and development though also known as a military dictator. During the Park Jungh-Hee administration, the export-oriented domestic market was protected and controlled by the government. Impoverished South Korea slowly gained the momentum of economic revival.

It was after president Park Jungh-Hee that neoliberal economic policies started to permeate in South Korea. With president Chun Doo-Hwan’s regime (1980-1988), the orientation of economic planning was changed from a closed- to open-capital market toward foreign capital and from governmental regulation to privatization. At the turn of 1990s, neoliberal economy was accelerated in South Korea under Kim Young-Sam (1993-1998) with the slogan of globalization. The discourse of globalization was spread not only by the government but also by big conglomerates like Samsung and Daewoo: “World Humankind” (by Samsung) and “World Management” (by Daewoo) for example.

During the Kim Young-Sam administration, South Korea joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) and OECD (Organization of Economic Co-operation and
Development) and reached the agreement of GATT (Uruguay Round of the General Agreement in Tariffs and Trade). South Korea opened its capital market to international communities. With the massive influx of foreign capital, domestic capital market was at risk of collapsing during the 1997 Asian Economic Crisis and ended up relying on the IMF (International Monetary Fund) fund with the condition of restructuring domestic economy. The consequences led to downsizing of large- and medium-sized companies and threatening stability in the labor market. The concept of life-long employment was replaced with contract-based or part-time employment in many workplaces in South Korea. The neoliberal economy in South Korea deepened in the beginning of the new millennium. In consequence, unequal redistribution of wealth, labor instability, high unemployment rate, and privatization of public enterprises have emerged as social issues.

**Education Fever in South Korea**

Education has been considered significant for the society as well as for its members throughout Korean history. The Choseon Dynasty (1392-1910), the last kingdom of Korea, was no exception. However, there is a major difference in education between before and after starting public education in South Korea. During the Choseon Dynasty, the social class system limited formal education to children from higher-ranking families, *Yangban*. Those children were encouraged to learn Teachings of Confucius and Mencius and to prepare for the national examination, called *Gwago*, to be government officials. Education for the commoners was mainly oriented to character building and moral education. Not only the social class system but also the classic Chinese Characters, *hanja*, made the commoners, who had very rare access to them, have difficulty in reading
and writing in *hanja*. The Korean traditional class system was abolished in 1895, but social inequality remained much unchanged, going through the social turbulence in the late 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century in South Korea during the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945) and the Korean War (1950-1953).

The South Korean government spurred growth of educational system after the Korean War, even though the half Korea in the South was rendered devastated, completely ruined, and shattered from the war and a long-term oppression and exploitation of Japanese colonial government before the war. The emergence of public education after the Korean War has allowed more and more people to get educated in the modern public educational system in *Hangeul*, the Korean writing system, which corresponds with the sounds of oral Korean. It was created and promulgated in 1443 by the Great King Sejong and his scholars in order to make commoners understood more easily not only oral but also written language. With the increased opportunities, education started to be interpreted as a promise for social mobility for many people. Economic development in the 1960s and 1970s boosted the hope of people dreaming of more and better education for children and social mobility. Consequently, public education expanded drastically until the 1980s. The main rhetoric of education was “uniformity,” “standardization,” and “equality” (Mok et al., 2003; Song, 2003, as cited in Abelmann et al., 2012) until neoliberal education reforms permeated the Korean public educational system during and following the Kim Young Sam presidency (1993-1997) emphasizing “creativity” and “diversification” (Abelmann et al., 2012).

Economic development allowed for the fast growth of public education in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s but at the same time, the expanded public education produced
human capital and well-trained labor for the economic development (Lim, 2007; Morris, 1996; Yoon, 2009). The centralized educational system was strictly operated by the Ministry of Education, with the reformed single-track system put into practice in 1951. The system could be described as 6-3-3-4; that is, six years of elementary school, three years of middle school, three years of high school, and four years of college education (Guo, 2005; Yoon, 2009).

The Korean government’s strategic investment in education witnessed tremendous growth in public education in quantity in 1960s and 1970s and in quality in 1980s (Yoon, 2009). The growth of the public education system has increased the academic credentialism and competition for admission to prestigious schools. Until the abolition of the middle-school entrance exam and high school equalization in 1974, it was very competitive to get admission to the selected few “good” middle and high schools (Yoon, 2009). Once the admission to middle and high school got looser, college entrance became at the center of competition of public education in South Korea.

Educational reforms in the 1990s enhanced neoliberal market principles of “free competition” and “deregulation” in education, fueling private-market education (Abelmann et al., 2012). The number of students participating in private-market education reveals the interdependence of public and private-market education. Statistics Korea reports that more than 80% of elementary school students, more than 75% of middle school students, and more than 55% of high school students participated in private-market education in 2012. The increasing participation in private-market education has made the relationship between public and private-market education more intertwined and complicated. Consequently, it has led to the widening achievement gap
between rich and poor students at school. Seth (2002) elaborated Korean education as education fever, which, simply put, features competitive, high-stakes college entrance exams and parents’ excessive zeal for children’s education. Fueled by private-market education, Korean public education serves the vicious cycle of social reproduction. Besides, at the center of neoliberal education practices has been English language education.

**Defining English Fever**

Krashen (2003) defines English fever as “the overwhelming desire to (1) acquire English, (2) ensure that one's children acquire English, as a second or foreign language.” He made these comments at the International Symposium on English Teaching hosted in Taiwan in 2003, where English language education is also a national obsession (Liu, 2002) similar to South Korea (Y. H. Kim, 2006; J. K. Park, 2009; J. S. Y. Park, 2009; Shim & Park, 2008).

Krashen (2003) argues, English fever can be handled with less stress and more cost-effectively by adjusting the goal of learning English, and changing the pedagogical approaches, and by better understanding the nature of second language acquisition, not relying on folk-theories. Modifying the goal from native-like fluency to intermediate level will reduce the stress to learn English as a foreign language. By intermediate level, he uses the definition of intermediate level where “students have acquired enough of the language to continue to acquire on their own” (p. 104). Comprehensible input such as free voluntary reading and content-based instruction for intermediate learners will help them to continue to acquire the language, for example.
Krashen (2003) problematizes two common issues in English language education, which are problematic in South Korea, too. One is the early English language education, and the other is the confusion between the basic communicational language and academic language, citing Cummins (2000). He argued that although the central concern of students and parents is fluency in learning English, academic English language is more likely needed in today's world.

However, Krashen's definition and proposals to deal with English fever seem to simplify the issues relevant to English fever. Learning English as a foreign language takes place in a unique cultural, historical, social, and political context. Acquiring English in such EFL settings is not necessarily well matched with that of ESL settings such as in Canada and the USA. English learners in ESL settings learn to speak it while English learners in EFL settings learn the language to achieve what is desired in the local context. ESL learners tend to have intrinsic motivation to learn the target language but EFL learners tend to have extrinsic and instrumental motivation to learn it. Especially when young learners learn English as a foreign language without intrinsic motivation, it is a painstaking process and can be the process of engraving negative and failing experiences repeatedly. Anecdotal evidences show that after a certain number of years, some children resist or give up learning EFL.

English language education practices in EFL and ESL settings feature different characteristics. Finding solutions for English fever in South Korea, for example, should start from better understanding the underlying, fundamental issues related to English fever. It also should not aggravate the existing conflicts among socio-economic classes and a pathologic obsession with English language education. In general, in South Korea,
English works as a gatekeeper in many parts of the society, therefore, English is acquired to get domestic benefits more than international communication. Besides, English language has been tied to power and class from the moment Korea was liberated from Japanese colonial rule (Kim 2008). English has been a socio-economic marker in South Korea (S-J. Park & Abelmann, 2004). English, which is an expensive commodity in South Korea, divides and deepens socio-economic classes (Nam, 2012).

The excessiveness of English language education has been criticized as a collective neurosis (Y. M. Kim, 2002), a national religion (J.S.Y. Park, 2009), “a disease ruining the nation” and “a fraud” (forum.chosun.com, April, 29, 2011). J.K. Park (2009) traced the English language education practices back to education fever (Seth, 2002). Shim and Park (2008) argued that English fever “is a phenomenon that is firmly grounded in local sociopolitical contexts, yet extends the global hegemony of English to Korean society (p.136)”.

Drawing on the criticism of English fever, my definition is that English fever is ideologically constructed, market-oriented, and policy-driven English language education practice in South Korea. It is a societal waste and loss to spend so much time, money, energy to learn and teach English without the need to use the language. There should be better understanding of what has ignited and fueled English fever in order to find the solutions.

**Ideologies of English in South Korea**

Silverstein (1979) defined language ideologies as “any sets of belief about language articulated by the users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (p. 1). Ideologies of English language in South Korea are
unique. The unique characteristics of English fever have been explained in Koreans' attitudes towards English language. J.S.Y. Park (2009) elaborated on the local ideologies of English in South Korea in three ways: necessitation, externalization, and self-deprecation. Necessitation means it is essential for survival to learn English. Externalization means that though it is considered essential to learn the language and despite the frenzy of Koreans learning it, English is a language of others. Koreans who speak English on the street can be frowned upon. Self-deprecation shows their lack of ownership of the language. In other words, they do not consider themselves legitimate speakers of the language.

The ideology of necessitation is very audible in popular narratives of English language education in South Korea. The English immersion proposed by president-elect Lee Myung Bak and the Transition Committee in 2008 reflect the necessitation ideology and the popular narratives of English in South Korea (J. Lee, 2010). The four main points of the proposal were: (1) English leads to national competition, (2) Conversational English is a top priority, (3) English and English only, which implies English as an instructional medium in all the other classes as well as English classes, and (4) English brings equality. In order to implement the English immersion, English-medium instruction in K-12 was suggested. Although his English immersion was negated immediately due to public outcry, these four key ideas—as well as the English language policies during his administration—reinforce the necessitation ideology of English.

Then president-elect Lee Myung Bak's English immersion proposal reminded many people of the controversial English as an official language debate a decade earlier (Yoo, 2005). The emergence of both Bok's English as an official language debate and
Lee Myung Bak's English immersion program (i.e., teaching all subjects in English in K-12) derived from the naturalized assumption that English is vital for Koreans' survival, which goes back to the necessitation ideology. The resistance against the two proposals is, however, not surprising where cultural, ethnic, and linguistic homogeneity has been the central part of its history for 5,000 years. At the same time, the unequal nature of language planning (Tollefson, 1991) might have been another reason of public outcry and controversy.

**English as a Commodity**

The statistics of private-market English language education cost in South Korea evidences that English is a good saleable commodity in South Korea. The growth of domestic *hagwon* industries in South Korea demonstrates the growth of the private English language education market. In 2012, there were an estimated 18,340 foreign language institutes throughout the nation, according to KOSIS (Korean Statistical Information Service). The foreign language institutes industry increased 20.6% between 2005 and 2009. The total sales of English language institutes increased to 26.1%.

South Korea is, however, not the only place where the English language business is booming. Prem (2012) explained that it is booming in big cities in Nepal although Nepal has no British colonial history. Foreigners and multinational companies are easily seen in big cities. English medium schools have emerged in big cities as well as in rural areas. It is because English has been chosen as a primary language in education since the mid 1990s. English is a popular commodity in Nepal, too. More evidences of English as a commodity can be seen in other Asian countries such as Taiwan, Japan, and China.
Watts (2011) argued that the spread of English as a global language is not a natural process but occurs with the commodification of English. Rassol (2008) shows the unfair economic cost of foreign language education in European countries: The more European countries increased the cost of learning English, the less the United Kingdom spent on learning foreign languages. Not only has it reduced the expenditure of learning foreign languages as a society, the United Kingdom has also increased its revenue selling EFL, ESL teaching materials (Kwon, 2000). For example, look at the IELTS and TOEFL websites. Each website elaborates how many people take each exam annually across the globe. Jeon and Lee (2006) and Jeon (2009) illustrated another example of English as a commodity: when Asian countries hire English native speaker teachers from the Inner Circle countries. Although it is known that English is spread because it is a global language, one wonders if the process and practice of English being a commodity spurs the spread of English, making it even more global.

**English Language Policy in South Korea**

The 1990s were a turning point of English language education in South Korea. Many English language policy changes occurred in English language education. English language was viewed as a communication tool and encouraged to be taught accordingly. In 1993, listening skill was included in the college entrance exam. In 1997, English became a mandatory subject from the third grade in elementary school. Previously English was taught from the first grade in middle school. With oral English language more emphasized, English native speakers started to appear in English language classrooms both in the public and private sector. EPIK (English Programs in Korea) and
the expanding private market English language education were the gateways for native English speaker teachers to come to teach English in Korea.

In the 2000s, the oral English language was even more emphasized. The increased number of EPIK teachers (Jeon & Lee, 2006; Jeon, 2009), the launch of TaLK (Teach and Learn in Korea), English medium instruction in higher education language (J-H. Cho, 2012; Kang, 2012; Piller & Cho, 2013), the president-elect Lee Myung Bak's English Immersion proposal in 2008 (J. Lee, 2010), and the emergence of NEAT (National English Ability Test) reflect the emphasis on oral English language.

Oral English was heavily emphasized in the National Curriculum. There have been seven changes in the National Curriculum since 1950s. The major curriculum changes for English language education can be seen in the 6th and 7th. The 6th National Curriculum was implemented in 1995 for middle school and in 1997 for high school. The 7th National Curriculum was completed in 1997 and implemented in 2001 for elementary and middle school and in 2003 for high school (Kwon, 2000). The communicative language skills are very much emphasized in the 6th and the 7th National Curriculum (Jung & Norton, 2002; Y. H. Kim, 2006; Kwon, 2000). The emphasis on communicative English language is identified in tertiary classrooms as well. The inception of English medium instruction is an example. Emphasis on speaking proficiency of English is witnessed in in-service teacher training programs. Teacher training programs, which consists of three parts, the basic 120 hours, the advanced 120 hours, and a month-long study abroad, were taught by native English speaker teachers from 1996, teaching oral English language and method as well as helping material development (Jung & Norton, 2002; Kwon, 2000). According to Kwon (2000), 25,000
teachers participated in the in-service teacher training program in 1996: 18,800 in the basic program and 6,600 in the advanced program, and 700 in the overseas program.

Pre-service teacher training programs were fortified, too. The required credits increased from 12 to 21. An oral English test became a mandatory for pre-service elementary school teachers in 1998 (Jung & Norton, 2002). Nevertheless, elementary school teachers' challenges to teach English were reported as materials development, class size, and teachers' English proficiency according to Jung and Norton (2002). Butler (2004) argued that lack of oral English language proficiency is a major challenge of elementary school teachers in English medium instruction.

The college entrance exam was replaced with CSAT (College Scholastic Ability Test) in South Korea in 1993, which holds good up until now. Instead of testing most of the school subjects that high school students learned, four key areas are tested: Korean Language, Math, English, and Inquiry 1 (Social Studies, World and Korean History, Economics, Politics, Ethics) or Inquiry 2 (Physics, Biology, Chemistry, and Earth Science). Korean language, Math, and English are common for students in Humanities as well as in Science track but Inquiry 1 is for students in Humanities track and Inquiry 2 is for students in Science track. The English exam in the previous college entrance exam focused on phonological, lexical, and grammatical competence, while the English exam in CSAT places more emphasis on communicative language skills, listening skills, reading comprehension, and fluency over accuracy. Pronunciation or spelling tests are removed. Over time, the listening portion in the English exams has increased from 16% to 30% (Kwon, 2000) to 40% (Dong-A Ilbo, Dec 22, 2011).
NEAT is an English exam developed by MOE (Ministry of Education) with an attempt to replace the current English exams in CSAT with. The rationale is to prevent the monopoly of the other existing English exams. However, it has not been fully implemented yet. And it stands now, it is not clear if NEAT will be able to function as expected in the near future. Four English skills are equally emphasized in NEAT: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Y.M. Kim (2010) explained that Connectivity, authenticity, Interactiveness, IBT compatibility and positive washback are presented as guiding principles of the development of the test. Positive washback of testing is expected to boost practical English education in classrooms, including speaking and writing, as a result (Y.M. Kim, 2010; Hwang, 2012).

EPIK and TaLK are both government-sponsored English language programs to teach students and teachers in elementary, middle, and high school. EPIK was launched as a major project of MOE in 1995 as an attempt to improve students' speaking proficiency, to train teachers, and to teach method and develop English teaching materials. In April 2013, 3066 EPIK teachers were placed across the nation. TaLK was launched under the former president Lee Myung Bak (2008-2013) to provide children from economically underprivileged areas with opportunities to learn English from native English speaker teachers. In 2012, more than 500 TaLK teachers were recruited and placed. To be considered, the applicants need to have citizenship from one of the seven English speaking countries: Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States, or South Africa. Prospective EPIK teachers must also have a BA degree from a four-year college. Prospective TaLK teachers needed to finish the first two years of a four-year college programs.
Representation of Motherhood

Many feminist scholars have argued that patriarchal ideologies of motherhood have imposed child-rearing responsibility on mothers. Rich (1976, as cited in O’Reilly, 2004) highlighted two detrimental features of modern patriarchal motherhood. One is the assumption that mothering is natural to women and so child rearing is the sole responsibility of the biological mothers. The other is the practice of giving mothers no power to determine the conditions under which they mother in spite of their responsibility. Hayes (1996) reiterated the ideology of Rich’s patriarchal motherhood as intensive mothering. Intensive mothering is defined as: “first, the mother is the central care-giver”; second, such mothering requires “lavishing copious amount of time, energy, and material resources on the child”; and finally, the mother regards mothering as more important than her paid work” (p.8). “The methods of appropriate child rearing according to the ideology of intensive motherhood,” Hayes concludes, “are constructed as child-centered, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labor-intensive and financially expensive (p.8)” (Hayes, 1996, as cited in O’Reilly, 2004, p. 5-6).

Walkedine and Lucey (1989) also delineated sensitive mothering as the normalization practice of mothering in child-rearing. They argue that children’s educational development as well as their moral, emotional and social development is the mothers’ responsibility. Sensibly using every teachable moment in a daily life to teach their children, mothers do fulfill their duty as a good mother to produce reasonable citizens to maintain the liberal democracy (Vincent & Warren, 1998).

Thus, child rearing has been mothers’ responsibilities traditionally but not much has been changed fundamentally even after an increasing number of mothers started
participating in paid employment (Arendall, 1999). Also, a child’s success in school is argued to prove mother’s success as a mother, while child’s failure at school exposes the mother’s deficiencies (Dudley-Marling, 2001, as cited in Smythe & Isserlis, 2004). On the other hand, discourses of fatherhood show otherwise. For example, participation in family literacy programs, where parents can learn to help their children learn better from young age, is not gender neutral. Many fewer fathers participate in family literacy programs than mothers because of the clash of gender identity (Macleod, 2008). Even parental leave after childbirth in Sweden shows it is dominantly mothers who take leave of absence to take care of their newborns after childbirth, even though both parents have access to this parental leave after childbirth (Elvin-Nowak & Thomsson, 2001).

A new educational exodus from Korea to English-speaking countries like Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, or the United States to improve children’s English proficiency has structured some Korean families by putting parents geographically apart: father in Korea and mother and their children to an English-speaking country for their children’s English language education. This new exodus also polarizes the parents’ gender roles: father as breadwinner and mother as child caregiver. Cho’s (2007) study and H-K Lee’s study (2010) about “Kiroki mothers, wild goose mothers” and Y. Lee and Koo’s study (2006) about “wild goose fathers” are some examples.

With the dominant ideology of patriarchal motherhood, the good mother myth meticulously shapes women’s lives disguised as common sense (Goodwin & Huppatz, 2010; Nathman, 2014; O’Reilly, 2004; Rich, 1976; Ruddick, 1989, Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989:). Goodwin and Huppatz (2010) reiterated that the good mother myth confines and
regulates women’s lives beyond the belief systems or choices of individual women as well as reproduces the hierarchy of gender.

**Wise Mother, Good Wife: Representation of Korean Motherhood**

“Wise mother, good wife” is a dominant narrative of motherhood in Korean society. Choi (2009) argued that “wise mother, good wife” emerged at the beginning of 20th century combining the traditional Confucian womanly virtue with Meiji gender ideology of ryosai kenbo, “good wife, wise mother” (Fijimura-Fanselow, 2007; Shizuko, 2012; Smith, 1983) and American Protestant missionary women’s ideology of domesticity in mission schools (p. 3). “Wise mother, good wife” highlights woman’s ideal roles and responsibilities as a mother reproducing acceptable members of society from birth to childrearing.

With the patriarchal motherhood dominant in Korean society, Korean mothers either choose to stay at home after childbirth or have to be a supermom as everything related to housework and childcare are seen as women's responsibility, J. S. Kim explains (as cited in Song, 2013). Having long working hours and minimal support of childcare limits Korean women's participation in labor market after marriage and childbirth (Song, 2013).

Patriarchal motherhood has penetrated in many parts of the world including Korea and so does the good mother myth. Patriarchal motherhood and the good mother myth result in gender biases not only for girls and women but also for boys and men. Divided gender roles in patriarchal society create many social issues and consequences. Increasing
women's participation in the labor market asks gender stereotypes of women such as “wise mother, good wife” to be reconsidered.
Chapter 3
Methodology

Multiple Case Study

This is a multiple case study using narrative analysis as a method. The multiple case study explores what has numerous cases, parts, or members while each case takes on its own problems and relationships. Each case is thoroughly studied and merged into a multiple case study. The amalgamated cases as a whole organization and the phenomenon embedded or manifested in those cases are what is sought to better understand in the multiple case study. Each case is a piece of the puzzle, revealing its own concerns, conflicts, and struggles through in-depth analysis. The assembly of each case helps better understand the phenomenon in inquiry as a whole (Stake, 2006).

The cases explored in this study are Korean mothers managing their children’s English language education in the historical, social, political context of English fever in South Korea with an attempt to get a better insight of their experiences, their views of English language education for their children, and their underlying interpretation of English language policies in South Korea. Each case was explored through mothers’ stories of managing their children’s English language education. In order to collect their stories as a main data source, mothers’ life stories, mostly relevant to their roles as a manager of their children’s English language education, were invited during the interview process.
Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this research is a critical sociocultural perspective. This study examines the social and cultural perspectives that influence mothers' understanding of the importance of English fever in their children's lives as well as the power relationships that shape why and what they do.

Data Collection

Research Site

The research site was selected on purpose; it was where the researcher gained her MA degree. This allowed the researcher to have easier access to referrals who could recruit the research participants and make this research feasible. The research for this study is a metropolitan city located in the center of South Korea. This city is the home for more than 1.5 million residents, and it is known as the hub of technology in South Korea. Five participant mothers live where the private-market education is so excessive and called 'Gangnam' of the city. Two mothers live in two different areas.

Participants

Purposeful sampling was used to choose the research participants (Light, Singer, & Willets, 1990, p. 53). Prospective participant mothers should have at least one child in middle school at the time of the interview. Mothers with middle school children were targeted because English language is taught very different in elementary school and middle school while the market share of the private-market English language education is the biggest in elementary school (Jung & Norton, 2002; Kwon, 2000; J.K.Park, 2009). The mothers whose child(ren) is/are in middle school could share their experiences of
teaching children English before and after elementary school while children were in (pre-)kindergarten, elementary school, and middle school.

The participant mothers were recruited by referral. In the end, seven mothers participated in this study. Initially, eight mothers were recruited but one mother, who detested the idea of recording the interview, dropped. All seven mothers had at least one child in middle school. Six mothers had a child in the third grade in middle school in March, 2013, and five of the six children go to the same middle school. One mother has a child in the second grade in middle school during the same academic year. Some participant mothers were hesitant to meet for three interviews at first but in the end all agreed to do so. There was no monetary reward for their participation. All the mothers had full of questions or concerns they would like to ask or share about children's English language education. Mothers' names, as they appear in this dissertation, are pseudonyms in order to keep their privacy.

Table 2-1

**Participant Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names (Pseudonyms)</th>
<th>Korean Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Marri age</th>
<th>Monthly Family Income (Won)</th>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Husband education</th>
<th>Husband employment</th>
<th>Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hyejin</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Two BAs</td>
<td>17 yrs</td>
<td>5,000,000</td>
<td>Full-time Mother</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Research</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyunmi</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>15 yrs</td>
<td>4,500,000</td>
<td>Full-time Mother</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Public Servant</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eungyoung</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>17 yrs</td>
<td>6,400,000</td>
<td>Full-time Mother</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younghee</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>18 yrs</td>
<td>4,000,000</td>
<td>Full-time Mother</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Public Servant</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunmi</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>16 yrs</td>
<td>4,500,000</td>
<td>Public Servant</td>
<td>Associate Degree</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youngsuk</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>18 yrs</td>
<td>8,000,000</td>
<td>Public Servant</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Public Servant</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myungsun</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>17 yrs</td>
<td>9,000,000</td>
<td>Public Servant</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Office Worker</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interviews

The data source of this study is “interview.” Data collection took place in February and March 2013. It was during winter break for students at the end of the academic year, as the new academic year starts in March in South Korea. Each mother was interviewed three times using the three-interview series designed for in-depth, phenomenological interview by Dolbeare and Schuman (Schuman, 1982, as cited in Seidman, 1998).

One question was prepared for each interview. This open-ended interview is designed to give a free flow and allow the participants to establish the context of their experiences, to reconstruct the details of their experiences, and to reflect on the meaning of their experiences. As Reissman (2012) pointed out from her studies about divorced men and women in the United States (1990) and about women’s infertility in South India (2000a; 2000b), the reason for the open ended interview is because strictly structured interviews can prevent the participants from letting go of their stories in the way they like. Especially when the participants’ stories are invited as a main data source, freedom for them to let go of their stories is critical.

Here are the three questions that opened each interview:

1. Please elaborate on your life history.

2. Please explain what you have done for your children's English language education.

3. What do you think of your motherhood, reflecting on what you have done for your children's English language education?
Each question worked as a conversation opener for each interview and the rest depended on the flow of the conversation. All the participant mothers were encouraged to share their memory of their mothers during at least one of the three interviews. After the first interview, with their life history shared, it got easier to add follow-up questions to their life stories when conversational openers were needed to make the interview more lively.

The consent form was given to all the mothers and explained, which clarified the purpose of the study and confidentiality of their personal information. The participant mothers signed the consent form before the first interview; they also filled out a form to share some personal information about the mothers and their children and spouse.

The intervals between interviews varied from two days to a week. A week between interviews is ideal in order to keep the connectedness as well as give the interviewee some time to reflect on the previous interview(s) (Seidman, 1998). Most of the interviews took place within four to seven days, but when the mothers' daily schedule did not allow the time span, some interviews took place after two days. Since it was during the winter break, stay-at-home mothers wanted to make sure they were at home while children were home. No interviews took place with more than a week between sessions.

A 90-minute interview was planned each time. Some interviews lasted up to three hours and most of the interviews lasted between two and three hours. Each participant mother was interviewed three times and altogether, the research spent a little more than 42 hours in interview time. Usually the second and third interviews lasted longer than the first. For the second and third interviews, follow-up questions were asked to clarify what
the mothers said earlier; this was done as a way of member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Issues During the Interviews**

There were three issues identified while collecting data. One was a technical issue with the recorder. During the 12th interview with the fourth participant mother, the recorder was not emptied, even though all the contents had been transported to the computer, so that the interview data could be accessed more readily. The problem was that the twelfth interview was lost after the first 30 minutes due to the memory shortage of the recorder. The battery was always checked and replaced, if necessary, before each interview. However, the memory space was not, which was a significant oversight on the part of the researcher.

Another issue consisted in the relationship between the interviewees and the interviewer. Interviewing strangers three times sounded too much to ask although all the participant mothers cooperated and the interviews all went well. The issue was when some mothers said they might not be available on so and so dates, in order not to lose the participant, the following interview took place in two days rather than five to six days later. The awkwardness between the interviewees and the interviewer lasted for the first interview for the most of the mothers although for the following interviews it got a little easier than the first one.

The third issue derived from the length of the interview process. The entire interview process was estimated to take two months long while staying two and a half months back in South Korea for data collection. But the 21 interviews total made it feel
rushed sometimes. With extended time, analysis during the interview could have been more thorough.

**Dealing with Data**

**Recording, Transcription, and Translation**

Each interview was audio-recorded and stored in a computer, protected with password. At the end of the interview process, all the interview data was transcribed and turned into more than a 1000-page long document, single-spaced. The interviews were conducted in Korean; all the data stored is in Korean, and only a small part of the data has been translated into English. Only the excerpts used for the reporting of the study as this dissertation have been translated into English.

**Analysis**

Data analysis started during the interview process. Since there was one question per interview, each interview was listened to a few times before the following interview to clarify the meanings of what the mothers said during the previous interview. I jotted down some points during and after each interview. Clarification questions were listed for the following interview meeting and asked.

Transcribing followed the interview. Actual transcribing started after the entire interview although there was an attempt to transcribe some parts during the interview. Data analysis continued during transcribing. Transcription made it easier to visit different parts of the data flipping through pages for further analysis later on although it took a while to get it done. Coding followed transcription, re-reading the transcribed data and
grouping and organizing themes. The mothers interviews were read individually and cross-read to get a better picture of themes of the entire data.

Thematic narrative analysis was employed for the analysis although structural as well as dialogic narrative analysis would reveal different layers of analysis (Reissman, 2008). Thematic analysis allows emerging themes to be grouped focusing on 'what' is said. This approach does not necessarily capture 'how' and 'why' mothers' stories were constructed or elaborated. Thematic analysis also does not capture body language, such as laughter, either. For example, one mother laughed every time, laughter of regret, at the end of her explanation of what she had not done for children's English language education.

**Reporting the Data**

Dealing with the data, my first concern was, "Should I analyze and report each mother or analyze and report a few mothers or all the mothers across?" Overwhelmed by the amount of the data, I hesitated to do the cross analysis of all the mothers at first. I believe this dissertation is the first step to report the data. To make it feasible, thematic analysis across the mothers is the best, quickest way to get it done. For future report, other analyses are possible to employ. It is possible that different analysis can tease out the data differently and reveal more in-depth layers. This will be the next project, beyond the scope of this dissertation.

**Researcher Identity**

This is my narrative to explain how I was drawn into this study in the first place. English was one of my favorite subjects in middle school and high school. My love of
English started in middle school. My second elder sister and I went to the same middle school. She was very good at English and Korean. She loved books like all my other siblings. It may be thanks to her influence; I was just hooked on with English from the very beginning. I never learned English except over my siblings' shoulders before going to middle school. Literally, I learned English from A, B, C, and D from day one in middle school. I was so excited to learn English. I was so lucky to have elder siblings who were in middle school and high school. There were always enough reference books when I needed some. Although I never took any private English lessons, I was enthusiastic and eager to pick up English grammar books and English storybooks, and I taught myself voluntarily in addition to the English I learned at school. I was always expected to memorize 'the dialogue' part in each chapter and present it in front of the class whenever we started a new lesson, which made me feel very special in English class in middle school.

In college, I majored in English, too. Majoring in English in college was not as fancy as it sounded. We learned most of the English literature and linguistics courses in Korean and did a lot of translation as part of assignment. None of the Korean professors taught anything in English. Only English Conversation and English Composition were taught by visiting professors who were native English speakers. I don't remember how many of those courses we needed to take.

Despite my interest in learning English, what I learned in middle school and high school was mostly English grammar and test-oriented English lessons. Listening was included in school exams from the first grade in middle school. However, the English that we learned was very limited, and the English textbooks we used included very limited
texts. Speaking or writing anything in English was rarely introduced until I went to college and majored in English. We spent most of the time practicing questions to prepare for the exams, especially in high school.

So, when I tutored middle school and high school students in college, that was what I did, teaching English to prepare for school exams. After I graduated from college in February 1995, I continued teaching English in private language institutes to varying age groups of students: pre-kindergarteners, kindergartners, elementary school students, middle school and high school students, college students, and even adults.

There were only a handful of language institutes with English native speaker teachers when I went to college but within a few years, drastic changes occurred. More and more private language institutes sprang up all over the nation. One year I taught in an English kindergarten, working as a program manager. It was an ambitious program that started with 20 children. When the number of children increased up to 60, about 10 English native speakers taught classes in the kindergarten. All of sudden, it became a norm to learn English from English native speakers.

Those changes in English language education occurred both in the public and in the private sector. In the public sector, English language education was highly advocated with the motto of globalization and internationalization in the early 1990s. English communication was very much emphasized. And there was an attempt to introduce English to the first grade in elementary school. The changes and the discourses in the public sector became an opportunity for the private sector to grow. It boomed and created self-perpetuating English language education market by the mid-1990s, which resulted in more confusion and chaos in English language education in general. More and more
students learned English at private language institutes besides learning English at school. There were loopholes in regulating private language institutes, which meant the quality of English classes and qualification of teachers in the private sector—both Korean and English native speaker teachers—was loosely examined.

Consequently, the expansion of the private market English language education has caused the tension between the public and private sector. The public sector has tried to control the private market English language education, but the loopholes in regulation allow the private English language education to thrive nonetheless. In doing so, the two sectors have built the relationship of competing and supplementing each other. The relationship between the public and private sector drove English language education to an endless competition, positioning mothers to be responsible for children's English language education. Teaching English in the private sector, I've witnessed many mothers frustrated and stressed with children's English language education, which is a bigger problem than an individual mother's concern for her children's English language education.
Chapter 4
Stories of Seven Mothers

Seven mothers participated in this study. Using pseudonyms, each mother will be introduced. Their childhood memories and brief description of their children and spouse are included.

Hyejin

"I'd rather study myself than make them do it.... Mom, you're strange. Your English is strange."

Hyejin is 48, a stay-at-home mother. She is the one who makes decisions for children’s education even though she consults with her husband every now and then. Her children, who are in the third and second grade in middle school this year, started to go to language institutes to learn English language when they were the second and first grade in elementary school and continued learning the foreign language until today. Her first child, a boy, was not very active and did not take initiative, unlike her second child, a girl. She explained that their characters were reflected on their participation in learning the language. Her boy used to talk only when he was asked to, while her girl loved to participate rather actively while learning in language institutes. These days, they are learning English grammar and reading from tutors. They learned speaking and listening more than now and had more chances to be exposed to English. They also learn grammar and reading more than before.

One of her concerns regarding their English language learning experiences is that they do not meet foreigners to learn English any more. They do not speak with foreigners.
They do listening only when they have to as homework. They do not take the initiative for improving their learning English. She has concerns that their vocabulary is not as strong as it should be. They do not seem to understand why they need to study more aggressively now. Once they become high school students, the level of English language they will have to deal with will be much more advanced than now, and it will not be easy to catch up without good preparation. She wants them to understand the urgency of the matter and take it more seriously but their responses are: Why more after tutoring and homework? Even though they have learned English grammar so far, they make the same mistakes repeatedly when they write in English. It really gets on her nerves. Sometimes she thinks, “I’d rather study it myself than make them do it.”

She has two college degrees: one in mathematics education and the other in pharmacy. In high school, her dream was to be a doctor. Her teachers tried to change her mind emphasizing, “Good mother and wise wife is the best career for a woman.” Most importantly, her father, also a school teacher, did not want her to spend all her young adult life studying to be a doctor. She obeyed her father and teachers and went to College of Education. However, she could not give up her dream. She convinced her father upon college graduation and went to a pharmaceutical college, instead of medical school. She chose pharmaceutical college because she was convinced that she would have to handle family and her career in the near future. Besides, there was no retirement age for pharmacists. She could work as long as she wanted to.

When it came to studying, she always got full support from her parents. Especially her father always promised “100 % support, financially and mentally, for studying even though it was not always the case for other topics.” Her father himself started teaching at
school to earn money to study further but never went back to study. As a bright student, she got full support from her parents and became a pharmacist. But she had not worked as a pharmacist very long before she got married. After marriage, she moved to this current city and shortly after had two children, one year apart from each other. She devoted her time to raising children and doing housework until her first child reached the fifth grade in elementary school. She started working as a part-time pharmacist, half a day three times a week and later four times a week until two months before the interview. She emphasized that she would get back to work when the time is right. Now is the time to spend for her children. Her husband wants her to take care of the children and the housework rather than work. She remembered that her parents were “real good parents.” They always told and encouraged her to give it a try when she hesitated or lost confidence in herself. She wanted to be a good mother just like her own, she said.

Just as her parents supported her when she was little, she also has been very supportive of her children’s learning. English language learning is no exception. She helped them with English language very closely when they first started learning English language at an institute. She even took online courses to improve her pronunciation. She also took mathematics course online for six months and Chinese course offline for a couple of years to get ready to help her children whenever necessary.

**Hyunmi**

"*He seems to believe he is a white Canadian, too.*"

Hyunmi, 41, has been a stay-at-home mother for the last two years after working 10 years or so as a private reading teacher. She does not like credentialism and the public
educational system in South Korea, which aggravates competition. Too much energy and resources are wasted, she believes. Working as a private reading teacher, she became skeptical about private education as well. It was painful for her to see so many unhappy children sitting in front of her against their will. She had witnessed continuous struggles between children and their parents, emotionally and mentally, caused by the excessive private education.

At the time of the interview, she was having hard time with her first child. He was going to be the third grade in middle school in March 2013. He wanted to go abroad to make his dream come true: become a world-famous tennis player like Nathalie Tauziat or other players. He also investigated all the possible options in Korea including a transfer to a physical middle school. He played tennis and got training for the last year. He was very into it, but she and her husband saw the situation a little differently. Even if he took it seriously, he started it very late. Besides, he was very into movies the previous year spending a lot of time watching the same movies and critiquing them. The tension between the child and parents got more intense during the winter break and they really needed to find out some sort of solutions. They decided to discuss the situation with her father who her son likes very much. Her father is more open-minded and progressive, she said. After visiting and having a long talk with grandfather, she and her husband found some solutions. They will look into the options for transferring to physical middle school only if he can pass the physical tests. She said she would let the coaches know that this is not really her and husband's first choice. Also her father indicated that the real reason for his divigation was because of his maladjustment after he moved to a new school in this city. They moved to this city for their son to transfer to another school for some reason
(unknown to me). He must have emotional and psychological struggles at school for the last two years. The boy agreed to get therapy once he got back home.

She explained that he does not play computer games or watch TV like other children do. He likes reading books and playing tennis when he has free time. He prefers not taking any private lessons to secure his free time. He could study on his own. Besides, her two children spend three hours every evening studying and doing homework. They have done this for a very long time. They also learn reading from their mother. Twice a week, they read and discuss books or newspaper articles. They have developed good study habits. They have studied English language pretty voluntarily since they stopped learning it from a Canadian instructor when they were in 10 and 8 years old. Their father helped them with grammar after that. Two children practiced English at home with their father, reading English children’s books. They have practiced speaking English on the phone for the last three years. She said they took TOSEL (Test of the Skills in English Language), a standardized English language exam for juniors hosted by EBS (Educational Boardingcasting in South Korea) every other month to check their English. She said her children seemed to have no problem speaking English when they went to Europe a few years ago. These days, they watch a lot of YouTube videos in English, including numerous tennis games, and seem to enjoy them. They look up words when they need to while doing it. They have no problems ordering purchases online from English websites, she said. Her first son took TEPS (Test of English Proficiency developed by Seoul National University) a month before the first interview to motivate himself. He has practiced English listening, reading, vocabulary and tried to find his own study method reading memoirs of other successful learners. Her main struggles about her
children currently are not necessarily about their learning contents but the environment within which they go to learn, she explained.

**Eunyoung**

"*Oh, he (my husband) doesn't know anything about children's education. It's all my responsibility: children, housekeeping, family events as the first daughter-in-law. He's too busy with his work, sometimes 24/7.*"

Eunyoung is 39, stay-at-home mother. She has two boys. Her first child was in the third grade in middle school and her second child was in the first grade in elementary school in March 2013. She explained that it has been challenging to help her first child learn English language. Her first child started to learn English language with the Hakseupji program when he was in the first grade in elementary school, and then he switched to another Hakseupji program and stayed with it almost for five years. She chose Hakseupji program on advice from a relative who majored in English language education and worked for a language institute. It might have been too early to send her first child to a language institute at the age of eight. She thought he was doing well and making steady progress, because whenever she asked the boy’s Hakseupji teacher how he was doing, she always got positive feedback from the teacher. About five years later, she switched to a language institute. She saw the limit of Hakseupji program, she explained. And he could make some friends in a van traveling to and from the institute too, not only learning English language in a new environment. She regretted her belated choice when she saw how much he enjoyed learning English language in the new environment. He actually learned to talk from foreign teachers, too. But after only one year of fun studying
English language like that, from the summer vacation during his sixth year in elementary school, the focus of the curriculum changed from speaking to grammar to prepare for middle school English. Her other regret was that she had not regularly checked his progress in English language with certified standard English language tests. If she had then, she would have had a better idea of his English language level sooner and done something to fix it.

She panicked when she saw her son’s mid-term exam score was much lower than she expected. She realized how much more her first child should have prepared before he started middle school after the first mid-term exam at school. Even though her first son had been studying English language from the first grade in elementary school, his score told otherwise. She was very disappointed with it. She thought it would be better over time at first. But the final exam score stunned her. It was slightly higher than the average. Compared to other children in that community, he didn’t study English extensively with more diverse materials, she thought.

English language ability for her son is closely tied to his dream. In order to make his dream come true, to be a car designer, he should go to a good college, one in Seoul. English language score is one critical factor for that. Maybe he will need to study abroad. Then he should be able to use the language. Her son has a clear dream, a distinct goal.

When she was younger, her father used to have a tailor shop. When the ready-made clothing business became more corporatized, her father’s business slowed down. Her father switched to laundry and repair shop instead when she was in high school. He worked hard but he did not make much profit in that business. Her mother worked from one job to another to make the ends meet. She used to tell her, “Man should be able to
support his family. Looks do not matter as long as a guy is a good provider.” Her parents were financially struggling; her parents’ financial support mostly went to her elder brother, and so she and her younger brother had to work to earn tuition throughout college. At school, she was more interested in singing than studying. She wanted to go to the College of Music majoring in vocal singing. She never asked for her parents’ support to make her dream come true though. She did not expect that her parents would be able to financially support private lessons even if she had talked to her parents, she thought. Instead, she chose Food Science as her major, which seemed to have a more promising career for a girl.

She got married two months after college graduation. She wanted to leave her parents as soon as possible, she explained. When she got married, her parents-in-law worried she might not be able to take the responsibilities as a first daughter-in-law because she was too young. She tried hard to meet their expectation. She never missed any annual family events, such as ancestors’ memorial services, New Year’s Day, and Chusuk (Korean Thanksgiving), which take a lot of time to prepare and cook for such events. These events happened eight times a year, in addition to the parents-in-law’s birthday celebrations. Her husband has been busy doing his own work all the time, so children, as well as housework, have been her responsibilities exclusively. It is she who makes decisions for children’s educational activities. Especially for private lessons, she said, “My husband does not know anything like what options exist out there.” With all these responsibilities as wife, mother, and first daughter-in-law, she has had no energy to do anything else, she explained. Her second child was born when her first child was in
the first grade in elementary school; she really had limited energy to help her first child
with his school work or private lessons.

Youngee

"I regret that I have not played the cassette tapes until my fingerprints got worn
out.... It hurt me to hear his criticism about children's school performance. I've raised
children alone, without his help."

Youngee is 43 and a stay-at-home mother. Having four children with limited
income, she tells her children that she would not pay for private lessons only unless they
really want to; otherwise, no pennies would be spent for them. One time she heard from
other mothers, “How could you neglect children without giving them any private lessons
like that?” It was when her first children started the third grade in elementary school. She
did not send her children to private lessons as much as the other mothers. Instead, she
bought collections of books and read them to her children until the covers were worn out
and dangling. She read books to them until they became fifth or sixth grades and did not
want to be read to. They love reading books, except for the second girl, she explained.
Her most pressing concerns are about her second child, who is so into the internet, pop-
music, and computer games spending a lot of time with her laptop locked in her world.
She is a defiant teenager who never listens to her mom.

From the beginning of her marriage, housework was her responsibility. Even when
she got pregnant with their first baby, her husband did not help her with anything around
the house. She had a miscarriage, and she realized that her body would not allow her to
keep her job and have a baby at the same time. She quit her job to have a baby. When the
baby was born, nothing changed. It was all her responsibility including housework, child, and annual family events as the first daughter-in-law. Two more girls were born. She and her husband decided to try one more time to have a boy. When she went to obstetrics, the obstetrician examined the gender of the baby and said, “next time.” Tears were rolling down on her way back home, but she went back to the clinic for the next check-up, another obstetrician examined and told her that it was a boy. She was so thrilled and relieved. Now they have four children: 11th grade, 9th grade, 7th grade and five years old. Because the youngest is a boy, sometimes the father changed diapers, which never happened for the three girls. Still housework, children, and annual family events are her responsibility.

As the youngest in her family, she learned early enough that she would have to go to a vocational high school instead of an academic high school. She went to vocational high school and received a scholarship throughout high school to reduce her mother’s financial burden. Her mother always emphasized, “Man should have a means to support family.” Her father did not have steady income sources, but did not like her mother to go out for work. Although her father did not like her mother to go out for work, she was the one who supported the family financially most of the time. Her mother worked hard to put food on the table. Tension and conflicts never ended between her parents, she remembered.

Watching her parents continuously fighting, Eunyoung did not want to get married or meet a guy. But she got married to her current husband because he was the first guy. She explained, "I was that naïve." She did not want to meet a man like her father who likes to drink and not take care of family. However, her husband loves drinking with
friends or colleagues. Five or six out of seven days he comes back home drunk. When he comes back home early, their household is not quiet. Father and children often argue back and forth, or the father criticizes the children's school work or something else. Her husband is a very patriarchal father toward their girls, which often causes disputes between father and girls.

Sunmi

“He says that he will study English by himself now.... (On the way back from the Saturday morning English class) I ask him, ‘What are you going to do with your English?’ ‘I don't know.’ ‘Do you want to learn English?’ ‘I don't know.’”

Sunmi is 47 and a working mother. At the time of the interview, she and her first child, a boy who is in the third grade in middle school, went to an English program called “Screen English,” where people learn English language watching a recorded English class. Learning English at a few language institutes since the second grade in elementary school, her boy has been struggling with English. She recalled that he was always struggling with English language whichever institute he attended. And, she was astounded when his English language tutor quit after final exam last December, saying “I cannot take your money anymore because there is nothing else I can do to help your son.” Her son's final English score was very low. She thought it would be enough to pay for expensive tuition for his son's English. She was paying 400,000 won per month ($400.00 USD). She was mistaken.

Going to the English class with her son, she realized that she had not known her son's attitude in English class well. She often observes him not paying attention to class.
Just dropping his head down, he waits for the class to end every time. She is so frustrated with her son’s English language. His math scores are better than those in English. He likes drawing very much, telling her that he would like to be an artist. He has been learning drawing since the second grade in elementary school. Her son wants to be an artist later. She does not agree with her son. She wants him to go to college like other children, majoring in a more promising area of the study, not art, and have an office job. She is so desperate to know how he could improve his English language ability. He has no confidence and no interest in learning English as much as his mother. The mother knows that the low English score will be an obstacle to attend a good university.

Meanwhile, she adds that her second child, a daughter in the first grade in middle school, does much better than him in English. Her daughter wants to study art, too, but she is not happy with both of her children’s interest in art.

When she was young, she wanted to study art, too. She remembered that she was not interested in any other subject as much as in art. Her father passed away when she was four. She was the fifth child and has one younger brother, two years old at that time, and four elder sisters. Her mother used to be a housewife, raising six children. Her elder sisters who were smart students in high school gave up going to college and worked to support the family. Her sisters wanted her to study hard, go to college, and become a successful career woman, making their sacrifices worthwhile. She felt brutally abused and terrorized every time her sisters tore apart her paper dolls or discouraged her from wasting her time drawing. Art was a wrong choice, which has no future career promised in their eyes. She lost her self-esteem and became devastated but did not work hard as expected. The tension between her and her sisters was always a problem. She felt that her
mother was never on her side or protected her when her sisters accused her of disappointing academic achievement.

As a grown woman, she still holds a grudge toward her mother and sisters. She repeated that she does not want to see her mother or sisters any more. She is not close with her sisters and does not talk with them often. Her first sister lives in Germany. She went to Germany to work as a nurse when she was in her mid-20s. She got married there, raised her children, and went to college and became a doctor. Eunyoung has not seen her for a long time. Her mother and one of her sisters live in the same city. The others live in other cities. Their family reunions have been very rare, she explained.

Although she kept mentioning that she wanted to live far from her family members, she got some help from her mother. With a full time job, she struggled trying to manage her job and babies when her second baby was born. Then, her mother offered her help. She did not have many other options. Her mother moved in and stayed with them for about 13 years until her daughter became sixth grade in elementary school. Her mother took care of the children and helped with housework. After her mother moved out to her our house, Eunyoung felt like she was a beginner housewife who needed to learn everything from scratch.

Youngsuk

"It was always very nerve-racking to wait, knowing other children were learning English already but not mine."

Youngsuk is 45, a working mother. Unlike the other two working mothers who have lived with their mothers, she was all alone with no help from any family members
when her babies were born. Her husband, who works in the same area, was busy with work but at the same time remained very social while the children were younger, frequently hanging out and drinking with colleagues or friends after work. Therefore, it was mostly her responsibility to pick up children at day care. Once children went to elementary school, they needed to go to a few after school lessons until their mother finished her work. She always ran from work to day care, from day care to home, and later from work to home back and forth. At home, she should cook dinner and then put the children into bed. She got very tired every night. It was her routine for a long time. It seemed like luxury to think of doing more than this routine for a long time. Sometimes, she regretted not having taken her children to museums, exhibitions, movies or libraries, so that they could have had more enriched cultural experiences.

Regarding English language education, her husband did not want to teach them English language too early. He believed that children need to play when they are young. So, she did not do anything. When her first child went to elementary school he started to learn English language. He did not like to go to a language institute, or learn English language with Hakseupji program, or work with private tutors. However, she convinced him that he needed to learn English. Many other children were learning English. He agreed to join an after-school English program administered by the elementary school five times a week for four years. His younger brother, two years younger, joined the same program when he went to elementary school. Then later, both of the two boys started to learn English language with a Hakseupji program for two years. When the first boy went to middle school, her two boys traveled by subway to a cram school on the other side of the city to learn English from foreigner teachers and other subject from better teachers.
The first boy went to the cram school for two and a half years and the second boy went there for a year and a half. Since quitting the cram school, both resisted taking any more private lessons. The first boy had not taken any private lessons for six months and the second boy for about two and a half months when she was interviewed. Youngsuk repeated that she felt so anxious and worried while they were taking no private lessons. She could not force them to go to language institutes or cram schools, but she felt like she was neglecting them. She added that her first child does pretty well in listening part of the college entrance exam prep test, assuming that it was thanks to the fact that he had learned English from the foreigner teachers.

Youngsuk had many good memories about her mother blurting out, “My mother was like a saint,” when asked to talk about her mother. She took care of her grandparents well. She was wise, giving, and very nice to other people. Although she was poor, she did not hesitate to help poorer ones, Youngsuk explained about her mother.

In talking about her life, Youngsuk summed up, "I have been lucky and happy." Born as a youngest in a family with six children, three boys and three girls, she was very much loved by all family members. Her family was poor, but her parents worked hard on the farm. Sometimes her brothers skipped school and helped parents and grandparents in the farm.

Her two elder brothers and sisters were grateful for finishing middle schools. Only her third brother finished high school, because her mother persuaded her grandfather to let him go to high school. She wanted to educate at least one son up to high school and her grandfather agreed with her mother. Youngsuk was also very lucky to have a chance to go to high school in the city, far from her hometown. Her hometown was in a very
remote area, very far from high school. She had to move to a nearby city. Fortunately, her eldest brother, who became a police officer, got married and moved near the city when she went to high school. Even though she had to travel two hours each way by bus, she was thankful. Otherwise, her grandfather would not have allowed a girl to live so far from home to go to high school.

She even went to college and was the first college graduate in her family. Her mom supported her and helped convince her grandfather, who thought they would have to sell houses and lands, which they did not have, to send a child college. She got scholarship throughout college, except once, and her sisters and brother helped her, too. She was lucky because when she was in college, her sisters moved to the same city and started working there. She remembers how happy and proud her grandfather was of her every time she visited home during summer and winter break in college, even though he disagreed with it at the beginning. He always gave her the most allowance secretly when she visited him, even more than he gave to his eldest grandson.

She and her husband always discuss when things need to be decided, including children’s education. They also ask and respect the children’s opinions when deciding on their educational activities. When it comes to study, her husband believes that children will study once they set a goal in life or when they realize they need to. She agreed with her husband and never asked children to study more than they decided. However, seeing other mothers make their children do more and more, it was hard to be calm. She pushed her children to do more but she knew that would not work. It has been a continuous battle against herself deep inside to keep her words with her children and husband.
"We sent children to the bilingual private elementary school so that they could learn English early. It might be too late to start at the age of 20 once they go to a college.... Now we wonder if we made a wrong decision. We could have done something else for them with the money."

Myungsun is 45, a working mother. Her most pressing concerns about her children’s English language is about her daughter’s grammar and school exams. There was a gap between the speaking proficiency and school English exams. She and her husband thought as long as their children got to speak the English language, they would have not any trouble because of English language. The truth is that after she went to middle school, a normal middle school, her daughter has been struggling with grammar and school exams. Her daughter was proud of her English in elementary school; she could speak it. However, in middle school, grammar is more important than speaking proficiency, and it was just a matter of time before she lost her speaking proficiency after she graduated from elementary school and left the English immersion environment.

She and her husband sent their children to a bilingual private elementary school where foreign teachers taught content areas. She wanted her children to achieve the speaking proficiency of English language, so that they could communicate in English language unlike other Koreans who are good at English grammar but struggle with English communication. In her husband’s company, employees are expected to speak three foreign languages at least: English, Japanese, and Chinese, she said. Also, it would be easier for the children to learn foreign languages when they were younger.
husband were willing to pay 1.32 million won quarterly per child for four years for the first child and six years for the second child for private elementary school.

Sending children private elementary school, she was criticized sometimes for “spending money like water.” However, her husband often told their children that he is satisfied with the outcome. They do not need to feel pressured with whatever the results were. He is happy already to know that they are not afraid of speaking with foreigners. Regardless of what he said, this month her daughter took the first college entrance exam prep test in high school. She got a few answers wrong and came back home devastated. She has been learning English grammar and reading for the college entrance prep for two years with a private tutor and a few other students. The mother complains of her daughter's dilemma, calling it a problem of Korean English language education.

Myungsun and her husband have been a weekend couple since they got married, due to their jobs. She works in the current city and her husband works in another city, three hours away by car. Several weeks she visits her husband and once a month her husband visits her and children. The children used to accompany when she visits her husband, but not after they entered the higher grades in elementary school. They have been busy with private lessons and other schedule. During school breaks, the children spend more time with their father.

Myungsun also lives with her own mother who has been very helpful, taking care of children and doing housework. It would have been impossible to manage work and children without her help. Her mother was a daughter-in-law for her grandmother, she recalls. She lived with her grandmother until she passed away, about the same time she got married.
Chapter 5
Mothers’ Perception: English as a Commodity and Requirement

Data analysis has entailed three major themes and six analysis chapters. The three themes are: (1) mothers' perception of English language education (Chapter 5, 6, and 7), (2) mothers' involvement and investment in their children's English language education (Chapter 8), and (3) mothers' dilemma, struggles, and regrets (Chapter 9 and 10). The first three chapters (Chapter 5, 6, and 7) are about mothers' perception of English language education. The fourth chapter (Chapter 8) is about mothers' involvement and investment in their children's English language education. The fifth (Chapter 9) and sixth (Chapter 10) chapters are about mothers' dilemma, struggles, and regrets in teaching their children English.

Chapter 5 is the first chapter that explores mothers' perception of English language education in South Korea drawing on mothers' stories. Two more chapters will follow on the same theme. Mothers' perception of English language education, which is explored in this chapter, includes generation gap between mother and children in English language education, English as a commodity, and English as a requirement in South Korea.

Generation Gap between Mother and Children

The mothers in this study all reported a generation gap between themselves and their children when it comes to learning English. The popular narratives of English as a global language had not made inroads into their English classrooms in 70s and 80s. Learning English was a continuous battle with a Korean-English dictionary to figure out
the meaning of new words or sentences. Rote memorization, pattern drill, and translation were the most common pedagogical approaches used in their classrooms. Grasping English grammar and reading comprehension, memorizing English vocabulary, and getting good scores in English exams were the major goals to achieve. Anticipation of communicate with foreigners or the fear of oral English proficiency had not ignited yet, not as obsessively as today.

Their children, on the other hand, have learned English in a different environment. The popular narrative of English as a global language has swept through and cast a spell on all corners of South Korea. The pressure to acquire spoken fluency in English has intensified over the last several decades. In so doing, spoken proficiency in English has been a mantra in English language education in public sector as well as in private-market English language education. It is expected that children are learning English as a language, not simply a school subject, to communicate with people who speak other than Korean. Thus, speaking proficiency in English emerges as a frequently discussed topic, as does English pronunciation.

As English proficiency became more emphasized, children start to learn English at a much younger age. Most children start to learn English before they go to elementary school—some from pre-kindergarten or kindergarten or others from low grades in elementary school. In 1997, English was included as a school subject from the third grade in elementary school. Previously, English was taught from the first grade in middle school (7th grade).

“Mom, strange. Your English is strange!” Hyejin was helping her children with English when her children went to a language institute for the first time. It was when her
children, who are now 15 and 16, were 8 and 9 years old. Then her daughter said, "Mom, strange. Mom, your English is strange" pointing out her Korean English pronunciation. She blamed her Korean accent for her poor English pronunciation. Her Korean dialect has strong accents, too. Since then she has tried to help her children with English grammar or something they did not understand in class, but not with speaking and pronunciation. The difference between her experiences of learning English and her children's made her less capable and less helpful when it comes to helping her children with English.

She elaborates another example regarding English pronunciation. Later, she took online English classes to improve her English pronunciation. But she had hard time moving forward to the next level because she did not get “excellent” or “great” every time she spoke at the computer. She even turned up the volume to see if it was because of the low volume. She used to criticize her husband's English pronunciation, but she has stopped because she realized her English pronunciation from the online English course was not much different from her husband's. She realized that her and her husband's English pronunciation was different from their children's English pronunciation, which sounded more like native English speakers. She adds that the difference in English pronunciation between her and her children made her rely more on private-market English language education because she thought she could not help her children fully with English.

Younghhee explains that English pronunciation was a challenge for her, too. Early on, she wanted to expose her children to English at home but used English tapes instead of directly reading English books to her children. She illustrates the reason: "Because my
English pronunciation is poor, I used to play English tapes.” She taught her children English herself using English books and tapes before her children started to learn English from after-school English programs provided in elementary school. However, her lack of confidence in English pronunciation made her utilize English tapes instead of her own voice.

Two mothers above illustrate that the generation gap between their own experiences of learning English and their children's made them rely on either private-market English language education or English tapes. Their generation gap is first noticed in English pronunciation, which determined how the mothers approached teaching and helping their children English. From the two mothers' cases, it is evident that the goal of achieving native-like proficiency in English means employing a lot of remedies and making significant investment.

“It was overwhelming to learn English.” Hyunmi also elaborates the generation gap between her and her children in learning English. She wanted to provide her children with better environment to learn English, which she had not had. Hyunmi recalled that it was overwhelming to learn English by cramming English language knowledge from the beginning. She started to learn English from the first grade in middle school beginning with A, B, C, and D. Rote memorization was tedious and onerous. English was taught as a school subject, not as a language to use to communicate. She worked hard and went to college, but even now she feels a little intimidated when she needs to talk to foreigners in English.

For her children, she wanted to introduce her children to English in a little different way that would be more learner-friendly and fun, instead of overwhelming. She
hired a Canadian English instructor and held English classes for her children at home, not at school. Free talking, games, and fun activities were utilized to facilitate class participation. It was when her children were 6 and 8 years old.

[Excerpt 5-1, (Hyunmi #2, p. 1)]

Mother: Back then we lived in Seoul. I hired a native speaker teacher, and asked him to come to our place on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays…. When I first learned English, I learned it as a school subject, not as a language. That was why I had strong resistance towards English. So, I wanted my children exposed to it more naturally…. At home, two hours each time, they did free talking and played games, and not with boring textbooks, uh, playing games. And he played with children. Because they were young, I hated the cramming method itself in learning English.

The lessons with the Canadian instructor lasted for two and a half years until he went back to his home country. The class meetings were held three times a week and two hours each time. It seemed her children learned a lot more than just learning the language itself, she adds. They learned to communicate with the instructor even with their limited vocabulary from the beginning. They did not and do not seem to hesitate or feel overwhelmed when they speak with foreigners.

“Vicarious thrill.” Some mothers explain that they would like to ensure that their children learn English well, better than themselves; they wanted their children to do what they did not do well. To be sure, they started to teach their children English from early age. Sunmi started to teach her first child English 'very early' from kindergarten. She tried to ensure that her child could do well in English starting early on. She was not good at English at school.

[Excerpt, 5-2, (Sunmi #2, p.1)]

Mother: In fact, I wanted to do well in English but I wasn't good at it. I chose another foreign language in college and graduated because I didn't have
confidence in English. After graduation I realized that English is very important. So, I wanted to make sure that my children would do well in English, so I started to teach my first child when he was very young.

Interviewer: How old was he?

Mother: Probably four or five? No, not four or five but probably it was about when he was in the kindergarten.

When Sunmi learned English, she started to learn English from the first grade in middle school beginning with A, B, C, and D. The phrase, English fever, was not coined yet, and private-market English language education was not as ubiquitous as now. Not many students had private tutors to catch up when they fell behind. There were not many resources available to help if they struggled or fell behind. Compared to her experiences of learning English using solely textbooks and dictionaries, providing opportunities to her children at early age might have been enough to make her think that her son would have better English than her.

The generation gap between mothers and children in learning English makes it harder for the mothers to help their children with English. The way the mothers learned English was different from the way their children learn English, which sometimes renders the mothers passive participants in their children's English language education. Besides, children start to learn English pretty early beginning from elementary school or even before kindergarten. Until elementary school, communication skills are more emphasized, which mothers have not learned much at school. By the time they enter middle school, children's English proficiency ranges various, which makes it harder and more complicated for school teachers to teach English to students with various levels in English in the same class. In the middle school curriculum, the goals include speaking,
writing, listening, and reading. Again, speaking and writing in English are usually what mothers did not learn much while they were learning English at school.

Despite the mothers' eagerness and desire to help their children with English, what they actually could do was limited due to the generation gap in learning English. This is not the only reason though. Mothers who keep saying, “I'm afraid of speaking with foreigners,” end up telling their children to practice speaking and writing without mothers' examples or real contexts, unless they take private market English language education. As Hyejin elaborates, the generation gap tends to increase the dependence on private market English language education.

**English as a Commodity**

Rassol (2007) elaborated that "languages constitute a saleable commodity with regard to business and marketing, while for the clients they represent an investment in cultural capital which can then be exchanged within global labor market" (p. 148). English is a saleable commodity in South Korea. The size of the private market English language education shows the marketability of English as a commodity in South Korea.

All the mothers in this study have made economic investments in their children's English language education. From buying English books, tapes, and CDs for toddlers or children in (pre-)kindergarten or in elementary, to sending them to private market English language institutes or hiring English tutors (either Korean or native English speakers), to sending children to private elementary school where English is a medium of instruction or to English speaking countries, mothers' economic investment ranges, based on their cultural, economic, and social capital.
For the most of the mothers in this study, the economic investment in their children's English language education tends to continue until their children graduate from either middle school or high school. The accumulated cost over time would be exponential, although the actual cost also varies in each family. The prevalent ideology of “English is a requirement” for children's future justifies their high economic investment in their children's English language education, which explains their anticipation for children's success later on.

“We spent a house for our children's English language education.” Myungsun says, she and her husband “spent a house for their children's English language education.” By saying that, she explained the cost of sending two children to private elementary school where English is a medium of instruction and where tuition is expensive, especially compared to free, mandatory education in public elementary schools across the country in South Korea. (According to the Statistics Korea in 2013, there are 76 private elementary schools out of 5,913 elementary school. See Table 1-1 for details).

It was their deliberate choice to help their children be exposed to English from early on. By “spending a house for their children,” she and her husband expected her children to be more competitive in the later higher education or job markets. Myungsun and her husband's choice for their children's better opportunity to learn English early on and especially able to learn to speak it illustrates that English is a commodity, which can be invested and then be exchanged into monetary values within the global labor market as Rassol (2007) argued. In the same vein, the mothers in this study repeatedly state that English will help their children succeed in higher education and in job market.
“All the money except for food is spent on children's private-market education.”

Hyejin explains they spend most of the money, except the money spent for food, for children's private-market education including English, which accounts more than half of their spending on private-market education when she elaborates her family's monthly expense.

[Excerpt 5-3, (Hyejin #1, p. 24)]

Interviewer: How much do you spend on children’s (private market) education out of the (monthly) household income?

Mother: Most goes to the (private) educational cost if not for food.

Hyejin had sent her two children to language institutes for six and seven years for each child beginning from the first and second grade in elementary school. They switched to other language institutes and then private tutors when they went to middle school. Now they learn English from Korean English tutors. She has been spending around $500-800 per month for her children's private market English language education for the last eight years. Though it is not the same with every family, it is evident that families—who spend a large sum of money for their children's private market English language education—make a large, long-run investment in their children's English language education.

“English grammar from one tutor and reading from another.” Eunyoung currently spends $500 every month for her first son's private English language education while his total private-market education cost is estimated at about $1,100 a month currently, about 17% of their monthly income. Her first son learns English grammar from one tutor and reading from another tutor. During the interviews, he was practicing speaking English on the phone with a foreign teacher as a free trial provided by the
company his second tutor works for. Eunyoung is considering finding a third tutor, an English native speaker teacher for him, so that he could practice English speaking, too. What makes her hesitate, however, is the added cost on top of her first son's private-market education cost. Her second son, who is in the first grade in elementary school, goes to a language institute to learn English, too. The cost is unknown.

As Eunyoung's practice shows above, English language can be purchased in the private English language education market. English grammar is one thing and English reading is another. English language exams prep is the third, and English speaking is the fourth. When English language skills are divided into four skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking), they are conveniently broken apart into saleable parts. Clients literally might believe that they just pay for the parts, which then will be transferred to the learners'.

As the mothers illustrate above, English is expensive to learn or to prepare for English exams, purchased accordingly: speaking, listening, reading, writing, grammar, and test prep. English is perceived as a panacea for children's future schooling success and entry into the labor market. Monthly English tuition for children is like a monthly premium on an insurance of future safety. They assume that children will be prepared and equipped with what is required in schooling and in the global labor market by learning English.

**English as a Requirement**

J. S. Y. Park (2009) categorized the ideologies of English language in South Korea into *necessitation, externalization*, and *self-deprecation*. By necessitation, he
explains English is understood as a necessity in South Korean society. By externalization, he explains that though English is perceived as a necessity in the local context, Korean learners of English distance themselves from the target language. English has never been their local language and is just for some other purposes, which is apparently contradictory to the necessitation ideology. By self-deprecation, he means that Koreans depreciate themselves as those who are not legitimate to speak the target language.

The mothers in this study unanimously express that English language is so important for their children. Why is it so significant for their children? They argue that it is because of the function of English in Korean society, which is why they call it a requirement.

“English is a requirement for higher education and in job market.” English language is required in school, especially for middle, high school, and college students. For middle and high school students, English is required to prepare for matriculation. For college students, English is used, at some universities, as a medium of instruction besides as a graduation requirement. English is a requirement for job seekers. English language scores are used as a screening filter and participating in an English interview has been implemented for the new recruits in large- as well as mid-sized companies regardless of the necessity of the language at work in Korea. Many universities and colleges advertise new faculty positions with the phrase "those who can profess in English" regardless of areas of study.

Hyejin argues, “It is impossible to go through educational system without English in South Korea... It is because English language is considered a necessity upon employment” (Hyejin, #3, p. 39-40). Sunmi adds, “English is a basic requirement in S.
Korea until now, isn't it?” (Sunmi #3, p. 20). Myungsun says, “Children need to be excellent in math and English to matriculate in a good college. First they need to have a degree from a good university to get a decent job.”

Three mothers elaborate why English is a requirement for schoolchildren and college students or those who are in search of jobs. English is one of the major subjects at school in middle and high school and in the college entrance exam. Getting good scores in English exams can be a determinant for their college matriculation and employment.

“English is a requirement at work.” English is still a requirement for office workers if they want to get a promotion and take advantage of the monetary incentives. With high English scores, opportunities to go study abroad for their higher degrees have been granted to some people either working for government-run institutions or private companies. Thus, office workers have been encouraged to improve their English with English classes provided at workplaces or subsidized if they are held outside their workplaces.

Hyunmi explains that her husband sometimes uses English at work. He has been practicing English for many years even after he got a job. He took English exams such as TOEIC or TEPS. He did not hesitate to share his experiences with his sons after the exams. Her children seem to take it for granted that they should English since they have been observing their father work on English so hard.

Yunghee believes that English is important not only for her children but also her husband who works for a government institution. It is beyond school requirement.

[Excerpt 5-4, (Younghee #2, p. 7)]

Interviewer: Why do you think English is important?
Mother: Children will have more chances to go abroad, unlike our generation, and English is required at work. My husband says new recruits have a very good command of English language. And every morning he still goes to English classes at work.

Her husband sometimes holds a workshop at work in English with foreigners. When he does that, he shares his experiences with his children, which makes children amazed and very proud of their father.

Hyunmi and Younghee exemplify the assumption that English is also important at work, not only at school. There is no supporting evidence of how much Hyunmi's husband has used English at work or how much his English has contributed to his work or his career. Nor is there evidence as to how often Younghee's husband holds the workshop and how much he contributes to it. Nonetheless, the cases of Hyunmi's and Younghee's husband reinforce the symbolic power of English in the eyes of their children.

“English is a requirement in the globalizing world.” In the global community, the status of English as a global language makes mothers believe that their children need to learn English well for their future. English is significant for global communities, not only for the local communities. The mothers believe that English is vital for their children's future if going study abroad for higher education, traveling, meeting foreigners, and working or living abroad is in their children’s future. So, they believe that English is a requirement for a global citizenship and for the global leadership, as well as for those who would like to get hold of fast-moving information on the Internet and knowledge in cutting-edge technology.

Eunyoung emphasizes that English is important for her son who has a dream to be a car designer. He will need to matriculate in a decent college. Then, if he wants to go
study abroad, having advanced English proficiency would help him to get admission to a university and to go through his academic program more smoothly there. For global education, English is important for her son. Hyejin elaborates that her children might need to collaborate with foreigners if they work in the field of cutting-edge technology. She also imagines that they might travel abroad a lot or even live in a foreign country. The global community will be smaller and much more connected for their children's time, mothers think. They will have a lot more chances to meet with foreigners in person than their parents did.

The boundaries of the local and global communities become blurry when it comes to cyberspace. With English proficiency, Internet users will have better access to updated news and information than those who do not, Youngsuk says. She also argues that as a leader of the society, English is a must because of the status of English as a global language.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter is about mothers' perception of English language education. In helping children with English, mothers realize a few things about learning English. First, there is a generation gap between their children and themselves when it comes to learning English. When they learned English, it was all about English grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and English exams. They grappled with Korean-English dictionaries to decipher meanings of new words and sentences. Their children live in so-called a globalizing world where the world becomes a global village and English
becomes its language. It is expected that they need to learn the global language to function as one of the members in the global village.

Second, English passes as a saleable commodity. This usually means an investment in education services when mothers teach their children English unless they teach their children English themselves, which is not the case with most of the mothers in this study. In turn, the economic investment in children's English language education is expected to produce returns as exchangeable values within the global labor market, as Rassol (2007) explained.

Third, English is required because of the gatekeeping function inside as well as outside South Korea (J.S.Y. Park, 2009). In South Korea, English is required of middle and high school students for college matriculation. It is required for college students to graduate and for those who enter the job market to get a job. English scores are used as a screening filter for the new applicants, and English interviews are another obstacle they need to pass to get employed in decent companies or institutions. English is still considered for office workers for promotion or more incentives. Outside Korea, English is required for study abroad or jobs that involve people other than Korean speakers. Thus, the mothers in the study consider English as a requirement in the local as well as global communities.

Children's English language education is important for the mothers because it is believed to help children succeed and thrive in the society. One problem here is that it is based on their conjecture of the function of English language in South Korea as well as in the globe. Inside South Korea, there have been endless English language education policy changes and reforms to either make English language education efficient or keep the
balance of power between public and for-profit English language education. Languages are saleable commodity as Rassol (2007) argued, but English is not the only one. The value of languages is not absolute but relativistic, plus contextual. It can be very dangerous to believe that conceptualization of the global language equates the real usage of the language.
Chapter 6  
Mothers' Perception: Native Speaker Belief and Issues

This is the second chapter of mothers' perception of English language education in South Korea, and it delineates the native speaker belief and early English language education. It is a common-sense belief in EFL contexts that English should be taught by native English speaker teachers in order to gain native-like fluency and native-like pronunciation. It is also commonly believed in EFL contexts that the earlier the children start to learn English, the more likely they will acquire fluent English. Native speaker belief, combined with early English language education, has fueled the ever-increasing, gigantic private English language education market for the last several decades in South Korea, creating problems such as English divide.

Native Speaker Belief

Native speakerism is a prevalent ideology in ELT (English language teaching), especially in EFL (English as a foreign language) countries, which accentuates the supremacy of native speaker teachers of English language and English language teaching methodology (Holliday, 2005; 2006). The native speaker belief is evidenced as a naturalized assumption of “native speaker teachers are the better teachers” among Korean stakeholders of English language education. The emphasis of speaking proficiency in English has highly promoted the native speaker belief—native speaker teachers as those who have the legitimate ownership of the target language and who can deliver the right English accent and pronunciation—in South Korea in public as well as private market
English language education. In that atmosphere, the number of native speakers of English has increased rapidly in South Korea.

For example, English language programs sponsored by the government such as EPIK (English Programs in Korea), TaLK (Teach and Learn in Korea), and TEE (Teaching English only in English) have manifested the native speaker belief. Through those programs, more and more native speaker teachers of English have been recruited to teach English speaking skills to school teachers and students of English and to develop teaching methodology and teaching materials.

Not only have government-sponsored institutions promoted this belief, but the private English language education market has also contributed to increasing the number of native English speaker teachers in South Korea. Thus, native English speaker teachers teach English in a wide spectrum of educational institutions, ranging from public to private and from kindergarteners to college students and adults.

Native speaker belief, intertwined with the presence of native speaker teachers, has impacted many mothers' decision for their children's English language education domestically and internationally. A great number of South Korean students have been sent abroad to learn English since 1995. The majority of them were elementary school students and some were middle, and high school students. Besides the early study abroad, technology connects students and teachers of English to hold virtual classes beyond time and space. The students in South Korea can reach native speaker English teachers intra- or internationally, via phones or skype for example, without leaving home.
Early English Language Education

The private English language education market targeting toddlers, pre-kindergarten and kindergarten-age children, and children in lower grades in elementary school has grown tremendously. The scale of the private English language education market for those young children evidences the popularity of early English language education in South Korea. Early English language education starts even with unborn babies and toddlers.

Combined with the native speaker belief, English kindergarten, which can be defined as private language institutes for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children, and early study abroad for elementary school children have increased in number and size over the last two decades. The fact that the majority of early overseas students who went study abroad to improve their English are in elementary school rather than middle and high school supports the common belief in early English language education.

On the other hand, the naturalized assumption of native speaker belief and early English language education puts heavy pressure on mothers' shoulders. Many mothers have prioritized the investment in children's private English language education. In doing so, lack of economic resources and comparison with other mothers can make them feel stressed and guilty for things they could not do for their children.

“From native speaker teachers and with child-friendly curriculum.” Hyejin wanted her children to learn English from native speaker teachers with curriculum that is strong but tailored for young children's taste—with fun and play—from the time her children were young. Her first child was in his second grade in elementary school and her second child was in her first grade in elementary school when they first went to the
language institute, where they continued going for five and six years respectively to learn English, even though they had been learning English in kindergarten and at home already for several years. Hyejin justified that her fear of speaking English with foreigners was the reason to ensure that her children learned English from native speaker teachers, so that her children could speak English without fear.

[Excerpt 6-1, (Hyejin #2, p. 2-3)]

Mother: I, speaking with foreigners (in English), because I can't do that. Since it made me scared to meet with foreigners and since they were young, I hoped they would be able to speak with foreigners without fear. So, I sent them to an English language institute where, I believe, it was a little play-oriented but had a strong curriculum.

The excerpt above illustrates that she upholds the common native speaker belief. She wanted her children to learn English from foreign teachers to be able to speak English without fear. At the same time, it also shows that she took the common-sense belief of early English language education for granted. Her expectation for her children to be able to speak English without fear, unlike her, also shows her vicarious thrill, which is a common rhetoric arising in education in South Korea. Parents invest economic capital in children's private-market education to help their children achieve what the parents could not for various reasons.

“At the BBQ party at the riverside/I thought that was good enough.” An anecdote made Hyejin believe that she chose the right language institute for her children to learn English. It was two months after they started to go to the English language institute when her family went to a nearby riverside for BBQ with her neighbor family. They saw a group of foreigners having BBQ there. Her husband asked the three children (two of their own and their neighbor’s boy) to go and talk with them. The two boys held back but her
daughter, first grader in elementary school, trotted over there and held a conversation with them.

[Excerpt 6-2, (Hyejin #2, p. 2-3)]

Mother: Probably it was about two months after they started to go to the language institute. We were having a BBQ party at Gapcheon with our neighbor family. There must have lived a lot of foreigner English teachers in the nearby apartments. Several foreigners were having BBQ over there, too. So, my husband asked the children (her two children and their neighbor’s boy) to go and talk to them. The two boys hesitated to approach the foreigners but my daughter went there and talked to them. When she got back, we asked her what she said. She told us where they were from, what their names were, and that they were English instructors at a language institute. Listening to her, I was satisfied. I thought that was good enough. I thought that it was working well.

She believed that her choice was right to send her children to the language institute where they could learn English from foreigner teachers. So, her two children learned English in the same English language institute for five and six years respectively until they went to middle school. Her first child changed to a cram school where he continued English from foreign teachers once he went to middle school. About a year later, he switched it to private tutoring at home. Now he is learning English grammar and reading from a Korean English tutor. Her second child went to the same language institute for six years, then moved to another language institute and stayed there for a year. Currently she is also learning English from a Korean English tutor at home like her brother.

“English kindergarten.” English kindergarten represents private-market English language institutes for pre-kindergarteners and kindergartners. The increasing popularity of early English language education has created expensive English kindergartens, which some parents choose to send their young children to instead of regular daycares or
kindergartens. The cost for sending young children to English kindergarten is sometimes higher than college tuition.

Hyejin thought of sending her children to an English kindergarten. But her family lived on a single income and her two children were one year apart. She couldn’t send one child to a regular kindergarten, while sending the other one to an English kindergarten. Sending two to an English kindergarten was much more expensive than what they could afford. If they had put “everything” in it, she adds, they could have sent their children to an English kindergarten.

She wanted to send her children to an English kindergarten because she believed that starting early, children are more likely to acquire fluent English, which otherwise might be difficult to achieve. She says, "The reason I wanted to send children to an English kindergarten is the fear... timing makes a difference. When children learn English at younger age and at older age...." (Hyejin, #2, p. 40). Hyejin says that she was not a tiger mom when it comes to children’s English language education and that she did not start to teach her children English too early. However, she repeated her regret not having sent her children to English kindergartens. (Her children started to learn English at home from before they went to kindergarten and while they were in kindergarten, but it was nothing serious.)

She explains one of her neighbor’s cases, which makes her wonder what might have happened if she had sent her children an English kindergarten, too. Her neighbor bragged that it was worth it to send one of her children to an English kindergarten despite the high cost because it made a big difference of English performance between her two children.
Mother: There is another family. One of their children, the first child, started to learn English when he got a little older and the younger one went to English kindergarten. The younger one who went to English kindergarten wasn't conscious of other people in speaking English. When a thought came up, since everyone spoke English, she spoke it in English, too. While she thought in English, their first child thought of something in Korean first and then translated it back into English. Their responsive time was different. So, she said it was worth to send the second child to an English kindergarten although it was expensive. Listening to stories like that, I think if I should have sent my children to an English kindergarten. (laughter) Would their English be better? (laughter) I think of that a lot. If we had put everything into it... when other people sent their children to an English kindergarten, we thought it was excessive competition. And it was too expensive. And my children are one year apart and we could not send just one of the two to an English kindergarten. Two was too costly. We couldn't send just one to an English kindergarten, so we didn't. But every now and then I wonder if I had done that (laughter).

Listening to stories like her neighbor's, Hyejin regrets not having sent her children to English kindergarten. At the same time, her response to her neighbor's story shows how strongly Hyejin believes the dominant discourses of early English language education: the earlier, the better. Stories like this illustrate what definition of English proficiency mothers take.

“Early study abroad.” Early study abroad is another example of early English language education. Eunyoung hired a native English instructor and taught her children English since her children were eight and six years respectively. After two and a half years, Eunyoung and her family had a chance to go to the United States for a year. Two other boys who learned English with her first son went abroad to learn English for a couple of years afterwards. One went to the United Kingdom with his family for his father's job, and the other went to the United States alone to learn English and stayed with a host family during his stay. Unfortunately, Eunyoung's family had to give up their
opportunity due to some changes in her husband's work. She explained they literally
finished packing and were ready to leave but had to unpack again. Given the opportunity,
ot not going was not an option until her husband work situation changed. Last winter,
Sunmi sent her daughter, a 6th grader, to the Philippines for a short term to improve her
English.

Hyejin wanted to send her children abroad to improve their English, too. She had
heard about many other families sending their children abroad to improve children's
English including her friend who bragged that her son continued speaking English at
home after coming back from early study abroad. Her plan never materialized because it
was a scary idea for her son. It was when her children were in the sixth and fifth grade
respectively.

[Excerpt 6-4, (Hyejin #2, p. 11-12)]

Mother: Probably it was when my first child was in sixth grade in elementary
school. I thought that if he had been sent to a place where he had to speak English,
he would probably speak it more. So when I heard some neighbors sending their
children abroad, I asked him, "Do you want to go abroad (to study English)?" His
answer was absolute no. He would never go abroad. So, I gave it up. "If you had
wanted to go abroad, your sister could have gone abroad together". "If you could
speak English fluently after several months studying English abroad, I think it is
much better than pouring money into language institutes in Korea for years".
Anyway, it is unavoidable to learn English in Korea. You should speak in English
and do everything in English. Even if you had mastered just listening, it would
have been nice.

By saying that "if you can speak English fluently practicing English there for
several months instead," Hyejin reveals her naïve understanding of English language
acquisition. It shows her belief that learning English in an English-speaking country will
expedite the learning process and her children would be able to speak English in several
months, which would take years back home. It also shows her dissatisfaction with her
children's English performance seen from the trip. She believed they were learning English, going to the language institute. After five years, they proved that it was not really working as well as she believed.

Native Speaker Belief

Native speaker belief is well manifested in mothers' choices for their children's English language education and their interpretation of children's performance. The native speaker belief becomes the source of concern, too, such as Hyejin's case below.

"English should be taught by foreigners." Hyejin elaborates, "Learning English is more costly because English should be taught by foreigners while other subjects can be taught by Korean teachers." She sent her children to a language institute where they could learn English from native English speaker teachers at great expense, too. However, the belief of native speaker teachers made it possible. In addition, the native speaker belief is grounded on the assumption that the advantage, commonly believed, of learning English from native English speaker teachers is that it helps EFL learners able to open their mouths and ears to speak and listen to and understand.

"He always gets (almost) full scores in listening." Youngsuk illustrates that her first son, who is in high school, always gets almost full scores in listening in the college entrance exam prep tests. She believes that it is because he learned English from native English speaker teachers for two and half years when he was in middle school. He had learned English for six years before he went to the cram school to learn English from native English speaker teachers as well as Korean English teachers. Youngsuk and her family live a little far from the center of the city where the most popular private English
language institutes are located. There were no good private language institutes near her apartment where native English speaker teachers taught. After researching good language institutes, she came across a few names. She asked other mothers and chose one. The cram school was a little far from home, and her children had to commute from home to this area by subway, three times a week after school. Every time they went to the cram school, she went to the subway station to pick them up at about the time her children arrived. With extra time on the road for children and the mother, she was satisfied with her first son's listening scores thanks to the fact that he had gone there for two and half years in middle school. Her son gets almost full marks in listening for the college entrance prep tests.

[Excerpt 6-5, (Youngsuk #2, p. 9-10)]

Mother: He went to Dunsan-dong to learn English, right? I don't know how hard he studied. But I can tell that, uh there were native speaker teachers in that cram school. These days half of the CAST English exam is listening. Nearly half. 22 or 23 questions (out of 50). I asked him. He took the mock exam yesterday. "Jinsoo, did you get perfect score in listening?" He has done great in listening from the first year in high school. He got the perfect score most of the time. Thinking about it, I believe that he is doing well (in listening) because he was exposed to native English speaker teachers for about three years.

This excerpt illustrates not only that she buys the prevalent native speaker belief but also that private English language education market is formed unequally from region to region. She elaborates that she sent her children to a particular part of the city where they could learn English from native English speaker teachers, which is otherwise not accessible in her neighborhood. For high school students, listening is more commonly addressed topic when it comes to English than speaking because it accounts for almost
half of the English exam in SCAT. She explains that listening is nearly 50% of the English test in the college entrance exam.

“Concerns after concerns.” The expense was not the only issue in learning English from native speaker teachers, Hyejin illustrates. The language barrier between students and teacher made it harder for her children to understand English grammar, for example. After her children switched to Korean English tutors, her concern has continued. Currently her middle school children are learning English from Korean English tutors at home. Learning English from Korean English tutors seems to help them understand English grammar better and prepare for school English exams more efficiently. Reading, English grammar, and test-taking skills are the main focus now. They are asked to listen to English CDs for listening, which is important for the SCAT (Scholastic College Ability Test) though they do not do it voluntarily as she wants them to.

While they were learning English from native speaker teachers, she was concerned whenever she noticed that her children were struggling from language barrier or their English scores were not as good as she thought they would be. After switching to private tutoring at home, their English scores have increased. Now she has concerns about the lack of contact time with foreigners to practice English. No speaking, no listening, or no writing anymore as they used to have. She has her idea of what it should be like to learn English to speak, but in reality, her middle school children need to learn English from Korean English tutors. The mismatch between her ideal and real method to learn English worries her very much.

**Problems in native speaker belief.** Issues relevant to native speaker belief in South Korea have emerged. Presented as a commodity, learning English in for-profit
institutions is costly. Access to quality English language education is not equal for people in different socio-economic classes, causing English divide. Hyejin's hesitation when she decided not to send her children to an English kindergarten is an example. Likewise, when Younghee says, "Since I have many children, I did not send them to English language institutes as early as others," it illustrates that their economic means shape their choices for children's English language education. If their English language competence is critical for their future, parents’ economic capability decides children's future.

Qualifications of native English speaker teachers are another issue. The basic requirement is their citizenship of seven English-speaking countries—Australia, Canada, Island, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States, and South Africa—and a four year college degree. Their training for teaching or teaching experiences is not questioned for most of the cases.

Cultural clashes and identity conflict that young EFL learners experience are another issue, too. Hyunmi elaborates that her first son seems to struggle from identity conflict. After learning English for two and a half years from eight years old, he seems to take himself for a Canadian, not Korean. The Canadian instructor's frequent criticism of Korean education, culture, and society shaped his view of Korean society accordingly, she explains.

Hyejin reveals her disappointment about her children's English proficiency and pronunciation. After learning English from native speakers for six and seven years respectively, her children do not speak as native-like as she expected to happen when she first taught her children English. They do not seem to like to speak it as much as she
expected as well. She did report that her girl has a little more confidence in speaking English than her son.

Myungsun lost her confidence about her choice of the English medium, private elementary school for her children. She and her husband chose it so that their children could learn English early on. As time went by, she observed her first child struggle from the difference in how English is taught in the elementary school and middle and high school. She is not so sure about her choice anymore as she used to be.

[Excerpt 6-6, (Myungsun #1, p. 1-2)]

Mother: My first child went to a regular middle school where she learned English focusing on English grammar. And her speaking proficiency got rusty over time. Three years later, she said “Mom, I think I should go to a language institute again if I'd like to speak English.” We really spent a lot of money sending children there (the private bilingual elementary school). For six years, we spent a house but three years later, my first child lost a lot of her speaking proficiency. Now she says, "I should have not gone there". Now we wonder if we made a wrong choice. We could have send them to elsewhere with that (much money).

After going to a regular middle school for three years, her daughter complains that her English becomes rusty. In order to speak English again, she would have to go to a language institute again. In addition, she has been complaining that she should have gone to regular elementary school and learned English like other students in middle school. What she was exposed to in elementary school and in middle school was quite different. She struggled with school English exams and had trouble figuring out the expectations in middle school English classes. Now as a high school student, English exams have got more serious as part of preparation for the college entrance exam and she complains even more that she should have gone to regular elementary school and learned English
grammar for school exams. Her daughter's dilemma is originated from lack of understanding English proficiency that is required in South Korea.

Chapter Summary

The native speaker belief is one of the mothers’ perceptions about English language education. Combined with the early English language education, the native speaker belief makes mothers convinced that learning English from native speaker teachers would enable their children to speak the target language fluently. So, mothers are anxious to provide their children with native English speaker teachers as early as they can. However, such practice reveals underlying problems of English language education in South Korea. Unequal access to quality English language education is one of them. For example, Youngsuk sent her children by subway to the language institute, located in the other part of the city, because the language institutes in their neighborhood did not have native English speaking teachers. Her choice also implies that some other mothers might not be able to send their children to the same language institute with lack of resources. Further emphasis on native speaker teachers, when it depends heavily on for-profit market English language education, might aggravate the gap between people who do or do not have access to quality English language education.

Other mothers exemplify other issues. Learning English from native speaker teachers is not a language transmission from one speaker to another. Even though children learn English from native speaker teachers for a lengthy period of time, many other factors determine the outcome, not only the presence of native English speaker teachers. Besides, when young children are immersed in learning English from native
speaker teachers, what children learn from them is not only the target language but also their view of the world. Cultural clashes and identity conflicts are by products in the process.
Chapter 7
Mothers' Perception: English Proficiency and English Exams

This is the third chapter investigating mothers' perception of English language education in South Korea, which explores the ideas of English proficiency and English exams in the local context. While “being able to speak English” is highly emphasized, English proficiency serves more than just international communication in South Korea. English language education in South Korea is more strongly characterized as a tool for gaining advantages in competitive domestic society (Higuchi, cited in Inagaki, 2012). Where English is a criterion to evaluate individual's ability in the domestic society, people might suffer from inferiority complex due to lack of English skills, either real or perceived (J. M. Lee, as cited in Inagaki, 2012).

In the same vein, as children move up to higher grades in elementary, middle, and high school, their English exam scores become more and more important as indicators of English language development as well as of their success at school and in their future job market when English proficiency is used as an instrumental tool to determine success/failure or in/out. This makes mothers get more anxious about their children's English language scores. However, too much emphasis on English exams can cause negative washback effects, shaping ways in which English is taught at school, at home, and in private-market English language education accordingly. This chapter highlights mothers' understanding of English proficiency and English exams.
English Proficiency and English Exams

Ideas of the importance of English language education, especially “being able to speak English” has been infused top-down through English language education policies and implementation in South Korea. As a globalizing and internationalizing project of the Kim YoungSam administration (1993-1998), English language education started to boom in South Korea in the public domain as well as in the private English language education market. The English fever as of today ignited in South Korea during that era.

The trend of highly emphasizing English proficiency manifested in various ways, including English immersion policy proposal by Lee MyungBak, president-elect, during transition period in 2008. The proposed English immersion called for teaching all subjects in English from K-12. When it was negated, due to public outcry, TEE (Teaching English only in English) has been implemented in teacher training programs. Popular narratives of English proficiency are also evidenced in English Instruction in college classes beginning in the early 2000s in a number of universities and English interviews in large companies in South Korea. In this environment, speaking proficiency in English has been interpreted as something equivalent to smartness.

Though speaking proficiency in English has been so heavily emphasized in curriculum as communicative language teaching, English language education in South Korea is strongly grounded in test-oriented English language education, especially in middle and high school and in college. This is not surprising, considering the prevalent usage of English language exams such as TOEIC, TOEFL, and IELTS across the globe. Those exams are commonly and globally used in academic and non-academic institutions as a gatekeeping criteria. In South Korea, English exams taken in middle school become
prep for high school English exams. High school English exams and English exams in CSAT (College Scholastic Ability Test) determine students’ matriculation in a college.

Several things frustrate the mothers in helping their children with English. One of them is English language scores in middle and high school. English pronunciation is another. The confusion caused by the changes in English language policies and layers of interpretation of English language policies is the third. Where should they focus their children’s English language education: speaking proficiency of English or English grammar? The popular narratives of English fever tell that speaking proficiency is the most important in learning English, but this is not always the case. Mothers who are in charge of children's English language education express their concerns and struggles with the confusion between English proficiency and English exams.

“Koreans can't speak English though their English grammar is great. Myungsun argues that Koreans cannot speak English though their English grammar is great. She and her husband are among them. Her husband works for a company where the employees are expected to have the fluency of some foreign languages including English. Without having the fluency, he often tells his family that his lack of his English skills is one of the reason he works in the local office instead of the main office in Seoul. If he only had the fluency, they would be living in Seoul together. Myungsun and her husband decided to send their children to a bilingual private elementary school so that they can learn English immersed in English speaking environment, learning English from foreigner teachers, not from Korean English teachers.
Mother: Koreans are not good at speaking English though their English grammar is good. So, I, the company, where my husband works, expects the employees to have fluency in foreign languages.

Interviewer: Is it a foreign company?

Mother: It’s not a foreign company but the president of the company wants that. Employees are expected to have the fluency of at least of the three foreign languages: English, Japanese, and Chinese. But, because my husband and I don’t have the fluency (in any of them) we sent our children to Samyuk elementary school. There English is the medium of instruction. Foreign teachers… all subjects are taught by foreign teachers…..

Emphasizing “English instruction,” and “foreigner teachers” illustrates that she believed that learning English from foreigner teachers would enable her children to speak the language. During the interviews, she repeats that her children can speak English because they went to the private elementary school, learning English from foreigners. Her children used to speak English each other at home and they still do sometimes. Believing Koreans cannot speak English although they have strong grammar knowledge, Myungsun and her husband sent their children to the bilingual elementary school. They weigh fluency over English grammar or knowledge. Fluency is proficiency for her. When her daughter went to middle school, she observed her daughter, whose English was great in elementary school, struggle with English. English grammar was very difficult because she did not learn English in the same way when she learned English in elementary school. English grammar became more important than fluency.

Myungsun’s confusion stems from the lack of understanding of proficiency. Being able to speak English as a foreign or second language freely does not mean that the speaker has the proficiency of the target language in general. There is a big difference
between conversational English and academic English. Especially for EFL learners the gap can be much wider. Cummins (1979, 2008) differentiates the two. For school-aged ESL learners, it takes two to three years to acquire conversational English while it takes 5-7 years to acquire academic English. Learning English in EFL environments with limited contact time, exposure, and motivation, the actual time required to acquire it might take a lot more. Even though his theory is one way to explain language proficiency, it is enough to imply the complexity of language proficiency. The opportunities for misunderstanding language proficiency abound. Just saying my children can speak English because they have demonstrated their English here and there does not explain how much English proficiency they actually have. If Myungsun really believes her children's English is good enough in speaking because of what she has observed, she has a very naïve understanding of English proficiency. Her naïve understanding of English proficiency caused her confusion and frustration about her daughter's English in middle school.

“English language exams from early on.” Hyunmi explains that she and her husband made sure that her children took TOSEL (Test of the Skills in English Language) every two months to double-check her children's English language development since they did not go to a language institute, after quitting learning English from a Canadian English instructor (when her first child was in the third grade in and her second child was in the first grade in elementary school). Since then, her children learned English grammar from their father for a while and read English story books for several years. They have used phone English for the last three years to practice speaking and reading with native
English speaker teachers. Her two children went to language institutes for a brief period of time: three months for the first child and six months for the second child.

Her first child, who seems highly motivated when it comes to learning English, voluntarily took a TEPS exam one month before the interview. Hyunmi asked him why he took the English test. He explained that he wanted to check his score and motivate himself because school English did not challenge him enough. During the winter break, he had been learning English by himself, focusing on each skill: reading, vocabulary, listening, and writing. Especially Hyunmi explains that her husband used to take TOEIC tests a number of times, too, and share his scores and experiences with children. She adds that her children took it learning English for granted, because they have seen long enough their father practice English and take TOEIC exams.

“My brain got numb. What is this score?” Eunyoung realized that her first son's English was in trouble. He had been learning English since the first grade in elementary school. He was a well-behaved and diligent student. He always did his homework on time. His English teachers used to tell her that he was doing well. So, Eunyoung did not expect the score he got from his first mid-term English exam although she had not evaluated his English, objectively using English exams.

[Excerpt 7-2, (Eunyoung, #2, p. 5-6)]

Mother: He had not prepared enough for English compared to his peers in this neighborhood. Even though he had been learning English for a long time, it was not enough. When I think of why, he had not studied English intensively and extensively. And his English was poorer than those high achieving students... as his school records showed....I thought his score would get better as time went by. But when I got his final exam scores, I was stunned. 'What the hell is this score?" was my reaction.

Interviewer: How was the score?
Mother: It was just a little better than the average…. ‘What is this? How should he prepare? It is serious! He was already a middle school student and a semester has passed. Where should I begin?’ I was really confused at that moment.

Taken aback and confused, she did not know what to do with her first son’s English, but she had to find some solutions. Now her son takes two private lessons. One is with his classmate where he learns English grammar in order to prepare for school English exam. The other is a reading lesson. Because it is private, she asks the teacher to help him prepare for his English exam during mid-term and finals. She explains that actually he takes phone English lessons too, which is available as a free trial during the winter break. She has not decided if she will continue pay for the phone English. She likes to help him learn English speaking. She wants to hire a native English speaker teacher like other mothers do for his speaking. She is well aware that speaking proficiency of English will benefit him, whose dream has been a car designer. He might go study abroad after college. Then speaking proficiency will be critical for his success there, she thinks. However, due to the added cost, she has been hesitating. Besides the cost, right now school English exams seem to be more important than speaking proficiency. First, he will need to matriculate in a college in Seoul. Then, English scores are more important unless speaking is included in school exams and college entrance exam. So, she prioritizes English scores for now.

“Elementary and middle school are different.” Sunmi explains that when her son was in elementary school, his English was not that bad. His English scores were not bad. In addition, his English scores were not compared to those of other students in the school record like in middle school. Now his English scores have been of her deep concerns.
Interviewer: Weren’t you aware of how he was doing back then? Like 'my child doesn’t know well or follow lessons well in the language institute’?

Mother: Elementary and middle school are different. In elementary school, you can see your scores (but not others). His (English) scores were not bad (in elementary school). Once he went to middle school, the school record showed his scores and his ranking, compared with the others. That’s when I realized his English was not so good. It was from then when I realized that his English was poor.

Sunmi says her son's English scores alarmed her about his English. The change from the elementary school to middle school was also something she had to learn as he went to middle school. At the elementary school, his English scores were okay, and she believed that his English was all right. However, after he went to middle school, it turned out she was wrong about his English.

"Because that language institute doesn't help students with school English exams."

Hyejin explains that she had to switch language institutes for her daughter. Her daughter changed language institutes when she went to middle school. She had gone to the previous language institute for six years, but when she went to middle school, she had to change language institutes due to time conflicts. Changing to the language institute, Hyejin considered her daughter's character. She is more expressive and loves to talk. Hyejin believed that she made the right choice to choose the new language institute. Her daughter seemed to enjoy it, too.

Later, when her daughter took the first mid-term exams in middle school, she was very disappointed and frustrated because the language institute did not help students to prepare for their school exams like other cram schools. Her school English exam score was not as good as she expected. She was used to being complemented on her English
but school exam score proved otherwise. Hyejin's husband also argued that if the language institute did not help her with school English exams, she should change to something else.

[Excerpt 7-4, (Hyejin, #3, p. 36)]

Mother: Chungdam did not prepare students for their school exams. So, my daughter’s English score was not so good. My husband and my daughter did not like that place so much (after the exam). But, um, what she learned at the language institute was not for the school exams-prep. She knew that but because her school English score was not so good, she had some conflicts, too. Although I kept pushing her to go there but because of her school English scores, she didn't like that place. I insisted for several months. She kept saying she didn't want to go there or she wanted to do something else. So, I said, "OK, I'll find something else."

Hyejin argued back that it took time to get adjusted in a new institute, so they should wait a while. But after a few months, she could not persist in her argument any longer and started to look for other options. She found a private tutor for her daughter. Her daughter has been learning English grammar from a Korean English tutor with one of her classmates, and her English scores showed some increase soon after she switched to private tutoring.

Though it is important to be able to speak English, outstanding English scores seem to be more important for middle and high school students. It is a matter of timing. Even for Hyejin and her children, learning English was all about to learn to speak the language before they went to middle school. Once they moved to middle school, it did not seem right to focus on speaking proficiency without having good English scores.

“NEAT or CAST.” “English Education Innovation to Enhance Practical English Education in Schools” has been implemented by the Korean government. NEAT (National English Ability Test) was developed by the Korea Institution for Curriculum
and Evaluation and launched in 2012 as one way to enhance practical English language education (Y. M. Kim, 2010; Hwang, 2012). It was scheduled to be effective as a college entrance evaluation in English in CSAT upon launching, but some internal errors delayed it. Now it is expected to serve as an English exam for college entrance beginning in 2019.

Backman (2013) argued that NEAT will bring positive impact, positive washback, on English language learning by providing motivation and opportunities for practical English language education in South Korea where English is not being used inside as well as outside school. Unlike the current CSAT (College Scholastic Ability Test), NEAT is loaded with speaking and writing besides reading and listening. By adding expressive skills (speaking and writing) to the existing receptive skills (reading and listening), NEAT is expected to facilitate English communication in the classrooms where speaking lessons have been avoided as not aligned with the CSAT preparation. Moreover, the exam is designed to correspond to what students learn in their curriculum, unlike foreign exams, of which contents are mostly foreign to them (Jin, 2012).

Despite the efforts to bring positive impacts in English language education, individual-level interpretation of NEAT expresses some concerns. Hyejin explains that it has been confusing her. Preparing for NEAT, her children need to focus on four English skills instead of two (reading and listening). She focused on speaking more than other areas while children were in elementary school. In middle school, school English exams become more important than anything else. English grammar and reading still account for the biggest part of the exam. Speaking, writing, and listening are not excluded but comprise a small portion. When NEAT is going to be used as college entrance exam, the
preparation will be very different from what she has been doing now. More speaking, writing, and listening need to be practiced.

[Excerpt 7-5, (Hyejin, #2, p. 17-18)]

Mother: And education keeps changing. So for my children’s ages, it has been said that NEAT exam, N. E. A. T. exam will be implemented and English language education needs to be adjusted to it. But some people said, according to those instructors who teach about English language pedagogy, it is a failure.

Instructor: You mean the exam itself?

Mother: The exam, the system itself is a problem. So, it might not be going to be implemented. But because so much money has been invested in developing the exam, it might be around for a while but fade away eventually. But some other people say that we need to prepare for the exam. So, I don’t know which one is correct. So those who insist that we need to prepare for the exam is the ones whose institute run based on the potential implementation. And those who insist that it will fade away teach based on the opposite conjecture. Some people say this while others say that. To be honest, English language policies tilt this way and that and sometimes I don’t know which way I have to focus.

Interviewer: If you need to prepare NEAT, do you know what you should do?

Mother: Yes. It focuses on four areas: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. …. That was why I thought that I had to send my children to a language institute where they could learn from foreigners… Speaking has been added to school English performance assessment in middle school from this year.

NEAT makes her job harder as a mother of middle school children. She would like to help her children prepare for high school English, but what focus does she have to take when no one knows if NEAT will be implemented or not for sure?

Hyejin has been teaching her children English seriously for a long time. Her children went to a language institute for five and six years in elementary school. More language institutes, cram schools and private tutoring ensue. However, the frustration in the excerpt above shows that children's English language education is structured by the
policy and exams. No matter how hard they try, the mothers' job of teaching English is challenged by many factors: children, spouse, resources, and the system, for example.

**Chapter Summary**

English proficiency and English exams can be confused and used interchangeably, although English proficiency in EFL world is evaluated by English exams. This is especially true when proficiency is confused with fluency. One of the common mistakes is to believe that English exams scores represent their fluency. Those with high fluency do not guarantee higher English scores.

One major difference in English language education in elementary and middle and high school is that elementary school is the time children can learn English without worrying about English scores. Proficiency as fluency can be a saleable commodity shown in private-market English language education in South Korea. However, those children who learned English for fluency in elementary school might not be well prepared for the English exams in middle school if they learned solely focusing on fluency.

Mothers’ confusion between proficiency and English exams derive from this misunderstanding. The confusion is predictable if speaking proficiency—fluency—is highly emphasized without including in school English exams accordingly, and English is a gatekeeper.
Chapter 8  
Mother Needs to be a Teacher of English for her Children

This chapter explores mothers' involvement in children's English language education from directly helping their children with their assignment or prep for English exams to gathering and researching information for optimal choices for their children's English language education. Despite their attempts to help their children with English by themselves, some mothers heavily rely on private market English language education for various reasons. In order to gather beneficial and useful information for their children, some mothers are known to socialize with other people including teachers (both in public and private sector) and groups of mothers, which is called social investment in this chapter, because information tends to be exclusive as well as age- and local-specific. Both stay-at-home mothers and working mothers find it challenging. In participating in children's English language education, mothers make a heavy emotional investment on top of the economic and social investments. Hoping that their efforts and investment to help their children would be fruitful, vulnerable mothers get frustrated and are sometimes at a loss.

Mother Needs to be a Teacher of English for her Children

This is How I Helped My Children with English but ...

“This is how I helped my children with English.” Hyejin elaborates how she helped her two children with English when they were in elementary school. They started to go to an English language institute when her first child was in the second grade and her second child was in the first grade in elementary school. They were puzzled with English
exams at the language institute and thought English was no fun, so she stepped up and taught them how they should prepare for the English exams.

[Excerpt 8-1, (Hyejin, #1, p. 23) ]

Mother: When they first went to the English language institute in elementary school, English exams made them puzzled. When I found they were struggling, since my English pronunciation is poor, I helped them with grammar or something, what they didn't understand. I showed them, "See, this is how you can do it". At first when their exam scores were bad, "English is no fun. I don't want to do it", they said. But several months later after I kept telling them, "This is how you prepare." They figured it out and then changed their minds, "Uh, English is fine." So, I tried to bridge the gap. Then I sat back for a while and then I helped them again when I noticed that they struggled with something. That's how I helped my children with English.

This excerpt illustrates how she helped her children with English whenever they needed, especially when they first started to go to the language institute. Her English knowledge was limited but she could help her children within her expertise. She tried to help them with English grammar and English exams but not with English pronunciation or speaking, which she believed was not her forte. Her children’s interest in learning English flickered on and off. Their motivation to learn English was external. Especially when they felt the lessons difficult, English was no fun to learn.

“Children's low performance shake things up.” Children's English language performance becomes a family issue. Hyejin elaborates her situation between her husband and her children. When her children performed poorly on school English exams, she comforted and said to herself that they would get better gradually, but her husband insisted that changes should be made if the results were bad after spending so much money.
Interviewer: It seems like there is nothing that makes you stressed or challenged.

Mother: No. I get stressed when they take exams or when I notice their assignment is done so sloppy. If I check their books too often, I tend to scold them too much, which they don't like. So I check only once in a while. When I do that, I see so many things done wrong, which makes me upset. I just say to myself that they will get better when that happens. But my husband is different. He insists that if we don't see the (expected) outcome after spending so much money, we need to make a change. Then, that gives me stress.

Her position as a mother who is in charge of children's English language education puts her in a dilemma. She wants to tell her children to work harder but does not want to make her teenage children upset repeating the same story over and over. Sometimes when she found out that some quizzes were done poorly or assignments were done sloppily, she felt stressed. She could not scold her children for poorly done quizzes or sloppy assignments every time. Otherwise, the tension between her and her teenage children would get more and more intense. She wants to tell her husband to wait for a while, but she is not the one who studies English. She does not know if children's English scores will increase for sure. In addition, she is not the breadwinner in this family. She cannot argue with her husband when he argues that money is wasting, investing in children's English language education in vain.

“It is complicated and difficult to teach my children English.” Eunyoung elaborates on her dilemma in teaching her children English language. She has not directly helped her first son with English much, but she has tried to find the right private lessons for him. He has been learning since he was in the first grade in elementary school, but when he went to middle school, she realized that his English was not as good as she had thought.
Mother: It is difficult to figure out how to teach (my children) English. It is too broad. Simply speaking, I started this way, 'thinking it might be the right way' but then it turned out that it was not. Or it ended up not being so satisfactory and so I keep in search of another way. I chose one way and continue doing it but still wonder if I'm doing it right or not. It's complicated. It's hard, actually.

This excerpt illustrates the challenges she has faced helping her first son with English language education. It is hard to find the "right" way. At one point, she made a decision believing that she was making the right decision, but later it turned out it was not. She made another decision to help her first son with English, but she is not sure which options are the right ones for him. She wonders which is the right way to help him with English.

"Live English or dead English is the question." Eunyoung is not the only one who asks herself the "right" way to help her son with English. Hyejin has been teaching her children English since they were in the second and first grade in middle school. When they were in elementary school, English instruction focused more on speaking and communication. Now they are in middle school when students need to prepare for high school and college entrance exam. Therefore, her children learn English more focusing on grammar and test-taking skills.

Mother: ... even though I'm managing my children's English, I still wonder if I'm doing it right or wrong. Even though I'm aiming at the goals of high school English and English for college entrance exam, I wonder if I'm doing it right. To be honest, I worry, "Am I making their English useless [dead] in the end my goal is to ensure my children's high school English?" But then in order to make their English useful [alive], if they don't get expected results (on English exams), it would be a problem, too. The best possible scenario is when they have something specific they would like to do. Until now they don't have any specific goals. With lack of sense of goals, they just learn English because others do it. So, I make them do it. That is the biggest reason for now. For now, you know, they need a base, so I'm trying to make the base for them.
Her concern is discerning which one is more important in learning English, communication or English scores. If their English scores are bad, they will have a hard time matriculating in a college when the time comes. However, if they cannot use the target language to communicate with foreigners, what is the point spending so many years learning it. She asks herself which one she should focus on more now, dead English or live English. When it comes to children's English language education, there are many factors and aspects that make mothers stressed and worried but they do not know what else to do.

**Economic Investment**

The annual report of the Statistics Korea (http://kostat.go.kr/survey/pedu/) shows private-market education for elementary, middle, and high school students in Korea in 2012 cost about 19.4 trillion won (approximately $19 billion USD) while the entire education budget of the Ministry of Education in 2012 was about 46 trillion won (approximately $46 billion USD). The private-market English language education cost in 2012 was estimated at 6.4 trillion won ($6 billion USD) without including the cost for early study abroad.

In fact, economic investment for children’s English language education takes place almost all corners of Korea. 80.9% of elementary school students, 70.6% of middle school students, and 50.7% of high school students participated respectively in private market lessons on top of regular school work (total 69.4%). Average monthly spending for private-market English language education per month was 80,000 won (approximately $80 USD). 75,000 won (approximately $75 USD) and 17,500
(approximately $17.5 USD) were spent for math and Korean language each month respectively.

The report also shows the correlation between family income and investment in children's private-market education: the higher the family income, the more they spent for their children’s private-market education. The households with monthly income higher than 7,000,000 won (approximately $7,000 USD) spent 426,000 won (approximately $426 USD) per child, while the household with monthly income lower than 1,000,000 (approximately $1,000 USD) spent 68,000 (approximately $68 USD) won per child. Parents’ educational levels correlate the spending on their children’s market education.

“We haven't spent as much money as others on that.” Younghee explains that she has not spent much money on children's private market English language education. She has four children. Not including the youngest, 5 years old, three of her children went to after-school English programs to learn English while they were in elementary school. After-school English programs start from the first grade in elementary school. Her first child is in the second grade in high school, her second child is in the third in middle school, and her third child is in the sixth grade in elementary school.

[Excerpt 8-5, (Younghee, #2, P. 8)]

Mother: Since they [children] didn't learn English much in the private market English language education, there must be some gap with those children who have done but we don't spend much money on (private) education.

[Excerpt 8-6, (Younghee, #3, p. 2)]

Mother: It [after-school English program] started from the first grade in elementary school. Once they entered elementary school, they were eligible to take those lessons.
Interviewer: Sorry to ask but how much did it cost?

Mother: Um, it was cheap. When my children first went to the after-school program, people did not use it much... Korean teachers teach, with play-oriented activities… just like in kindergarten, with fun activities, so that they could get adjusted easily when they were in the lower grades. So, compared to children who learned English more systematically in language institutes, my children seemed to fall behind....

Learning English from after-school English programs was not costly compared to attending language institutes. Asked the cost of the afterschool programs, she simply answered "cheaper." She also describes afterschool programs with the phrases as "Korean teachers teach," "like kindergarten," and "with fun in order to get adjusted more easily," implying the lower quality compared to more costly language programs. She assumes that learning English in the afterschool programs would not be systematic and beneficial like learning in “rather expensive” language institutes. In the excerpt above, Younghee connects the economic investment with the better opportunity to learn English.

“I won’t pay unless you really want to.” Younghee tells her children that she is not going to spend any money unless they are really serious about it. Younghee's husband asks her to teach the children English more, so that they can perform better and come in higher ranking at school. But she knows better than that. She cannot spend away their limited income on private market lessons like other families. They have four children, which is higher than the average number of children in South Korea.

[Excerpt 8-7, (Younghee, #3, p. 3)]

Mother: My children are not the best in class. But their dad asked me to make them do more but because I have many children, I tell them, "You don’t want to do it, do you? Then don’t do it." (Laugh)

Interviewer: (Laugh)
Mother: I used to tell her, "I'm not going to pay for you unless you really want to." So now she takes EBS (Educational Broadcasting System) lessons by herself.

So, her first child takes EBS online classes, which are designed to supplement school education and reduce the burden of private-market education. Her second daughter, in the third grade in middle school, is asking her to find a private tutor for her. But she has never done anything for a lengthy period of time, Younghee adds. Younghee wants her second daughter to do well in English, too but she is no exception. Only when they are desperate, she will pay for their private lessons like her third daughter. The number of children is Younghee's justification for not paying for private market English lessons like other mothers.

**Dependence on Private Market English Language Education**

Although not all mothers make heavy economic investment in children's private-market English language education, many mothers do. An estimated 80.9% of elementary school students and 70.6% of middle school students take private market lessons according to the annual report of Statistics Korea in 2012. English is very dominant in private education market until students reach the second grade in middle school. The mothers in this study explained their own reasons to count on market English language education here.

"What should I worry more, scores or dependence?" The excerpt below illustrates the dependence on private market English language education. Hyejin explains that after switching to private tutor, her first child's English scores have increased.
Mother: When he first went to middle school, first mid-term? His English score was great even though he did not study hard. Then he did not study hard for the final as well. His English score dropped. The second semester, his English scores dropped even more. And this year, his English scores were not very good like the previous year. But after changing the English tutors this year, his English scores have been improved a lot. Uh, in one sense I think I chose the right tutor, so that his English scores increased. On other hand, well we depend on private lessons, too much. I’m worried what he should do once he goes to high school and becomes too busy to take any more English tutoring.

She adds her contradictory ideas about her son's English scores. On one hand, she is relieved that the scores have increased since they changed to the current private tutor. On the other hand, the dependence on private tutoring makes her worry if he could do English exam prep on his own once he goes to high school and becomes a lot busier.

“More private tutoring to move up to higher level classes.” Hyejin illustrates that private-market English language education is to promote the competition among students. A daughter of her neighbor's wanted to move to a higher class in a language institute where she went to learn English. It was when she was in elementary school.

Mother: Often more advanced classes get the most attention in the private language institutes and the rest do not.... So among many classes, she wanted to go to the more advanced class. And her score was on the border line. So, her mom found a private tutor, a foreigner teacher, for her and a few months later, she was moved to the targeted class. When someone asks, "Which institute do you go to?", when children ask each other, "Which class there?" 'I'm in so and so class." Then, they say, "Wow, you're smart." Then it becomes mother's pride, too. Sometime, I think that I should have done that, too.

She adds that more attention is often given to advanced classes in language institutes. Therefore some students, who desire to move the advanced classes, take extra private lessons besides the English class in the language institute. The name of the class becomes
a pride of the student as well as mother when asked which class he or she belongs to in the language institute, she elaborates.

**Rationale for Private Market English Language Education**

Mothers elaborated on the rationale for private market English language education. First, it is because their children do not study English alone. Second, mothers often clash against their teenage children when they try to teach them at home. Third, mother’s English is not good enough to teach their children English themselves. Fourth, their English pronunciation is not sufficient to teach their children themselves, unlike grammar. Fifth, they feel relieved by sending their children to language institutes or cram schools to get them involved in some kind of private-market English language education. Sixth, it is competition, private-market English language competition. When every other child learns English outside school, it is terrifying to know that “my child is the only one who does not do anything and who might be left behind.”

Myungsun elaborates why she and her husband decided to send their children to costly private elementary school: "If they can learn English earlier, my children would have advantages being able to speak the language," she says. "Starting early would be much more likely for them to be able to learn to speak than starting at the age of 20." She wanted to believe that their children would be more competitive than other children who did not have the opportunities to learn English as early as they did. Her explanation illuminates the competitive aspects of English language education, especially in private market English language education.
Hyejin lists, in the excerpt below, the reasons why she had her children take private-market English language education. She agrees that she tends to rely on private-market English language education more than any other subjects. First, she finds her children defiant. Second, she learned English knowledge such as English grammar rather than English as a language to speak. She has no confidence to pass on her English pronunciation to her children. Third, children do not voluntarily study English diligently on their own.

[Excerpt 8-10, (Hyejin, #3, p. 7-8)]

Interviewer: While talking with you, I sense that you depend on private market English language education a lot.

Mother: I do when it comes to English. Even I think that I rely on private market education for children’s English education… First, my children and I clash when I teach them English at home. It is not easy to do it at home. Second, because my generation learned English focusing on grammar and with textbooks, it is not easy… Children’s English pronunciation sounds natural but mine is not. I can help them with grammar but not the pronunciation. And my children don't do it by themselves. So that’s why we end up relying on the private market English education.

Youngsuk adds that she feels relieved knowing that her children do some extra work going to market English language institutions. She has not forced her children to take private lessons against their will. However, she felt uncomfortable, worrying if her children alone were not doing anything to improve their English while other children went to English kindergarten and English language institutes. It is competition.

[Excerpt 8-11, (Youngsuk, #2, p. 4-5)]

Mother: Although I usually ask their opinions before I make them do anything, deep inside I think that other children are taught English a lot. They went to an English kindergarten, did private tutoring, or went language institutes. But my children didn't nearly do any of them, so I worried whether my children fall behind or not.
[Excerpt 8-12, (Youngsuk, #2, p. 50-51)]

Mother: The reason to send children to a language institute is because that [doing it voluntarily] doesn't happen. It's because they don't do it by themselves. Then I have to memorize everything and learn them by heart, but that doesn't happen. Then, I have to sit down with them and help them do it but I can't do it, either. Then, the next choice is the private market language institute.... And it made me feel relieved (by sending them to a language institute.)

Youngsuk also added that children cannot study English by themselves and she has no expertise to help her children with English when they need. Therefore, she chose a cram school for private English language education for her children. She felt relieved knowing that her children were doing something to improve English, too.

Social Investment

Social investment refers to mothers' information power in gathering information for children's private-market education, which is mothers’ efforts to build networks with other mothers to get useful information for their children’s education. It features location-specific, age-specific, and exclusiveness. With mothers heavily involved in their children’s education, it is said that mothers’ information power is key to children’s success.

“Mother's information power is key to children's success.” Mother's information power is introduced in a longer phrase: Grandfather's money, father's indifference, and mother's information power is key to children's success. Hyejin explains the phrase in the following excerpt.

[Excerpt 8-13, (Hyejin, #2, p. 52)]

Mother: People say this these days: Key to children's success is 'grandfather’s economic power, mother’s information power, and father’s indifference'.
Interviewer: Why father's indifference?

Mother: If father intervenes, diverse opinions might make it difficult (for mother) to make a decision (for children's education). Previously, it was father's income that matters but these days father's income is only good enough for survival. Grandfather's money is what makes a difference in children's education. So, if the family has a lot of money (inherited), they can freely make children do things. Father should not intervene and mother should have information power and.... wow, it's scary!

The common phrase Hyejin cited in the excerpt above represents the discourses of private-market education embedded in the Korean society: economic burden of private education and mother's and father's stereotypic roles and participation in children's education. Especially social investment reinforces the women's roles and responsibilities of childrearing and children's education in Korean society. Hyejin sighs that she has none of the three. She has no grandfather’s money; her husband is interested in children’s education and does not hesitate to express his opinions; she does not have strong information power. She says that it sounds scary. The discourses like this can make mothers disempowered in children's education and make mother's roles in children's education overwhelmed.

Three Features: Location-Specific, Age-Specific, and Exclusiveness

Location-specific. Hyejin has to learn how to choose children's private market lessons since she is in charge. Her own trial and error taught her how to choose one better. Instead of believing what reputation of institutions she heard, now she can triangulate the information she gains from different sources.

[Excerpt 8-14, (Hyejin, #3, p. 51)]

Mother: At first I thought it was a good institute if people said so. As my children grew up, ah~ if I knew three people who sent their children to the institute and
they had positive opinions about it, which might be various although they say good things about it. I think I can judge if it would be a good place for my children. And my children would get adjusted. Besides, I need to gather the information from someone nearby.

She emphasizes that the travel distance is crucial. If an institute is located too far, the information about it is not really beneficial for children. So, information should be location-specific.

**Age-specific.** Hyejin elaborates age-specific character in social investment. The target information should be from mothers whose children are about the same age. Otherwise, the information can be outdated for one’s children. But the dilemma is that mothers whose children are about the same age are reluctant to share the information to reduce the competition.

[Excerpt 8-15, (Hyejin, #3, p. 52)]

Mother: I don’t know many unnis* (sister, title to call older siblings or older female), who can give me such kinds of information. But knowing many unnis doesn't matter if they are much older than you (if their children are much older than yours). The information they can hand me down is out-dated already. And a mother that I know told me that, sometimes mothers don’t share the information unless their children are much older or younger because of the impacts. Adding more students might take too much time out of the same private tutor.

**Exclusiveness.** Both stay-at-home and working mothers elaborate their own reasons to render their social investment difficult, not being able to socialize and make social investment, which results in the exclusive feature in social investment. Hyejin explains that her small pool of other mothers, who she hangs out, limits her social investment. Younghee argues that her reserved character and busy daily routine taking care of four children hinder her social investment. For Eunyoung, her roles as mother, wife, and the first daughter-in-law use up all her energy and do not allow her to make
social investments. Working mothers, Sunmi, Youngsuk, and Myungsun explain that her job does not allow them to socialize with other mothers for social investment.

“Working mom has lack of information power.” Sunmi argues that working mothers lack mothers’ information power. She was one of the working mothers lacking information power. She tended to rely on easier resources when choosing private language institutes for her children. She justifies her choices of children's English language education.

[Excerpt 8-16, (Sunmi, #2, p.6)]

Interviewer: Then how did you choose language institutes?

Mother: Working mothers have this thing. They have lack of information power. So, what they can do is to choose from the commercial flyers. Or from what they heard from someone. Or from what I've had contacted. So, the EG language, I chose because I had met an instructor from that language institute while I was learning English at work. The director of the language institute was the instructor. So, I thought that place might be good (for my child). How did I choose Sisa? It has slipped out of my mind. It's been too long. I think I'd heard from someone.

Sunmi is not the only one arguing that working mothers' face challenges in social investment. Myungsun elaborates how tight her daily schedule at work leaving at 6:45 and coming back 7 or 8 at night. Working long hours over time, she has missed many of her children’s school events. While stay-at-home mothers go to parent-teacher meetings, volunteer at school as exam supervisors, or supervise lunch at school, her work has not allowed her to participate any of those school events that require mothers' participation. Lack of participation in school events results in lack of social connection, she elaborates.

[Excerpt 8-17, (Myungsun, #2, p.20-21)]

Mother: … and these days those mothers get together and talk about teachers but never share their information with the others. So, working mothers are 'outcasts' at
school. Because stay-at-home mothers can go to school often and consult with teachers. But working mothers can't join anywhere. When parents are invited to school events, working mothers don't have time to go. When children take exams, these days parents go and supervise them. Two parents a day. But working mothers don't have time for that. And during school lunch, mothers used to go to school to and dish out the food. But working mothers cannot go to school to do that.

Myungsun refers those mothers who have no time to participate in such school events with other mothers as "outcast, 왕따". Once named as outcasts, they are excluded from the circulating information in the group. Information is very unlikely to circulate between in-groups and out-groups.

"An outcast, stay-home mother." Exclusiveness is not an issue only for working mothers. Younghee often hears complaints from her first daughter in high school. One time her first daughter went to volunteer with a few classmates. The mothers of the other girls had known each other for a while but hers. They had organized activities together for children such as volunteering. Her daughter was lucky to join that volunteering event because one of her friends invited her. Otherwise, she might not have had a chance to do it. Even then, Younghee's daughter complained, after coming back from the event, that all the other mothers knew each other well and they were with them but her.

Younghee argues her hardship in social investment. Taking care of four children, one which is five years old, she does not have much time. Without much help and support from her husband, she has not had any social life since she got married. She has not contacted other mothers, let alone her old friends. She has been a lone mother who gets information about childrearing from books rather than from other mothers. This exclusiveness of social investment illuminates the overloaded mothers' responsibilities inside as well as outside of the household. In so doing, it only victimizes both stay-at-
home and working-mothers by loading unreasonable roles and responsibilities on mothers' shoulders.

**Emotional Investment**

English language is a threshold of children's success or failure as mothers elaborate on “English is a requirement.” Then, involved in children's English language education, mothers would like to ensure that they are doing everything they can to teach children English. They would like to ensure that they are doing it right. In doing so, they make a huge emotional investment, which creates unexpected tensions and stress.

The fear for children's failure drives mothers to make emotional, not only economic and social, investments in children's English language education. However, investment in children's English language education in such a competitive educational environment is to expect the uncertainty to be certain. In investing in children's English language education, mothers are really investing in the notion of English language education, and it is not easy to discern what exactly that is in South Korea. English language is tied to one's success and global competition as a nation, one assumes. However, as the dramatic changes of English language education over the last two decades prove, learning English in South Korea is different from other areas of study where what one is expected to learn is relatively well-defined. What is required in English language education in South Korea is not clearly defined but still very fluid. Even then, mothers' investment in any forms of children's English education cannot stop, because they do not want to diminish children's success. The consequence is exhausted mothers.
“Pouring money into a broken jar.” Hyejin elaborates that she and her husband often talk about the children's English language education. Using the metaphor of a broken jar, their investment is to pour money into a broken jar.

[Excerpt 8-18, (Hyejin, #2, pp. 48 & 68)]

Mother: Honestly speaking, the money that is invested in children’s private market English language education is not a joke. To be honest, I sometimes think we spend our retirement money for that. Children’s father often says we're pouring money into a broken jar….. To be honest, I think it is investment. We only can hope that the investment is worthwhile. What we can do is to invest, not to make that investment fruitful. Unless they work hard in order to make it worth, it will be useless. However, we cannot stop pouring money into the broken jar for now….. Of course, retirement without financial preparation makes me feel uncomfortable. But we cannot stop investing in children’s English language education now in order to make our retirement fund. That is parents’ mind.

The challenge, in doing so, is that the consequence does not depend on how much mothers pour money into the broken jar, because it is children who can make mother's investment fruitful, not the mother or father. What the mother can do is to wait, hoping that children will realize that it requires the collaboration between two parties: mother and children. No matter how exhausted, mother will continue pouring money into the broken jar because that is what she can do.

“It was worth of the money.” After sending children to a bilingual private elementary school to get a head start in English, Myungsun believed that she did her part to ensure her children learned English in the right way.

[Excerpt 8-19, (Myungsun, #1, p. 1-2)]

Mother: (Children’s) father says, “Aren't you able to speak with foreigners without fear?” So, when I took them abroad, they volunteered to talk with foreigners. It was when they were in fourth or fifth grade in elementary school, we went abroad (to Disney Land in Japan), which was nice. I told them, “Mom doesn’t know. So, you guys should ask (questions others to find places).” You
know, you get booklets when you go to amusement parks. I told them to ask and find places to take rides. They did without hesitation. When I took them there to test them. So, I thought that proved it was worth the money we had invested.

She and her husband were convinced that they had invested right. It was worth the money. Children could speak with foreigners without fear; their trip Disney Land in Japan proved it.

“Not sure if it was the right choice anymore.” However, things changed once her daughter went to middle school, which was a regular middle school. She was not accepted by the middle school that was run by the same foundation as the elementary school where she could continue practicing English with pride. Unlike elementary school, there are only a handful of bilingual middle schools in South Korea. In the research site, the middle school run by the same foundation as the bilingual elementary school was the only one where one can learn English from foreigners like she used to. Her trouble began when she went to middle school. Her daughter complains that learning English focused on grammar for three years has made her lose speaking proficiency in English.

[Excerpt 8-20, (Myungsun, #1, p. 1-2)]

Mother: My first child went to middle school and learned English focusing on English grammar and lost speaking proficiency of English language. Three years later, “Mom, I think I should go to a language institute again to polish my speaking proficiency,” my daughter said. We really spent a lot of money sending them to the elementary school. For six years, we spent a house on it. “Mom, I should have not gone there” she says…. Now I wonder if we did wrong. We could do something else with that money.

Listening to her daughter's grumbles about school choices, Myungsun is not sure anymore if she and her husband made the right choice by sending her to the elementary school. After spending so much money and hoping that it would help her children learn English better, her daughter's complains do not reassure her. She is confused and very
frustrated. She wonders if she and her husband should have done something else with the money instead.

The emotional investment derives from mothers’ efforts to make sure that they are doing their job right in educating children as normalized in the patriarchal Korean society. However, it reveals that mothers' roles in the education of their children is a bigger fight than simply making sure that their children do their work or managing their financial resources right. In the neoliberal education where education is grounded in a winner-take all competition, mothers' roles in children's education makes mothers look like they are not doing their job no matter how much they try.

Chapter Summary

This chapter explores mothers' involvement and investment in their children's English language education. Their involvement in their children's English language education makes them English teachers of English for their children, directly helping their children with English. At the same time, their involvement drives them to make economic, social, and emotional investments. In so doing, their involvement makes them vulnerable in their position as mothers who hope their children to perform well and flourish and succeed at school and in the future where neoliberal ideology rules in education.
Chapter 9  
Dilemma of Proxy Investment

Norton (1994; 1995) used the concept, investment, in learning English as a second language (ESL) in her earlier study conducted in Canada. She argues that ESL learners need to make active efforts to practice the target language in order to improve it. In other words, they should invest in learning ESL. Investment in their target language, not motivation alone, will help ESL learners achieve their desired proficiency of English language and benefits that come along with the proficiency, she argued.

The mothers in this study have a strong desire to invest in the target language, English as a foreign language (EFL), in order to improve it just as the participants in Norton’s study in Canada. Literally, they do make ample investment in their children's English language education. But the mothers’ investment is by proxy and does not necessarily lead to their children's investment in their own learning. The mothers make a monetary investment in their children's English language education and spend time helping children with English within their expertise of English language. They mobilize their social network to gather beneficial, useful information and resources for their children's English language education. They repeatedly tell, monitor, and encourage their children to practice English. No matter how hard they try, their investment in the target language, EFL, is still limited because it is by proxy. The mothers cannot practice speaking out loud what they learned in class for their children. They cannot memorize new English vocabulary they found in newspaper articles for their children. They cannot try to make their interaction in English more meaningful using the phrases they just have learned for their children. Their dilemma begins with the mother's ambivalent position as
a proxy investor. The mothers' anxiety about children's academic success and fear of failure drives them to invest in their children's English language education.

“I'd rather study English myself.” Helping children with English has been a constant battle for Hyejin. Sometimes, she sighs, “I'd rather study English myself than make them do it.” Her children have been learning English since they were little at language institutes, at school, and at home with private tutors. No matter where they learned English, endless assignments and exams ensued. She has helped her children with English either for homework or exams since they started to learn English, but she illustrates here that it is hard to help children with English. The limit she faces here is called proxy investment. She can do everything to ensure children to learn English except one thing: She cannot do it for them.

Hyejin's job gets even more challenging as children get older. Her teenage children are not as obedient as they used to be. She says, “It was much easier to talk them into doing things when they were younger.” As the importance of English grows as they get older, they do not listen to her as they used to while younger, which gets her more anxious.

Teaching children English over the years, Hyejin recalls her school days and compares those days and now. "Ah, it was so much easier to study at school. All I needed to was to study myself. Now (as a mother) I should encourage my children and study the subjects also in order to help them with. What is this?” (Hyejin, #2 p. 51). She cannot answer her children's questions without studying English herself. However, her job does not limit her time for studying English. Continuous negotiation with children is harder. For children, they are like doing mother a favor by learning English.
Being a mother makes it more complicated. Hyejin's worries are not limited to English scores. Now she sees the consequences of high or low English scores. She connects them with children's future well-being and success. However, her position is by proxy. She cannot study English on behalf of her children. The more anxious she gets, the more likely the tensions between mother and children will arise. The complicated relationship between the children's English language education and the nature of proxy investment shapes the motherhood in neoliberal education.

“How nice if she can even chat in English!” Hyejin blurts out, “How nice it would be if she can even chat in English? She doesn’t understand why I sent her to that English language institute.” This embodies one dilemma of proxy investment in children's English language education. Children do not understand mother's intentiona. Hyejin deliberately chose the language institute, where she could practice English discussion and debating instead of grammar or other areas, when she needed to change to another. Her decision was based on her daughter's character and style. Her daughter loves to talk and had been participating in English class actively. Hyejin believed that it would benefit her daughter continue improving her spoken proficiency a lot.

At first she seemed to enjoy it. Soon she started to complain: “There was a strict rule of English only throughout the time in the institute. No one was allowed to talk in Korean during recess. Chatting in English is not chatting anymore.” Her daughter kept complaining about the English-only policy there. For Hyejin, it would be a nice thing if children spoke English even while chatting. But for her daughter, English was not as comfortable as she believed it would be, so she could chat in it freely. Being able to chat with friends during recess was more important than being able to even chat in English.
Hyejin's expectation clashes with her daughter's reality, which is constructed unreasonably by the institute and not fully understood by the mother.

The mother's proxy investment does not always correspond with the children's interest and investment in their own learning. Children have interest in many things, more than just learning English even when they go to language institute. Friendship for teenage girls is sure to be important for them.

“It makes me upset.” Sunmi has been learning English with her son, who is in the third grade in middle school, together for the last several months. Every Saturday morning they sit and learn in the English class. It was her decision to make sure that her son learns English after years of learning English without many fruitful results. However, she illustrates that it has been a little stressful to watch him in the English class.

[Excerpt 9-1, (Sunmi, #3, p.6)]

Mother: Today we took the screen English together. Taking the class together, I was upset looking at him. I guess I'm still not used to. Looking at his behavior just makes me upset.

Interviewer: How did he behave?

Mother: So, he didn't take notes. You know, you need to take notes in class, so that you can memorize words. Or memorize or understand them. He never reviews the lessons. So while looking at him, he takes notes only when I tell him to do so. When I ask what the word means, he is like, so I tell him why you don't know that when we both take the class together. (laughter)

Interviewer: (laugher)

Mother: That’s how he did in class. But he didn’t doze off today. He used to fall asleep in class. We went there early this morning but he didn't doze off.

Mother's frustration in helping children with English worsens when compounded with underachieving children. What is worse, her investment in children's English
language education is less likely to lead to a child’s investment in learning English if he or she already has lost confidence in the subject for a long time. As Sunmi struggles in the excerpt above, what she can do to really help her son with English sitting in the same class is limited. However, the mothers of underachievers at school cannot give up their children as the same as those mothers of high achievers at school. The dilemma of proxy investment is that those mothers of underachieving children tend to be more victimized and rendered guiltier than their counterpart mothers.

“Monetary investment is the only thing what I can do.” Frustrated, Sunmi illustrates that economic investment seems to be the only thing she can do for her son's English language education at this point. What he learns at school is too advanced for her to help him with.

[Excerpt 9-2, (Sunmi, #3, p.11)]

Mother: When he was in the lower grade in elementary school, I helped him but now it's beyond what I can help him with. What he learns at school is beyond I can help. I don't understand it as well. So, the only thing I can do with his school work is to support him economically. As a parent, that's not good enough.

Although she still goes to the Saturday English class with her son, Sunmi has been driven into a corner. Her son's English makes her feel guilty, thinking that there is nothing else she can do except make an economic investment in her son's English. Her son's resistance to learning English in any other language institutes or private tutoring worsens her guilt when she realizes that economic investment is the only thing she can do for his English.

“It must have been too difficult.” Sunmi has reflected on the reasons why her son has been so struggling in English although he began learning English early on.
Although she has taught her son English early on, it seems as though it made him dislike English even more.

[Excerpt 9-3, (Sunmi, #3, p.4-5)]

Interviewer: Thinking of what you have done (with his English), what would you like to change if you could?

Mother: Um, my expectation was too high from the onset.

Interviewer: Could you specify it?

Mother: I sent him GNB when he was in the first and second grade in elementary school. They have their own programs, right? Their programs start from sentence levels, not from the word levels. And they expect children to read and comprehend and teach them how to use prepositions etc. I forced him to learn more and more when he didn't know anything, which made it hard for me to help him with English and made it hard for him to follow. The same thing happened again and again when I changed the institutes. It was the same with private tutoring, too. Trying to add more and more without any foundations.

She might not have known about his placement or how the entire placement worked. Or maybe out of her own frustration, she might have forced him to cram the English lessons when he was younger. From one institute to another, he was asked to learn something more advanced than his own level. So, rather than having experienced joy of learning, he must have experienced repeated failure, which must have caused him to give up. Helping him with English, as a proxy investor, she might have been an accomplice, giving him a failing experience repeatedly and unknowingly. One dilemma of proxy investment is that it is possible that mother might unknowingly force children to do what they cannot, engraving failing memories in their experiences.

“Constant worries.” Constant worries have seized Youngsuk. Positioned as a mediator between children and spouse, the mother needs to constantly negotiate with
children and spouse regarding children's English language education. When resisted by children or disagreed by spouse, the mother's concern mounts, as Youngsuk's case shows.

The competitive educational environment worsens her concerns. Comparison with other children aggravates her worry. Looking at other children having learned English beginning in pre-kindergarten or from kindergarten ate her heart out, she explains. She wanted to her children to learn English early on. However, her husband was a person who believes that children need to play while young and they will work hard when time comes. Her children did not show any interest in learning English, either. In her household, the whole family makes a decision together. Parents do not force children to do things they do not want to. She needed to respect children's opinion as well as her husband's. She just worried, but there was nothing else she could do back then but wait. This is another dilemma of proxy investment.

**Chapter Summary**

Mothers make economic, social, and emotional investments to the extent that they feel like they have been pouring money into a broken jar. However, the nature of their investment becomes their dilemma. No matter what they do, there is one thing only children could do: the actual learning. The nature of mother's investment in children's English language education is called “proxy investment.” Mothers’ proxy investment in children's English language education becomes the source of the mothers’ frustration and stress. Comparison and competition consumes the mothers who worry about their children's English language education. In so doing, the market-oriented proxy investment in children's English language education becomes the mother's dilemma. Mothers can
compete by investing more or less, but at the end of the day, it is not directly their
competition but children's although it is also theirs indirectly.
Chapter 10
Neoliberal Motherhood and Regrets

This chapter explores mothers' challenges in neoliberal motherhood. Many challenges are identified, ranging from a lack of resources and support, to mothers' desire for their career, to a good mother ideology in the patriarchal society. Though their motherhood has been continuous, day-to-day battles to be good mothers, mothers are full of regrets for what they have or have not done for their children's English language education.

Neoliberal Motherhood

“How do you neglect your children like that?” Mothers in previous chapters repeatedly show how their motherhood has been shaped and reshaped around private-market education and competitive education. Their stories affirm that their involvement in their children's private-market education sometimes equates shopping for their children's English language classes. Moreover, their shopping for their children's private-market education is not limited to English education.

Younghhee tells the story of when her first child was in the third or fourth grade in elementary school. She heard one of her neighbors criticizing her, "How do you neglect your children like that?" Her neighbor criticized her for not drilling her children with workbooks to prepare for school exam. It was true; she had not made her children drill with workbooks nor sent them to cram schools to prepare for school exams like many other mothers living in the same apartment building. After that, she bought a workbook
and told her first child to work on it, but she was not very enthusiastic about it. Therefore, she said she did not buy her any more workbooks unless the daughter asked for one.

Compared to other mothers, Younghee acknowledges that she has not spent much money on children's private-market education. Instead of sending her children to private market institutes, she bought collections of books and read them to her children starting when her children were young. She explains that she read them to her children until the book covers were worn out and dangling. She read books until her children asked her to stop it; this was when her children were in the fifth and sixth in elementary school. Her children love reading books now. Especially her first and third children love reading books, and they are good at writing, too. They often win prizes at writing contests. Currently she only reads books to her youngest boy, who is five years old. Sometimes her daughters take turns and read books to him, too, when she is busy with other house chores.

Younghee's story above illustrates that her motherhood was judged by how much money she spent on her children's private-market education, not by what she actually did. The society brings its own measurements when it comes to good mother and motherhood and the measurements are often prevalent, dominant ideologies and discourses. In neoliberal mothering, motherhood can be evaluated by how much they spend for their children's education and how well children perform at school. Those mothers whose children struggle at school are easily seen as bad mothers.
Career or No Career

“Wise mother, good wife.” Living as a stay-at-home mother takes devotion, sacrifice, and more sacrifice. Nonetheless, Hyejin chose to be a stay-at-home mother when she got married in her early 30s. She and her husband believed that she was already too old for the first baby, so they prioritized having babies over her pursuing a career. Now her children are in the second and third grade in middle school. Though she has remained as a stay-at-home mother most of her time, she has a desire to work outside, too.

She is certified to be a secondary math teacher and also a pharmacist.

She wanted to be a doctor in high school but instead of going to a medical school, she went to pharmaceutical college and became a pharmacist. It was after she graduated from her first college that she also became certified to be a secondary math teacher. The decision was made based on a teachers’ advice for “wise mother, good wife (賢母良妻, Hyun-Mo-Yang-Chu)” and her father’s advice to consider balance between career and motherhood after marriage. Plus, her father did not want all her youth to be wasted studying to be a doctor. Her teachers in high school advised her to consider staying at home as a mother rather than pursuing her career after college. For them, being a full-time mother was seen as the best career for a woman. So, she took her father's and teachers’ advice and went to College of Education and became certified to be a secondary math teacher.

However, by the time she graduated from college, she realized that she really wanted to work in medical field. Besides, she did not want to live as an easy quitter. She did not want to tell her children how easily she gave up her dream. She convinced her father and spent another year to prepare for the college entrance exam. Her father did
some research on which medical area would be good for her. She would eventually get married and have children, so her father wanted her to do something with which she could combine her responsibilities as a housewife. He thought a dentist but other dentists did not recommend it for someone like her who is small. Her and her father's final decision was a college of pharmacy. His calculation was that there is no retirement age for a pharmacist, and time can be more flexible if she is self-employed.

When she graduated from the college of pharmacy, she got a job in a hospital. But a year later, she moved to another city and worked for a pharmacy of her college friend's. It was not even eight months later that she met her husband and married and moved to the current city. Once they got married, she and her husband believed that they were too old to delay for children. Soon, they had children. Two children were born one year apart, and from then on her life has revolved mostly around children and housekeeping.

At that point, she had a chance to work part-time in a pharmacy for a few years. It was when her first child started the fifth grade in elementary school. She worked during the busiest hours in the pharmacy. She started working four days a week for several hours a day. She went to work after her children went to school and came back before her children came home from school. Later, her work days were reduced to three days a week once the “five-day school week system” for middle school students was established. When her children stayed at home on Saturday, it became her husband's responsibilities to take care of them on Saturday. He did not like it. Her husband persuaded her that this was the time when her children needed her more. She had to quit her job again. It was just one month before the interview.
[Excerpt 10-1, (Hyejin, #1, p.4)]

Mother: About four years. I worked part time during the busiest time at a pharmacy. I worked four times a week. Then Saturdays became an issue. So, later I worked three days weekly. This year my husband asked me to stay home and take care of children, so I stay home, taking a break now. I’m not sure, "Will he ask me to work again later?" I don't know. (laughter)

“I feel better working outside than staying at home.” She explains that her husband insists children and housekeeping should be priority to career. Therefore, he did not want her to pursue her career while the children still needed a mother's care. However, she wanted to work outside instead of being a full-time mother and housewife. She accepted the part-time job offer while her husband was away on business trip and just informed him on the phone. Whenever she needed to defend herself from her husband, she argued "I feel better working outside than staying at home… I see myself differently when I work outside." Her inner conflicts as a mother and career woman continue, and she does not want to admit that she has quit her job, but says that she is taking a break. Staying at home, a day flies by.

[Excerpt 10- 2,(Hyejin, #1, p. 19)]

Mother: "Honey, a day flies by while I’m at home. And I feel better outside than at home. I feel incapable at home while I feel more capable outside. So, I look at myself differently when I work outside." That way I convinced him…. And I quit it. No, I haven’t quit it. I'm just taking a break.

Her unpaid house work is more important for the family to her husband's perspective than her career. The hegemonic motherhood that a stay-at-home, full-time mother is ideal is evidenced by her relationship with her husband (Johnson & Swanson, 2006). Simply, that is what a housewife is supposed to do, she reiterates her husband's argument. He might not mind her pursuing her career if she could handle work paid and
unpaid. She is a mother who wants to be like her own mother. She recalls her mother as someone who was very supportive of and physically present for her and her siblings while they were growing. She remembered her mother as a person like light. You never notice its presence while it is there but you do when it is gone. For her, the concept of motherhood is engraved and naturalized in the example of her own mother and discursively reconstructed by the expectations of her family, herself, and the society.

**Supermom**

"I've raised my children alone." Supermom usually refers to a mom who successfully manages job and housekeeping in balance. In this section, supermom is used to refer mothers—including stay-at-home and working mothers—who manage their job if they are working mothers, raise children well, and take other responsibilities that come up in nuclear and extended families.

Younghee's excerpt below illustrates her overloaded responsibilities. Explicitly stating, "I have raised them [four children] alone [without my husband's help]," she implies that there has been lack of help and support from her husband. However, her husband does not mind criticizing her children for their school performance compared with other children. She explains that her husband's criticism hurts her a lot since she has raised their children alone.

[Excerpt 10-3, (Younghee, #1, p. 5-6)]

Mother: (Children's) Father's greed is, um, he has been working hard for promotion, moving forward. But children's academic performance does not come in the highest rank. With father's greed, people say children's success is what fathers envy most after getting promotion up to certain point. Which universities children have matriculated and where they are employed; if they are doctors or lawyers, etc. It seems like they become sensitive with this matter. Father
[children's father] does not keep this matter inside but speaks it out loud. It hurts me when he downgrades them, saying like how poorly children are doing at school. I raised them alone without his help and support. His inattentive remarks like that really hurt me.

She explains that her husband is a good provider. He works hard at his work place. At home, he is not such a good father for his children. Most of his free time after work and on the weekend, he has been doing his social activities including football, hiking, marathon, and participating in social gatherings with a few groups of friends. He has not spent much time with children. She recalls that from the time when she got married, he had been busy with other activities besides his work. He started rarely helping with house chores, which continues until these days.

Nonetheless, she emphasizes that people at work talk about children’s academic achievement and their jobs. Children become at the center of their conversation among office workers. If someone's children have jobs such as doctors and lawyers, people are envious of him or her. Therefore, her husband continued the conversation whenever he has a chance with children. He tells them whose children became what and so on. Compared with those high achievers, her husband tells their children how little they have achieved.

When they first got married, she had a full time job, but after her first miscarriage, she was scared to lose more. So, she quit her job when she got pregnant again. Since then raising children, housekeeping, and taking responsibilities of familial events have been all her life. She has to prepare for memorial services seven times a year, all alone. A few months of a year, her mothers-in-law used to stay with her family; this happened for a number of years until a few years ago. On top of raising four children alone, the familial
responsibilities have isolated her from other social life. She says she has rarely met with her own friends over the years while raising children. As a stay-at-home mother, she has played a multiple roles, constantly juggling her time daily.

“Oh, my husband doesn’t know anything.” Eunyoung, who is also a full time stay-at-home mother, demonstrates her responsibilities as mother, wife, and in-law. She makes the decisions for children's education, especially decisions for language institutes and such. Though she says that she asks for her husband's advice or discusses it with him, she firmly denies her husband's knowledge of children's education. She read a newspaper article about fathers who are more interested in children's education a couple of months ago, but she doubts that many fathers are interested in or actively participate in children's education. Her husband is no exception. He is busy with his own work. Sometimes 24 hours a day is not enough for him when he is very busy. Therefore, she is responsible for children, housekeeping, and familial events with in-laws. Besides, her second child is eight years younger than her first child. When her first child started to go to elementary school, her second child was born and her attention went more to the newborn.

[Excerpt 10- 4, (Eunyoung, #2, p. 33-34)]

Interviewer: Who makes a decision for children’s education?

Mother: I do it most of the time. I ask for his advice and discuss with him.

Interviewer: Then when you need to choose which language institute is better for children...

Mother: Oh, he doesn’t know anything, nothing.

Interviewer: Nothing?

Mother: Yeah. Sometimes I read newspaper articles saying fathers have more interest in children’s education nowadays. I remember reading an article a few
months ago. Maybe there are fathers like that but until now mothers are the ones who collect all the information for children’s education. My husband is busy working on his research. When he is busy, he is busy 24/7. So I need to take care of the rest from familial responsibilities with in-laws and annual family events and everything. That must have consumed me. I was always lack of energy because I had to do everything on my own for my own family and the extended family.

She was always lacking energy even though she wanted to help her first son, who is now in the third grade in middle school, with his English and other school work. Instead, she kept telling him to do his homework on his own since he was a big brother. Her coping strategy, when overloaded with responsibilities, is to reduce or minimize whichever activities she could curtail.

Eunyoung and Younghee are full time, stay-at-home mothers who are overloaded with responsibilities and who lack help and support. They only struggle with unpaid labor but nonetheless, they are the same supermom as working mothers who grapple with the social norms imposed on mothers, wives, and daughter- or sister-in-laws. Though they are lacking support and help, it seems like they are to blame for their children's low performance.

Regrets

Helping children with English language and managing children’s English language education has been big part of motherhood for all the mothers in this study. In doing so, there were times when they faced challenges and had pressure, stress, and frustration. Some mothers share their regrets about their children’s English language education here. They regret what they could not do or what decisions they made for children's English language education.
“Only if I had played the cassette tape until my finger prints wore out.” Younghee regrets that she had not done enough for children. Raising four children alone, she always runs out of time, resources, and energy. She was not always able to pay attention to individual child's need for developing their English language proficiency although she tried hard.

[Excerpt 10-5, (Younghee #3, p. 9)]

Mother: I feel sorry, I should have played the (English) tapes until my finger prints got worn out, even just the tapes.

Interviewer: Tapes?

Mother: Yes. If I had played them more, wouldn't their English listening be better now? I regret that I used to say, "OK, that's it for today." with the excuses of younger children.

She wonders if it would have been different to have spent more time for her children's English language education. Her first child is not a struggling student even though she is not a top student. She elaborates that her first daughter is a motivated learner even though she had not learned English in English language institutes or taken private tutoring like many other students. She adds that her first child was selected for a free trip to the United States this winter by her high school. She is very proud of her first daughter. She worries about her second daughter though, who is a little defiant and does not listen to her as much as she used to. Her third daughter starts her middle school this year and sounds like a very motivated and diligent learner. Nevertheless, she wonders her more persistent efforts might have made them turn out a little better.

“I should had made him take English tests earlier to evaluate his progress.”

Eunyoung explains her mistake in teaching her children English. She sought advice about
what to do at the beginning. Her first son started to learn English relying on home-visit private lessons. His teachers said nice things about his progress and she naively believed them.

[Excerpt 10- 6, (Eunyoung, #2, p. 2)]

Mother: Considering all advices, he started to learn English at home without too much burden. His English teachers used to tell me he was doing well, diligent and hard-working. So without much worry, his English education lasted for 3-4 years like that. The problem later was, he was not evaluated from time to time using some standardized English exams. I should have double checked his performance in English along the way. Neglecting that was my mistake and what I feel sorry for my son.... when he went to a language institute, it was when he was starting the second semester of his fifth grade, which is very late, compared to other children these days.

She regrets not having evaluated and understood her first son's English progress in timely manner. It seems like her unintentional negligence delayed her son's English language education compared to other children.

“I wish I could have spent more time for their English language education.”

Youngsuk, a working mother, regrets that she has not spent enough time with children developing their study habits in general and in English. Even though learning English or spending a lot of time in English does not guarantee their English proficiency, she still regrets it and wonders if it would have been different if she had spent more time with her children.

[Excerpt 10- 7, (Youngsuk, #3, p. 6)]

Mother: I’m not sure but I think it would have been better if I had spent more time teaching children English like other children even though that doesn't guarantee anything. I’m not sure whether it would have made things better for sure or not. But it's my regret, which still lingers.
Chapter Summary

Mothers’ roles in raising and educating children are taken for granted as women's innate responsibilities without question. As Hyunmi’s case illustrates, a woman can keep her job once her housework and children are taken care of. As Eunyoung's case illustrates, a woman's roles in the house are embodied as a supermom loaded with children, housework, and familial responsibilities up to the point that she has no energy to pay attention to her children's schoolwork. Even then, more pressure and stress and regrets awaits the mother.
Chapter 11
Demystifying English Fever

English fever in South Korea is manifested through the interplay of many factors. One factor is the tension between public and private-market English language education. The popular narratives of English language education, such as the native speaker belief, are another. The gap between expectation and reality and mothers' efforts to secure their children's future are other factors, to name a few. Entangled with the hegemony and ideologies of English as a global language, English fever has created the sites of struggles for the stakeholders of English language education in South Korea.

The Sites of Struggles: English Fever from the Inside

Tensions between Public and Private-Market English Education

English language has been advocated as global competitiveness or even a silver bullet in the global competition, greatly promoted through various English language policy implementation, especially since the early 1990s in South Korea. At the same time, the orientation of English language education in the public sector triggered the boom of the private-market English language education into a self-perpetuating market. In doing so, public and private-market English language education has been in the relationship of competing against and supplementing each other, which has continuously created tensions for the stakeholders of English language education.

The private-market English language education allows mothers to teach English to their kindergarteners (or even younger) children although English is taught for nine years to all Korean students, beginning in the third grade in elementary school. The
mothers in this study unanimously agree that English needs to be taught as early as possible, because it is perceived as “a requirement” for children's success. Moreover, learning English language becomes the “competition of the private-market education” as Hyejin illustrates. The competition positions mothers responsible for running “an endless race,” which otherwise would diminish children's future success.

**Sites of the Struggles for Mothers**

In one sense, children's English language education shapes motherhood. All the mothers in this study started to teach their children earlier than the third grade in elementary school. However, many external factors, such as places where they lived, their economic resources, family size, and mothers' understanding of children's English language education, have determined mothers' choices for children's English language education. Those external factors often make mothers feel triumphant or guilty, playing a taken-for-granted role in children's English language education.

Hyunmi hired a Canadian English instructor as the first English teacher for her 6- and 8-year-old sons. She explains that it was feasible because they lived in Seoul back then. After learning English from the instructor, her children have continued learning English from other resources, such as reading English books through English book rental programs or phone English to practice speaking until the time of the interviews. She wanted to ensure that her children learned English in a more natural environment than when she had learned English, so that they would be able to learn the language without resistance like she had had. They would be able to speak the language freely, unlike herself. These struggles are summarized in Figure 11-1.
On the other hand, Younghee, who was as eager as Hyunmi in teaching children English, regrets that she had not played cassette tapes enough until her fingerprints got worn-out. She started to teach her children English at home by herself but because of her poor English pronunciation, she was using the English cassette tapes. Once her children went to elementary school, she was able to send her children to the after-school English programs provided by the elementary school. It was her alternative choice over private English language institutes, which were more costly. Although she thought her children might not learn English as systematically as those who went to private English language institutes by going to the after-school English programs, she justifies her choice with her efforts to make ends meet within her husband's income. She has more children than the average Korean family in her generation. In doing so, her choice makes her more vulnerable as a mother when she became aware that children's English language education might be compromised, as she needs to make ends meet within her husband's income.

**Figure 11-1. Mothers’ constraints in children’s education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Global sphere:</th>
<th>Modern sphere:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Economic globalization</td>
<td>✓ Intensive mothering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Neoliberal economy</td>
<td>✓ School involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Uncertainty in job prospect</td>
<td>✓ Competitive education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Instability in employment</td>
<td>✓ Neoliberal motherhood: feminine sacrifice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ &quot;Imagined&quot; global citizenship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home sphere:</th>
<th>Traditional sphere:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Divided gender roles in parenting,</td>
<td>✓ Patriarchal family structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>placing mothers responsible for childrearing</td>
<td>✓ Wise mother, good wife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and children's education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Social isolation in mothering</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Overloaded responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Global sphere:
- Economic globalization
- Neoliberal economy
- Uncertainty in job prospect
- Instability in employment
- "Imagined" global citizenship

Modern sphere:
- Intensive mothering
- School involvement
- Competitive education
- Neoliberal motherhood: feminine sacrifice

Home sphere:
- Divided gender roles in parenting, placing mothers responsible for childrearing and children's education
- Social isolation in mothering
- Overloaded responsibilities

Traditional sphere:
- Patriarchal family structure
- Wise mother, good wife
Hyejin regrets not having been able to send her children to English kindergarten. For her, the age of kindergarten was critical to learn English like a mother-tongue without judgment or fear. Limited economic resources meant her plan never materialized. Her two children were one year apart, which made her decision more challenging. If they were a few years apart, she could have sent them to an English kindergarten at different times. But her children were doing everything together at the same time like twins. As she repeated during the interviews, she wonders how different it would have been if she had sent her children to an English kindergarten anyway. She wanted her children to be able to speak English freely without fear. However, her teenage children do not like to speak English as much or freely as she thought they would. Their English pronunciation is not native-like even though they have been learning English from foreigners for six and seven years respectively.

Even though it is not clear what the quality English language education is, often the mothers who make distinctions among the English language education programs based on the cost, equating more expensive classes with better classes. As Hyejin illustrates, the classes taught by the native English speaker teachers are more expensive than those taught by Korean English teachers. Moreover, as Younghee explains, private language institutes teach English more systematically juxtaposed with after-school English programs.

**Any Problems with English as a Commodity?** The prevalence of the private market English language education makes English a costly commodity, positioning itself a socio-economic maker (J.K.Park, 2009; S.Y.J. Park & Abelmann, 2004). As a result, the access to English in the private-market English language education is not equal to all.
Heavy dependence on private market English language education turns it into “a competition of private-market English language education: as the mothers in this study repeat. ‘The more, the better’ or ‘the earlier, the better’ mentality accounts for the competition.

The mothers in this study have faced some issues while teaching children English in the private sector. One is the achievement gap among students. By learning English early on, some have become “bad” students already when they first start to learn English at school or when they are seriously tested on the subject. The diverse curriculum and instruction in the private-market English language education and the different length and depth of children’s exposure to English makes English instruction in the public sector more challenging. For the mothers with children struggling in English, they tend to find solutions in the private-market English language education as Eunyoung illustrates, creating the vicious cycle of dependence upon the private-market English language education.

Given the function of English as a gatekeeper in education and job market, the interplay between the public and the private-market English language education perpetuates the cycle of social reproduction via English education. Without a real reformative action, the public English language education really serves to officialize whatever kinds of English students learn in the private sector via testing or school reports. Then, what it really does is to aggravate the competition in the private-market English language education and worsen the inequality gap in education.
Struggles in Learning English

Myth of the Native Speaker Belief

One of the taken-for-granted assumptions in EFL is the ideology of the native speaker belief, which accentuates the supremacy of native speaker teachers (Holliday, 2005). In South Korea, infused with local English fever, the native speaker belief has been normalized in the public as well as in the private market English language education. The normalization of the ideology is evidenced by the governmental efforts to increase the number of native English speaker teachers as a way of improving the quality of English language education for students and teachers. The mothers’ choice to get children to learn English from native English speaker teachers early on exemplifies the normalizing practices of the native speaker belief in the private sector. The increase of native English speaker teachers as well as the increase of early study abroad (to learn English in English speaking countries) indicate the same practice.

The ideology of the native speaker belief serves in two ways when mothers make a choice for children’s English language education: native-like fluency as a learning goal and the native speaker teachers as “better” teachers (Canagarajah, 1999; Holliday, 2005; Mahboob, 2005). For example, Hyunmi wanted her children to learn English as a language to speak in, not as a school subject, in a more natural environment by hiring a native English speaker teacher for her children's first English language teacher. Hyejin chose a language institute where native English speaker teachers taught English, expecting her children to be able to speak the language fluently without fear unlike her. Myungsun sent her children to a bilingual private elementary school, so that they could learn English—to speak it—unlike her or her husband. Youngsuk concurred that learning
English from native speaker teachers helped her first son to have a better ear for English. These mothers chose native speaker teachers for their children, so that their children would be able to speak the language. In addition, they believed that in learning English from native speaker teachers, their children would be able to acquire native-like pronunciation unlike their mothers' English.

Seen from inside, the ideology of the native speaker belief has been deliberately constructed by the language policies and the discourses around English fever. The Kim Young Sam administration (1993-1998) is often criticized as triggering the excessive English language education, the English fever, in South Korea. The criticism is that with the motto of globalization, his administration made English proficiency for global communication more prominent and sparked the competition in the public as well as in the private-market English language education. South Korean education, which has contributed to the development of human capital for the economic growth (Guo, 2005; Morris, 1996; Yoon, 2009), needed to get adjusted to the changing politics of neoliberal economy. On the verge of global competition, his administration created the rhetoric of English language proficiency as a silver bullet for global competition.

Many changes were made during his administration in the public as well as in the private-market English language education. In the public English language education, the age of school children learning English as a mandatory school subject lowered from the first grade in middle school to the third grade in elementary school. The part of speaking and communication got bigger in the National English language curriculum. Government-sponsored English language programs were launched, such as EPIK (English Program in Korea) to recruit native English speaker teachers to teach students
and teachers in middle and high school. The EPIK teachers were in charge of in-service teacher training to improve their speaking proficiency as well as to provide insight for the curriculum development and teaching methodology as illustrated in the EPIK website (Jeon, 2009).

In the private sector, private English language education boomed, resulting in the drastic increase of private language institutes across the nation. Over time, more and more English language institutes hired native English speaker teachers to entice more students. With the increasing rhetoric of English proficiency as a silver bullet of global competition, as well as domestic benefits, it seemed more important for children to learn English for global communication. More and more mothers started to send their young children to an English language institute to learn English from native English speaker teachers. Most of the mothers in this study are among those who sent their children to English language institutes to learn English from native speaker teachers, believing their children would learn to speak like native English speaker teachers if they started early enough. Some of the mothers talked about their friends or children's friends who sent their children abroad or went abroad to English-speaking countries to learn English directly from native English speaker teachers in a more natural environment. The number of native speakers present in Korea as well as the number of young children sent abroad to improve English increased every year.

The English language education boom that took place during Kim Young Sam administration grew even bigger during the following administration, and English language education was more and more emphasized. Evidently, it has made English language education excessive, gaining the name of English fever. IMF (International
Monetary Fund) aid in 1997 followed by Asian Economic Crisis and the following social change reinforced the popular narratives of English proficiency as a silver bullet for global as well as domestic competition. The English language education boom continues to convince mothers that English language proficiency is required not only for school success but also for children's future success or maybe even for survival. Seemingly, the world of children's future seems to shrink.

All the mothers in this study have a child in the third grade in middle school in March 2013 (born between 1997 and 1999) plus one or more children younger or older. They first learned English in the private-market English language education with various degrees of exposure to English. In addition, they started to learn English as a mandatory subject at school from the third grade in elementary school, except Myungsun's second child who went to bilingual private elementary school beginning to learn English from the first grade. They started to learn English while learning English was taken for granted. It was natural to learn English because it is a requirement. What matters was how to learn English, not whether they needed to or not. All those middle school children, except Youngsuk's, learned English from native speaker teachers; her children learned English from native speakers in middle school.

However, some mothers explain the disparity between their expectation and reality. Now that their children are in middle or high school, the mothers illustrate what they have realized. Learning English from native speaker teachers brings unexpected problems. First, the language barrier between the students and teacher hinders them from understanding some grammatical concepts, as Hyejin illustrates. The language barrier
between the mother and teacher stops them from communicating between the two parties, as well.

Second, although the goal of learning English was to be able to speak the language with foreigners without fear, the mismatch between school English proficiency and communicative proficiency makes mothers confused over time; as Hyejin says, where should she focus: live or dead English, in other words English for communication or for school exams. To her disappointment, Hyejin adds that her children's English pronunciation is not as good as she expected, even though they have been learning English from native speaker teachers.

Third, Hyunmi illustrates her son's case about identity conflicts. Learning a language is more than learning the phonetics, phonology, or lexical knowledge. The culture, value, and history embedded in the language become part of the learning process.

Many scholars (Canagarajah, 1999; Holliday, 2005; Mahboob, 2005) argue that it is wrong to make people believe that native speakers are the better teachers simply because of their first language ability. They argue that language teaching requires more than just the knowledge of the language including knowledge of teaching and teaching the target language. Mahboob (2005) argues that both native English speakers and non-native speakers can be good teachers of the target language but their strengths might be different.

Although the high cost of learning English from native speaker teachers makes it unavailable for many people, causing educational inequality, the mothers' stories reveal the underlying implications of the ideology of the native speaker belief. Their stories tell that it is naïve to believe that the presence of native speaker teachers will magically
transfer their language ability to the learners. The mothers’ belief that their children will achieve native-like fluency after attending English language institutes several years results from the misconstrued understanding of language proficiency.

**Early English Language Education**

The mothers' cases also exemplify another popular narrative of English language education: The earlier, the better. Starting to teach children English much earlier than themselves made mothers believe that it would enable their children to speak it “without fear or stress,” as Hyejin and Hyunmi repeatedly noted. All mothers but Younghee and Youngsuk began to teach children English in kindergarten or even earlier. Younghee thought teaching children English before learning Korean might be confusing. Youngsuk wanted to teach her children English earlier but she had to wait until children went to elementary school. Her husband did not want to teach children English too early and her children also did not want to. She convinced her husband and children and started to teach them English once they went to elementary school. However, waiting until then made her uncomfortable. She knew everyone else was already doing it. Hyejin repeats her regret at not having sent her children an English kindergarten due to the high cost. The increasing market share of early English language education market demonstrates that it is not only those mothers who chose to send children to learn English as early as (pre-)kindergarten.

Early English language education combined with native speaker belief was hard for the mothers not to believe when they first taught children English for two reasons. The first was timing, such as in critical hypothesis and competition. Besides the popular
narrative of timing, it was overwhelmed and reluctant to speak learning English from middle school, Hyejin and Hyunmi illustrate. It made more sense to start earlier. There was also competition. Many other mothers they knew taught their children early. As Youngsuk explains, it was not easy to wait while everyone else was already teaching children English. She had to convince her husband and children repeatedly to start English language education for the children. In so doing, teaching children English creates continuous tension and negotiation with children and spouse for mother.

Another source of tension with children and spouse regarding teaching young children derives from motivation. It is not easy to keep internal motivation to learn English as a foreign language even if they had it to begin with. With a lack of internal motivation, the mothers' role, then, is to continue providing external motivation such as candies or other prizes for the young learners. After a while, tension can arise between mother and children. Depending on father's attention to children's English language education, as in Hyejin's case, the children's father can be another source of tension for the mother when repeatedly criticized about children's progress or the mother's choices.

As discussed earlier, the cost of private market English language education remains an issue for all families while teaching their children English. However, the cost for younger children is sometimes even higher than for younger children. English kindergarten is one example. Anecdotal evidences show that English kindergarten is more expensive than college tuition. As Hyejin repeatedly illustrates, it was a difficult decision for her not to send her children to an English kindergarten. It became a mother's guilt, making her wonder what might have happened if she had sent her children to an English kindergarten instead, even if it took more than they could afford.
The popular narratives of English fever are full of unproven folk theories and false remedies of English language education. The function of English language in South Korea as a requirement and English as a commodity make mothers who teach children English struggle from lack of direction and road map. In doing so, the hidden cost of ongoing English fever is going beyond imagination. There are many underlying issues relevant to English fever that require more in-depth research and understanding.

**English Proficiency in the Local Context**

The rhetoric of English proficiency as a silver bullet for local and global competition confuses people in teaching and learning English in South Korea; even though English is called a global language, the actual usage is very contextual. English proficiency needs to be understood accordingly. The mothers in this study unanimously agree that English is a requirement for their children's success in South Korea. They want their children to learn English well, so they started to teach their children English early on. But what English proficiency level do they want their children to acquire? It is not an easy question for a layperson to answer. A few mothers in this study repeat that they wanted their children to be able to “speak English without fear” when they first started to teach their children English. However, as children moved to middle and high school, English exams and test-taking skills became more prominent goals for their children's English language education.

The mothers believe that their children will achieve native-like fluency after attending English language institutes several years results from the misconstrue understanding of language proficiency. Learning English as a foreign language to attain
native-like fluency is an on-going, lifelong process and needs to be understood as such to avoid painful mistakes such as unrealistic expectations, excessive investment, or grave disappointment. Even those who get good enough scores on TOEFL or IELTS to go study abroad for their higher education in English speaking countries have hard time to get adjusted in a new learning environment because of English among many other factors. Without proper social and academic engagement and investment, many people would be unlikely to achieve native-like fluency even after living in English speaking countries for a number of years.

When planning English language education in South Korea, the issues relevant to English proficiency need to be better understood in order not to confuse people. In particular, English fever can compound the issue when added to English considered as critical skills for children's school and future success, as well as a misconstrued concept of English proficiency.

**Challenges for Mothers**

In teaching children English, mothers encounter many unexpected issues relevant to children's English language education. This section briefly revisits their struggles from two angles: the generation gap between mother and the children and mothers' efforts to secure children's future.

**Generation Gap: Expectation versus Reality**

The generation gap between mothers and children becomes a source of mothers' struggles in teaching children English. Mothers learned English as a school subject. Their battle against a Korean-English dictionary was the biggest for them. Rote memorization
was onerous but not criticized out-dated. Learning about the target language was the main part of the learning, not training their mouth or ears to use the language for global communication. Most of the students started to learn English at the same time, from the beginning of middle school. There was no fever of any sort when it comes to learning English. Equalization was at the center of the main rhetoric of the public education, as well (Piller & Cho, 2013). The college enrollment of high school graduates was much lower, at about 30%.

These mothers' children have been learning English while inundated with the popular narratives of English fever. The rhetoric of English as the silver bullet for domestic as well as global competition has been at the center of the narratives. Supposedly, children need to acquire English to be able to communicate with non-Korean speakers from around the world. Rather than rote memorization of the knowledge of English, direct contact with native speaker teachers to learn English becomes common sense for learning the target language. More sources of learning English are available online and offline. A large body of Korean students has left for English-speaking countries to improve their English and become more competitive back home. The Internet has been part of their life. Everything sounds more connected in the cyberspace in the children's generation who were post-IMF crisis babies. Neoliberal competition has been the main rhetoric of their education (Piller & Cho, 2013). The current college enrollment of high school graduates is now about 80%, as indicated in Table 11-1. Mothers' interpretation of children's English language education is a matter of success at school and in the future.
Table 11-1

*Enrollment in Tertiary Education and GDP*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Enrollment in tertiary education (%)</th>
<th>Out of academic high school (%)</th>
<th>Out of technical high school (%)</th>
<th>Net GDP per capita (Won)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>26.90</td>
<td>40.20</td>
<td>9.60</td>
<td>200</td>
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<td>1980</td>
<td>27.20</td>
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<td>1990</td>
<td>33.20</td>
<td>47.20</td>
<td>8.30</td>
<td>859</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
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<td>2005</td>
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<td>81.90</td>
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<td>73.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>79.00</td>
<td>81.50</td>
<td>71.10</td>
<td>2,116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Division of Subjects, Korea Bank

The generation gap has been a big challenge for mothers teaching children English. They have responded to the popular narratives of English fever. They have tried hard to teach children English, but as time passes, they have witnessed the mismatches between expectation and reality. Their expectation for children's English language education when it began does not turn out as expected. For example, children's English is not as good as mothers expected it would be after in years of time if they continued learning it. Once children moved to middle school, mothers discovered that English is taught differently in middle school than in elementary.

Reality has been different from their expectation. What mothers have discovered instead is the dilemma of the fallacy of composition, saying “competition of private market English language education.” Learning a global language, English, well seems to be very advantageous, not problematic at all. However, it does become an issue difficult to solve when excessive competition develops, as in South Korea. The mothers in this
study have made a tremendous economic investment in their children's English language education, as well as social and emotional investments. Some of them argue that economic investment in their children's English language education is inevitable because everybody else does. They call it a competition of private English language education ‘과외 경쟁’. Their economic investment in their children's English language education is analogous to the economic concept called the fallacy of composition.

The fallacy of composition is explained that one's reasonable economic activity might turn out not so reasonable when more than the “appropriate” number of people participate in the same economic activity. For example, English proficiency in South Korea might have very high economic value while the number of people with high English proficiency is small, but the value of English proficiency decreases as the number of English proficient people increases. The same logic is applied to the relationship between English language scores and private-market English language competition. As more and more students learn English privately after school, it might make the competition get harsher without getting the expected return.

Hoping to give their children a head start in English language education, mothers choose to teach their children English early on. Some mothers send their children to English language institutes or abroad to English-speaking countries. Other mothers hire English tutors to teach their children English at home or do something else they can exercise within their financial means. However, the probability of what they will gain may change depending on other mothers' participation. As more and more mothers decide to teach their children English early on, the desired outcome might not be returned, only making the competition even harsher. Making mothers believe that teaching their
children English early on will promise their children's English proficiency and children's success in learning English can increase the competition in private-market English language education, wasting energy and societal cost unnecessarily. In so doing, the fallacy of composition—a dilemma of English fever—puts mothers whose children learn English in the private market in competition, creating the a dilemma of unstoppable competition for the slightest reward. As the competition of private-market English language education grows, individual mothers' competition turns into a bigger societal problem, English divide.

Secure the Future: Challenges of Neoliberal Motherhood

A closer look at the individual mothers in this study reveals the pressure, struggles, and frustration. In order to ensure that children are equipped with the so-called requirement at school and for the future, mothers have taught children English early on, making heavy economic, emotional, and social investment. The pressure to secure children's school success and future, efforts to ensure children to be diligent with the task of learning English, and frustration at seeing undesired or unexpected results have been all the sources of mothers' struggles in doing so.

One of the sources of mothers' struggles resides in the changing social and educational context of South Korea. For example, mothers keep bringing up the significance of matriculating in a decent college to get a decent job. One major issue of higher education in South Korea derives from the expanded scale. When mothers went to college, the college enrollment out of high school graduates was about 30%. Now the college enrollment out of high school graduates is about 80%. Just like the fallacy of
composition in the private-market English language education, the increased college enrollment devalues the college degree. Nonetheless, it is inevitable to matriculate in a college when the majority of peers do so, although the quality of the higher education is not exactly matched and improved with the increased scale. What is worse, the academic credentialism prevails in South Korea, worsening the competition to enter a few selective top universities. Therefore, mothers' children are not just striving to learn English but preparing early on to matriculate in a few selective top universities to secure their academic network afterwards. The competition to go to those universities is launched very early for children's generation.

Mother's investment in children's English language education is by proxy no matter how much they try, often creating tension between mother and children. Mothers would do anything, exercising everything that they could, to ensure their children to learn English like the mothers in this study repeatedly illustrate. Despite all their efforts, however, it is children who make mother's involvement or investment worthwhile, not the mother. And sometimes the tension between mother and children jeopardizes their relationship as mothers get more anxious to teach children English.

Children's resistance or lack of motivation undermines mothers' efforts to ensure children to learn English. Young children do not necessarily understand why they need to learn English without internal motivation. It is challenging for mothers to continue motivating children to keep their interest in learning English. After learning English for a length of time, some children lose interest in learning English, like Sunmi's first child in middle school. Their English scores at school label them as a bad student already. Besides, the achievement gap among students is very wide since many students have
learned English for a number of years before they go to middle school. Then, those teenage children resist learning English as mothers desire them to, even if they used to listen to and follow mother's guidance while younger. The tension can aggravate the relationship between mother and children.

In teaching children English, the mother positions herself in the conflict zone, not only with children but also with spouse, too. Once children move to middle school, school English exams make mother evaluate and re-evaluate her choices for children's English language education. But Hyejin's case illustrates, when children's English scores were lower than expected, her husband criticized and challenged her choices and asked her to change children's private English language education. She cannot ignore her husband's opinion, as the breadwinner of the family, when it happens, but at the same time, nothing is guaranteed when it comes to children's English language education. Changing to another institute or another tutor does not mean their English scores will increase.

For some mothers, children's English language education has been daily strife. The mother's roles in teaching her children English are shaped by many factors, from resources and cultural and linguistic capital they can exercise to English language pedagogies and policies. Mothers’ roles are reshaped by their relationship with her children and spouse in teaching children English.

When English, taught as a commodity, is a requirement for children's school success and future as it is in South Korea, children's English language education in the public as well as private sector becomes mothers’ mind-boggling struggles. In doing so, however, what mothers really encounter is more than their daily conflicts with children or
spouse. The general problems of public education in South Korea are what mothers are really battling against, which is oriented towards the neoliberal competition. Hidden causes of English fever beneath individual strife needs to be better understood in order to more clearly see the issues relevant to English fever and take the steps to better deal with the situation. Otherwise, English language education in South Korea is another way of colonialism, but only towards its own people.

**Limitations**

There are many limitations in this study. One limitation is the focus on mothers, not including other stakeholders of English language education in South Korea (e.g. students, teachers) as well as policymakers. As the mothers' dilemma indicates, their involvement in English language education both in the public and in the private sector is by proxy. Their children are the ones who supposedly learn the target language. The teachers who teach English to those children, both Korean and native speaker counterparts are also a key factor. The policy makers and those who participate in the policy implementations take part in English fever, too. People involved in the private-market English language education are equal participants in English fever. Since English fever has a great impact on the society in a myriad of layers, English fever should be investigated from diverse perspectives to better understand the on-going phenomenon.

Another limitation is again related to the participants. Korean mothers belong to diverse socio-economic status. Even though some mothers in this study elaborate how challenging to manage their children's English language education within limited income, other mothers might call that a luxury. Moreover, some mothers might make very
different choices for children's English language education regardless of their socio-economic status.

Not all families consist of a two-parents (mother and father) household. All the participant mothers in this study come from two-parent households. However, there are many children who live in different family structures. The participant mothers in this study with middle-class income do not represent all Korean family structures. Combined with the socio-economic status and household structure, the family structure is more complex than the stereotypical or ideal two-parent family.

**Solidarity**

Despite the limitations of this research mentioned above, this research has one strength to address. It is the solidarity built with the participant mothers during the interview process. Although it might have been odd at first meeting with and talking about their struggles, frustration, and pressure they carry on their shoulders, the interviews were quite therapeutical for some mothers by having the opportunities to let out what they had held inside.

**Implications**

This study investigates the issues relevant to English fever in South Korea from mothers’ perspectives. Hoping their children will thrive at school and in the society, mothers teach their children English early on. In doing so, mothers encounter many frustrating factors. Economic, cultural, and social capital that they can exercise for children's English education varies from household to household, which disconcerts mothers. They need to continuously negotiate with their children as well as spouse in the
process, making sure their children are engaged in English language education as they are supposed to be. Mothers with underperforming children might struggle even more with worries of not having prepared for their children's English well. Many are full of regrets, as what they have or have not done for their children's English language education remain unsolved.

The struggles and challenges the mothers face in teaching children English, either in the public as well as in the private-market English language education, results from the neoliberal competitive education in South Korea. Education functioning as a mechanism to provide human capital for economic development in South Korea, the neoliberal competitive education makes the public education a winner-take-all competition backed up by the private-market education. In teaching children English, what mothers really deal with is the systematic flaws of English language education. They are in the battle against the monstrous neoliberal education, destructive of democracy, human dignity, and human right.

This study illuminates that English education is not neutral with English fever in South Korea. With the popularity of English as a global language, English language teaching has been spreading globally for the last half century. However, EFL education in the local context manifests tensions, confusion, struggles, and conflicts, as this study shows. Although English fever in South Korea has taken on a unique character reflecting the local cultural, historical, socio-economic, and political conditions, English fever prevails in many other EFL countries. In addition, English language education has created English divide in many post-colonial ESL countries, too (Blommaert, 2010; Mufwene, 2010; Sonntag, 2003).
Thus, the implications of this study go beyond mothers' striving for children's success. The global spread of English language education needs to be thoroughly questioned. Why makes English a global language? With a present tense, what is making English a global language? Who is gaining in the global scale ELT? What is making English a global language? Who is gaining in the global scale ELT? What is the gain or loss in the local context with the widespread and growing spread, English language education? What would be the future consequences in the long run? If English language education is not neutral, English language policies in the local context need to be re-examined for whom they serve for what purpose.

**Future Studies**

With an attempt to better understand issues relevant to English fever from mothers' perspectives, this study invites many more studies of English fever or EFL education. First, English fever from students' and teachers' perspectives would be a meaningful study, which will increase the understanding of English fever. It will help triangulate the issues from multiple perspectives. Second, a cross-national comparison of English language education in other EFL countries would be another way to help understand English language education in the global scale. Third, the economy of English fever or the economy of English language education in EFL contexts also needs to be understood.
References


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Appendix:
Excerpts in Korean and English

[Excerpt 5-1, (Hyunmi #2, p. 1)]

Mother: Back then we lived in Seoul. I hired a native speaker teacher, and asked him to come to Seoul, to our place on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays…. When I first learned English, I learned it as a school subject, not as a language. That was why I had strong resistance towards English. So, I wanted my children exposed to it more naturally…. At home, two hours each time, they did free talking and played games, and not with boring textbooks, uh, playing games. And he played with children. Because they were young, I hated the cramming method itself in learning English.

[Excerpt 5-2, (Sunmi #2, p.1)]

Mother: In fact, I wanted to do well in English but I wasn't good at it. I chose another foreign language in college and graduated because I didn't have confidence in English. After graduation I realized that English is very important. So, I wanted to make sure that my children would do well in English, so I started to teach my first child when he was very young.

Interviewer: How old was he?

Mother: Probably four or five? No, not four or five but probably it was about when he was in the kindergarten.
Interviewer: How much do you spend on children’s (private market) education out of the (monthly) household income?

Mother: Most goes to the (private) educational cost if not for food.

Interviewer: Why do you think English is important?

Mother: Children will have more chances to go abroad, unlike our generation, and English is required at work. My husband says new recruits have a very good command of English language. And every morning he still goes to English classes at work.

Mother: I, speaking with foreigners (in English), because I can't do that. Since it made me scared to meet with foreigners and since they were young, I hoped they would be able to speak with foreigners without fear. So, I sent them to an English language institute where, I believe, it was a little play-oriented but had a strong curriculum.

Mother: Probably it was about two months after they started to go to the language institute. We were having a BBQ party at Gapcheon with our neighbor family. There must have lived a lot of foreigner English teachers in the nearby apartments. Several foreigners were having BBQ over there, too. So, my husband asked the children (her two children and their neighbor’s boy) to go and talk to them. The two boys hesitated to approach the foreigners but my daughter went there and talked to them. When she got back, we asked her what she said. She told us where they were from, what their names were, and that they were English instructors at a language institute. Listening to her, I was satisfied. I thought that was good enough. I thought that it was working well.

[Excerpt 6-3, (Hyejin #1, p. 25-26)]

Mother: 또 어떤 집은 보면 그 집은 조금 영어를 한 애는, 큰 애는 영어를 조금 일찍, 아, 늦게 시켰고, 작은 애는 영어 유치원을 보낸 채이스인 거에요. 영어 유치원을 보낸 애는 될 모르나가 다들 영어로 하니까 아, 그런가 보다하고 아무 생각없이 영어를 쓰더라고. 그런데 무슨 생각이 뭐 떠오르면 영어로 생각을 한대요. 영어적으로 생각을 하는데 큰 애는 우리나라 말로 먼저 생각을 하고 영어로 말을 한대요. 그래서 반응하는 속도가 틀리다고 하더라라고요. 그래서 그 엄마는 영어유치원을 보내길 잘 한 거 같다. 비싸도. 그런 이야기 듣고 있으면 '나도 보낼 걸 그랬나?' (웃음) '그럼 좀 나았을까?' (웃음) 그런 생각도 많이 해요. 그때 무리를, 그러니까 모든 걸 다 붙여서 썼으면, 난들은, 왜냐하면 그때 영어학원, 유치원 보낼 때, 우리는 꼭 뭐 유치원 때부터 뭔가만성이나 생각해서 안 보내고. 또 우리 비싸고, 또 연령이 나이보다 큰 애들 못 보내겠는 거에요. 한놈만 보낼 수는 없잖아요. 둘은 안되었겠고. 아~ 한 명만 보내기는 좀 그렇고 해가지고 (50:00) 안 보냈는데 가끔씩은 아이씨 보낼 걸 (웃음) 그런 생각도 해요.

Mother: There is another family. One of their children, the first child, started to learn English when he got a little older and the younger one went to English kindergarten. The younger one who went to English kindergarten wasn't conscious of other people in speaking English. When a thought came up, since everyone spoke English, she spoke it in English, too. While she thought in English, their first child thought of something in Korean first and then translated it back into English. Their responsive time was different. So, she said it was worth to send the second child to an English kindergarten although it was expensive. Listening to stories like that, I think if I should have sent my children to an English kindergarten. (laughter) Would their English be better? (laughter) I think of that a lot. If we had put everything into it... when other people sent their children to an
English kindergarten, we thought it was excessive competition. And it was too expensive. And my children are one year apart and we could not send just one of the two to an English kindergarten. Two was too costly. We couldn't send just one to an English kindergarten, so we didn't. But every now and then I wonder if I had done that (laughter).

[Excerpt 6-4, (Hyejin #2, p. 11-12)]

Mother: Probably it was when my first child was in sixth grade in elementary school. I thought that if he had been sent to a place where he had to speak English, he would probably speak it more. So when I heard some neighbors sending their children abroad, I asked him, "Do you want to go abroad (to study English)?" His answer was absolute no. He would never go abroad. So, I gave it up. If you had wanted to go abroad, your sister could have gone abroad together. If you could speak English fluently after several months studying English abroad, I think it is much better than pouring money into language institutes in Korea for years. It is unavoidable to learn English in Korea. You should speak in English and do everything in English. Even if you had mastered just listening, it would be worth.

[Excerpt 6-5, (Younsuk #2, p. 9-10)]

Mother: He went to Dunsan-dong to learn English, right? I don't know how hard he studied. But I can tell that, uh there were native speaker teachers in that cram school. These days half of the CAST English exam is listening. Nearly half. 22 or 23 questions (out of 50). I asked him. He took the mock exam yesterday. "Jinsoo, did you get perfect score in listening?" He has done great in listening from the first year in high school. He
got the perfect score most of the time. Thinking about it, I believe that he is doing well (in listening) because he was exposed to native English speaker teachers for about three years.

[Excerpt 6-6, (Myungsun #1, p. 1-2)]

Mother: 큰 애가 일반 중학교를 가서 문법 위주만 하다보니가 자꾸 까먹는 거야. 지금은 3 년이 딱 지나니까 "엄마, 회화를 하려면 또 회화 수업을 따로 학원을 가야 될 거 같다" 그러더라고요. 우리 나름대로 정말 많은 돈을 들여서 거기 학교를 보냈는데, 6 년간 집 한 채가 남라 갈을 정도로 저회 열성을 떨었는데 지금은 3 년이 지나니까, 큰 애, 지나니까 회화가 너무 까먹은 거야. "아, 왜 그 학교 갔나봐." 맛 이계 이렇게 나오는 거에요... 지금은 너무 우리가 잘못한 거 아닌지? 그 정도로 우리가 다른 거를 보낼 수도 있었을텐데...

Mother: My first child went to a regular middle school where she learned English focusing on English grammar. And her speaking proficiency got rusty over time. Three years later, she said “Mom, I think I should go to a language institute again if I'd like to speak English.” We really spent a lot of money sending children there (the private bilingual elementary school). For six years, we spent a house but three years later, my first child lost a lot of her speaking proficiency. Now she says, "I should have not gone there". Now we wonder if we made a wrong choice. We could have send them to elsewhere with that (much money).

[Excerpt 7-1, (Myungsun, #1, p. 1)]

Mother: 우리 나라는 아무래도 영어가 회화가 안 되잖아요. 문법은 되더래도. 그래서 나는 인제 신랑이 이제 그 회사가 외국어를 좀 많이 해야 해요.

Interviewer: 외국인 회사에요?

Mother: 외국인 회사는 아닌데 회장님이 좀 많이 원해요. 영어, 일본어, 중국어 이렇게 세 개를 기본적으로 해야. 근데 애기 아빠도 그렇게 나고 그렇게 회화 수준이 거의 안 되니까 우리 아이들은 삼육초를 보냈어요. 거기는 영어 수업이네요. 외국인 선생님... 전과목 외국어 수업을 하고요.

Mother: Koreans are not good at speaking English though their English grammar is good. So, I, the company, where my husband works, expects the employees to have fluency in foreign languages.

Interviewer: Is it a foreign company?

Mother: It’s not a foreign company but the president of the company wants that. Employees are expected to have the fluency of at least of the three foreign languages: English, Japanese, and Chinese. But, because my husband and I don’t have the fluency (in any of them) we sent our children to Samyuk elementary school. There English is the medium of instruction. Foreign teachers... all subjects are taught by foreign teachers.....
Mother: He had not prepared enough for English compared to his peers in this neighborhood. Even though he had been learning English for a long time, it was not enough. When I think of why, he had not studied English intensively and extensively. And his English was poorer than those high achieving students... as his school records showed....I thought his score would get better as time went by. But when I got his final exam scores, I was stunned. 'What the hell is this score?' was my reaction.

Interviewer: How was the score?

Mother: It was just a little better than the average.... 'What is this? How should he prepare? It is serious! He was already a middle school student and a semester has passed. Where should I begin?' I was really confused at that moment.

Interviewer: Weren’t you aware of how he was doing back then? Like ‘my child doesn’t know well or follow lessons well in the language institute’?

Mother: Elementary and middle school are different. In elementary school, you can see your scores (but not others). His (English) scores were not bad (in elementary school). Once he went to middle school, the school record showed his scores and his ranking,
compared with the others. That's when I realized his English was not so good. It was from then when I realized that his English was poor.

[Excerpt 7-4, (Hyejin, #3, p. 36)]

Mother: 청담에서는 내신을 거의 안 봤어요. 그러다 보니까, 학교 성적이 별로 안 오고 있었어요. 이제 고개 아파도 그렇게 애도 자기는 좀 실어하다라고요. 근데 뭐랄까, 아, 생각은 그렇게 해요. '아, 별개야.' 본인은, 제가 느껴면서도 일단은 안 나오니까 감동은 생겨요. 그래서 한 동안은 끊고 나가고 그러다가 이제 한동안 그렇게 나오다가 애가 일단은 실어하니까, 몇 달은 바빴거더군요. 자기 안 하고 싶다는 둘 뭐다는 둘, 일단은 나눠 놓고, "그렇게 알았어, 엄마가 알아볼게."

Mother: Chungdam did not prepare students for their school exams. So, my daughter’s English score was not so good. My husband and my daughter did not like that place so much (after the exam). But, um, what she learned at the language institute was not for the school exams - prep. She knew that but because her school English score was not so good, she had some conflicts, too. Although I kept pushing her to go there but because of her school English scores, she didn't like that place. I insisted for several months. She kept saying she didn't want to go there or she wanted to do something else. So, I said, "OK, I'll find something else."

[Excerpt 7-5, (Hyejin, #2, p. 17-18)]

Mother: 또 이게 교육도 자꾸 바뀌더라고요. 그러니까 저희 때는 니트 시험 N. E. A. T. 그 시험이 그때 적용되었고 해 가지고 교육도 막 그런 식으로 바뀌는 데 또 들리는 말에 의하면 외부에서 무슨 강사들이 영어 교육법 특강 해 가지고, 공부하는 방법 가르쳐 주는 사람들 (40:07), 그런 사람들이 내려 와서 이야기를 하더래요. 그래서 누가 듣고 이제, 물어 봤거든PRINTF("", "어땠어?" "뭐라고 하대?" 물어 봤더니, "그게 실패다" 라는 말도 있다고더라고요.

Interviewer: 그 시험 자체가요?

Mother: 그 시험, 그 자체가 문제가 많다. 그러니까 실패한 것일 수도 있다. 그런데 일단 투자한 금액이 너무 많아서 몇 년간 끌다가 없어질 수도 있다 이렇게 말하시는 분들도 있답니다. 근데 어떤 분은 그 시험에 대해서 대비를 해야 된다고 또 강의를 하더래요. 그러니까 어느 쪽이 맞는 말인지 모르겠대요. 근데 그 시험 대비 해야 한다고 하시는 분은 학원이 그 위주로 나가는 입장이고 할 필요가 없다는 분은 또 방법이 그 부분으로 나가는 분이고, 전체적으로 아웃트라인 잡힌 분들은 할 필요 없다, 너무 그 쪽으로 하지 마라. 그렇게 이야기 하고, 또 다른 분은 이렇게 이야기 해서, 솔직히 정책이 위낙 됐다 갔다 하니까 어디다 포커스를 맞춰야 할지 가끔씩은 헷갈려요.
Interviewer: 그쪽에 포커스를 맞춘다고 하면 어느 쪽으로 대비를 해야 되는지 혹시 아세요?

Mother: 응, 이게 이제 하나, 들, 쌓, 넣, 네 영역을 다 골고루 하라는 거잖아요. 근데 그때 막하면서 말하기, 말하기를 굉장히 강조 했거든요. 그래서, 그러니까 뭐지? 솔직히 말하기 때문에 외국인이 많이 하는 쪽에 보내야겠다는 생각을 했었어요. ... 애, 말하기 평가도 처음에는 별로, 이제 올해부터 말하기 평가가 들어갔거든요. 학교에서, 수행평가에.

Mother: And education keeps changing. So for my children’s ages, it has been said that NEAT exam, N. E. A. T. exam will be implemented and English language education needs to be adjusted to it. But some people said, according to those instructors who teach about English language pedagogy, it is a failure.

Instructor: You mean the exam itself?

Mother: The exam, the system itself is a problem. So, it might not be going to be implemented. But because so much money has been invested in developing the exam, it might be around for a while but fade away eventually. But some other people say that we need to prepare for the exam. So, I don’t know which one is correct. So those who insist that we need to prepare for the exam is the ones whose institute run based on the potential implementation. And those who insist that it will fade away teach based on the opposite conjecture. Some people say this while others say that. To be honest, English language policies tilt this way and that and sometimes I don’t know which way I have to focus.

Interviewer: If you need to prepare NEAT, do you know what you should do?

Mother: Yes. It focuses on four areas: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. .... That was why I thought that I had to send my children to a language institute where they could learn from foreigners… Speaking has been added to school English performance assessment in middle school from this year.

[Excerpt 8-1, (Hyejin, #1, p. 23)]

Mother: 초등학교 때 영어학원도 처음에 갔을 때 애들이 시험을 치는 데 시험이 어떤 식으로 나올지 헤매더라고요. 부족한 부분이 있으면 발음이 이제 안 되니까. 문법이나 이런 거는 이제 선생님이 설명할 때 애들이 못 알아 듣는 거 이제 그런 부분은 있으면 설명해 주고, “자 이런 식으로 하면 되잖아” 이야기 해주니까. 처음에는 이제 성적이 안 좋으면 남 “영어 제미없어, 안 할래” 그러더라고요. 그러다가 몇 달 정도 지나서 “이런 식이다 이런 식이다” 하니까 저가 감을 잡잡이야. 그래 저가 올라 가니까, 이제 “어, 영어 학습해”로 바꿔더라고요. 그래 좀 감 잡고, 좀 연결했다가, 그러면 손 써 떼다가 또 떨어지면 또 붙었다가 그런 식으로 했었어요.

Mother: When they first went to the English language institute in elementary school, English exams made them puzzled. When I found they were struggling, since my English
pronunciation is poor, I helped them with grammar or something, what they didn't understand. I showed them, "See, this is how you can do it". At first when their exam scores were bad, "English is no fun. I don't want to do it", they said. But several months later after I kept telling them, "This is how you prepare." They figured it out and then changed their minds, "Uh, English is fine." So, I tried to bridge the gap. Then I sat back for a while and then I helped them again when I noticed that they struggled with something. That's how I helped my children with English.

[Excerpt 8-2, (Hyejin, #3, p. 32)]

Interviewer: 어려운 점은 정말 스트레스 받고 이런 거는 별로 없으신가 봐요.
Mom: 아니 (스트레스) 받을 때는 이제 보면 애들이 가끔씩 테스트나 이런 거 했을 때, 그 다음에 숙제 감사 한 번씩 체크 했을 때 (70:02) 보면 너무 아닌 경우 있잖아요. 책을 자주 보면 잔소리가 돼서 애들이 싫어하니까 한 번씩 책을 한 번씩 훑어 봐요. 그러면 정말 이게 틀린 것도 많고 답답할 때가 많거든요. 그러면 숙이 터져요. 근데 이제 저는 숙이 터져도 조금씩 나아지지 않으면 스스로 위로를 하는 데 이제 얘기 아빠 같은 경우는 들인 돈이 얼마나 이렇게 효과가 안 나오면은 바꿔야 된다. 그러다 보면 이제 고런 부분에서는 스트레스 받더라도.

Interviewer: It seems like there is nothing that makes you stressed or challenged.
Mom: No. I get stressed when they take exams or when I notice their assignment is done so sloppy. If I check their books too often, I tend to scold them too much, which they don't like. So I check only once in a while. When I do that, I see so many things done wrong, which makes me upset. I just say to myself that they will get better when that happens. But my husband is different. He insists that if we don't see the (expected) outcome after spending so much money, we need to make a change. Then, that gives me stress.

[Excerpt 8-3, (Eunyoung, #2, p. 1)]


Mother: It is difficult to figure out how to teach (my children) English. It is too broad. Simply speaking, I started this way, 'thinking it might be the right way' but then it turned out that it was not. Or it ended up not being so satisfactory and so I keep in search of another way. I chose one way and continue doing it but still wonder if I'm doing it right or not. It's complicated. It's hard, actually.
Mother: ... even though I'm managing my children's English, I still wonder if I'm doing it right or if I'm doing it all wrong. Even though I'm aiming at the goals of high school English and English for college entrance exam, I wonder if I'm doing it right. To be honest, I worry, "Am I making their English useless[dead] in the end my goal is to ensure my children's high school English?" But then in order to make their English useful[alive], if they don't get expected results (on English exams), it would be a problem, too. The best possible scenario is when they have something specific they would like do. Until now they don't have any specific goals. With lack of sense of goals, they just learn English because others do it. So, I make them do it. That is the biggest reason for now. For now, you know, they need a base, so I'm trying to make the base for them.

Mother: 사교육을 안 해서 안 한 만큼의 그 정도가 있겠지만 남들에 비해서는 많이 그렇게 교육비로 나가는 건 아니거든요.

Mother: Since they (=children) didn't learn English much in the private market English language education, there must be some gap with those children who have done but we don't spend much money on (private) education.

Mother: 1학년 때부터 들어가요. 학교 들어가면 이제 방과 후 수업 들을 수 있어요.

Interviewer: 죄송하지만 방과후 수업은 비용이 얼마나 정도되요?

Mother: 예, 저렴해요. 그러니까 처음에 애들 방과 후 수업 시작했을 때는 그나마 방과후 수업이 그저 하지 않았어서, 그러니까 널리 사람들이 많이 이용을 하지 않아 가지고... 한국인 선생님이 수업하고, 늘어 위주로, 그러니까 유치원 때 배우듯이 늘어 위주로 적응을 할 수 있게 그렇게 시작하더라도요 저학년 때는, 그렇게 해서는 학원 다니는 애들, 그러니까 체계적으로 배운 애들한테 되쳐지는 거 같고...
Mother: It (= after-school English program) started from the first grade in elementary school. Once they entered elementary school, they were eligible to take those lessons.

Interviewer: Sorry to ask but how much did it cost?

Mother: Um, it was cheap. When my children first went to the after-school program, people did not use it much... Korean teachers teach, with play-oriented activities.. just like in kindergarten, with fun activities, so that they could get adjusted easily when they were in the lower grades. So, compared to children who learned English more systematically in language institutes, my children seemed to fall behind....

[Excerpt 8-7, (Younghie, #3, p. 3)]

Mother: 최상위는 아닌데 이제 해서 아빠 욕심에 자꾸 시키라고 하는 데 애들도 많고 헤가지고 "너도 하기 쉬지? 그럼 너 하지 마라." (웃음)

Interviewer: (웃음)

Mother: "하기 쉬우면 나 못해 준다" 막 이랬더니 혼자서 EBS 강의도 듣고...

Interviewer: (Laugh)

Mother: My children are not the best in class. But their dad asked me to make them do more but because I have many children, I tell them, "You don't want to do it, do you? Then don't do it." (Laugh)

Interviewer: (Laugh)

Mother: I used to tell her, "I'm not going to pay for you unless you really want to." So, now she takes EBS (Educational Broadcasting System) lessons by herself...

[Excerpt 8-8, (Hyejin, #2, p. 12)]

Mother: 중학교 와서는 처음에는 일 학년 중간 고선가? 그때는 점수 대가 그래도 편찮았어요, 시험 공부를 안 했음에도 불구하고. 그런데 일 학년 기말 고사 때 공부를 안 했어요…. 그래서 성적이 뚜 떨어지더라도요. 그래서 2학기에 오면서 성적이 또 뚜 내려가는 거예요. … 그러다가 올해 (중 2) 성적이 썩 안 나왔는데, 안 나오고 성적이 계속 그려더라도요. … 그리고 나서 요번에 지금 과외 선생님으로 바꾸고, 성적이 많이 올랐어요. 아, 어떻게 보면 아직까지는 한편으로는 아, 성적이 올라서 선생님 잘 고른 거 같아 그런 거고, 다른 한편으로는 선생님한테 너무 의지가 되는구나, 나중에 애매들이 고등학교 가서 시간이 없어서 정말 자기대로 공부해야 할 때 어떡하지? 이런 걱정도 좀 되더라도요.

Mother: When he first went to middle school, first mid-term? His English score was great even though he did not study hard. Then he did not study hard for the final as well. His English score dropped. The second semester, his English scores dropped even more. And this year, his English scores were not very good like the previous year. But after changing the English tutors this year, his English scores have been improved a lot. Uh, in one sense I think I chose the right tutor, so that his English scores increased. On other hand, well we
depend on private lessons, too much. I’m worried what he should do once he goes to high school and becomes too busy to take any more English tutoring.

[Excerpt 8-9, (Hyejin, #2, p. 35)]

Mother: 학원에서도 톱 클래스가 아니면 학원에서도 찬밥인 경우가 많다라고요…. 여러 가지 클래스가 있으면 그 중에서 그 클래스 (높은 반) 에 가고 싶은 거야. 애가 약간 컨트라인을 왔다가 갔다 한 거에요. 그러니까 자기 거 가고 싶다고. 그러니까 저 엄마가 외국을 불여주는 거에요. 그러니까 그래 갖고 외국인 붙여 갖고 진짜 몇 달을 했나 보다. 그러니까 해가지고 그 클래스로 올라갔어요. 그러니까 떠 누구가 물었을 때 "어느 학원이야?" 애들이 물잖아요. "무슨 반이야?" 묻는 거죠. 무슨 반이야 그려면 "어, 너 공부 좀 잘하네", 그렇게 되는가 봐요. 그리고 엄마의 자존심도 되고. 가끔씩 나도 그릴 걸 그랬나?

Mother: Often more advanced classes get the most attention in the private language institutes and the rest do not…. So among many classes, she wanted to go to the more advanced class. And her score was on the border line. So, her mom found a private tutor, a foreigner teacher, for her and a few months later, she was moved to the targeted class. When someone asks, "Which institute do you go to?", when children ask each other, "Which class there?" "I'm in so and so class." Then, they say, "Wow, you're smart." Then it becomes mother's pride, too. Sometime, I think that I should have done that, too.

[Excerpt 8-10, (Hyejin, #3,p. 7-8)]

Interviewer: 근데 어머니이방 이야기 하다보니가 사교육에 대한 의존도가 좀 높지 않나 생각이 들어요.

Mother: 영어는 그래요. 영어는 확실히 제가 생각해도 사교육에 많이 의지하는 부분들이 있어서요…. 첫째는 (애들이) 반감이 있어서 집에서 어떻게 하기 힘들고, 둘째는 우리 세대가 배운 영어는 거의 문법 위주고 글로만 배웠으니까 확실히 힘들어요…. 그러니까 확실히 애들 발음은 자연스러움에 우리 발음은. 그러니까 애들한테 해주고 싶어도 문법은 어떻게 해주겠지만, 아, 이런 (발음) 부분은 카바가 안 되니까, 애들 스스로도 못하고 하지만, 아무래도 (사교육에) 의존하게 되더라도.

Interviewer: While talking with you, I sense that you depend on private market English language education a lot.

Mother: I do when it comes to English. Even I think that I rely on private market education for children’s English education… First, my children and I clash when I teach them English at home. It is not easy to do it at home. Second, because my generation learned English focusing on grammar and with textbooks, it is not easy… Children’s English pronunciation sounds natural but mine is not. I can help them with grammar but
not the pronunciation. And my children don't do it by themselves. So that's why we end up relying on the private market English education.

[Excerpt 8-11, (Youngsuk, #2, p. 4-5)]

Mother: Although I usually ask their opinions before I make them do anything, deep inside I think that other children are taught English a lot. They went to an English kindergarten, did private tutoring, or went language institutes. But my children didn't nearly do any of them, so I worried whether my children fall behind or not.

[Excerpt 8-12, (Youngsuk, #2, p. 50-51)]

Mother: The reason to send children to a language institute is because that (=doing it voluntarily) doesn't happen. It's because they don't do it by themselves. Then I have to memorize everything and learn them by heart, but that doesn't happen. Then, I have to sit down with them and help them do it but I can't do it, either. Then, the next choice is the private market language institute.... It made me feel relieved (by sending them to a language institute.)

[Excerpt 8-13, (Hyejin, #2, p. 52)]

Mother: People say this these days: Key to children's success is 'grandfather's economic power, mother's information power, and father's indifference'.
Mother: If father intervenes, diverse opinions might make it difficult (for mother) to make a decision (for children's education). Previously, it was father's income that matters but these days father's income is only good enough for survival. Grandfather's money is what makes a difference in children's education. So, if the family has a lot of money (inherited), they can freely make children do things. Father should not intervene and mother should have information power and... wow, it's scary!

[Excerpt 8-14, (Hyejin, #3, p. 51)]

Mother: At first I thought it was a good institute if people said so. As my children grew up, ah~ if I knew three people who sent their children to the institute and they had positive opinions about it, which might be various although they say good things about it, I think I can judge if it would be a good place for my children. And my children would get adjusted. Besides, I need to gather the information from someone nearby.

[Excerpt 8-15, (Hyejin, #3, p. 52)]

Mother: I don’t know many unnis* (sister, title to call older siblings or older female), who can give me such kinds of information. But knowing many unnis doesn't matter if they are much older than you (if their children are much older than yours). The information they can hand me down is out-dated already. And a mother that I know told me that, sometimes mothers don’t share the information unless their children are much older or younger because of the impacts. Adding more students might take too much time out of the same private tutor.

[Excerpt 8-16, (Sunmi, #2, p.6)]

Interviewer: 그림 학원을 고를 때 어떤 식으로 선택을 하셨어요?

Mother: 그냥 맛볼이라는 그런 게 있어요. 정보가, 엄마의 정보력, 크게 없어. 그냥짜 이제 할 수 있는 거는 광고나 광고지 있잖아요, 광고지하고 누구한테 들은 거,
그리고 내가 평소에 접해왔던 거. 그러니까 이지 어학원 같은 경우는 내가 교육 받을 때 그 강사가 왔었어요. 아침에 동아리 식으로 영어 배우고 뭐 이런 거 했을 때 거기 학원 원장이 와서 강의 했죠. 그리고 아. 저기 학원마다 해서 선택한 거고. 시사 주니어는 선택을 어떻게 하게 했지? 너무 오래 해서 기억이 안 나네. 이것도 누구 통해서 들은 거 같은데.

Interviewer: Then how did you choose language institutes?

Mother: Working mothers have this thing. They have lack of information power. So, what they can do is to choose from the commercial flyers. Or from what they heard from someone. Or from what I’ve had contacted. So, the EG language, I chose because I had met an instructor from that language institute while I was learning English at work. The director of the language institute was the instructor. So, I thought that place might be good (for my child). How did I choose Sisa? It has slipped out of my mind. It's been too long. I think I'd heard from someone.

[Excerpt 8-17, (Myungsun, #2, p.20-21)]

Mother: … 그리고 요즘은 그 엄마들이 자기네 이렇게 꼬리꼬리 모여서 선생님 얘기하고 절대 알려 주지도 않고 그래요. 그러니까 직장 생활하는 엄마들은 왕따에요. 학교에서. (1:05:02) 왜 그러냐면 집에 있는 엄마들은 학교도 자주 오고, 학교 선생님 상담도 하고. 근데 직장 생활하는 엄마는 어디에도 잘 수가 없어. 뭐 학부모 초청 뭐 한다고 그러면 뭐 제대로 갈 수 있는 시간도 안 되고. 뭐 이렇게 요즘은 시험 볼 때 부모들이 와서 시험 감독해야, 두 명씩 헤，默认. 그런 것도 뭐 직장 생활하는 엄마는 헤，默认요. 그러니까 그것도 못 가지, 또 예전에는 급식 할 때 엄마들이 와서 급식 확인하고 급식 아이들한테 퍼주고 그러랬어요. 그러니까 직장 생활하는 엄마들은 그걸 못 가는 거야.

Mother: … and these days those mothers get together and talk about teachers but never share their information with the others. So, working mothers are 'outcasts' at school. Because stay-at-home mothers can go to school often and consult with teachers. But working mothers can’t join anywhere. When parents are invited to school events, working mothers don’t have time to go. When children take exams, these days parents go and supervise them. Two parents a day. But working mothers don’t have time for that. And during school lunch, mothers used to go to school to and dish out the food. But working mothers cannot go to school to do that.

[Excerpt 8-18, (Hyejin, #2, pp. 48 & 68)]

Mother: 솔직히 영어에 투자되는 돈이 장난이 아니잖아요. 솔직히 노후 자금 지급 끝이지 않는다고 생각이 가끔씩 들 때도 있거든요. 얘기 그때도 말 빠진 독에 볼 뿐이라는 말을 하거든요. 솔직히 투자라고 생각하고, 제발 그 투자가 효과가 있기를 바랄 뿐이지, 우리가 할 수 있는 건 투자고, 그거를 효과가 있게 만드는 건 애들이라고
우리가 효과 있게 만들 수 있는 건 아니고 저거들 정신 안 차리면 소용 없다고, 그랬다고 믿빠진 독에 물 안 부을 수 없다. 물론 노후 생각하면 걱정되기는 하는데 그랬다고 노후 자금 만들겠다고 지금 투자 안하고 기다릴 수는 없다. 그래 부모 마음이니가.

Mother: Honestly speaking, the money that is invested in children’s private market English language education is not a joke. To be honest, I sometimes think we spend our retirement money for that. Children’s father often says we’re pouring money into a broken jar….. To be honest, I think it is investment. We only can hope that the investment is worthwhile. Unless they work hard in order to make it worth, it will be useless. However, we cannot stop pouring money into the broken jar for now….. Of course, retirement without financial preparation makes me feel uncomfortable. But we cannot stop investing in children’s English language education now in order to make our retirement fund. That is parents’ mind.

[Excerpt 8-19, (Myungsun, #1, p. 1-2)]

Mother: 근데 이제 아빠는 외국인 만났어도 (5:00) 접없이 얘기 할 수 있지 않냐? 그니까 내가 테리고 나가 보니까 애들이 앞서 얘기 하더라고요, 앞에서. 그니까 초등학교 4학년 때, 5학년 때 테리고 나가 보니까 그거 하나는 좀더라고요. 응, 엄마는 잘 모르니까 내가, 어디를 놀러 가면 표지를 주잡아요, 물어 물어 갔다오라고. 그니까 접없이 물어 물어 갔다는 오더라고요. 그 테스트를 해 보려고 테리고 가면, 이거 하나만 해도 그만큼 돈 들어서 좀 괜찮다 했거든요.

Mother: (Children’s) father says, “Aren’t you able to speak with foreigners without fear?” So, when I took them abroad, they volunteered to talk with foreigners. It was when they were in fourth or fifth grade in elementary school, we went abroad (to Disney Land in Japan), which was nice. I told them, “Mom doesn’t know. So, you guys should ask (questions others to find places).” You know, you get booklets when you go to amusement parks. I told them to ask and find places to take rides. They did without hesitation. When I took them there to test them. So, I thought that proved it was worth the money we had invested.

[Excerpt 8-20, (Myungsun, #1, p. 1-2)]

Mother: 큰 애가 일반 중학교를 가서 문법위주만 하다보니까 자꾸 까먹는 거야. 지금은 3년이 막 지나니까 엄마, 회화를 하려면 또 회화 수업을 따로 학원을 가야 될 거 같다’ 그러더라고요. 우리 나름대로 정말 많은 돈을 들여서 거기 학교를 보냈는데, 6년간 집 한 채가 날라갔을 정도로 저희 열성을 했는데 지금은 3년이 지나니까, 큰 애, 지나니까 회화가 너무 까먹은 거야. “엄마 왜 그 학교 값이 빠.” 막 이제 이렇게 나오는 거에요… 지금은 너무 우리가 잘못한 거 아닌지? 그 정도로 우리가 다른 거를 보낼 수도 있었을텐데…
Mother: My first child went to middle school and learned English focusing on English grammar and lost speaking proficiency of English language. Three years later, “Mom, I think I should go to a language institute again to polish my speaking proficiency,” my daughter said. We really spent a lot of money sending them to the elementary school. For six years, we spent a house on it. “Mom, I should have not gone there” she says…. Now I wonder if we did wrong. We could do something else with that money.

[Excerpt 9-1, (Sunmi, #3, p.6)]

Mother: 오늘도 이제 같이 스크린 강의 듣잖아요. 같이 듣는데 나도 내가 너무 단련이 안 돼서 개만 보면 화가 나는 거에요. 개 하는 행동만 보면.

Interviewer: 행동이 어때요.

Mother: 그니까 안 atol고 있으면, 설명할 때 적어도 그 시간에 그 단어를 다 외우잖아요. 외우던가 이해를 하잖아요. 그러다고 해서 자기가 다른 때에 복습을 하는 것도 아니잖아요. 가만히 보고 있으면 "적어" 그래야 그래서야 적고. 단어도 "너 저거 뭐야" 그러면 "너랑 나랑 같이 들었는데 왜 몰라?" (웃음)

Interviewer: (웃음)

Mother: 그러더라고요. 그래도 오늘 즐지는 않았어요. 다른 때 같으면 매일 즐웠거든요. 아침인데 일찍 일어나서 가니까. 오늘은 즐지는 않대.

Mother: Today we took the screen English together. Taking the class together, I was upset looking at him. I guess I'm still not used to. Looking at his behavior just makes me upset.

Interviewer: How did he behave?

Mother: So, he didn’t take notes. You know, you need to take notes in class, so that you can memorize words. Or memorize or understand them. He never reviews the lessons. So while looking at him, he takes notes only when I tell him to do so. When I ask what the word means, he is like, so I tell him why you don't know that when we both take the class together. (laughter)

Interviewer: (laugher)

Mother: That’s how he did in class. But he didn’t doze off today. He used to fall asleep in class. We went there early this morning but he didn't doze off.

[Excerpt 9-2, (Sunmi, #3, p.11)]

Mother: 이제, 초등학교 저학년 때는 그래도 조금 조금씩 빠 쳤었는데 이제는 내가 와 줄 수 있는 수준을 지났어요. 학업 수준이 내가 아이들을 빠줄 수 있는 한계를 넘어서 내가 와도 물라. 모르겠더라고요. 그래서 지금 학업 부분에서 도와 줄 수
Mother: When he was in the lower grade in elementary school, I helped him but now it's beyond what I can help him with. What he learns at school is beyond I can help. I don't understand it as well. So, the only thing I can do with his school work is to support him economically. As a parent, that's not good enough.

[Excerpt 9-3, (Sunmi, #3, p.4-5)]

Interviewer: 근데 어렸을 때부터 지금까지 시켜온 걸 생각해 보면 어떤 부분을 바꾸고 싶어요?

Mother: 그니까 면 처음부터 기대를 너무 높게 시작한 거 같아요.

Interviewer: 좀 더 구체적으로 그게 어떤 거예요?

Mother: 그 초등학교 1, 2 학년까지를 GNB를 보내 왔으니 GNB 에서 프로그램이 있잖아요. 그 프로그램은 말을 만드는 단계가 아니라 그냥 문장으로 나와서 그게에 독해 하고 전치사 쓰고 어찌고 저찌고, 알지도 못하는데 계속 강요를 하니까 개도 그랑고 나오고 그렇게 (힘들고). 그래서 다시 학원을 옮겨 왔자 그랑고, 다시 옮겨 왔자 그랑고. 또 과외를 시켜는데 과외 선생님도 그랬으니까. 기본 없이 계속 위에만, 위에만.

Interviewer: Thinking of what you have done (with his English), what would you like to change if you could?

Mother: Um, my expectation was too high from the onset.

Interviewer: Could you specify it?

Mother: I sent him GNB when he was in the first and second grade in elementary school. They have their own programs, right? Their programs start from sentence levels, not from the word levels. And they expect children to read and comprehend and teach them how to use prepositions etc. I forced him to learn more and more when he didn't know anything, which made it hard for me to help him with English and made it hard for him to follow. The same thing happened again and again when I changed the institutes. It was the same with private tutoring, too. Trying to add more and more without any foundations.

[Excerpt 10-1, (Hyejin, #1, p.4)]

Mother: 4 년 정도. 파트타임으로 해서 이제 약국에 보면 가장 바쁜 시간대가 있거든. 원래는 일주일에 4 번 정도 다니다가 토요일이 있었어요. 토요일이 걸려 가지고 얘기 아빠가. 나중에는 일주일에 세 번, 그래서 작년에는 일주일에 세 번 하다가 옮겨는 얘기 아빠가 애들 챙기라고 해 갖고 좀 쉬고 있어요. 모르겠어요. 나중에 또 나가라 할라나? 모르겠어요. (웃음)
Mother: About four years. I worked part time during the busiest time at a pharmacy. I worked four times a week. Then Saturdays became an issue. So, later I worked three days weekly. This year my husband asked me to stay home and take care of children, so I stay home, taking a break now. I’m not sure, "Will he ask me to work again later?" I don’t know. (laughter)

[Excerpt 10- 2,(Hyejin, #1, p. 19)]

Mother: 여보 집에 있으면 하루가 금방 간다고. 그리고 집에 있는 것보다 밖에 나가 있는 게 속 편해. (웃음) 그 순간만은 좀 잊으니까. 그리고 집에 있으면 아무것도 못하는 거 같은데 밖에 나가면 뭐라도 한다는 느낌이 있으니까 내가 내 자신을 생각할 때 좀 느꼈다. 나에 대한 평가가 달라지는 거 같아. 그래 갖고 바꿨어요… 그래 갖고 이제 그만 둔 거죠. 그만 둔 거 아닌데. 지금 쉬는 건데.

Mother: "Honey, a day flies by while I’m at home. And I feel better outside than at home. I feel incapable at home while I feel more capable outside. So, I look at myself differently when I work outside." That way I convinced him…. And I quit it. No, I haven’t quit it. I’m just taking a break.

[Excerpt 10- 3, (Younhee, #1, p. 5-6)]

Mother: 네. 아빠의 욕심은, 좀. 그러니까, 아빠는 이제 앞만 보고, 승진을 위해서 앞만 보고 달려 왔는데, 이렇게 이제 말들은 학업이 최상위권이 아니니까 아빠 욕심에 주위 사람들이 어느 정도 승진을 하면 제일 무례운 게 아들 말들 어디 대학 갔느냐, 뭐 어느 직장을 가졌으나, 뭐 의사, 변호사 이런 직장을 가졌으나, 뭐 이런 거 되게 민감해 하더라도요. 아빠 그걸 속으로만 안는 게 아니라 표현을 해요. 나는 이 정도 안 된다는 식으로 막 무시 안한 무시를 하는 말투가 나오면 많이 속상해요 제가. 저 혼자 키웠는데. 거의 아빠 도움 없이 컸다. 보니까 그런 무심한 말투가 저한테 상처가 되는 거에요.

Mother: (Children's) Father's greed is, um, he has been working hard for promotion, moving forward. But children's academic performance does not come in the highest rank. With father's greed, people say children's success is what fathers envy most after getting promotion up to certain point. Which universities children have matriculated and where they are employed; if they are doctors or lawyers, etc. It seems like they become with this matter. Father (children’s father) does not keep this matter inside but speaks it out loud. It hurts me when he downgrades them, saying like how poorly children are doing at school. I raised them alone without his help and support. His inattentive remarks like that really hurt me.

[Excerpt 10- 4, (Eunyoung, #2, p. 33-34)]

Interviewer: 그 아이들, 자녀 교육에 대한 결정은 주로 누가 하시는지?
Interviewer: Who makes a decision for children’s education?
Mother: I do it most of the time. I ask for his advice and discuss with him.
Interviewer: Then when you need to choose which language institute is better for children...
Mother: Oh, he doesn’t know anything, nothing.
Interviewer: Nothing?
Mother: Yeah. Sometimes I read newspaper articles saying fathers have more interest in children’s education nowadays. I remember reading an article a few months ago. Maybe there are fathers like that but until now mothers are the ones who collect all the information for children’s education. My husband is busy working on his research. When he is busy, he is busy 24/7. So I need to take care of the rest from familial responsibilities with in-laws and annual family events and everything. That must have consumed me. I was always lack of energy because I had to do everything on my own for my own family and the extended family.

[Excerpt 10-5, (Younghie #3, p. 9)]

Mother: 아쉬움은 엄마가 손가락에 지문이 닿도록 더 들려주지 못 한 거, 테잎이라도
Interviewer: 테잎을?
Mother: 예, 귀로 들까 했으면 귀가 좀 더 듣기에 편할지 않았을까? 동생 평계 대면서 오늘은 그만 그랬던 게 많이 아쉽네요.
Mother: I feel sorry, I should have played the (English) tapes until my finger prints got worn out, even just the tapes.
Interviewer: Tapes?
Mother: Yes. If I had played them more, wouldn't their English listening be better now? I regret that I used to say, "OK, that's it for today." with the excuses of younger children.

[Excerpt 10- 6, (Eunyoung, #2, p. 2)]

Mother: 이렇게 다 참고를 해서 집에서 이렇게 부담 없이 시작하는 걸로 먼저 영어 교육이라는 걸 처음 발을 내밀은 거예요. 그랬을 때 아이가 잘 따라가고 있구나 선생님 말도 들었고, 성실하고 해서, 큰 걱정 없이 그냥 그 걸로 한 3~4 년 했었는데 그러고 나서 나중에 문제가 뜰나면, 중간 중간 좀 더 공식화 된 시스템? 시험같은. 인증을 받을 수 있는 하나의 그런 시험으로 좀 아이의 실질적인 평가를 해 봤어야 되는데 사실은 그 부분을 지나친 부분이 가장 아이한테 미안하고 제가 영어 교육을 시켰을 때 좀 설수했던 점... 그래서 어학원을 보냈을 때에는 거의 이제 5학년 2학기 때 보냈고 어떻게 보면 요즘 아이치고 굉장히 늦게 보냈었어요.

Mother: Considering all advices, he started to learn English at home without too much burden. His English teachers used to tell me he was doing well. He was diligent and hard-working. So without much worry, his English education lasted for 3-4 years like that. The problem later was, he was not evaluated from time to time using some standardized English exams. I should have double checked his performance in English along the way. Neglecting that was my mistake and what I feel sorry for my son.... when he went to a language institute, it was when he was starting the second semester of his fifth grade, which is very late, compared to other children these days.

[Excerpt 10- 7, (Youngsuk, #3, p. 6)]

Mother: 확신은 없는데, 그때부터 인제 다른 아이들처럼 영어에 많은 시간을 투자를 해서 가르쳤으면 더 좋았을 수도 있다라는 생각도 하고. 그거를 인제 그렇게 해서 뛰 다 애가 받아들이고 그런 거는 아니기 때문에, 그렇게 좋았을지 나빴을 지는 확신은 없어요. 그러지만 인제 엄마 마음으로 미련은 있는 거죠.

Mother: I’m not sure but I think it would have been better if I had spent more time teaching children English like other children even though that doesn't guarantee anything. I’m not sure whether it would have made things better for sure or not. But it's my regret, which still lingers.
VITA

Suyoung Kang
sxk450@psu.edu

Education:
Doctor of Philosophy-Curriculum and Instruction, 2015
Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, USA

Master of Arts-TESOL-MALL, 2007
Woosong University, Daejeon, South Korea

TESOL Intensive Program, 2003
Sung Kyun Kwan University & Georgetown University, Seoul, South Korea

Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Literature, 1995
Jeju National University, Jeju, South Korea

Publications:


Teaching and Other Work Experience:
Invited lecturer to Dr. Makoni's courses, *Theory of Second Language Acquisition* and *The Ecology of Global Englishes*. Pennsylvania State University, Spring 2012-Fall 2014

Research and teaching assistant, Pennsylvania State University, 8/2013-5/2014

Lecturer in Applied Linguistics, Pennsylvania State University, 8/2012-12/2012


Research assistant, Pennsylvania State University, 8/2010-5/2011

Assistant to the editor of *TESOL Quarterly*, Pennsylvania State University, 7/2009-12/2009

Research assistant, Pennsylvania State University, 8/2008-5/2009

EFL instructor in South Korea, Private Language Institutions, 3/1995-7/2008