1 Orienting to Transnational English-Language Education in Korea

The relevance to this book of cross-border education, the spread of English as an international language, and Korea's relatively recent openness to international contact necessitate a discussion about how those topics influence my own perspective before entering my research site. So in this chapter, I provide background on several conceptual frameworks that sensitized me and guided my travel and work between my U.S.-based and Korea-based campuses. In describing these frameworks, I also suggest the necessity of similar conceptual grounding for other, similar work regardless of national contexts.

International/Transnational Education

Both the terms "international" and "transnational" appear in my study—in part because both terms circulate in relevant literature and in my university's description of its own work at both its campuses. But the two terms are not ultimately interchangeable.

Internationalization and Branch Campuses

"Internationalization" as a buzzword in U.S.-based higher education typically refers to efforts to engage with other national contexts. Those efforts include recruiting international students, creating and sustaining learning abroad opportunities for domestic students, building small- or large-scale branch campuses of U.S. universities (as my university did), identifying foreign sites for research and technology development, and partnering with foreign educational institutions to promote awareness of specific universities as brands in globalizing markets.

A lot of what is known about international students in the US is captured superficially but compellingly by the numbers. The Institute of International Education's (2022) annual *Open Doors* report observes that roughly 1.1 million students (including over 52,000 Koreans) came to the US to study in tertiary institutions during the 2018-19 academic year, a figure that represents the 12th year in a row of growth or steadiness despite recent perceived and actual shifts

in U.S. policies and attitudes that have been unfavorable for international student recruitment.[3]

My own university/research site is an example of another international trend. Adding to students' traditional patterns of travel from home to host country, a phenomenon that Anna Kosmützky has termed a "California gold rush" of international branch campuses (IBCs) has established new U.S.-based college and university sites in countries ranging from Albania to Qatar to Rwanda (as cited in Redden, 2015). The Cross-Border Education Research Team (C-BERT), a multi-institution and multidisciplinary collective, defines such campuses as entities owned by foreign education providers that offer degrees "substantially on site" in those foreign providers' names in host countries (C-BERT, n.d.). As of late 2020, C-BERT lists roughly 300 international campuses coordinated by 37 countries (up from 180 campuses in the last decade), among which the United States is the largest exporter. My university's Asia Campus is in good company—part of what Jason Lane and Kevin Kinser (2013) describe as an "Asia Pivot" among universities based in the US, UK, and Australia through which Western-style institutions can locate at least some programs closer to extremely large markets for students in Korea, China, Malaysia, and other rapidly developing countries in the region.

IBCs often launch on the assumption that they can export desirable curricula to students who demand U.S.-style university education but wish to remain close to home. Universities following the trend tend to propagate what Stephen Wilkins and Jeroen Huisman (2012) term "isomorphic" educational and administrative models and practices across borders, especially where the governments that invite them are interested in promoting new efforts based on those universities' identities and reputations: for instance, it was clear early on in my university's negotiations with Korea's Ministry of Education that we were expected to offer the same degree programs with the same transcripts as the U.S.-based campus. But such high-level negotiations between university administrators and host country education officials may lead to provisional agreements that lack faculty support (or even knowledge).

Initial challenges may also include funding and policy. Funding models

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3   As I revise this chapter, COVID-19, the infectious syndrome caused by the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, continues to spread and kill. Immediate and long-term effects on international students' entry to the United States remain uncertain, and the pandemic has definitely impacted enrollment in the short term. But universities such as my own are attempting to extend synchronous and asynchronous online instruction to other countries in attempts to maintain international student engagement. For our extended campus, the pandemic has meant that some students who would have shifted their studies to the US have remained in place and are attempting to enroll in online courses to augment the courses that remain for them there.

typically rely on money approved by local governments or foundations with widely different ideas about budgetary transparency. University standards of academic freedom may clash with restraints on speech in destinations such as China, Singapore, and the United Arab Emirates (Redden, 2014; 2019). As Wilkins and Huisman (2012) note, the values that undergird high levels of parental investment in education in countries such as China and Korea can also inform those countries' tight educational controls—controls that may seem obscure, obstructionist, or even xenophobic to educational entities coming from other countries.

In addition to the challenges that emerge at high levels of planning and implementation, clear mismatches can arise at more daily operational levels too. Peter Ninnes and Meeri Hellstén (2005) argue that "the internationalization of higher education is currently experiencing a moment of exhaustion brought on by increasing workload demands and seemingly insoluble pedagogical dilemmas" (pp. 3-4). And even where U.S.-based universities successfully navigate their entry, the large investments in student affairs at their "home" campuses may not translate to international branches, where a lack of country-specific experience with counseling, housing/residence life, and other wraparound services may cause problems for students, especially if they transition from one campus to the other (Cicchetti, 2018; Ludeman et al., 2009). Employees themselves may also face challenges owing to the interactions of different professional cultures and expectations: in a study of staffing at six IBCs, Farshid Shams and Jeroen Huisman (2016) conclude that institutions' need to balance hiring from "home" and "local" contexts can lead to disparate employment terms and treatment. Li Cai and Christine Hall (2016) point to the need for sustained and targeted professional development to help faculty members anticipate and adjust to the many potential differences between home and local *academic* contexts in addition to immediate *personal* and *social* needs.

A Transnational Approach

In most cases, as in the case of the Korea-based campus that is a large part of my own research site, international priorities at high administrative and policymaking levels give way to many complexities where students, faculty, staff, and other community members within and adjacent to institutional sites actually work and live. Theorists of "transnationalism" apply analytic and often critical lenses to such complexities to claim that what appear to be people's discretely separate national identities are actually "constructed within and often solidified by transnational connections" (Hesford & Schell, 2008, p. 464;

also see Martins, 2015). As Thomas Faist et al. (2013) argue, the phenomenon of migration, for instance, may appear to move people from one place to another, but it actually creates "transnational social space," which transcends specific circumstances of geography to create imagined/virtual sensibilities in which a migrant identifies with multiple places simultaneously through "repeated movements and, above all, continued transactions" (p. 1; see also Levitt & Schiller, 2004). Steven Vertovec (1999) argues that transnationalism may mean a kind of consciousness, but it also describes patterns of capital flow, sites for political engagement, and "social morphologies" exemplified by split families whose members live in and feel allegiance to several countries, often at the same time. In other words, transnational movement and work occur across national borders, but they are not determined by those borders: instead, they can create new interstitial formations people and capital occupy and through which they transit multidirectionally.

In the context of higher education, where "international" projects may *seem* unidirectional—attracting international students; sending students to other countries for study; and importing/exporting curricula, faculty, and administrative models—a transnational analytic framework can reveal multiple directions, forms, and temporalities occurring and overlapping every day. Steven Fraiberg et al. (2017), for example, describe what they term the "translocal" classroom space at the campus in China where they were conducting research, in which students were fulfilling assignments from U.S.-based instructors but doing so by exploring issues that were locally relevant and current (p. 177). Danielle Zawodny Wetzel and Dudley W. Reynolds (2014) focus on their transnational campus, spanning the distance between Pittsburgh, PA, and Doha, Qatar. While their university's establishment of programs in the Middle East might appear on the surface to be a straightforward instance of applying U.S.-based instruction abroad, the authors claim that their first-year writing course provided exigence for bi-directional work. They leveraged the university's claim about sameness across the campuses to argue for curricular and programmatic change at the U.S. campus based on innovation in Qatar, thus reversing a traditional logic of curricular exportation from a "home" to a "branch" location.

At the Asia Campus, I observed and indeed helped facilitate a curricular export from the US to Korea. In addition to establishing outgrowths of academic major programs and staffing them with U.S.-based department-vetted faculty members, the university re-created a cohort model of first-year general education courses, requiring all students to take the same block of Writing, Introductory Psychology and Sociology, Math, and Global Citizenship. Outside of the curriculum itself, the university's efforts to encourage Asia Campus students' identification with an emerging transnational social space

were literally visible. On my return trips to that campus (which I describe more fully in Chapter 3), I noted that the brand-new classroom and office building my colleagues were occupying had been emblazoned with university logos inside and out in what appeared to be a very strong visual correction to the more spartan decorations of our first campus building. Photographs of the U.S. campus and of popular alpine and desert natural features of the Intermountain West were prominent in hallways. Furniture was keyed to university colors. And several rooms had been named after regional national parks. Those examples of investment in the university's symbolic presence reflected the institution's desire to create an "extended" rather than a "branch" campus—one that, like Wetzel and Reynolds' (2014) home institution, could credibly claim that students enrolled thousands of miles apart were nonetheless having the same educational experiences. In my university's case at least, "sameness" was symbolically imposed from afar through set curricula but also more materially through photographs, logos, color schemes, and other elements that seemed to pull students into a virtual social space heavily determined by their apparent destination in the US.

But as theorists of transnationalism would remark, the students were not *merely* pulled into such a space: instead, they were themselves co-creating it. As I believe my student participants demonstrated, they worked, lived, and interacted in ways that showed their "self-awareness of an imperfect foreign ear in an accentuated space" (Singh et al., 2007, p. 202). While all of the students who participated in my study were Korean nationals attending a university on Korean soil, as I will show, they acted overtly and subtly in response to their awareness that things were different at the Asia Campus than they would have been at the Korean university campuses very close by—and that they as students were often different from one another too (see, e.g., Brooks & Waters, 2011). In other words, there was friction just beneath the smooth internationalist surface of the university's and government's experiment that was both noticeable and variously productive.

Korea's Relationship with English and English Education

Given the location of part of my study site at a shared English-medium university campus in Korea, and given that country's significant investments in English-language education at primary through tertiary levels, I turn here to that country's history with the English language and the contemporary complexities in that relationship that inform my work. A significant part of that history includes Korea's simultaneous affinity for and suspicion of U.S. cultural influences—ambivalence that likely affects my university's campus there.

In widely circulating reports about international students studying in U.S.-based colleges and universities (especially the Institute of International Education's annual Open Doors report), Korea usually figures prominently as one of the top three sending countries—a remarkable position given that its population of roughly 50 million is significantly smaller than those of the top two sending countries, China (1.4 billion) and India (1.3 billion). Its disproportionate presence in international education is even more remarkable considering the relatively short history of Korean students' international circulation: Korea did not generally grant permission for its citizens to study abroad until 1980, before which only a very few highly privileged Koreans (most prominently the Republic's first president, Rhee Syngman) could pursue educational opportunities outside the peninsula (Cho, 2017, p. 70). Closely related, Korea's domestic history with English-language education and penetration also shows rapid recent development following a tumultuous 19th- and 20th-century history of international contacts.

Trade envoys introduced English to the Korean peninsula in the last quarter of the 19th century at a time when Korea became the last country in the region to be reached by prospective colonizers (Collins, 2005). The Empire of Japan was the most persistent regional force, and it attempted incursions into Korea beginning in the 1870s—efforts that led to the forceful imposition of a trade treaty in 1876. A combination of English-language trade emissaries' growing influences and internal fears about Japanese domination led to the creation of a dual-language (English/Korean) press and to the 1882 Shufeldt Treaty, which established commercial and diplomatic relations with the US. In addition to political and trade-based effects, JongHwa Lee et al. (2010) argue that Korea's opening to the US also encouraged Koreans to orient rhetorically to Americanization as an alternative to traditional Confucianism: while Japan would go on to colonize Korea between 1910 and 1945 (with social effects still readily perceivable in Korea today[4]), Japan's eventual defeat at the hands of the US became a powerful symbol of American economic and military might (also see Bizzell, 2017). Indeed, the ascendance of American "soft" (market-oriented) power after World War II was augmented in Korea by its "hard" (military) power. And both types of power were apparent in the U.S.-led postwar military occupation and in U.S. leaders' collusion with Korean elites (Lee et al., 2010, p. 347).

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4   While there is evidence in Korea of an affinity for Japanese cultural artifacts, including art, design, and literary/popular productions, there is also an enduring strand of anxiety about and xenophobia toward Japan. Most visible is the ongoing dispute about the roles Korean women played during Japanese occupation as forced/indentured sex workers, or "comfort women."

Since 1945, English's role in Korea has evolved from being the "language of the latest wave of occupiers" (Collins, 2005, p. 421) to becoming a language that represents a desirable, if somewhat conflicted, target for aspirational politicians, students, and parents (see also Cho, 2017, pp. 76-84). Korea remains among the most ethnically and linguistically homogeneous countries on Earth (Jeon, 2009), but English education represents a huge government and private investment. As Korea built its domestic economy after the Korean War of the early 1950s, and as interest in English (and U.S.-led globalization) grew, educational authorities attempted to shift English-as-a-foreign-language teaching from drill-based grammar-translation pedagogies to more communicative methods. U.S. Peace Corps volunteers were actively teaching in Korea between 1966 and 1981, and government investment in language education increased further as the 1986 Asian Games and 1988 Olympics increased Korea's international exposure. In the 1990s, as Korea emerged as "one of the most successful tiger economies" in East Asia (Jeon, 2009, p. 234), authorities revised educational programs pursuant to President Kim Young Sam's policy of 세계화 *(segyehwa)*, or "globalization": primary and secondary curricula integrated English education even further, and national standards specified that each school should have at least one native-English-speaking teacher on its faculty (Jeon, 2009, p. 235). Outside the school day, private tutoring centers marketed their services to parents, who seemed (and still do seem) eager to pay hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars per student per month for extra preparation in Korea's test-driven educational system. As Hyera Byean (2015) notes, parents felt compelled to pursue such private options in the wake of 1970s-era "equalization" policies that randomly assigned students to high schools and ended score-based tracking practices (p. 871). In a bid to win back affluent parents' trust in public schools, the Kim government reinstituted tracking, and the later Lee Myung Bak regime (2008-2013) entrenched tracking further and authorized more hiring of native-English-speaking teachers (Byean, 2015, pp. 871-872). Perhaps predictably, more tracking has meant even more familial private investment as parents use English cram schools to aim for the highest tracks, especially in high school English curricula (Byean, 2015, p. 873).

Thus the "English Fever" that grew apace with Korea's interest in globalization and that reached boiling after the Asian economic crisis of 1997-1998 has carried a high price tag (Cho, 2017; Park, 2009, 2012). Jin-Kyu Park (2009) relates that roughly half of all money spent on education in Korea in 2006 went to English-language preparation—a figure that translated to nearly $19 billion by 2009 (Lee et al., 2010, p. 338). Lee et al. (2010) cite further reports that as many as 40,000 Korean parents—mostly mothers—lived abroad in

2008, often in the US, as so-called "wild geese," supporting the children who traveled with them as they learned English in English-dominant primary schools alongside native-speaking peers. Perhaps the most compelling example of many Koreans' high investment in English proficiency is a trend reported in the *Los Angeles Times*, in which parents turn to surgeons to clip their children's frenula (membranes under the tongue), supposedly correcting tongue-tiedness and allowing easier pronunciation of unique English phonemes (Demick, 2002; also see Park, 2009).

Yet, as Samuel Gerald Collins (2005) and Mihyon Jeon (2009) argue, the assumption that Korea has unilaterally "bought into" English as a periphery nation adopting "inner circle" standards is unsafe: Korea is indeed continuing to invest in, adopt, and adapt to English but on its own terms. The growth of "Konglish" is clear evidence of English's evolution alongside the Korean language: many areas in and outside of the massive capital city, Seoul, are replete with advertisements including apparently direct/phonetic translations of English-language terms such as 핸드폰 ("han-deu-pon" / "hand phones" or mobile phones) and 소울푸드 ("so-uhl-puh-deu" / "soul food" restaurants), and the many and proliferating high-density apartment complexes can carry creatively elaborate English names that gesture to prestige, such as "First World" and "Hanwha Dream Green World Euro Metro" (Suk, 2015).

But the local and daily push and pull between languages is not the only evidence of Korea's adoption and adaptation of English: since English is closely associated with international trade, politics, influence, and education, its presence in Korea is also inflected by Korean desires to control it. There are instances of formal control of English teaching, as Jeon (2009) relates in her study of expatriate native-English-speaking primary and secondary school instructors who are heavily recruited but whose varied approaches can run afoul of centrally planned English curricula. There are also compelling examples of informal pressures to control Korean English that reveal ambivalence and anxiety—feelings I discovered among student participants in my study. Jinhyun Cho (2015) argues that Korea's investment in English is actually an investment in "linguistic perfectionism," a particularly intense regime of language assessment in which "even proficient speakers of English feel anxious" as they internalize critiques of their competence (pp. 689-690). Indeed, Adrienne Lo and Jenna Chi Kim (2012) observe that some reactions to the growth of Konglish itself have entrenched "racialized ideas of linguistic incompetency," in which Konglish and other putative evidence of substandard English skills are "framed as responsible for the country's low global status" (p. 259).

Even high levels of English competency, however, are not enough to allay such linguistic anxiety in Korea. In her scholarship on the status of profes-

sional Korean-English translators, Cho (2015, 2017) adopts Roger Goodman's (1986) anthropological distinction between "guknaepa" and "haewaepa" to discuss differences between Koreans who learned English largely in country versus abroad. In Goodman's original definition, guknaepa academics, who had earned degrees at elite Korean universities, felt competition with haewaepa, who had earned degrees at prominent institutions elsewhere. While Goodman (1986) noted guknaepa wariness about potentially unorthodox ideas among haewaepa, Cho (2017) argues that internationally educated translators in her study are more glamorous and desirable than domestically educated peers, owing to their pronunciation and their easier familiarity with international English idioms (p. 2). She relates the personal story of attending, as guknaepa herself, the most prestigious institute in the country for graduate-level translation studies and learning a key lesson about language, register, and globalization. She writes,

> I knew a lot of terms and idioms belonging to high-level English registers, such as "sabre-rattling" or "megaphone diplomacy," as we practiced interpreting with speeches delivered by officials and experts on global issues all the time. Having learned English through Korea's grammar-oriented English education tailored to university entrance exams, however, I occasionally experienced embarrassing moments when I did not know ordinary words such as "tadpoles" or "peekaboo," which overseas English learners had been exposed to in naturalistic environments. While I worked very hard to become a glamorous elite bilingual as projected in the media, I constantly desired the English language resources of haewaepa classmates and secretly wished that I had been given an opportunity to learn English overseas as a child. (Cho, 2017, p. 2)

Pressures of performance in the highly competitive and even glamorous orbit of professional translation are, in one way, certainly owing to the "ever-rising local standards for English skills" Cho (2015, p. 688) notes, but they are also owing to a different qualitative shift in "local standards" themselves that are less about higher and higher proficiency "scores" and more about the intensification (and personal internalization) of the regime of assessment that produces and evaluates such scores in the first place. As English maps onto social class and mobility, English-language competence becomes a moving target: Lo and Kim (2012) observe that newer Korean television dramas (" 한국드라마"/*hanguk deurama*) depict cosmopolitan Seoulites flawlessly and effortlessly shifting among numerous languages other than Korean and En-

glish as if to reinforce the idea that real linguistic "competence" is a matter of carefully managing fluidity among several languages.

Faced with such formal and societal pressures to reinvent, both *guknaepa* and *haewaepa* can easily encounter discrimination and anxiety. *Guknaepa* may find their domestic preparation and credentials insufficient among other English speakers who have been privileged enough to travel/live/be educated abroad and/or in affluent cosmopolitan locations. But *haewaepa* may feel pressure to earn and keep their relative status and may feel effects of their perceived differences. Cho (2015) relates the comments of Soyoung, a research informant who left and then returned to Korea during the late 1990s rise of "English fever." As Soyoung recalled,

> I was like an alien. I am not a boastful character, as you know, and want to keep a low profile no matter what. But I received so much attention and I guess that girls in my [school] year all knew that I had lived abroad. . . . My Korean sounded funny and my English was awesome in their eyes and I was just an interesting subject. My English teacher always asked me to read English textbooks because he was ashamed of his pronunciation. (Cho, 2015, p. 699)

Ultimately, the attention that *haewaepa* attract as apparent models of "proper discipline," "hard work and education," and "complete mastery" (Cho, 2015, p. 693) can potentially position them as unique among some of their peers—an uncomfortable position in a country that values a high level of social cohesion.

Students in my study, coming from different educational backgrounds and bringing different kinds and levels of English proficiency but sharing Korean citizenship and heritage, seemed to imagine themselves as members of a transnational institution. They were on Korean soil for much of the term of my study but daily encountered people, expectations, and symbols that prompted them to create transnational social space at the same time their faculty members were creating it as well. When they did, they negotiated the parameters of that space through nuanced language work, including writing. Social and familiar pressures, desires for individual achievement, and awareness of the emergent nature of the transnational experiment combined and were refracted through the campus- and city-in-progress. In the next chapter, I describe that campus and city scene and my own encounter with it as a resident and researcher more fully.