ENGLISH EDUCATION AND SOCIAL REPRODUCTION:
AN ETHNOGRAPHY OFADOLESCENTS IN A KOREAN PUBLIC SCHOOL

by

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Abstract

This research examines the relationship between English and social reproduction through a group of Korean adolescents in a public school. I address how social reproduction occurs through English education by focusing on two social categories: *Returnees* from Early Study Abroad (ESA) and *Underachievers* in English. They embody differential access to English by social class. I draw upon both Bourdieu's legitimate language (Bourdieu, 1977, 1991), and language ideology (Lippi-Green, 1997), and their application to sociolinguistic studies (Heller, 2007; Heller & Martin-Jones, 2001). Based on a one and a half-year ethnography, I focus on students' language learning practices and identity construction across four sites: English classrooms, the English Speech Festival, Afterschool Class, and a summer English camp.

I analyzed the ways in which school reproduces the "English gap" by social class. First, a systematic curricular gap and academic streaming reinforced students' differential achievement. Second, according to "native-like" ideology, Returnees enjoyed full-fledged membership in English-only events while Underachievers remained as bystanders. Third, school welfare programs specifically engineered to support Underachievers (i.e., Afterschool Class and psychiatric counselling) did not take their life patterns, peer networks and norms into account. Finally, teachers' emphasis on grammatically correct English did not allow

Underachievers a legitimate speaking position in a communication-oriented class. In accounting for some Underachievers' low motivation, teachers assessed them as either *Responsible* or *Irresponsible* and referred the latter to psychiatric counselling. Despite their marginal status, Underachievers challenged Returnees in reference to the gendered peer culture, which portrayed Returnees' native-like English as a feminine quality. Returnees were thus socialized to perform Korean-accented English to blend into their peer society.

This dissertation challenges the assumption that input-oriented English education policy should address the widening English gap along social class. I argue that the Irresponsible Underachievers' non-participation in English reflects their development of working-class consciousness, in which few think of getting middle-class jobs through education. Contrary to marginalization in classrooms, experiences in the low-skilled job market give Underachievers confidence to challenge school authority. In the long-term, however, the lack of English skills will prevent Underachievers from achieving middle-class employment in Korea, where English functions as a key gatekeeper.

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Chapter 1 A Social Turn to "Underachievers"

1. Introduction

When travelling across Seoul by local bus, you may encounter stories and songs irrelevant to your taste. From legal advice to contemporary K-pop songs, radio stations are chosen at bus drivers' leisure, determining what you hear between boarding and reaching your destination. During my recent trip, an educational radio talk show playing on a local bus caught people's attention, including mine. In it, a mother talked to a psychiatrist and a Study Consultant (a professional giving academic advice to students) about her son's low achievement in English. A passenger next to me, a middle-aged woman, asked the driver to turn up the volume.

The mother in the program said, "He's smart, but he's not studying hard enough. His teacher called me to say that he now would study English at the Basic level because he got low marks on the exam. I was shocked to death." The psychiatrist, having heard the mother, then started to ask questions of the boy. "Do you like English?" "So, so," the boy replied. "Okay, at least you don't hate English. Good. Do you try to remember things in general?" "Not really," said the boy. After some more talk, the psychiatrist advised him to make more conscious efforts to remember things. "Buy a Study Planner (i.e., a type of the Franklin Planner for students), and document each day how long you focused on studying," the Study Consultant added.

The bus driver changed the station before the other passengers and I could not hear the outcome of the session. However, the conversation between driver and passengers that followed turned out to be as interesting as the radio show itself. "What a shame to talk in public about her son not studying hard," the driver said bluntly. "She must have been desperate. I bet she brought him to the studio after having spent tons of money for *hagwons* (i.e., for-profit shadow

education[1] agencies),” said the woman next to me. After getting off the bus, I thought about the

program and the responses from the audience. From the perspective of a radio show producer,

the program was certainly successful, as it provoked different responses and interpretations.

Some might find the counselling useful and leave a comment on the online bulletin board to

share their concerns with the program. Others, however, might think of publicizing their child's

low academic performance as “too much information.” On another level, I wondered if the boy

would buy a Study Planner as was recommended.

This vignette exemplifies how Koreans, in general, make sense of academic achievement

as an individual and private matter. Underachievement often incurs negative images such as

laziness or lack of goal setting. Such assumptions are based on meritocracy in school, that is,

students' achievement depends solely on individual cognition (McNamee & Miller, 2013). These

assumptions attribute difficulties in language learning mainly to individual psychological factors,

such as a lack of motivation and/or negative attitude toward the target language. With the belief

that proper learning skills such as time management should “rectify” the problem, the public

increasingly turns its eyes to psychiatrists and lay experts such as Study Consultants for advice.

Within this perspective, however, a set of critical questions emerge. For instance, if language

learning is a psychological endeavour, how can we make sense of the positive correlation

between social class and English achievement? Are low-achieving students, as some might argue,

just lazy and/or not making enough efforts?

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[1] Shadow education (*hagwon*) refers to the for-profit, supplementary tutoring sector parallel to the public education system (Park & Abelmaan, 2004; Piller & Cho, 2013). Although *private education* has been used to describe the market, I chose the term in order to avoid potential confusion across contexts. For instance, private education in North America represents exclusive educational institutions with higher tuition fees and autonomous curricula.

This thesis aims to address these questions from social approaches to language education, which conceives of language as valued symbolic capital that is differently accessible (Bourdieu, 1977). It examines the relationship between English and social reproduction through a focus on adolescents' English learning in a Korean middle school[2]. As English has emerged as the key language in the globalized new economy, many linguistic peripheries in the Asia-Pacific region recognize English skill as one means to advance standing in the world. Since the 1980s, many countries have implemented a communication-oriented curriculum in public schools to develop their citizens' English communication skills. The rationale behind such drives was the idea that English represents valued linguistic capital, to use Bourdieu's (1991) term.

The policy certainly has raised awareness of English in society. However, differential access to English by social class emerged as a topic of national debates in Japan (Kanno, 2008), Taiwan (Price, 2014), China (Hu, 2005), Hong-Kong (Lin, 2001), and South Korea (Piller & Cho, 2013; Shin, 2010). For instance, students from the middle-class have easier access to study-abroad and English immersion, as many sociolinguists point out through the case of ESA (e.g., Y. Kang, 2012; Park & Bae, 2008; Song, 2011). On the other hand, their working-class counterparts are without such costly options. Educators and policy makers raise a concern that class-based inequality challenges the liberal value of equity in education. Media are abuzz, reporting the "English Divide" by social class, and asking for the state's active intervention in the interest of low-achieving pupils.

In response, many governments in the region endeavour to offer additional English learning opportunities to students from low-income families. This input-oriented policy concurs

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[2] In South Korea, a middle school includes grades 7 through 9, consisting of students from ages 14 to 16. This corresponds to junior high school in the North American education system.

with a cognitive approach to language education, which poses that anyone can be a bilingual speaker. According to Heller (2002), bilingualism in this context refers to parallel monolingualisms, or "the ability to speak each 'language' as though it were a homogeneous monolingual variety" (p. 48). That is, one must learn each linguistic variety in a separable manner to gain legitimacy as a 'good' bilingual speaker. Bilingual practices in learning language, or code-switching (leveraging linguistic repertoire in more than one language), are frowned upon, and considered to be non-target forms of learning or errors to be corrected. Further, this leads us to imagine a monolingual speaker as the perfect linguistic model, against which one's linguistic performance should be evaluated (Doerr, 2009). As a result, the narrative on bilingualism in the field of English teaching straddles a fundamental discrepancy; although learners are expected to become fluently bilingual, the teachers in charge of their English education are preferred to be monolingual.

This thesis attempts to advance the discussion on underachievement in light of Bourdieu's notion of legitimacy (1991) and social reproduction in schools (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Heller and Martin-Jones (2001) noted that language is critical to control resource production and distribution, and to legitimate relations of power therein. Language learning, from this perspective, is about getting access to communities with the authority to speak and to be heard (Bourdieu, 1977) in that language. Critical analyses of who is included in and who is excluded from the community, who has the power to decide, and hence who has access (or is denied access) to what resources can shed light on how linguistic difference connects to social inequality (Shin, 2010). Analytically, this means attention must be paid to two things: 1) the political economic conditions of the linguistic market in which linguistic resources have value,

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and for whom; and 2) the consequences of how those resources get distributed in terms of social inequality and social justice.

I examine the relationship between English and social reproduction by looking at two social categories that represent a class-based division in English attainment: Returnees and Underachievers. Returnees are middle-class children who returned to Korea after having participated in Early Study Abroad (ESA), a transnational, split-family arrangement. As a typical practice of ESA, the father stays in Korea and financially supports the mother and school-aged child's stay in an English-speaking society (Park & Lo, 2012). This border-crossing activity is based on the belief that one can approximate parallel monolingualism through study-abroad at a young age, which is viewed as critical to developing "native-like" English. Lo and Kim (2015) note the contradictory discourse on Returnees. On the one hand, Returnees represent high-class elites with native-like English proficiency. On the other hand, ESA is associated with negative stereotypes of immoral personhood, such as the selfish mother in blind pursuit of her children's education, or the incompetent child, who could not fare well in the Korean educational system. A statistic from the Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI) indicates that more than 75% of ESA students return to Korea after one to two years (KEDI, 2010). Upon return, most Returnees go to middle schools and continue their English education with local peers. Those children must then highlight their Koreanness for successful socialization with peers who never left. As Lo and Kim succinctly put it, "Returnees needed to be both traditional (sufficiently Korean) and yet modern (sufficiently worldly), both like and unlike those who had never left" (p. 180).

In contrast, Underachievers refer to low-achieving groups in nationwide standardized exams. Although there have always been students with academic difficulty in school, the term

English Underachievers (*Yeongpoja:* those who has given up on learning English) first appeared after the nation-wide exam was reinstated in 2008. In Korean schools, mathematical calculation serves to define underachievement. For instance, if the mean of a test is 70 and standard deviation (SD) is 10, Underachievers represent a group of test-takers whose performance is below 60 (1 SD below average) or 50 (2 SDs below average). According to a white paper on Underachievers in school, the purpose of such categorization is to detect those in need of support, and to offer additional English programs as part of addressing growing inequality in English education.

Returnees and Underachievers are so named based on their relative English proficiency. I observed a class-based difference between Returnees and Underachievers; while the former came from middle-class families, the latter had working-class family backgrounds. This does not, however, mean that social class exclusively determines English achievement, or that all differences between the categories arise directly from social class. What I suggest is that the category division represents not only students' different English skills, but also deeper differences in values and norms. What students learn at school includes more than curricular knowledge; they also learn how to gain social status and recognition in their respective peer cultures. Throughout schooling, students explore, develop, and invest in the peer relationships that they think suit them. The stereotypes of Returnee and Underachiever serve as a point of reference against which students can assess their positions, opportunities, and risks in school. Many students, especially 7th graders, expressed their identities as "In-betweens," swinging back and forth between Returnees and Underachievers. By the time of graduation, these students typically had settled into an identity and thus were clearly aware of where they belonged, and accordingly, how to prepare for their futures on their own terms.

A Returnee may be simply an adolescent student who has participated in ESA, and who local peers single out as a Returnee based on observing behaviours that deviate from peer norms. From the viewpoint of local students, the typical image of a Returnee would be one of a student who participates enthusiastically in class. The student would be clumsy at forming friendships, yet would work hard to get the teachers' attention through academic (over)achievement. Peers may also call some boy or girl without transnational experience a Returnee if he or she acts like a teacher's pet and refuses to blend into the peer culture. By contrast, Underachievers identify themselves as more mature teenagers compared to local peers. This is possible because they (particularly boys) gain competence in dealing with adults in the low-skilled job market, and perceive themselves as equal to adults. This creates fundamental conflicts with teachers, who try to limit students' activities within their purview. Also, peers who interpret masculinity as cooperation with power structures challenge Underachievers' value system by calling them as "losers in the game of school life" (March 2015, Fieldnote).

To examine their dynamics *in situ*, I focus on the public school, where the tensions between the two social categories are managed. Public English education in Korea has become a topic of national debate, as schools no longer take centre stage in distributing the linguistic capital. Specifically, the widening English achievement gap by social class has seen the emergence of ESA, a new mode of English learning. In recognition of growing class-based inequity in educational attainment, the Korean government now offers additional learning programs to students from low-income families, such as afterschool programs, academic tracking, and online courses. Do these policies, however, bring the intended effects? To what extent do schools level out the playing field? The case of Returnees and Underachievers shows how schools serve as a space to reproduce class relations in Korean society. Regarding English

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learning, it is important to understand what Underachievers' voluntary subordination into the poor English speaker identity has to do with their peer culture. Examining the Korean case can reveal important insights about how Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) social reproduction model in schools remains relevant.

In addition, the story of Returnees and Underachievers will be important in examining how nationally-oriented social selection intersects with globalization. A growing body of work in linguistic anthropology has looked at South Korea as a key locus of exploring the links between (trans-) nationalism, social class, and language ideologies. Through the case of Korean ESA students, for instance, Park (2009) and Shin (2010) examined some of the reasons why success is always just beyond reach, or comes at a price, situated largely in the contradiction of Korean nationalism as path to globalization. As Park and Lo (2012) argued, social debates about transnational Koreans and their language skills should capture how the old essentialist language ideology as identity competes with the new language ideology as capital and skill (cf. Heller, 2003). For instance, the heavy emphasis on English learning as a crucial goal of study abroad represents a multilingual, cosmopolitan Korean identity in place of the monolingual culture of Korea. At the same time, Korean English speakers face linguistic and social marginalization, as Lo and Kim (2012) demonstrated how Korean Americans' incompetency in Korean is subject to linguistic mockery in the media. As I will show, the gendered peer culture also shaped Returnee boys' native-like English as a feminine quality, which enabled Underachievers to challenge Returnee boys' masculinity.

Before going into details, a discussion of the concept of social class is due. ~~As one of~~ Highly contested ~~concepts~~ in the social sciences, social class is subject to different interpretations depending on a researcher's epistemological and ontological orientations (Wright, 2008).

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Following Block (2014) and Rampton (2006), who examined social class in their sociolinguistic studies, I view social class as centrally about the production and (re)distribution of material resources. I also recognize that class is not only about material resources ~~base~~, but also concerned with forms of social reproduction and cultural distinction (Savage et al., 2013). Thus, the present study treats social class in terms not only of economic property, but also of a range of symbolic resources, such as social networks, consumption patterns, and views on social mobility and education. This view of class will be the reference point throughout the dissertation.

I chose adolescents as my target population. Adolescents start developing their friendships based on their own norms of behaviour, but the nature of those friendships differs according to their social class orientation (cf. Eckert, 1989; Pujolar, 2001). Examining their peer culture is thus important to understand why and how class reproduction begins at school, where students spend most of their time. I chose middle school students for two reasons: First, high school students generally choose between two tracks, either college-bound or vocational training. By the time they reach high school, students will have already decided what kind of jobs they would like to have in the future. I thus reasoned that class-based dynamics among students would be more apparent in middle school In addition, focusing on middle school students was a way to address the logistical issues I encountered in my research. Many high school teachers, particularly in academic-streamed schools, found it difficult to invite me as a researcher as the school curriculum mainly focused on preparing students for the college entrance exam. They did not hold any communication-oriented English events, instead running college-prep programs in their classes.

I chose a middle school in Gangnam, Seoul, where the number of ESA elementary students is almost ten times higher than that of the low-income areas such as Dongdaemun and

Jungrang (Lee & Koo, 2008; see also Chapter 2.3 for a detailed research background). During my observation, I focused on four discursive sites where the government's support for Underachievers unfolds: regular English classes, extracurricular activities, afterschool programs, and a state-funded English camp run over summer vacation. By providing these input-oriented academic programs, government officials intended to narrow the English gap among students. Given that the gap nevertheless persists (Nam, 2016), we should examine how students make sense of those opportunities in school.

Throughout this thesis, I analyze four ways in which school reproduced the English gap by social class: First, streaming and a systematic curricular gap between elementary and middle school served to reinforce students' differential achievement. Second, according to native-like language ideology, or the linguistic practice that values North-American, heterosexual, and middle-class English (Doerr, 2009; Lippi-Green, 1997), Returnees enjoyed full-fledged membership in English-only events while Underachievers remained as bystanders. Third, Educational Welfare programs (i.e., Afterschool Class and psychiatric counselling) for Underachievers did not match with their life patterns, peer networks and norms. Finally, teachers' emphasis on "grammatically-correct" English did not allow Underachievers a legitimate speaking position in a communication-oriented class.

In the next section, I will briefly review the literature on class reproduction in schools. I examine how governmental policies address underachievement in therapeutic terms in Section 3. Section 4 examines language ideology and its applications in language learning research. Section 5 will specify the research questions that have guided my methodological choices. Finally, Section 6 will outline the structure of this dissertation.

2. Social Reproduction in School

Research into social reproduction in school comes out of a concern with equity to educational success (Collins, 2009). Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) examined the structure of symbolic domination in school by looking at how unequal relations of power along class lines were reproduced through education. They argued that the middle-class family background was a key factor for educational success in the school system. The institutional power downplayed working-class students' struggles as a lack of adequate effort. In this way, the study showed how the school system served to reproduce the structure of symbolic domination, and ultimately, of class relations in advanced capitalist societies.

Ethnographies of class reproduction in school expanded Bourdieu and Passeron's model by examining how students' class/gender ideology in school affects the process. Through ethnographic observations of how working-class lads get working-class jobs in England, Willis (1977) examined the process through which their counter-school behaviours developed into a working-class identity. He found that they entered working-class jobs at will by viewing counter-school culture as more masculine and therefore superior. Although the lads viewed working-class jobs as empowering, such perception locked them into those jobs with little hope of rising into the middle class. Foley (1990) shared Willis's emphasis on school as a site of class reproduction, and examined the dynamics of class in relation to other axes of inequality, including race and ethnicity. The studies emphasized the agency of the social actors behind social reproduction, showing how individuals resist yet inadvertently subsume into social reproduction processes. Eckert (1989) examined two social categories, *Jocks* and *Burnouts*, in a Michigan high school. She found that Jocks gained visibility among teachers because their middle-class culture was more adaptive to the institutional norms. However, what Burnouts were good at brought them few rewards. In that sense, students' category membership reflected their

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middle- and working-class worldviews and career prospects, and school oriented both Jocks and Burnouts to develop those identities.

Language use emerged as a key factor mediating social reproduction in schools (Collins, 2009; Lareau, 2003). A growing number of sociolinguists incorporated Bourdieu's notion of legitimate language and examined how language practices are linked to social reproduction in multiple educational settings (e.g., Bunyi, 2001; Lin, 2001; Heller, 2006; Codó & Patiño-Santos, 2014). As Heller and Martin-Jones (2001) argued, linguistic practices in school represent who gets to control resource distribution and production, and ultimately, how some advance their interests over others. Rojo (2010), for instance, examined how quotidian interactions in the Spanish classroom are deeply implicated in what she termed as *decapitalisation*, a discursive process that devalues immigrant students' linguistic and symbolic capital. In the Japanese context, Kanno (2008) found that educational stakeholders viewed immigrant and refugee students' multilingual capitals as a hindrance to building Japanese knowledge and basic academic skills. The studies showed that schools' linguistic practice served as the basis for constructing inequality against immigrant students, leading them to school failure and the unskilled labour market.

Most empirical studies have begun to concentrate on the relationship between parents' socioeconomic backgrounds and students' educational success. Lareau (2003) showed how parenting practice affected the child's life and learning in US schools. According to her, middle-class families viewed child-rearing as akin to "concerted cultivation," where parents provide structured activities for children's education. On the other hand, their working-class counterparts believed in "natural growth" by letting the children have more unstructured activities. In the

Korean context, Kim (2003) agreed with the family effects on education, pointing out that an individual student's family background played the most important role in students' achievement.

From an economic political perspective on language, researchers analyzed how the discourse of language changed from the one-nation-one-language model toward the economics of language (Heller, 2003). Based on fieldwork in a French-speaking high school in Toronto, Heller's (2006) ethnography showed how such shift has affected students' linguistic and racial identities and the school's political reactions to valorize middle-class, Standard French. Rampton (2006) examined the relationship between language choice and social class in the UK. He argued that students' accents (i.e., Posh versus Cockney) represent their (counter-) school attitude and social identities in the school. These studies started to capture how the political economic transformation into late capitalism has brought challenges and opportunities in the struggle for new social order in educational contexts.

Extending this line of inquiry, I examine how language, especially English, is intertwined with identity politics in the Korean context. Throughout history, learning English in Korea is bound up in existing systems of social selection via education, intensified through Korea's nationalist movement for position in the globalized new economy. In this framework, Returnees represent global elites while Underachievers represent losers. However, studies of Returnees' lives in Korea show that they must develop a wide range of linguistic and cultural strategies to fit in with their local peers, sometimes at the expense of capital earned overseas (Lo & Kim, 2015; Vasilopoulos, 2015). I take up the issue of Returnees' socialization in school through the lens of (linguistic) nationalism. Since its inception, public education has served to develop nationalistic citizens, as expressed through traditional gender norms and monolingual ideology (Lee, 2000). As I will show in Chapter 3, the ideology of Koreanness in school played out among students,

with Underachiever boys deriding Returnee boys' native-like English as feminine in order to enjoy higher status and be perceived, even temporarily, as more authentically Korean.

Below, I introduce the government's Zero Underachiever Project as an entry point to understanding Underachievers in school. When the government proposed state-level support for Underachievers, officials addressed underachievement in therapeutic terms, suggesting that those who were struggling with underachievement would benefit from psychiatric counselling. Theorizing underachievement in therapeutic terms naturalizes the importance of English in Korean society and requires Underachievers to embrace the ideology of self-help to "remedy" the problem. Few Underachievers agreed with the idea, because their worldview was grounded in working-class culture, where English carries little instrumental value. In effect, while Educational Welfare offered support for Underachievers' emotional wellness as well as academic success, it also served to reinforce their marginalization at school.

3. From a Lazy Student to a Welfare Subject: Underachievers in School

In Korea, a comprehensive educational welfare policy has been in effect since 2003. This policy brought about a fundamental shift in conceptualizing underachievement. In the context of meritocracy, low achievement in school had been widely viewed as evidence of a lack of adequate effort. However, since the IMF crisis (see 2.1 for more details), class-based inequality in students' achievement has become more salient, with low-income children four times more likely to experience academic difficulties in school (Lee, 2008). Policy makers and teachers now approach underachievement from a welfare perspective and offer means-tested benefits for educational, cultural, and welfare services.

How does a welfare policy play out in Korean society, where neoliberal economic policies of privatization and individuation are at work? At first glance, expanding state funding

to low performers seems contradictory to the neoliberal imperative of cutting welfare. Proponents of neoliberalism often describe welfare provision as restricting citizens by fostering dependency and contrast this with the benefits of choice -especially consumer choice- and individual fulfilment (Brown & Baker, 2013). However, welfare and the market do not necessarily contract each other in that welfare programs can be mobilized to maximize the productivity of labour power, for example through workfare programs (Wacquant, 2010). In addition, neoliberalism does not necessarily indicate the retrenchment of state intervention; rather, as a variant form of liberal social governing, it strives to control society by the technology of the self. The state's role in this regard is to help individuals manage their risks through insurance (e.g., Ewald, 1991), punitive policing (Wacquant, 2009), and selective welfare (e.g., Rosanvallon, 2000; J.-S. Song, 2009). In addition, the state exhorts its citizens to undertake a variety of personal disciplines to manage themselves, arranging their bodies, minds and lives so that they can contribute to the maintenance of a capitalist liberal state and its class structure. Within this line of inquiry, I view neoliberalism as advanced liberalism that operates through various social actors to regulate not only the state, but also families, individuals, and the sense of self. This perspective poses that state power is not reduced under neoliberalism; rather, it is modified and sustained through various social technologies, not only through budgets and standards but also through welfare and support.

At its core, the governmental policy for Underachievers, also known as the Zero Underachiever Project, puts a strong emphasis on the individual. Underachievers receive two types of support: academic and emotional. In terms of academics, government officials offer additional English learning opportunities, with an assumption that low achievement is due to limited access to resources. For this reason, the Ministry of Education has encouraged teachers to

change their perspective on Underachievers "from deficient learners to slow learners" (Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education, 2012). Government policy and perspective holds that, with proper support, teachers should be able to facilitate Underachievers' progress on a par with others.

Academic support consists of online and on-site programs. Online programs mainly provide students with free access to lectures in the subjects of Korean, math, and English. By subsidizing internet fees to low-income households, the state promises that every child in Korea can have access to fair learning opportunities. On-site support includes inviting Underachievers to afterschool programs. Those with financial difficulty are eligible for the Afterschool Voucher, which redeems fees for afterschool programs. This represents a widespread neoliberal tendency to privatize social problems, or to reinterpret social problems as personal problems emphasizing individualized responsibility.

In terms of emotional support, the project focused on rectifying students` underachievement through psychiatric counselling. For instance, the 2011 government document entitled *The Plan to Enhance Accountability for Underachievers* (Ministry of Education, 2011) clearly states that low achievement stems not only from the lack of individual efforts, but from emotional difficulties and poor familial care. The document further suggests that teachers "identify internal or external factors that impede students' learning (e.g., poverty, family troubles, and emotional, psychological, and behavioural problems), and provide customized instruction according to their reasons for underachievement" (p. 2). Since 2007, schools have each run their own independent counselling department called a WEE, a compound word of We, Education, and Emotion (http://www.wee.go.kr/), to take charge of students' mental wellness. The government publicized that its one-stop approach would meet the diverse needs of students, from

detecting reasons for underachievement to referring those in need to professional psychiatrists in hospitals. Doctors, psychiatrists, and counsellors have become key authorities with regards to giving advice from a psychoanalytic perspective on how to help students become better learners in school. My introductory vignette, for example, described how a boy and his mother sought advice about underachievement from a psychiatrist and a Study Consultant on a radio program.

Despite its relative newness to Korean eyes, the therapeutic approach in education is not new on the global scene. According to Rose (1998), the therapeutic discourse gained currency in neoliberal society by mobilizing and perpetuating the liberal democratic discourse of freedom, choice, and identity. As he notes, "therapeutic ethics promises a system of values freed from the moral judgment of social authorities. It governs while allowing to construct ourselves through the choices we make, and to shape our existence according to an ethics of autonomy" (p. 97). The introduction of psychiatry in US education dates back to the early twentieth century as part of the mental hygiene movement. The movement aimed to improve conditions in the various institutions for the insane and feeble-minded. With the strong support of the government, the field developed quickly to apply the results to the prevention of mental illness and milder form of disorders. The movement increasingly incorporated into mainstream psychiatry, in particular through the community health movement of the 1960s. According to Cohen (1983), the following premises contributed to the spread of psychiatry in education:

> Personality maladjustments are the cause of individual mental disorder and social problems of all sorts; childhood is the critical period in the development of personality; children are extremely vulnerable to personality disorders; the school is the strategic agency to prevent, or detect and "adjust" problems in children's personality development; and finally, the personality development of children must take priority over any other educational objective. (p. 124)

Since the 1920s, mental hygienists promoted a therapeutic perspective on the everyday problems of children. Mental hygienists were interested in children because they thought that the origins of mental illness (and disorder) could be traced back to early childhood experiences. They viewed the educational system as a promising venue to reach all schoolchildren with immediate intervention. As Flaherty, Weist and Warner (1996) pointed out, teachers tended to over-present students with salient behavioural issues such as talking out of turn, noncompliance, and disruptiveness, while under-presenting students with problems such as depression and anxiety. Viewing that the latter behavioural issues were harder to detect, the interventionists argued for school-based mental health services. Later, the influence of the hygienist approach succeeded in incorporating developmental psychology into teacher education programs. Many schools in the US also implemented educational programs aimed at fostering mental health.

On the one hand, the Korean therapeutic discourse mirrors the history of psychiatry in US schools, where scientific medicine and psychology came to regulate the development of schoolchildren. Conversely, the Korean case shows two major differences. First, in terms of diagnosis, academic achievement plays a key role in assessing students' mental wellness. During their transition to middle school, many students felt stressed due to the heavy emphasis on academic achievement (Yoo, 2007). As we see below, teachers refer long-term Underachievers to psychiatric counselling to support their life in and beyond school. This is somewhat different from North America, where school counsellors provide in-class presentations to groups of students regardless of whether or not they have records of emotional or behavioural difficulties (Flaherty, Weist & Warner, 1996).

In terms of outcome, the major goal of Korean psychiatric counselling is to support students in (re)gaining academic competency. As I will show in Section 4.5, educational

programs and workbooks refer to the notion of Learned Helplessness (Seligman, 1972) to account for students' underachievement. They suggest this attribute hinders low-achieving pupils from trying to succeed, which creates a vicious cycle (Learning Help Book, 2015): a sense of helplessness, loss of self-esteem, and continued failure. Thus, the programs focus on uncovering attributes that hinder academic progress and teaching "appropriate" studying-skill strategies. By contrast, contemporary mental health programs for US youth view well-roundedness in personality as the most important goal and discourage academic subject-matter centered curriculum and rigid disciplinary procedures. Psychiatrists as well as educational reformers thus advocate for a variety of educational initiatives such as vocational training and project learning.

Taking on a critical perspective on psychology/psychiatry, Illouz (2007) argued that psychology in workplace management (e.g., Elton Mayo) in US corporations served to neutralize class struggles. According to her, psychology convinced workers to believe that leadership and personality, not innate privilege or family background, decide social positions. In this way, psychology began to offer "the dispassionate gaze of science" (p. 10) and instructed individuals to cultivate self-developing technologies in a variety of arenas, including education, marriage, racial/class conflict, and labour disputes. In line with that, I examine how psychiatric counselling in school is related to meritocracy in school, where good English skills are believed to stem not from social class but from motivation and self-regulation.

In sum, the Zero Underachiever Project is an Educational Welfare program that aims to enhance school accountability and minimize social risks against potential dropouts. Underachievers emerged as a new object of academic and emotional support. In Chapter 4, I focus on Educational Welfare for Underachievers through a case of Afterschool Class and psychiatric counselling. I examine why the program, despite its good intentions, had limited

effects on Underachievers' English progress. I argue that theorizing underachievement as resulting from inefficient study skills, high anxiety, or low self-esteem conflicted with Underachievers' worldviews, norms, and the nature of their peer networks.

I now turn to examining who counts as an Underachiever in the school. To make sense of Underachievers in school, I had to ask what counts as 'good' English, for Underachievers by definition are not attaining the school's standard. Below, I examine streaming and bilingualism as the two language ideologies that construct Returnees and Underachievers in school.

4. Language Ideology: Streaming and Bilingualism

Language ideology refers to a socially situated belief about language and its use. According to Irvine (1989), it represents "the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests" (p. 255). Researchers in this inquiry examine the ways in which assumptions, thoughts, and ideas about language are associated with the language users' social experiences and with the advance of their economic and political interests (Blommaert, 1999; Schieffelin, Woolard, & Kroskrity, 1998). One of major inquiries in language ideology is to articulate how communicative actions constitute political and economic consideration of power and social inequality (Woolard, 1998).

As subjects of linguistic periphery, Koreans have recognized the importance of English since the nineteenth century (Kim & Moon, 2006). Behind the desire for English is what Wee (2008) termed linguistic instrumentalism: "a view of language that justifies its existence in a community through terms of its usefulness in achieving specific utilitarian goals such as access to economic development or social mobility" (p. 32). Because English serves as the linguistic capital in the new globalized economy, government officials introduced an English communication-oriented curriculum, emphasizing that Korean students should achieve

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functional English proficiency as global citizens. However, as Jang (2017), Park (2009), and Shin (2010) indicated, students' socioeconomic backgrounds mediate attitudes as well as proficiency in English. Therefore, there emerged urgent need for schools to level out the playing field by providing the disadvantaged students with additional English learning opportunities.

In this thesis, language ideology in public English education regulates both how to teach English, and what kind of English counts as 'good'. The former is mainly concerned with setting up a curriculum. Many schools in Korea, including my research site, have a policy of streaming in the subject of English. The language ideology behind streaming suggests that students should benefit from learning content that is slightly above their current level (cf. Zone of Proximal Development, Río &. Álvarez, 2007). A body of literature critically examined how streaming reinforced, if not intentionally, students' differential learning achievement. Collins (1986) and Bunyi (2001), for instance, documented how high achievers and low achievers were given different classroom activities (i.e., text comprehension versus sound-word identification drills), which in turn differently shaped their understanding about reading. Heller (2006) also pointed out that streaming did not prepare students in the lower stream to shift to the upper level; rather, it led students to fall farther and farther behind.

Students in my research site took English classes at either the *gibonban* (General) or *sujunbyul* (Basic) level and engaged in different classroom activities. Structural linguistics played a key role for educators and content developers in setting up a curriculum in the order of phonics, words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. In gibonban*,* for instance, teachers prepared students for upcoming school exams, while teachers from sujunbyul focused on teaching basic literacy skills at the level of phonics and words (See 3.3 for more detail). This content organization is premised upon the belief that streaming should cater to students' different

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linguistic needs. In addition, the government insisted that streaming allows for more focused instruction, thereby reducing the burden of teaching loads. In Chapter 3, I explore how different classroom practices between the Basic and the General level differently prepare students for the kind of English the school values.

In considering what counts as 'good' English, I found the ideology of bilingualism important because it works to control what counts as normative, or which group's linguistic performance deserves recognition (Lippi-Green, 1997). On the one hand, Korean-English bilingualism emerged as an index of global elite status. The Korean government invests in quality public English education, suggesting that students should achieve functional English proficiency as global citizens. On the other hand, linguistic nationalism remains strong because the Korean language was historically tied to the anticolonial movement against Japan (Yang, 2017). A nation-state is based on the imagination of cultural, linguistic, and racial homogeneity (Bauman & Briggs, 2003). That idea stemmed from western European colonialists who viewed a standardized linguistic system as the foremost condition of national sovereignty. Many colonies took up the European nation-state model to contest unequal power relations between centre and periphery. Studies on language policy in (post)colonies, however, indicate that the idea of linguistic homogeneity worked in ways to regulate the relations *inside* as well as *outside* the nation (see Hutton, 1999). As Shin (2010) argued, this tension between the new and the old discourse of language remains unresolved. Accordingly, those who speak English and Korean should speak as if they were two parallel sets of autonomous and bounded linguistic systems; those who try to mix the two codes often face criticism and negative evaluations. In Chapter 3, I examine the process of constructing illegitimate Koreans by looking at students' gendered peer

culture. It suggests that gender as well as class be key variables in accounting for students' (un)successful English learning at school.

In sum, the language ideologies of streaming and bilingualism are important to theorize English learning as a matter of individual cognition. They further give off an impression that anyone can be a good English speaker through personal effort. I now turn to a research methodology that links language practices in school to social reproduction.

5. Sociolinguistic Ethnography in School: Into the Wild

"Middle school students? Well, just be prepared." Many wished me good luck upon learning that I would follow middle school students. Joking that even top-notch North Korean armies are afraid of eighth graders' hormonal upheaval, many people reminded me of how tricky working with adolescents could be. Frankly, based on my previous experiences teaching English as either a part-time or full-time middle school teacher, I felt some confidence about meeting the students. I thought I knew what I was going to do and how.

In retrospect, going into the field and engaging with students turned my approach to Underachievers upside down. After reading classic literature on social reproduction, I became critically aware of the institutional power that reproduces class relations. I was eager to help Underachievers become better English learners so that they could break the class reproduction cycle. Naturally, my contact with Underachievers was more frequent than that with Returnees (my contact with Returnees was limited by their afterschool schedules which typically included studying at hagwons until a 22:00 curfew). I wanted to help Underachievers learn English so that they could achieve upward social mobility.

I became gradually disappointed and, at some points, angry with Underachievers. They did not seem to appreciate my 'good' intention. During the data collection period, I served as an

afterschool English teacher (see 1.5.1. for details). Underachievers were always late for class. During class, it seemed that they were thinking of something else. After class, they would often destroy the handouts I had made especially for them. Admittedly, they were not the Underachievers I had imagined. I had expected them to be ashamed of their low academic performance and to have some motivation to improve their scores. The Underachiever boys I met, however, had no interest in studying, instead talking incessantly about getting a motorbike license, buying a "smoky snack" (by which they meant a cigarette), or indulging in smartphone games. In one class, an Underachiever girl asked where I bought my lipstick when I asked after class, "Do you have any questions?"

After getting to know more about the 'true' nature of Underachievers, I pondered the puzzling experiences with them: "Why can't they study English harder?" The first answer that I considered was low motivation. My educational background in applied linguistics was useful in considering psychological factors, such as motivation, self-regulation, and aptitude. From the psychological perspective, it was not surprising that they were Underachievers because none of them had 'proper' psychological inclinations. Recognizing this issue, schools offer psychiatric counselling (See section 1.3) to help students find the reasons for their underachievement. However, I found the low motivation framework insufficient to understand Underachievers' non-participation. First, some Underachievers showed good performance in other subjects, such as history and math. I presumed that their resistance to English should have to do with factors beyond the individual. Second, the practice of streaming was in place to support Underachievers' linguistic needs. The teachers made sure to incorporate cognitively less-demanding activities, with the expectation that Underachievers would be driven to learn English once they found the

learning interesting and fun. However, it seemed that the policy failed to deliver what it had promised.

My frustration with Underachievers eased a bit when I got to know their lives outside school. They invested heavily in friendships with high school-aged peers, which many adults, including myself, viewed as a site of juvenile delinquency. After all, the peer group was where information they valued circulated: where to smoke, how to find a job, and what to do after graduation from middle school. Within the limitation of my teacher identity, I had struggled with understanding Underachievers' worldviews. I also realized how I, if not intentionally, judged Underachievers' 'less-hardworking' behaviours based on my own class-orientation and successful experiences at school. I thus changed my question from "Why *can't* they study English harder?" to "Why *don't* they study English harder?" While only a slight change in wording, it had significant implications in understanding of Underachievers. I also had to move away from mainstream applied linguistics toward a more socially-informed research tradition to make sense of how students' English learning experiences have long-term consequences with regards to what I now understand as part of social reproduction.

Sociolinguistic ethnographers examine language practices in their respective contexts and trace how those activities are linked to particular political economic conditions (Heller, 2006). By theorizing that the global and the local are not exclusive, but interlocked, Heller (2001, p. 215) explained how sociolinguists should make links between everyday observation and social patterns at three different levels:

- First, we need to know what kinds of communicative resources and sets of interests interlocutors are likely to have, given their social position with respect to the distribution of resources.

- Second, we need to know to what extent certain kinds of resources are conventionally associated with certain kinds of interactions (like exams, or job interviews), or more broadly what kinds of resources might be at stake where.

- Third, we need to be able to discover how immediate interactional consequences are linked to longer-term consequences with respect to the access individuals have to resources, mediated through possibilities for participating in social relationships and activities where the circulation of resources is regulated.

Guided by these suggestions, I first examine the social categorization process of Returnees and Underachievers. While these social categories seem neutral based on language proficiency, we must critically ask under what social and political conditions Returnees and Underachievers emerge in school. The analytical questions include, but are not limited to, the following: Who counts as a fluent English speaker? Who decides what counts as 'good' English? Who goes where for English learning? What do Returnees think of Underachievers, and vice versa?

Second, I address how governmental policies on Underachievers affect their engagement in English. Government officials asked Underachievers to attend extra English classes, thinking that they should benefit from maximizing English input. Disturbingly, however, recent studies show a widening English achievement gap by social class. We thus should examine how and why the governmental policy on Underachievers works (or does not) by looking at the Underachievers' English learning experiences in school.

Finally, I analyze how social categorization in school affects the social reproduction process. We should link students' choice of (not) learning English to the larger Korean social

context, where English functions as a key gatekeeper to middle-class employment (Park, 2009). With this in mind, I considered where Underachievers and Returnees go after school, and how those after-school activities shape their understanding of school and society. From this foundation, I developed three research questions:

- What are the social, economic, and political conditions of Underachievers' English support in school? What resources are at stake, and why?

- What are the tensions and contradictions at play when the school addresses a class-based inequality in English attainment in defense of meritocracy?

- What do Korean students' English learning experiences tell us about social class in contemporary schooling?

While discussing the initial findings with my thesis supervisor, we agreed that gender played a key role in students' socialization in school. This is because the school oriented students to develop Koreanness, in which gender plays a key role. Korean nationalism, like any other nationalism, is gendered in that it normatizes traditional masculine and feminine gender expressions. This means that boys and girls have to embody traditional gender images based on their class orientation. Thus, I added the following question to incorporate a dimension of gender in understanding the dynamics of Returnees and Underachievers in school:

- How do students' gender and class interact with their process of English learning in the classroom?

By asking these questions, I aim to identify the ways in which public English education serves as a mechanism to maintain and reproduce inequality in society. This requires understanding the school generally as a site for social reproduction, where failure is always the fault of the individual, or perhaps their neighbourhood or family, while looking specifically at how English as a subject fits into that process. This study will help educators and language teachers understand why the governmental policies for Underachievers have had little impact on

lessening the English achievement gap by social class. Further, it will help them critically examine several underlying assumptions of teaching English in school, and their consequences in terms of social reproduction.

Below, I describe three phases of data collection in a middle school located in Gangnam. I chose the school based on the widespread social belief that Gangnam residents are highly dedicated to children's English education (Lee, 2016). I had never questioned this belief, until I got to know the history of gentrification in Gangnam.

5.1. Data Collection and Analysis

I collected data from a middle school that I call Hillside. For a year and a half (May 2014 to December 2015), I visited the school at least twice a week. My approach to Hillside was bottom-up in that I first built rapport with the community members as an afterschool instructor. Originally, I used only my Ph.D. student identity to build relationships with personnel at multiple schools. However, I found it difficult to get through the institutional process without personal ties. School personnel also seemed wary of my research project, and defended their reluctance to participate by emphasizing that students in their schools had equal access to educational success. After several failures to find a research site, I learned that I should find a school to which I could belong as a legitimate peripheral participant (Lave & Wenger, 1991): a person whose participation is limited, but legitimate to observe the everyday practice of the community. I thus applied for a part-time position as an afterschool instructor teaching English (See 4.3.2 for institutional position). My previous experience as a full-time English teacher, my ethnic/gender identity, and educational credentials helped me get hired for the position. After six months of working with the school community, I received administrative approval for the project.

Data collection for this study had three phases. **Phase 1** from May to December 2014 involved establishing a research site. This included selecting a middle school, finding (potential) research participants, and building rapport with staff and students. While preparing for the university's ethics review, I limited myself to collecting documents about public English education and examined the Returnee/Underachiever dynamics therein. I checked on the school's website on a regular basis for upcoming school events. I also kept track of documents, books, and leaflets about psychiatric counselling for Underachievers. These data helped me understand how underachievement was understood and regulated in contemporary schools.

Phase 2 from March to August 2015 was the major phase of data collection. Upon completion of the ethics review, I focused on collecting research data through interviews and classroom observations. The participating students took pride in their identities as Returnees or Underachievers (see Appendix A for a description of secondary participants). I interviewed 30 students (see Appendix B for interview outlines): six Returnees, 14 Underachievers, and 10 In-betweens (i.e., neither Returnees nor Underachievers).

I had a hard time recruiting Returnees at Hillside, because there were no official data to establish their identities. I thus had to use a snowballing strategy to meet them. I asked two Returnees (whom I got to know through an English teacher) to introduce me to their network of Returnee friends. Later, I met more Returnees at the English Speech Festival, where they felt free to reveal their Returnee identity (see section 3.5). Of the ten Returnees that I asked to participate in the research, six signed up. All had attended elementary school overseas, with a parent's (typically a father's) relocation at work (or year-long business trip) as the major reason for their study abroad. The six are described below:

Andy is a male Returnee whose father works at a local bank. He hopes to get into a science-specialized, selective high school. He participated in a summer English camp to obtain the certificate of completion, which he (and his parents) thought would be useful for his high school admission.

Brandon is a male Returnee from the US. He maintains the friendships he formed overseas by playing online games. He is struggling with math, and says that "math in Korea is too difficult."

Rina is a female Returnee with passion for the South Korean boy band, *BTS*. Her interest in cosmetics sees her often share information with Underachiever girls. However, her Returnee schedule sees her go to hagwon after school, and therefore those relationships do not further develop.

Roy is a male Returnee from the US. He has difficulty getting along with other classmates. He thinks that Korean students are very exclusive, and he is often picked on because of his too 'fluent' English (see Chapter 3).

Sally is a female Returnee from Canada. At the school she attended in Canada, there were few Koreans, and she noted that she felt lonely there and found many Chinese students looked down on her. She said that she was happy being in Korea. Before Sally disclosed her Returnee identity in order to participate in this research study, few people at the school, including her English teacher, were aware of her study abroad.

Tim stayed in Vietnam for two years, during which he attended an international school. He visited Korea on every vacation, and spent time with his friends speaking Korean. Following in the footsteps of his brother, who is a student at Stanford University, Tim hopes to go abroad for his post-secondary education.

While Returnees were more difficult to identify at the school, Underachievers, by contrast, were noticeable in the community because they are sent to a different classroom to study English. Underachievers shared several characteristics. First, they had a long history of experiences studying English prior to beginning official English education in public school, ranging from immersion to one-to-one tutoring. This is in stark contrast to the social assumption that Underachievers may lack resources to learn English outside school. Second, due to internal migration from other provinces and districts, Underachievers were newcomers to Gangnam (See Section 2.4 for Gangnam's gentrification history). While my contact with students was initially

limited to girls because of gender, I later expanded my network to the boys through the support

of two male Underachievers, Sanghyuk and Taegyu. They gradually became communicative

about their lives outside school, and introduced me to their network of friends, including their

*hubae*s (younger peers with lower hierarchy in friendship). The hubaes would show up instantly

if they were not at work and expressed their respect for Sanghyuk and Taegyu, who took great

care of them. Several focus-group interviews were conducted based on students' preferences. I

audio-recorded the interviews with their consent, and did not use the data if anyone wished to

remain off-the-record. The following description, in alphabetical order, details the participating

Underachievers and their key characteristics:

> **Byeongho** is a male student originally from Gwanakgu. He came to Seocho in Grade 5. Asked why English was difficult to learn, he responded that he lacked the memory skills for learning grammar.

> **Dongjin** is a male student from Seodaemungu. He is having difficulty getting along with his friends. He said that he wanted to live in a study-free world. He wanted to quit school and make money as soon as possible to become (financially) independent from his family.

> **Hae-In** is a female student who showed little enthusiasm for schoolwork. She moved to Seocho from Gwanakgu when she was in Grade 6. She said that she felt stressed out in school because teachers exercised too much control over students. Guided by her homeroom teacher, she later participated in a school-sponsored counselling program.

> **HS** is a male student who moved to Gangnam from Eunpyeonggu. He remained silent when teachers asked questions in class. He had difficulty in understanding English phonics, which suggested to me that he his academic deficiency had accumulated over a long time.

> **Jaewon** is a male student originally from Gangdonggu. He confessed to hating Returnees' English use in schools, saying, "We're in Korea! Why do they speak English?" As a result of this tension, he recently had a fight with Roy, one of the Returnee participants.

> **Junkyu** is a male student who was working at a local gas station after school. He moved to Seocho from Seodaemungu when he was an elementary school student.

> **MK** is a male student who came to Gangnam from Gyeonggi province. He began learning English when he was five, but said that he never enjoyed it. He participated in

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the English summer camp, but did not receive the certificate of completion due to his frequent absences.

Myung is a male student who moved to Seocho from Gangdonggu. He said that he did not like English back in elementary school because the teacher kept asking students to read out loud in front of the class. He participated in a career-counselling program, but soon lost interest and stopped attending, instead electing to hang out with his peers.

Samghyuk is a male student, who teachers said was "not paying attention to class." He moved to Seocho from Gyeonggi province. He and Taegyu were best friends, and often hung out together after school.

Suhyun is a female student who moved to Seoul from Jeonnam province. She was interested in cosmetics. She often expressed a desire to be proficient in English, but did not invest the time and energy she promised to in order to develop the language.

Sungtae is a male student whom I came to know through Myung. He graduated elementary school in Gurogu. He was the first student to make it clear that he did not believe English was necessary for his future.

SY is a female student who moved to Seocho from Chungcheong province. She attended short-term English intensive courses, where she was asked to speak only English. She was strongly motivated to get higher scores on English exams. She said that she did not like her English class because some boys' "disruptive" behaviour made it difficult to concentrate.

Taegyu is a male student with a great interest in the Rubik's cube. He moved to Seocho when he was at Grade 5 from Gangseogu. He befriended Sanghyuk in the Basic level English class

Yuna is a female student from Chungbuk Province who often skipped hagwon classes in order to hang out with other friends after school. She said, "English is not my thing." She was a graduate of an English-Only kindergarten. She was called to the Hillside Student Court several times over violations of the school uniform rule.

Secondary informants such as In-betweens and school personnel (i.e., teachers/administrative staff) were another participant group. Because interactions with teachers played a key role in the students' identity construction, I spent a long time getting to know them. Both the vice principal as well as the head teacher showed interest in my research and gave me insider perspectives when I shared my observations about students. Because my role was closer

to that of contract-termed staff, I had few opportunities to work with the tenured staff either in or out of school. My participation in two English camps during vacation enhanced my contact with school staff, including with a female native English teacher. During class, I volunteered for various roles, from making a short movie clip to acting as a substitute teacher. After class, we would spend time together for lunch or tea.

I found it difficult to schedule time for parent interviews. First, all the participating parents had either part- or full-time jobs in different locations. Second, students (especially Underachievers) were reluctant to bring their parents to school because they wanted privacy in some parts of their school life. Thus, I waited until the bi-annual Parent-Teacher Meeting at Hillside, where parents visit the school and discuss their children with homeroom teachers. I met five parents in person and had five phone calls with three other parents, who were all open to sharing their concerns about their children and English education at school.

Finally, I met a realtor and two local business owners. Given Hillside's history of gentrification, I found it necessary to meet experts in real estate to learn about who would be interested in this district, and why. My meetings with local business owners were not planned, because my research was originally limited to the school itself. However, I learned that many Underachievers were working part-time jobs, and their jobs outside school were a source of pride for them. For this reason, I visited the owner of a local pizza store after being introduced by one Underachiever to talk about adolescent workers.

I observed four General and four Basic level English classes of Grades 8 and 9, for a total of eight classroom observations. I sat at the back of the classroom and focused on interactions, which I audio-recorded. I participated in several school events, including the English Speech Festival, Annual Hillside Festival, student court, and Curriculum Day. Throughout, fieldnotes

served as a repository of questions, reflections, thoughts, struggles, and concerns. On my one-and-a-half-hour commute home from school, I repeatedly read them and highlighted recurring key themes over time.

A major goal of my research is to understand how schools make use of psychiatric counselling to support Underachievers. Yet, I could not observe counselling sessions because the sessions had to remain strictly confidential between the counsellor and the client. I instead analysed documents and workbooks (see Appendix D for full list), and then complemented the data with interviews with the student who had participated in the counselling session. I also referred to the websites that provide study and counselling materials to Underachievers (http://www.basics.re.kr/; http://wee.go.kr/home/main.php).

Phase 3 spanned September to December 2015 and included intermittent follow-up through online chats and occasional message exchanges with some of the participants and the teachers at Hillside. This phase turned out to be helpful in learning about students' academic outcomes regarding their transition to high school.

Doing ethnography in societies to which the researcher belongs can be challenging due to the familiarly with the cultural practices (Coupland & Creese, 2015). Born and educated in South Korea, I was concerned about whether things would be too 'normal'. As my expectations about Underachievers were increasingly challenged by the realities of what I observed, I began to ask questions afresh. For my observation, I developed four domains: ideology, practice, resource, and identity. These are the key dimensions of tensions and contradictions when we theorize school as a site of class reproduction (Willis, 1977). At the heart of school is a foundational belief in fairness, or equal opportunity for educational success. Depending on where students are socially positioned, the social actors in school could lead the game, follow the norms, or subvert

the order by inventing a new set of rules. The dynamics, then, between Returnees and

Underachievers will reveal why we need the categories in the first place, how English has

become a fault line of class division, why it matters, and to whom. The following is a list of

fieldwork questions I explored in each of the four domains:

Ideology: What is being displayed on public boards, on classroom walls, in English-only zones, and in corridors? How is the sociolinguistic environment of school represented in the school's annual report, pre-and in-service teacher training programs, code of conduct for native teachers, and media discourse on state-run English education polices?

Practice: How is division of labour being determined between Korean teachers and native teachers? What are their respective roles in the classroom? Who makes those distinctions and why? Who is in charge of after-school programs for Underachievers? Who else remains in school to take after-school programs? What are the conversation flow in class and the structure of participation like? Who controls the floor? Who pays attention to the teacher? Who does/does not hand in homework on time? Who stays/leaves the classroom to take class academically-streamed courses? How is the students' English proficiency constructed and evaluated?

Resource: How do the teachers evaluate the students? How is the Returnees' (or Underachievers') English proficiency evaluated? What are their relationships like with parents, teachers, and other peers? What kind of support do the students have in learning English? What motivations/goals do the students have in learning English? How do they come to have such goals? What do they do on weekends? Do the students carry smartphones with them to school? If so, why? If not, why not? What kinds of career paths are presented to Underachievers and Returnees?

Identity: Who participates in student court and student council? Who shows up/does not show up for English-related school activities (e.g., English speaking contest, essay contest, or publishing an English school newspaper)? In what kinds of subcultures do the students invest? How do they wear their school uniforms? Do they follow the norm? Or do they create some variation (e.g., shortening the length of skirt, wearing sweat pants under the skirt, etc.)? What do these styles mean to the students?

Based on Coupland and Creese (2015), I analyzed the data according to the following

sequential, yet iterative steps: (1) organize and prepare the data, which included transcribed

interviews, fieldnotes, written vignettes, photos, and videos; (2) read through all the data to

reflect on its meanings and manually code emerging themes by focusing on what is at stake,

what the contradictions in events are, if any, and why; (3) select the themes, setting, and participants in reference to the theoretical frameworks, and describe them in detail; (4) reread the data sets, revisit my research questions, and examine direct quotations to support my findings; (5) interpret the data based on the theoretical frameworks, existing literature, and my theoretical orientation.

6. This Dissertation

This study has six chapters, including this introductory chapter. In Chapter 2, I introduce Hillside Middle School. The first half of the chapter provides a history of Hillside, focusing on gentrification and its mixed-class effects. The rest of the chapter introduces the physical layout of the school.

In Chapter 3, I examine the ways in which school's curriculum contributes to students' differential access to English. First, in their transition to middle school, students felt challenged due to curriculum dissonance between elementary and middle school. Aware of that inconsistency, middle-class parents better prepared their children than their working-class counterparts. Second, academic streaming served to reinforce the achievement gap by social class. Teachers at the General level guided students to develop comprehension and inference skills. On the other hand, the Basic level classroom consisted of translation and decoding activities. This class format did not help Underachievers move into the General level because achieving high marks on school exams required not only translation but also inference skills. Third, native-like English ideology in the English Speech Contest enabled Returnees to enjoy full-fledged membership while relegating Underachievers to the role of bystanders.

Chapter 4 discusses the workings of the Educational Welfare for Underachievers program by looking at Afterschool Class and psychiatric counselling. Underachievers experienced

marginalization in Afterschool Class, because they did not find the test-oriented classroom format meaningful. In accounting for Underachievers' lack of participation, teachers tended to categorize all the Underachievers into two groups: Responsible versus Irresponsible Underachievers. With the former, teachers promoted the importance of English in the skilled blue-collar job market. With the latter, the teachers recommended psychiatric counselling in order to rectify the students' low academic motivation. I argue that the welfare programs had limited effect because the school fails to provide meaningful guidance in relation to Underachievers' life patterns, peer networks and norms.

Chapter 5 explores how the liberal ideology of self-help intersects with "grammatically-correct" English through the case of an English camp. Teachers' emphasis on Standard English did not allow Underachievers a legitimate speaking position in a communication-oriented classroom. Similarly, in a movie production task with a native English speaker, English skills played a key role in shaping students' access to participating in, and thus successfully completing the task.

In Chapter 6, I challenge the assumption that input-oriented English education policy should address the widening English gap along social class. Underachievers' non-participation in English reflects their development of working-class consciousness, in which few think of getting middle-class jobs through education. Considering English a middle-class identity marker, Underachievers legitimated their non-participation in English learning. Contrary to the limited access to English in school, experiences outside school in the low-skilled job market give Underachievers confidence to challenge school authority. In the long-term, however, the lack of English skills will stop Underachievers from achieving middle-class employment in Korea, where English functions as a key gatekeeper.

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Chapter 2 Historicizing South Koreans' Experiences of Public (English) Education

1. Introduction

This chapter illustrates the ways in which public (English) education has developed in South Korea. Currently, the English language serves as linguistic capital in social, political, and educational arenas in the new globalized economy (Park, 2009; Park & Wee, 2012). The importance of English as a powerful foreign language is not new in the eyes of Koreans, as investment in English dates back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. While recognizing the historical continuity, I pay attention to the role of public education, which enabled all citizens, not just a small number of elites, to have access to English.

The central debate around public English education is to what extent schools level out the playing field for getting access to English. Assuming that working-class students' underachievement is due to limited resources, educators and policy makers focus on provisioning more input into English language learning for lower income students. As I will show below, this self-help ideology has to do with South Korea's nation-building movement as a liberal democratic country against North Korea. As official institutions endorsing what counts as legitimate English (Bourdieu, 1977), schools endeavour to emphasize meritocracy in achievement, downplaying non-merit factors such as gender and class. Without denying that access to English is a critical factor in determining its achievement, I argue that we should take a closer look at the social conditions of motivation and achievement in English. This is because students' educational aspirations are determined by multiple factors, including familial backgrounds, peer relationships, and career prospects as well as individual cognition.

Below, I trace the link between public (English) education and social reproduction. The first section reviews how public education served to legitimate differential resource distribution

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in Korean society. I then examine how and why English education is bound up in the social selection process. The final section introduces my research site and its geographical significance in terms of gentrification, and sketches out the school's English education policies and practices.

2. A History of Public Education in Korea: Erasing off Class in Society

This section traces a timeline of the history of public education in Korea. Korea's history in public education began with the experience of colonization by Japan (1910-1945). Throughout the *Joseon* period (a Korean kingdom that lasted from 1392 to 1909), a hereditary social hierarchy grounded in Confucianism limited the public's access to education, and to powerful positions. In engineering Joseon into a colony, the Japanese government unfurled assimilative policies, one of which was to transform Joseon people into Japanese citizens by means of public education. Access to high-powered positions was limited to Japanese citizens, or to those who could speak *kokugo* (national language; Japanese) (see Yi, 2010). Some Korean-Japanese bilingual speakers managed to achieve higher social status through credentials in public education (Yang, 2017). In this way, educational credentials began to replace prestigious family backgrounds as criteria for upward social mobility.

Korea achieved national independence in August 1945, after the end of World War 2. During the Cold War period, Korea was divided into two along the 38-degree north latitude line, with U.S. military forces occupying the southern half and Soviet forces occupying the northern half. The two countries' nation building efforts brought about severe ideological tensions between liberalism and communism. In South Korea, liberalism gained political legitimacy through the ideology of fairness. For instance, the Universal Primary Education Law, which mandated every citizen's access to elementary education, represented the first step toward becoming a democratic nation. The law increased the student enrolment rate to 4.94 million (90%

of total elementary school-aged population) in 1965 (Byun, Kim, & Park, 2012). The policy served its political goal of producing nationalistic citizens through education (Hobsbawm, 1989). It also provided a literate yet low-waged labour force for the state's transformation into a capitalist society (see Bowles & Gintis, 1976).

After the Korean War (1950-1953), there emerged great discrepancy between the demand for and supply of secondary education. The social demand for secondary education was on the rise as people saw it as a means to better their life conditions. Nevertheless, the opportunities were limited because the law defined compulsory education only up to the sixth grade, and resources to expand educational institutions, such as facilities and teachers, were scarce. Secondary schools thus chose students through entrance examinations. Secondary school graduates had increased opportunities to pursue middle-class jobs with good monetary rewards, such as paid breaks and pension benefits. Thus, the entrance exam was called as *Ipsi jiok* (entrance exam hell). The term captures how academic credentials served to enhance economic capital in Korea.

It is important to ask why the public did not engage in collective mobilization for better social welfare policy. Thompson (2002), for instance, showed that the labour movement in the 1970s awakened British working-class consciousness, and led to better labour conditions. By contrast, the ideological conflict between communism (North Korea) and liberalism (South Korea) made it difficult for South Koreans to have class-consciousness. This is because President Lee Seung Man and his party framed social class as part of communist ideology, and therefore anti-nationalistic. According to Hobsbawm (1989), the basis of nationalism is the "… readiness of people to identify themselves *emotionally* with 'their' nation" (p. 143, emphasis added). Suppressing class consciousness was thus an effective way to fashion a national identity in

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opposition to North Korea. People engaging in unions or labour movements ran the risk of arrest, detention, and public execution.

Moreover, Koreans, influenced by Confucianism which prioritized academics over menial work, perceived the middle class to be morally superior to the working class. Schools cater to middle-class norms by positioning academic competitiveness as the key characteristic of good students. In that sense, students develop a greater sense of belonging in school when they are identified as such. For instance, OECD reports (2015) showed that the longer students study and the more they conform to expectations to do well academically, the more positive their responses about their school life. In this way, investment in education came to represent the politically and socially legitimate means of obtaining middle-class jobs.

During the military regimes that spanned over three decades (1961-1987), successive governments placed a high emphasis on uniformity over creativity as the goal of public education. The Park Jeong-Hee regime abolished entrance exams in secondary school by implementing the Middle School Non-Examination Entrance Policy in 1968 and the High School Equalization Policy in 1974 (S.-J. Park, 2007). Under the July 30 Educational Reform Act, the Jeon Do-Whan military regime prohibited private after-school education in 1980. While these policies served to ensure upward social mobility among working-class students, the public became discontent with the increasingly strict state regulations.

These changes in educational policies, despite their intended goal of making Korea a more equitable society, failed to mitigate rapid class division. The Park regime strongly controlled the quotas on the number of students admitted to higher education in order to lower unemployment rate among college graduates. Nevertheless, parents' investment in children's education continued to grow, because post-secondary educational credentials were necessary for

middle-class jobs. For instance, most college graduates worked as government officials or businesspersons at conglomerates like Samsung and Hyundai. The companies provided family-oriented employee benefits with relatively high wages (J.-S. Song, 2009). On the other hand, blue-collar workers, including those working in the same conglomerates, had to endure inhumane conditions, such as unpaid night labour and few benefits. The wage differential between college graduates and middle school graduates sharply increased, from 2.7 times in 1972 to 3.5 times in 1976 (Kim & Choi, 2015). As I discussed, the governmental suppression of labour/union movements refrained the development of class-consciousness among Koreans. Therefore, fierce competition for college entrance continued to grow, because of the ideology that upward social mobility was a function of personal effort.

Korea achieved political democracy in 1987, after historic mass protests calling for the end of military dictatorship. In education, the end of the military regime brought a fundamental shift toward the goal of excellence and away from the goal of egalitarianism. After democratization, class division in education came into sharp relief because the upper-middle class endeavoured to maintain privilege through educational capital. They argued for freedom in private education and elite education by contesting the former military regimes' stringent educational policies. In line with the political atmosphere of democracy, demand for market principles and consumerism triumphed over state control for egalitarianism.

In the 1990s, the state emphasized its post-authoritarian, democratic governance, and agreed to lift restrictions on education. Examples include lessening conditions for university establishment, diversifying types of high schools, and emphasizing "consumer-oriented" education. As Byean (2015) indicated, those changes paved the way to introducing neoliberal principles into schools. Policy makers devised and implemented the changes without much

resistance from teachers' unions or civil groups, both of which were, in principle, against

neoliberalism (J.-S. Song, 2009). This is because the public interpreted individual property and

freedom as symbols of democracy, rather than of neoliberalism (Seo, 2005). In that sense, the

political goal of democracy converged with the neoliberal educational policy under the political

condition of post-military governments.

The Asian Debt Crisis of 1997 led to a radical economic and social restructuring of

Korean society. The Korean economic crisis began as several conglomerates successively went

bankrupt. Due to the companies' financial vulnerability, the stock market fell sharply in 1995

and 1996 (Baliño & Ubide, 1999). Foreign investors hastily moved their capital out of the

Korean market and there were few dollar reserves left in the central bank to repay debts to

international short-term lenders. The Kim Young Sam administration was referred to the IMF for

advice. As a condition for receiving IMF bailout funds, the government restructured its industrial

(big conglomerates), financial (banks), and bureaucratic systems along liberal free-market lines.

The IMF crisis led many large companies and banks into bankruptcy, driving large-scale

layoffs and sending unemployment rates from 2.5 percent to 7.8 percent (J.-S. Song, 2009). The

IMF intervention brought about the amplification of neoliberal social policies, among them

labour politics. During this time, middle-class anxiety over unprecedented layoffs and lack of

full-time employment opportunities prevailed in society. In the name of enhancing

competitiveness, for instance, many corporations abandoned the traditions of seniority-based

wage structures and lifelong employment, naturalizing instead a more flexible pay system and

year-based contracts. The government also implemented various forms of temporary

employment as one means of increasing labour market flexibility. The IMF crisis saw a large

number of middle-class families suffer downward mobility, and economic polarization became a topic of national debate.

The heightened attention over equality in education reshaped the notion of underachievement in school. To restore middle-class consumerism and prosperity, educators and policymakers argued that public education, as the official institution that allocates middle-class job opportunities, should offer fair access to all children regardless of their class backgrounds. Previously, low-performance in school was purely attributed to a lack of individual effort. However, after the IMF crisis, policy makers and educators began to consider underachievement as a class-based, structural problem. Accordingly, Underachievers (particularly those from working-class families) were targeted for various forms of additional state support.

To summarize, public education in Korea served to disseminate meritocracy and to mask class-based differentiation. During the ideological conflict between North and South Korea, the South Korean government mobilized meritocracy as a modern principle of social organization, dismissive of communism (and its central idea of social class). The military regimes controlled public education in favour of uniformity in school. After the collapse of the military dictatorship, citizens called for democratization to advance individual liberty and freedom. The period coincided with the spread of neoliberalism in Korean society. However, few resisted its spread because individual freedom and choice were interpreted as signs of democracy rather than of neoliberalism.

In the next section, I discuss how public English education, as the key terrain of tensions between meritocracy and class-based inequality, developed in the Korean educational context. Any job seeker in Korea would agree that English is necessary to get into better schools and get better jobs, thus securing an economically stable future. As Park (2016) noted, however, English

learning is more than a skill that may be replaced with other skills. As a basic index of responsible care, English learning has become a "moral project of developing oneself to become a better person through English" (p. 458). By tracing the history of English education, I examine how it has shaped the subjectivities of South Korea.

3. English Education in Korea

During the US military intervention (1945-1948), Korea became officially an English-Korean bilingual country. Through the colonial politics of centre and periphery (Pietikäinen & Kelly-Holmes, 2013), the knowledge of language of centre enabled its speakers to achieve upward social mobility. Not all English-Korean bilinguals enjoyed high social status, however. For instance, Returnees from US educational institutions obtained elite status in Korea. By contrast, bilingual waitresses and sex workers near the U.S. military camp town did not have the same opportunities. To them, bilingualism was an indelible ruin the Korean War had engraved onto their bodies. The social prestige of bilingualism was also not shared by war refugees or by houseboys who ran errands for U.S. soldiers. Instead, their bilingual skill represented a living example of life-threatening hardship. Given this, one's status as a legitimate bilingual speaker had less to do with English skill than with what kind of markets it was attached to.

Korea introduced public English education in 1946, one year after national independence in 1945. From 1945 to 1954, students learned discrete English skills such as translation, grammar, writing, conversation, and pronunciation (W.-K. Lee, 2015). In the absence of an English education curriculum, teachers resorted to choral reading and the English-Korean dictionary for instruction.

During the military regimes from 1961 to 1987, the Ministry of Education enacted English education policies focused on teaching listening and reading skills. At the same time,

there was growing desire to learn English communicative skills, because the government emphasised them to boost national dollar reserves through export and tourism (Kang, 2014). English language schools in Korea were thus highly populated with adult learners, who wanted to learn how to speak English 'properly'. Recognizing the high social demand for English, the government announced a plan for teaching English communicative skills to elementary school students. Nevertheless, the plan was not put into action due to 1) opposition from nationalists, who thought of English education as detrimental to the Korean culture and language, and 2) the limited number of teachers with communicative competence.

The ideological link between English and globalization intensified when Korea hosted two international games in a row: the 1986 Asian Games and the 1988 Summer Olympics. Mainstream media and public campaigns encouraged citizens to support foreign visitors and create a positive image of Korea by acting friendly and speaking English (Park, 2009). Many Koreans began to associate English with the language of globalization and modernization. The Fifth National Curriculum also reflected this discourse by emphasizing oral skills over reading skills. It was around this time that English skills began to play a gatekeeping role. Starting in 1986, for instance, English became a mandatory subject for the college entrance exam. In job interviews, knowledge of English became a key index for qualified candidates (Kang, 2014).

The Kim Young Sam Administration (1992-1997) formed the Presidential Globalization Promotional Committee in 1995 and brought exhaustive changes to society, one of which was to start English education in Grade 3. Since then, the government has run a two-tiered English education; teaching communication skills in elementary school and grammatical knowledge in secondary schools. According to the national curriculum, students learn the English alphabet in the second semester of Grade 3. Practicing literacy skills (simple words and sentences composed

of fewer than 7-8 words) begins in Grade 5. The curriculum regulates how many words students learn at each grade level: no more than 100 words in Grades 3 and 4, and a limit of 150 words in Grades 5 and 6 (Lee, 2014). The teachers' guidebook encourages the use of games, songs, chants, and role-plays for students' motivation (Kim, 2000). From secondary school on, students study English as an academic subject to take the high-stakes college entrance exam.

It was during the IMF crisis that English came to take up symbolic importance in the job market. In accounting for the national 'shame', the conservative media linked the economic meltdown to government officials' inadequate English skills to negotiate with IMF authorities in favour of Korea's interests (Park, 2009). According to the discourse, English (communicative) skills should enable more Koreans to function fully in the global arena, which should in turn bring prosperity to the nation. Thus, English language learning has been actively promoted by both the state and the corporate sector as a crucial resource necessary for Korea's survival in the global world, leading to *yeongeo yeolpung*, or English fever.

Indeed, Park and Abelmann (2004) reported that family expenditures for English education increased during the IMF crisis, in which the middle class shrank by 20 to 30 percent. The reasons for the rapid development of the shadow English education market can be analyzed at both the individual and the national levels. At the individual level, English has come to exceed its local meaning as a school subject on the college entrance examination. Nationally, as Park and Abelmann suggested, Koreans need to be good at *communicative* English as a way to represent the new Koreanness:

> The idea of what it means to be South Korean is transforming: increasingly, to be South Korean means to be South Korean "in the world"-a prospect that calls for the mastery of English as an index of cosmopolitan striving. (p. 13)

All this led to intensive investment in English education for everyone from young children to white-collar workers. Schools took on the significance of communicative English by revising English curricula multiple times. Native speaker teachers of English were actively recruited from English-speaking countries to teach in public schools (Jeon & Lee, 2006). Parents wanted more opportunities for their children to be immersed in speaking English. Having found the curricular reform toward communication insufficient, parents resorted to private English teaching institutions, including English preschools and English-only schools. The English education industry at all levels experienced an exponential growth. Young adults today actively pursue communicative English skills, finding it a necessary skill to help them survive in the increasingly precarious working conditions (Jang, 2017). College students invest in the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), and school-aged students actively study abroad. In sum, English communicative skills have come to represent cosmopolitan selfhood in globalizing Korea.

The discourse of English as the global language served as an effective marketing strategy. The current English markets exhort that each household take primary responsibility for investing in their children's English learning. To manage the constant risk of downward mobility, families navigate various forms of English programs. In particular, the rapid growth of study abroad among pre-adolescent children, or what Park & Lo (2012) termed Early Study Abroad (ESA), is notable. By referring to the ideology of 'the earlier, the better' in language learning, ESA agencies argue that exposure to English at a young age is critical to developing a native-like accent. As a result, elementary school students emerged as key ESA participants. Statistics from KEDI (2010), for instance, indicate that elementary school students represented a majority of ESA participants in 2009; 16,836 out of 29,769, followed by 8,172 middle school students and

4,761 students from high school. As we will show in section 3.2, middle-class parents prioritized ESA opportunities to develop 'communicative English' before guiding the children to focus on English grammar. Upon return, Returnees look for English-only environments to maintain their native-like English skills. Currently, many hagwons in Korea offer English-immersive environments, prohibiting students' use of Korean during class.

While the public agreed on the importance of English in the globalized era, little attention was given to the fact that one's socioeconomic class plays a key role in accessing ESA. Unlike college-level study abroad programs for which universities and colleges offer full (or partial) funding, ESA is fully financed by individual households (Jang, 2017). Numerous media reports began to discuss social polarization based on English ability, calling the phenomenon the "English Divide". They also called for a fundamental reform in public English education towards teaching communicative skills. In this way, public English education emerged as a key site to neutralize class-based tension over access to native-like English.

The Lee Myung Bak Administration (2008-2013) continued Kim Young Sam's globalization-oriented education initiative by addressing two recurring complaints about public English education: First, that streaming should replace mixed-level in order to maximize the pedagogical effectiveness of English class; and second, that schools should teach communicative English skills in place of grammar skills. In theory, streaming promotes learning English according to students' level of English proficiency. Streaming, previously banned by the school equalization policy of the 1970s, was recognized for its value as a way to increase competition among students. In 2009, 77.2% of middle schools and 79.6% of high schools adopted streaming as school policy, and those percentages are on the rise (Hwang, 2014). However, examination of

streaming practice will show how the system serves as the basis for reproducing class-based

inequality in English attainment (See Chapter 3).

Second, the government put a strong emphasis on teaching English communicative

competence. Such focus led to a fundamental shift in the curriculum, from a grammar-focused

approach to communicative language teaching (CLT). Other policies to support CLT include

Teaching English in English only (TEE) and recruiting native English speakers as teachers.

However, many English teachers, especially at the secondary level, found the plan incompatible

with their classroom practice. This is mainly due to pressure from parents to prepare students for

the college entrance exam, which does not include an English-speaking component (Lee, 2014).

The government-funded English camp programs emerged as a key site to put communication-

oriented English education policies into action. This site currently serves as alternative access for

working-class children who cannot afford ESA. In Chapter 5, I examine how students learn

English in this program.

In sum, the social imagination of English as valued linguistic capital is not new in South

Korea. Historically, the public understood English communicative skills as key to attaining

middle-class jobs. Parental expectations for English education grew exponentially, but the

national curriculum could not satisfy the demand. Middle-class parents thus resorted to the

private English education market. As a result, students' opportunities to learn English differ

depending on their social class. As an official institution committed to meritocracy, how would

school try to level the playing field? What are the contradictions therein?

The rest of this dissertation will examine how schools respond to the class-based division

in English education by taking up a case of Returnees and Underachievers. I now turn to my

research site, Hillside Middle School. Although the middle school was located in Gangnam, one

of the affluent areas in Korea, the school was struggling with an increasing English achievement gap. I explain why in the next section.

4. The Other Gangnam: Sociohistorical Backgrounds of Hillside

This section introduces my research site, Hillside Middle School. I first sketch out the neighbourhood of Hillside with a focus on the history of gentrification in Gangnam. I then explain how internal migration to Gangnam has affected English education policies at Hillside.

4.1 The Neighborhood of Hillside

The Greater Gangnam Area (comprised of the Gangnam, Seocho, and Songpa Districts) represents modernity and wealth in Korea. Its population consists largely of the upper-middle class. Shon (2016a) argued that one out of every three cash-rich individuals in Korea lives in the districts. The formation of Gangnam as a wealthy residential area had to do with the government policy to develop Gangnam, which had been agricultural. During the Park Chung-Hee regime, first-tier schools in Gangbuk (north of the Han River) were relocated to Gangnam. Soon, housing prices in the area soared, with large numbers of people wanting to live in Gangnam initially for investment purposes, but increasingly for educational purposes (Lee, 2016).

Figure 1. Map of Seoul

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If luxury characterizes Gangnam's lifestyle, it is quality education that characterizes students' life in Gangnam. In the documentary film *School Swap Korean Style*, for instance, the BBC followed three Welsh teenagers on an exchange program to a school in Gangnam to explore South Korea's top global standing in maths (Welsh teenagers learn from South Korea school swap, 2016). Gangnam students are also widely known to spend their afterschool hours with extra study at hagwons or in high-end extracurricular activities such as horse riding and fencing (e.g., Sung & Joo, 2017). With their parents' affluent socioeconomic backgrounds, Gangnam students thus have better access to first-rate educational resources. Lee (2016), for instance, stated that the Greater Gangnam Area has more ESA students than any other district in Seoul. Gangnam schools also show competitive results in nationwide exams compared to other schools. According to Song (2017), about 40 percent of new students in Seoul National University come from the Gangnam Area.

My research site, Hillside Middle School, is located in Seocho, one of the three districts of the Greater Gangnam Area. Before data collection, I had a chance to talk about my research with both Hillside insiders and outsiders. I began by opening up the conversation with a simplified research question: "I want to know about Returnees and Underachievers at the school." Responses varied by community. Insiders, like teachers and school staff, put an emphasis on Returnees: "Hillside is not the kind of school you'd imagined," or "I'd say Hillside is in the countryside of Gangnam." Outsiders, like graduate colleagues and professors in Korea, put an emphasis on Underachievers: "Is there such a student in Gangnam?" or "You might want to keep looking for another research site."

Their different reactions partly stem from Hillside's unique student demographics. One school staff member confirmed that Hillside had a higher number of working-class students than

other schools in Gangnam. How is this the case when housing prices in Seocho are not readily affordable for them? Below, I start with a brief background of Seocho, with a central concern for its gentrification process. This will help us understand the differences in the perspectives about Hillside of both insiders and outsiders.

4.2 Gentrification and Hillside

Seocho, part of the Greater Gangnam Area, is the largest district in Seoul. The head of the district argues that Seocho is a globalization-friendly city, meaning that it aims to maximize the use of English in daily contexts. This policy is represented in the staff meetings of Seocho public officials, which are supposed to be conducted in English (Baek, 2009). The district continues to fund the placement of native English speaker teachers in secondary school, while schools in other districts have stopped recruiting them (Teacher Lim, personal communication, January 25, 2015). There are four public English resources centres, where instructors run English teaching programs not only for toddlers, but also for the elderly.

Healthy living conditions and cultural facilities attract wealthy people. In 2015, Seocho beat Gangnam as the most expensive residential area of Seoul, making housing costs there increasingly unaffordable for many. The district has major facilities, such as corporate research and development centers, the National Library of Korea, and the Supreme Court. One teacher told me that a large number of Hillside's parents work in the legal field as judges, prosecutors, lawyers, and judicial staff. A French quarter within Seocho, complete with a French-speaking school adds to the ambience of sophistication, inviting local tourists to year-round cultural festivals.

The history of Seocho, however, shows that the city is home not only to the upper class, but also to the urban poor. In preparation for hosting the 1986 Asian Games and the 1988

Olympic Games in Seoul, the state carried out a series of nationwide beautification projects. This included improvement of unregistered households in southern parts of Seoul, including Bongcheon, Sadang, Nangok, and Sangdo (Cho, 2013). Residents who could not afford public housing settled on the fringes of the Greater Gangnam Area, which had remained an underdeveloped greenbelt of Seoul. Due to the city regulation allowing small-scale farming and floriculture crops in the region, the urban poor built vinyl greenhouses for residential purposes. During and after the economic crisis of 1997, the homeless began to migrate into the area, occupying the greenhouses that were built up over time. As a result, a residential area consisting of vinyl greenhouses sprung into being at the lower end of Seocho.

In 2008, the state carried out another city renewal project with the aim of supporting housing stability for those in need. President Lee announced that some greenbelt areas that had become squalid, sprawling slums of vinyl greenhouses would give way to a large apartment complex, which I call Forestwood here. There were multiple interests at work. First, the government could resolve a perennial urban problem due to overpopulation, shortage of housing, and soaring housing prices. The state's housing stability plan was to rent houses at a relatively affordable price over a long-term period (from 6 to 50 years). As part of social welfare, the government gave priority to low-income families, families with more than three children, multicultural families, newlyweds, and households with disabled members (Huh, 2016). They further promised that even lower-income families could have a home in Seocho, as is captured in Figure 2. Below, the placard reads: Providing living space where people from diverse social classes live together.

Figure 2. Forestwood under construction

Gentrification also relates to the interest of the government, because it was the chance to remove the vinyl greenhouse residential area without much public attention. This also would create economic profit for the construction market, as well as the national economy, in a time of recession. Gentrification brought about a fundamental restructuring of the neighbourhood (Appendix C). Due to its convenience and accessibility to education, shopping, and multiple subway stations and bus terminals, the demand for Forestwood was high. According to a local realtor, the environment attracted many young professionals, many of whom made Forestwood their home. Within the neighborhood, there is subtle yet clear spatial segregation in ways that the neighbors are able to identify others' socioeconomic status depending on which building they lived in.

Following the construction of the apartment complexes, Hillside Middle School underwent two major changes. First, the school was moved. From 2012 on, internal migration to Forestwood saw increasing parental expectation and demand for quality education. Given the decreasing population of middle school students in central Seocho, the government decided to

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relocate Hillside closer to Forestwood in order to accommodate the increasing number of middle school students there. At Hillside, nearly 70 percent of the student population attended elementary school outside Seocho (Teacher Sung, personal communication, March 19, 2015). As a result, students of varying socioeconomic backgrounds came to attend Hillside, from old-timers to newcomers to the district. The former argued strongly against the school relocation without legal consent from parents, and against the inclusion of newcomers who they feared might undermine the competitiveness of Hillside. They were concerned that some working-class students' disruptive behaviour in class or low academic motivation would affect their children. In a series of open discussions, the school principal reassured the parents by suggesting that Hillside would provide a level-differentiated curriculum through streaming.

The second change relates to English education in school. As expected, Hillside students exhibited greater variability in terms of their English skills. As a subject, English has the largest standard deviation, which means students' English scores show the largest gap. At one end, Returnees have learned English through transnational schooling and English immersion in Korea; at the other, Underachievers struggle with the English alphabet, with few resources at hand. Parents, as well as teachers, recognized the wide English proficiency gap among students. Thus, Hillside elected to stream English classes from Grades 7 to 9, while other school subjects had optional streaming (e.g., Korean for Grade 7; math for Grades 8 and 9). English teachers suggested that streaming would play a crucial role in catering to students' different academic standings, and supporting Underachievers to good effect.

Streaming begins with combining students in two classrooms, and then dividing them into three different levels as "fast", "intermediate", and "slow" learners (Byean, 2015). To sort students into these categories, teachers at Hillside created a hierarchy of students' English scores

from the two classes, and then established a cut-off point from which the 10 students with the lowest results were identified. This is because the government asked local schools to have 10 or fewer Underachievers in each class. Those above the cut-off were streamed to the General level; those below were assigned to the Basic level. The latter group takes English classes in a specially designated classroom (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Classroom for Underachievers

In spite of these efforts to effectively stream the classes, there emerged a wide proficiency gap within each level. In the Basic level class, for instance, some students were used to being labelled Underachievers due to accumulated academic deficiency from elementary school. Others were ashamed of the category affiliation and showed high motivation to move into the General level. In the General class, a broad gap also existed, from Returnees to Underachievers who were outperforming their peers in the Basic class. In Chapter 3, I examine how teachers deal with the within-group difference in their streamed classes.

At the time of data collection, there were six English teachers, including one native speaker of English teacher whom I call Rebecca. Three of them were tenured, full-time teaching staff; the other three, including the native teacher, were non-tenured teachers. In terms of

teaching, the two non-tenured teachers were in charge of the Basic level, because other teachers preferred the General level class, where students have a more academic-oriented attitude. Teacher Lim, who took charge of one Basic level class, noted that there are many "troublemakers" in the class, so teaching in the Basic level sometimes drained her energy. Rebecca's class was available only for Grades 8 and 9, as this was the maximum number of classes her teaching schedule would permit. She taught English conversation in collaboration with other Korean teachers. According to Rebecca, students do not pay attention in her class because "my teaching part is not on school exams" (see chapter 5).

The physical layout of Hillside supports streaming. The first floor houses major student facilities: student and teacher cafeterias, the school auditorium, the nurse's office, and the library. It also includes the Principal's office, conference room, admin office, and broadcasting room. On the second floor, we find classrooms for Korean, Chinese characters, and home economics, as well as the offices of three different teachers and of the Vice-Principal. The third floor houses the English, social studies, ethics, and Chinese classrooms, along with two teachers' offices and an indoor gym. On the fourth floor, math and science classrooms are present, along with two teachers' offices. The fifth floor houses art and music classes, with two common-use classrooms.

Hillside offers a wide range of extracurricular activities in line with the governmental policies for quality English education. These include the English Speech Contest, English Writing Contest, English play, English camps, and Afterschool Class. Emphasizing that these opportunities are open to all, teachers and policy makers suggest the programs' different goals should cater to each student's different linguistic needs, from building English literacy to developing communicative skills. In so doing, schools attempt to level out the playing field for a more equitable access to English.

Drawing upon the history of Gangnam gentrification, I have shown how English achievement gap is recursively reproduced throughout the school, in streaming, in student results, and even in the design of the building Indeed, despite their initial desires and efforts to lessen the achievement gap, teachers recognized that English had the largest such gap among school subjects. Examining why the English gap continues to grow may help us to understand factors and ways that enhance or hinder Underachievers' English learning. The rest of this thesis examines the dynamics of Returnees and Underachievers across four discursive spaces: Regular English classrooms, English Speech Festival, Afterschool Class, and English camps.

Chapter 3 Unequal Access to Meritocracy: English Education in Schools

1. Introduction

This chapter examines the ways in which the seemingly meritocratic English curriculum contributes to students' differential achievement by social class. Meritocracy is the key ideology of public schools. According to McNamee and Miller (2013), it refers to "a social system as a whole in which individuals get ahead and earn rewards in direct proportion to their individual efforts and abilities" (p. 2). Meritocracy in the public education system incorporated two meanings of freedom: both political freedom from tyranny and economic freedom to achieve on one's own merits. Historically, the school supported individual merit over other social categories (e.g., gender, class, and race) to account for success in school. This meritocratic ideology orients society to think of school as a democratic institution where everyone succeeds (or fails) based on raw talent and personal effort.

Currently in Korea, the English language serves as a battleground to test the workings of this meritocracy. Along with the growing emphasis on English communication skills, native-like English has come to index a model English (Park, 2009) that is valuable to acquire. Studies suggest that, in many linguistic peripheries where people learn English as a foreign language, the opportunity to learn English is not always equally distributed (e.g., Choi, 2003; Kanno, 2008; Price, 2014). This creates a dilemma for schools. On the one hand, they should maintain meritocracy as political ideology. On the other hand, they should carry out social selection based on the unequal conditions of English learning.

By looking at the workings of the English curriculum at Hillside, I explore how schools resolve the tension between meritocracy and class-based inequality. I first take note of a fundamental change in the goals of teaching English at the elementary and middle school levels:

from communication to grammar. The construction of English as a sum of linguistic items is in line with the meritocratic school ideology that anyone can excel in school through personal effort. However, the communicative approach of the elementary school English curriculum does not prepare students to learn English in middle school, where teachers largely focus on teaching grammar and reading skills. Further, the heavy focus on grammar does not resonate with the wider social discourse that values communicative skills.

In response to the curriculum inconsistency, parents applied different strategies according to their socioeconomic class. Such differences extend beyond whether or not they can afford to send their children to shadow education agencies. It further encompasses their different interpretations about parents' roles in English education and about public (English) education. Schools' streaming practices reinforced students' class-based differences by orienting them into different classroom practices, and thus, outcomes. The division served as the basis for identity construction as Returnees and Underachievers. In the process, gender played a key role in mediating their relationships. The English Speech Festival reinforced students' identities as Returnees and Underachievers. Specifically, native-like English ideology in the English Speech Contest enabled Returnees to enjoy full-fledged membership while relegating Underachievers to the role of bystanders.

This chapter consists of five sections. First, I discuss the systemic rupture of the English curriculum between elementary and middle school. I then examine class-based responses to the disjoined English curriculum. The third section compares the differences between the General and Basic levels and examines their effects on academic outcome. I also explore how students' gender intersects with the peer status of Underachievers and Returnees. The final section looks at how native-like ideology differently shaped students' participation in the English Speech

Festival. I conclude the chapter with a call for a sociological turn to underachievement, which is understood in psychiatric terms.

2. The Same Subject? Institutional Rupture in English Curriculum

The primary goal of English education in Korean elementary schools is to help language learners express their basic needs in English (Kim, 2007). Arguing that a positive attitude is crucial to students' success in English, textbook writers and educators ask teachers to organize their lessons with hands-on activities and games. Therefore, English classroom activities in elementary school consist mainly of participating in in-class projects and of learning English songs and chants. Teachers also encourage students to make use of inductive reasoning to develop knowledge of English grammar. In teaching the English tense, for instance, teachers allow students generate rules from examples before giving them explicit input (e.g., put –ed after the verb).

English instruction undergoes a radical change in middle school in that the English classroom practice focuses exclusively on learning English grammar and vocabulary. Many middle school students, regardless of their academic standing, nostalgically recall the English class they enjoyed in elementary school. Once in middle school, they find that learning English becomes a largely sedentary task with a heavy focus on reading and grammar.

Conversation with Students, Grade 7
We didn't study English in the way we do now. We learned English through songs and chants. These days we have lots of grammar and vocabulary to memorize. I feel like English has now become a sedentary job- it's so difficult.
그니까 옛날에는 지금처럼 공부 안 했거든요. 노래도 부르고 막 챈트도 하고. 근데 지금은 완전 문법에 단어에 외워야 할게 너무 많고 약간 사무적인 느낌? 영어가 어려워졌죠.

English was such a piece of cake in elementary school, like most kids got perfect scores except for a few. Now English is a challenge. I want to go back to the old days.

초등학교는 진짜 영어 완전 쉬웠어요. 애들 다 거의 백점 맞고 좀 못하는 애들 빼고는. 근데 지금은 생각이 아 영어 완전 어렵다. 진짜 다시 돌아가고 싶어요

The two students responded that English learning in middle school consisted of learning English grammar and vocabulary, which involves lots of "sedentary work." This response is common among Grade 7 students across Korea, as the Ministry of Education controls the content of textbooks and curriculum. This means that the core parts of textbooks, regardless of the publisher, remain the same. Why, then, does the government make such a radical shift in curriculum and approach between elementary and middle school?

I argue that schools can efficiently carry out social selection by presenting English learning as a set of decontextualized linguistic items. It is from middle school on that academic performance (and its record) carries significance for college entrance. In a context in which post-secondary education plays a key role in deciding students' middle-class employment opportunities, middle-class parents believe that they should "manage" their child's school grades from middle school on. Referring to grammar and reading for English tests thus helps teachers to codify "correct" and "wrong" answers, which in turn facilitates standardization in tests and social selection in school.

However, this focus on correct and incorrect English grammar does not necessarily free teachers from disputes with parents. An English teacher named HJ told me how "stressful" it is to deal with parents' complaints about test results. She recounted the story of a mother who phoned her and demanded a re-evaluation of her son's score. The test item in question was a fill-in-the-blank, open-ended question. In Figure 4, it asked students to point out two grammatical errors and to correct them accordingly.

Figure 4. Test item from Grade 9

The expected answers were (2) *wants travel → want to travel*; and (6) *try keep → try to keep*. Several days after the test, a mother phoned HJ and to argue that her son's alternate answer, (2) *wants travel → will be travelling,* should be marked correct. From the teacher's perspective, the answer, though it may be 'grammatically' correct, it did not count as a 'good' answer because the it did not make use of the central point of the grammar lesson, the use of the to-infinitive verb. HJ thus referred the mother to the textbook she had used to create the test. However, the mother argued that *I will be travelling around the world* is a grammatically flawless, and therefore valid, response. After discussion with other teachers, including the native English teacher, HJ raised the boy's score. The incident made HJ realize that she should have built a test for which only one possible answer could be correct. HJ's story illustrates how teachers deal with tensions between pedagogical effectiveness and test fairness in social selection. It also made HJ and other teachers view assessment as equivalent to controlling students'

answers. As the student responses demonstrate, test-takers also perceived learning English as "writing down answers on the sheet."

Teachers faced a similar problem in assessing students' English oral proficiency. For instance, HJ distributed a handout in preparation for an upcoming speaking exam. It contained sample questions with suggested expressions for students to utilize in their responses (Table 1). HJ said that she wanted to help students have a clear sense of what the speaking exam would look like, so that those with limited English skills could participate fully in the test.

Table 1

List of Sample Interview Questions

N	Questions
1	What are you planning to do this summer vacation? (Planning to~, going to~)
2	I have a problem with a classmate. He doesn't help during group activities. He is always talking to his friends. What should I do? (You should~)
3	Do you think you will like high school? What makes you say that/why do you say that?
4	What do you wonder about your teachers? (I'm curious about~, I wonder~)
5	What are your hopes for the future? (I hope~)
6	What is your favourite Korean food? Can you tell me more about it?
7	Tell me about a regret you have about your school life or your friends (I should have~, I shouldn't have~)
8	What do you think about the new Avengers movie? (I think~)

The contextualized definition of fluency refers to the extent to which students can make prompt, error-free responses through memorization. As one teacher admitted, this operationalization was inevitable, partly due to time constraints, which allow each test-taker at best one-and-a-half minutes for evaluation. Teachers also agreed that basing the speaking assessment on students' memory skills is more democratic than having students speak without any preparation, which otherwise would benefit Returnees. Ms. Choi, another English teacher, made this point clear:

"I'm aware that the speaking test looks a bit bizarre, but we should make test items with 'right' and 'wrong' answers. Without that, it's a piece of cake for Returnees, which is not fair. Anyone who invested in time [to study] and memorized the answers deserves a good grade."

좀 (테스트가) 이상하긴 해도..이게 정답이랑 오답이 없으면 안되거든요. 만약에 자유롭게 말해라 그러면 이 리터니 애들한테는 너무 유리한 게임이니까. 그래서 시간을 좀 투자해서 메모라이즈 한 애들이 좋은 점수를 받게 하자는게 저희 생각이고요.

In sum, we observed how the curriculum focus shifts from communication to grammar between elementary school and middle school. The change has two consequences: On the one hand, grammar-oriented teaching in middle school helps teachers carry out social selection by making use of clear-cut exams. On the other hand, students must develop individual strategies to adapt to the change in response to the disjointed curriculum. Below, I compare parents' different responses by social class. The differences stem not only from parents' ability (or inability) to afford shadow education agencies, but also from how they view their own roles and responsibilities as parents in relation to their child's academic success.

3. Class-Based Responses to the Disjointed Curriculum

It is common for Korean students to study English after school at private language schools. Many would cite the effect of shadow education to account for how social class mediates English achievement. An analysis of household expenditure on shadow education reveals a difference of up to five times more spending in high-income families than in lower-income ones (Lee, 2015). Specifically, the expenditure of a household making more than USD 100,000 per year was 8.8 times higher than that of a household earning below the poverty line. Expenditures intensify during high school, when this gap balloons to 11.2 times the average spending of lower-income households. In this context, we may conclude that students who did

not receive private English education are more likely to feel challenged in middle school (Shin, 2014).

However, the shadow education factor does not fully explain why some Underachievers, despite their long experiences with shadow education agencies, still struggle with English. In fact, many Underachievers responded that they had attended hagwons, although their form and tuition fees widely varied between state-funded programs and English immersion. Two of my participants in the Underachiever category, SY and Yuna, attended English-only kindergartens, which are considered beneficial for acquiring a native-like English proficiency. Then, what are the factors that mediate students' English skills?

Based on a sociological viewpoint, I substantiate Shin's (2011) argument that middle-and working-class parenting practices differently shape students' motivation. My interviews with parents, however, reveal a little twist. As Shin found, working-class parents tended to have low educational aspirations for their children. However, I also found that some working-class parents spent more money on their children's education than their middle-class counterparts. How can we make sense of this contradiction?

To analyze the relationship between social class and shadow education, we first should understand how parents view their roles in their child's English education. Both middle- and working-class parents were aware of the importance of learning English in Korean society. However, they showed different responses in terms of the extent to which they involve themselves in their children's English education and how they support their children's learning in a grammar-oriented teaching practice.

First, parents assumed different roles in children's English education. Among middle-class parents, induction into English can be analyzed in two main phases: from preschool to

Grade 3, and from Grade 4 onward. During the first phase, the parents' role is to create and foster environments in which their children can 'develop' interest in English. This includes sending them to shadow agencies that focus on teaching English through songs, games, and hands-on activities. The parents also brought their children to English libraries, and chose books with them to read at home. When the children asked to watch TV, parents sometimes had them watch Disney animations with English subtitles. Critical of the practice of some language schools that ask students to memorize 70 vocabulary words per day, parents argued that this method would not result in a positive outcome. Comparing English learning to running a marathon, one parent remarked: "I see many parents thinking of English education as a sprint, but it is actually a marathon. They will study English at least for more than 6 years. I don't want my child to hate English." In this way, middle-class parents developed a critical sense of shadow education, carefully choosing the program(s) that served their best interest.

When children were ready to enter Grade 4, middle-class parents prepared for their children's smooth transition into middle school. They started to search for shadow education agencies teaching grammar and vocabulary. Some organized a small group with other mothers and invited an English tutor for group lessons. At the same time, parents (mainly fathers) made deliberate efforts to communicate to their children the importance of English by sharing their own lived experiences at work. Within the middle-class parent community, there are numerous examples of how English skills (mainly in the form of TOEIC scores) contribute to pay-raises and promotions. Further, opportunities for overseas family trips, relocation at work, and establishing relationships with international friends (or business partners) all contribute to the ideology of English as a critical skill in Korea. Within the middle-class family culture, the importance of English is an established fact.

By contrast, working-class families establish a clear role division: parents are breadwinners and children are students. A mother explained to me the division of labour within her family: "Parents' job is to make money and the children's job is to study." They thus did not have age-specific strategies to support their children's English learning. At the same time, parents were judgemental of some mothers' intense participation in school, calling them "excessive" mothers. In their view, achievement in school is a function of innate talent. As shown in the following interview excerpts, working-class parents therefore limited their role to primary caregiver, rather than guide for success at school.

> *Interviews with Working-Class Parents*
> It would be good if my child does well. If not, then it's out of my reach.
> 애가 잘해주면 고맙고. 못하면 어쩔 수 없고.
> I worked so hard to get the money to have a home in Gangnam. Now the rest of the work is for them.
> 내가 힘들게 여기까지 강남까지 데려다 놨으면 이제 나머지는 애가 할 몫이지...

The less-interventionist attitude of working-class mothers does not mean that they do not have educational aspirations for their children. Some working-class parents heavily rely on hagwons to support students' study, and their monthly expenditure on the shadow education market exceeds that of the middle-class. The mothers said that this was out of desperation: "He might learn something while being there. Otherwise he would never sit and study." Another parent added that despite her tight budget, her son went to three different hagwons because she couldn't stand him playing computer games while she was at work. "I don't want him to be at home throughout the day. I got him to learn English, math, and Taekwondo (a Korean martial art) after school till I came home." In addition to their working-schedules, I also presumed that the

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parents' unsuccessful experiences in school made it more difficult for them to pass on study-specific advice to their children (cf. Shin, 2011).

In choosing programs, working-class parents prioritize proximity to home (because mothers cannot transport their children) and low tuition fees over the curriculum the hagwon offers. The afterschool programs at their local school were the best candidate that met those criteria. When asked about the curricula of these programs, parents responded that they may have taught English communication skills or vocabulary (and grammar), but did not recall what the curricula were like. They added that they were not knowledgeable in English, and did not know how to teach English to their children.

The working-class parents' strategy for getting children to study English was mostly related to a 'do your job' ideology. Alternatively, some parents commented on "globalization", and made a connection between that and the importance of learning English. But few opportunities were available in their environments to demonstrate how English skills bring quality job opportunities. Jinho's father, for instance, works at a factory making construction machinery, where Chinese and Vietnamese are the two major foreign languages spoken. While working-class parents recognized the necessity of learning English as a school subject, their immediate working environments made it difficult for them to explain how English competence can bring advantages at work. One exception came from a comment from Heyoung's father, whose friend worked as a car mechanic in Australia. Based on his story, he suggested to Heyeong that, with good English skill, people can go abroad, make more money, and have a comfortable life. The link between English skills and the skilled blue-collar job market is discussed in Section 4.3.

During my data collection, many students from working class backgrounds, including Underachievers, were not learning English outside of school. In order for them to get higher scores in school exams, additional support from shadow education might be of help. However, the students' former unsuccessful experiences with shadow education and low motivation in English made their parents skeptical about spending money on English education. As one mother said, "It will be just a drop in the bucket," deeming it ineffective. Underachievers did not believe that a good academic standing would be of use in gaining popularity among their peers. Parents could either send their children to state-funded afterschool programs that were free of charge (see Chapter 4), or let them find their own way of surviving: "I pray for God to help Minjae find a career that suits him" (Interview with Minjae's mother at Parents' Meeting, Spring 2015).

Parents also differed in terms of understanding the current English teaching practice. In general, middle-class parents found it inevitable, if not desirable, for the school to carry out social selection. Based on their competition-oriented schooling in the 1980s and 1990s, middle-class parents internalized the idea that school is a field for competition. These parents also had the experience of studying English in a grammar-oriented way, so they were aware of what it was like to study English in this manner. In the case of one Returnee, his mother made him study English grammar while they were abroad: "I bought a bunch of English grammar books with Korean explanations. It helped him understand English sentence structures better."

Further, middle-class parents acknowledged the school's authority and taught their children to obey to teachers. In one interview, I observed a dispute between a middle-class mother and her Returnee daughter from Singapore. She had been asked to re-submit a homework assignment because of poor Korean writing. The assignment was to write out an entire passage of a chapter in English with accompanying Korean translations. The daughter complained to her

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mother that she thought Korean writing had nothing to do with English skills. Before the daughter finished her complaint, her mother said, "That's the way it is here. You should follow the Korean way once you are in Korea."

Middle-class parents do not entirely trust the public education system, however. They recognize the value of English communicative skills, and organize after-school schedules for their children that ensure exposure to English-speaking opportunities. Their typical strategy was to support a two-tiered English education system; one is focused on practicing English communicative skills with native speakers, and the other on teaching test-related skills and knowledge. One parent told me how she had helped her sons maintain native-like English skills. Upon return from the US in 2005, she began taking her two children to a shadow education agency in Gwangwhamun, an hour's journey away by car, as it employed the English-only speaking rule. The children's grandmother sometimes took charge of transporting the kids when their mother was busy with other errands. The mother found it necessary for her children to have English-immersive experiences at least twice a week, because the grammar-oriented teaching was not adequate to develop English communicative competence.

Working-class parents, however, showed outright distrust of public English education. They attributed the current grammar-oriented teaching practice to teachers' (or school authorities') inability to teach communicative skills. In the following interview, a working-class mother described to me her feeling that, in the globalized age (*geulobul sidae*), such practice is of no use.

> *Interview with Working-Class Parent*
> I heard that schools still teach English grammar. I happened to go through his English textbook, and alas, they were still learning the same things I did when I was in school. What's the use of learning that kind of English in these global days?

요즘 하도 신문에서 학교영어공교육 아직도 문법배우고 그런다고 하니까. 내가 애 책을 보니까 아니 나 학교 다닐 때 배우던걸 그대로 배우고 있는 거예요. 그게 무슨 소용이 있나요 요즘 같은 글로벌 시대에?

Parents' distrust of public English education also fostered a carefree attitude about academic progress among their children. They responded that although they were sceptical of the grammar-oriented education, they had to follow the system in spite of their lack of confidence in English education. Finally, the mothers' working environments can account for their seemingly less-interventionist attitude. All of four working-class mothers responded that they could not afford the time, mental energy or money to support their child's academic progress. Two moms, for instance, worked night shifts three times per week and said they could not pay sufficient attention to their children. In the following, Sungtae commented that his mother did not seem to care about his English scores:

> *Interview with one Underachiever boy*
> YJS: How did your mom respond to your English score?
> 엄마가 뭐라고 하셨어? 영어성적 보시고.
> Sungtae: She didn't say much about it. She told me to learn some skills after graduation and find work (instead of studying).
> 그냥 별말 없어요. 나중에 졸업하고 기술 배워서 일 하래요.

To summarize, the study shows how parents' social class mediates students' interest in English motivation and achievement. Both middle-and working-class parents recognized the importance of personal effort in educational success. However, their intervention strategies were different. Middle-class parents ensured their children developed interest in English by strategically providing them with extended yet relevant English learning environments. On the other hand, working-class parents' clear role division led to unproductive investment in shadow education. This experience lowered the parents' educational aspirations for their children. Below,

I turn to school's regular English classrooms in order to examine how these different, class-based ideas about English shaped classroom experiences. I focus on how streaming orients students from different classes into different language ideologies, different language practices, and thus, different outcomes.

4. Academic Streaming

This section examines students' different English learning experiences under the system of academic streaming. For the success of streaming within the same curriculum, teachers adjusted lesson goals and classroom materials according to students' proficiency levels. This means that even though both the General and Basic level students use the same textbook in school, their classroom scope varies widely. By comparing how their lesson goals and classroom materials differ, I discuss how streaming affects students' differential English outcomes.

4.1 The Basic Level: Shame and Pride

In May 2015, I was introduced to one of English Basic-level classes, *Atti Gyosil* (friends' classroom). It is located next to the teacher's office on the third floor. It has half-transparent walls decorated with animal decals and students' projects. The space is made of glass, which created a greenhouse effect with low air ventilation. "Without air-conditioning starting in early summer, we can't stand a single minute here," said Teacher Song. The classroom houses about 15 students; a dark orange colored G-shaped desk aims to create a learner-friendly environment by encouraging students to sit close to their classmates. It comes equipped with the basic whiteboard, on which the teacher highlights the daily lesson goals, with emphasis on their grammar points.

The class dismissal bell rings. During recess, traffic in the corridors seems dense. Students from Grades 7 through 9 move up and down the hallways; some simply stroll around

the classrooms, taking quick glances into different classrooms as they look for friends. Hallways are highly populated throughout the day, whether or not students take streamed classes. Hillside operates streaming only in the subjects of Korean, math, and English. After homeroom sessions, Underachievers have to move to Atti Gyosil, whilst other students remain in the class. In the case of other subjects that do not track students' levels (e.g., social studies and science), all classmates, including both Returnees and Underachievers, travel together to take the classes. To ease the traffic congestion in the hallways, students have different lunch times according to their age, with 9th graders being the first group to break for the midday meal. When the preparation bell rings, the hallways soon fill with silence.

I waited for students' arrival in the Atti Gyosil. Widening their eyes, two students showed surprise at my unexpected presence (I presumed because they had not read the document shared in class a week before informing that I would be observing). They soon averted their eyes, pretending that they did not see me. I got a chance to talk with the students after one latecomer arrived, found me sitting at the back of the classroom and tossed the English textbook on the desk. Other students ignored the teacher's reprimand of his unruly behaviour, as if it was a daily part of classroom talk. Teacher Song then spared 15 minutes for discussion, during which I attempted to interview students about their English learning experience. My first question was "What is it like to study English at the Basic level?" Breaking the silence, one boy said bluntly, "Are you here to inspect us?"

The student's suspicious attitude toward me reflects the wider discourse about the Basic level. As a proxy term for underachievement, the class name "the Basic level" carries a pejorative meaning, indexing slow progress in the academic sphere. In general, students perceived being streamed into the Basic level as a punishment for dereliction of duty as students.

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Such perspectives were also found during teacher interviews. HJ, a Korean English teacher, recalled that she had made the following speech on her first day teaching:

> *HJ's whole-class speech:*
> Let's not see you again next year here (in the Basic level). If you can study English a bit harder, then maybe you won't bother yourself coming here next semester. So, let's study English from the beginning all over.
> 야 얘들아 우리 이제 여기서 다시 만나지는 말자. 영어 조금만 더 열심히 공부하면 이제 여기 올 필요 없어. 그러니까 우리 처음부터 영어공부 한번 열심히 해보자.

There were two contrasting attitudes toward being streamed into the Basic level: Shame and Pride. In explaining the heterogeneity of population in class to me, Ms. Song sorted Underachievers into two groups: Responsible versus Irresponsible. According to her, the former represents a group of Underachievers "who show up in class without having to be pushed by staff and show some willingness to learn English" (April 2015, Fieldnote). By contrast, the latter represents a group of Underachievers "who skip class, keep running away from teachers, and create a disruptive atmosphere in class" (April 2015, Fieldnote). These categories were widely used among teachers to rationalize why some students did not want to study English. In addition, the division had to do with their job prospects, which I will examine in detail in section 4.4.

The Responsible Underachievers were ashamed of being called Underachievers, because they had been good students through elementary school. They had academic orientation, but were unprepared for how the disjointed curriculum would affect their academic standings (see section 3.1). As new students to middle-school, English Underachievers believed that they could "escape the Basic level" by actively participating in English class. Teachers highly encouraged their study-oriented behaviour with motivational speeches, such as "practice makes perfect," or "nothing is impossible."

On the other hand, Irresponsible Underachievers, who had struggled with English since elementary school, did not mind studying at the Basic level. Assuming that these Underachievers would also want to move into the General level, I asked what they would need in order to study English harder. In response, one boy said, "Why do we have to study English? We like being here." Big laughter followed, and some boys whistled as a sign of support. Other students then chimed in with "Here we can use air-conditioning at will," "teachers give us free candy bars," and "the class is fun." Others cited practical reasons for wanting to stay in the Basic class, such as hanging out with friends. Indeed, the class served as a basis to develop peer solidarity. For instance, some students called a boy named Jun 'betrayer' throughout my stay at Hillside, after he moved up to the General level. These long-term Underachievers, for whom much peer solidarity is based on the relative lack of English skills, pride themselves on not being desperate to achieve good scores or to earn recognition from teachers.

After the students got used to my presence in class, I asked them to draw a reflective piece about their English learning experience. Suhyun, a female student, shared her frustrations about the General level class she had taken (Figure 5, left). She describes one female teacher delivering a lecture to students sitting in rows. The students seemed to respond to the teacher with clear, affirmative answers (Scene 1). Frustrated, she speaks to herself, "I have no idea what she is saying… Everyone but me is such a good English speaker…" (Scenes 2 and 3). Instead of asking for help, she decides to remain silent, because she does not want to become the object of ridicule: "They'd laugh at me if I told the truth" (Scene 4). In Scenes 5 and 6, she askes herself "Where did it all go wrong?" and "I have no idea about English." Putting it all together, she concludes, "The chemistry (with English) does not work out for me" (Scene 7).

Myung, a male student from the same class, used a metaphor of heaven and hell to portray his life after school (Figure 5, right). A door opens abruptly while he is taking a nap in front of the TV. "Hurry for Afterschool Class!" He draws his mother with two demon horns, yelling in a shrill tone of voice (Scenes 3 and 4). He crawls to the door, where the door sign reads *Hell of Afterschool*. Inside the class, two out of three students are asleep and the one conscious student (himself) can hear only "blah~ blah~" and then "class dismissed" (Scene 6). Finally released from class, he is in heaven (Scene 7).
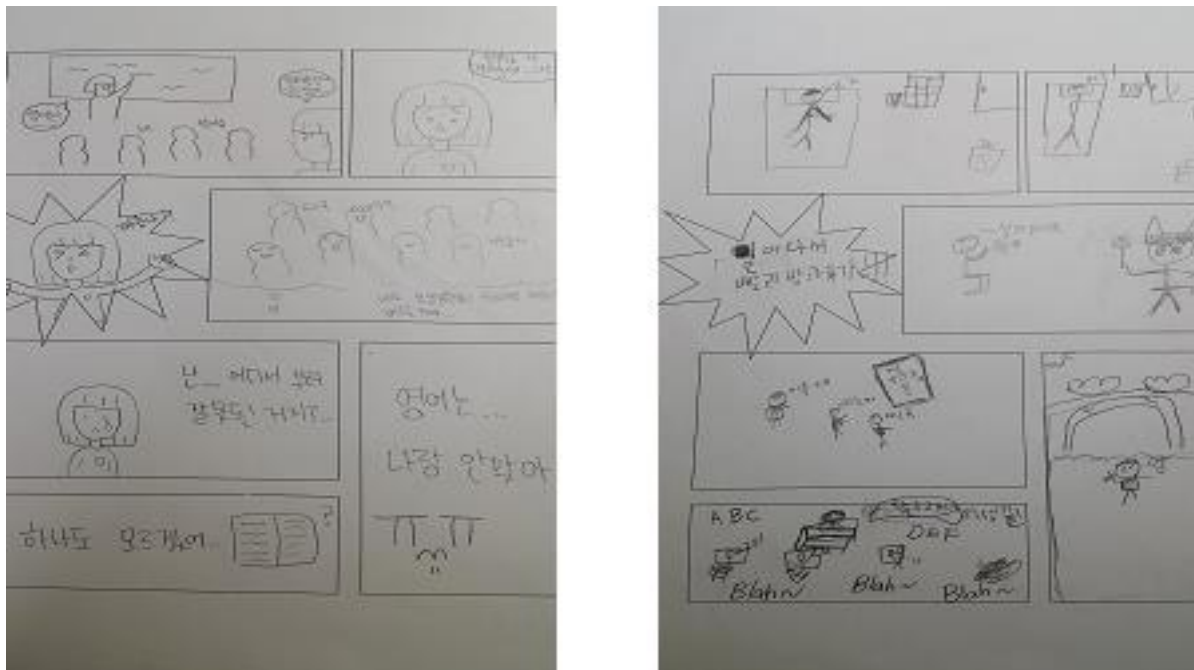
Figure 5. Reflective piece from Suhyun (left) and Myung (right)

Studying the interviews and the reflective drawings together, I found one theme weaving the two different stories together is their subjective reaction to English: lack of agency. Both stories depicted the students' marginal positions in the English classroom. All of the students I interviewed used the school exam as reference to say, "I'm not good at English." This means that the students' perceived lack of control in English had to do with their low English scores in

school exams. How then does the Basic level English class work to support their self-perception as poor English speakers?

The primary goal of the Basic level is to (re)kindle the interest of students in English through accessible English learning tasks. The underlying belief argues for language learning as individual cognition: interest in English learning increases English motivation, which in turn leads to better English outcomes. The mainstream approach to underachievement reasons that Underachievers lack interest in English partly because they have no positive classroom experiences. This thinking assumes that Underachievers can become good language learners once they experience English learning as fun. Official guidebooks by the Ministry of Education thus ask teachers to organize their lessons with cognitively less-demanding activities such as English vocabulary games.

In the delivery of curriculum, Teacher Song used several strategies to make English classrooms more accessible. Accessibility in this context means making students feel less stressed out in class, and more importantly, simplifying and reducing the scope of teaching. First, their lesson goals are highly specific, for example learning ten vocabulary items, learning about the English voice, and doing brief one-page reading-and-translation activities. The teaching of vocabulary was followed by game-based tasks, such as crossword puzzles and quiz-based activities. Lastly, she deliberately avoided using grammatical expressions (e.g., to-infinitive and subjunctive mood) in teaching English grammar to avoid discouraging students. In a class in which she was teaching relative clauses, she said, "that, which… they are like bridges. They link two different sentences together. Please repeat after me. Bridges."

I have stated that within the Basic level, students' levels of ability with English varied widely, from those who could not read the English alphabet to those who had been good English

students in elementary school. Ms. Song therefore grouped students into two; those who knew

their ABCs versus those who did not. Then, she established different learning goals for each

group: the former recited the key new vocabulary of the lesson while the latter practiced writing

their ABCs (Figure 6).
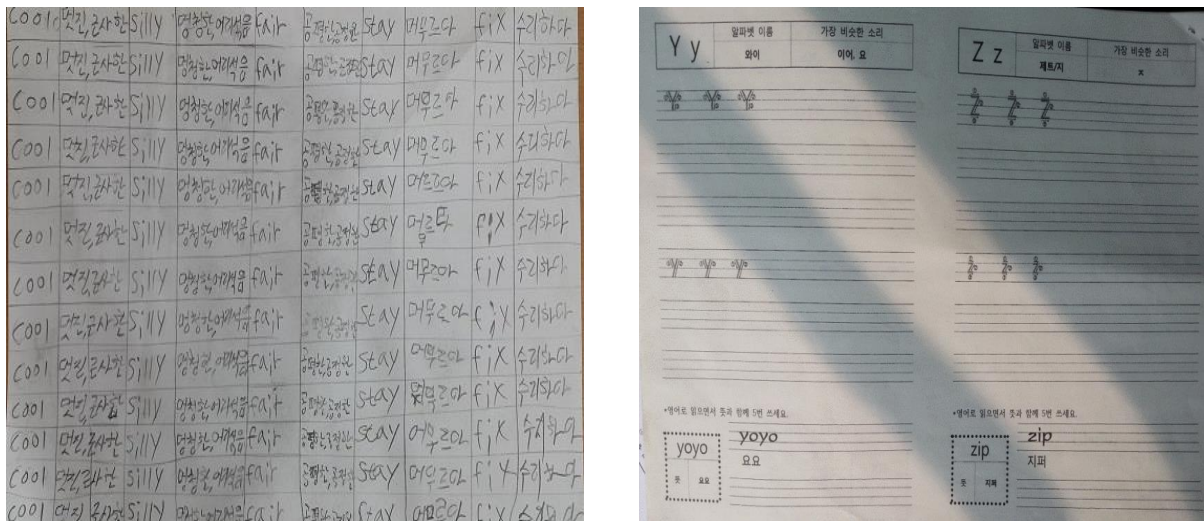
Figure 6. Classroom material for the Basic level

Herein lay a contradiction; these strategies enabled the Underachievers to engage in class,

but did not prepare them to take English exams. During the 45-minute class, Ms. Song moved

between the two groups, checking on students' progress for the first 20 minutes. After the group-

based activity, she covered the textbook by reading English sentences aloud and translating them

into Korean. Those students who volunteered to read out got candy bars in appreciation of their

active participation. Ms. Song made sure to incorporate at least one "fun" element in each lesson,

such as a crossword puzzle, game, or movie clip. As the mid-term exam approached, Ms. Song

made Underachievers write down reading parts of the textbook several times, so that students

could memorize key grammatical structures while engaging in the activity. The students,

however, understood this activity simply as "copying the reading part." Without critical thinking

of English structure or vocabulary, they spent time copying the English alphabet (Figure 7).
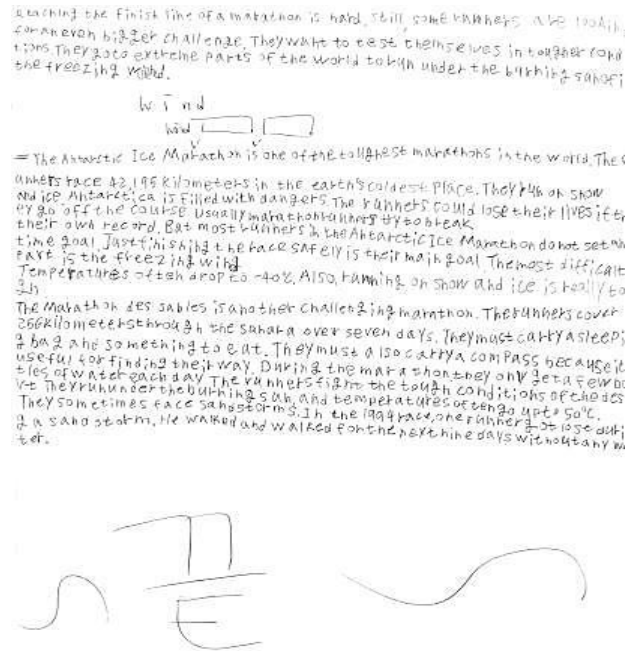
Figure 7. Underachiever's activity in class

After the school exam, I confirmed that the Underachievers almost invariably got poor

scores. In accounting for this, I argue that we should take a closer look at the discrepancy

between teaching practice and assessment. In the test, items tended to focus on accuracy in

applying the rules of grammar. Out of 33 test questions (20 multiple choice and 13 open-ended),

for instance, 9 asked about grammar and its application. This focus on English grammar makes it

difficult for Underachievers to achieve desirable outcomes. Underachievers also struggled with

test questions about vocabulary. The following is a multiple-choice question from a Grade 8

exam. Students were asked to choose the pair that contains the same meaning.

Table 2

Test Item from Grade 8

Q 10. Choose the number that contains the same meaning.

① Russia is the biggest **country** in the world
He lives in the remote **country** from the city.

② I like the main **character** in the drama.
Do you know how to read this Chinese **character**?

③ There is a big **match** tonight.
The **match** was cancelled due to rain.

④ We need to **change** this situation.
Here is your receipt and **change**.

⑤ I wrote an apology **letter** to my homeroom teacher.
Write down the initial **letters** of the words.

The scope of teaching vocabulary at the Basic level was limited to translation activities. It is thus not surprising that few Underachievers understood the question. Underachievers also responded that they found the question too difficult because of unknown words like "receipt," "initial," "remote" and "apology."

From the teachers' viewpoint, however, they did not expect the students to name every Korean equivalent; indeed, many students in the General level made use of inference as a strategy to find out the answer. As one Returnee remarked, "Though it looked the same, here [pointing to **change**] one is used as a verb and the other one as a noun." To Underachievers, however, English reading was no less than a decoding activity, because they had not learned how to make inference in the text. Classroom activities at the Basic level did not adequately prepare Underachievers to develop the inference skills necessary to succeed on the test. Therefore, the curriculum for Underachievers provided little support for students in preparing them for the school exams by which their academic progress would be judged. In this way, the discrepancy

between classroom practice and exams contributed to Underachievers' academic stagnation. After my fieldwork, I confirmed that none of the Underachievers moved into the General level.

4.2 The General Level: Boredom and Difficulty

The goal of the General level is to prepare students for upcoming school exams. The teachers organized the lessons to deliver grammatical knowledge about English. To this end, they made a lot use of Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) interactions, in which the teacher initiates a question and evaluates students' responses (Ellis, 2008). This format was efficient in checking students' progress and providing support where necessary. Below is an excerpt from one such classroom interaction, followed by two examples of students' note-taking at the General level.

Classroom observation, the General level
Ms. Lim: Why do we have "ing" here?
자 여기 ing 가 왜 붙지?
Ss: (Because of) preposition
전치사요
Ms. Lim: Right! When a verb is followed by a preposition, how do we change the verb?
그렇죠. 동사가 전치사 앞에 쓰일 때는 동사를 뭘로 바꿔준다?
Ss: ing
Ms. Lim: See, we erase off "e" and change "move" into "moving".
그렇지. 근데 여기 봐라. 뒤에 e 를 떼고 move 에서 moving 으로 바꾼다. Right. But
Ms. Lim:
Here's a hypothetical test item. Choose the sentence that carries the same meaning of (to) in the example sentence. The sentence reads, "I came back home early to help him out."
자 여기 봐라. To 만약에 시험문제에 이렇게 나왔어. 여기서 예문의 to 와 같은 용법을 고르세요. 나는 그를 도와주기 위해 집에 일찍 돌아왔다. 그러면 여기서 이 to 는?
Ss: for doing something.
하기 위해서
Ms. Lim: Right! Here it means "for doing something." Please write down its meaning (in your book).

바로 여기서 그 ~를 위해서 이런 의미죠. (책에) 쓰세요.
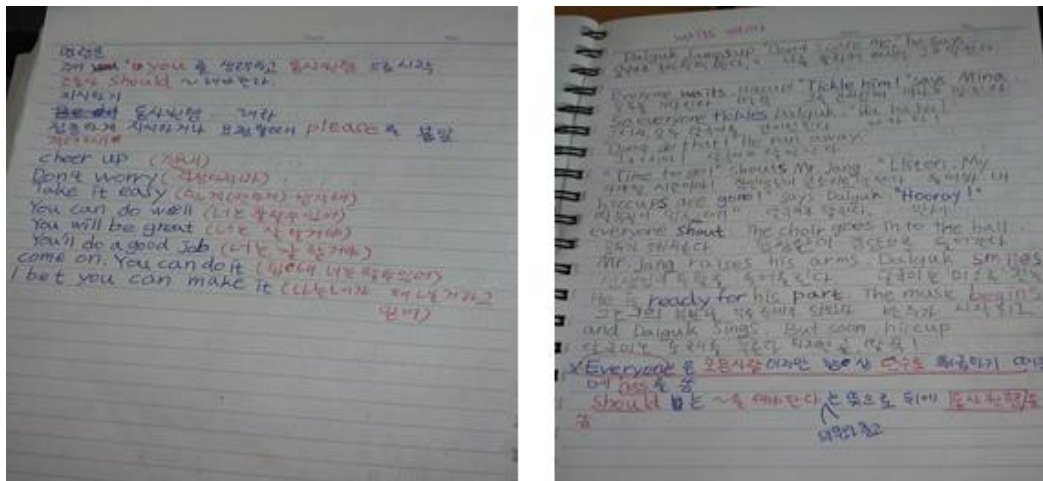
Figure 8. Students' notes from the General Level

Returnees, Underachievers, and In-betweens had different perceptions about the class. Returnees thought that the English class was boring due to its simplified content. Such response was based on their competency with indirect and direct speech acts, and discourse markers. Jamie, a Returnee boy, pointed out sociopragmatically inept expressions in the textbook, entertaining the idea that English at school "does not make sense." In another interview, he questioned why the phrase "you can say that again" cannot be used to give encouragement.

> *Conversation with Jamie, Returnee:*
> It's like a book for young kids. The letters are really big. The grammar doesn't make any sense. Here you see, "She can't be Canadian." Ah, it sounds so dramatic.
> 애들이 보는 영어책 같아요. 글자도 엄청나게 크고. 문법도 말도 안되고. 여기 She can't be Canadian! 아 너무 드라마 대사 같아요.
>
> I hate English grammar class. "You can say that again," we studied this phrase the other day. The teacher said that this is about showing agreement. But I think we can use the same phrase for encouragement. But how come encouragement is a wrong answer?
> 문법 진짜 싫어요. You can say that again 이 사실은 agreement 동의일 수도 있고 encouragement 도 있는데.

Further interviews with Returnees reveal that their transnational experience does not necessarily give them an advantage in English class. Brandon, a Returnee boy from Canada, recalled feeling indignant because of his teacher's rigid grading practice. On a vocabulary quiz, the teacher asked students to write down a word that starts with A, which indicates being close to a particular number or time. The target vocabulary word was *about,* and his answer of *approximately* was marked wrong. On obtaining the result, he expressed his dissent, asking why *approximately* cannot replace *about*. However, he ended up being rebuked for his disrespectful demeanour to the teacher.

Conversation with Brandon, Returnee:
Brandon: The teacher said that I got it wrong because I didn't answer the same way as the textbook.
선생님이 책에 있는 대로 안 썼다고 틀렸대요.
YJS: What was the answer she expected?
선생님이 뭐라고 쓰라고 했는데?
Brandon: About. I kept saying that both words have the same meaning, but she said I was being very disrespectful to her. So I just gave up.
about 이요. 저는 똑 같은 의미라고 계속 이야기했는데 선생님이 저한테 건방지다고 해서 그냥 포기했어요.

The teacher's mobilization of "disrespect" in addressing Brandon's dispute over his result is noteworthy. I think she was aware that *approximately* had the same semantic value as *about*. As a figure of authority in charge of social selection, however, she could have argued for test fairness over linguistic authenticity. Brandon's question, whether linguistically correct or not, did not make her look good in front of other students. Further, his transnational schooling experience in Canada made other students assume that Brandon's English skills would be better than the teacher's, which amounted to a threat to her authority. Many Returnees shared similar

experiences, saying that they were sometimes disadvantaged compared with local students. After learning that overseas experience may not necessarily bring advantages in English class, the Returnees slowly accepted that they should follow teachers' instructions in order to get high scores. This means that Returnees came to perceive that two different registers of English are at work in school: English as a tool for domestic competition and English as a communicative resource.

Underachievers, whose inclusion in the General level class was only a result of other students' poorer performance and the state requirement that no more than 10 Underachievers be streamed to the Basic level class, were ill-prepared for the IRE framework. As I have stated, the IRE format is efficient for preparing students for English exams. For successful participation, students must know about the rules of English grammar and their application. Underachievers thus remained silent throughout the class, not knowing what to do. Teachers often acquiesce to Underachievers' non-participation in class unless they interrupt the classroom flow. While some Underachievers were glad not to be considered "Basic level" students, many of them longed to learn English in a more relaxed and engaging environment.

Academic-oriented local students had a different interest. Clearly, few of them seemed to enjoy English learning in that highly controlled way. And yet, they recognized the value of grammar-based teaching as a way to support meritocracy in school. College-bound locals believed that they had a chance at success in competition against Returnees as long as test questions focused on English grammar and vocabulary. These In-betweens prepared for school exams by taking extra classes at hagwons. The private language schools offered structured lessons and weekly tests to micromanage students' progress.

Conversations with Leah and Sera (students studying at a local English school)

Leah: We have vocab tests three times per week for every lesson. You get one 'fail' when you can't pass the exam. If you have failed the exams more than three times, you're expelled. And we have frequent grammar- and content-review tests.

단어시험을 회차 별로 1주일에 3번있어요. 통과 안 하면 미스가 쌓이고 3번 되면 쫓겨나는 거예요. 문법시험도 있고. 중간에 테스트 있고.

YJS: So I understand you take English classes in both school and hagwon. Which one do you prefer?

학교 수업도 듣고 학원 수업도 듣는데 어떤 게 더 좋아?

Sera: I'd say class from hagwon.

학원이요.

YJS: Is that so?

학원이?

Sera: Because the class from school… it's not really systematic, and less structured and I feel like the teacher's lectures are only for high-performing students and it's not enough to catch up with other students. I feel a little bit distracted.

네. 학교는 체계적이지 않고 그리고 뭔가 또 듬성듬성한게 선생님들도 설명도 약간 좀 너무 잘하는 애들을 위해서 같기도 하고, 그걸로는 다른 애들을 따라 잡을 수 없다는 생각. 산만해요. 수업시간에.

Here we should take a closer look at how social reproduction takes place on the terrain of the test register. As I illustrated above, the test register, which measures students' English proficiency based on vocabulary and grammar, allowed some working-class children to develop an identity of good English learners. Also, it also supports meritocracy as a foundational ideology of public education. Ultimately, grammar-oriented English teaching enabled the school to level out the playing field, such that some students from working-class families earn recognition as good English learners, and ultimately, were able to beat the odds of the "English Divide" by social class. From this viewpoint, we can make sense of why communicative language teaching, despite its theoretical and pedagogical developments, remains as a contested pedagogy, especially in the public school settings.

However, it comes with a price. The heavy focus on grammar does not resonate with the wider social discourse that values communicative skills. For instance, many local high school students found themselves ill-prepared for higher education, where English increasingly serves as the language of instruction (cf. Fenton-Smith, Humphreys, & Walkinshaw, 2017; Kang, 2012). I argue that the schools' failure to offer communication-oriented instruction may not prepare their transition from secondary to post-secondary education, where English is increasingly used as a medium of instruction. Without access to socially valued registers of English, it is likely that academically-oriented working-class children would develop vastly different perceptions about their English skills across educational institutions. By contrast, middle-class children who are adept in the registers of both test and communication should find the transition process much easier. This observation echoes Roberts' (2009) view that supporting working-class children's academic achievement would not necessarily bring upward mobility if the middle classes continue to maintain the lead. In that sense, we can see how the test register comprises both possibilities and limitations as a tool of social reproduction.

To summarize, streaming gave rise to a division of students into categories which, in turn, shaped their perceptions about English differently. As I discussed above, the division represents not only students' different English skills, but also deeper differences in values and norms based on category membership. How, then, would Returnees think of Underachievers, and vice versa? Below, I refer to their gendered peer culture to examine the relationship between Returnees and Underachievers.

5. The Development of Oppositions: Returnees and Underachievers

Peer culture serves as a basis for making and maintaining friendships, which, in turn, produces a shared interpretation about school life. It is during adolescence that students shift

their locus of self-esteem and identity from family-based to peer-based norms (Eckert, 1989). As students grow older, friendship among peers is characterized by attitudes toward school, academic orientations, and plans for college. Through sustained investment in their peer culture, childhood knowledge and practices develop into the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in the adult world.

The peer culture at Hillside is based on performing Koreanness, in which gender and language play key roles. Korean nationalism, like any other nationalism, is gendered in that it valorizes heteronormativity and accordingly supports traditional masculine and feminine gender expression. Heterosexual identities gain hegemonic status as the naturalized ways that boys or girls ought to behave. This means that acquiring Koreanness has to do with embodying traditional gender images. Thus, boys invest in athleticism and physical strength as primary indicators of masculinity. They also compete to initiate talks in group discussion, to intercept turns in communication, to invoke humour occasionally, and to interrupt others' talk in class. In contrast, investing in cultivating mainstream femininity, to greater or lesser degrees, is an overriding concern of girls in the school. Girls feel safe responding to a teacher's question when asked to but stay silent in group discussion. All other forms of masculinity/femininity are viewed as abnormal or deviant. In that sense, gender membership is a significant rite of entering into adolescence.

The school's gendered socialization practice leads individuals to make friends of the same gender. According to Eckert (2011), it is during pre-adolescence that cross-sex friendship changes from asexual egalitarian patterns into heterosexual hierarchical ones. Upon entry into middle school, students organize their social values based on popularity in the heterosexual market. At Hillside, heterosexual couplehood emerged as a new social order among peers as well.

Students are keenly aware of heterosexual pairings around them, taking "who likes whom," "who started dating (or got dumped by) whom," and "who's sitting next to whom" as valued, serious information. Most teachers at Hillside, however, disapproved of couplehood among students, striving to leave romance in the realm of the adult world. Students thus had ambivalent feelings about romance, and (often jokingly) expressed their desire to make girl/boyfriends.

The Korean language is the other factor that represents Koreanness. Linguistic nationalism remains strong in Korean society, wherein the Korean language is a strong marker of Korean identity (Park, 2009). Hillside emphasizes the significance of Korean in the following ways: on every Hangul (the Korean writing system) Day, students write about the significance of Hangul in relation to national identity; in history class, teachers focus on how nationalists' endeavours for Hangul were related to anti-colonial movements against Japan; and, every Monday, the school broadcasts a five-minute short film about the proper use of Korean, including a list of Korean equivalents in place of words borrowed from the English language.

The school-wide emphasis on Korean led students to perceive Korean as a solidarity code. Many students viewed speaking foreign languages in the Korean-dominant context as exclusionary as well as impractical. As some researchers argue (e.g., Jeong & Joo, 2003; Moon & Lim, 2012), Returnees' limited Korean proficiency may hinder their successful peer socialization in local schools. However, as I will show below, Returnees' putatively weak Korean skills are not an objective property. Instead, local peers either erased or highlighted the Returnees' Korean competency in order to include or exclude them. I now examine how gender intersects with peer relationship.

5.1 Cooperation with Power Versus Resistance to Authority: Boys

Returnees and Underachievers pursue different types of masculinity. While the former interpreted masculinity as cooperation with power structures, the latter viewed masculinity as resistance to authority. The different constructs of masculinity result in different relationship patterns with teachers, seniors (meaning older students), and friends. Returnees valued teachers' recognition and tried to gain trust and autonomy by collaborating with school staff. They also actively seek those positions of power accessible to students, such as the Hillside Court Council or student government. Returnees meet seniors in those activities and develop task-oriented, instrumental relations with them. The roles given to students are age-specific, meaning that access to certain roles depends on school grade. For instance, only ninth graders are eligible to serves as judges in the student court, while younger students take roles as prosecutors and court reporters, respectively. Their friendships end as older peers graduate from school. Returnees largely viewed Underachievers as "excessively defiant to teachers" and "not smart enough to study."

In contrast, many Underachievers equate masculinity with opposition to authority. They take pride in standing against teachers and in violating school regulations. Although age defines Underachievers' positions in their peer group, solidarity as the underrepresented population in school enhances their membership. Underachievers' relationships with seniors are grounded in common interests outside school. Underachievers emphasize loyalty in defining friendship. This is partly because they are oftentimes involved in unlawful activities, such as smoking and drinking. Particularly, the Underachiever boys considered socializing after school to be a crucial activity, and therefore often skipped Afterschool Class. Friendships with older peers continue after graduation, because they are both informative and resourceful. For instance, Underachiever

boys often start working in the low-entry job market through the help of seniors (see Chapter 4). From their perspective, then, Returnees' school-cooperative behaviour lacks masculinity.

With these two different types of masculinity at work, athleticism emerges as a common ground to legitimate Korean identity among boys. In such cases, Underachievers challenge Returnees by mocking their bilingual identities. For instance, Jaewon (an Underachiever) and Roy (a Returnee) got into a physical fight after a soccer game. Later, Roy told me that Jaewon had made several fouls worthy of a penalty kick, but the referee took no notice of this, and the game proceeded without a warning. Roy's class was defeated in the match, and their team leader was badly injured during the game.

The verbal dispute started when Jaewon made fun of Roy. According to Roy, the altercation began when Jaewon overheard Roy express general frustration with the outcome of the game that he believed Roy was directing at him personally. Roy said, "Ah, jjajeongnane (Ah that really pisses me off), fuck!" Upon hearing this, Jaewon retorted, "oh, jalnasseyo (you're being a jerk)". The typical phonetic description of Jaewon's remark would be [oʊ dʒɑl nɑsɔːjou]. However, Jaewon added a heavy /w/ and /r/ in order to indicate the influence of English and spoke [oʊːↃ dʒwɑː r nwɑː sɔːjouːↃ]. He continued in a high-pitched voice, shaking his butt and saying, "Yankee go home home home." Following Jaewon's provocation, Jaewon's team all laughed their heads off. Roy punched Jaewon's face hard. They got into a physical fight, and, as a result, both boys were called before the Hillside Student Court.

As Roy argued, the word 'fuck' does not necessarily reflect his bilingual identity, given its frequent usage among Korean teen boys. Nevertheless, Jaewon viewed the slang as indicative of Roy's bilingual identity, referring to him as "Yankee". Here, we can tell that Jaewon draws on linguistic nationalism to equate bilingualism with a non-Korean, Yankee identity. He challenged

Roy's Korean ability by speaking English with hyper-use of /w/ and /r/ sounds and indexed heavy phonological influence from English. His derisive stance is confirmed by speaking in a feminine voice while shaking his butt toward Roy. In sum, Roy's English use outside English class was stylized as a feminine behaviour. What does English have to do with femininity?

I argue that the feminization of Returnees is a strategy of Underachievers to construct them as less-legitimate Korean boys. Underachievers thought of Returnees as feminine because they were feeble boys unable to deal with 'verbal duelling' (Pujolar, 2001). According to Corsaro and Eder (1990), this activity is often competitive in nature, and enables boys to gain status among peers. Underachievers thought that Returnees took advantage of their English skills to claim masculinity. One Underachiever boy commented: "They [Returnees] know how to throw words around like fuck. Then they walk away when I keep challenging them. They are so weak." Based on an ethnography of conflicts over English use among Koreans in a study-abroad context, Jang (2017) pointed out that students who use only English are subject to criticism, which amounts to "the backlash of nationalism" (p. 127). Similarly, Underachievers aptly mobilized linguistic nationalism to undermine Returnees' status in their peer society.

More importantly, the dispute between Roy and Jaewon captures how class conflicts play out on the terrain of language. Underachievers considered English to be a middle-class identity marker, which did not belong to them. Jaewon's challenge to Roy involved a satirising of the middle-class, elite, transnational, multilingual South Korean. On the one hand, Returnees represent figures of modernity, globalization, and sophistication (Lo & Kim, 2012). Their fluent use of English is indexical of those values, of which many English learners in Korea are envious. On the other hand, Returnees are often mocked as inauthentic Koreans, whose fluent English

skills only bring them isolation from peers. Just as Jaewon made in his use of /w/ and /r/ sound, students often distinguished Returnees from locals through fluent English and awkward Korean.

Returnees' collaborative relationships with teachers enhanced Underachievers' stereotyping of them as feminine boys. During my data collection, many Underachievers were working part-time jobs after school. Some Underachievers told me about their 'adventurous' and 'fun' experiences outside the school territory, talking about how they deal with adults. From Underachievers' perspective, then, Returnees are naïve and dependent on adults.

I emphasize that Returnees and Underachievers are not always in conflict. I observed how Returnees deliberately mobilized Korean-accented English to blend into the peer group (for a similar observation, see Vasilopoulos, 2015). One teacher recalled that she had difficulty in class, because of a Returnee's deliberately mobilized Korean-accented English with erasure of /r/sounds, salient pauses, and hesitation. The Returnee's non-native accent worked to challenge her authority, as well as the authority of the textbook and the school, which saw him valued by other Underachievers in the class. The Returnee's Korean-accented reading-aloud led the classroom, from her perspective, into a state of chaos. Other students mimicked the Returnee's accent as well and said "this is real native-like accent", refusing her corrections. After the class, she reported the Returnee's non-cooperative demeanour to his homeroom teacher.

In the examples above, we can observe a resistance to the center-periphery linguistic order. As the English teaching practice orients students into native-like English performance, the hierarchy between Returnees and local students is taken for granted. However, my observation shows that native-like English was at times associated with more material and symbolic costs than benefits. In fact, some Returnees experienced being the target of ridicule partly due to their "too fluent English skills." Park (2009) noted that Koreans shared the ideology that Koreans are

'bad' English speakers. By this logic, we can deduce that good English speakers are not considered Koreans. In the school context, this ideology has double functions; while the 'bad speaker' ideology orients Koreans to purse good English, it also serves as the basis for the sharing of a particular Korean linguistic identity. During adolescence, students are highly sensitive about membership in peer groups. Returnees thus understood editing out their native-like accents as a strategy to negotiate inner-circle membership as Koreans. The value of friendship should not be underestimated because the peer networks take centre stage in adolescent life (Ryan & Ladd, 2012). Ultimately, Returnees' Korean-accented English is a mundane form of linguistic nationalism, which continues to regulate bilingualism as parallel monolingualisms (Heller, 2002, 2006). It continues to define bilingualism as a class-mediated capital that does not belong to Koreans, as long as Returnees remain in Korea after their time in ESA.

5.2 Achieving Mainstream Femininity: Girls

The dynamics between Underachiever and Returnee girls ran smoothly. Returnee girls were aware of how and why some Returnee boys have trouble with Underachievers and quickly learned the power asymmetries between the two categories (cf. Goodwin, 2002). Instead of challenging the peer norms, Returnee girls strategically formed alliances with Underachiever girls based on the common interest in mainstream feminine beauty. To understand their friendships, we should make sense of how female students undergo socialization at school.

At Hillside, there are two contrasting female groups. At one pole, there are girls that I call Cosme (short for cosmetics) girls, who practice a mainstream feminine style (see Table 3). Most Underachiever girls, to varying degrees, belong in this category. Although Underachiever boys and Cosme girls shared counter-school attitudes, the girls must index their identities using other

resources because displaying aggressive behaviour is not considered appropriate for girls (Eckert, 2011). In that sense, their investment in mainstream feminine beauty is a symbolic action to show their counter-school attitude. In the student code of conduct, the school specifies how to wear school uniforms properly, and prohibits students from wearing make up. Nevertheless, the Underachiever girls tailored blouses and skirts to emphasize their body shapes and put on heavy make-up after school.

Table 3

Summary of Difference Between Manga and Cosme Girls

	Manga club	Cosme girls
Focus of identity	Studenthood	Femininity
Style-face	Wearing glasses	Wearing contact lenses (mainly after school hours)
	No makeup	Wearing makeup
Style-costume	School-named hoodies	Abercrombie/ Nike
	Default option deemphasizing body	Curl up-pants/short skirts
Style-item	Japanese comic books/related goods	Mirror/cosmetics
Style-relationship with boys	Few engagements in a heterosexual relationship	Romance

The Manga group represents the other pole. Manga girls explicitly reject the Cosme girls' social order, and have their own social order in reference to Japanese Manga and culture. Japanese popular culture offers a rallying point for the Manga club, which occupies the margins of the school. Proudly referring to themselves as *Odeok* (a Japanese word for people with an obsessive interest in Manga fandom), the Manga club has created an alternative space in opposition to the Cosme girls. Within this community of practice, indulgence in the Japanese

culture is a legitimate and valued activity. Unlike the Cosme girls, Manga girls in general maintain a good relationship with the school staff, for their area of interest does not clash with institutional norms. The following table shows the representative differences observed in their preferences for appearance and style.

According to Hyunju, an active member of the Manga club, labels such as "tomboy" or "boyish" are sometimes useful to distance club members from the popular crowd. Her rejection of mainstream femininity gained strong support from the Manga club. Manga girls are proud of making no fuss about "looking pretty," embracing more diverse styles, such as short hair cuts and wearing only pants, and having zero-interest in cosmetics. They demonstrate group solidarity by displaying goods on their backpacks or participating in costume plays to represent characters from Manga culture. The space they occupy entails rejecting the prevailing view of femininity, and rejecting participation in the heterosexual market as an important part of female identity. However, their status among peers remained marginal. During my stay at Hillside, the only time the Manga girls gained attention was when one of the Manga club members won a prize at a local drawing competition.

Returnee girls value academic success as much as Manga girls as a key aspect of their identity. Nevertheless, they refused to befriend the Manga club, thinking of Manga as a legacy of childhood─ a period characterised by cognitive and physical immaturity. Both Returnee and Underachiever girls formed, however temporary, allegiances and made fun of the Manga members. Returnee girls showed deep interest in mainstream feminine beauty and sought advice from Underachiever girls about how to lose weight, where to buy cheap cosmetics, and how to use an eyelash curler, etc. In that regard, Underachiever girls had a lot to offer, so they often spent time together during lunch breaks. In the process, the linguistic differences between the

two were erased. For instance, in a school field trip to the zoo, a Returnee girl's linguistic mistake that referred to a *hippo* as a *seahorse*[3] was described as being "cute." Throughout the day, changing animals' names on purpose became a fun linguistic game. In return for friendship, Returnee girls helped the other group with their English homework (e.g., preparing a script for a 3-minute speech). However, Returnee girls share the strong aspiration for academic success of high-achieving boys, and so never crossed the line into becoming Underachievers themselves.

Compared to Returnee boys who developed friendship through school-based activities such as soccer and basketball, Returnee girls invested in informal social clubs outside school, which include hagwon, church, and K-pop star fan club. Near Hillside, there were several educational agencies targeting Returnees, where students studied with American textbooks. The language schools strictly enforced an English-only policy for immersion education, and students speaking Korean were penalized. Returnee girls found this a safe place to reveal their bilingual identity. Second, the Returnee girls I met were all regular churchgoers. Following their parents, they went to church during their overseas sojourn period (some started to go to church upon arrival in the US), and their parents wanted them to continue the religious practice in Korea. Teenagers in the church had a relatively inclusive ideology of friendship, which allowed for easier access to time with each other (cf. Han, 2007). Finally, joining a K-pop star fan club was the quickest way to build local friendships. In one interview, Rina, a Returnee girl, admitted she joined a BangTan Sonyeondan (BTS) fan club, even though she was not that interested in the band. She explained how her "fake" fandom for Jimin, one of the seven members of the South Korean boy band, turned into real one.

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[3] The mistake derives from phonological similarity in Korean: 하마 (hippo) and 해마 (seahorse).

Conversation with Rina:

Rina: I felt a bit lonely when Jieun (her close friend) talked about them with others all the time. It was a bit awkward to stand and say nothing. They were just so close, I feel like I was a bit left alone. So one day I said I liked BTS, and they assigned me to like Jimin.

YJS: Why? Who's your real favorite?

Rina: Doesn't matter. When I first joined there, there was only one spot left and it was for Jimin. So I didn't have a choice in who I would like. And I really like him now. (laugh).

Rina: 그니까 혼자 애들이랑 지은이가 방탄소년에 대해서 엄청 이야기하는데 서있기 뻘쭘하고. 아무말도 안하면서. 그래서 약간 좀 따 되는 (따돌림 당하는) 느낌이 들었죠. 그래서 이제 나도 BTS 좋아한다고, 그랬더니 애들이 나는 이제 지민이 전담으로 맡아서 좋아하라고.

YJS: 너는 원래 누구 좋아하는데?

Rina: 상관없어요. 어차피 그 여섯 명은 다 애들이 각각 차지하고 지민이 남은거 거든요. 선택사항이 없었어요. 근데 저 이제 진짜 팬이예요 (웃음).

What do the peer socialization practices of Returnees tell us? The internal dynamics of gender in school show that students must speak English well to become successful Koreans, but not in ways that threaten Koreanness, which is also understood as a form of masculinity. This makes it harder for Returnee boys to gain peer recognition. For Returnee boys, they must carefully calculate when and how they can reveal their native-like English identity without jeopardizing their social networks. In general, they secretly enjoy the psychological benefits of being in the upper part of the linguistic hierarchy while they carefully manage their friendships.

Conversation with Brandon:

Sometimes the teacher stops me from answering questions because I hog the game and get all the prizes. Now I participate in the game when nobody can answer the questions. I get candy bars in return and I share them with my friends.

제가 하도 수업시간에 선생님이 퀴즈내면 다 맞춰서 다 상품 얻어가니까 어쩔 땐 선생님이 저보고 참여하지 말라고 해요. 애들이 도저히 모르면 제가 그냥 해요...초콜렛이나 스니커즈 같은 거 선물로 받아서 애들이랑 나눠먹어요.

In trying to maintain a balance between friendship and academic competitiveness, Returnees carefully look for chances to capitalize on their bilingual identity. During my fieldwork, Hillside held many English-related extracurricular events, including the English Speech Contest, English Writing Contest, English Play, and English Newspaper Club. I focus on the English Speech Contest given its long history as a school-wide event in keeping with the government initiative toward quality English education. I examine how the language ideology of the event benefited Returnees over Underachievers by differently shaping their membership.

6. English Speech Festival

It is 9:10 am. The teachers are standing and anxiously waiting for two latecomers. The contestants are doing a dry run by reciting their lines with gestures; the audience, on the other hand, seems relaxed, enjoying comfortable armchairs. Finally, two Underachiever girls show up, giggling. Rebecca, the native English teacher, gives them a gentle warning, but the girls fail to understand what she is saying. One of the Korean teachers stands up and translates Rebecca's words, emphasizing the importance of punctuality in school events. With a sort of we-are-sorry-face, they soon settle down next to me, in the last row of the auditorium. Beginning with some words of encouragement from the Principal, the contest starts.

The English Speech Contest consists of two different activities. During the first segment of the event, contestants perform a three-minute speech in front of peers. The second segment assesses students' knowledge of English. Following a popular reality television show format known as the Golden Bell, this activity features answering riddles or trivia questions about English. The event took place on the Curriculum Experience Day, where teachers run in-class projects (e.g., making a water rocket in Science class and writing short poems in Korean class). All projects were drop-in in nature with the goal of increasing students' engagement. Students

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would get a coupon after class for participation, with ten coupons worth a free popcorn. To encourage participation in the competition, the student committee for the contest distributed a flyer announcing that participants would get five coupons after the event.

Teachers emphasized that participation in the contest was open to all, so not only Returnees but also Underachievers should benefit from the event. Aware that Underachievers had no other chances to get English support, some teachers in the Basic level spent their regular class helping Underachievers write their scripts. To their disappointment, however, none of Underachievers signed up for the event as contestants. The two Underachiever girls I described above who came late were there only to support their Returnee friend's speech. While two Underachiever boys performed a dance, it did not involve speaking a single English word. By contrast, 12 Returnees applied for the competition. What made this event uninviting to Underachievers?

Below, I focus on how the language ideology of the event differently shaped students' participation. I will describe how native-like English ideology in the English Speech Contest constructed a legitimate linguistic variety and a legitimate speaker. This ideology enabled Returnees to enjoy full-fledged membership while relegating Underachievers to bystanders.

6.1 Who Participates in the Event and Why (Not)? The English-Only Policy

Hillside laid out two strands of participation to make sure students had equal access to the event: Overseas and Domestic. Overseas represents those who have lived abroad for more than six months and Domestic represents the rest of the student population. The teachers viewed that this division would give some Underachievers incentive to take part in the event. Rebecca, a native English teacher, told me that awards would be given to three students in each division, for

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a total number of six. A Korean teacher added that the certificates of award could serve as a reference of leadership and proactiveness when applying to high school.

I view that the Overseas versus Domestic division made the event more accessible to the student public. However, none of Underachievers participated in the event as contestants. They had two primary reasons for non-participation. First, despite the school's category division, many students with near-native English proficiency who had never lived abroad were expected to dominate the Domestic division. Indeed, all participating students in the Domestic division turned out to be high-achieving students. Even though the Domestic students did not have overseas experience, they gave eloquent speeches with native-like English accents. As we shall see below, the teachers assessed students' performance based on the extent to which they could perform native-like English. One of the Domestic students told me that he went to an English debate school to get his accent corrected.

More importantly, the English-only policy limited Underachievers' access to the event. In line with the government's effort to develop students' communicative skills, the teachers made it clear that once students set foot to the auditorium, they must follow the English-only rule. Teacher Lim explained that the policy was to offer English-immersive experiences, and thus, was to their advantage. However, this language policy did not align with the students' peer norms, where Korean functions as a solidarity code. The auditorium filled with silence, as many students chose to remain quiet rather than trying to speak in English. The teachers also regulated students' Korean use, issuing warnings if students spoke Korean loudly. Yet, they did not problematize students' low-key use of Korean.

Also, teachers frequently used Korean to make sure that students understood the rules of participation. At first, they gave English instructions and Korean translations followed. However,

as the event drew toward its end, teachers increasingly spoke in Korean. They had to do so because the English Speech Contest had to finish in conjunction with other concurrent sessions being held for Curriculum Experience Day. As shown in the introductory vignette, instructing in English and providing Korean translation seems inefficient and time-consuming. The logistical pressure thus led the Korean teachers to administer the event dominantly in Korean, and as a result, the native English teacher gradually retreated backstage.

The English-only rule applied differently according to formality. In less formal contexts, so-called 'broken' English or 'Konglish' was an interstitial space where metapragmatic stances were possible. For instance, one Returnee boy who was adept with technology had to communicate with the emceeing students about a microphone glitch. Given that they had full competency in English, they could have communicated in English. However, the boy employed a mixed register of Korean and English. This made the students, including teachers and other Underachiever boys who supported the technology, burst into laughter. What made the audiences regard the mixed register as a form of humour? According to Park (2009), Korean-English humour serves as a site that (re)produces the images and significance of English. This language play does not merely point out the incompetence of Koreans, but positions its speakers as butts of the humour who are supposed to be laughed at. The following is a verbatim record of his remark:

hei YUNA and JENI, maikuseon iz ggobulggobul, jou jaba daruen maiku

'Hey YUNA and JENI, (the) microphone line got tangled, take (a) different microphone'

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hei YUNA and JENI,	*maikuseon*	*iz*	*ggobulggobul*
VOC	SUB	VERB (DECL)	COMPL
Hey *YUNA and JENI,*	microphone line	is (got)	An ideophone indicating two or more lines got tangled.

jou	*jaba*	*daruen*	*maiku*
DEI	VERB (IMP)	ADJ	OBJ
		COMPL	
You	Take	Different	microphone

The use of "mixed" register expects some understanding of English enough to understand what he said. At the word level, for instance, "hei" (hey), "is" (iz), "you" (jou) are the English words used. We can also find Korean words re-ordered to conform to English syntax. However, a relatively complex expression got tangled was replaced with ggobulggobul, an ideophone. Besides, the level of vocabulary used is basic. It appears that he is engaging in a translation riddle by himself, constructing himself as bad speakers of English. This type of humour is considered funny because what the speaker produced is different from the audiences' expectations. As Park (2009) argued, the appeal of Korean-English language play is that Korean recipients can easily sympathize the speakers' anxiety and pressure for 'proper' English. In this context, English effectively serves as an external language, which few in-group members are supposed to be competent. In this way, Returnees engaged in self-deprecation when peers were around so as to mitigate the accusation of arrogance that comes with the "Returnee" label.

As the task formality increased, however, the event became dominantly English-only. The teachers expected the contestants to completely memorize their scripts and give a speech in front of peers. In case they forget any lines, students were allowed to bring notecards. On the day of the contest, teachers checked students' notecards to see whether any students made use of the Korean writing system in their English speech. I found that what many teachers defined as a

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'cheating' strategies were quite prevalent in public speaking. In one example, the audience, including myself, were in awe of one Underachiever's eloquent English speech, because he showed remarkable improvement. Later, a teacher found out that he had written English pronunciations in Korean on his notecards in order to pretend he could speak English (see Figure 9). The teacher's effort to discourage students from such strategies exemplifies how the ideology of bilingualism as parallel monolingualisms (Heller, 2006) plays out in the everyday school context.
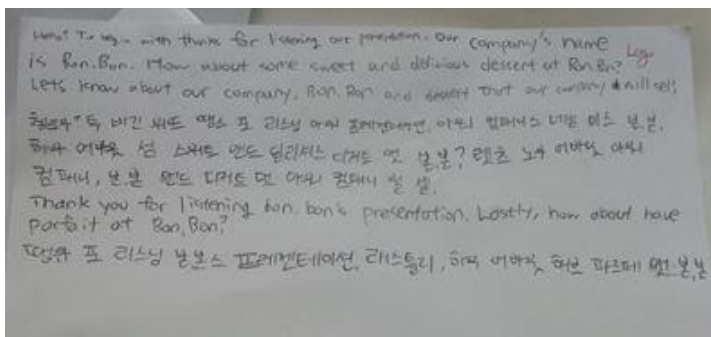
Figure 9. Student's use of Korean in English speaking

Not only that, teachers regulated students to speak grammatically-correct English. For instance, prior to the contest, Rebecca carefully checked students' grammar and asked them to make revisions if she found any errors. The other teachers also read the students' manuscripts multiple times to make sure the English Speech Contest would be an error-free event.

Accordingly, students' English proficiency played a critical role in deciding who took what kind of role. The emceeing students were both Returnees, whom teachers considered 'good' English speakers. Different acts, including mini skits and teacher-interviews, were performed in English. Mostly, the audience remained silent or showed little enthusiasm. Some left in the middle of the event, saying "Teacher, I can't understand what they're saying. I'd rather go out and have some rest." Indeed, many looked a bit lost when the emceeing students tried to crack a

joke at intermission. The dance performance of the two Underachiever boys got the most applause from the audience of any part of the event. However, the boys hastily left the stage when the emceeing students approached them to talk (presumably in English).

Paralinguistic features such as accent and gesture served to strengthen Returnees' position as 'good' English speakers. In this value system, audiences viewed native-like proficiency as superior, good to listen to, and thus, more desirable. By contrast, Korean-accented English was subject to linguistic mockery. In one speech, mocking a presenter's overt /r/, the alveolar approximant sound, some students laughed, making the following comments: "Does she speak English or Chinese or what? What's with her?" and "Why is she there (with such limited English skills)? It's funny". Many felt that the revealing of their "local" English accent in public would be no less than a humiliating experience. Such linguistic judgment against users of Korean-accented English can come not just from students, but also from teachers.

> *Conversation with Teacher Lim*
> We assess a contestant's accent, gestures, and bodily posture for public speaking, things like that… fluency and accuracy, clarity, and how well they deliver their opinions.
> 처음에는 그 참가자들 발음, 제스쳐, 몸동작 이런거 보고요. 유창성, 정확성, 명확성...얼마나 자기 생각을 잘 전달하나 이걸 봐요.

To what extent would the criteria reflect a speaker's position as legitimate? Drawing upon Bourdieu, Heller (1998) pointed out that an individual's social position as a legitimate speaker in the community is crucial to be recognized as a good bilingual speaker. It means that having a native-like accent or learning American gestures alone would not suffice to make a person a legitimate speaker, who not only has the right to speak, but is also worthy of being heard, believed, and obeyed. Questions then remain as to why teachers at Hillside refer to those skills to define what counts as 'good' English.

I argue that dispelling the native-like language ideology in the school curriculum brings little benefit to stakeholders. Teachers need seemingly neutral evaluation criteria, against which they assess students' linguistic proficiency. Given the wide circulation of native-like English as the best model in Korean society, the school has nothing to lose by arguing for the value of the native-speaker model. Also, the Returnee group benefits only by acknowledging the authority of the native-speaker model.

Aware of such sociolinguistic conditions, Underachievers refused to participate in the event. When asked about their non-participation, many Underachievers said indifferently, "I don't want to go to such a boring event. It's not for me." In their worldview, incompetency in English served as the basis of their category membership as Underachievers. Moreover, Underachiever boys thought of getting teachers' attention through participation in school events as "nerdy," and "girly." As Bourdieu (1984, 1986) discussed, such self-selection is part of social reproduction in that it guides people to tailor their expectations and their own view of themselves to their place. In that sense, students' choice of participation has long-lasting implications.

To summarize, teachers encouraged students' participation in the English Speech Contest, where students with different levels of English proficiency -from Returnees to Underachievers- could all enjoy learning English. However, the participation structure of the event bears resemblance to the classroom because Returnees, who perform native-like English, enjoy recognition and prestige as legitimate speakers. Keenly aware of that, Underachievers chose non-participation.

7. Sociology of English Motivation and Achievement

This chapter has examined the ways in which the meritocratic English curriculum contributes to the students' differential achievement by class. During elementary school, students

focus on developing communicative skills. Upon entering into middle school, however, the curriculum puts a heavy emphasis on grammar, from which students infer that English is about learning grammatical rules. It is from middle school on that academic performance (and its record) becomes critical for college entrance. Teachers therefore efficiently carry out social selection by presenting English learning as a set of decontextualized linguistic items.

Parents' strategies in response to the disjointed curriculum differed according to their social class. Specifically, parents have different ideas about the extent to which they involve themselves in their children's English education, and how to help the children through the grammar-oriented teaching practice. Middle-class parents tended to foster children's engagement in English through 'concerted cultivation' (Lareau, 2003) at a young age. In their minds, curricular rupture was inevitable for making social selection fair. Instead of complaining about the institutional decision, they carefully organized English learning opportunities to ensure their child's excellence in school. As much as working-class parents did want their children to excel in school, parental involvement in English education was limited to sending them to affordable English teaching institutions. The ideology that academic success is a function of work ethic made it difficult for working-class parents to actively engage in children's academic progress. Also, due to their limited knowledge of English (education), they tended to rely upon what is offered by the school.

The school's streaming practice and extracurricular activities reinforced differential achievement by social class. The government implemented the streaming practice in order to offer Underachievers chances to rekindle their interest in English. However, the students' active participation in the Basic level had a limited effect because the items tested in school exams

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required more than the Basic curriculum covered. Similarly, the English Speech Contest valued native-like English proficiency, creating little space for Underachievers' participation.

I thus argue for a sociological turn to underachievement. As we have seen, the division between Returnees and Underachievers stems not only from the class-based inequality in accessing the linguistic capital, but also from their different understandings about gender identity and social mobility. Without taking into account the social factors, teachers interpreted academic underachievement in therapeutic terms, which I will examine in the next chapter. Below, I focus on the workings of afterschool programs for Underachievers. By tracing their implementation at Hillside, I describe why and how the state support has had little effect on Underachievers' English progress.

Chapter 4 Underachievers in Educational Welfare

1. Introduction

This chapter examines how Educational Welfare programs for Underachievers operate through a case of Afterschool Class and psychiatric counselling. According to a government document (e.g., The proposal to ensure basic academic skills: No single student left behind, 2015), underachievement stems not only from lack of effort, but also from other broader issues, including family problems, learning difficulties, and psychiatric issues (e.g., Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder [ADHD] and depression). Thus, the welfare programs focus on providing systemic support both in academic and emotional domains. To what extent would these policies address class-based inequality in English achievement? I aim to answer this question by looking at how the policies and programs are implemented at Hillside.

During data collection, two types of on-site academic support for Underachievers were available: Walking-Together (an educational support run by college students), and Afterschool Class, which refers to a range of educational activities that occur after regular classes. I focus on the latter because of its long history as a means to reach students whose access to shadow education is limited. Since 2006, afterschool programs have become part of Educational Welfare, the first governmental initiative to address students' low-achievement from a welfare perspective (see section 6 in Chapter 1 for detail). On-site emotional support consists of psychiatric counselling, through which students who show low academic motivation can visit a designated office and discuss their academic and emotional difficulties with a school counsellor.

Despite the governmental efforts to address underachievement, I found that few Underachievers found the program helpful. First, the Afterschool Class's test-oriented curriculum did not provide linguistic support that was relevant to Underachievers. In accounting

for Underachievers' non-participation, teachers grouped them into two categories: Responsible versus Irresponsible. With the former, teachers promoted the importance of English in the skilled blue-collar job market. With the latter, teachers attempted to rectify low academic motivation through psychiatric counselling. However, the programs fail to provide meaningful guidance in relation to Underachievers' life patterns, peer networks and norms. I argue that while the Educational Welfare model recognizes the complexity of underachievement, its solution is narrowed down to a liberal self-help ideology.

Below, I provide a background of Afterschool Class at Hillside. In Section 3, I will examine what kind of dilemmas Hillside teachers faced in the Afterschool English Class. Section 4 describes teaching staff's strategy of categorizing Underachievers as either Responsible or Irresponsible. Section 5 assesses the process of psychiatric counselling. Section 6 critically reviews the effects on Underachievers.

2. Tensions in Afterschool Class: Curriculum and Teacher

The terms referring to afterschool programs may have varied over time, but their purpose has been consistent: to minimize the power of the familial backgrounds in students' achievement. Government officials insist that families should spend less on shadow education if schools attract more students by providing quality afterschool programs. In compliance with the government's effort to curb expenses on private education, Hillside teachers have run afterschool programs since the 1990s. Currently, the government provides means-tested Afterschool Vouchers, which allow for students from low-income families to take classes free of charge. Among my participants, six Underachievers reported that they have received vouchers.

Teachers faced two recurring tensions in running the afterschool programs. First, few high-performing students found its curriculum competitive. In 2014, the government made it

clear that afterschool programs should comply with the national curriculum. This means that

afterschool English teachers should organize their classes around the national English curriculum.

Under this regulation, for instance, it is unlawful to teach Grade 9-level English to students in

Grades 7 or 8. At Hillside, those who wish to work as afterschool instructors need to submit

sample lesson plans in reference to the curriculum of the regular English class in the application

package for Afterschool Class, specifying what to teach and its relevance to the school's

curriculum. However, such policies did not account for the needs of high achievers, because the

state-mandated afterschool curriculum offered little help in preparing them to meet the admission

requirement of prestigious high schools. Ms. Jang pointed out that high-performing students,

including Returnees, rarely participate in Afterschool Class.

> *Interview with Ms. Jang, Head Teacher, Afterschool Programs:*
> When they enter Grade 9, most students go to hagwon. Similar to how high-performing
> students feel bored studying at school, you know, because we're not allowed to teach
> advanced content. And the students who have no interest in studying, there's no need for
> them to stay (after) in school. Now In-betweens stay in (after) school programs. And
> Underachievers. Teachers spend lots of time on classroom discipline.
> 애들이 3 학년되면 많이 학원가요 공부잘하는 애들은 학교에서 공부하는거
> 지루해하고. 그 선행학습이 안되니까. 그리고 공부 관심없는 애들은 학교에 있을
> 필요가 없고. 그니까 중간 애매한 애들만 남는거예요. 이 학습부진아들하고.
> 선생님들이 그니까 애들 잡느라 수업시간에 시간 많이 쓴다고..

 As Ms. Jang indicated, the Afterschool Class population consisted of students with

different academic goals. At one end was a group of students who wished to enhance test-

specific knowledge. Students in this group wished to stay in the academic track, and were

determined in their goals for post-secondary education. They thus expected afterschool teachers

to provide highly-structured lessons like hagwons do. On the other end, Underachievers with

ambivalence about post-secondary education also attended the class. Once homeroom teachers

identified Underachievers in the classroom, their duties included referring them to Afterschool Class. Skipping classes at will was hardly possible, because a program coordinator would phone parents after checking attendance when students were absent.

Another tension has to do with unequal power distribution between teachers and instructors. Full-time teachers took charge of charge of administrative duties. These include organizing timetables, inviting and selecting part-time instructors, sending out flyers to students, and communicating with other departments regarding payment and Afterschool Vouchers. Ms. Jang said that many full-time teachers are reluctant to take charge of Afterschool Class due to their heavy workloads with teaching, homeroom management, and administrative jobs in their departments: "They want a break from the students after regular teaching hours".

For this reason, schools hire a large number of non-tenured, sessional instructors to run the Afterschool Class. Inside Hillside's afterschool office was a small round table for *oeubu gangsa*, or external teaching staff. An instructor, by legal definition, is a short-term temporary worker, working no more than 15 hours per week, and 60 hours per month. Workers in this category are not eligible for employee benefits, such as employee insurance, monthly breaks, and retirement pension contributions, nor are their position secured, because a student satisfaction survey of the Afterschool Class determines their next contract with the school. This means that while full-time teachers have institutional powers to decide what to teach and what to assess, instructors, although they are called "teachers", have limited access to those decision-making processes.

The 2015 Hillside Afterschool started at 3:40 p.m., 20 minutes after regular class dismissal. The programs had four major categories: academic subjects, extracurricular subjects, self-development, and sports. In the domain of academic subjects, both regular and part-time

staff took charge of teaching Korean, English, math, social studies, and science. External staff, whom Hillside teachers invited as sessional instructors, on the other hand, taught extracurricular subjects such as Japanese, Chinese, and Movie & Pops English, a class that taught English through popular culture rather than through a study of grammar. Under the category of self-development, students could learn skills in dance, flute, guitar, illustration, hair design, and computers. Finally, students (mostly boys) in sports programs played various sports games including, but not limited to soccer, badminton, table tennis, and basketball. Each class, with the exception of sports, had no more than 15 students. During my stay at Hillside, the tuition was between CAD 50 and 100 for three months. Pricewise, this was competitive given that hagwons charged, on average, CAD 150 a month. Below, I examine what kinds of struggles teachers had as they placed Underachievers in the Afterschool Class.

3. The Dilemmas of Supporting Underachievers

Students in the Afterschool Class, whom Ms. Jang referred to as "In-Betweens", showed varying degrees of English motivation. On a questionnaire, they indicated difficulties in understanding General level classes. For instance, many students said, "Teachers do not give details in explaining English grammar," or "It's hard to ask questions when teachers are quickly delivering lectures" in discussing why English was difficult to learn. The program participants asked that more time be spent on grammar explanations in order to get higher scores in exams. Others cited parents as their primary motivation for taking the course. Asked about their motivation for participating, they said, "Mom forced me to take the class," or "not to be told off by my mother." However, these students also recognized the instrumental value of English and came to class regularly.

From the In-betweens' viewpoint, Afterschool English Class was an economically rational choice. As I have stated, Afterschool Class follows the national English curriculum. Thus, instructors used the same textbook, which many students found helpful in reviewing content from the regular class at a cheaper tuition fee than would be charged by hagwons. Reflecting the students' high interest in succeeding on school exams, instructors provided extra resources relevant to the school curriculum to help them prepare. The major goal of Afterschool Class was thus geared to teaching test-specific knowledge, and ultimately helping students get better scores on exams.

Many Underachievers, whose understanding of English varied from English phonics to basic vocabulary, found it difficult to survive in the test-oriented curriculum. According to Ms. Jang, allocating Underachievers to the Afterschool Class was done to protect them from the stigma effect. She said that Hillside once ran additional programs designated only for Underachievers. However, the class became known as a group of "troublemakers" who were viewed as "hopeless," which caused low enrolment rates. The teachers viewed afterschool programs as a practical way to help Underachievers without stigmatizing them. The Afterschool Class is also an efficient strategy for schools to demonstrate their accountability. Currently, the number of Underachievers in Afterschool Class is important to government officials in assessing schools' accountability to the Zero Underachievers policy. These numbers, in turn, affect teachers' performance-related pay (Park, 2014).

The demands of teaching English according to the national curriculum shaped teachers' classroom practice to focus on helping students prepare for English exams, which saw many Underachievers infer that "English is too difficult." In that context, instructors could at best provide Underachievers with different materials for self-study or, at worst, let them ride the time

in class out without providing instruction. Some Underachievers started to behave in ways that incurred negative evaluations. One Underachiever boy, for instance, interrupted the class and incessantly talked with his friends until the instructor yelled at him.

The heterogeneity of the student population brought tensions between In-Betweens and Underachievers. The former viewed Underachievers as an "annoying" group: "I don't know why they are here if they're not interested in studying." The latter, by contrast, made it clear that they did not want to study in the Afterschool Class in the first place: "Suddenly, my homeroom teacher said that I should study here because my English scores are so low." They also added that the In-betweens were "pathetic," because their lives are so constrained by study and adult intervention. As I will show below, many Underachievers were working as front-line, minimum-waged staff in the service sector. Based on their wage-earning experiences, Underachievers thought of themselves as more mature than their peers.

The instructors' primary concern focused less on how to make teaching more effective than on whom they would target, and their criteria for making make such decisions. Many instructors emphasized that they could not teach both groups simultaneously. For instance, Somi, an English afterschool instructor, made it clear that her teaching goal is to help students get higher scores in English exams. In talking about one Underachiever boy's "disruptive" classroom behaviour, she commented:

> *Interview with Somi, Afterschool Instructor*
> To what extent am I held accountable for his poor performance in English? I sometimes think about it. Not having him in class clearly helped other students study. I did my best to support him, but he's the one who denied my offer. Then why should I help him? Because I get paid?

어느정도까지 제가 걔가 영어 못하는게 제 책임인가, 그런생각해요. 오히려 안오는게 다른애들한테 도움이 되잖아요. 저는 도와주려고 하는데 걔가 거절을 하니까. 그럼 제가 걔를 왜 도와야 하냐? 돈을 받으니까?

As time went by, fewer students showed up to class. A program coordinator, whose duties included making phone calls (or sending text messages) to absentees' parents, told me that less than half of the Underachievers managed to complete the courses. She added that recipients of the Afterschool Voucher tend to drop out of programs rather quickly "because the program is free of charge for them, [so] they freely come and go." In this way, social actors in Afterschool Class naturally distinguished those students who actively participate in the Afterschool Class from those who do not, which later leads to being dubbed as Responsible or Irresponsible. I examine the working of these two categories in the next section in detail.

The In-betweens said that they were going to hagwons for a short period (e.g., three weeks) to increase efficiency in preparing the exams. Parents thought of the Afterschool Class as part of public service, which did not necessarily guarantee a quality class. Distrust in quality resulted in a low participation rate, particularly during the exam period. In conversation with a mother, she said that many parents were aware that some students from low-income families take advantage of the Afterschool Voucher. She added that students "who paid the tuition" are discriminated against due to the Educational Welfare policy, and parents therefore felt compelled to send their children to shadow education agencies.

In response to the increasing absenteeism in the Afterschool Class, the head teacher attributed students' participation to the instructor's personal qualities, such as enthusiasm, passion for teaching, and dedication to education. Having talked about Hillside's policy on Underachievers, the head teacher offered instructors the following advice:

Afterschool Head Teacher Jang's Speech in Teacher Orientation
It will be, sometimes, very difficult to make students sit and study. But your continuous

effort and care, they should make a difference. Please don't push them to study hard;

listen to what they want and support their opinions, while helping them build up some

basic knowledge about each subject. Think of yourself as walking a fine line throughout

the semester… You should find a good balance.

애들을 참 진짜 책상에 앉혀서 공부시키는 게 어렵죠. 정말. 근데 선생님들께서 정말

꾸준히 노력하시고 애들을 케어하시면은, 분명히 달라지거든요. 너무 애들한테

공부하라고 하시기 보다는 애들이 뭘 원하는지 귀 기울이시고, 애들을 좀 지지

해주세요. 각각 과목 공부 기본적 소양만 쌓을 수 있게 도와주시고. 한 학기 동안

줄타기 하신다 생각하시고, 거기서 밸런스를 잘 맞춰서.

Ms. Jang's remark is significant in that she refers to each instructor's individual strategies

as well as work ethic as keys to making Underachievers present in class. Dismissive of her view,

the instructors suggested that there be a clear reward and punishment system. They viewed that

the majority of participating students had a carefree attitude because the programs did not allow

instructors to assess students' performance. Afterschool instructors also expressed that

Underachievers would benefit from one-to-one tutoring classes rather than from whole-class

instruction. Nevertheless, the instructors' requests went unaddressed.

As a result, many instructors quit the job after the end of their three-month contract.

Sometimes, they left during the semester for better working conditions. Accordingly, the

continuity of curriculum was often at stake, and the students complained about the frequent

change in their instructors. Upon learning that instructors had changed twice within a single

semester, some parents expressed resentment, stating that afterschool teachers were no more than

"knowledge peddlers" who lacked professional expertise. Although Ms. Jang constantly

reminded the instructors of the moral value of "a caring mind for students," many instructors

were ready to leave the school in search of job stability.

To summarize, the government offered the Afterschool Class to provide Underachievers extra opportunities to learn English. However, the test-oriented curriculum did not provide relevant linguistic support to Underachievers. The instructors who took charge of teaching had little institutional power to negotiate the curriculum in the interest of Underachievers. In effect, these two factors hindered schools from providing quality afterschool programs to support Underachievers. Below, I focus on how categorization within Underachievers helps teachers sort out who should be eligible for school counselling.

4. Categorization of Responsible Versus Irresponsible Underachievers

In this section, I examine how teachers referred Underachievers for psychiatric counselling. The category division within Underachievers- Responsible versus Irresponsible - helped teachers to sort out who should benefit from school counselling.

The within-category division first emerged when teachers and the program coordinator looked into some Underachievers' frequent absences. The increasing number of dropouts concerned many teachers, because high dropout rates could affect the overall quality of afterschool programs. The teachers referred to the dropout Underachievers as Irresponsible. They reasoned that, unlike Responsible Underachievers who regularly attended classes, the Irresponsible Underachievers often skipped classes, dropped out of the program, and behaved badly in class.

In addition, students' job prospects served to distinguish Responsible Underachievers from Irresponsible ones. Many teachers admitted that not all Underachievers would excel in academic competition, and that there would always be Underachievers as long as schools maintained an exam-driven model for education. "If things (exam-driven education) don't get

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better in any sooner," one teacher suggested, "I think it's realistic for Underachievers to find a job and aim for it by themselves rather than to invest energy and time in studying."

Within the Underachiever group, some students acknowledged that they were neither interested in nor good at studying. They instead developed an interest in skilled jobs and prepared to enter the vocational field. Teachers considered them Responsible, supporting their decision in various ways. For instance, an Underachiever boy was taking a course after school to get a certificate in information processing. His homeroom teacher made exceptions for his absence from afterschool programs. One teacher also acquiesced to allow for an Underachiever girl's nail coloring, even though it went against the Hillside student code of conduct. This was possibly because the girl was preparing for a certificate in nail art.

For Responsible Underachievers to make progress in English, teachers helped the students recognize the instrumental value of English in Korean society. They urged the Underachievers to keep studying English, rationalizing its skill as added value in the job-seeking process. A school-wide event with a hairdresser further illustrates my point. Once a month, Hillside holds a Career Counselling Day, where people from diverse fields talk about their professions, and give some input to students who show interest in that field. I participated in a session in which a graduate of Hillside, now working at a major hair salon in Korea, was invited as a speaker. Teacher Kim introduced her in the following way: "Let me introduce our proud graduate of Hillside, Mina Kim. She courageously chose her career as a hairdresser around your age and worked so hard while her friends struggled for university admission. Guess what? She makes more money than the average college graduate!"

Students' eyes sparkled with curiosity. Mina told us how she got out of the academic track: "I knew that it would be very difficult for me to get ahead of others. Then I thought, why

should I spend another three years like that? I've had enough with it. So, I decided to follow my dream." Mina explained how her life trajectory as a hairdresser began after graduating from a vocational high school. Her stories were trimmed to emphasize the importance of making efforts. She shared some struggles a (female) hairdresser can face, which involved experiences of harassment, discrimination, and overwork without pay. The speech, including its stories of success, perseverance, and tears, was motivational not only for future hair designers but for students in general. She made a clear link between English and her future when asked about her next goal:

> *Mina Kim's Speech to Students:*
> One thing I regret is not having studied English harder when I was in school. If possible, I want to live in countries where hairdressers are well-paid. Now studying English is very difficult for me because the only time I have for English is after work, which is sometimes after 1 a.m. And there's an age limit (for obtaining a visa). So, my dear fellow Hillside girls and boys, I hope you study English hard and don't make the same mistake I did (applause from the audience followed).
> 제가 지금 한가지 후회하는 거는 학교 다닐 때 영어 열심히 안 한거.. 가능하면 좀 더 미용사가 잘 대우받는 나라에서 살고 싶고요. 지금 영어 공부 할 수 있는 시간은 새벽 1 시 넘어서, 제가 일 끝나고 밖에 시간이 없으니까. 나이도 있고요. 여러분들은 꼭 영어공부 열심히 하셔서 그런 저 같은 실수 안 하셨으면 좋겠어요.

Mina viewed English skills as added value that can bring advantages with significant material benefits. It is difficult to assess whether proficient English skills alone suffice for job security in English-speaking countries. Documenting the lives of skilled Korean immigrants, for instance, Lee (2015) argued that job security depends on multiple factors, such as educational backgrounds, language skills, and previous experiences. Yet, the importance of English for high-skilled blue-collar sectors quickly spread to students through various career-searching events held in the school.

Students at vocational high schools, who were also graduates of Hillside, emphasized the importance of English in the vocational field. Every year (mainly in September, when ninth graders begin applying for high schools), a number of students from vocational high schools visit Hillside to promote their school programs. In specifying admission criteria, one student pointed out that "you can enjoy the luxury of choosing what to do as long as you have a high TOEIC score." She gave details on three possible options: first, to work at major companies like Samsung or Hyundai; second, to go abroad; and third, to pursue college education via the vocational high school track. In each case, English represented an indispensable skill to access higher salaries with better working conditions.

By contrast, teachers viewed that the Irresponsible Underachievers had neither academic motivation nor career prospects. Teacher Sung pointed out they often drop out of school on a whim and end up in low-skilled jobs like telephone sales or pizza delivery. "Even a small-sized company requires TOEIC scores…not having English scores in this competitive era is like… to tell future employers like, please hire me even though I am a lazy person," Mr. Sung added. In this context, the categorization within Underachievers exemplifies how English learning has become a moral project of self-development (Park, 2010, 2016).

The categorization gained wide currency when teachers sorted out who should be referred for psychiatric counselling. Teacher Sung added that the Underachievers' self-sufficient attitudes stem not only from personal character, but from broader family problems. In recounting the experience of dealing with a boy who tore up a test sheet in class, Mr. Sung commented:

Interview with Mr. Sung' about Underachievers:
They are, in a sense, self-sufficient and living in the moment… they simply do things they like. They can't think of "oh, what will happen if I do this or that." I think some would be emotionally unstable. Parents work until late at night in this neighbourhood, so children

do not have proper protection at home. It's not really something that teachers can do (anything about).

그냥, 뭐랄까. 현실에 만족하고 그 순간에 사는 듯한 행동을 하는... 그냥 좋으면 하는거 거든요. 아 무슨 일이 생길까 내가 이거 하면, 뭐 그런 생각을 못하고. 애가 좀 정서적으로 좀 불안한거죠. 여기가 맞벌이 하는 부모가 많고 그러니까 가정적인 부분에서 애들이 안정이 없고. 선생님이 혼자 어떻게 할 수 있는 부분이 아니거든요.

Mr. Sung diagnosed that Irresponsible Underachievers were caught in a vicious cycle; few successful experiences in achievement leads to low motivation in studying, which again causes low achievement. Asked why, he responded, "Learned helplessness, I'd say." Other teachers at Hillside agreed with the view, suggesting that psychiatric counselling is a practical way to understand the reasons for underachievement and to prepare Underachievers for skilled blue-collar jobs. Mr. Sung's view widely resonated with the official discourse on Underachievers, wherein low academic motivation is addressed in therapeutic terms (see section 3 in Chapter 1).

However, it was not in the Underachievers' interest to have skilled-blue collar jobs. Most Irresponsible Underachievers expressed the urgency for employment. They were willing to make money through low-skilled entry jobs, such as staffing gas stations, convenience stores, internet cafés (*PC bang*), Karaoke clubs, and local restaurants. Those with a motorbike license delivered fast food. Their reasons for working were diverse, and include the following: to become independent from family conflicts, to build experience outside school, to support parents' difficult financial conditions, to hang out with other friends without parents' intervention, and to earn an allowance for going out with girlfriends.

Whatever their reasons, the Underachievers' most pressing need was not met by the school, but by friends or seniors already in the work force. This is because non-skilled blue-collar jobs are generally filled not by official hiring process, but through informal networks. According to a local business owner, he prefers the latter because adolescent boys tend to have

more accountability and commitment when they work with friends. He also added that this makes it easier to track down their whereabouts in case any boys make trouble at work or disappear. In this way, Underachiever friendships in school developed into a systematic job network that mutually benefits both Underachievers and employers.

The Underachievers did not express a strong desire for socioeconomic mobility, because middle-class jobs required "too much study" (March 3; May 14 2015, Fieldnote), which they were not good at. Regarding this, I had a chance to talk with Junkyu (JK), who was working at a local gas station. As the following interview shows, he had a modest sense of job security, which was short-term and highly dependent on peer networks.

> *Interview with one Underachiever boy, JK*
> YJS: Have you thought of having a stable job, though?
> JK: What is a stable job?
> YJS: Teacher, judge, civil servant… You do without the worry of being fired.
> JK: This job (staff at a gas station) doesn't have that, either. And I have friends in different gas stations. I can work there (if I get fired).
> YJS: 근데 좀 안정적인 직업 같은 거 생각해 본 적 있어?
> JK: 안정적인 게 뭔데요?
> YJS: 교사, 판사, 공무원... 잘릴 위험 없는 거.
> JK: 지금 하는 일도 그런 걱정 안 하는데. 다른 주유소에서 일하는 애도 있어요.
> (만약에 짤리면) 거기서 일하면 되는데.

In the excerpt, I start with a loaded question to indicate that his current job may not be considered stable. JK responds with a question about what stability means. I remember being a bit hesitant to respond, because I had assumed that middle school students would have the cognitive maturity to understand the importance of job stability. Searching for words, I give him examples of jobs with security (teacher, judge, civil servant), and add, "You do without the worry of being fired." He replies that his job is also stable, for he does not have to worry about

that either. His network of friends at gas stations strengthened his belief that he had places to turn quickly in times of unemployment.

Experiences of marginalization in class (see Chapter 3) naturally led Underachievers to turn away from school, and this retreat enabled them to gain a sense of confidence. The more they became confident about knowledge and practice outside school, the more they became self-sufficient and less concerned about low academic standings. Some Underachievers were critically aware of structural constraints in learning English, complaining that "teachers do not care about us," "we're being discriminated against," and "the school exam asks what we did not learn." However, rather than questioning the status quo, they developed distrust in the school, which seems to reflect the working-class's dismissive attitude about social institutions (cf. Eckert, 1989; also see the working parents' response in section 3 in Chapter 3).

More importantly, Underachievers thought that they were developing real-world knowledge outside school, which they considered more valuable than academic progress. In JK's case, for instance, he often talked about how much he gained confidence by dealing with demanding adults. Another boy also commented that he felt grown up every month, when he received his monthly paycheck. They all enjoyed the sense of being and acting like adults outside school. Their non-cooperative behaviour at school, however, frustrated teachers, whose help and guidance was critical to their future ability to get middle-class jobs.

In sum, social actors in the Afterschool Class categorized Underachievers into two groups: Responsible versus Irresponsible. The former, despite their adverse positions in school, were encouraged to study English to gain a competitive edge in the skilled blue-collar job market. The latter were referred to psychiatric counselling. The next section focuses on how the school's psychiatric counselling programs address underachievement.

5. Revolutions Within: School's Encounter with Psychotherapy

This section examines how school authorities made use of psychiatric counselling to support Irresponsible Underachievers. Government officials argued that psychiatric counselling should guide teachers in identifying the reason(s) for underachievement and providing treatment where necessary. After reviewing official counselling booklets and guidelines, I examine how the program affected Underachievers, and with what consequences.

5.1 Three Elements of Psychiatric Counselling

This section examines three recurring themes that arise frequently in official guidelines of psychiatric counselling. The themes serve as windows into understanding how policy makers, educators, and teachers view and act upon underachievement in schools, and with what consequences. After exploring each characteristic, I assess the consequences of psychiatric counselling in light of social reproduction in schools.

First, motivation should be the panacea for poor academic performance. Many program guidebooks begin with the idea that underachievement is a multi-layered phenomenon. For instance, the Study Counselling Manual Book (2015), distributed by the Seoul Learning Support Center, identifies four dimensions that affect students' academic progress: emotion (e.g., anxiety), cognition (e.g., lack of attention), behaviour (e.g., ADHD), and (home) environment (e.g., family separation). It goes on to say, "With your strong will, you can overcome your situation and make it." By referring to Positive Psychology (Peterson & Selligman, 2004), the book's authors ask students to develop self-esteem by finding strengths in Six Virtue categories: wisdom, humanity, courage, temperance, justice, and transcendence. In that sense, I argue that while the Educational Welfare model recognizes the complexity of underachievement, its solution is narrowed down to a liberal self-help ideology.

At the school level, psychiatric counselling focusing on motivation shaped the counsellors' role to provide micro-level supervision. The participating students said that the sessions focused on thinking about study habits. Hae-In, for instance, said "She [the school counsellor] asked me to write down what kind of words I think of when someone tells me to study. I wrote words like anger and boredom. Then we talked about, like, why I have those kinds of feelings… and we made a study plan together. She will track of how I keep to the plan."

Government publications also offer peer support, through which students of the same age share advice and information regarding English. In the following example, several high school-aged students created a lengthy list of reasons, motivations, and practical strategies for learning English under the English heading *Do I Have to Do It?* (see Figure 10). The Underachievers, however, did not find the peer advice particularly useful or appealing, partly because the advice rationalized the importance of English and gave study-specific strategies. In the Underachievers' worldview, excellence in academics did not bring any rewards or recognition in their peer culture. Underachievers did not necessarily challenge the hegemonic notion of motivation, which places an emphasis on individuals in resolving underachievement. They instead developed gendered strategies to resist the school authority. Many Underachiever boys, whose core identity lies in opposition to authority, directly challenged the school's pastoral support by saying "why should I do this crap?" (July 2015, fieldnote), or by not showing up for sessions. The bold anti-school behaviour made them look 'tough' and 'cool' in front of other peers. Underachiever girls, while more conservative with their anti-school behaviours, found other methods, such as making up a fake study plan right before their counselling session. When asked personal questions by the counsellor, the girls often refused to engage further (April 2015, fieldnote).

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Figure 10. Self-regulated learning guidebook: English study

Q: I'm not planning to live abroad; I don't get why I study English. It seems that grammar is not really helping me when I talk with foreigners. I live in Korea; Why there are so many English words? I have to study English even when I'm not good at Korean? Studying English is worry and more worry!

- Think of your dream; English is a must.
- Sometimes you don't get why you study other school subjects when they are so difficult to understand. You may find the subjects interesting once you overcome the difficulties.
- I do not have fundamental knowledge in English. But I memorize English words when I worry about my English skill. There is no other way around it. And I hate this too, but I frequently listen to English CDs. It will help me understand the content someday even if I don't pay attention to them. My ears are listening.
- In this globalized world, English is important for communication. If you have to study English, do it now.

- Can you say that you're not going abroad throughout your entire life? English is a must when you go abroad; all people over the world make use of English.
- Study English for communication first; once you develop your skills, then you study English grammar and reading.
- Go to the adult-working world. You will see the importance of English. Study English now before you regret it.
- Study English with YouTube or American dramas. Movies also will work. I watch British dramas, movies, and YouTube clips. You can also study English with American comics.
- I translate every single English word into Korean. The reason why we study grammar is to be more precise in our interpretations of English scripts or conversations.
- Start with children's stories and comics. Reading novels and newspapers will help as well. I studied with Garfield stories, which I borrowed from a library.

Additionally, the current school counselling programs reify such class-based differences into matters of personal choice, suggesting that 'wrong' communication styles may have caused students' underachievement in school. Supported by the Korean Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, for instance, the Ministry of Education offers the *Love Your Child* newsletter online to support students' mental wellness. The newsletter mainly targets parents, and features articles on improving parent-child relationships. In the following excerpt, a guest editor discusses the importance of parents' communication style with children. She defines a parent's role as that of a facilitator, and asks for change in communication style toward empathy, proper responses, and encouragement. By comparing 'wrong' or 'exemplary' conversational flow, she explains (in italics) how a parent's response affects their child's self-esteem.

Table 4

Two Modes of Parent-Child Conversation

Child: Mom, I messed up the test.

Mom: Oh no. Again. What can you possibly do in the future if you keep getting such low scores?

Child: I did my best.

Child: Can you really say it was your best? Why can't you be more like a kid in the neighbourhood, who got another perfect score? Do you think there is a chance for you to go to college with this result?

Child: Stop! You don't understand!

How would you feel if you were in the child's situation? As a parent, you may simply express how you feel about the disappointing result. However, the conversation may end up hurting your child's feelings. Children may stop trying to talk with parents if they feel they are being judged.

> - 자녀: 오늘 시험 봤는데 망쳤어요.
> - 부모: 지난번에도 망쳤잖아. 이렇게 해서 나중에 뭐가 될래?
> - 자녀: 나도 최선을 다했단 말이에요.
> - 부모: 그게 최선이야? 옆집 아이는 이번에도 잘 봤다더라. 이렇게 해서 나중에 좋은 대학 갈 수 있겠니?
> - 자녀: 됐어요! 엄마는 알지도 못하면서!
>
> 위와 같은 상황에서 자녀의 입장이라면 어떤 느낌이 들까요? 부모님 입장에서는 자녀가 시험에서 좋은 결과를 내지 못한 것에 대한 속상한 마음의 표현일 수 있지만, 부모님으로부터 위로를 받고 싶은 자녀에게 도리어 마음의 상처를 줄 수도 있습니다. 성급하게 자녀의 행동을 판단하거나 마음에 상처를 남기는 대화를 반복하게 되면, 자녀는 결국 부모에게 마음을 닫게 됩니다.

<<Please talk with your children like this :>>

Child: Mom, I messed up the test.

Mom: I'm sorry. I understand you must be sad (*Empathy*; emphasis original).

Child: I was so nervous that I made so many mistakes.

Mom: I'm sorry to hear that (*Showing response*). You could have done better if you hadn't been so nervous…

Child: I studied harder than before. But I got so nervous when the test started.

Mom: I see. But I'm proud of you because you made more efforts than before.

(*Encouragement*)

Your child will talk more openly once they feel their parent(s) can understand how they feel.

4 ▶ 이렇게 대화해 주세요.

• 자녀: 오늘 시험 봤는데 망쳤어요.
• 부모: 속상하지? (공감하기)
• 자녀: 내가 너무 긴장을 해서 아는 것도 많이 틀렸어요.
• 부모: 저런. 긴장만 하지 않았어도 더 잘 볼 수 있었는데 속상하겠다. (반응 보여주기)
• 자녀: 이번 시험은 지난번보다 더 많이 공부했어요. 그런데 막상 시험문제를 받아보니 너무 떨렸어요.
• 부모: 더 많이 공부했는데 긴장하는 바람에 점수를 잘 못 받았구나. 엄마는 그래도 네가 지난번보다 더 노력한 것이 대견한데~ (정리하기)

※ 자녀는 부모님이 자신의 마음을 있는 그대로 이해한다고 느끼면 더욱 자신의 이야기를 잘 털어놓을 수 있습니다.

Table 4 illustrates a conversational flow between a mother and child about her unsatisfactory test result. In the first example, the mom scolds her for getting a low score, comparing her score to the neighbour's. Then she challenges her capacity to go to college with the current academic standing. The conversation ends with the child yelling "Stop!" In the second example, however, mom is strategically using softer language by showing empathy, response, and encouragement. The guest editor argues that parents' supportive attitude is key to providing children with a sense of security and protection, which in turn facilitates students' academic success. This viewpoint is not new in Korean society, as TV programs and news articles urge parents to develop greater empathy to ensure children's success at school. For instance, an educational documentary entitled *The Secret of Top 0.1%* (Kim & Park, 2010) argued that parents of high-achieving students made more use of acceptance as well as acknowledgement in conversation with their children.

However, the putative link between parents' communication styles and students' achievement warrants better theorization. As Lareau (2003) argued, parents' communication

with children represents an important class-based difference. She found that middle-class parents encouraged negotiation, reasoning, discussion, and logical questioning of authority, while working- and lower- class parents made use of directives and parental authority. Children are socialized into the different communication styles through mundane interactions, such as family dinners, appointments with a doctor, or neighbourhood gatherings. In support of Heath's (1982) finding, I suggest that middle-class communicative styles are more effective for success in school. This is due neither to their inherent superiority nor the school's discrimination against working-class culture. Rather, middle-class communication strategies prepared the children in institutional settings better to successfully address specific needs through reasoning and strategic bargaining. Therefore, I argue that attributing students' underachievement to parents' 'wrong' communication strategies misrepresents or ignores the complexity of the social, economic, and cultural relations underpinning parenting practice and social class.

The final characteristic of the program concerns its stated goal: helping Underachievers find "their true potential," or their "place" in society. I have stated that many Underachievers were working as frontline staff in the service-sector. In multiple interview/informal sessions, they often expressed the difficulties of working as adolescents and complained about dissatisfactory working conditions. Despite their eagerness to earn money, many Underachievers therefore quit the jobs rather easily. Further, not all Underachievers were able to find jobs. They thus spent long hours hanging around the school until dark, which concerned both police officers and teachers. Some teachers referred Underachievers to career counselling sessions, thinking that the program would help them successfully finish schooling with concrete job prospects. As part of the program, students take standardized tests like the MBTI, which generate a range of 10 to 15 suggested job categories, and discuss the result with a counsellor. Currently, government-

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sponsored websites (e.g., www.career.go.kr; www.jinhak.or.kr) provide online career counselling as well.

Underachievers' interest in the program changed drastically as time went on. At first, some students participated in the program at will, partly because they knew that low-entry jobs often involved a high risk of accidents. In one interview, MyungJun (MJ) recounts how exposure to physical danger at work made him participate in the program.

Conversation with one Underachiever boy, MJ

MJ: One of my seniors at work was hit by a bus when he was doing a delivery at night. It was the first time I had seen someone close to me get seriously hurt. I was sad, I mean, it could happen to me. So, I was like, can I do something else?

YJS: Like what?

MJ: Something less dangerous. My father used to say, "Get an office job" when I was young. Now he knows about my exam scores, so he doesn't say much about it.

MJ: 선배 중에 한 명이 오토바이 타고 밤에 가다가. 배달 중에 버스 밑에 깔렸어요. 그렇게 아는 사람이 크게 다친 거 처음 봐서 좀 슬펐고. 그냥 나한테도 그런 일이 일어날 수 있으니까. 그래서 아 뭔가 다른 일 할거 없나? 그런 생각하죠.

YJS: 예를 들면?

MJ: 그냥 덜 위험한 거 있잖아요. 옛날에 우리아빠가 펜대 굴리는 일하라고. 근데 이제 학교 성적을 아니까 그런 말은 안 하죠.

MJ seemed satisfied with his MBTI result, which suggested architecture/interior design as a potential field for him. However, he became ambivalent about pursuing it after he discovered that the field required at least three years of college education. When asked about the national college entrance exam, I told him that it generally covered what students have learned in high school, including the entire middle school curriculum. After some thought, he responded, "I might need to quit the job at night" and study hard to "catch up."

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It did not take long for MJ to lose interest in the plan. In a follow-up interview, he said

briskly that he decided not to pursue a career in architecture, because "college education is

useless these days." His logic is as follows:

Conversation with one Underachiever boy, MJ
MJ: The owner at work told me that his son and daughter, both university graduates,
have not been working for two years. They still get allowance money from him. He told us,
like, hey boys, get a skill for making a living. Not studying.
YJS: I see. What kind of vocational high schools do you want to go?
MJ: Vocational high school is competitive to get into. Only students with good academic
standing get in.
YJS: Oh, then how do you want to make it?
MJ: I know of one senior who now lives in Cheolsan (southern part of Seoul), working at
a factory. He doesn't have a high school diploma, but it didn't matter (for him to find the
job).
MJ: 사장님이 자기 딸이랑 아들이랑 둘 다 대학교 졸업했는데 2년동안 취업
못했다고. 아직도 용돈을 받는데요. 그래서 막 저희 (배달원)보고 공부보다 기술을
배워야 한다고.
YJS: 그러게. 그럼 어떤 실업고 가고 싶은데?
MJ: 실업계 가기 힘들잖아요. 공부 잘해야 간다던데.
YJS: 아. 그럼 어떻게 기술 배우려고?
MJ: 제 선배님 중에 아는 분이 그 철산에 공장에서 일하고 계시거든요. 근데
고등학교 졸업을 못했는데, 그 일자리를 찾았어요.

In the excerpt, MJ rationalizes why he no longer wants to go to college by referring to the

example of the owner's children. By using the word "still," MJ reveals his negative evaluation of

the fact that the owner's two university graduate children still rely financially on their father. I

find his evaluation rational, because many Underachievers, including MJ, become financially

independent around age 16, the legal age to get a motorbike license and work as a deliveryman.

Assuming that he would want to attend a vocational high school, I ask what kind of schools he

had in mind. To my surprise, however, he says that he does not intend to go to vocational high

school because "it's competitive to get in." Later, I confirmed with several teachers that entrance into vocational high schools becomes competitive due to high unemployment rates among university/college graduates. This means that students like MJ have no choice but to go to college-stream high schools if they wish to continue their education. Indeed, despite his lack of interest in college education, MJ went to a college-stream high school. Teachers added that many Underachievers like MJ drop out during the first semester due to high academic pressure.

I point out that MJ's lack of interest in the career-search program reflects his rational decision between opportunities and risks. It also suggests that the context which presents those opportunities and risks goes beyond individual rationality. The university option indeed looks appealing, but it is highly risky because he has to invest time and energy that might bring nothing in return. Additionally, he lacked the information and resources necessary to pursue a college education. Finally, pursuing a college-level career would require that he cut off his immediate information and resource network, which he relies heavily upon. Underachievers like MJ placed more emphasis on loyalty and stability, with friendship determining the scope of their activities in and beyond school. The seniors to whom MJ frequently referred enabled him to find a job at the pizza store where he is working now. More importantly, they show what kind of future trajectories he might pursue, and what kind of possibilities and constraints he might face along the way.

Teachers felt frustrated with what they described as the Irresponsible Underachievers' lack of motivation in both academics and finding skilled jobs. One teacher said with a sigh, "They're interested only in making trouble. They say no to studying, they say no to job search… what else can I do with them?" One male teacher forced Underachievers into counselling sessions against their will, with the hope that there would come a time when they would

"appreciate me doing this." However, few of the students I interviewed showed motivation or willingness to complete the program successfully. At worst, they did not show up, or, at best, they offered fake responses to the series of questions and rushed the counsellor to finish the session (Personal communication with a teacher, June 2015).

To summarize, the school's intervention with the counselling program had limited effect on Underachievers. First, the practice of psychiatric counselling with an emphasis on motivation contradicted the Underachievers' worldview, wherein underachievement served as a key identity marker. The theorization of underachievement in therapeutic terms, accordingly, results in unproductive investment in Underachievers' academic progress. Second, class-based differences in parenting were translated into personal preference. Finally, the school fails to provide meaningful job guidance in relation to Underachievers' life patterns, peer networks and norms.

6. Welfare for Whom? Rethinking Support for Underachievers

This chapter has examined how the Zero Underachiever Policy operated through a case of Afterschool Class and psychiatric counselling. Underachievers experienced marginalization in Afterschool Class because its test-oriented curriculum did not address their linguistic needs, nor did instructors have the institutional power to support them. In accounting for Underachievers' lack of participation, teachers at Hillside categorized them into two groups: Responsible versus Irresponsible Underachievers. With the former, teachers promoted the importance of English in the skilled blue-collar job market. With the latter, teachers offered psychiatric counselling to rectify low academic motivation.

The school's intervention through psychiatric counselling had limited effect on Underachievers. First, the theorization of underachievement as a result of inefficient study skills, high anxiety when studying, or low self-esteem conflicted with Underachievers' worldview,

which sees English as a middle-class identity marker. Second, class-based differences in parenting were simplified into personal preference. Finally, job search guidance with college orientation did not match with Underachievers' life patterns, peer networks and norms. In effect, while Educational Welfare offered support for Underachievers' emotional wellness and academic success, it also served to reinforce their marginalization at school.

Chapter 5 A Critical Sociolinguistic Analysis of an English Camp

1. Introduction

This chapter explores how the liberal ideology of self-help works to marginalize Underachievers through the case of an English camp. In public schools, this two-week government-funded program was designed to support students from low-income families in learning English communicative skills. It adopted the Task-based language teaching (TBLT) model, in which learners engage in different tasks (oral and written) that require them to solve problems and/or negotiate meaning in order to achieve a particular purpose or goal (Spada, 2007). Long and Crookes (1992) argued that as learners work together in groups, they will have opportunities to interact in English and that this interaction will facilitate their progress.

The TBLT classroom has two features. First, it changes the mode of student participation from one of being passive recipients of grammatical knowledge to being active participants in communication. Government officials place great emphasis on learner autonomy, arguing that students' willingness to 'speak out' is necessary for the success of the program. The set up of desks in the classroom thus changed from a series of rows facing the blackboard to a four-desk island to encourage students to talk in class. Second, the TBLT model asks that teachers make use of 'authentic' English (i.e., a corpus of daily English, such as movies, advertisements, or novels) in place of textbooks. Currently, many schools hire native English speakers on a temporary basis to support students' English learning. In that sense, the English camp represents the state's efforts to provide students with quality English-immersive experiences.

Contrary to the government's expectation, however, the camp participants in my study responded that their experiences were "not so much different from regular English classes." Indeed, many of my field notes documented their ambivalent attitude toward camp participation.

The discrepancy between the stated goal and the students' responses requires an analysis of what kinds of experiences they had over the two weeks.

My analysis shows that the teachers' goals of teaching communicative English skills in the TBLT model were tempered by standard language ideology that emphasizes grammatical correctness and native-like accent. Also, I found that English proficiency played a critical role when students had access to opportunities to participate in, and thus successfully complete a classroom task. Thus, despite the program's well-intentioned goal of empowering students, the TBLT classroom reproduced the very linguistic and, consequently, socioeconomic inequalities that the program was dedicated to addressing.

I organize this chapter according to the two key characteristics of their classes as described by the teachers themselves: the use of authentic materials, and groupwork. I focus on two programs, one run by a Korean teacher of English, and the other by a native English teacher. The former focused on developing students' English communication skills by teaching English through a movie. Her thinking that 'authentic' English matters is widely accepted in TBLT research. However, we know little about how its underlying language ideologies shape students' classroom participation. I discuss the ways in which a teacher's emphasis on Standard English led to decontextualized rote-learning activities, which the program was dedicated to addressing.

In the second session, students engaged in a film production task. I address how English proficiency plays a critical role when students get access to opportunities to participate in, and thus successfully complete a project. Throughout, I argue that the emphasis on self-help as the key condition of successful participation obscures the fact Standard English ideology did not allow Underachievers a legitimate speaking position. Next, I examine how teachers at Hillside organized their classes based on the TBLT model.

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2. The Organization of TBLT: The Case of English Camp at Hillside

Since the 1970s, language teaching theories and practices have undergone significant changes toward communication. As the importance of English grew enormously in global commerce, researchers began to focus on teaching English communicative competence. Communicative language teaching (CLT) is a language teaching approach with a focus on communication. According to Skehan (2007), CLT is based on Dell Hymes's theory of communicative competence and the notion that knowing a language includes more than a knowledge of the rules of grammar (i.e. linguistic competence); it also requires a knowledge of the rules of language use (i.e. communicative competence). Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is best viewed as a classroom model of CLT, in which communicative tasks serve as units of lessons in language course design (Littlewood, 2004). English education in many Asian countries adopts the TBLT model as an alternative to traditional, grammar-oriented English teaching practice (Pérez-Milans, 2013).

The 2015 Summer English Power Up program started on July 25th, three days after the beginning of summer vacation. Decorated with international flag buntings, a balloon arch, and colourful placards, the third floor welcomed participants with a festive ambience. The English camp participants came to school for two weeks, studying English for 3.5 hours per day (from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.). In terms of program enrolment, those who came from low-income families were prioritized so that they could have English-immersive experiences that would otherwise be costly. Out of 21 students enrolled in the program, four came from low-income families, all of whom were identified as Underachievers.

Following the mandated TBLT classroom model, teachers rearranged the physical and linguistic conditions of the classroom. First, students reorganized the desks and chairs to create

four-chair islands to facilitate interaction in class. Second, they aimed to create English-rich environments. This took the form of initiating small talk with students in English, responding in English when asked a question in Korean, and encouraging students' English use in class. I also observed one student immediately translating a sentence from Korean to English in order to be rewarded with a cookie. The linguistic landscape of the classroom seemed to support the policy as well, for the classroom bulletin board was plastered with English-only student projects.

The school principal was happy with these changes. In a surprise visit to encourage students, he compared two modes of English class in terms of quality, focus, material, classroom mode, and purpose (Table 5). Recalling his experiences of learning English in a purely grammar-oriented way, he asked the students to make the most of the opportunity to become fluent English speakers.

Table 5

Two Modes of English Class

	Regular classroom	TBLT classroom
Quality	"dead" English	"live" English
Language Focus	Grammar	Speaking
Material	Textbook	Authentic material
Classroom mode	Individual, sitting in rows	Group-based, sitting in a group
Purpose	For tests	For communication

The TBLT model laid out expectations for teachers as well, defining the teacher's role as that of the model speaker. English as a mode of instruction gave base to the program as one means of maximizing students' exposure to English, which means that teachers should provide students with 'appropriate' linguistic feedback where necessary. Nevertheless, the teachers were concerned about creating communication difficulties if they enforced an English-only policy.

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One teacher commented that English camp participants, with the exception of a few students, had relatively low English proficiency: "They are quiet in class anyway, and there will be much more silence if I make them speak only English; it shouldn't be that way." Her remark reveals how students' silence was perceived as undermining the vision of the TBLT classroom, where everyone was expected to speak up for successful task completion. For this reason, she felt obliged to comply with the linguistic guidelines of the English camp (i.e., increase exposure to English) while still giving out Korean equivalents.

Given the students' wide linguistic proficiency gap, teachers decided to enforce streaming in the English camp. Prior to the camp, students took a placement test in speaking and reading. Teachers conducted one-to-one interviews with students and had them take a vocabulary quiz. Following this, the students were grouped into either the Advanced or Basic level. The former consisted of 11 students (5 boys and 6 girls), and the latter of 10 students (3 boys and 7 girls). As shown below, this level-based grouping had long-lasting implications on their group work.

The TBLT model clearly defined what counts as participation (Goffman, 1979) in class. It encourages learners to actively engage in a group-based tasks using English only. Being active in this context, therefore, means literally hearing student voices when completing a given task. Who then gets recognized as a contributing (or non-contributing) group member? What counts as 'good' English in the classroom? With these questions in mind, the first section examines how the underlying language ideologies of TBLT shaped students' participation. In the second section, I analyze how English proficiency played a critical role when students collaborated in groups to complete a movie production task.

3. Use of Authentic English Materials

This section examines Ms. Lim's class, which aimed to develop students' communicative skills using a Hollywood movie. I focus on how the Standard English ideology in the communication-oriented classroom shaped students' differential participation, allowing (or denying) them a legitimate speaking position.

3.1 The Paradox of Learner Autonomy

A low hum of student voices filled the classroom as Ms. Lim greeted them. Some were unaware of her presence, or did not want an interruption. After readying the computer and audio equipment in an orderly manner, she looked around the classroom. Some students changed their positions, pulling their chairs to their desks to signal their readiness for class. Others continued talking, or were immersed in smartphone mobile games. Ms. Lim rang the bell on the podium twice, asking for the students' attention. "Guys, ready to learn *real* English?" she said.

Ms. Lim chose a Hollywood movie as her teaching material. She said that she had watched the film several times and edited out any inappropriate content (adult scenes, coarse language, and smoking). She prepared a worksheet that included authentic linguistic expressions to teach. The worksheet consisted of five different headings: *Comprehension Questions*, *New Words and Expressions*, *Listen-and-Fill-In*, *Role-Play*, and *Writing a Summary*. *Comprehension Questions* assessed the extent to which students understood the stories they had watched. In *New Words and Expressions*, students learned new words with Korean equivalents. This included prefabricated expressions (e.g., would you mind…?) and phrasal verbs (e.g., bring on, take off, and zone out). The *Listen-and-Fill-In* activity asked students to develop listening skills by writing down what they heard. In *Role-Play*, students took on a role in the movie and acted it out by repeating the script. Finally, *Writing a Summary* asked students to compose a short summary

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of the story of the day. Few students found this handout particularly engaging, because they were used to doing similar activities in their regular English classes.

In class, Ms. Lim expected students to develop a *Do-It-Yourself* attitude. This means students should actively engage in a given task and mobilize their (non) linguistic resources to solve problems without the teacher's support. Comparing learning English to riding a bike, she pointed out the following:

> *Ms. Lim's Speech to Students*
> It may sound fast and difficult, but once you try writing out what you've heard, you will feel very comfortable (with listening) by the end of the whole program. But the important thing is that you try it out on your own. Nobody can do that on your behalf. You should do it for yourself.
> 너무 빠르고 어렵지만 들리는 대로 먼저 써보기 시작하면 캠프 끝날 때 되면 조금 편해졌다는 걸 알게 될 거예요 근데 여러분 스스로 스스로 해야 해요. 누가 해 주는 거 아니고 여러분 스스로.

The Do-it-Yourself attitude placed a strong emphasis on individual initiative in task involvement. Underachievers' seeming lack of participation emerged as a critical issue. Ms. Lim perceived being quiet in class as undermining the vision of the communication-oriented classroom. She oftentimes talked to me about how frustrating it is when some students remain silent, negating their chance to improve their English. Her prescription for this problem was that they should make greater efforts to learn English.

> *Conversation with Ms. Lim*
> They just sit and daydream. And do nothing. If I ask questions, all they say is "I don't know." I mean, if they don't know, they are supposed to study harder, aren't they? Sometimes I think, with no offense intended, 'maybe you'll get stuck there (the basic level) unless you work harder'.
> 앉아서 이제 딴생각만 하는 거죠. 암것도 안하고. 제가 물어보면 딱 이야기하는 거는 "몰라요". 아니 모르면 좀 더 공부 열심히 해야 하는 거잖아요. 가끔 생각 하는게 아 너는 진짜 공부 더 열심히 안 하면 계속 거기 (수준별 기초반)에 있을 수밖에 없겠다.

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Her account widely resonates with the meritocratic ideology of school, where everyone has equal opportunities for academic excellence or well-meaning bureaucrats, together with teachers, endeavour to level the playing field by addressing a class-based inequality in educational attainment. Additionally, it is not rare to interpret silence as an indication of passiveness or lack of agency (e.g., van Lier, 2008). Studies examining (particularly Asian) students' silence in the language classroom tend to theorize the phenomenon of silence as an indication of Asian cultural norms, linguistic insecurity, and face-saving strategies (Granger, 2004). Without denying that silence may carry such messages in certain communication encounters, I argue that what counts as silence, just like what counts as participation, is a highly ideological concept. For instance, silence can be understood as a form of resistance depending on context (cf. Philips, 1983). Similarly, students' offstage talk or unsolicited onstage talk may not count as legitimate participation but as disruptive behaviour.

During class, Ms. Lim frequently made use of the IRE conversational format to elicit a target English vocabulary from students. It was necessary for her to confirm students' vocabulary knowledge, because they were expected to write a summary at the end of the class. The following example shows how Ms. Lim accomplished this with students:

> *Classroom interaction between Ms. Lim and Students*
> Lim: What do you say '기절하다' in English? 기절하다, 뭐죠?
> Ss: Zone out
> Lim: Good.

As shown above, an answer that meets the teacher's expectation receives positive recognition. Put differently, while the program emphasized spontaneous English speaking opportunities, there was a clear role division between teachers and students. This was in stark

contrast to the program goal that students would have 'free' opportunities to speak English. The former posited questions and provided feedback according to the students' responses, while the latter were expected to provide correct answers. Disturbingly, the role distribution corresponds to that of the grammar-oriented English classroom with which many Underachievers had had difficulty.

In Ms. Lim's class, Standard English or grammatically correct English emerged as a key factor for successful task completion. Her adherence to the variety should be understood in the context of her linguistic position as a teacher, who by definition was supposed to speak 'flawless' English. Oftentimes, I found she self-corrected her speech in accordance with the rules of grammar, for example, "I want you focus on…, no, no, I want you TO focus on work" (July 2015, fieldnote). She took a similar approach to students' writing. For instance, she constantly reminded the students to use "WH questions" and speak "in a full (i.e., grammatically correct) sentence," highly discouraging their mobilization of metalinguistic features (e.g., rising tones) and word-by-word responses. In the following example, Ms. Lim and the students are discussing a scene they just watched in which a man tries to send a "wink" to a woman whose profile he saw on an online dating website, but runs into a technical glitch and fails. It exemplifies typical teacher-led talk from Ms. Lim:

Ms. Lim's instruction for writing class
Ms. Lim: Do you remember him reading a profile in the scene? What did he want to send? And? Right. Fail. He failed. Maybe you should write down the whole question in a complete sentence.
Ms. Lim: 프로파일 봤던 거 기억나니? 뭘 보내려고 했었니? 근데? 그렇지. fail 실패했죠. 이런 질문은 한번 최대한 완전한 문장으로 쓰세요.
Ms. Lim: [He] what did he want to do? [wanted to send a wink] right to whom? But what happened? [but failed] you should write down the answer in this way.

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Ms. Lim: [He] 뭐하고 싶었어요? [wanted to send a wink] 그렇지 누구에게? 근데 어떻게 됐어요? [but failed]. 이런 식으로 써보세요

Ms. Lim's targeted approach to teaching English communicative skills in class had differential effects depending on students' English levels. The classroom structure benefited the students who had sufficient knowledge of English grammar. Accordingly, the classroom model ran smoothly at the Advanced level. Ms. Lim managed to assist the students without taking over the task assigned to them and gradually withdrew her assistance. Most students completed the writing task by themselves, and Ms. Lim focused on helping two or three students who were having particular difficulty with the activity.

On the other hand, students from the Basic level felt challenged to engage in the activity. Due to limited linguistic skills, the students showed greater dependence on Ms. Lim's feedback in completing the task. This led to what I call the *copy method*, in which students copy the teacher's response. The following is a typical example of how the copy method plays out in a writing activity. When students were slow to provide the answer to a question, Ms. Lim found ways to let them explore it. At the same time, however, she corrected misspellings, and guided them to produce 'correct' English.

Classroom interaction between Ms. Lim and Students
S1: Teacher what is a 회사원 / office worker/ in English?
선생님 회사원 영어로 뭐예요?
[looking around at other students]
Lim: What do you call a 회사원 / office worker/ in English?
자 회사원 영어로 뭐니
S2: Office worker.
S1: How do you spell it?
스펠링이 뭐예요?
Lim: How would you spell it?
자 스펠링이 뭐지?

[looking around at other students]

S2: O-F-I-C-E-W-O-

Lim: O-F-F-I-C-E-

S2: O-F-F-I-C-E-W-O-R-K-E-R

Lim Yes.

그렇지.

S1: Am I correct?

이거예요?

[showing the paper to the teacher]

T: Yes.

S4: Let me see that.

나도 보여줘.

The way Ms. Lim engaged with students is noteworthy. It might have been much more convenient to write down the word in question on the blackboard in response to the student's uncertainty. However, she instead sought out responses from students in line with the goal of the TBLT model, where students work in collaboration to complete tasks. This mode of conversation stopped when S2 failed to provide a correct answer. At other times, I observed her jotting down words in question on the blackboard, on a piece of scrap paper, or in the margins of a handout. The students then copied those into their workbooks. To Ms. Lim, this was one way of helping students become more responsible by minimizing direct intervention. But many students complained about the redundant, time-consuming talk in class: "Ms. Lim doesn't give answers to my questions right away. I have a lot of questions because I don't know much about English. But if I ask all my questions, it would probably use up all the class time," one Underachiever girl said.

Ms. Lim was critical of Underachievers' passiveness in class, saying that "they do not make a single effort to do the activity on their own." She added, "I allowed students to use their smartphones to look up unknown words. But then they never move a thumb." In students' defense, however, it seemed that her classroom activities required knowledge not only of English

vocabulary but also of English structure. For instance, in writing activities, she oftentimes returned students' work with red pen markings highlighting their grammatical mistakes in tense, misspellings, and subject-verb agreement. Her heavy focus on grammatical correctness hindered Underachievers from engaging with the final task. One Basic level student expressed difficulty in revising written work, because he did not know how to improve his writing.

Overall, Ms. Lim's goal of teaching communicative skills faced paradoxes. Although the TBLT model emphasized learner autonomy for successful task completion, Standard English ideology induced students (particularly Underachievers) into the copy-method and resulted in greater dependence on the teacher's linguistic feedback. Accordingly, the students who spoke up at the right time and place and with the right language received recognition as 'contributing' students. Next, I will examine how students' resistance to the teacher's imposition of speaking the 'right' language unfolded.

3.2 Making Sense of Native-Like English

As part of teaching communicative skills, Ms. Lim incorporated English pronunciation into class. Her scope of teaching pronunciation lay in suprasegmental features, such as nuclear stress, word stress, tone, and intonation. Lim chose *Shadow Reading* as a teaching strategy, wherein one shadows (i.e., repeats) what the speaker just said. This method has gained wide recognition as a teaching strategy for pronunciation. Ellis (2008), for instance, argued that repetition can enhance students' comprehension of a given text and increase reading as well as speaking fluency.

In teaching pronunciation, Ms. Lim asked the students to repeat what the speaker had said "exactly" with the same word stress, tone, and intonation. The following example illustrates how the classroom goal attached to the shadowing practice emerged. Ms. Lim defined the movie

actors' speech as the linguistic model, and asked students to emulate the native-like English. She

suggested that students should focus not only on the lines, but also on the accents, gestures, and

bodily orientations.

> *Ms. Lim's Whole-Class Speech:*
> The textbook listening or the school listening test, they are very friendly, I'd say. Like a
> TV announcer, they read each word like a robot. In this class, we learn how to listen to
> the native speaker speaking in the way they do in daily life.
> 교과서에서 나오는 듣기나 듣기평가로 하는 듣기는 굉장히 친절한 듣기예요.
> 아나운서가 발음도 정확하게 로보트마냥 한 단어 한 단어 이야기해 주는 거고…이
> 세션에서는 마찬가지로 네이티브들이 평소에 말하는 그 속도 그대로 듣는걸 배워
> 보는거예요.
>
> Do NOT read. Mimic it. You're not in reading class. Sense (the movie actor's) tone. You
> should add more stress on the word [monkey]. The most important thing is to act on their
> feelings. You should also think about the intonations.
> 읽지 말고 듣고 미믹 하세요. 읽는 시간 아니라고 했지. (영화주인공들의) feeling
> 살리면서 하세요. monkey 에 더 stress 를 줘야지! 감정 살리는 게 관건이야.
> 인토네이션 살리면서

The shadowing activity created tension between Ms. Lim and the students. Mainly, the

conflict stemmed from the coexistence of two language ideologies: the ideology of language as a

learnable skill versus the essentialist ideology of the native speaker. Ms. Lim viewed verbal

shadowing as a pedagogically sound activity. However, students showed reluctance to participate.

They found it very uncomfortable to emulate the native speaker, especially in front of peers. In

the context of Korean as a solidarity code (see Section 3 in Chapter 3), they thought that the

mocking native-speaker authenticity was nothing less than "embarrassing and shameful." Also,

some students might have felt uncomfortable to inhabit a persona of a dorky middle aged man

desperately looking for love.

The students took up different strategies in response to the teacher's request to perform the activity. First, students at the Basic level voiced their resistance through the performance of denaturalization, which refers to the process in which the identity that the speaking subject claims is intentionally constructed as "crafted, fragmented, problematic, or false" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 602). At first glance, they seemed to be enthusiastically participating in this activity. What I noticed, however, is that they performed the role-play with a strong emphasis on /s/ and /f/ sounds, which reminded their peers of swear words such as *shit* and *fuck*. This was considered funny because they had found a way to verbalize those words that were strictly restricted in the public sphere.

More importantly, adding the /r/ sound in an exaggerated manner served as a tool to index a jocular stance about the activity. Often, the /r/ sound is indicative of native-like English pronunciation, as the Korean phonetic system does not have a corresponding sound (Lo & Kim, 2012). Their act of denaturalization comes from a critical awareness that speaking 'good' English does not belong to them. In the following, Underachievers' exaggeration in the shadowing activity (and the laughter it inspired from the audience) shows how they amused themselves at being native speakers. The students thus did not necessarily subscribe to the imposed identities of native speaker, but instead took up the opportunity as a means of enhancing solidarity among peers.

Classroom interaction among Ms. Lim, SH, and TG
Lim: Now Sanghyuk is Walter, and Taegyu is the E-harmony agent. Repeat as it sounds after listening to the clip.
자 이제 여기 Walter 부분은 상혁이가 읽고, E-harmony agent 부분은 태규가 읽을꺼야. 듣고, 이 등장인물이 하는 대로 그대로 따라하는거예요.
WALTER from the movie: I tried to leave a "wink" for someone. But it didn't work.
Lim: Sanghyuk (SH). It's your turn.

SH: I tried to leave a wink for someone. But it didn't work [aɪ traɪ:d tu: sɛnd hɜːr ə wɪŋk.
fɔr ˈsʌmˌwʌn. bʌt ɪt ˈdɪdənt wɜrk.]
Lim: Don't you think your accent is too thick?
didn't. 발음이 너무 세지 않니?
(Laugh from audiences)
Lim: Taegyu (TG)'s turn. Listen.
*E-HARMONEY AGENT from the movie: Well, they're not required to respond to you
favorably. We can't force—*
TG: Well. they're not, required to respond to you. We can't force [oʊwːːɛl, ðɛr nɑt
rːːikwaɪər tuːː rɪ ˈspɑnd tu ju. oʊwi kænt fɔrs]
(Another laughter from audience)
Lim: Stop. Go back to the classroom and stand for a while there. Stop being playful!
그만. 너네 일어나서 둘다 뒤로 가세요. 너네 이렇게 할래!

The students enjoyed the opportunity to exercise autonomy in directing classroom

interaction at will. As a result, their role-play activity ended with the teacher's disciplinary

warning: "Stop being playful!"

Students in the Advanced level were more careful in expressing their discontent with this

activity. Two Returnees, for instance, played along with the idea of being native-like with some

level of resistance by reading the script with Korean-accented English. In fact, Min, a Returnee,

pointed out that he did not agree with Ms. Lim's idea of being native-like, because he thought

that people in English-dominant countries would speak with different accents and bodily gestures.

Min's response to pronunciation class:
Min: I mean it's SO boring… to repeat what others say. What's the point of doing this
[activity] anyway? I don't do this thing [theatrically mocking the gesture of the movie actor,
who lightly shrugs his shoulder to express disappointment] when I feel sorry.
Min: 아 진짜 너무 지루해요 똑같이 반복 하는거. 왜 하는지 모르겠어요. 저는
미안하다고 해서 이런거 [영화 주인공이 실망감을 나타내며 어깨를 들썩이는
제스쳐를 극적으로 표현] 안 하는데.

To summarize, students in the TBLT classroom were taught a standardized linguistic system with the belief that they should approximate a monolingual native speaker (Kramsch, 2009). The underlying problem here concerns not only the superiority of Standard English over other varieties. On a more fundamental level, the construction of native-like English as the target norm leads language learners to believe that acquiring such linguistic capital would be attainable through concerted efforts. This runs counter to sociolinguistic observations that learning a second language entails not only the acquisition of the language knowledge prescribed in the curriculum, but the gradual transformation into a competent member of the learning community with the authority to speak and to be heard in that language (Heller, 1999; Han, 2007). Nevertheless, standard language ideology and the practices of orienting towards, and instructing in, the standard register, reinforces a social imagination that learners' native-like English skill is critical for successful intercultural communication and thus legitimated Underachievers' marginalization as lack of adequate effort.

3.3 Negotiating Students' Participation

As the end of the program drew near, Ms. Lim was compelled to negotiate the classroom goal of the Basic level. First, she streamlined some of the classroom activities due to time constraints. Also, the students' growing disinterest in classroom participation required much disciplinary talk. This led her to invest heavily in the regulation of offstage talk. She often expressed her frustration with the behaviour of some of the boys who failed to participate in the IRE format appropriately. Later, when few students showed up in the class, she replaced the role-play activity with game-based English vocabulary lessons.

One game she introduced to the students was "market shopping," which she presumed to be less demanding than the role-play had been. The game is a type of memory-based activity in

which each participant names an item from the market, and the next speaker then includes that item in their response while adding a new one of their own. The students said that they were familiar with the game, for they had played a similar type of game in other classes.

As she did in the writing activity, Ms. Lim asked the students participating in the game to observe grammatical correctness. Correction typically occurred immediately following an error, often interrupting the turn in progress, a strategy that frequently led to the reformulation of a sentence in the next student's turn. The excerpt below illustrates the feedback routines:

Classroom interaction between Ms. Lim and Students
Ms. Lim: Where did you guys go yesterday?
(no response)
Ms. Lim: OK, 누가 갔니?
Who did go?
MK: I
Ms. Lim: 그리고 나서 뭐?
And what?
MK: Go
Ms. Lim: Go 의 과거형.
The past form of go.
(moments of silence)
SY: Went!
Ms. Lim: Exactly. And to where?
SY: Supermarket.
Ms. Lim: OK 한 문장으로?
OK. So how do we put them in one sentence?
SY: I went to supermarket.
Ms. Lim: 한번 더?
Say that again?
SY: I went to supermarket.
Ms. Lim: Good. MK 해볼까?
Good. MK can you do that?
MK: I went to supermarket.
Ms. Lim: 잘했어. 자 이제 빈칸에 써보자.

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Good. Then write it in the blank.
MK: spell?
Ms. Lim: S-U-P-E-R-M-A-R-K-E-T

Here, I want to emphasize the process through which the students articulated the sentence "I went to supermarket." First, Ms. Lim decides not to focus on local errors, namely, the student's omission of the article *the*; instead, she helps the students articulate a full sentence without (other) grammatical errors. When MK responds to Ms. Lim's question with the word "supermarket," she requests further information. Taking a more indirect approach that masquerades as a simple question, she requests that MK connect the words into a full sentence. When MK fails to respond, SY hijacks the turn and successfully continues. Having made SY articulate the full sentence two times, Ms. Lim acknowledges MK's contribution by asking him to repeat the sentence. As such, the teacher's guided assistance is provided mostly at the sentence level, which helps students verbally produce a grammatically correct sentence.

This mode of interaction, again, brought about a challenge when she played the game with Underachievers. Below is from an interaction between Ms. Lim and HS, an Underachiever boy. The interaction shows the structured guidance she provided to engage HS in the game.

Classroom interaction between Ms. Lim and HS
Ms. Lim: 자 HS 이 단어 알지? 읽어봐.
Ok, HS, you know of this word, don't you? Read it.
HS: a..
Ms. Lim: Pardon?
HS: a...p...
Ms. Lim: 각각 알파벳 읽어봐.
Read each letter.
HS: A.
Ms. Lim: A./ae/
HS: P.

Ms. Lim: P. /p/

HS: P.

Ms. Lim: P. /p/.

HS: L.

Ms. Lim: /l/ 여기 윗니 뒤에 혀 있게 하는거 보이지.
You see, my tongue is right behind the upper teeth.

HS: e.

Ms. Lim: e. 여기서는 소리가 없어요. 연결해봐.
That has no sound here. Connect the words.

HS: /ae//pp//l/?

Ms. Lim: 오~ 잘하네
Great! (smile) You're good!

The teacher begins the conversation by asking the student to read the word *apple*. The tag question "You know of this word, don't you?" is illocutionary in that it reveals her expectation of the student. Her questioning of the learner's response ("Pardon?") signals that she didn't find his answer satisfactory. She then negotiates the participatory role of the student as an animator, and thus a less-powerful speaker in this conversation. Although she sometimes strategically made the atmosphere more inclusive by employing extralinguistic and paralinguistic features such as a cheerful smile, the flow of conversation is rigidly controlled by the teacher.

I interpreted HS's noticeably low-key response as an indication of his reluctance to participate in the conversation with Ms. Lim. The presence of peers who were within earshot could have made him feel overwhelmed, for he was forced to publicize his lack of competence in English. Following the conversation above, HS's strategy to save his face was to remain silent. To him, the practice of silence was a way to express frustration in class. After several subsequent attempts to engage HS, Ms. Lim did not venture further into talking with him.

In sum, Ms. Lim intended to help students develop English communicative skills by teaching English with movie-based classroom material. Nevertheless, the implementation of the

communication-oriented classroom model within the Standard English ideology reproduced the IRE classroom talk format, with which many Underachievers had difficulties. The exclusive emphasis on self-help as the critical condition for classroom participation obscures the fact that Standard English ideology did not allow Underachievers a legitimate speaking position.

As a concluding remark, I emphasize that I have no intention to make value-laden judgments about Ms. Lim and her classroom teaching practice. It is also misleading to single out her TBLT classroom as an invalid application. As Bygate (2016) pointed out, "task-based approaches do not preclude the use of non-task-like activities to develop formal control, fluency or understanding of particular formal features, but such activities act as adjuncts to the main elements of the programme" (p. 7). Rather, I view that her classroom practice succinctly illustrates how Standard English ideology, as a form of linguistic nationalism, plays out on the terrain of English education to regulate teaching and learning experiences. The construction of English learning as the acquisition of Standard English with grammatical correctness and native-like accents unintentionally and unwittingly led to the reproduction of the IRE conversational structure that the educators aim to address.

Below, I examine how students get to engage in a film production task guided by a native English teacher. By comparing the collaborative process of two groups, I focus on how students' English proficiency worked in ways to support or hinder their task completion.

4. Differential Access to English Task Completion: Rebecca's Group Project

In this section, I discuss how English proficiency plays a critical role when students get access to opportunities to participate in, and thus successfully complete a classroom task. Task completion is important not only to meet the program's goal, but also to gain recognition from the teacher. Rebecca, a female native English teacher, took charge of a film production project.

While Rebecca had little communicative competence in Korean, a comparison of the differential negotiation process of two team leaders from her class (Andy from the Advanced level and Byeongho from the Basic level) reveals the ways in which English proficiency had differential consequences for the students in completing the task. Throughout, I argue that in the current communication-oriented classroom model, students' English skills and their respective socioeconomic backgrounds matter as crucial resources that can yield significant situational advantages.

Following Rebecca's class organization, I examined students' participation according to the temporal dimension of the classroom: a pre-task stage, a task-involvement stage, and a post-task stage. In the pre-task stage, the observation begins with the process through which Rebecca set up rules for participation. At the task-involvement stage, I focus on two representative cases, Andy and Byeongho, and how the flow of their interaction with Rebecca differently unfurled according to their cultural and linguistic capital. I then address how teachers differently interpreted the two boys' lack of motivation in the classroom task. This will show how students' class backgrounds, coupled with their English skills, are key to defining what counts as appropriate contribution in the classroom. Below, I start with a brief story about Rebecca with reference to her institutional position as a Native English Instructor (NEI). Specifically, I examine how her multiple positions in and beyond school shape her teaching practice in the classroom.

4.1 Rebecca: A Figure of Quality English Education

In her mid-twenties, Rebecca was born in California, US. After majoring in the field of Arts and Humanities at a local university in California, she found the job market in the US "hostile for BA holders," and wanted to break from her US life. The idea of teaching English in

Korea occurred to her when she came across a friend's Facebook messages and photos who was doing so. Rebecca conducted extensive research on teaching opportunities in public schools as well as private language schools in Korea, and chose the former because she valued "work-life balance over money." She applied for a teaching position through the National Institute for International Education (NIIE)[4], attended an interview, and came to Hillside as non-tenured Native English Instructor (NEI) in March 2014.

Note that Rebecca's title at Hillside is Instructor, not Teacher. Although they may sound synonymous, the distinction between the two categories acutely reveals relations of power in the community. As one of the professions with job security in Korea, the teaching community has an exclusive corporate structure in that only those who have passed the National Teachers' Exam are eligible for tenure. To qualify to take the exam, applicants must have obtained a teaching credential from a domestic university. Test takers, while preparing for the exam, can work on contract on a yearly or monthly basis. In sum, whether permanent or contract, having the teaching credential is the foremost condition that institutionally accords one's professional identity as a teacher.

Rebecca's institutional position as an instructor imparted her little power in the school. Her marginalization in the English teaching context seems counterintuitive, for she is a native speaker, whose linguistic norm is highly valued in the linguistic market. To understand this contradiction, we should explore the institutional and sociolinguistic conditions under which Rebecca started working as an instructor. First, such marginalization reflects a larger social discourse against the NEI in the local teaching system. Media reports sensationalizing native

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[4] Headquartered in Seoul, the NIIE (National Institution for International Education) is the parent institution in charge of recruiting, hiring, and locating NEI to schools.

English speakers' delinquent behaviour (e.g., sexual assault, drug use, and abusive teaching practices) formed a stereotypical image against them. Thus, now all NEIs in public schools must take drug/AIDS tests as a condition of hiring or renewing their contracts (Ock, 2016). Further, as in Rebecca's case, lacking teaching (or otherwise relevant) experience prior to coming to Korea served to enhance the stereotype that NEIs lack professional identity.

Second, teachers as well as administrators in schools questioned the effects and effectiveness of native English teachers in developing students' English communication skills. Some studies concluded that the effects of native teacher classes may be overestimated (and overpaid), which subsequently led to massive layoffs of NEIs at the secondary school level (e.g., Lee, 2014). In Rebecca's case, her teaching position at Hillside was secured through financial support of the Seocho District Office. However, teachers at Hillside considered Rebecca's class to be additional or extra, which did not have an immediate impact on students' English progress: "It's good to have opportunities to learn English with her. But even if students do not take the class, it won't affect their preparation for school exams," Ms. Lim said, "Because Rebecca's class won't be included in school exams."

In conversation with the head English teacher, she said that because Rebecca's coming to Hillside was finalized at the last minute, there had not been enough time to induct her into the cultural importance of school exams in Korean society: "Here, teachers are held accountable for test questions. If any errors were found in the tests, then parents would keep calling to ask for an explanation. But how could Rebecca deal with such tricky situations? How is she going to explain that to parents? Anyway, it's the Korean teacher's job- She doesn't even speak a word in Korean." The teachers thus decided to exclude Rebecca's class and her classroom materials from English tests.

The sociolinguistic environment of the school did not allow Rebecca to join as a contributing member either. The school operated exclusively in Korean. This led to an unconditional exemption for Rebecca from participating in various (in) formal school events: going for team dinners, chipping in money for colleagues' family events, sharing daily concerns around the lunch table, complaining about internal politics or student issues in private, and spending time together at weekly teachers' meetings. In addition, Rebecca did not participate in student discipline in the morning or at lunchtime, the key arenas where authority over students is displayed. Thus, Rebecca gained little authority as a teacher in front of students.

In addition to her limited contribution to the teachers' community, she told me that she had some challenges in building rapport with students. First, the NEI policies brought logistical negotiations at the expense of rapport and time with students. For one thing, one native English speaker alone could not teach the entire school population (i.e., 789 students). In addition, the practice of streaming complicated the timetable, and required teaching hours to exceed what Rebecca had signed in the contract. After discussing what to do, the English teachers decided that only part of the school population[5] would have English classes with Rebecca, once a week. Her class content was therefore not included in school exams. This decision shaped the nature of her class as a special, non-compulsory event.

Rebecca found it very difficult to engage in conversations with students. While she may have been recognized as an authentic English speaker, such linguistic capital carried little institutional significance in the community. Interviews with Returnees indicated that few of them found her class important in their school life, mainly because her class made little impact on their

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[5] The school personnel decided that Grades 7 and 9 students from the General level would have a class with Rebecca, leaving out all of Grade 8, as well as Basic level students from Grades 7 and 9.

English scores. The excerpt below shows Rebecca's interpretation of such institutional constraints in her own terms:

Conversation with Rebecca
Rebecca: There was a student who made a paper plane out of my handout and flew it through the window. Right after I gave it to him. I was like, are you kidding? [Laugh]
JSY: Why don't you ask them to pay more attention to your class?
Rebecca: They are young… and I try to understand that they are humans, so sometimes feel tired or not interested in the class like I did before. And they know my part is not really for exams.

In that sense, Rebecca's teaching practice had little impact on the students' investment in the development of English communicative skills. For instance, of all afterschool programs at Hillside, the one organized by Rebecca had the lowest participation rate. Bearing this in mind, I describe how students' different linguistic proficiency and school orientations led to a different negotiation process in a movie production task. A note of interest is that neither of the groups showed interest in the activity. However, their exit strategies were different according to their school orientation, social class, and English skills. Teachers evaluated the students' classroom behaviour differently, in ways that a Returnee boy was deemed motivated to learn English while an Underachiever boy was deemed to lack such motivation.

4.2 The Pre-Task Stage: "Be On Task"

At first glance, Rebecca's class incorporated ideal elements of a TBLT classroom: a native English speaker, a small number of students (four students per group), four-desk island positions facilitating communication, use of authentic materials including videos from YouTube, and above all, a collaborative, group-based task. Mindful of the fact that few students would initiate questions in public, Rebecca preferred individual conversations to whole-class ones. To

support students, she constantly moved between groups and tried to detect the problems that students might be encountering in task completion.

In Rebecca's class, the normative participation model is to "be on task," meaning that students, whether teachers are present or not, should be involved in a given task. The class's project was to make a short movie. Rebecca emphasized equal participation by suggesting four different participant roles in the project: writer, director, props, and editing. She further provided the following guidelines as the criteria for evaluation:

1. Every person needs to talk in the movie.
2. Speak in English
3. Story- Is the story interesting?
4. Creativity
5. Bonus challenge: In your movie, if you have a teacher, an animal, and a famous figure, an additional three points will be added to your final score.

The students found the guidelines somewhat vague and insufficient; for instance, how long is the movie script expected to be? How much should they speak English? Does creativity have to do with the storyline or special effects or both? Since Rebecca was the one who came up with those guidelines, they could clarify this ambiguity only by putting those questions to her. Another problem was that students had no idea how much they could expect support from Rebecca, or how to ask her for help. Thus, students had to draw on their linguistic and cultural capital to complete the task successfully. In the process, the role of team leader gained importance because it was team leaders who would negotiate with Rebecca throughout the project. I now turn to students' different negotiation processes through the cases of team leaders Andy and Byeongho, whose differential linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds affected their involvement in Rebecca's class.

Andy is representative of middle-class Korean children. Born in Gangnam, he started learning English through English immersion hagwons. Following his father's relocation at work, he moved to Australia. His mother, a housewife, paid careful attention to his extracurricular activities as well as his academic progress. During his days at an international school, he said that he continued studying Korean, math, and social studies with his mother. He went to church every Sunday, where he met many Korean friends. With his church friends, he studied advanced physics as preparation for admission to a science-specialized high school. Upon return to Korea, he invested heavily in math, as he thought that his English was "fine enough." He was placed in the General level English class, which he finds "dull" and "boring." After school, he goes to hagwon every Tuesday and Thursday to study science and math. During data collection, he served as Prosecutor at the Hillside Student Court, with the hope that such experiences would help him get into a science-specialized high school.

Byeongho's life trajectory and schooling experiences contrast those of Andy. Born in *Sillim*, a statutory division of Gwanak District, he attended a local elementary school up to Grade 5. When his second brother was born in 2012, the family became eligible for housing in Forestwood. Having moved to Gangnam, he was transferred to an elementary school near Hillside. His father was working in the construction division at a local telecommunication company. Byeongho did not particularly mention his mother. He told Ms. Lim that his reason for participation in the English camp was to "play mobile games as much as I want- I can't do it at home because of my father." With widening eyes, Ms. Lim responded, "That's too candid." After school, he does not go to hagwons, but occasionally meets up with his old friends in Sillim or hangs out with seniors in his Judo club. In terms of English proficiency, he moved between the Basic and General Level throughout my fieldwork at Hillside. Byeongho actively displayed

his counter-school values in various ways. For instance, Ms. Lim was aware of his smoking and involvement in a case of motorbike theft. I now examine how Andy and Byeongho's different linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds affected their classroom participation.

4.3 The Task-Involvement Stage

The groupwork commenced with a division of labour. In the process, students' English proficiency served as the key criterion for the role setting (i.e., who gets to play what kind of role in the task). That is, the strongest English skills in the group were needed to take charge of the directing and writing roles, the positions of authority. In the Advanced class, considering his overseas experiences in Australia, Andy was appointed to take up both roles.

Certainly, the task would have been more meaningful had team members been invited to try out some collaborative writing, because the underlying ideology of the TBLT model highlights collaboration and peer-peer learning opportunities. However, the idea that students with lower English proficiency get to participate in writing seemed neither practical nor efficient when the students were also pressured to get the job done in time. Accordingly, the students with low proficiency spent most of their time watching the writer and director do the groundwork, while doing some backstage work such as coloring and drawing company logos.

I observed how Andy got to talking with Rebecca several times. Here, I take note of his English fluency not only in terms of his grammatical competence (i.e., speaking without linguistic error), but also in terms of sociolinguistic competence (appropriateness sensitive to context), such as how to catch the teacher's attention and how to initiate a question in the form of a declarative statement. The following illustrates Andy's conversation with Rebecca when she was making rounds of the classroom to check on students' progress. Wondering what Rebecca meant by "creativity," Andy raised a hand, looking at her directly:

Classroom interaction between Rebecca and Andy

Rebecca: Hi, Andy. Do you need any help?

Andy: I'm uh just working on the rules you mentioned….

[Cheering sound makes the conversation temporary inaudible]

Chaewon/Wonhee: 야 짱인데 (Oh You're good)

Andy continued asking Rebecca for clarification of the guidelines and got a sense of what they actually needed to do to meet them. Having heard the conversation between them, other team members praised Andy's 'good' English, albeit playfully. Later, they tried to join the conversation between Andy and Rebecca by prompting Andy with any questions he forgot to ask. This, in turn, greatly helped Andy's group figure out the nature of the task, and assess how much time and resource they needed for task completion.

In the Basic level class, however, the decision over who would be the director was not as simple as the case of the General level. At first, the students showed some level of interest in the role of director. In particular, Byeogho showed great enthusiasm because he liked the idea of directing a classroom project at his will. Byeongho claimed that he got the highest score in English exams within his group.

Although it may have been true that Byeongho had the highest English exam score among his group's members, the lack of experience in talking with Rebecca made it difficult for him to comprehend the nature of the task and execute it accordingly. In particular, Byeongho's lack of competence in English communication skills worked as a hindrance when Rebecca offered help. Rebecca barely noticed that the extensive conversations in Korean between group members had little to do with the project. By the time Rebecca finally ventured into the group discussion to check on their progress, Byeongho tried to avoid talking with her; saying only, "OK, OK" and then asking me to explain to Rebecca in English that "We're talking about a

storyline." This could be considered a lost opportunity to develop English communicative competence with Rebecca, but more importantly, a logistical problem for the group as a whole, delaying their progress. After a week, the boys in the Basic level were still struggling with coming up with the storyline while their General level counterpart was already filming their movie.

From observing Andy's group, I learned that it was not in Andy's best interests to make a quality movie. In situations where Andy's and his friends' afternoon schedules were filled with studying at hagwon or tutoring, they found investing the time to develop a storyline and the money to purchase props neither practical nor rewarding. This was partly because Rebecca herself was not in a position of authority in the community. "All I want is a certification letter," Andy stated. His team members, including Andy, shared the idea that the experience and proof of their participation in the English camp would make Andy's report card look good in his application for science high school. Additionally, contrary to the mandated ideology, Andy felt pressured to carry out multiple roles for task completion, ranging from director to writer to editor to meet the timeline of the task. Thus, he had to negotiate ways to reduce the amount of work.

Andy's strategy to negotiate the quality of work was particularly important in this context. He did not complain about the task, but first acknowledged the contextual limitation of making a quality movie. Andy took a proactive approach to dealing with the issue that involved speaking directly with Rebecca. She positively evaluated his initiative, as many teachers appreciate students' recognition of them as authorities. In response, she provided a practical solution for speedy task completion.

Conversation with Andy
I talked to her in person. We really wanted to make a fun movie, but the team members, including myself, are so busy with the hagwon schedules and we have limited time for

task completion. And she said we could choose an easy genre for the movie and that we don't have to stress out too much…

선생님한테 직접 말씀 드렸어요. 욕심 내서 재미있게 만들고 싶긴 한데 이거 너무 시간이 부족하고 저랑 애들 다 학원가니까 끝나고 나서 만나서 하기 한계가 있다.. 이런 식으로. 그랬더니 선생님이 좀 쉬운 장르를 선택을 하고 하고 너무 스트레스 받을 필요 없다고.

Reflecting on Rebecca's advice, Andy suggested a horror movie, as he thought that all they would need was to scream, run, and speak some simple English sentences. Such a choice thus reflects Andy's strategic calculation between the demands of the task and the resources he would be able to invest in it.

The movie production project consisted of small tasks, including making company logos, organizing storylines, developing the storyline, rehearsing before filming, and editing. To complete the movie in time, the process therefore required punctuality and commitment on the part of every member of the group. Andy's group demonstrated greater efficiency than Byeongho's. By English proficiency, they had a clear role distribution. It appeared that they worked with an instrumental attitude, one of "getting the work done," prioritizing that over other concerns.

In contrast, Byeongho's group showed little progress from making storylines after a week. The production as well as the performance posed a challenge to Underachievers, because the TBLT model values Standard English, the linguistic capital many Underachievers are lacking. Jun, who showed the least participation in the movie production, did his best to contribute to the project as the main character; yet, he repeatedly failed to memorize a simple sentence during a dry-run session, which delayed the entire filming process. Having heard of Andy's group's decision from one of his friends, Byeongho also decided to make a horror movie, which would

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help them get the work done with efficiency. Therefore, there emerged a clear need to discuss

changing the genre with Rebecca.

As I did with Andy, I observed several cases where Byeongho asked Rebecca for help.

Byeongho, however, had great difficulty in communicating with her. Rebecca did her best to

detect problems and provide appropriate help where necessary. However, frequent

communication breakdowns between the two worked to further delay progress. Below, I joined

the conversation as a bystander/translator:

> *Classroom interaction between Rebecca and students (including myself as translator)*
> BH: Change, uh, we change (gestures back and forth with moving hands) Comedy.
> Change. Scream.
> Rebecca: Pardon?
> JSY: Oh so they want to change the storyline.
> Rebecca: Now? We have only five days left!
> BH: 뭐라고요?
> Pardon me?
> JSY: 우리 5 일밖에 안 남았다는데
> We only have five days left
> BH: 네 바꿀래요.
> Yes, we want switch.

I speculate that he tried to express his concerns over the task in other ways as well.

Rather than trying to negotiate the task as Andy did, Byeongho sent various extralinguistic

signals, such as dropping his pencil, putting his head on his desk, and sitting loosely with his

hands in his pockets, all of which appeared to express his less engaged attitude. However, his

help-seeking signals were neither recognized nor appreciated by Rebecca. Rebecca did not seem

to view such signals as appropriate help-seeking strategies, and did not respond to them by

offering support. In other words, Byeongho's help-seeking behaviours did not align with what

the teacher had presumed because Rebecca interpreted them as a lack of motivation. Accordingly, Byeongho failed to get the appropriate help to complete the task.

Second, Byeongho's challenge must be understood in reference to the nature of his group. The success of any group project is a function of cooperative relationships among the group members. The group led by Byeongho, however, had little collaboration with one another for the task completion, partly because none of the team members, including Byeongho, felt it necessary. They did not think that they should or could finish the task on time. "We don't know how to do it," the team members responded when talking about the film project. Instead, discussion on counter-school topics such as girlfriends, mobile games, smokes, getting part-time jobs, and networks outside school, attracted students' attention throughout class. Rebecca must have found it difficult to spot whether they were actually performing the task, for their bodily orientations embodied 'good' classroom behaviour—gathering in a group, holding pencils, discussing something in Korean. If they had any discussion specific to the completing the task, it would end immediately after the bell rang. Low engagement with the task made group solidarity fragile, as evidenced by some students' frequent absence.

It is notable that neither Andy nor Byeongho demonstrated high motivation for the task. However, their exit strategies were different; the former chose efficiency, while the latter chose non-participation. I suggest that Andy's strategy was more effective not because it was inherently better, or because the teacher was biased against Byeongho, but because such strategies aligned with the TBLT ideology, which asks learners to demonstrate a high level of English motivation. However, these assumptions often fail to address learners' linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds and rarely question how such factors may affect learners' differential engagement with the task.

4.4 Post-Task Stage: Different Interests at Work

Following three weeks of groupwork, the participants presented their movies in front of the class. The school principal, head teacher, and several other teachers were invited to the viewing. Many TBLT researchers (e.g., Long & Crookes; 1992; Skehan, 2007) argue that in addition to the pre-task activity and exposure to language, it is necessary to provide certain kinds of form-focused instruction in the post-task stage. Given this, I point out that little time was reserved for Rebecca to discuss the movies and the language used with the students. The institutional constraint of expecting a tangible outcome inevitably shifted its emphasis from the process to the product. Rebecca's position as instructor made it difficult for her to claim the space for discussion during the post-task cycle. Additionally, few students thought it necessary to discuss their negotiation processes with Rebecca, for she would not understand their Korean speaking.

The two films were strikingly similar. Beyond being of the same genre, both offered a similar plot about a serial killer with a knife, lots of screaming and some sound effects. Over the two minutes of running time, English was used sporadically in conversation, predominantly for screaming. Some of their dialogue was difficult to understand due to the lack of technological support for quality audio. After some moments of silence, the students received a wide range of responses, many of which were largely dismissive: "You boys must have played too many violent computer games!" Looking at the back of the principal, who was leaving, speechless, the head teacher appeared lost as well. Although she did acknowledge the participants' collaboration through the program, she ensured that she left an indirect, but disapproving review of the films in the following way:

Ms. Lim's speech to students

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> It seems to me that you could have done it better had there been more quality collaboration. There's got to be a storyline, not just killing and screaming.
>
> 얘들아, 좀 더 잘 할 수 있었겠죠 사실 우리 여기 학생들 좀 더 같이 열심히 했으면. 죽이고 비명 지르는 것뿐만 아니라 분명히 스토리가 있어야겠죠.

Rebecca waited with patience until I explained in English why the whole class was laughing following Ms. Lim's comment on the movies. Shrugging her shoulders, Rebecca laughed and said, "Well, anyway, we're done with it."

In conclusion, we can evaluate that the attempt to level the playing field via English camp – with its TBLT-oriented pedagogical practice and incorporation of the native English speaker – fails to achieve its goal, maybe largely because the students as well as teachers had all different, somewhat conflicting, motivations about the English camp. In case of Teacher Lim, while she intended to provide students with English-immersive experiences, the immediate pedagogical goal of teaching Standard English resulted in Underachievers' greater dependence on the teacher's feedback. In Rebecca's class, the participating students prioritized efficiency (i.e., getting the job done) over pedagogic opportunities (i.e., how to practice English communication skills with her), and some students successfully learned how to play the game well enough to avoid getting into trouble. Those who failed to learn those skills had nothing to lose, simply because Rebecca was not in a position of authority at Hillside. The present case exemplifies how English programs dedicated to addressing students' growing English gaps may not work in the way the program had intended. Some students' failure to learn English, then, was interpreted through a liberal ideology of self-help.

5. A Social Approach to Learner Autonomy

In the communication-oriented model, learner autonomy is a key condition for academic success. The proposition makes sense when we conceptualize language as a technical skill that

everyone has equal access to regardless of social position, or as a socially disembedded, autonomous system. By taking up a case of the communication-oriented English camp, I have analyzed why this may not so in school: First, by exploring how Ms. Lim's adherence to Standard English unwittingly marginalized Underachievers; and second, by demonstrating how English proficiency played a critical role for Andy and Byeongho in negotiating the task to their advantage.

I view that communication-oriented class is effective in countering teacher-centered instruction and in fostering individual responsibility in learning processes. Nevertheless, it is subsumed in, if not supporting, liberal ideology of self-help as key to academic success. Specifically, its emphasis on individual aspects of English learning falls short of addressing the structural, economic, and cultural factors that deepen the educational inequities between students. This is because language skills in communication-oriented classrooms regulate one's participation both as a means and product in the first place; students lacking the valued linguistic capital have a harder time being recognized as contributing members of the community. Without consideration of these local conditions, the language education policy that intended to provide opportunities to learn English communicative skills may not fulfill its goal.

Chapter 6 English, Class, and Social Reproduction

This research has focused on the relationship between English and social reproduction through a group of Korean adolescents in a public school. The study started with one guiding question: How do schools in charge of meritocracy reproduce the English gap by social class? The positive relationship between social class and English attainment has received academic and social attention in Korea. Many educators and policy makers frequently cite private education as a primary reason for such outcomes, arguing that middle-class children have better access to English learning opportunities, whereas working-class children do not. In recognition of increasing class-based gaps in English attainment, public schools attempt to provide equal access to English education. In 2008, the Ministry of Education announced a systematic policy for supporting English Underachievers. The major purpose of the policy is to provide Underachievers with additional English learning opportunities in and outside class.

My study focused on testing out the widely-held assumption that increasing English input would help Underachievers become better language learners, thereby reducing the achievement gap. Throughout the thesis, I addressed whether one's access to English learning opportunities, as opposed to what some policymakers and educators have argued, is equally available in the school, and if not, why this is the case. To this end, I examined four strategic sites (i.e., English class, the English Speech Contest, Afterschool Class, and the English camp), where identities as Returnees and Underachievers are discursively (re) produced, reinforced, and challenged.

In the following, I turn to each social category to situate their stories into the larger theoretical backgrounds of bilingualism as language ideology and of social reproduction. I then conclude this thesis with suggestions for future research.

1. Returnees and Bilingualism as Language Ideology

In globalizing Korea, middle-class parents view transnational schooling as a route to ensure class reproduction, thinking that early exposure to bilingual environments can bring an advantageous position in local competition. While Returnees from study abroad index high-class elites with multilingual proficiency, they have to contend with the media representation that Returnees are morally dubious (Lo & Kim, 2015). For this reason, my analysis indicates that Returnees must learn what it means to become Korean for successful peer socialization, which is highly gendered. By way of the dominance of heterosexual gender views, Underachiever boys' counter-school norms gain hegemony as legitimate masculine behaviour. Also, the school's emphasis on linguistic nationalism enabled Underachiever boys to project Returnee boys as less-masculine, and thus feminine boys. In resistance to this feminization, Returnee boys performed Korean identity as poor English speakers. Returnee girls, by contrast, collaborated with Underachiever girls in pursuit of mainstream feminine beauty. They also invested in informal social groups to expand and secure solid peer support. The girls were aware that English that was "too good" would undermine friendship with Underachiever girls; outside of extracurricular activities such as the English Speech Contest, they were reluctant to reveal their Returnee identity in public.

In English class, Returnees find the grammar-oriented practice boring and unengaging. With competence in the use of indirect and direct speech acts, and discourse markers, they often notice sociopragmatically inept expressions in the textbook. Nevertheless, they are fast to recognize that they should master the "school-version of English" (i.e., test English) in order to earn good grades in school exams. While the monolingual environment does not allow Returnees abundant opportunities to capitalize on their linguistic capital, they endeavour to find the right

times and places to gain legitimacy to speak and to be heard in English, such as the English Speech Festival.

Like any typical adolescents, Returnees have a desire for autonomy from adult supervision. They sometimes have to stand up to teachers to achieve what they want, but not in ways Underachievers would; they instead control certain aspects of the learning environment through skilful negotiation. In the English camp, for example, neither Andy (the Returnee) nor Byeongho (the Underachiever) found instrumental value in participation. Nevertheless, their exit strategies were different. While Andy successfully mobilized sociocultural knowledge of negotiation with Rebecca in order to lessen the burden of movie production, Byeongho became disaffected with the activity with no such strategy. Ultimately, it was Andy who was perceived by school staff to have successfully completed the program. In this way, Returnees gradually gain both teachers' trust and peer support, which allows them to enjoy heightened visibility and autonomy in school life.

The stories of English Returnees show how bilingualism is projected and managed in the framework of linguistic nationalism (Heller, 2006, 2007) in globalizing Korea. During the colonization period by the Japanese Empire (1910-1945), the nationalistic elites of Korea endeavoured to systematize the Korean language that hitherto had remained as a regional vernacular and taught it as a praxis of linguistic nationalism. This political role of the language in school is still pervasive; public education functions as one of the major channels through which Koreanness is constructed. In the globalized economy, however, the image of the nation as a stable, homogenous category is simultaneously fractured and destabilized (Heller, 2007) on the terrain of language. As Shin (2010) argued, what we see now is co-existence of two language ideologies: an essentialist ideology of linguistic nationalism that prevailed in Korea throughout

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the 20th century versus a Korean-English bilingualism that emerged as an index of global elite status in rapidly globalizing Korea. At the same time, Returnees' struggles to gain recognition among peers indicate that the essentializing ideologies of language and identity are still robust in South Korea, although perhaps the specific details of what linguistic features or languages need to me mastered (pronunciation, grammar, sociolinguistic competence; English, Chinese, or Japanese) might change over time.

In my study, I have shown how the state endeavours to make the linguistic, and thus national, boundary clear by constructing bilingualism as parallel monolingualisms (Heller, 2006). As she pointed out, the ideology of bilingualism as parallel monolingualisms supports social selection in school:

> The most evident mechanisms of social selection have to do with the ideology of what being bilingual means. Setting up bilingualism as two parallel monolingualisms…places some students at an advantage over others in terms of their ease of access to learning to be bilingual that way, and in terms of the relative cost and benefits to them. (pp. 218–219)

In contemporary Korea, this model appears to have many advantages. At the individual level, we see how students make use of language as a tool to signify Returnee as less authentic Korean. Also, Underachievers performed native English speaker identity with a stance of denaturalization, assuming that bilingualism does not belong to Koreans. At the curriculum level, the model allows curriculum developers to construct English education as a set of codified linguistic systems. This makes access to English look democratic, because it appears learnable. At the national level, it helps to sustain the long-standing social imagination of Korea as a monolingual country.

Further, the stories of Returnees bring us back to the long-standing sociological debate about the relationship between structure and agency. From the transitional social reproduction

model, it was assumed that whatever happens in the classroom, the changes would be subordinate to the reproductive functions of school. I refer to Giddens' (1984) notion of *dialectic of control* to capture the dynamic, fluid nature of the relationship between social systems and individual agency. The dialectic of control refers to the means or resources whereby subordinate players in a power relation may influence those in more powerful positions. From this perspective, the less powerful members in school-in this case Underachievers- can always "manage resources in such a way to exert control over the more powerful in established power relationships" (p. 374).

Indeed, the contradictions and tensions we observed in the cases of Returnees and Underachievers indicate the possibility of change, however temporary, in the established power relationships. As we have seen, native-like English is central to the relationship between social structure and social action, since it is through this linguistic capital that some advance their interests, legitimating their positioning over others. I showed how Returnees are ultimately celebrated by the school while Underachievers are left to mimicry at the periphery. I note that those involved in the institution (in particular, teachers, middle-class parents, and their children) benefit from native-like English, in part by virtue of the fact that it creates its own linguistic marketplace, and in part because it upholds the value of the linguistic resources they endeavour to possess.

However, it is important to note that Returnees' competency in English may no longer be sufficient to achieve (or maintain) class advancement, as the Korean job market is saturated with the increasing number of jobless college graduates. Underachievers, on the other hand, come to school from a different class position, and end up being marginalized partly because their class position does not afford them to the kind of English school values. From this standpoint, then,

Underachievers have least to gain from collaborating with the school. Also, Underachievers' dominance in peer dynamics makes Returnees dissimulate their advantage (e.g., Korean-accented English) to blend into the peer society. This contradiction we observed in school indicates how social structure is both enabling and constraining social action, bringing up unexpected consequences in terms of social reproduction.

2. Underachievers and Social Reproduction

Korean public education has had contradictory reputations. On the global scene, the system earns recognition for its ability to raise competitive and effective test-takers. For instance, referring to Korean students' high performance in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), US President Barack Obama lauded South Korean education during his State of the Union speech in 2011. However, the locals were sceptical about its effectiveness. They argue that it is unfair for the public education system to take credit for students' strong performance in the PISA, because shadow education has been part of the system since its inception. In addition, the test scores do not reflect other factors, such as students' satisfaction level in life, gender inequality, and achievement gap by social class. A closer look at the PISA data suggests that socio-economic inequalities among Korean students have had a more pronounced impact on performance over the past decade (OECD, 2015). The story of Returnees and Underachievers shows how the class-based division within school takes place in Korea.

Framing English learning as a matter of input, educators offered supplementary English programs to Underachievers, with the expectation that they would soon achieve desirable English proficiency. However, my ethnographic analysis reveals that supplementary classes did not allow Underachievers a legitimate speaking position. In the English camp, for instance, students were expected to use "grammatically-correct" English, with which many

Underachievers have difficulty. Similarly, Underachievers remained as bystanders in the English Speech Festival because the front stage activity that brings recognition and prestige was reserved for Returnees, or for those who could perform native-like Standard English.

Similarly, due to the systematic dissonance between curriculum and assessment in the practice of streaming, teachers were compelled to assess what they did not cover in class. The teacher in the General course focused more on decontextualized, production-oriented grammar activities and encouraged students' participation through an IRE format. On the other hand, the Basic level course focused more on the "fun and easy" part of English learning, consisting of vocabulary-related games and comprehension-oriented activities. This class organization may have been helpful for students to focus on English class in the moment, but it did not provide systemic support in preparing students for school exams, which assess their English proficiency based on the normative production of grammar skills.

Underachievers did not find school favourable to their life patterns and norms. They are, in a sense, making rational choices in refusing to learn English and they faithfully act on those choices. While teachers emphasize that good English skills enhance opportunities in middle class employment and are essential to entrance into a good university, Underachievers feel that success at college-stream high schools (and ultimately getting while-collar jobs) is out of reach. This perception encourages Underachievers to heavily rely on peer networks, because the school does not provide adequate support for the vocational track. Underachievers' so-called anti-school behaviour is a form of resistance to the symbolic violence of school and provides a base for category affiliation. However, subscribing to Underachiever ideology can be costly. While Underachiever boys enjoy greater autonomy by rejecting the institutional force of learning English, their lack of the linguistic capital legitimates differential resource distribution in school

and society. Similarly, Underachiever girls did not earn as much positive recognition as Returnee girls.

The stories of English Underachievers indicate the tensions and contradictions brought by 'English fever', especially in terms of the broken promise of socioeconomic mobility through (English) education. Koreans' investment in English learning is based on the belief that a good command of English will increase their employability in white-collar jobs. Students are often told that if they work hard in school, they will be rewarded with better jobs with upward class mobility. But, to what extent does that belief reflect socioeconomic mobility in Korea?

A series of recent statistics indicates the growing pessimism about social mobility through education. Half of all Koreans responded that their children would not attain a higher social status than their own (Shon, 2016b). Recognising that parents' financial support is critical to earn a good university degree, which in turn brings higher possibility for quality jobs, Korean youth find it increasingly difficult to climb the social ladder on their own (Young Koreans find it harder to climb social ladder, 2016). Researchers also found that chances to achieve social mobility are getting slimmer, indicating that children of manual labourers (the lowest socioeconomic level) and professionals (the highest socioeconomic level) are more likely to lock into their own classes.

The broken promise of social mobility leads to differing educational aspirations among children. As I illustrated in 3.2, parents had different strategies and plans about children's English education. The relationship between parents' social class and students' achievement does not come as a surprise. However, the working-class parents' low educational aspirations and less-interventionist attitude deserves more academic attention, as it indicates to what extent they perceive the possibility of socioeconomic mobility through education. Middle-class parents also

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must work harder in order not to fall into poverty. Trapped by slow income growth and increased expenditures, they excessively invest in education to maintain class privilege. English, then, represents a very different subject to both Returnees and Underachievers. To Returnees, English is a global commodity needed not only for their successful high school transition, but also for their future opportunities for university and quality jobs. To Underachievers, English is no more than a boring school subject, which they consider unlikely to bring rewards in their future trajectories.

This study argues that Underachievers' struggle in English should not be interpreted as a lack of their accountability. In the post-industrialized society, a majority of people receive wages in exchange for their labour. The desire for English is intertwined with the expectation for quality jobs in increasingly precarious working conditions. The main chapters have shown that none of the classrooms allowed a legitimate position to Underachievers, which made them consider non-participation in English a rational choice. And yet, teachers tended to pathologize students who lack autonomy, referring them to psychiatric counselling. Therefore, we need to be aware of how liberal educational ideologies of self-help and choice are complicit in social reproduction in schools. Specifically, we should problematize the underlying principles of linguistic-oriented curriculum and its classroom practices by addressing the process through which material and symbolic resources are distributed. Questions such as whose interests are served by having the English curriculum structured the way it is, who benefits from streaming, what interests are at stake, and with what consequences, are crucial in that regard.

This dissertation also suggests that we need to restructure English education in the interest of equity. To this end, we first must acknowledge that education is both a merit and non-merit factor. I have shown that speaking English is a matter of gaining legitimacy and

recognition in designated contexts, rather than a matter of acquiring the linguistic structure itself. Many Underachievers lack a sense of agency in English, partly because the discrepancy between teaching and assessment failed to grant them legitimacy in English. This suggests that public resources invested in reducing educational inequality could be more efficiently spent on reforming assessment, such as process-oriented assessment, rather than on offering more English classes to Underachievers. To this end, the meaning of test fairness should not be limited to procedural and mechanistic aspects of test administration; it should consider the contingency between class organization and assessment. This requires the school to administer a different set of tests for the Basic level, which I think is important for the structural inclusion of Underachievers in the community. Below, I conclude this chapter with a discussion of future research directions.

3. Directions for Future Research

The narrative of Returnees and Underachievers I presented here suggests that the study of language needs to engage more with language ideologies, particularly in reference to the Bourdieuian concept of legitimacy. While globalization facilitates the circulation of English worldwide as a lingua franca, a rootless language by definition, the activity of learning English does not automatically endow the right to speak to its students. Moreover, as shown in Rebecca's case, it appears that various categories such as race, ethnicity, and gender continue to affect the social evaluation of a speaker's English skill. In recognition of native-like English as a socially constructed reality, we need to engage in a critical dialogue about how English education in school serves to reproduce language ideologies of class and gender.

Research in sociology of education in K-12 educational contexts should recognize the relationship between the liberal trope of self-help and learner autonomy and their roles in social

reproduction. In the era of late capitalism, individuals are urged to embrace challenges, to develop autonomy, and more importantly, to take full responsibility for their own development. However, these tropes are not new in school contexts, where everyone, in principle, has equal opportunity for educational success. In commitment to this goal, the state currently operates a range of welfare programs to address increasing class-based inequalities. My analysis pointed out that the programs aptly recycled the old liberal ideology of self-help, while framing underachievement as a psychiatric issue requiring professional counselling. In that sense, the provision of Educational Welfare contributed to social reproduction while giving off an impression that education is functioning democratically. Thus, researchers should pay attention to how schools' educational policies and programs relating to social inclusion interact with the broader political goal of social reproduction.

To applied linguists, this study urges researchers to consider class as a central unit of analysis in studies on language education. For a long time, the mainstream liberal value of the individual self has produced a line of inquiry named Individual Difference, resulting in neglect of class as a consideration (cf. Block, 2014). In the wake of the neoliberalism that Harvey (2005) termed as an economic political regime to restore class power, the effects of social class are increasingly on the rise in various domains, including language education. Nevertheless, the rigid interpretation of social class as one's material wealth in Second Language Acquisition literature does not do justice to the fact that class is, in fact, a practice of living (Weis, 2008). Within this context, taking stock of class in language learning can substantiate learners' stories by giving an account of how and why they responded to English learning opportunities in the way they did in relation to their multiple positions at and beyond the school. To this end, the teacher needs to

develop an understanding of learners' English classroom participation as part of negotiations among various aspects, including socioeconomic positions.

What remains to be conducted is an empirical analysis examining the relationship between English and other subject areas. How, for instance, would students' performance in mathematics relate to their English skills and class backgrounds? Recognizing the strong influence of social class on English skills, major companies in Korea now turn to assessing applicants' mathematical skills based on the belief that mathematics can assess one's cognitive capacity. However, an OECD statistic indicated that mathematics as a school subject had the largest class-based gap among students (Choi, 2016). Examining the students' differential involvement in English and math according to their social positions would then provide a more comprehensive picture on how students' success (or failure) in school is mediated by their class backgrounds.

It is also of importance to follow young adults' trajectories upon graduation. This would provide insight into how their local decisions (e.g., getting bad grades in English or not turning in homework on time) have longer-term consequences, particularly in their gatekeeping encounters when job searching. How would Returnees think of their linguistic and cultural capital when they have to adapt themselves to Korean society (cf. Lo & Kim, 2015)? Examining their different socialization process in the job market would help us better grasp how their category membership in school has long-term consequences.

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Appendix A
Secondary Informants profile

In-Betweens

Leah was a female student with academic orientation. She got perfect scores on her last English exam. She also participated in the English Speech Contest as a domestic student.

Sera was Leah's close friend. She moved to Seocho when she was in Grade 6. She was strongly motivated to become a vet. In 2015, she served as Vice President of the Hillside Student Council.

Hyunju was a female student from the Manga Club. She took pride in displaying manga-related goods. She maintained a good relationship with teachers, but did not show strong academic performance. She was interested in nail art design, and studied Japanese in the Afterschool Class.

Teachers

Ms. Song was a tenured, female English teacher. Based on 15 years of English teaching experiences across Seoul, she has seen many cases of Underachievers struggling with English. She argued that despite its potential issues, schools should keep the grammar-teaching practice to level the playing field in the interest of Underachievers.

Mr. Sung was a tenured, male English teacher. He had taught English over ten years, including his previous teaching in high school. During fieldwork, he served as head of the student discipline department.

Ms. HJ was a non-tenured, female English teacher (English Conversational Instructor). Prior coming to Hillside, she worked at a local interior design company.

Ms. Lim was a non-tenured, female English teacher (English Conversational Instructor). I observed her classes and shared what I had observed after school.

Ms. Jang was head teacher of the Afterschool Class department. Having worked at middle school over 15 years, she said that she was well aware of the nature of middle school students.

Somi became an Afterschool Class instructor in 2014. Given the high turnover of the instructors, she recognized as one of the old members in the community, and thus aware of the internal politics between teacher and instructor. She often talked with Ms. Jang about the Afterschool Class on behalf of all of the Afterschool Instructors.

Rebecca was Hillside's native English teacher. Born and raised in California, US, she had no prior teaching experiences before coming to Korea. She left for Taiwan to teach English there after I completed the fieldwork.

Appendix B
Interview outlines with informants

Participants	Themes to cover	Sample interview questions
Students	English learning history, students' perceptions on English class, respective position in school, ideas on future career	How would you describe your English class? When did you first learn English? How did you like it? How would you evaluate your English? What do teachers, parents, and friends say about your English? How do you study English these days? Do you go to private language schools, have tutoring with teachers, or study by yourself?
	Future career and respective position in society	What kind of high school would you want to go upon graduation? How often do you talk with your parents about your future career? What are your specific plans to achieve those goals?
	Linking family's social class to investment in English	What do your parents say about English? How supportive are they of your English learning? What elementary school did you graduate from? Who do you currently live with?
Teachers	Overall job satisfaction; classroom philosophy	What led you into the teaching field? Could you talk about your teaching experiences over the past years? Could you tell me about your teaching goals? What level are you in charge of?
	Teachers' perception on Returnees and Underachievers	How do you teach students with varying degrees of English achievement? What is your approach to Returnees and Underachievers? How would they benefit from English education in school?
Parents	Parents' perception of children's English learning	How would you describe your child's English proficiency? What do you think school should provide more of to students for quality English education? Do you think learning English is important to your child's future? Why or why not?
	Familial support on English learning	Have you considered sending your children to English-speaking countries to learn English? How do you support your child's English learning?

Appendix C
Hillside Landscape Change

Appendix D
List of references for psychiatric counselling

- 공부가 느린 학생도 행복한 학교를 만들기 위한 서울학생 기초학력보장 사업 계획 (2012) (Proposal to ensure basic academic skills: Making schooling happy for "slow learners" in Seoul)

- 교육부 학습부진학생 책임지도 계획 (2011) (Proposal to enhance school accountability for Underachievers)

- 기초학력 미달학생 지도 인턴교사 연수자료 (2012) (Material for intern teachers teaching Underachievers)

- 단 한 명의 아이도 포기하지 않는 초등 기초학력보장 기본계획 (2015) (Proposal to ensure basic academic skills: No single student left behind)

- 서울기초학력보장 사업 계획 (2013) (Proposal to ensure basic academic skills)

- 서울학습도움센터 학습상담 운영 지침서_ 심층 학습상담 매뉴얼 (2015) (Manual to in-depth study consultant from Seoul study support center)

- 자기주도학습_가이드북_배포용 (2015) (Self-regulated study guide book)

- 자녀사랑 뉴스레터 (Love Your Child News Letter)

- 학력향상형창의경영학교_신규학교담당자연수_자료집 (2012) (material for employee in achievement improvement-enhanced schools)

- 학습부진학생 책임지도 기본계획 (2008) (Basic plans to teach Underachievers with accountability)

- 학습부진학생을 위한 강점기반 프로그램 워크숍 활용(책)-초등학생용 (Strength-Based program workshop book for Underachievers in elementary school)

- 학습부진학생지도교사 연수 (2012) (Orientation for teachers teaching Underachievers)

- 한국교원단체총연합회_학습부진실태/ 학습부진아지도계획 (Korean Federation of Teachers' Association_ the state of Underachievers/Plan for Underachievers)

Appendix E
Transcription conventions

(words)   Transcribing notes/researcher's explanation

((words))   Speakers' actions

words   Utterances in the original language, English or Korean phonetics

(…)   ellipsis

=word   Overlap starts

word=   Overlap ends

word   Speaker's emphasis

<u>words</u>   Researcher's emphasis