

## A Historical-Structural Approach to ESL Ideology in Korea

Chee Hye Lee\*

**Lee, Chee Hye. (2021). A historical-structural approach to ESL ideology in Korea. *English Teaching*, 76(1), 79-104.**

Based on the socio-historical dynamics of English ideologies that percolated into Korean society, this paper explored the significant aspects of ESL ideology in the Korean context. Despite the generally accepted EFL context in Korea, the country is situated at the intersection between two categories: ESL from a perspective of English ideologies and EFL from a perspective of societal context. As a proto-ideology of English, ESL ideology, which dates back to the United States Military rule in Korea, was further theoretically developed by the Peabody/Korean team, and its implementation was attempted by the Peace Corps. Although activating ESL has failed in Korean society, its ideology *per se* remains unchanged, (re)generating other English ideologies including *Spoken English First*, *Ten-year English Fiasco*, and *Earlier the Better English Education* ideologies. This study found that the discrepancy between ESL as the ideological domain and EFL as the practical domain has brought about some confusion in English education policy and practices.

**Key words:** English ideologies, ESL, USAMGIK, Peabody/Korean Project, Peace Corps

---

\*Author: Chee Hye Lee, Professor, Department of English Education, Hannam University; 70, Hannam-ro, Daedeok-gu, Daejeon 34430, Korea; Email: [chlee@hnu.kr](mailto:chlee@hnu.kr)

Received 30 December 2020; Reviewed 26 January 2021; Accepted 16 March 2021



© 2021 The Korea Association of Teachers of English (KATE)

This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0, which permits anyone to copy, redistribute, remix, transmit and adapt the work, provided the original work and source is appropriately cited.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most perplexing problems in the domain of English education in Korea is that there has been little improvement in Koreans' English speaking proficiency (Brown, 1990) despite their tremendous efforts for more than two decades since 1997 when the early English education policy began to be actually implemented in elementary schools (Lee, Lee, & Ahn, 2015). As remarked by Terhune (2003), "the sweeping and far-reaching changes of the 90's" (p.3) in English education policy have done little to make any epoch-making linguistic environment for enhancing their English ability. According to the TOEFL scores, Korea is likened to one of the underdeveloped countries from a perspective English speaking proficiency: ranked 125th out of 169 countries in 2017 and 122nd out of 168 countries in 2018 (Kim, 2019; Lee, 2018).

Many years of research on English education in Korea, mainly based on the neoclassical approach (Tollefson, 1991), have yet to provide any answer to the question of why Korea still remains very poor at English proficiency, as indicated in the test scores given above. Although it may be "considered to be the proper focus of research" (Tollefson, 1991, p. 27), neoclassical approach, which focuses on "the rational calculus of individuals" (Tollefson, 1991, p. 27) such as age, attitudes toward the target language, time spent to learn, motivation and so on, does not aptly elaborate on social, political, historical, and economic factors that affect individuals' choices in language education.

The historical-structural approach to language education, on the other hand, focuses on "the historical and structural pressures that lead to particular policies and plans and that constrain individual choice" (Tollefson, 1991, p. 32). In other words, policies and practices of language education cannot be isolated from sociohistorical, political, structural contexts (Spolsky, 2018), and *ipso facto* from language ideologies of the society, since they are committed to determining the major issues of which language to be taught, how many hours to be taught, and when to start the language education and so on (Cenoz & Gorter, 2018; Wright, 2002). Language education, in this sense, is inseparable from language ideologies of the time as they are reflected in, generated through, and practiced in its policy and planning (Mirhosseini, 2018; Rahman & Mehar Singh, 2020). Thus, it is imperative to investigate how language ideologies have been constructed, practiced, and regenerated (Schieffelin, Woolard, & Kroskrity, 1998; Rosa & Burdick, 2017) in the field of language education.

Based on Tollefson's (1991) historical-structural approach to English education, this study is aimed to investigate some major English-related beliefs, ideas, and discourses which, covertly or overtly, have served to give rise to English ideologies in Korean context. Starting with the qualitative analysis of articles or editorials on English policy and education in Korea, issued in a few major Korean daily newspapers in the early 1980s, the

study takes a process of establishing major English ideologies such as Spoken English First (SEF) ideology, Ten-year English Fiasco (TEF) ideology, and Earlier the Better English (EBE) ideology. It is further examined that they all would be subordinate to their proto-ideology of English, or ESL in the EFL setting of Korea. As it stands, my discussion dates back to the history of modern Korea generally assumed to begin in 1945, when Korea was liberated from Japanese rule and simultaneously came under the U.S. military rule. As a way of justifying ESL as a proto-English ideology, a strong emphasis is placed on shedding light on the three major historical-structural events that had occurred since then: the United States Army Military Government in Korea (1945-1948), the Peabody/Korea Project (1956-1962), and the Peace Corps Korea Program (1966-1981). As would be revealed in the following sections, what they all had in common in their general approaches to English policy in Korea is that English should be served as a second language rather than a foreign language. Given this, it would be further argued that the ESL ideology so accumulated, rationalized, and legitimized over a long period of time may not coincide with the EFL pedagogical setting in Korean context, suggesting that the two categories of ESL and EFL should overlap with each other in Korea from two different perspectives: ESL from a language ideological perspective and EFL from a pedagogical perspective.

## 2. ENL, ESL, AND EFL

English is generally classified as three categories depending on its function and users of the language: English as a Native Language (ENL); English as a Second Language (ESL); and English as a Foreign Language (EFL). This classification is schematically represented as the three categories of English, as given in Figure 1.

**FIGURE 1**

**Categories of English**

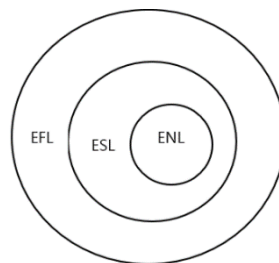
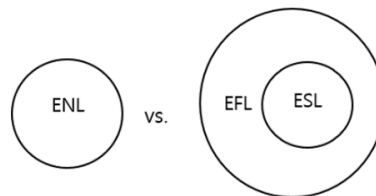


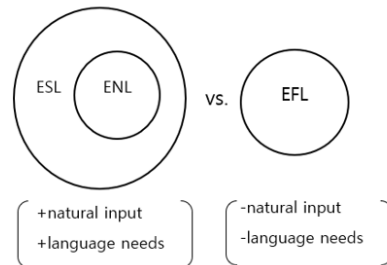
Figure 1 corresponds to Kachru's (1986) three concentric circles, i.e., inner circle, outer circle, and expanding circle, suggesting three different ways in which English has functioned and for that matter has been acquired in its societal context. ENL refers to English as a dominant and/or native language, ESL, official or unofficial, English as a second language, and EFL as a foreign language to be learned as a school subject. According to Phillipson (1992), ENL is a language of core English-speaking countries, whereas both ESL and EFL are grouped together as a language of periphery-English countries "in the sense that they generally attempt to follow the linguistic norms of the core English-speaking countries" (p. 17). Following the rationale for his core/periphery division, it is possible to delineate them as Figure 2 below.

**FIGURE 2**  
**Core English-Speaking Countries vs. Periphery-English Countries**



It may also be postulated, however, that ESL can be grouped together with ENL rather than EFL when it comes to the issues of its pedagogy. It is generally agreed that there are three essential conditions for having access to language acquisition: Language Acquisition Device (LAD), natural input, and language needs (Ahn, 1992). Of these three conditions, LAD, as a key concept in "Chomsky's mentalist view of language learning" (Ellis, 1985, p. 12), plays a pivotal role in learning a language. But LAD *per se* is no more than a linguistic competence in Universal Grammar. It is not activated unless natural input or language needs, or both are committed to working out as an initiator or propellant of language learning. According to Ahn's (1992) analysis of both natural input and language needs, it is ENL and ESL that have them in common to form a group of categories, whereas EFL remains alone as another group of categories. When taking this into consideration, it is also possible to recategorize ENL and ESL as one group and EFL alone as another group, as demonstrated in Figure 3 below.

**FIGURE 3**  
**Categories by Language Acquisition Variants**



Prior to further discussion of these three categories of English users, it is necessary to note, as remarked by Phillipson (1992), that there might be an effect of fuzziness between any two categories of English, particularly between ESL and EFL due to their multifaceted use of the language depending on different contexts. What is at stake is that ESL and EFL may coexist in one way or another when there happens to be a confusion or change in English policy in general and English education policy in particular. Some countries, as in the case of Bangladesh, may be classified as an ESL country in spite of only a minute amount of English to which people are exposed. Other countries, as in Malaysia, are characterized by their dichotomous town/country variable that separates ESL from EFL, resulting in the ESL situation in downtown areas as opposed to the EFL situation in many rural areas. Still other countries, as exemplified in Scandinavia and Finland, are in the process of shifting from EFL to ESL (Brown, 2014; Phillipson, 1992).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

As clearly elucidated in the introduction of the paper, this study is aimed to investigate some major English ideologies established through the history of modern Korea. In order to capture the underlying dominant language ideology of English and how it prevailed in Korean society (re)generating several collateral language ideologies of English, this paper examines various types of historical texts ranging from 1945 to the 1980s. In addition to historical texts as a primary data source, survey results are also used as a supplementary data source. Mainly capitalizing on the document analysis as one of qualitative research methods, the analytic procedure is taken, including “finding, selecting, appraising, and synthesizing data contained in documents” (Bowen, 2009, p. 27). Yielded data such as excerpts, quotations, or even entire passages are organized into several major themes or

categories through content analysis (Labuschagne, 2003). These data are critically analyzed to establish their underlying socio-historical meanings in Korean context.

As for data collection, a variety of different kinds of data were collected in terms of different periods of socio-historical events assumed to have had a critical influence on the English language ideologies. They are classified as three major historical-structural events related to the U.S. policy toward English in Korea: (i) the United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK) (1945-1948) (ii) the Peabody/Korea Project (1956-1962), and (iii) the Peace Corps Korea Program. Text data collected for each of these events are listed below.<sup>1</sup>

Text data for the USAMGIK (1945-1948)

- Treaty document between the U.S. and Korea
- Official reports and letters from the USAMGIK
- Official reports from the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Text data for the Peabody/Korea Project (1956-1962)

- Makerere Report (1961)
- Maston's (1963) doctoral dissertation: *English language workshops for English teachers of South Korea*

Data for the Peace Corps /Korea Program (1966-1981)

- Peace Corps Annual Reports (1966-1981)
- Kailian's (1980) doctoral dissertation: *English test and attitude measure among Korean students of United States Peace Corps Volunteers*
- Official documents by the Korean government/ the U.S. government
- Survey results from Peace Corps Volunteers who served as English teachers in Korea

Additionally included in this paper are other textual data collected during the 1980s, as listed below.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> For more information on data, see Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> The 1980s could be identified as pre-globalization period (Lee, 2020) in which societal debates on English education in Korea were actively conducted for about a decade prior to establishing the 6<sup>th</sup> National Curriculum which reflects the era of globalization. In order to aptly capture the ideological underpinnings of the 1980s, which resulted in the fundamental shift in educational policies, it is newspaper articles and editorials that played an important role in forming public

- 4th and 5th National Curricula
- Articles and editorials from The Kyunghyang Shinmun (Daily newspaper)
- Articles and editorials from The Dong-A Ilbo (Daily newspaper)
- Memorandum of Education Exchange between the United States of America and the Republic of Korea, 1981

Employing document analysis, this study takes two stages of data analysis. First of all, data collected undergoes an initial descriptive-level of coding process. Chunks of words, phrases, and sentences were categorized under the several themes (Gibbs, 2007) including ‘representation of the English language,’ ‘planning and practice of English education in Korea,’ and ‘dominant discourse’ associated with the English language. Initial interpretations and reactions to the data are also taken during this stage. Secondly, “a more categorical, analytic and theoretical level of coding” (Gibbs, 2007, p. 42) was conducted. It is during the second stage that those chunks of words, phrases, and sentences that were identified in the descriptive-level are recategorized into language ideology-related categories such as ‘superiority’ and ‘neutrality’ of the English language, ‘instrumentalist perspective’ toward English, ‘English language teaching from a prescriptive perspective,’ ‘earlier introduction of English education’ and so on. These categories are likely to become the basis of “identifying patterns and discovering theoretical properties” (Bowen, 2009, p. 37), or English language ideologies in the data.

#### 4. ENGLISH IDEOLOGIES IN KOREA

Following Silverstein’s (1979) definition, language ideologies are defined as sets of beliefs about a language articulated by users of that language as rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use. They are demonstrated in forms and practices of daily explanation and/or justification of a particular use, status, acquisition of the language. Language ideologies are often reflected in enactment and implementation of language policy in general and language education policy in particular. It needs to be noted that language ideologies are not constructed abruptly but rather constantly generated, distributed, contested, and accumulated. As a social process, language ideologies are

---

opinion (van Dijk, 1995) in the 1980s. In this respect, The Dong-A Ilbo (Dong-A Daily News) and The Kyunghyang Shinmun (Kyunghyang Newspaper) were selected as data to investigate a host of socially controversial language ideologies which, directly or indirectly, influenced the English educational policies in the 1990s.

“derived from, rooted in, reflective of, or responsive to the experience” (Woolard, 1998, p. 6) that a particular speech community or even a nation goes through. In this respect, the ways in which language ideologies are (re)generated in particular sociohistorical and political contexts are critical to examine.

The same is true for the English language ideologies in Korea. Defined as sets of beliefs about English, demonstrated in its practices of daily explanation, and justified as a particular use, status, acquisition of English, English language ideologies have been formulated, disseminated, contested and reproduced throughout the modern history of Korea ever since English was introduced in the country. The following sections elucidate a few English language ideologies in relation to Koreans’ spoken English proficiency. In addition to these overt or visible language ideologies, it is also important not to lose sight of the ideology that has already become “doxa, naturalized, dominant ideology” (Woolard, 1998, p. 9). In this respect, this paper seeks to unveil the underlying, dominant, or even hegemonic proto-ideology of English that had been constructed, practiced, and reproduced and its dynamic relationship with the subordinate language ideologies of English.

#### 4.1. Major English Ideologies in Korea: SEF, TEF, and EBE

English ideologies in Korea have been (re)constructed since the introduction of English in Korea (Lee, 2016). While the use of English had been highlighted since then, it is not until the late 1970s and the early 1980s that they stood out as one of the most frequently debated societal issues in Korea (Choi, 1982; Kim, 1992; Lee, 1982). This societal debate is of significance as it has laid the groundwork for the major changes in the English education policy ever since the 1990s. Speaking proficiency is of utmost importance in Korean English education, which has been echoed repeatedly both in policies and practices of English education (Lee, 1982; Lee, 2020).

In 1978 a seminar, which was touched off by a proposal made by the Ministry of Education in 1977, was hosted by the Korean Language Society, in which there was a pros-and-cons debate<sup>3</sup> on early English education in Korea. It was in the year 1981 that debates on and/or discussions of the English policy in general and early English education in particular were activated again in Korean society, since the Ministry of Education was mandated to make an improvement in practical English immediately after then President Chun’s coming back from his visit to the five ASEAN countries. English education began to be magnified again as one of the most contentious societal issues, which was commonly

---

<sup>3</sup> See Yang (1982) for more details of the pros and cons debate on the early English education. According to him, the cons obtained more consensus than the pros, resulting in no change in English education policy.



reflected in public media as well as in the academic arena of language policy. Given below are a few main ideas or beliefs about the English education policy represented in editorials of The Kyunghyang Shinmun and The Dong-A Ilbo, respectively.

The teaching of pronunciation, grammar, and reading in English education is no more than a means to reach the *final goal of authentic English conversation*. Absolutely needed is a groundbreaking shift from traditional grammar-oriented English education to *communicative competence-oriented English education*. In this respect, English education in Korea is required to be essentially reexamined for its reformation. (The Kyunghyang Shinmun 1981, July 15, emphasis added)

As far as English education is concerned, it is more encouraged to *directly teach how to speak first* than to teach about English based on its grammar. It might be desirable that English education should be shifted from reading-oriented learning to *speaking-oriented learning*. (The Dong-A Ilbo, 1981, July 15, emphasis added)

The underlying patterns of the ideas and beliefs (Verschueren, 2012) in English education display the English ideology that speaking English is far more important than any other skill in learning English. This ideology, which is referred to as the “Spoken English First” (SEF) ideology, is closely associated with several other language ideologies in relation to English education. Denouncing the traditional English education of Korea, which is mainly characterized as grammar-oriented English education and reading-oriented English learning, both editorials point out that the ten-year English education in Korea is good for nothing when it comes to English conversation, and also that speaking-oriented English is more important than reading-oriented English as far as communicative competence is concerned.

The conventional English education in Korea has not been so practical. The truth is that *Korean English learners are not able to communicate with foreigners* on the street despite their hard work of learning English for ten years including six years (4-5 hours a week) in secondary school and four additional years in their college. (The Kyunghyang Shinmun, 1981, July 15, emphasis added)

Despite ten years of English instruction including six years for middle and high schools and four more years in college, most Korean students fail to *communicate with foreigners* even in a simple conversation. (The Dong-A Ilbo, 1981, July 15, emphasis added)

The ideology identified may be referred to as the TEF ideology in the sense that the “Ten-year English learning ends in a Fiasco.” Due to the urge to improve spoken English proficiency, there needed to be a policy change in English education as identified in the first two quotes. Note here that The Dong-A Ilbo, based on the theory of LAD, further suggests that English should be taught as early as possible.

It is well-known that *the earlier English is taught the better the results*. The English teaching in elementary schools is based on the theory of LAD, which is claimed by linguists to work roughly up to the age of thirteen but stop after puberty. (The Dong-A Ilbo, 1981, July 15, emphasis added)

The belief in English language learning aligns with one of the tenets in the Makerere Report (1961), which states that “the guiding principle regarding the age at which the language can be introduced should, subject to various limitations, *be the earlier the better*” (p. 7, emphasis in original). This belief in the relationship between the age and second language acquisition brought about the ideology of “The Earlier the Better in English learning,” abbreviated as EBE. These language ideologies, overtly generated in Korean society in the 1980s, continue even today to influence the policies and practices of English education.

What should be noteworthy here is that SEF, TEF, and EBE are all not so much associated with EFL as associated with ESL. The relationship between these ideologies and ESL is explicitly demonstrated in the Makerere Report (1961).

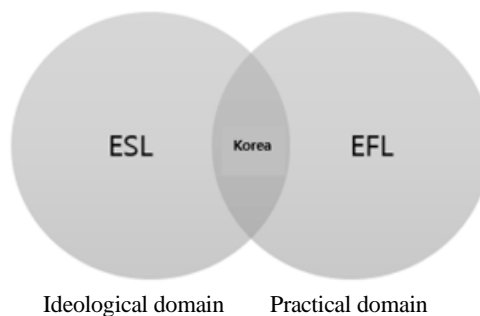
In countries where English is recognized as a second language, its teaching should be based on its direct use *as a spoken language*, and it should be *introduced as early as possible* in the child’s school life when this is of advantage to the child. (p.8, emphasis added)

All the English language ideologies identified in Korean society during the 1980s are compressed in this conclusion. Highlighting the direct use of spoken language and introducing the English language as early as possible are indisputably linked to the SEF and EBE ideologies, respectively. As the two measures in the Makerere Report (1961)

above were not fully taken in Korea's English education, it is presumed that ten years of English learning in Korea were to result in a *de facto* failure (Terhune, 2003), leading up to the ideological discourse of TEF.

It is noteworthy to mention that the concluding remark in the Makerere Report (1961) was directed to countries where English was recognized as a second language rather than a foreign language. This demonstrates that language ideologies of SEF, TEF, and EBE identified in Korean context are inextricably related to the ESL ideology. If it were not for the ESL ideology, SEF, TEF, and EBE ideologies would remain meaningless in an EFL context in which English is neither used as a medium of instruction in classrooms nor used in the media or government, and so on. Simply put, all the English ideologies, including SEF, TEF, and EBE are assumed to be associated with the ESL ideology even though Korea belongs to Kachru's expanding circle, as seen in the EFL circle given earlier. Korea, in this respect, may be categorized as the fourth dimension of the relationship between ESL and EFL. Both ESL and EFL coexist in Korea, being parallel to each other: ESL in their ideological domain versus EFL in their practical domain. To put it another way, there exists a distinction between what English has been represented as from a perspective of Koreans' long-standing English ideologies and what the language has actually served as in their own societal and/or pedagogical context. This linguistic situation facing Korea can be represented schematically as in Figure 4.

**FIGURE 4**  
**Two Parallel Domains of English in Korea**



Although Korea is conventionally categorized as an EFL country, it is ESL that has percolated to a great extent into Korean society as a proto-ideology, leading to the discrepancy between a few subordinate English ideologies, including SEF, TEF, or EBE and the societal practice of the language. To sum up, as a proto-ideology of English, the ESL ideology has been sociohistorically generated in the societal context of Korea.

## 4.2. ESL as a Proto-Ideology of English in Korea

The process of promoting the language as ESL in Korea is identified throughout the modern history of Korea. This status promotion of ESL was initially carried out by the U.S. governmental agencies such as the United States Army Military Government in Korea (USAMGIK, 1945-1948) and other U.S. quasi-governmental agencies including the Peabody/Korean Project (1956-1962) and the Peace Corps (1966-1981). In what follows, this paper explores how each of these agencies was involved in establishing, practicing, and regenerating the ideology that English should be learnt and practiced as a second language in Korea.

### 4.2.1. The initial establishment of the ESL ideology in the USAMGIK

The initial contact of Korea with the English language dates back to the late 19th century when Korea and the United States concluded the treaty.<sup>4</sup> However, it is not until the liberation of Korea from the Japanese rule in 1945 that English began to be practically exposed to all the Korean people in general since the language was declared in Korea as an official language<sup>5</sup> under the rule of USAMGIK. The English policy of the U.S. military government is typically based on the linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992; 2018) between Korean and English. According to the official documents drawn up by the headquarters of USAMGIK (Chung, 1992), their viewpoints of the Korean language are listed as:

- (1) a. The Korean language is inadequate at present to serve as a tool for Korea's rehabilitation and development.
- b. Korean cannot serve as a medium for expressing social concepts of technological developments.
- c. Korean has no literature on social, scientific, or technical subjects.

By contrast, the USAMGIK's viewpoints of the English language are revealed with a wealth of its sociolinguistic superiority over Korean that fits the following requirements best.

---

<sup>4</sup> The official title of the treaty is Treaty of Peace, Amity, Commerce & Navigation, United States-Korea Treaty of 1882.

<sup>5</sup> Refer to Article V of Proclamation No. 1 issued by MacArthur, commander-in-chief of the U.S. army forces Pacific, part of which states: For all purposes during the military control, English will be the official language.

- (2) a. To get a systematic idea of the 20th century world
- b. To be an effective citizen in the world
- c. To be the most useful tool in having access to the greatest number of people and books

With Korean and English being in stark contrast with each other, “the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities” (Phillipson, 1992, p. 47) between the two languages. Based on this English imperialism, the USAMGIK finally concluded that “the future relations of America and Korea would be measurably strengthened if the *English language became the second language of Korea* and the literature and ideas of America were introduced into Korean life by that means” (Chung, 1992, p. 1123, emphasis added). As a second language, American Language (Chung, 1992)<sup>6</sup> in Korea became highly popular among the Korean people, most of whom realized that their future business and educational relations will be with English speaking people, and also that their future careers may depend on how fast they can master English (Lee, 2016). However, although English was declared to be an official language, it was that the Korean language was a language actually used by Koreans in their daily lives. Nevertheless, it is critical to note that the ideology of ESL was implanted in Korean society during this period of USAMGIK.

#### 4.2.2. The ESL ideology in the Peabody/Korean Project

Established by the USAMGIK, the ESL ideology remained unchanged in Korea up until the early 1960s when the Peabody/Korean Project was conducted from 1956 to 1962. Part of the project was carried out by Maston (1963) to work out the specific strategy for the English instruction in Korea. As a form of U.S. educational aid toward Korea, this English project was shortly conducted for the last two years, 1960 to 1962. Yet, these two years laid the cornerstone of how English education should be practiced for the next two decades.

According to Maston’s understanding of modern Korea in the 20th century, Korea failed to exist as a modernized independent country due to a series of national sufferings such as the Japanese colonialism (1910-1945), the Korean War (1950-1953), and the succeeding sociopolitical turmoils (1954-1961), thereby resulting in the gap and lag of international

---

<sup>6</sup> Note here that the term American Language was used instead of a more generally accepted term English. Even though we can refer to H. L. Menken’s (1962) *The American Language* for the technical differences between the two terms, their special emphasis on that brand of English seems to be related to the American English linguistic imperialism particularly with regard to the U.S. competition with the U.K. in their educational and cultural policy toward the world after World War II.

information absolutely needed for the new emerging nations. The English language was seen as a lingua franca, playing the role of information-bridge. His four criteria against which to select English as a lingua franca are (i) reception, (ii) storage facilities, (iii) production dynamics, and (iv) reproduction potential. English was regarded as the best language for reception in that it “is used by many other countries as a secondary medium of expression” (Kailian, 1980, p. 29). The language was also viewed as the most appropriate one for the storage and transmittal of information that may be shared between nations (Kailian, 1980). These two criteria may “in part take care of the problem of the language-gap Korea faces” (Maston, 1963, p. 30) at the time. As a means of filling up the information-lag in Korea, on the other hand, English was a dynamically productive language, covering a range of scientific research and academic criteria, and also dealing with diplomatic, consular, and international affairs. As the fourth criterion for lingua franca, English was able to serve as the “means available to make such information known” (Maston, 1963, p. 31) in terms of its abundant printing facilities, paper, and avenues of distribution. Based on these four criteria, Maston (1963) concludes that English may be considered a successful candidate for second language status in Korea. This conclusion is further supported by such highly valued characteristics of English as neutrality, universality, and availability, finally leading to a “Korea TESL (Teaching of English as a Second Language) feasibility study” (Kailian, 1980, p. 30) conducted in 1968 by Greenway, Harris, Raik, and Worth. Given this brief sociohistorical review on the status of English in Korea, it seems to follow that ESL had already been established as a dominant language ideology in Korean society, even though it was not actually applied to public schools.

Maston’s argument to establish English as a second language in Korea is in part due to then the most influential linguistic theory, or the American structuralism led by such scholars as Leonard Bloomfield, Robert Jacobs, Robert Lado, Charles Fries, and William Moulton. As pointed out by Moulton (1963), learning something about the grammar of a language one is studying may be thought a part of liberal education. It is no longer language teaching but linguistics. In an article entitled *Linguistics and Language Teaching in the United States 1940-1960*, Moulton (1963) sums up some principles of language learning/teaching from the perspective of American structuralism (Maston, 1963).

- (3) a. Language is speech, not writing.
- b. Language is a set of habits.
- c. The real goal of instruction was an ability to speak the language and not to learn about it.
- d. A language is what its native speakers say, not what someone thinks they ought to say.

- e. Languages are different.
- f. Relatively little emphasis was placed on translation from the foreign language into English.

Particular emphasis is, as seen in (3a), (3c), and (3f), placed on speaking instead of writing, which seems to be enough to bring about the assumption that the American structuralism of the 1940s-1950s was more likely to link with the SEF ideology and for that matter, with the ESL ideology. This assumption is further supported by Fries, who states:

[The pupil] must be able to use orally all the English he studies each day. To use it orally means that he can select at once and produce orally the English that is required for any of the meaning situations covered by what he has studied. ... It is not enough that he be able to write it. He must have learned the fundamentals of the new language [English].  
(Fries, 1960, as cited in Maston, 1963, p. 107)

As an assistant to Fries, as a teacher at the English Language Institute under Lado, and also as a student of the two leading American structuralists of the time, Maston learned of structural linguistics, i.e., (3b) and audio-lingual approach to language teaching, i.e., (3d). Based on (3e), which may be closely associated with the concept of contrastive analysis in structural linguistics, Maston's program of assistance was designed to upgrade English language instruction in the Korean high schools. He adheres to his own schematic diagram consisting of three phases: linguistic research in phase-one, materials production in phase-two, and teaching in phase-three (Maston, 1963). When it comes to phase-one, the U.S. approach to English policy begins with a comprehensive comparison or contrast between Korean and English in every linguistic domain: sounds, grammar, lexicon, culture, writing system, etc. This is followed by phase-two for materials production — the production of teacher's manuals and student texts along with audio-visual aids — covering pronunciation drills, pattern drills, lesson content, and reading and writing. Added to this is the teaching itself in phase-three by using materials produced in phase-two, covering in-service training for Korean English teachers' practice as well as pre-service training for normal college students and general teaching at secondary schools. Particularly in phase-three, it is noteworthy that the Peabody's workshops, seminars or conferences for in-service and pre-service programs were held across the board in a variety of provincial cities as well as in

Seoul. Table 1 is a list of thirteen workshops, seminar, or conferences<sup>7</sup> carried out by Maston from 1960 to 1961.

**TABLE 1**  
**A Range of Peabody's Teaching Program<sup>8</sup>**

Type	Date	Location	Remark
Conference	Nov. 1, 1960	Taejon	
Workshop	Nov. 15, 1960	I-Chon	• 40 teachers
Workshop	Dec. 2, 1960	Taejon	• Chungnam Univ.
Workshop	Dec. 14, 1960	Pusan	
Conference	Dec. 20-21, 1960	Chejudo	• Informal
Workshop	Dec. 1960 (Several weeks)	Seoul	• Yonsei Univ.
Workshop	Jan. 6, 1961 (10 days)	Taejon	• Chungnam Univ. • 350 teachers
Workshop	Jan. 9-21, 1961	Seoul & 9 provinces	• Seoul National Univ. • Nationwide
Workshop	Feb. 8, 1961	Seoul	• Ewha Womans Univ.
Workshop	Mar. 23-31, 1961	Chejudo	
Conference	Aug. 2, 1961	Chinhae	• Naval academy
Seminar	Aug. 7-18, 1961	Seoul	• College of education
Workshop	Aug. 14, 1961	Taejon	

As seen in Table 1, the Peabody's English project was not simply planned as an impromptu or temporary program, but rather fairly well organized as an intensive and extensive work and also as an across-the-board commitment to English education in Korea, with a special view to improving Korean English teachers' "competence in the use of English" (Maston, 1963, p. 116). Had it not been for the ESL ideology, the Peabody project would not have been implemented across the board all over the country. And the audio/lingual method introduced by the Peabody Team presupposes a shift in English education from the traditional grammar-oriented English teaching method to the method aimed at the competence in the actual use of English (Maston, 1963) for both teachers and students, which is directly linked to the SEF ideology and to the ESL ideology for that matter.

According to Maston (1963), however, the Peabody English Project failed to accomplish its major objectives and in particular, its primary goal of improving Korean English teachers' competence in spoken English. Despite such intensive and extensive in-service

<sup>7</sup> However, the three different types of meetings for in-service or pre-service English trainings may not be of significance. They are all covered under the sub-section entitled Thirteen workshops in Maston (1963) with no clear distinction among themselves.

<sup>8</sup> The spelling for the names of location may somewhat differ from that currently used in Korea. Note that the names of location in Table 1 follow the primary source of Maston (1963).



workshops for English teachers across the board, as definitely illustrated in Table 1, there is no visible change in classes that was intended and expected by the Peabody Team. Most Korean English teachers present in the workshops became interested in lectures on language teaching itself, the philosophy and/or psychology of language teaching, and linguistics, but a large portion of them had to remain content with only improved ideas about English in theory and improved knowledge about English teaching. As remarked by Maston himself, indeed, “the Korean workshop leaders [themselves] did not expect or demand measurable, outward behavioral change” (Maston, 1963, p. 174).

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the Peabody Team’s failure is not meant to lead to the failure in establishing the ESL ideology in Korea. Even though changes were not actually made as intended, however, most Korean English teachers began speaking of their desire to learn more about the audio/lingual teaching method and also to put it into practice for their competence in the use of English, resulting in the ESL ideology deeply rooted in Korea (Maston, 1963).

#### 4.2.3. The implementation of the ESL ideology in the Peace Corps/Korea Program

The ESL ideology does not stop spreading in Korean society even after the termination of the Peabody/Korean Project in 1962. The Peabody Team was actually immediately<sup>9</sup> followed by the Peace Corps/Korea, implying that the Peabody-established ESL ideology would have been inherited in its entirety to the Peace Corps/Korea’s English program in general. This seems to be clear from the fact that Robert Maston, Peabody Team’s leading English technician, came to Korea in 1966 as one of the five administration staff members in the first group, i.e., K-1 of Peace Corps/Korea (Moon, 1966). As an English education specialist with a Ph.D. in English education in Korea, he seems to have played a vital role in determining what to do with and/or how to run the Peace Corps/Korea English program. When it comes to the status of English in Korea, the ESL ideology, originally created in MacArthur’s proclamation No. 1 and theoretically established via the Peabody/Korean Project, continues with no particular change even during the time period of the Peace Corps/Korea, 1966-1981.

---

<sup>9</sup> There is a four-year interval between the termination of the Peabody/Korean Project and the initiation of the Peace Corps/Korea Program. It is assumed, however, that there had been active interactions between the two countries for the program of the Peace Corps/Korea during this period. This is partly inferred from Maston’s (1963) Ph.D. dissertation, part of which states: “to Korea, city and village, will come the tourist, the technician, the businessman, the diplomat, the travelling U.S. senator, the Peace Corpsman” (p. 41). According to Samuel Burger’s report on October 18, 1961, entitled Possible Peace Corps Program in Korea (Brazinsky, 2007), it becomes clear that the U.S. Peace Corps/Korea Program had already begun to be examined in 1961, even before the termination of the Peabody/Korea Project.

Just as in the case of the Peabody/Korean Project, the Peace Corps/Korea starts its program with a general examination of the English education in Korea, which is characterized as both concepts of SEF and TEF as they stand.

Unfortunately, spoken English is a skill whose development is almost totally ignored despite the ten years of study invested by the time of college graduation. (Greenway, Harris, Raik, & Worth, 1968, as cited in Kailian, 1980, p. 5)

Consequently, the quality of English spoken by Korean secondary school graduates (and college students) after six to ten years of study remains minimal. ... possibly due to present teaching techniques which do not emphasize spoken English. (Kailian, 1980, p. 15-16)

Starting with both SEF and TEF, the Peace Corps/Korea is inextricably linked with the ESL ideology in that the program was implemented across the board in many ways. Firstly, their English teaching was not limited to any specific school level but expanded to all levels, covering even colleges or universities as well as middle and high schools (Lee, 2016). Secondly, their strong emphasis was placed more on the in-service training for Korean English teachers than on their own teaching in classrooms, particularly in the latter part of the program in general (Kailian, 1980). According to the Peace Corps Annual Report, “with the completion of the project in June 1980, it was estimated that 80 percent of all secondary school teachers of English in Korea had had training by Peace Corps Volunteers” (Peace Corps, 1982, p. 45). Thirdly, the Peace Corps was not intended to play an auxiliary role in English education in Korea, but rather committed to serving a powerful role in shifting from written English-oriented education to spoken English-oriented education, and also from grammar-oriented English education to audio/lingual-oriented English education (Lee, 2016). This may be a clear rationale for the Peace Corps-led publication of middle school English textbook and Methodology for Teachers in 1974, aimed at the spoken English teaching method. Overwhelmingly emphasized by Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) is the section of English speaking skills while other sections remain well-nigh nothing or minimal, and audio-lingual method and communicative learning method were revealed as two dominant methods used by PCVs (Lee, 2016).

Fourthly, the program was encouraged to manage nationwide, geographically covering all the areas of Korea, and furthermore PCVs were almost evenly distributed to every province in proportion to population. For example, Peace Corps English teachers of K-12 in 1969 were evenly assigned everywhere in the nation as identified in Figure 5.

**FIGURE 5**  
**Distribution of K-12 Peace Corps Volunteers<sup>10</sup>**



This figure aptly indicates that PCVs were not concentrated only in Seoul but rather scattered all around the country including Daejeon, Seosan, Nonsan, Gunsan, Buyeo, Iksan, Jeonju, Gochang, Chuncheon, Sokcho, Jumunjin, Gangneung, Wonju, Gimcheon, Daegu, Gyeongju, Busan, Jeju, Seogwipo. As illustrated in Table 2<sup>11</sup>, it is true that not only in K-12 but also in all the groups from K-1 to K-51, PCVs were evenly placed *de facto* everywhere in the nation.

<sup>10</sup> This figure is due to Peace Corps Volunteers, Pat and Mike DeVito, who served in 1969 in Gyeongsangbuk-do, Korea. The original book was collaboratively made by all of the K-12 Peace Corps Volunteers. This book was not officially published but was for their own recollection.

<sup>11</sup> Table 2 is based on the survey by the author. In total, 131 PCVs who served in the field of English education in Korea participated in the survey. Due to the lack of recollection, some PCVs were not able to locate the exact region that they served.

**TABLE 2**  
Evenly Distributed PCVs Nationwide in Korea

Province	Seoul	Gyeonggi-do	Gangwon-do	Chungcheong buk-do	Chungcheong nam-do	Gyeongsang buk-do	Gyeongsang nam-do	Jeolla buk-do	Jeolla nam-do	Jeju-do
Number of PCVs	21	10	8	8	16	16	13	11	7	5
City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Pocheon</li> <li>•Euijongbu</li> <li>•Goyang</li> <li>•Incheon</li> <li>•Suwon</li> <li>•Anyang</li> <li>•Icheon</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Chuncheon</li> <li>•Wonju</li> <li>•Gangneung</li> <li>•Mukho (Donghae)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Chungju</li> <li>•Cheongju</li> <li>•Okecheon</li> <li>•Boeun</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Oryang</li> <li>•Dangjin</li> <li>•Cheonan</li> <li>•Seosan</li> <li>•Yesan</li> <li>•Daecheon</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Andong</li> <li>•Daegu</li> <li>•Gimcheon</li> <li>•Pohang</li> <li>•Gyeongju</li> <li>•Sangju</li> <li>•Daejeon</li> <li>•Yuseong</li> <li>•Geumsan</li> <li>•Gongju</li> <li>•Nonsan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Jeonju</li> <li>•Ulsan</li> <li>•Jinju</li> <li>•Masan</li> <li>•Inhae</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Jeonju</li> <li>•Gunsan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Gwangju</li> <li>•Suncheon</li> <li>•Yeong-gwang</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Jeju</li> <li>•Seo-gwipo</li> </ul>	

Table 2 shows that the Peace Corps as a social institution and its English program in Korea replenished the ESL ideology. Taken together, all these arguments for the Peace Corps/Korea's across-the-board approach had been by virtue of the ESL ideology, and thus the program served to instill the ESL ideology into the Korean people and also the Korean society as a whole.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Pointing out little improvement in English speaking proficiency despite the sweeping changes in English education in Korea, this paper looked at the underlying proto-ideology of English which was constantly generated and practiced in the field of English education. This ideology was the product of the three separate attempts to promote English as a second language in Korea made by the U.S. governmental and non-governmental agencies: the USAMGIK (1945-1948), the Peabody/Korean Project (1956-1962), and the Peace Corps/Korea (1966-1981). Although ended up in failure in that none of them was able to make Korea one of Kachru's (1986) outer circle countries adopting English as a second language, those attempts for the years from 1945 to 1981 are considered to have contributed to rationalizing, legitimatizing, and naturalizing ESL as a proto-ideology of English in Korean society. The sociohistorically accumulated proto-ideology of English generated the SEF ideology and other collateral language ideologies such as TEF and EBE, leading to the major changes in English education policies of the 1990s in Korea. Despite such English language ideologies driving the current English policies, Korea still remains in an EFL setting country where both natural input and language needs are lacking. In this respect, Korea is caught in-between the ESL ideology and the EFL context: ESL from the perspective of dynamics of English ideologies; and EFL from the perspective of societal context in which English is not daily used. Both ESL as a proto-ideology of English and EFL as a societal context still remain unchanged, bringing about a struggle or conflict between the two in enacting and implementing English education policy.

Based on the three major historical events – the USAMGIK, the Peabody/Korean Project, and the Peace Corps/Korea, this study is a historical-structural approach to ESL ideology in Korea, resulting in an overlap between ESL and EFL as in Figure 4. It is assumed that the size of the overlapping area in Figure 4 may be modified, depending on the ever-changing socio-historical and structural contexts of Korea. Thus, it is further necessary to shed light on the tug-of-war between the two categories in the 1990s when globalization was the key word of the time and even in the two decades of the 21st century.

Applicable levels: Tertiary

## REFERENCES

- Ahn, S. W. (1992). Teaching English earlier in the EFL situation. *English Teaching*, 43, 83-112.
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document Analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27-40.
- Brazinsky, G. (2007). *Nation building in South Korea: Koreans, Americans, and the making of a democracy*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press.
- Brown, H. D. (2014). *Principles of language learning and teaching: A course in second language acquisition*. New York: Pearson.
- Brown, R. N. (1990). English education in Korea. *Asian and Pacific Quarterly of Culture and Social Affairs*, 12(4), 57-67.
- Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2018). Language policy in education: Additional languages. In B. Spolsky (Ed.), *The Cambridge handbook of language policy* (pp. 301-319). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Choi, Y. J. (1982). Theories and practices of early English education. *English Teaching*, 23, 283-296.
- Chung, T. S. (1992). *Migunjunggi hankuk gyoyuksa jaryojip (Sang)*. [A collection of documents on the history of Korean education during the U.S. military (Vol. 1)]. Seoul: Doseochulpan Hongjiwon.
- Ellis, R. (1985). *Understanding second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gibbs, G. (2007). *Analyzing qualitative data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kachru, B. B. (1986). *The alchemy of English: The spread, functions and models of non-native Englishes*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Kailian, G. S. (1980). *English test and attitude measures among Korean students of United States Peace Corps Volunteers*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA.
- Kim, S. J. (2019). Siwon School Lab, "Hanguokin TOEFL malhagi sungjuk segwe 122 wi, banmyeon ilkgineun?" [Siwon School Lab, "Korean TOEFL speaking score ranks 122nd, what about reading?"]. *Dong-A EZEDU*. Retrieved on January 10, 2019, from [http://m.edu.donga.com/news/view.php?at\\_no=20190624092115981521](http://m.edu.donga.com/news/view.php?at_no=20190624092115981521)
- Kim, S. U. (1992). The elementary school English teacher training: Problems and

- suggestions. *English Teaching*, 43, 65-82.
- Labuschagne, A. (2003). Qualitative research: Airy fairy or fundamental? *The Qualitative Report*, 8(1), 100-103.
- Lee, C. H. (2016). *Language ideological approaches to English education in Korea: A sociolinguistic perspective*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ.
- Lee, C. H. (2020). Language ideologies in the early English education policy in Korea: A sociohistorical perspective. *The Mirae Journal of English Language and Literature*, 25(1), 529-555.
- Lee, K. W., Lee, W. K., & Ahn, K. J. (2015). The present situation analysis of teaching of the speaking in primary ELT and some strategies for improvement. *Primary English Education*, 21(4), 85-114.
- Lee, O. R. (1982). LAD and early English education. *English Teaching*, 23, 77-91.
- Lee, S. W. (2018). Siwon School Lab, hangookin TOEFL sungjuk 82 wi, malhagi sungjuk 'hawigwon' [Siwon School Lab, Korean TOEFL score ranks 82nd, speaking score remains in the lower ranks]. *The Electronic Times*. Retrieved on January 10, 2019, from <http://www.etnews.com/20180625000043?m=1>
- Makerere Report. (1961). *Report on the conference on the teaching of English as a second language*. Entebbe, Uganda: Commonwealth Education Liaison Committee.
- Maston, R. E. (1963). *English language workshops for English teachers of South Korea*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.
- Menken, H. L. (1962). *The American language: An inquiry into the development of English in the United States*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc.
- Mirhosseini, S. A. (2018). Issues of ideology in English language education worldwide: An overview. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 26(1), 19-33.
- Moon, H. J. (1966). *Agenda of cabinet meeting: Activities of Peace Corps (1067.2-3440)*. Seoul: Ministry of Education.
- Moulton, W. G. (1963). Linguistics and language teaching in the United States 1940-1960. In C. Mohrman, M. Sommerfelt, & J. Whatmough (Eds.), *Trends in European and American Linguistics 1930-1960* (pp. 82-109). Utrecht, Netherlands: Spectrum Publishers.
- Peace Corps. (1982). *Peace Corps: Congressional submission budgets justification fiscal year 1982*. Retrieved on November 21, 2014, from <http://peacecorpslibrary.org>
- Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Phillipson, R. (2018). Imperialism and colonialism. In B. Spolsky (Ed.), *The Cambridge handbook of language policy* (pp. 203-225). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rahman, M., & Mehar Singh, M. (2020). Language ideology of English-medium

- instruction in higher education: A case study from Bangladesh. *English Today*, 36(4), 40-46.
- Rosa, J., & Burdick, C. (2017). Language Ideologies. In O. García, N. Flores, & M. Spotti (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of language and society* (pp. 103-124). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Schieffelin, B., K. Woolard, & P. Kroskrity. (1998). *Language ideology: Practice and theory*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Silverstein, M. (1979). Language structure and linguistic ideology. In R. Clym, W. Hanks, & C. Hofauer (Eds.), *The elements: A parasection on linguistic units and levels* (pp. 193-247). Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society.
- Spolsky, B. (Ed.). (2018). *The Cambridge handbook of language policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Terhune, T. (2003, December). *Expanding English: A pragmatic puzzle*. Paper presented at the 2003 Fall Conference of the Linguistics of Linguistic Society of Jeju, Jeju, South Korea.
- Tollefson, J. (1991). *Planning language, planning inequality: Language policy in the community*. New York: Longman.
- van Dijk, T. A. (1995). Ideological discourse analysis. *New Courant*, 4(1), 135-161.
- Verschuereen, J. (2012). *Ideology in language use: Pragmatic guidelines for empirical research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Woolard, K. (1998). Introduction: Language ideology as a field of inquiry. In B. B, Schieffelin, A. Kathryn, & P. V. Kroskrity (Eds.), *Language ideologies: Practice and theory* (pp. 3-47). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wright, S. (2002). Language education and foreign relations in Vietnam. In J. W. Tollefson (Ed.), *Language policies in education: Critical issues* (pp. 225-244). New York: Routledge.
- Yang, I. S. (1982). The pros and cons of early English education. *Language and Linguistics*, 8, 119-151.

## APPENDIX

### Examples of Data Collected

#### Text data for the USAMGIK (1945-1948)

- Treaty document between the U.S. and Korea

Example



- *General Headquarters United States Army Forces, Pacific Proclamation No.1*
- Official reports and letters from the USAGMIK

Examples

- Kehoe, M., 1947, *General resume of field trip in the provinces during September 1947 made by supervisor of English*, Department of Education, USAMGIK
- Memo, 1947, *American Language Institute: Initial Report of English Language School.*
- Supervisor of English, 1946. *Language Instruction in Korea*
- Official reports from the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Example

- *Petition against the closure of American Language Institute*

Text data for the Peabody/Korea Project (1956-1962)

- Makerere Report (1961): *Report on the conference on the teaching of English as a second language*
- Maston's (1963) doctoral dissertation: *English language workshops for English teachers of South Korea*

Data for the Peace Corps /Korea Program (1966-1981)

- Peace Corps Annual Reports (1966-1981)

Examples

- Peace Corps, 1967, *Congressional presentation fiscal year 1968*
- Peace Corps, 1968, *Congressional presentation fiscal year 1969*
- Peace Corps, 1971, *Middle school English teacher re-training project*, Peace Corps/Korea, Washington D.C.
- Peace Corps, 1973, *Peace Corps annual operation report*. The Agency for Volunteer Service
- Kailian's (1980) doctoral dissertation: *English test and attitude measure among Korean students of United States Peace Corps Volunteers*
- Official documents by the Korean government/ the U.S. government

Examples

- *Agreement relating to the Establishment of a Peace Corps Program in Korea between the Government of the Republic of Korea and the Government of the United States of America, 1966*

- Peace Corps Act, Public Law 87-293 U.S.C. Sec.2. *Eighty-seventh Congress of the United States of America*
- Keeton's (2011) memorandum: *The U.S. Peace Corps and the Korean development experience*, The Asia Foundation Center for U.S.-Korea Policy
- Survey results from Peace Corps Volunteers who served as English teachers in Korea (Lee, 2016)

Data for the Peace Corps /Korea Program (1966-1981)

- 4th and 5th National Curricula
- Articles and editorials from The Kyunghyang Shinmun (Daily newspaper) from 1980 to 1989
- Articles and editorials from The Dong-A Ilbo (Daily newspaper) from 1980 to 1989
- *Memorandum of Education Exchange between the United States of America and the Republic of Korea*, 1981