

“It’s not real culture anyway”: Language ideologies of local and expatriate English teachers in rural South Korea

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Abstract. In South Korea (Korea), Park (2004) identifies three dominant English language ideologies: necessity (English as essential to compete in neoliberal markets), externalization (English as antithetical to Korean identity), and self-deprecation (English as unobtainable by Korean speakers). While studies have explored these ideologies among Korean English teachers in cosmopolitan settings like Seoul, few studies consider how teachers in rural areas negotiate these language ideologies. This study compares ideological stances from both expatriate guest English teachers (GETs) and local Korean English teachers (LETs). Participants working in the rural province of Jeollanamdo conducted semi-structured interviews about their perspectives and experiences regarding English education in Korea. Interviews underwent thematic analysis where initial codes identified Park’s three ideologies, and further coding produced subthemes through stance analysis. Findings indicate a diverse mix of stances between LETs and GETs that both affirm and resist dominant English language ideologies. LETs and GETs with experience working in both rural islands and coastal cities also report variation in students’ motivation and stress toward English education. By examining variation in teachers’ stancetaking toward dominant English language ideologies, this study challenges Bourdieu’s (1991) notion of a unified linguistic ideological marketplace.

Keywords. language ideologies; English education; EFL; stance; global Englishes; South Korea.

1. Introduction. At the heart of language ideology research is a tension between the “shared notions” of ideology (Woolard & Schieffelin 1994), and the subjectivities of individual perspectives. As Gal and Irvine (2000:36) point out, “There is no ‘view from nowhere,’ no gaze that is not positioned.” So where do shared notions end and subjectivities begin? Are intersubjectivities just a rebranding of ideology? How do researchers navigate the tightrope between macro-level social forces that inequitably distribute opportunities and micro-level social negotiations that imbue social actors with sparks of agency?

This study begins with a macro-level framework: three dominant English language ideologies in South Korea (Korea) as identified by Joseph Sung-Yul Park (2004). Through qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews, this study aims to add nuance to these ideologies through the voices of expatriate guest English teachers (GETs) and local Korean English teachers (LETs). This paper argues that LET and GET perspectives on dominant English language ideologies are various, both within groups and between groups. By gathering the voices of teachers working in Jeollanamdo, one of the most rural provinces in Korea, this paper argues that dominant English language ideologies may attenuate over geographic space, wielding less influence over teachers and students in the most remote, rural parts of the country.

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This paper begins with background information on language ideologies, English as a global language, English language education in Korea, the recruitment of GETs to Korea, and Park's (2004) three dominant English language ideologies. Section two culminates with this study's key research questions. Section three describes the qualitative methods employed to address these questions. Section four discusses key findings, dedicating three subsections to each of Park's ideologies and one subsection to LETs' and GETs' observations of urban and rural students. Section five summarizes key findings, shares limitations, and discusses future research avenues.

2. English language ideologies in the Korean context. Language ideology research has proliferated from an anthropological tradition since the 1980s, accumulating many definitions (Woolard & Schieffelin 1994). Broadly speaking, language ideologies entail shared beliefs about language linked to social interests, cultural narratives, or power relations. This study considers language ideologies as “cultural systems of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests” (Irvine 1989: 255).

In a post-colonial era, applied linguists have written extensively about the role of English as a world language with stances ranging from neutral (Crystal 2003) to critical (Phillipson 1992). Kachru (1986) organizes global Englishes into countries where English is an official or dominant language (inner circle), countries where English competes with local languages as a legacy of British and U.S. colonialism (outer circle) and countries where English is not an official language but a common foreign language of study (expanding circle).

Korea classifies as an expanding circle country (though see Ahn 2013). English has been a core subject of study in secondary-level public education since the Republic of Korea emerged from the Korean War in 1953 (Ahn 2013; Lee 2016). In part due to entangled Korea-United States relations post-World War II, English developed into a language of prestige, power, and upper-class stratification in Korean society (Cho 2016). As Korea emerged as a powerful exporter of consumer goods and semiconductors in a globalizing marketplace, English has developed into a coveted resource for upwardly mobile middle-class Korean families (Park & Ablemann 2004) and a gatekeeper for Korean upper-class society (Lee 2021a). This precipitated a proliferation of an English shadow education economy of private tutors and cram schools (Korean: *hakwon*²) that costs Korean families upwards of \$1,500 per month (Kim 2016). Scholars have coined this phenomenon “English fever” (Korean: *yeongeo yeolpung*) (Ahn 2013).

To curb spending on shadow education and to promote intercultural exchange, Korea has recruited thousands of expatriate guest English teachers (GETs) through the Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) program and English Program in Korea (EPIK). These programs recruit college graduates from inner circle countries to serve as assistant teachers in Korean public-school classrooms (Ahn 2013, 2018). While many scholars argue that lax qualifications reflect unearned privilege and neo-imperialist ideologies (Holliday 2006), others argue that GETs are in a precarious position of linguistic power and political weakness (Miyazato 2009). Lee (2016) also points out that GETs often have underdeveloped understandings of the English ideological landscape in Korea.

In an analysis of English language ideologies in Korea, Park (2004: 35-36) identified three dominant English language ideologies. Necessitation, or “English as necessary” views English as “a valuable resource one must acquire and secure in order to survive in a globalizing world” (ibid). Externalization, or “English as foreign...views English as a language in opposition to Korean, incongruent with a Korean identity” (ibid). Finally, self-deprecation, or “Koreans as bad

² Korean terms in this paper are transliterated using the Revised Romanization of Korean system.

speakers of English” views Koreans as “lacking sufficient competence to use English meaningfully, despite the abundance of English education they receive” (ibid).

This study compares the ideological perspectives of LETs and GETs living in Jeollanamdo, a province known for rurality (Jeon 2013), socioeconomic disadvantage (Im 2009), and educational inequality (Burt & Park 2008). Few studies have focused on teacher perspectives in rural Korea (Lee 2021b), especially from a language ideological perspective. Therefore, this study aims to address two questions.

- (1) How do LETs and GETs align or differ in their stances toward dominant English language ideologies?
- (2) How do LETs and GETs working in rural areas of Korea affirm or resist dominant English language ideologies?

3. Methodology. To address the above research questions, this study employed a qualitative thematic and stance analysis of semi-structured interviews. The author recruited both LETs and GETs through snowball sampling. 24 participants participated in this study (12 LETs and 12 GETs). All participants have at least two years of teaching experience and have worked in a public secondary-level (middle or high) school in Jeollanamdo province. Table 1 presents all pseudonyms, nationalities, years of teaching experience, and types of schools for each participant.

Participants completed semi-structured interviews with the author over Zoom. Interviews were conducted in (mostly³) English. Semi-structured interviews allow interviewer and interviewee to freely explore topics of interest through a scaffolded structured interview schedule (Friedman 2011). Interview questions were adapted from Lee (2016: 211-220) and focused on participants’ perspectives and attitudes toward mandatory English education policies in Korea. Interviews lasted between 45 and 75 minutes.

After reviewing and transcribing interviews⁴, participants’ utterances underwent thematic analysis where the author familiarized themselves with the data, generated initial codes, searched for themes, refined codes, and named the themes (Braun & Clarke 2006). In this study, initial coding involved Park’s (2004) three ideologies, and then subsequent rounds of coding and theming searched for nuanced inter-participant subthemes. Lastly, a stancetaking analysis (Jaffe 2009) considered how participants position themselves relative to stance objects (in this case, Park’s ideologies). Stancetaking analysis involves three dimensions: evaluation (the value assigned to a stance object), positioning (how much responsibility a speaker assumes in their stance), and alignment (how a speaker calibrates their stance with respect to an interlocutor) (Du Bois 2007).

It is also important for the author to acknowledge their positionality and lend reflexivity to this qualitative analysis (Ahn 2018). I identify as a white, male-presenting, United States citizen whose first language is English. I lived and worked in Korea for two years as a GET in a Jeollanamdo high school and two years as an intensive teacher-educator in a Jeollanamdo public institute. These experiences grant me ethnographic insight into GETs’ perspectives. Moreover, my work as a teacher-educator gives me some insight into the experiences and struggles of

³ Some LET participants switched to Korean, engaging in translanguaging with the author to negotiate meaning around complex terms or ideas.

⁴ To avoid native-speakerist ideologies (Holliday 2006) of error correction and to allow data to speak for itself, I do not use *sic* in interview excerpts. I do, however, use square brackets ([]) to clarify pronominal referents and ellipses (...) for brevity.

LETs. However, I am not Korean. I do not have a full understanding of LETs’ experience in the Korean context. Therefore, I aim to corroborate my own insights with the work of Korean scholars to better temper my personal biases.

LETs					GETs				
Name	Nationality	Teaching Experience (Years)	High School	Middle School	Name	Nationality	Teaching Experience (Years)	High School	Middle School
Anne	ROK	9	✓	✓	Amina	RSA	10	✓	✓
Arizwel	ROK	7	✓	✓	Andile	RSA	4	✓	✓
Handsome Potato	ROK	5	✓	✓	Ben	USA	2	✓	
Jiaenius	ROK	7		✓	Bevan	CAN	11		✓
Jin-D	ROK	8	✓	✓	Brandon	AUS	10	✓	✓
Miranda	ROK	5		✓	Hyunsoo	USA	7		✓
Ninja’s Sister	ROK	8	✓		Isadora	USA	6		✓
Perez	ROK	7		✓	Jihye	USA	3	✓	✓
Sean	ROK	7		✓	Katie	RSA	4	✓	✓
Sehyeon	ROK	8	✓		Nancy	USA	5	✓	✓
Woongbear	ROK	7		✓	Patricia	USA	10		✓
Yeonghyeon	ROK	4		✓	Steve	USA	3	✓	

Table 1. List of participants. Country codes are as follows: ROK = South Korea, USA = United States, RSA = South Africa, AUS = Australia, CAN = Canada. A checkmark indicates experience working in a Jeollanamdo middle school and high school respectively.

4. Analysis. Participants assumed a variety of stances relative to dominant English language ideologies. Some participants seemed to affirm these ideologies, while others showed evidence of resistance. Illustrative examples and analyses of these stances are organized into four subsections below.

4.1. NECESSITATION. Multiple subthemes emerged as LETs and GETs took stances relative to Park’s (2004:35) ideology of necessitation (“English as essential”). Figure 1 summarizes these themes.

LETs and GETs both discussed English as necessary for survival in a neoliberal world. Harvey (2007: 2) defines neoliberalism as “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade.” This subtheme therefore explores how LETs and GETs discuss English as a path to self-interested economic advancement or self-improvement.

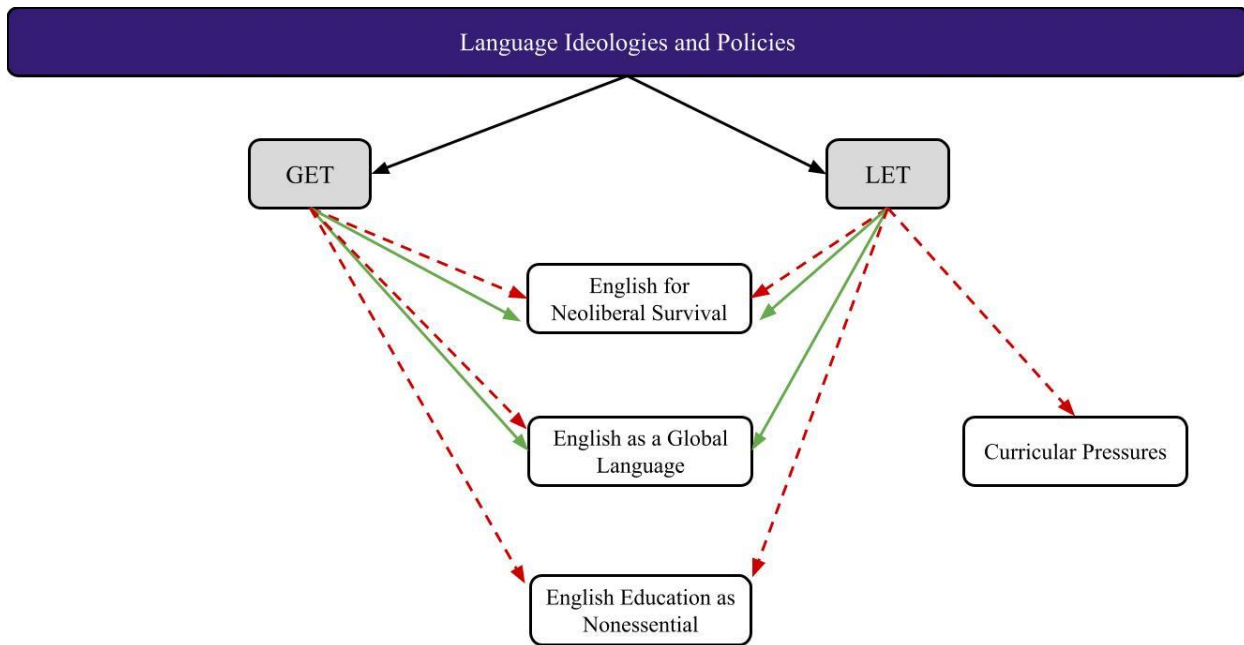


Figure 1. Diagram of key subthemes and stances in LETs' and GETs' negotiation of the ideology of necessitation. Solid green lines indicate affirmation of the ideology, while red, dashed lines indicate participants resisting the ideology.

LETs often discussed how the prestige of the teaching profession (but not necessarily English) influenced their career choices. Handsome Potato (LET) “decided to be an English teacher, because [he’s] not good at math.” Jiaenius (LET) preferred to study “society or history” and Sean (LET) “thought he would become a teacher who majors in science.” For many LETs, English was not a topic of intrinsic motivation, but a vehicle of access to the stable and prestigious teaching profession. Due to the overwhelming influence of the College Scholastic Aptitude Test (CSAT) (Korean: *suneung*), many LETs’ career aspirations were predestined immediately after high school. Sehyeon (LET) said “[she] didn’t [unk⁵] want to be an English teacher. [She] just wanted to major politics...But [she] had the very good [English] score.” This indicates how LETs become English teachers through similar neoliberal, exam-based tracking processes (Byean 2015) that drive the aggressive study habits of the students they lead.

When asked whether English should be a mandatory subject of study in Korean education, most LETs and GETs took affirmative stances. However, the reasoning behind these stances varied between LETs and GETs. Many LETs pointed to English as the dominant language of knowledge and scientific discourse. Miranda (LET) said she “thinks English is the platform to get knowledge” while Sehyeon (LET) said “English is necessary to every majors...like engineering.” Jiaenius echoed these sentiments saying she “thinks it’s much...useful to acquire knowledge in original language...or English...Because it is common language in academic area.” This theme of “English as intellectual capital” was scarce in GET interviews and hearkens back to ideologies of English as a required language for Korea’s modernization as described in declassified documents of the United States of America Military Government in Korea (1945-1948). “The logical answer...then, would seem to be the introduction of the English language as

⁵ [unk] indicates “unknown,” or indicates where audio was inaudible, muffled, or cut out due to unstable internet connections.

the best medium for the education of the Korean in the technologies necessary for a modern state” (Lee 2016: 59). This ideology remains strong as Korea emerges as a world power in the information economy through consumer electronics and semiconductor manufacturing.

On the other hand, GETs often appealed to the value of English in travel, migration, and international communication when discussing the necessity of English. For example, Brandon (GET) describes how many of his students “want to go study in an English-speaking country, or they may be even want to migrate to another country.” These aspirations for English as a linguistic passport to travel or live abroad are echoed by participants in Kim (2020) and Cho (2016) who often discuss English in terms of a bridge to overseas opportunities, or an escape from the suffocating *gongchae* system (English: white-collar job application process).

LETs and GETs also appeal to what Anderson (2006) calls “imagined communities”, or groups of people who are not immediately accessible, but whose existence can be felt through imagination. Such appeals often involve proleptic scenarios where Korean students need English either while travelling abroad or interacting with foreigners in Korea. For example, Arizwel (LET) recalls an exchange she had with a student resistant to learning English.

- (1) “My students say, 'Why should I study English?' And I always answer, 'Because you need this.' And one of my students...he said, 'Okay, after I graduate high school, I'm going to be a bus driver. So, I don't need English. Why should I learn English?' ... And then I said 'Okay, then, if you want to be a bus driver and if your passenger is foreigners, and if he or she had a problem, then you should help him or her. So that's why you have to learn English.’”

Arizwel’s story is one common to both LETs and GETs. Such stories place students into hypothetical scenarios where communication in English is essential and unavoidable. These appeals are not based in statistical probabilities of interacting with foreigners, especially in rural areas. Rather, both LETs and GETs present these scenarios to reinforce and legitimize their profession and maintain their own employment prospects. LETs and GETs say as much when arguing for compulsory English education. Ninja’s Sister (LET) said she “thinks [English] should be a core subject forever. Because [she’s] an English teacher.” Hyunsoo parallels this sentiment in saying, “the fact that English is so praised here helps me have job security.”

Some teachers also resisted Park’s ideology by rejecting English’s essentiality. This entails the contestation of ideological space by replacing commonsensical notions of language ideologies with statements of ambivalence. Arizwel (LET) said, “I don't know why, but all the companies they require the applicants to take the TOEIC⁶ exam and get better score from this test.” Miranda (LET) later said, “because English was very important in Korea. I don't know why.” Such ambivalence fails to reify language ideologies by avoiding well-tread justifications or appeals to self-evidence. Yeonghyeon takes this questioning a step further by rejecting ideologies of necessitation in front of her students. “Even though you [students] don't know any English word, you will graduate, and you will live your life” (Yeonghyeon, LET). In opposition to the imagined community scenarios discussed above, Yeonghyeon aims to alleviate students’ resistance to English by re-contextualizing their need for English all the way down to zero.

Finally, many LETs discussed feeling squeezed between the Ministry of Education’s initiatives for more communicative language teaching (Ahn 2013) and the curricular mandate to prepare students for the CSAT. This pressure also grows in the face of diminishing CSAT

⁶ Test of English for International Communication

enrollment (Bastedo 2021). Arizwel (LET) frames this as a dilemma, saying, “only five or ten students would take the exam and rest of them, they would not take the exam... Why should I [teach from the CSAT book]? It's like dilemma.” Sean (LET) frames a similar dilemma as competing egos. He provides a voicing contrast (Agha 2005) of his own inner monologue. “Like, 'Hey Sean, you just need to focus on increasing [students'] genuine...abilities of speaking English... And the other thing is, 'I have to teach the students how to solve the *suneung* (English: CSAT) question well.’” This dilemma summarizes how LETs and GETs struggle to reconcile the disconnect between English as a test subject and cultural status object and English as a medium of communication. Although LETs and GETs both expressed interest in teaching more conversational, communicative English, the historical momentum of Confucian-derived examination systems (Gardner 2014) locks both teachers and students into unending cycles of standardized test preparation.

4.2. EXTERNALIZATION. LETs and GETs also showed variation in their stances toward the ideology of externalization (or English as separate and antithetical to Korean identity). Figure 2 summarizes key themes pertaining to the ideology of externalization.

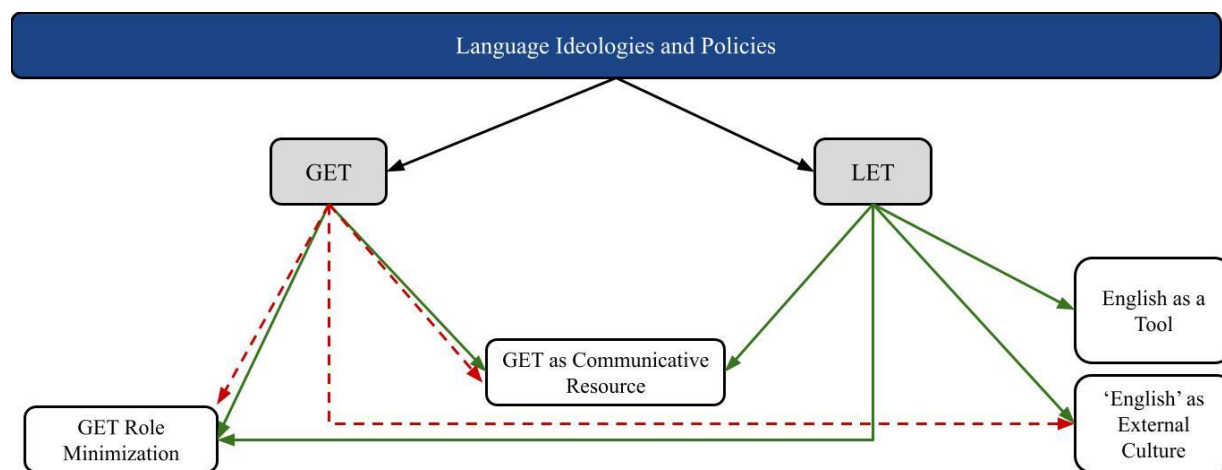


Figure 2. Diagram of key subthemes and stances in LETs’ and GETs’ negotiation of the ideology of externalization. Solid green lines indicate affirmation of the ideology, while red, dashed lines indicate participants resisting the ideology.

Both LETs and GETs discussed how GETs serve as an exclusive communicative resource in the Korean English classroom. Woongbear says that “The students do not talk [in English] to Korean English teacher, because [the teacher] is Korean... However... when they talk to native speakers, they don't try to talk to them using Korean, because they are not Korean.” In other words, Woongbear notes partitions of social space (Silverstein 2003) where Korean is a language used between Korean students and Korean teachers, and English is a language used between Korean students and non-Korean teachers. His framing is one of linguistic identity rather than competence, acting as a form of erasure (Gal & Irvine 2000) that renders invisible not only GETs who use the Korean language during their school life, but also LETs whose English could be a valuable communicative resource for Korean learners of English (Lee 2014).

Many experienced GETs reject the notion of GETs’ monopolization of communicative English. Brandon says, “sometimes students and Korean English teachers see native English teachers as kind of conversation partners” when he would much prefer for GETs to function as “activity leaders.” A disjoint between LETs’ and GETs’ conceptualization of GETs’ role in

Korean English education reflects an ideology of externalization inscribed onto the bodies of GETs as instruments of conversation, “human tape recorders” (Tajino & Tajino 2000), and “performing monkeys” of English entertainment (Jeon 2009). Hyunsoo (GET), expands upon this frame by saying “[GETs are] being underutilized and put to these roles of, you know, edutainer or clown.” Hyunsoo’s comments, common among GETs, carries the presupposition that GETs’ lessons index games and entertainment, as opposed to legitimate teaching. It also exemplifies the precarious position of GETs who feel pressured to entertain students while also being aware of discourses that say “the ‘entertainment value’ of native English teachers alone does not adequately justify the significant costs of running the EPIK program” (Jeon 2009:175).

This ideology of GETs as the sole source of communicative opportunities also links to ideas of English as an external, monolithic culture set in opposition to Korea and Korean culture. Many LETs, like Jin-D, expressed interest in “knowing English culture” while Arizwel (LET) says Koreans may be able to travel and read books, but “It’s not real culture anyway, we are Korean.” This framing of English as a homogenous culture not only fits the externalist ideological frame of Korean vs. Non-Korean, but also serves to disqualify LETs as legitimate teachers of English. One student in Elizabeth Root’s (2012:196) study of English language ideologies in the Korean classroom corroborates this position. The student admits “an embarrassing confession” as an English major due to “not taking a single class instructed by a foreigner” (ibid). The student’s stance not only delegitimizes English courses taught by non-L1 English instructors, but also indicates an ideology of externalization due to what Root (2012) calls “foreigner fright.”

Miranda (LET) also exemplifies this contradiction by saying she “cannot be expert” because she’s “not living in the English country” and “doesn’t use English at all, except for the class.” However, she then goes on to talk about how she struggles to explain “the use of articles or prepositions or phrasal verb.” She doesn’t mention how such complex grammatical terms are lost on most L1 English speakers and her experiences learning English as an additional language give her advantages over GETs, who often struggle to articulate language intuitions as explicit rules or patterns. (Mahboob 2003).

More evidence of externalization arises in LETs’ frequent descriptions of the English language through the metaphor of a tool, or an external object independent of the self that one manipulates to achieve a goal. For example, Jin-D (LET) says students “are learning English as...a tool for getting answers, memorizing words.” His stance reflects the prevalence of the word “tool” in scholarly literature on English in Korea, describing English as “highly effective tools in gaining upward social mobility” (Ahn 2013: 3) or a “tool” for enhancing South Korea’s competitiveness in the global market (Jeon 2009: 168). Arizwel (LET), on the other hand, complicates this notion by saying, “English is kind of tool that we can use in communicating with others, not reading just text or studying.” This means an analysis of English as a tool cannot bifurcate between instrumental motivations for test taking and integrative motivations for communication, as some LETs label English as a tool for communication. Jiaenius (LET) completes this square of English functions (reading texts vs. communication) and motivation types (instrumental vs. integrative) by saying English is “an instrument...for reading texts...within literature” and that “it makes [her] life rich” and she can “make friends” and “experience things.” In other words, she aligns her tool-like use of English with an integrative motivation of enriching her life and nurturing cross-cultural friendships.

Ideologies of externalization also contribute to GETs’ perceived marginalization as illegitimate instructors and outsiders. Brandon’s (GET) experience observing a fellow GET’s

lesson in an official capacity sums up the disjuncture and diminution of GETs' educational contributions.

- (2) “The province asked me to go do an observation of a new EPIK teacher. And I watched her class...And she did 45 minutes straight of drilling...And it was frustrating to see too because the students were- the students were trying to make it more communicative like they- they'd crack jokes in English about something on her PPT slide or something, and none of it would go anywhere...I was very critical of her lesson. And then the other- like the Korean person from the education office who was like also doing observation was...just like 'That was wonderful' and 'You're so responsible,' and 'You made them focus on the textbook so much.' 'You did a great job.' And so...I very lightly said a few of what- a few of the points I wanted to say...And then after, I [to the education official] was like, 'Was she- was that really good?' and [the education official was] like, 'Oh yes, like compared to some of the others I've seen, that was great.’”

Brandon positions himself against the new GET's lesson of “45 minutes of straight drilling” by saying he was “frustrated” with and “critical of” her lesson. His criticism situates his beliefs in communicative language teaching where learning should not involve rote drills, but ongoing negotiations of meaning, which he notes as missed opportunities in the new GET's lesson. This complicates the “fun lesson” vs. “legitimate lesson” dichotomy shared by many GETs. Brandon's critical feedback bemoaned the opportunity cost of meaningful engagement with students “cracking jokes about something on [the] PPT” in lieu of the simulated legitimacy of pushing students through drills.

As a dedicated GET with 10 years of experience and a master's degree in TESOL, Brandon views teacher-facilitated student-to-student interaction patterns as a path to GET legitimacy. By comparison, the Korean education official describes the observed lesson as “wonderful” and “focused on the textbook” while labeling the GET as “so responsible.” Most tellingly, the education official bestows this label in comparison to “some of the other [lessons]” they've seen. This presupposes an ideology of irresponsible GETs whose lessons are of little to no perceived value unless they adhere to textbooks and rote learning.

Through Brandon's eyes, a double frustration emerges. First, the observed lesson fails to meet his expectations of a well-run GET lesson. Second, the lesson clearly exceeds the expectations of the Korean education official. In other words, the reported comments of the education official (i.e. “being responsible” and “sticking to the textbook”) reflect a positive affective stance when associated with a GET, but a bare minimum of employment for LETs who often expressed frustration over being shackled to textbooks. Such contrast reflects how even positively valanced comments can devalue GETs as illegitimate, foreign others.

4.3. SELF-DEPRECIATION. LETs and GETs also showed variation in their stances toward the ideology of self-deprecation (or the view that Koreans are incapable users of English). Figure 3 summarizes key themes pertaining to the ideology of self-deprecation.

Of Park's (2004) three ideologies, participants tended to resist self-deprecation the most. One theme invoked by both LETs and GETs is the arbitrariness of linguistic competence. In other words, both groups discussed how Koreans' self-deprecation toward English entailed mismatched expectations in either the medium of communication (reading vs. speaking) or in ability level (the linguistic knowledge required for successful communication). Brandon (GET) talks about how students say they are “bad at English” because “they can't like pump out a whole

essay or something.” He goes on to say that “what [students are] saying they can't do is so high level...Like, 'Yeah of course you can't do that.'”

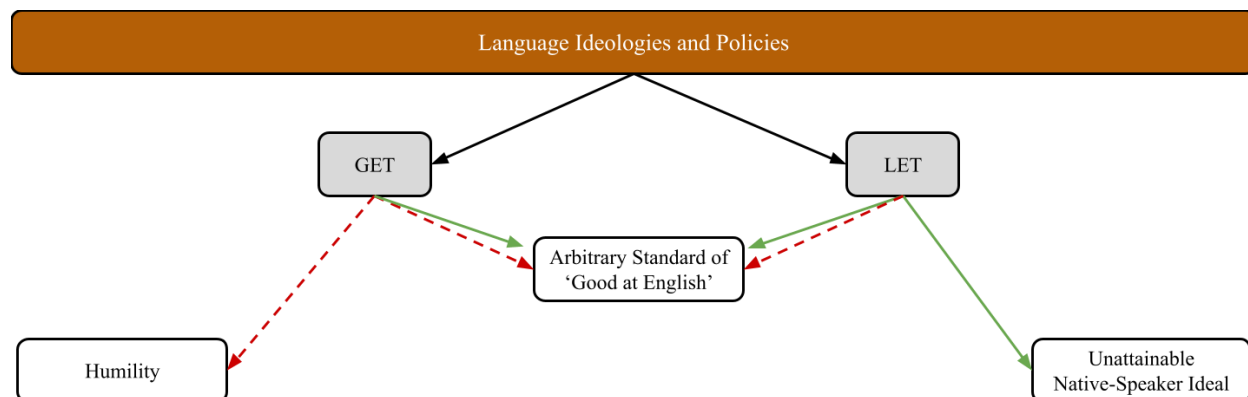


Figure 3. Diagram of key subthemes and stances in LETs’ and GETs’ negotiation of the ideology of self-deprecation. Solid green lines indicate affirmation of the ideology, while red, dashed lines indicate participants resisting the ideology.

This mismatch of expectations leads to a bifurcation in GET stances. On one side, GETs like Brandon explain how Koreans’ unrealistic or ill-fitting expectations relative to language use contexts lead to an unjust devaluation of their perceived English competence. On the other side, GETs who prioritize speaking beyond all other language skills affirm the ideology of self-deprecation by erasing Koreans’ competence in reading, writing, or listening. Jane (GET), for example, said, “the best method to teach English and like CLT⁷ is like about communication and like learning how to speak, but like it's kind of a failure in Korea.” In other words, GETs are hired to focus on speaking – an underincentivized skill in Korean English education (though see Lee 2021a). Therefore, LETs’ and GETs’ perceptions of students’ English language skills often depend on their positioning of the four main language skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing). Teachers (like Jane) who prioritize speaking are more likely to affirm ideologies of self-deprecation while instructors with more balanced positions toward the four language skills (like Amina) were more likely to share a measured view of Korean learners’ abilities. “Koreans know English. They know all the rules about English...But they don't have a confidence to communicate in English because they've always studied it in the textbook” (Amina, GET).

On the other side of this ideology, LETs often compared students’ English skills to hard-to-attain native-speaker standards, thereby devaluing perceived language competence. For example, Yeonghyeon (LET) says students “still don't know like what a topic or what sentences can be rude to the foreigners in Korea.” This appraisal, while accurate to her experience, holds up sociolinguistic competence as a benchmark for language competence. But sociolinguistic competence is culturally relative. Describing students’ choice of topic as “rude to foreigners” pegs sociolinguistic competence to the conversational norms of Western English-speaking cultures. Such topics may in fact be appropriate to the Korean context, and it could be argued that foreigners in Korea require greater sociolinguistic understanding of conversational norms in Korea. This shows how Park’s ideologies often overlap, as Yeonghyeon externalizes the norms of English speaking to a Western context, thereby self-deprecating Koreans’ English sociolinguistic competence.

⁷ Communicative Language Teaching

Other GETs attribute Koreans' expressions of self-deprecation to Confucian notions of humility (Gardner 2014). Ben (GET) speculates that most students "would respond with modesty" and say, "Oh, teacher...I'm not good at English" after "writing like a two-page essay...describing everything in eloquent perfect grammar." In other words, many GETs reject ideologies of self-deprecation not because they reject Koreans' stated beliefs of linguistic incompetence, but because they view self-deprecation as a culturally specific pragmatic stance regardless of one's abilities.

4.4. TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF URBAN AND RURAL STUDENTS. LETs and GETs who reported working in both rural and urban secondary schools discuss marked differences between the motivation and demeanor of rural and urban students. Andile (GET) described students on his rural island school as "very relaxed", "less tired" and less likely to be "sleeping in the class." "Sleeping in class" is one of many acts of resistance by overburdened Korean students who decolonize subjectivities and "say enough to English" (Park 2022:6). Such acts of resistance indicate students' saturation within dominant English language ideologies. In other words, by bringing their energy into the classroom, students in more rural communities demonstrate less need to resist ideologies of English due to the ideologies' attenuating influence over geographic space.

Handsome Potato (LET) corroborates Andile's statements. He thinks rural students "are not interested in studying" any subject, including English. "Because...their parents are not getting that much interested in educating children." While Chang (2010) argues that most rural parents encourage their children to improve their employment prospects through education, Handsome Potato's comments reflect a potential urban-rural distinction between the strength of dominant English language ideologies in Korea. Sehyeon (LET) further supports this notion by arguing against motivation as a mediating factor in differences between urban and rural students. She says, "the atmosphere is so different from city... from rural area." In rural areas, students think, "Oh, that's fine he's studying, I don't study." But in the city, "everyone's studying" so students feel pressure to study despite their low motivation. That social pressure comes from both peers and from "what [students'] families expect from them" (Amina, GET). In other words, Sehyeon thinks, "The motivation is very similar to each other...but the social pressure is so different." This common sentiment expressed by LETs and GETs who worked in both rural islands and coastal cities suggests that geographical distance from urban centers may attenuate the influence of dominant English language ideologies. In other words, language ideologies identified around Seoul (Lee 2014, Kim 2020) and Jeju Island (Lee 2016) are useful starting points for language ideology research elsewhere in Korea but should not be taken for granted as the same.

5. Discussion and conclusion. This study aimed to address the following two research questions.

- How do LETs and GETs align or differ in their stances toward dominant English language ideologies?
- How do LETs and GETs working in rural areas of Korea affirm or resist dominant English language ideologies?

This study builds nuance into language ideology research most often conducted in urban and cosmopolitan settings by analyzing the ideological stances of LETs and GETs in the rural Jeollanamdo province. Few studies have compared the perspectives of LETs and GETs in Korea through the lens of language ideology, so this study is also a first step toward more comparative ideological research. LETs and GETs demonstrated both shared and distinct subthemes of dominant language ideologies. For example, while both LETs and GETs explained the ideology

of externalization in terms of the GET's role as an (exclusive) communicative resource, only LETs tended to frame English as an external tool. LETs' and GETs' observations of rural students also suggest that dominant language ideologies carry less power in more rural areas. This study therefore cautions against assuming people in rural areas have the same ideological footing as people in urban areas. In other words, it's important to contextualize language ideologies as situated, place-based sets of beliefs linked to the place-based orientation of their speakers (Ferguson 2022). In the context of this study, "Korea" may be too broad of a place to identify as a unified ideological marketplace (Bourdieu 1991). This is not because the ideologies are necessarily different, but because the ideological signal surely does not carry a uniform distribution.

While iterations of language ideologies were interpreted from every participant, each participant showed varying gradations in their reasoning, positioning, and alignment with each ideology. In other words, the various subthemes discussed above reflect variation in LETs' and GETs' negotiation of dominant English language ideologies. While a degree of sharedness is essential to the definition of language ideologies, individuals' interpretation of ideology through the lens of their own experience and cultural background creates the liminal space through which social actors can exercise agency to either endorse or resist ideologies in their own way.

Like all language ideology research, this study is not without its limitations. Interviews were conducted (mostly) in English. While I do not discount the complex notions that LETs shared in English, LETs were also second-language speakers of English, and therefore may have been limited in their ability to share more. As Miranda said at the end of her interview, "I have many thoughts in my head, but I cannot explain it." While I responded that she was free to share those thoughts in Korean, she did not seem comfortable doing so. So, I backed off. I speculate that asking Miranda to share her thoughts in Korean was an abrupt violation of the established linguistic frame of our interview. Therefore, this study aimed to cite the work of Korean scholars to better bolster LETs' commentary. Second, limited work in Korean rural sociology (written in English) limits understandings of language ideologies in rural areas. Without understanding the ideologies of rural Korea, it is more challenging to situate English language ideologies. In other words, Park's three dominant ideologies might be a poor comparison, and more research may be necessary to identify English language ideologies specific to rural Korea. Finally, while this paper occasionally pulls from the literature to corroborate LETs' and GETs' stances, it is important to contextualize the findings of this paper as the subjectivities of LET and GET participants. In other words, statements about student behavior or the voicing of others in narratives are one-sided stories. However, narratives and perspectives are also valuable sources of ideological research because the subjectivities of participants carry presuppositions that can reveal ideological stances (Preston 2019).

This study is quasi-ethnographic and exploratory, which allows for several avenues of future research. First, due to length requirements, many nuances in LETs' and GETs' ideological perspectives could not be further unpacked. Future writing can add more layering and texture to this analysis. Future studies can also survey the language attitudes of students in urban and rural areas to corroborate or refute LETs' and GETs' observations of less stressed, less ideologically bound rural students. Second, closer conversation analytic transcription of LETs' and GETs' opinions on compulsory English can yield important insights into how English teachers navigate the ideological bind of promoting their employability while reckoning with the problematic colonial positioning of English using pauses, repairs, and dysfluencies. Interview data could also be reconsidered through the lens of Karimzad and Catedral's (2022) chronotopic triangle, where

interactions between embodied experiences, textual discourse, and imagined subjectivities contribute to variation in LETs' and GETs' interpretation of language ideologies. Finally, more traditional ethnographic work can explore how ideological work takes place at the micro-level of interaction. For example, fieldwork in a Korean English teacher-training center (Korean: *yeonsuwon*) could examine how LETs and GETs negotiate language ideologies through translanguaging or use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) (Kinging & Zhuang 2023).

Teachers working in diverse environments or across cultural differences would be wise to develop tolerance for discomfort. In an analysis of the Wednesday Demonstration⁸ (Korean: *suyo jipoe*), feminist geographer Jaeyeon Lee (2021c:11) focuses on “engaging the politics of discomfort” to reveal the violence of familiar and non-confrontational knowledges. By engaging in politics of discomfort, ELT professionals can better understand not only the ideological complexities of their local teaching contexts, but also grow more inclusive of the diverse ways these ideologies contribute to the material, lived experiences of teachers and their students.

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⁸ The Wednesday Demonstration is a decades-long activist project led by surviving “comfort women,” Korean women brutalized by a Japanese imperial system of sexual slavery during the Japanese colonial period, particularly during the Pacific War. Every Wednesday, survivors and their supporters protest outside the Japanese embassy in Seoul demanding an official apology and reparations from the Japanese government (Jaeyeon Lee 2021c).

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