

# JOURNAL OF COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

## Multimodal English Language Pedagogy and Social Justice: A Sociohistorical Perspective from South Korea

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### ABSTRACT

This research investigates English language education in South Korea, situated within the broader sociohistorical and global influences that shape the education system. The theory-based study sets out to critique the prevailing grammar-intensive and rote learning methodologies, proposing instead a pedagogical paradigm that foregrounds holistic, inclusive practices and purpose for student agency. By employing a qualitative analysis, it explores multimodality while endorsing the fusion of interdisciplinary insights to enhance both the learning process and students' communicative competencies. Findings underscore the pivotal role of educators in fostering significant pedagogical shifts, necessitating deep introspection and an informed grasp of sociohistorical and cultural contexts. The research reveals a need for an approach to learning that harmonises linguistic skills with broad sociocultural understanding, advocating for a teaching model that seamlessly integrates historical consciousness, creativity and innovative strategies, and a commitment to principles of social justice. The significance of this study lies in its potential to influence policy and practice, encouraging a move towards more engaged, reflective and socially responsible English language instruction within the region.

**Keywords:** pedagogy, multimodal, social justice, South Korea, English language

**Received:** 5 November 2023, **Accepted:** 7 February 2024, **Published:** 31 July 2024

### Introduction

In South Korea, a country where mastery of the English language is itself deemed a key factor for both academic and career advancement, the prevailing teaching strategies stress rigorous grammar instruction and standardised testing. However, this emphasis often overshadows the cultural, historical and sociolinguistic dynamics that underpin language learning. The research herein traces the evolution of English language learning in South Korea from the Goryeo Dynasty through periods marked by Japanese colonial rule and American interventionism to the present day. These epochs have shaped the normative values of Korea's educational ethos, influencing contemporary pedagogies and an overarching emphasis on English education as a conduit to global integration. An analysis of that traverses the relationship between language, education and sociohistorical contexts while advocating for a paradigm shift towards a holistic and genuinely student-centred approach. Proposing the need for a sharpened focus on meaning and communication over syntactical correctness, it advocates a teaching philosophy which fosters critical thinking, creativity and student agency.

This article integrates perspectives from education, linguistics, sociology, and cultural studies. Following inspiration from the Saphir-Worf hypothesis posits that understanding the causal dynamics between language, culture, and society are principal factors to consider for pedagogical strategies that resonate with students on a deeper level. In doing so, it demonstrates the significance of adopting innovative practices which acknowledge the diversity of linguistic expressions and identities, thereby fostering an empathetic and equitable approach to teaching English. By employing a qualitative analysis of a student's writing, the theory-based focus iterates a critique of the prevalent use of corrective feedback and proposes the integration of multimodal pedagogical practices. These practices enhance student agency and cognitive engagement for a more inclusive, pluralistic environment.

At the core of this exegesis is a commitment to social justice, advocating for educational experiences that enhance language proficiency, empower students to engage critically with societal issues, and contribute to a more just world. By integrating historical sensibilities, this study overall aims to catalyse a pedagogical shift in thinking about language learning. It seeks to transcend conventional methodologies, advocating for a climate that is cognizant of social dynamics while also forward-thinking in its pursuit of holistic student development and achievement. This article thus seeks to expound upon disciplinary interdependence, noting the relevance and potential of an instructional model that integrates teaching innovation with cultural consciousness and a resolve for the ideals of equity and fairness.

### ***South Korean Education***

Education has been an important part of Korean culture for centuries, with the first educational institutions dating back to the Goryeo Dynasty in the 10th century (Peters, 2019). From the late 14th century to the late 19th century, the Joseon Dynasty restricted education to the elite classes, with most schools emphasising a conservative Confucian philosophy (Hyunsoo, 2007; Lee, 2006; Palais, 2014). Under Japanese imperial rule from 1910 to 1945, the education system underwent a notable change. Colonial authorities implemented policies aimed at eradicating Korean culture (Yim, 2002), which included imposing Japanese as the language of instruction in schools and the removal of Korean language, history, and literature from the curriculum (Kim-Rivera, 2002; Neuhaus, 2023; Pieper, 2015). Japan also required many Koreans to learn English in order to participate in the colonial economy; thus, its prevalence and influence increased (Myers & Peattie, 2020; Zhen, 1984). Despite these policies, resistance to colonialism was strong and underground schools preserved Korean art, music, and literature (Laurent & Robillard-Martel, 2022; Neuhaus, 2023). After Korea's liberation from Japan in 1945, the government in South Korea made efforts to rebuild and modernise the education system (D. B. Lee, 2020), which focused on promoting Korean culture and civilisation.

At the end of Japanese rule, the government also prioritised economic growth while making significant investments in education throughout the 1950s and 1960s (György, 2023; Story, 2020). South Korea's focus on economic development led to a strong emphasis on English education, driven by its alignment with the West (Choi, 2023; Kim, 2019). English became a vital component of the school curriculum, intended to prepare students for a global economy. The U.S. played a noteworthy role in the expansion of the education system (Brazinsky, 2016; Liddicoat & Kirkpatrick, 2020; Song, 2019), offering financial and technical assistance to reconstruct schools and universities, and many schools adopted American educational practices (Armstrong, 2003; Seth, 2021; Lee, 1989; Kim, 2023). English language learning became mandatory in middle and high school as American teachers were recruited to teach. Noted by McClintock (2020), another notable influence of American interventionism was an emphasis on scientific and technological education.

The education system underwent further transformation under the dictatorship of Park Chung-hee, who came to power in 1961 (Isozaki, 2019). The government implemented a series of reforms aimed at increasing access and improving quality. One significant impact of the Park dictatorship on Korean education was its emphasis on vocational education and job training (Nabil & Sim, 2021). South Korea established a network of technical schools to provide students with the skills to support the country's growing economy (Fleckenstein et al., 2023). From then to the present day, globalisation has impacted the trajectory of South Korean education, which has been influenced by events such as the Asian financial crisis. Following this crisis, which struck in the late 1990s, the country's education sector felt

the impact of globalisation more acutely. South Korea became increasingly integrated into the global political economy, prompting its economic system to appease the IMF and align more closely with international standards. Consequently, the importance of English surged with proficiency in the language becoming pivotal for college admissions, employment opportunities, and career advancement.

### ***Structure and Meaning***

A hyper-competitive culture persists in the South Korean education system with substantial emphasis placed on standardised testing and rote memorisation (Allen & Chen, 2020; Bastedo, 2021; Sorensen, 2023). In many respects, this contrasts with contemporary perspectives and trends in English language learning within the ESL community and, more broadly, in educational circles. Still, there has been a recent, gradual shift toward socially just teaching methods that advocate for the integration of practical communication and critical thinking into the curriculum (Buchanan & Song, 2022; Cho, 2021).

This movement itself complements attention given to issues of inclusivity and diversity when selecting instructional materials (Um & Cho, 2022). In settings where norms demand a strong emphasis on rules and achieving "correctness," an instructor who grasps the dynamic between linguistic and cultural contexts must often persist in implementing a communicative approach with a focus on meaning and the relationship between semantics and syntax.

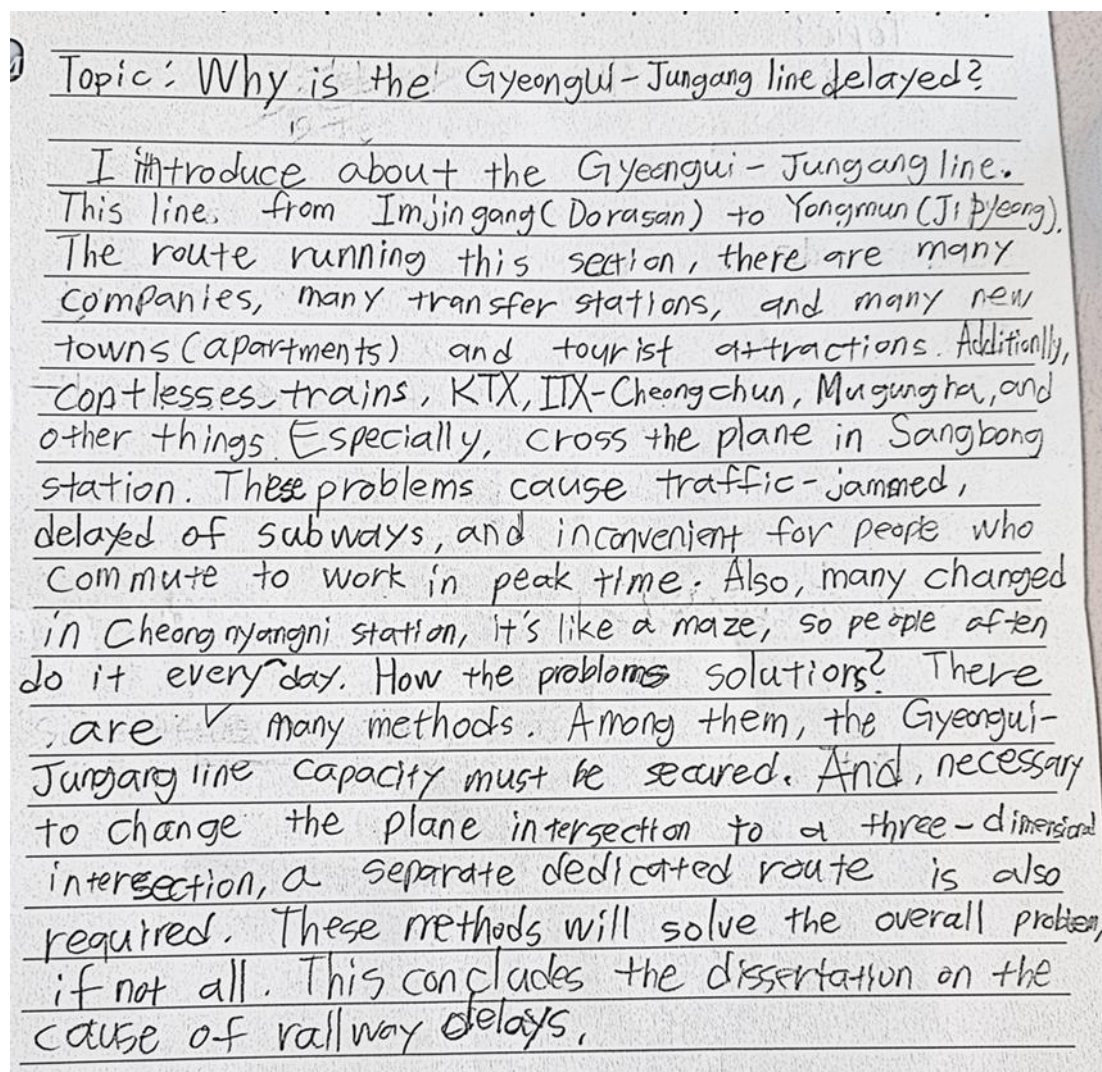
The enduring relevance of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis supports the importance of integrating the cultural context into teaching methods. Theoretical frameworks such as those undertaken by Rhode et al. (2016) prove relevant. By incorporating empirical perspectives, educators can increase their knowledge of how language backgrounds shape their cognition and perception, rooted in the dynamic between linguistic structure, social structure, and the causal effects of culture itself. From this, innovation can emerge to steer directions for theory development and pedagogical insights that address critical issues.

Consider an example of a student's writing shown in Figure 1 with the archetypical corrections a teacher might make outlined in Table 1. Typically, teachers highlight grammar and syntax. The prescriptive approach to feedback would note that the student overall fails to follow English rules and norms. The writing displays a considerable number of grammatical errors affecting readability. The inconsistent use of verb tenses would confuse any reader accustomed to consistency for clarity in the time relationship of events. The use of plurals appears to be a challenge. Words like "contlesses" suggest a misunderstanding as the correct word should be "countless."

Overall, word choice needs attention as the vocabulary does not correctly convey the intended meaning to a reader. For example, "many changed in Cheongnyangni station" should be "many changes at Cheongnyangni station." Issues with sentence structure are present throughout. The sentence "Additionally, contlesses trains, KTX, IIX-Cheongchun, Murguaha, and other things" proves particularly unclear. Here, the student should prioritise concise language. Rephrasing to "Additionally, various trains like KTX, ITX-Cheongchun, and others..." would be required. In terms of coherence, the writer needs to organise the ideas more effectively. The points appear scattered, making it difficult to follow the argument's progression. Greater coherence should guide the reader seamlessly from one idea to the next, ensuring that each point builds upon the previous one.

**Figure 1**

*Example of Student Writing*



Contrasting the practice of reducing feedback to prescriptive corrections, a more communicative approach transcends a narrow focus on syntax. Instead, it seeks to encourage students to explore the function and teleology of language, grounded in its contextual usage with an emphasis on semantics. Having a holistic perspective extends beyond the technical to explore how one constructs meaning and shapes reader comprehension (Holbekova et al., 2021; Palvanova et al., 2022). Empowering students to meaningfully examine the relationship between structure and meaning can enhance communication in the interest of grammatical integrity. By cultivating students' ability to analyse texts or sentences, they learn to identify structural patterns while strengthening their linguistic intuition and problem-solving skills (Yacob & Yunus, 2019). To achieve this, instructors need to provide feedback in a way that refrains from superimposing meanings through extensive editing – noting that such practices also foster dependency (Gordon, 2010). When teachers employ meaningful practices, a dialogic method can guide students to scrutinise semantic structure beyond syntax so that they improve their communicative skills in the process of developing an intuitive grasp of the rhetorical device (Al-Jarf, 2021; Al-Marwani, 2020; A'yun, 2019). By moving beyond passive, prescriptive teaching practices and toward genuine engagement, students have the opportunity to deepen their understanding and expressive abilities. This creates a collaborative atmosphere and engenders respect for diversity, shifting the traditional focus on precision.

**Table 1**

*Prescriptive Corrections of Student Work*

Student's Writing	Prescriptive Correction	Explanation
"I introduce about the Gyonggui-Jungang line."	"I will introduce the Gyonggui-Jungang line."	"I introduce' is present tense and sounds wrong. 'I will introduce' is future tense and shows what the speaker plans to do next."
"This line from Imjingang (Dorasan) to Yongmun (Jipyong)."	"This line runs from Imjingang (Dorasan) to Yongmun (Jipyong)."	The initial sentence lacks a verb, making it a fragment. The verb "runs" provides a clearer description of the trajectory.
"The rout running this section, there are many companies, many transfer stations, and many new towns (apartments) and tourist attractions. Additionally, contlesses, trains, KTX, IIX-Cheongchun, Murguaha, and other things."	"Along this route, there are many companies, transfer stations, new towns (apartments), and tourist attractions. In addition, there are countless trains, including KTX, IIX-Cheongchun, Murguaha, and others."	"Rout" is a misspelling of "route". The initial structure was unclear and fragmented. The revised version offers a more structured and coherent explanation.
"Especially, cross the plan in Sarggong station. These problems cause traffic-jammed, delayed of subways, and inconvenient for people who commute to work in peak time."	"In particular, the intersection at Sarggong station causes traffic jams, subway delays, and inconvenience for peak-time commuters."	"Plan" was an incorrect term to use; "intersection" offers clarity. The revised sentence simplifies and clarifies the issue by combining fragmented thoughts into one coherent sentence.
"Also, many changed in Cheongnyangni station, it's like a maze, so people often do it every day."	"Furthermore, Cheongnyangni station has undergone many changes, making it a maze-like structure that commuters navigate daily."	"Many changed" is vague and lacks a verb. "Navigate" clarifies the actions people are doing in relation to the station.
"How the problems solutions?"	"What are the solutions to these problems?"	The initial question lacks clarity and proper structure. The revision provides a straightforward query about solutions.
"There are many methods. Among them, the Gyeongui-Jungang line capacity must be secured. And necessary to change the plane intersection to a three-dimensional intersection, a separate dedicated rout is also required."	"Several methods exist. One crucial method is securing the Gyeongui-Jungang line's capacity. It's also essential to convert the flat intersection into a three-dimensional one, and a separate dedicated route is necessary."	The term "plane intersection" was changed to "flat intersection" for clarity, and "rout" was corrected to "route". The revised version offers clearer structure and coherence.
"These methods will solve the overall problem, if not all."	"These methods can address most, if not all of the problems."	The initial phrasing was somewhat unclear. The revision offers a clearer assertion about the methods' effectiveness.
"This concludes the dissertation on the cause of railway delays."	"In conclusion, this discussion outlines the causes and solutions for railway delays on the Gyonggui-Jungang line."	The term "dissertation" may not be appropriate if this isn't an actual dissertation. The revision provides a clearer and more contextual conclusion.

Importantly, such methods do not mean that the teacher abstains from direct instruction on the technical aspects of language use. Direct instruction provides learners with tools and frameworks – categories and concepts – for expressing ideas. However, it's important to recognise that knowledge is not static; it develops through a synthesis of concepts, precepts, and experiences (Cogie et al., 1999; Lee, 2019). Ethical teaching involves achieving an equilibrium with engaged guidance. Language instructors should not dismiss grammar and syntax altogether but actively engage a student's ability to recognise and internalise their significance in a way that is meaningful to them. Ensuring students receive support without falling into either a rigidly imposing or a laissez-faire environment is key. Constructive feedback should not merely identify areas for improvement but also enable a cognisance of why changes are necessary and provide the scaffolding to empower their capacity to self-govern and take responsibility for their learning.

In doing so, instructors advocate for student agency, preserve expressive uniqueness, respect linguistic differences, and promote sustainability while avoiding corrections that may inadvertently inhibit achievement. This conceptual shift supports engagement and a sense of linguistic ownership, enabling learners to think critically about their language usage. When educators aim to implement changes that elevate instruction beyond merely attaining grammatical “correctness,” they enhance the focus on the connection between language and culture. Shifting from correcting errors to providing meaningful feedback encourages independent thought and learning while also equipping students with the ability to critically examine narratives and utilise language as an instrument for social change. Iterating student agency, shifting from prescriptive norms to a cognitive frame, encourages students to apply linguistic concepts through their own personal and social lenses.

### ***Student Agency***

At the heart of the call for pedagogical change is the need to adopt a genuinely student-centred teaching methodology, promoting practices grounded in principled, open-minded instruction. Abating corrective feedback involves avoiding the risks of imposing ideas without facilitating a dialogue to develop deeper understandings (Lee, 2023; Murphy et al., 2022; Tadesse et al., 2023).

Guiding them to construct their own meanings includes creating an environment where they actively use their intuitions and knowledge as a reference point to cognise the relationship between semantics and syntax. This is essential when applying concepts to real-world situations and engaging students with language in a manner that is not only purposeful academically but also relevant to their own psychological schema and circumstances (Kilic, 2023; Zhang, 2023). That includes a means for integrating the cultural dimensions of learning, particularly an awareness of native languages.

While ensuring inclusivity and equity, respecting a student's preexisting philological knowledge cultivates an appreciation of the role that native languages play (Kharchenko & Gostishcheva, 2023; Mansour, 2023). In this respect, a keen focus on the relationship between structure and meaning can leverage the values of linguistic diversity and pluralism within the classroom.

Thus, advancing innovative strategies requires a marked emphasis on enhancing one's cognitive flexibility and adaptability. Instructors prompt students to consider alternatives, reflect on their interpretations, and ultimately challenge them to develop their perceptions and mental models through directed feedback. This allows them to make choices and decisions about intent and meaning in their own words.

Demonstrated by the challenges observed when direct instruction imposes norms without considering linguistic diversity (Pavlic et al., 2020) and underscored by the potential unintended consequences described in the qualitative analysis presented in Table 2, accommodating native languages facilitates a more seamless adaptation in the interests of student achievement and agency.

**Table 2**

*Unintended Consequences of Corrective Feedback*

<b>Student's writing</b>	<b>Native language influence</b>	<b>Unintended Consequences</b>
"I introduce about the Gyonggui-Jungang line."	In Korean, the verb "introduce" implicitly includes "about," reflecting a direct translation.	Direct corrections may cause the student to question their linguistic intuition. Alternative feedback should validate their intended message while guiding a revision of the language used.
"This line from Imjingang (Dorasan) to Yongmun (Ji-pyeong)."	Korean grammatical structure often places the topic at the end and may omit verbs. This reflects a topic-prominent sentence structure.	Suggesting the inclusion of "runs" might divert the student's focus from the places to the action, potentially misaligning with their intended emphasis. Teachers should encourage clarity while respecting the original focus.
"The route running this station, there are many companies..."	This reflects a direct translation and of Korean's topic-prominent structure. The student may conceptualise sentences differently, leading to this construction.	Alterations focusing solely on structure could hinder the student's ability to express descriptions aligning with their thought processes. Feedback should foster structural understanding without stifling descriptive language.
"Especially, cross the plan in Sarggong station. These problems cause..."	The structure reflects how temporal and spatial prepositions and concepts might be expressed differently in the Korean language.	Prescriptive feedback for corrections might overshadow the student's focus on specific issues, altering the intended emphasis. Feedback should aim to clarify while preserving the student's focal points.
"Also, many changes in Cheongnyangni station, it's like a maze..."	This reflects the context-rich nature of the Korean language, where significant details are often implied.	Corrections might undermine the student's unique observational insights. Instead, feedback should enhance clarity while maintaining the student's description.
"How the problems solutions?"	This question format may stem from Korean syntax, where questions can be formed with a change in intonation and without rearranging the word order.	Correcting to standard English question format might discourage the student from asking questions in a way that feels natural to them. Feedback should encourage inquiry while introducing English syntax.
"There are many methods. Among them..."	This stems from Hangul's flexible sentence structure, where logical flow differs from English.	Revising this might deter the student's natural exploratory and methodical approach. Feedback should aim to guide clear communication while respecting the student's logical flow.



**Table 2 (continued)**

<b>Student's writing</b>	<b>Native language influence</b>	<b>Unintended Consequences</b>
"These methods will solve the overall problem, if not all."	This reflects the contextual and less assertive communication style that is common in the Korean language, possibly indicating cultural humility.	Direct corrections promoting assertiveness might clash with communication styles. Feedback should respect cultural nuances while aiding in the expression of certainty where appropriate.
"This concludes the dissertation on the cause of railway delays."	The term "dissertation" might be a formal translation from different academic conventions.	Replacing "dissertation" could lessen the intended level of formality and respect. Corrections should value the student's choice while ensuring the terminology fits the context.

Students naturally follow patterns influenced by their native languages, often reflecting unique grammatical structures and idiomatic expressions (Alkhudiry, 2020; Groff et al., 2023; Shafran, 2019). Direct language transfer when a speaker or writer applies knowledge from their first language to a second language, can affect various aspects of linguistic production, including syntax, lexicon, and phonology (Attia, 2023; Maulida & Yani, 2023). In the given example of student writing, sentence structure and choice of tense reflect the student's native Korean (Hangul), which does not delineate between certain tenses as strictly as English does. For example, the phrase "I introduce about the Gyonggui-Jungang line" exemplifies the influence of the student's first language. In Korean, speakers can use the verb "sogaehada" (to introduce) in a way that implicitly includes the preposition "about," eliminating the need to express it as one would in English. The use of the simple present to indicate a future action also reflects a linguistic form in Hangul which utilises the present to discuss future events, a pattern less common in English without context or temporal markers. When instructors encounter these linguistic variations, it is more pedagogically sound to view them as opportunities for bilingual development rather than plain inaccuracies in need of rectification.

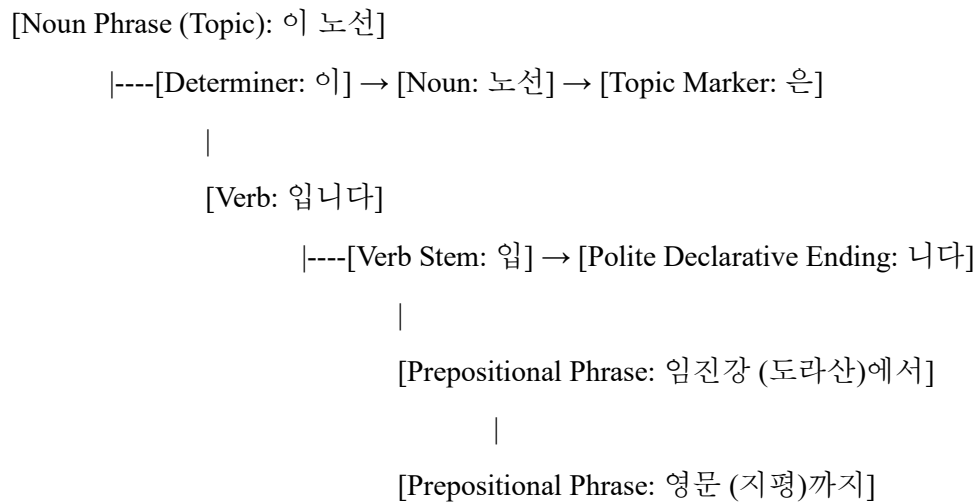
Another illustrative instance reveals itself with "This line from Imjingang (Dorasan) to Yongmun (Jipyeong)." The sentence is expressed through an ellipsis, which is common in Hangul and many other languages. In this sentence structure, topic-prominence (that is, "this line") holds more importance than the subject and can receive emphasis through its placement in the sentence – a prevalent pattern in Korean.

Consequently, it signifies more than a deviation from English grammar or problems of direct translation; it represents the student's thinking. The expression does not merely attempt a literal translation or indicate an unassuming problem with language transfer. Rather, it denotes the juxtaposition of a psychological schema from idiosyncratic perceptions in which an awareness of the native language proves relevant in the student's effort to articulate meaning (Figure 2). The structural preference unveils the depth of the speaker's philological edifice that one should not perceive as remedial deviations from the English norm in need of "correction," but as manifestations of complex cognitive processes. While differing from English, the student's approach to sentence structure underscores the importance of adopting a more exploratory and less prescriptive stance.



**Figure 2**

*Semantic Schema (Hangul)*



One further example concerns the following sentences: "The rout running this section, there are many companies, many transfer stations, and many new towns (apartments) and tourist attractions. Additionally, contless trains, KTX, IIX-Cheongchun, Murguaha, and other things." In this instance, "running this section" again positions the subject in a manner typical of topic-prominent languages. That said, this construction demonstrates how the student uses that structure to shape the subsequent logical progression. The use of "many" repeatedly before each item on the list emphasises each element independently, which is a feature of the propensity to reiterate each component within a series for clarity and emphasis in Hangul. The phrase "and other things" reflects the use of "deung," indicating other, implied elements without enumerating them. This is a device to identify that there are unspecified items, like the use of "et cetera" or the abbreviation "etc." in English. Yet, it is frequently used in Korean to maintain a concise yet comprehensive list. In some respects, it tends more toward the use of an abstract set notation within logic and math, which implies an extension or inclusion of elements like those already mentioned. As further illustrated in Table 2, it becomes decisive for teachers to recognise the deep-seated influence of linguistic contexts on a student's reasoning, notably when navigating cases that showcase expressive agency.

As the linguistic patterns in the writing indicate cognitive structures influenced by the student's native language, they reveal the intrinsic differences in expression and cognition across dialects. By encouraging an investigation of structure and meaning, teachers can help students sustain a stronger understanding and interpretation of both. Instruction can advance the purpose of developing the students' linguistic knowledge while affirming their identity and cognition. A principled strategy not only helps students build confidence; it reinforces the idea that their thought or "thinking" – their unique way of perceiving and articulating ideas – is not "wrong" but simply varies from that of standard English (Alkhudiry, 2020; Groff et al., 2023; Shafran, 2019). Thus, educators bear the responsibility to provide instruction that ensures interventions cultivate self-expression. Asking rather than telling is key, and teachers need to encourage a culture of humble inquiry. Appropriate support helps students internalise conventions and norms while humanising the clarity of their expressiveness.

Educators should embrace a teaching style that is open, understanding, and aimed at guiding students without compromising who they are (Cotton & Wikelund, 1989; Gupta, 2023; Ullmann, 2023). Mindfulness and inclusion of diverse language patterns defend the students' intended meaning. Instead of rectifying so-called "errors," instructors employ strategies that accommodate linguistic schema and mental models while helping students navigate the differentiation between their thinking and that of others. Tolerance for otherness allows for a supportive environment that bolsters each student's progress

while respecting his cognitive processes (Coleman et al., 2022; Rodriguez & Morrison, 2019). Ultimately, this pedagogical stance leads to a holistic practice which values the integrity of a student's linguistic and cultural frames. Recognising that can and should inform strategies which respect the student's perceptions while cultivating a firm command of the target language.

Facilitating an active cognisance of linguistic forms, educators act as facilitators of discovery – not as arbiters of uniformity. The impetus should steer toward empowering the agency students need to articulate complex thoughts (Canagarajah, 1999; Zacarian & Silverstone, 2020), drawing upon and even encouraging multilingual innovation. When engaging in a dialogic process of meaning-making, students become capable of critically evaluating their language use (Lian, 2008; Tadesse et al., 2023). This didactic orientation can validate the students' philological resources and promote English language acquisition as an additive process which enhances rather than diminishes a student's thought and purpose. An affirmative approach towards student aptitude is important, wherein teachers employ strategies which progressively develop skills without resorting to a passive and assimilationist method (Fu et al., 2023; Tadesse et al., 2023), thereby creating an environment which aids skill development in the interests of cultural knowledge and self-awareness.

### ***Multimodality***

In the interests of holism, innovations in pedagogy also arise at the convergence between disciplinary knowledge and the sociocultural context. Building on Archer's (2014a, 2014b) perspectives, such a pedagogy strives to transcend the boundaries of conventional language instruction in a way that offers students a unique angle for advancing a distinctive perspective in their work. Educators motivate students to venture beyond limits, exploring multimodality and its contextual applications to advance transformative insights (Lohani, 2019, pp. 118-130). Multimodality overcomes the barriers between different realms of knowledge and praxis, thereby allowing for a comprehensive understanding of complex issues (Beaumont, 2020; Stein, 2007; Wang & Li, 2022). It advocates a shift away from rigid, top-down curricula to dynamic, cooperative learning spaces where students actively construct meaning and engage in experimentation (Poudyal, 2023; Sanders, 2000). Furthermore, it emphasises scrutinising both text and context within a social justice framework (Dooley, 2023). Texts are not mere static entities; they evolve and reflect the mutable contexts of communication.

For example, when writing, "Also, many changed in Cheongnyangni station, it's like a maze, so people often do it every day," the student opens a window to multifaceted issues. Here, the writing conveys an impression of the Cheongnyangni station's structural complexity. The instructor can prompt further exploration of this in a way that sharpens their reasoning and analysis of the social implications. From this, a flexible curriculum allows for experimentation with varied representations, drawing from diverse resources (Myhill et al., 2012). In a multimodal framework, educators enfranchise students to explore topics from relevant historical, social, and cultural contexts (Smith et al., 2022). Given that the student more than likely has firsthand experience with the line, appealing to that would encourage the use of personal narratives and other modalities for a discussion that moves beyond a mechanical assignment and toward a genuine piece of writing. Multimodality encourages students to see the bigger picture while considering the real-world settings in which events or phenomena like the Gyonggul-Jungang line delay unfold. Exploring ideas and perspectives beyond a language task aids students in crafting meta-languages, expanding their meaning-making (Cloonan, 2011; Exley & Kitson, 2020). The teacher seeks to facilitate reflection on the delay, assisting the student in adapting their mental modelling of the issue.

Investigating the writing with consideration for different knowledge domains, consider: "The route running this station, there are many companies, many transfer stations, and many new towns (apartments) and tourist attractions. Additionally, countless trains, KTX, IIX-Cheongchun, Murguaha, and other things." By focusing on the routine details, the student only skims the surface of the sociocultural setting. How have the many companies along the route influenced the economy and the livelihoods of the locals? What significance do these new towns and apartments hold in the broader urbanisation of Korea? How has tourism shaped perceptions and experiences? A multimodal approach might prompt the student to consider how Japanese imperialism and American interventionism impacted Korean infrastructure (e.g. Roy, 2015). The Gyonggui-Jungang line is not just a railway but a

symbol of Korea's past and evolving present. Instructors can facilitate this view, challenging students to move beyond an assignment with a narrow task and into a multifaceted exploration.

To increase the student's repertoire of resources, the instructor would encourage the student to deliberate on what is not immediately visible. Considering the writing, the sentence, "I will introduce the Gyonggui-Jungang line, which runs from Imjingang (Dorasan) to Yongmun (Jipyeong)", offers a notable point for exploration. On the surface, this sentence introduces the railway line. However, what significance do Imjingang and Yongmun hold historically or culturally? Are there events, stories, or narratives connected to the areas this line traverses? Prompting the student to discover these avenues develops their thinking and recognition of the line's role in connecting various cultural pockets of the region – in the interest of further understanding the logistical or technical aspects of the delay. By drawing on native resources, the student can present a many-sided view of the topic.

Expanding upon multimodal learning, the instructor would employ strategies that motivate the student to experiment with different modes of representation in a less regulated space (Archer, 2014a, 2014b), such as a creative writing assignment or a visual presentation. The student provides an overview of the Gyonggui-Jungang line, yet it is void of sensory detail that could bring the text to life. To enhance descriptions, the student might incorporate visual elements such as maps, photos, or even student-created artwork. Recordings or simulations of the announcements over intercoms, the hum of conversations among passengers, or distinct sounds associated with a bustling train station can create an immersive experience. Allowing for that in a less regulated space permits students to reflect, consider how to develop ideas, and better capture the topic of their writing accordingly (Perry et al., 2020, 2023). Experimenting with a variety of expressive modalities in a flexible environment, the student thinks about the train line not simply as a route but as an integral part of people's lives with all the attendant noises, sights, and feelings.

This multimodal approach thus engages visual, auditory, and possibly even kinesthetic elements that can enable students to grasp and convey their thinking more effectively. The less structured approach to learning fosters greater reflection, allowing students to articulate themselves in ways that are personally meaningful and contextually resonant. Through this multidimensional engagement, what starts as a simple sentence can evolve into a comprehensive and inviting narrative. These concerns extend beyond the conventional boundaries of language instruction to incorporate a multifaceted, multimodal outlook. The noted examples from the student's writing illustrate the potential depth that lies beneath the surface level, demonstrating the need to tap into these depths of meaning by making it more relevant, dynamic, and aligned with diverse learning needs.

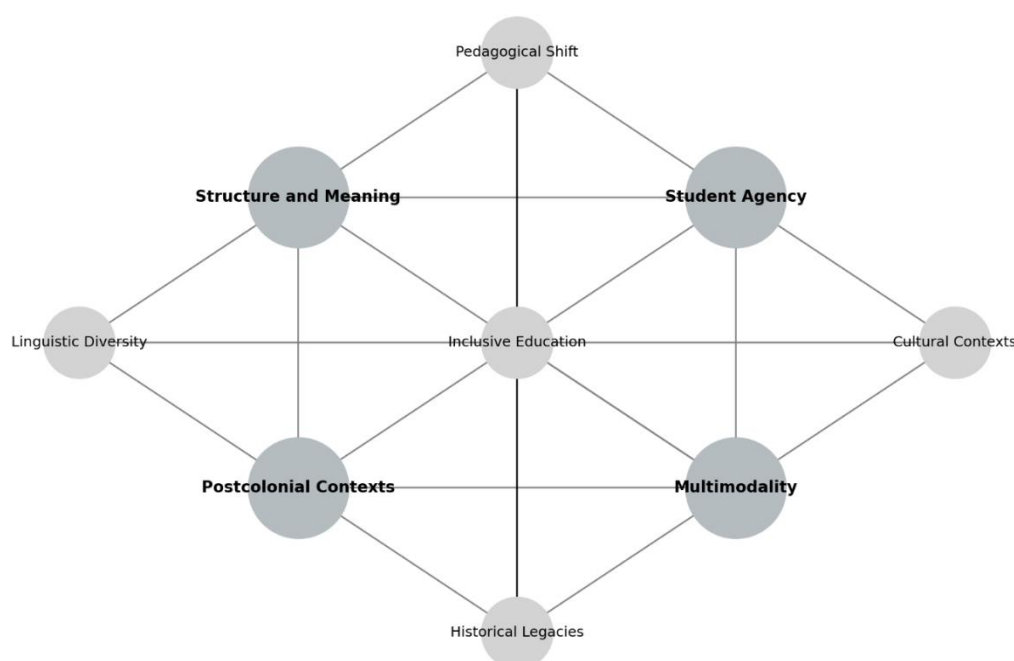
### ***Postcolonial Contexts***

Bridging the discourse following the deliberation of pedagogical strategies to the systemic complexity of postcolonial contexts further demonstrates how historical and sociocultural factors entangle educational policy and practice. An investigation of language structure and meaning serves as a catalyst for change while becoming a mirror which reflects the causal dynamics between history, culture, and education (Figure 3).

From the strength and potential of multimodality to an examination of South Korea's postcolonial history, it becomes evident that the pedagogy discussed can spark a mindfulness of how past events influence social structure. An educator's historical awareness and the ideals of social justice supplement instructional design and become a catalyst for critical engagement with the past while engendering a more inclusive and reflective classroom environment. South Korea presents a compelling case in this respect. The country's education system exemplifies the complexities of navigating deep-seated historical influences and the need to strive for teaching innovation.

**Figure 3**

*Multimodal Pedagogy in Postcolonial Context*



Japanese imperialism, American interventionism, and the Park dictatorship weave together the multifaceted dynamic of South Korea's modern history and culture. Each has left its mark, determining the sociopolitical landscape in numerous ways. The effects of this period have been enduring (Myers & Peattie, 2020), as its hierarchical nature has perpetuated a culture of competition and elitism in South Korea (Fedman, 2020; Koo & Koo, 2022; Mason & Lee, 2012). Even after Korea's liberation, colonial structures shaped the reorganisation of the education system by continuing to stress rote memorisation and high-stakes testing – a reflection of the influence of prioritising conformity and discipline (Kim, 2013). This has a notable impact on student agency, often sidelining mobility in favour of a uniform, top-down approach to learning. Educators cannot underestimate the remnants of colonialism in social structures and professional practices (Altbach, 1978). In such an environment, students may find limited space to express, question, or engage critically. This can lead to a diminished sense of ownership for their learning and decrease their sovereign ability to act self-reliantly.

The post-WWII era, underpinned by U.S. intervention, aimed to reconstruct and the American influence proves particularly evident in the priorities for democracy and English language education. However, it overlooked the entrenched social and cultural impacts of Japanese rule and perpetuated existing social hierarchies (Aviles, 2009; Edwards Jr. & De Matthews, 2014; Kohli, 1994). Strategic decisions such as retaining Japanese officials in government sustained the colonial-era infrastructures and inequalities (Goh, 2008, pp. 353-377; McClintock, 2020). While structurally aligned with the objectives of stabilising a democratic ally (Brazinsky, 2016; Lind, 2011), the strategy neglected social sensibilities. Consequently, while education aligned with the technical, operational, and political interests of ensuring a stable government, it undermined resolve for equity, justice, and cultural self-determination.

Perhaps most significantly, structural decisions overlooked the symbolic meanings and tensions associated with imperialism – namely, the imposition of Japanese language and culture. This marginalisation was not merely a matter of language preference but a manifestation of the power structures and dynamics (De Matthews et al., 2017; Yang, 2017), where the dominance of Japanese in educational settings and, later, English contributed to the suppression of Korean identity and the elevation of foreign languages as symbols of modernity and progress (Byean, 2017; Kim, 2017; Park,

2021). The intervention undermined Korean cultural history and represented a missed opportunity to foster a sense of identity through language (Kim-Renaud, 2022), a movement which would not fully emerge until the 1970s (which coupled with a nationalist ideology). Supporting pluralism and recognising the intrinsic value of Hangul through a respect for the diversity of language and dialects are steps toward remedying historical injustices; thus, empowering students and their agency with a more deferential, affirming sense of their linguistic uniqueness and character.

Park Chung-hee's focus on education as a lever for industrial growth entrenched a system deeply stratified by socioeconomics and continued to overshadow efforts to heal. Park's normalisation of relations with Japan in 1965 led to substantial financial aid and loans, but many saw it as glossing over the wounds of colonisation (Daniel, 2021; Lie, 1998). Coupled with the financial gains from improved Japan-Korea relations, education spurred development but also deepened societal divisions, given the uneven benefits of economic growth (Howe, 2020). These policies show how an education system initially structured for political and cultural progress transformed into a mechanism for reinforcing social and economic hierarchies. The emphasis on technical and vocational training had significant political, social, and cultural fallout while linking educational access and social mobility with status and wealth (Fleckenstein et al., 2023; Han, 2016; Seth, 2002). The advent of globalisation with its strong emphasis on English proficiency further stratified Korean society, highlighting the dynamic between social structure, language, and power in a context marked by political authoritarianism. This underscores the disconnect between the structural goals of progress and the meaningful integration of education and learning as a tool for sustainable and equitable development.

Today, the influence of the past continues to be felt in the education system. The postcolonial history of language imposition and resistance informs attitudes and methods in English language education today (Darder & Uriarte, 2013; Sun & Rong, 2018; Kim, 2023). In grappling with the shadows of its past, South Korean education finds itself at a pivotal point. Acknowledging these historical dimensions iterates the need for an instructional practice that values linguistic diversity and empowers students as agents of social change (Bagea, 2023; Chamberlain, 2005). Embracing strategies that are mindful of this, there is an opportunity to transform learning outcomes while advancing the purpose of social justice (Brauer, 2018; Chirhart, 2021) and fostering a society aware of its past and committed to an equitable future. Educators stand at the crossroads. By advocating for student agency, they can contribute to the cultivation of a reflective and inclusive society. Thus, navigating the entanglements with postcolonial contexts through innovative practices offers a path toward reconciliation.

## **Conclusion**

The evolution of South Korean education illustrates the interaction between internal dynamism and external global influences. The confluence and ascension of English education in the country show the complicated contours of linguistic and cultural identity. That itself underscores a pivotal need: the empowerment of students through an analytical engagement with language and meaning, promoting a diverse and inclusive pedagogy. Doing so requires a shift towards instruction that prioritises meaning, communication, and critical thinking over mere grammatical accuracy. Along with the purpose of recognising cognitive complexity, an active shift toward enabling and welcoming student agency supports the importance of integrating historical sensibilities with a progressive pedagogy to develop more holistic and student-centred instruction. Through this, learners emerge as self-sufficient thinkers capable of making sound judgments through a critical and informed perspective.

The integration of multimodal pedagogies aligns with the goal of cultivating an awareness of cultural difference, diversity, inclusivity, and a multiplicity of voices. By appreciating the significance of pluralism accordingly, this vision advocates for a future where students possess the faculties to meaningfully contribute to a more equitable and just society. At the core of the narrative is the indispensable role of educators in cultivating a teaching ethos which supports human inquiry in the interest of student agency. The efficacy of innovative practices hinges on educators' commitment to introspection, continuous self-improvement, and open-mindedness. By adopting these practices, educators become facilitators of learning and advocate for a paradigm that prioritises equity, fairness, and social justice.

It is not enough to pursue linguistic aptitude as an isolated goal; instead, education should empower students to skillfully navigate the dynamic between language, culture, history, and society. Shaped by its sociohistorical experience and contemporary global dynamics, the trajectory of English education in South Korea offers an exemplary lens through which to view interdisciplinary relationships. By adapting to these entangled connections, South Korea's education system can transcend traditional boundaries. It can evolve into a vibrant field where learning is not just about rules and “correctness” but concerns the need to foster an informed, critical, and socially aware citizenry. In this context, English education transcends its functional utility, becoming a conduit for reflecting on national history, societal transformations, and the relentless pursuit of a more just and inclusive international community.

### **Acknowledgement**

Special thanks to the students who gave permission to use their writing as an example.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The author has declared that no competing interests exist.

### **Author Contribution Statement**

The author was responsible for the conception, design, writing, and revision of the manuscript.

### **Funding**

This research received no external funding.

### **Ethics Statements**

This article adheres to the ethical standards set by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

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