

Lost in between colonialism and corporatism: A critical review of the case of South Korean academia

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Abstract: In this paper, we critically examine the hypothesis that higher education in Korea still operates under the context of colonial dependency and has become corporatized, driven by the ideologies of neoliberalism and market capitalism. In doing so, we discuss the academic dependency and corporatization of Korean colleges by pinpointing three events: first, the recent attempt by Korean colleges to adopt the American journal accreditation system; second, the annexation of the universities to Chabeol to make universities more competitive and efficient; and third, Korean college policies for expanding English-mediated courses in their curricula. We argue that these changes impacting the atmospheres of higher education and academia in Korea are not legitimate because such changes confuse the real purposes of higher education, which should not be determined only by the logic of competition or scientific development. These changes also disregard the rights of students and lecturers to think, communicate, and perform research using their own mother tongues. We suggest alternative attitudes and strategies for Korean academia to revive academic independence.

Keywords: colonialism, corporatism, journal accreditation system, English-mediated courses

1. INTRODUCTION

Academic colonialism occurs when center countries preoccupying the systems of knowledge production, distribution, and accreditation at the global level successfully coerce scholars from peripheral countries to accept their own academic disciplines (Heilbron, Guilhot, & Laurent, 2008).

Also known as academic neoimperialism, even now, scholars from peripheral countries resort to academic dependency in theories and practices (Alatas, 2000, 2003).

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Within this context of academic colonialism, scholars in the centers of knowledge, e.g., in the U.S. or the U.K., enjoy such advantages as:

- (1) producing enormous amounts of research more easily in accustomed journal formats
- (2) exchanging thoughts and information freely by means of English as the international language, and
- (3) influencing scholars in peripheral countries to consume their academic products by appropriating their prestigious statuses domestically and internationally (Alatas, 2003, p. 602).

In contrast, scholars from academic colonies tend to depend on academic advisors in the mainland for most research procedures, from defining research problems to interpreting research findings. Being at risk of rejection, marginalization, or being silenced, indigenous scholars must overcome colonial bondage or dependency by struggling with their enslaved identities as scholars to be accepted as academic professionals (Forbes, 1998).

The problem is more acute in the areas of social sciences or humanities, in which works also originate from the scholars in the U.S., U.K., France, and Germany, also known as the Big Four social science powers (Alatas, 2003). Universities in other parts of the world have reduced themselves to copying or studying the output of social scientists from these main countries, including conceiving new ideas, defining problems, selecting methodologies and selecting research priorities. Consequently, little attention is paid to local or indigenous ideas, perspectives, and philosophical standpoints, which are seldom regarded as proper sources of theories in the social sciences. There is a learned and habituated lack of selfconfidence among social scientists outside of the Euro American academic culture, who therefore often fail to conceive original theories and develop methods while studying their own areas (Haney, 2008).

These attitudes of academic colonialism can be described as “auto Orientalism,” in which Korean scholars also consider their own knowledge, culture, and heritage to be primitive, underdeveloped, or irrational, while Western norms and standards are considered scientific, developed, and advanced. The idea that resistance against academic colonialism represents academic or intellectual sovereignty is the core of our argument in this paper. Intellectual sovereignty means that indigenous scholars take the lead in the production/reproduction, interpretation, and distribution of knowledge. The goal of intellectual sovereignty is the development of an indigenous system of knowledge construction and its application according to its own criteria (Rigney, 2001).

1.1 Methodology

1.1.1 Objectives and theoretical framework

This paper aims to critically discuss the academic dependency and corporatization of Korean academia. In doing so, the author critically examines how the higher education in Korea remains in the colonial legacy while following the trends of neoliberalism and market capitalism. Three major evidences of the academic dependency and corporatization of Korean colleges are adopted for this paper's argument:

- a) the recent attempt of adaptation of the American journal accreditation system
- b) the annexation of the universities to Chabeol corporation, and
- c) the expansion of English mediated courses in college curricula.

The theoretical framework of this paper is the criticism of neocolonialism, neoliberalism, and the critical theories. In the argument of this paper, the author rests on the concepts of academic sovereignty, autonomy, and independence from or resistance to the Western hegemony in culture, academia, and society. The cultural independence is still very significance issue in Korea, since the Western theoretical models and concepts in academia were uncritically adopted and applied to the construction of knowledge and practices for resolving social problems in Korean society.

1.1.2 Method of data gathering and analysis

This paper critically discusses the discourses and ideologies of Korean academia and society by analyzing newspapers, public surveys, and literature regarding the trends of higher education and academia. The data and examples of analysis in this paper are those publicized in press media, websites, and/or research papers in recent years. In the analysis and discussion, the author focuses on highlighting the influences of post colonialism, neoliberalism, and corporatism that expedites the competition and efficiency oriented college educational system. The critical ideas and perspectives of the author are inspired by many thoughtful thinkers and researchers in the area of postcolonial criticism.

2. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

2.1 Academic dependency on western academia

2.1.1 Adopting the American research accreditation system

Recently, the Korea Research Foundation (KRF), which is subsidized by the Ministry of Education (MoE), announced a plan to reform the academic journal accreditation system for domestic journals. Previously, Korean domestic journals

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were registered in and managed by the Korea Citation Index (henceforth, KCI) system, which has been administered by the KRF since 1998. The number of journals registered under the KCI system soared from 56 in 1998 to 2119 in 2013. Having succeeded in fostering the quantitative growth of registered journals, however, this explosive increase met with criticism and skepticism regarding quality control. With the increase in the number of journals, the quality of published papers cannot be guaranteed even by peer review. In fact, according to a recent survey (MoE, 2013), about 75% of researchers felt that the current system should be reformed: only 14% of the respondents believed that the current system is adequate. The respondents expressed worries that if the current system were terminated, unqualified journals would multiply, the quality of journals would decrease, or individual academic society abuses the judging power. Therefore, respondents expressed a desire for new accreditation systems based on those of foreign countries.

Under these circumstances, in 2011 MoE announced a formation plan that adopts U.S. journal accreditation systems, such as SCOPUS, SCI/SSCI, A&HCI, terminating the current system by 2014. This plan sparked reactions from scholars and researchers who asked whether the termination of the current system is the best solution for quality control of domestic journals. Nonetheless, the switch from the current domestic journal accreditation system to the American journal accreditation system begs the question of whether it is necessary to adopt a foreign system. If so, why should the system in Korea be based on the American journal accreditation systems?

This is a significant question that must be asked and answered before Korean academia begins to take action in shaping its future. We argue that it is a matter of academic autonomy and independence for Korea to have its own management and accreditation system. Such academic autonomy is especially important in the social sciences and humanities, since the themes and issues are political and cultural, rather than positivistic and scientific (Garreau, 1988).

The logic of such arguments for academic independence, free from American or Eurocentric systems, is well addressed by the idea of academic imperialism, which originated from the notion of cultural imperialism (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1999). As cultural imperialism leads people to universally and unconsciously accept particular beliefs, conventions, or systems that are linked to certain, mostly dominant cultural heritages, academic imperialism accustoms scholars or academia in subordinate regions to be susceptible to research themes, frameworks, or methodologies constructed by the dominant academic society. Bourdieu & Wacquant (1999) emphasized that the doctrines of dominant academic conventions perpetually remain undiscussed by peers, uncritically accepted by junior scholars, and spread through

allegedly neutral channels of publication. The dominant academic standard is American or Eurocentric (Alvares, 2011; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1999; Ghajar & Mirhosseini, 2011; Raju, 2012).

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The dominance of the Westernized system of knowledge building is most problematic in the social sciences and humanities, although there is also some criticism in the areas of natural science and engineering. Aside from the natural sciences, which are overwhelmed by the ideology of scientism (Alvares, 1992), the social sciences and humanities are the foundation of knowledge about humanity, values/thoughts, and cultures, which cannot be reduced and evaluated by the logic of scientism, positivism, or objectivism. Wallerstein (1996) argued that such Eurocentrism or Americanization in the social sciences is a form of epistemic colonialism, which Bourdieu & Wacquant (1999) called “one of the most striking proofs of the symbolic dominion and influence exercised by the USA over every kind of scholarly and, especially, semischolarly production”(pp. 4546).

The transition of the KCI system to the American system involves many hidden risks to the sustainment or development of indigenous knowledge building in Korean society. First, the knowledge that belongs to indigenous countries, cultures, or people is slowly being replaced by theory based on the Western worldview (Hereniko, 2000). In fact, Korean scholars are already accustomed to relying on theories that originated in the American knowledge building system. As Meleisea (1987) pointed out, research following such theories remains an intellectual enterprise with little bearing on the realities of indigenous lives. Under such circumstances, the cultural, economic or political peculiarities of Korean society will not be accounted for. Therefore, since all research is politically engaged (Katz, 1978), scholars must examine their theoretical frameworks, assumptions, or epistemic dispositions.

Second, the medium of research used for literature review, web searches, paper writing, and the publication process is primarily practiced in English. English is considered the lingua franca of scientific research and publication. Roughly 80% of journals indexed in Scopus are published in English (Kirchik, Gingras, & Larivière, 2012; Tardy, 2004). This is an academic version of linguistic imperialism via the domination of English (Phillipson, 1992). In Korea, no matter what academic field they are in, scholars are encouraged by their institutions to publish their research findings in major journals listed in, for example, SCOPUS. However, publication in such international journals is limited to researchers who can write in English. U.S. journals do not allow multiple language abstracts, but require only English, which is not the case for most European journals.

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Third, traditional customs and conventions in academia are another problem associated with colonial mindsets. It is believed that Western endorsement is the best test of scientific truth and expertise (*Raju, 2012*). Raju argues that most theories, arguments, and discussions are not treated as credible until they have been endorsed or published in 'prestigious' journals, which is an undisputable sign of academic imperialism. Passi (2004) argued that the idea of 'international' in the field of geography has been dominated by hegemonic discourses in AngloAmerican geography journals, and emphasized that the changing conditions of knowledge production in the field of geography are characterized by three keywords: internationalization, competition, and market like operations. Passi's results imply that domination in academic research may lead to the homogenization of social science publication practices, which are currently heterogeneous and context dependent. This trend pushes social science researchers to publish their articles in popular international journals, mostly those listed in SSCI databases. Under such circumstances, only journals on the ISI list are considered both 'international' and 'qualified.'

Fourth, the neoliberal ideologies of competition, globalization, and the capitalistic agenda applied to the knowledge economy make academic endeavor productive, efficient, and measurable. The problems associated with academia that produces, distributes, and consumes knowledge and information and is driven by capitalistic market ideology is well addressed by the notion of cognitive capitalism (Peters & Bulut, 2011). Cognitive capitalism is, in brief, a form of capitalism based on the 'general intellect'; in the postindustrial economy, it is the production and consumption of knowledge and symbolic goods, rather than 'real goods,' that really matter. In a society dominated by cognitive capitalism, all human intellectual effort is considered and treated as capital. Such societies urge people implicitly to pledge the universalized values and objectives of the market. The dominance of market ideology also influences academia, in which researchers and scholars of social science delve into the pursuit of productivity and profits, rather than the issues of equity or justice by inciting the public to unquestioningly accept the ideals of growth, development and globalization.

Therefore, the uncritical acceptance of the American journal accreditation system, especially in the social sciences and humanities, may expedite the atmosphere of academic colonialism in Korea. As Mlambo (2006) found in the cases of African countries, it is a real problem in Korean academia

¹The theory of cognitive capitalism has its origins in French and Italian thinkers, particularly Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, the work of Michel Foucault on biopolitics, Michael Hardt's and Antonio Negri's trilogy *Empire*, *Multitude*, and *Commonwealth*, as well as the Italian 'Autonomist' Marxist movement.

that there is no resistance to the imperialism of knowledge that conjugates intellectual domination by Western knowledge.

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2.2 B. Ph.D. employment rates

The dependency of Korean academia on U.S. and European academic circles is a symptom of academic colonialism (Lee, 2000; Paik, 2000). This phenomenon is reflected in differences in employment rates between scholars with doctoral degrees from domestic and international institutions. Among newly employed faculty in the fields of humanities and social sciences in Korea, especially at top ranked universities, about 80% earned doctoral degrees from foreign countries, with 70% of the total from the U.S. Furthermore, many departments consist only of professors with international degrees. According to a survey examining employment rates for university positions (MoE & KEDI, 2010), the ratio of employment for scholars with doctoral degrees earned overseas compared to those with domestic degrees increased after 2000, as the Figure 1 highlights:

This tendency is even clearer when Korea is compared to neighboring countries. For instance, the ratio of professors possessing foreign doctoral degrees at Seoul National University(50.4%; 83% in the case of natural sciences) is 10 times higher than at Tokyo University(5.2%)(Jung, 2010).

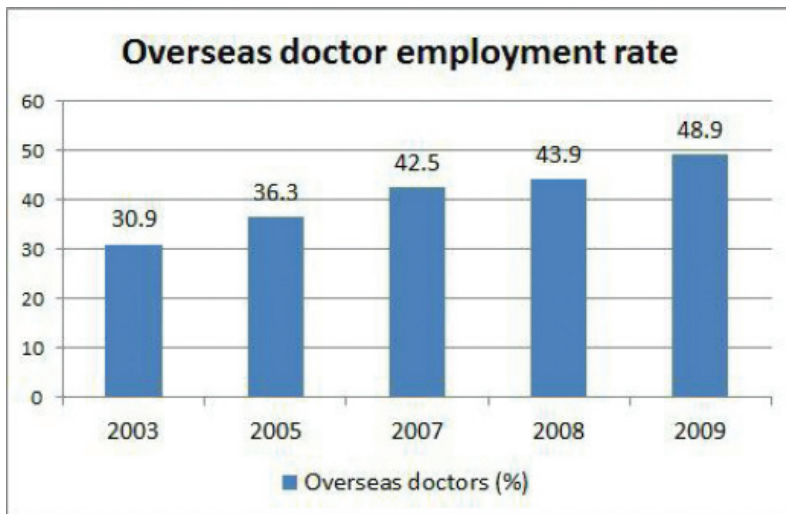


Figure 1: The increase of scholars with doctoral degrees earned overseas (MoE & KEDI, 2010).

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It is clear why universities prefer to hire scholars who were educated overseas. Korean institutions place greater trust in the advanced education and research systems of foreign institutions, and expect these scholars to exhibit international experience and global networking in R&D. They can also sell the image of being a global university to the so-called 'education market.'

Korean universities do not trust their own academic and research systems. Many previous studies have pointed out the dilemma in which Korean universities are proud to become competitive globally, but are still reluctant to hire domestic scholars, even those who graduated from their own universities. This implies that Korean universities do not trust their own academic systems and scholarly competence (University News Network, 2010). In fact, newly hired professors find sources of academic dependency to include: a) 'lack of long term research supporting policy' (55.3%), b) 'political/economic dependency of the whole society' (19.1%), and c) 'uncritical acceptance of foreign theories and methods' (17.0%).

Korean universities rely on the reputation and quality of journal accreditation systems abroad, especially for the social sciences and humanities. For instance, publication numbers in SSCI/A&HCI journals is one of the most influential factors for the evaluation of research potential and academic achievement of new faculty. This is also the reason why universities prefer faculty who were educated overseas, because such scholars are expected to be more likely to publish in SSCI/A&HCI journals.

Korean universities want to sell their images as 'global leaders,' exhibiting 'international competitiveness,' and 'consumer friendly institutes' in the education market, which are popular at corporatized universities that are administered by market principles (Park, 2007). This phenomenon is closely related to the goals of universities that encourage international competitiveness by expanding and reinforcing EMC. By employing overseas scholars who are more capable of conducting EMC, universities can enhance their images as 'globally distinguished' colleges, attract more talented students, and raise their university rankings according to 'the internationalization' index. However, it is negligent on the part of universities because, as Fallis (2007) emphasized, higher education has a responsibility to serve not just as a source of economic growth, but as society's critic and conscience.

2.3 Corporatization of higher education

According to the perspective of critical theory, neoliberal globalization is an extension of colonization, whose goal is to dominate and exploit underdeveloped countries for profit (Slaughter, 2009). Critical theory views globalization as an exercise of developed countries' colonial will by extending

power and domination to impose hegemonic value systems on other countries and cultures. Among many strategies and approaches used to actualize the domination of one value system over another, the corporatization of academia is one of the most effective (Lieberwitz, 2002). In this section, we introduce the recent tendency of annexation of Korean universities to Chabeol, and how it expedites competition oriented higher education and academic dependency on the market ideology of globalization.

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2.4 Annexation of Korean universities to Chabeol

Among many vivid examples of trends toward academic corporatism in South Korea, the merging of universities into Chabeol government is a representative case. The *Chabeols*, big business conglomerates, are beginning to take charge of running prestigious Korean universities, such as *Jung Ang* University (now owned by Doosan Corp.) or *Sungkyunkwan* University (now owned by Samsung). The government of universities can benefit from Chabeol: to improve corporate images, to obtain talented graduates, and to benefit from tax exemptions.

On the university side, such relationships are considered to be good deals, because Chabeols are good sources of money. These relationships enable institutions to resolve deficits that have accumulated for years, to extend sources of scholarship, and to ensure more job opportunities for students. For instance, The University of *Ulsan*, which was founded by Hyundai Corporation in 1969, has exhibited remarkable achievement in university rankings (e.g., ranked first in educational support, faculty numbers, employment rates, etc.), due to enormous investments in campus infrastructure including research facilities, building renewals, sources of scholarship, and hightech school management systems (Kim, 2013). On the surface, coalitions between universities and corporations appear to be good means of paving a new way for the future of tertiary education.

On the other hand, such unions between universities and corporations involve many latent problems. Universities become places for vocational training and securing human capital, and, thus, the purposes of universities become confused. Until recently, universities were considered places for academic communities pursuing leadership, scholarship, and moral values as well as vocational training. However, due to the rapid corporatization of Korean academia, the virtues that currently define the goals and directions of university education are utilitarianism, efficiency, and profits. Such conflicting expectations have yielded a wave of criticism regarding the risks of higher education (Hersh & Merrow, 2005; Kronman, 2007).

In fact, the merits of corporatized universities are also dubious from the students' perspective. In corporatized universities, the influx of live assets of

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corporations for subsidizing university costs is not greater than the average corporate subsidies granted to other private universities. Over the last five years, only 2 out of 7 corporatized universities had tuition increases that were lower than the average rate (22.2%) (KHERI, 2011). This indicates that at corporatized universities claiming to offer competitive and high-quality education, students still have to pay proportionate expenses for their education.

2.5 Competition oriented higher education and the allegiance to university rankings

Following the conventions of academic corporatism in the U.S., in Korea some media groups began to survey the academic performances of universities and publish rankings in their own journals. For example, the Joongang University Ranking System (JURS), which was launched in 1996 by, (owned by Samsung), is now the most popular university ranking system in Korea. Benchmarking according to the JURS, other media groups have considered this business sector to be a 'blue ocean' and launched similar university-ranking systems. As a result, three more major media groups have opened and released university ranking systems since the JURS (KBS, 2013).

Confronted with such normreferenced evaluation, universities set their goals to the indexes of evaluation criteria and deviate from the genuine purposes of higher education. For instance, the grading indices of the JURS include educational environments (student/faculty ratio, scholarship, accommodation, library resources: 95 points), competence of faculty (publication, research grants: 115 points), the internationalization index (international faculty/students, international exchange programs, Englishmediated courses: 70 points), and educational effectiveness(social reputation, student supplement, graduate employment: 70 points)(Jungang Ilbo, 2010). Based on these indexes, universities consider raising their internationalization points to be the best way to enhance their rankings, and therefore invite international faculty and students or force newly employed faculty to hold Englishmediated lectures as part of their duties.

In fact, the recent efforts of universities to change are not motivated by longterm goals for educational or research achievement, but are based on university rankings that duplicate competition oriented and neoliberal ideology goals (Brophy, 2012).This neoliberal restructuring of university systems has induced the corporatization and marketization of higher education in Korea. Under the banner of 'university reformation for global competition,' many leading universities in Korea are moving away from previous practices: for example, Korean universities) adopt corporate systems in their administrations,

ii) raise tuitions in the name of balancing the budget, iii) close courses or departments that are determined to be less competitive or less practical, iv) expand class sizes for efficiency, v) attract investment for campus businesses from big corporate franchises, and iv) enact antistrike legislation against workers' unions on campus.

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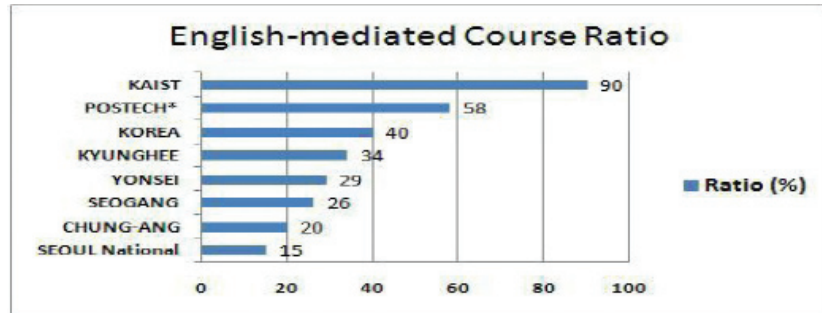
Consequently, due to the mismatch between the purposes of university education and the goals of corporations, corporate owned universities may face a series of dilemmas in many aspects of operation. Recent changes in faculty achievement/promotion assessment systems are an example. Most universities begin to assess the achievements of faculty based on norm referenced evaluation systems, ranking all faculty according to four levels, S, A, B, and C, to be paid differently by piece rates without taking into consideration the idiosyncrasies of career histories or subject areas. Such competition oriented or incentive based achievement evaluation does not accord with the purpose of academia. Under such circumstances, to increase in rank, professors or researchers must compete under a short term scheme, rather than participating in interdisciplinary or peer collaboration with a longterm plan.

In short, when education and research have been commoditized as never before, universities need to identity what their true purposes are and to take strong measures to avoid erosion by the ideologies of capitalism and corporatism(Sumner, 2008).

2.6 Overemphasis on English mediated lectures

2.6.1 Expansion of English mediated courses

Globalization cannot be achieved without the existence of English as *lingua franca*. English is critical in global intellectual commerce, such as in research, academic conferences, media, and publications, is unchallenged as an international language, and is used ubiquitously in global business, diplomacy, and cultural exchanges. This domination of English over thousands of other languages is referred to as language imperialism (Phillipson, 1992). Responding to these trends, the higher education system in Korea has prioritized English, not only over other foreign languages, but also over the Korean language, and promoted English mediated courses and lectures. In fact, English mediated classes are a major trend, especially in leading universities in Korea. Since 2007, the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST), which is the top technology university in Korea, has made it a school policy to hold all freshmen courses as English mediated classes. English mediated classes made up 10% of the liberal arts courses at Seoul National University in 2006. Korea University plans to increase the number of English mediated classes to 60% of all courses provided (Yoon, 2007).



* For major courses offered to undergraduate juniors and seniors

Figure 2: English mediated course ratios of major Korean universities (Han, Kim, Maeng, & Kim, 2011).

This trend has accelerated recently. By 2010, KAIST had expanded English to 70% of all undergraduate courses, and 100% of all graduate courses. The so-called ‘SKY’ Seoul National, Korea, and Yonsei universities, which are recognized as the top prestigious universities in Korea, also offer mostly English language courses. The average ratio of English-mediated courses for the other major universities in Seoul metropolitan area was 20.4% in 2011 (Han, Kim, Maeng, & Kim, 2011). Figure 2 depicts the current ratios of English-mediated courses out of total courses at top Korean universities.

There are a number of rationales offered by universities that promote English-mediated courses (EMCs): first, English (competence) is not a choice but a requirement; second, college students in the global age are expected to acquire international leadership with communicative competence; and third, universities must be internationalized so that they become top-ranked among global competition. In brief, the logic of the universities’ argument is quite simple: ‘We need to open English-mediated courses because English competence is the most effective solution for winning the global competition.’

However, there are serious objections to English-mediated classes in the press, SNS, and academic circles, and it has become a social issue. According to a non-campus survey, about 47% of students at X University responded that they were not satisfied with English-mediated classes (13% ‘Very dissatisfied’ and 34% ‘Dissatisfied’). Most of their replies centered on three points: i) ‘Lack of English proficiency of the lecturers,’ ii) ‘Experienced hardship in understanding the lessons’, and iii) ‘Though intelligible, they hardly feel English-mediated lessons are necessary’ (Yonsei Chronicles, 2011). Many scholars in Korea argue that there is no theoretical or practical evidence that

English mediated classes improve students' English competence and stress that, even if there is improvement, the costs in terms of other educational benefits are not worth it (Kim, 2007; Kim, 2008).

According to a forum organized by the National Language Association and Chosun Ilbo in 2011, most scholars and specialists in the field of language education stated that although they think EMCs are 'helpful,' the 'necessity' of EMCs in colleges has not been proven (Chon, 2011). Nonetheless, it remains controversial whether EMCs should be promoted in Korean colleges, which is discussed in the following section.

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2.7 The controversies over English mediated courses

Korea. According to postings on and responses to an internet bulletin board (Hibrain, 2013), where researchers and professors share opinions on higher education related issues and job information, EMC is the topic of a hot debate regarding whether it should be required or elective in college curricula. There are also some counterarguments against criticisms of EMCs. The major rationales for supporting EMCs are: i) there are international students in every university, which is a global challenge for which universities need to be prepared, ii) EMC is crucial for students to be internationally competitive, especially elite students in leading universities, iii) English competence is a global trend, and neighboring rival countries also promote EMC.

However, many lecturers criticize the absurdity of English-mediated classes based on several points: i) 100% EMC is not possible nor effective from either the students' and lecturer's perspectives; ii) Universities cannot demand natively like English competence for professionals in subject knowledge; iii) EMC represents negligence of duties of universities that should deliver quality education; iv) and EMC represents the aftermath of colonial dependency and interferes with academic autonomy.

Pro and anti-EMC arguments are in sharp conflict as Figure 3 highlights:

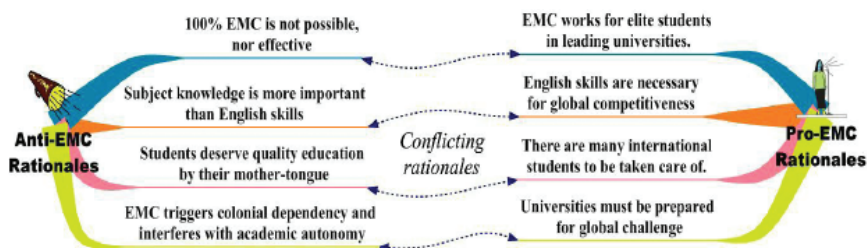


Figure 3: Rationales pro and anti-EMC.

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In brief, the rationales of antiEMC and proEMC sides are notably contradictory: the proEMC position emphasizes the roles of elite education, educational competitiveness, and preparation for globalization and market economy, while the antiEMC position focuses on subject knowledge, quality education in the indigenous language, and academic autonomy. Therefore, it is a matter of choice in terms of how Koreans perceive the aims of higher education and in which direction we hope to set the goals of college curricula.

Then, why is the issue of EMC so controversial in Korean universities? We identify three discrepancies: i) the differences of expectations between students and lecturers, ii) the gaps in English proficiency among students, and iii) the dissonance between the means and the end.

First, there is a clear difference in how the students and lecturers recognize the goals of English mediated courses. The primary goal of students for taking EMC is to enhance their English skills, while that of lecturers is to contribute to the reputations of their universities (Han, etc. 2011). Most students want to learn subject knowledge rather than English skills. Furthermore, EMCs conducted by nonproficient speakers of English are not helpful. This problem is similar in courses that are conducted by native speakers of English, because normally native speakers teaching at Korean universities are less knowledgeable than Korean scholars. This conflict represents a dilemma between form (language or English skills) and function (knowledge or intellectual skills). To make things worse, both students and lecturers are well aware of the fact that EMCs exist primarily to satisfy university policy. EMCs are administered under obligations carrying various incentives or penalties.² Under these circumstances, the idea that EMC will enhance the English skills of students and strengthen global competitiveness is a naïve and unfounded hope.

Second, the gap of English proficiency among students is another problem. The range of English proficiency is wide in Korea, as in many other postcolonial countries, because English skills as a *lingua franca* are treated as cultural capital (Canagarajah, 2013). English as a dominant foreign language is not just a means of communication or the medium for distributing knowledge, but works as an exclusive social skill in a society in which English is not the mother tongue. English enjoys such domination or power over other languages and people who can or cannot speak it because cultural English in society is also found in Korean universities.

²For instance, in terms of incentives for students, EMC credits offer advantages regarding oncampus scholarship opportunities and graduation requirements. Newly appointed lecturers are obligated to offer EMC every semester or year for promotions, and receive some bonuses for offering EMCs.

In fact, there are many voices of resistance against English-mediated courses from students. Many students have complained that their efforts and achievements in English-mediated courses are judged, not according to lesson comprehension, but mostly in terms of English proficiency. In EMC, students having less proficiency in English will be a disadvantage, and these students will be marginalized by those who are proficient. In fact, at universities where EMC flourishes, there are many cases in which students who are proficient in English have exclusive chances to communicate with professors and obtain better grades, while the other students, also paying high tuition, are not heard. It is ironic that universities that encourage competence are actually reducing the potential of students with diverse backgrounds in language skills by means of enforcing English-mediated lectures.

Third, the discrepancy between the means and the end is caused by confusion regarding the basis of academic excellence or competitiveness. It is a general misunderstanding that English skills or proficiency guarantee or accelerate the competitiveness of Korean academia or society. English skills may help students or researchers 'internationalize' their academic/scholastic achievement, but these skills are not a core source of ideas, knowledge, creativeness, or technology (Pennycook, 1996).

According to a survey, students and lecturers commonly responded that the major factors hindering universities from conducting EMCs are lecturers' and students' lack of English skills (Han, Kim, Maeng, & Kim, 2011). Even though the most important aim of higher education is the study of professional knowledge, rather than practicing English skills, EMC might mislead students into inappropriate directions by mistaking the means (i.e., English skill) for the end (i.e., professional knowledge). As English skills are not the basis of academic achievement, the development of a nation, or success in a competition, what advantages do students and lecturers receive from EMCs if they are not confident in English? In short, even though many leading universities consider English-mediated courses a means to an end for the goal of global competitiveness, in this paper we argue that it is incorrect to consider EMCs to be the best solution for these goals.

CONCLUSION: VICIOUS CIRCLE OF ACADEMIC DEPENDENCY

The dependency of academia in non-European countries on European and U.S. research systems has serious implications for academic autonomy (Kwek, 2003). This academic subordination to Western academia works in terms of indoctrination to Western rules and standards, from knowledge building to education and research, and has seldom been seriously challenged (Ghajar

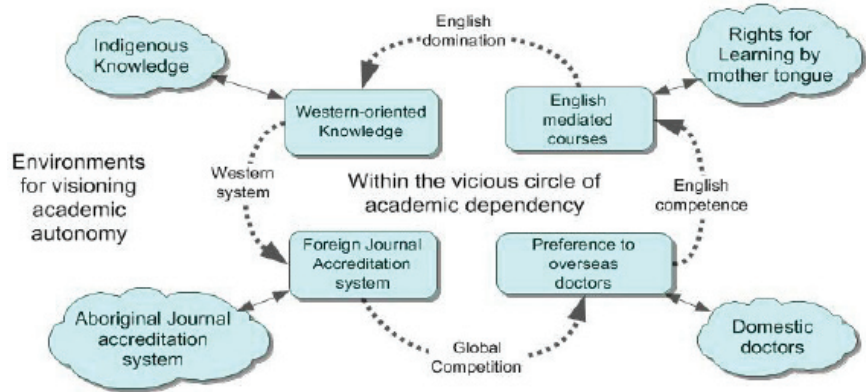


Figure 4: Conceptual map of the vicious circle of academic dependency.

& Mirhosseini, 2011).³ The preference of Korean colleges for scholars with overseas doctoral degrees can be explained by the vicious circle of academic dependency, as depicted in Figure 4:

In Figure 2, four factors—EMCs, Western-oriented knowledge, the foreign journal accreditation system, and the preference for scholars with overseas doctoral degrees constitute the vicious circle of academic dependency of Korean academia. Students and professors within the circle may survive or thrive in academia, while those outside of the circle remain devalued, marginalized, and silenced. The academic autonomy of Korean universities will be facilitated by encouraging environments that appreciate indigenous knowledge, secure rights for learning in the mother tongue, recognize the value of domestic doctoral degrees, and develop aboriginal journal accreditation systems. In short, recent directions of changes in Korean universities are closely related to trends toward academic corporatism, marketization of education, and dependence on the Western educational research system.

How can we revive higher education in Korea as a more academic, independent, and collaborative endeavor, rather than being corporatized, colonial, and competitive? Alvares (2011) suggests some strategic attitudes to challenge such dependency and the corporatization of academia. First, a non Eurocentric theoretical and conceptual framework needs to be established, especially in the social sciences and humanities. It is necessary to discuss and develop culturerooted and cultureacceptable assumptions for research and methodology

³Indoctrination through the colonial educational system plays a key role in cultural imperialism. The aim of colonial education was to create a Westerneducated elite class who would be loyal to the Westernized knowledge building system. This loyalty to Western conventions of scientific research is ensured by academic elites who studied in Western countries and the use of journal accreditation systems dominated by Western scholarly societies.

by critically reconnecting with indigenous intellectual traditions (Churchill, 2002). Second, the reorganization of academic circles, conferences, or councils must occur among scholars, especially those who are not from Europeans or American academic or cultural institutions (Jaya, 2001). These groups are tasked with developing new or counterparadigms challenging the Western academic tradition, and gradually replacing them with themes, premises, and understandings of indigenous traditions. Third, common ideas about academic citations should be reconsidered: scholars and students should be encouraged to write papers without solely relying on Western sources or references, especially in the social sciences and humanities. As Alvares (2011) notes, “the best literature in the world never carries citations because the truth does not need crutches. If you cannot make out a case based on your own experience and knowledge, no amount of quoting will help(p. 79).” Since scientism is not a cure-all, the notion of ‘scientific research’ should be reconsidered.

Fourth, prevalent and influential EuroAmerican positivist methodologies must be critically reviewed, since scientific positivism is only one branch of many diverse scholastic approaches (Leysens, 2008). It is more important to sustain the university as a creative and critical center of thinking, research, and education. This resistance against the domination of Western academic traditions will bring a more open atmosphere into Korean academia to serve the real purposes of higher education and make Korean academia more self-supporting and autonomous.

Fifth, for the development of knowledge and academia in individual countries, the maintenance of indigenous languages is important and indispensable. Since language is not only a medium of communication, but also constitutes the tools of thought, culture, and motivation of solidarity, the opportunities for students to learn, think, and employ native languages should be guaranteed.

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