

Cultural Translation: Curricular Discourse with/in Internationalization of Curriculum Studies¹

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In recent decades, curriculum studies has been reconceptualized as a *complicated sphere* in which texts, knowledge, and subjectivity are situated with/in historical, political, cultural, and auto/biographical contexts (Miller, 2005a; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995). The field also has been reconstituted internationally due to economic, sociopolitical, and educational exchanges among shifting versions of nation-states (Asher, 2010; Gough, 2003, 2004; Pinar, 2003a). Pinar (2003a), most notably, has conceptualized internationalization as multiple dialogues among nation-states for a better understanding of curriculum and its exchanges. A cross-cultural, cross-national conversation has been enriched within several academic organizations, including the International Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies (IAACS) and its regional associations (e.g., the American Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies: AAACS).

By participating in IAACS and AAACS, among others, I have joined these complicated conversations in inquiries into what knowledge is, who decides most valuable knowledge, and the ways in which knowledge is defined in its specific inter/national contexts. Yet, I sometimes notice that multiple dialogues among nation-states are grounded in the explanation of curriculum at a nation-state level without a deeper interrogation into the complex sociopolitical, historical, and economic interactions among nation-states. Dialogues happen as if a universalized version of curriculum exists in a nation-state (e.g., *the* “Korean” curriculum or *the* “U.S.” curriculum). When I encounter any monolithic understanding of one nation’s culture, curriculum, and educational practice, I cannot stop asking the question, what possibilities are curriculum theorists missing when they do not pay attention to the shifting meanings and cultural clashes of curriculum? In what ways can a curriculum theorist investigate curricular experience that the meanings of knowledge, curriculum, and nationality are complicated with/in specific historical, political, and cultural exchanges between and among nation-states?

The purpose of this inquiry is to complicate the meanings of internationalization of curriculum studies when conversations among nation-states are universalized through simplistic explanation of one nation-state’s culture, curriculum, and education. Drawing from the account of *cultural translation*, I review my past participation in IAACS and imagine different dialogues in the field by investigating shifting interactions among



nation-states. By definition, I conceptualize cultural translation as working at the sociocultural limits of universal concepts to create openness, fluidity, and inclusion that previously were excluded from the dominant discourses (Bhabha, 1994; Butler, 2000, 2002, 2004). Most notably, I pay attention to new sociopolitical, economic, and cultural interactions between South Korea and other nation-states. For this inquiry, cultural translation has potential to be a particular curriculum discourse by opening up different ways of thinking about culture, human beings, and knowledge.

As such, this paper examines theoretical and practical possibilities when cultural translation is incorporated into the inquiries of curriculum and its internationalization. This article presents this thesis with two distinctive parts. The first part of this article is dedicated to the analysis of the notions of cultural translation, where theories of Walter Benjamin, Homi Bhabha, and Judith Butler are the main references. The second part of this article is committed to the analysis of the internationalization of curriculum studies drawing from the theories of cultural translation. I utilize my own narratives as a participant for IAACS. By the critical examination of recent sociopolitical, economic transformation of South Korea for the past decades, I review the ways in which my understanding of “Korean” curriculum studies had been examined with the use of East/West binary (e.g., an Eastern curriculum theorist speaks to the Western audience). At the end, I discuss the importance of creating new vocabulary to understand the complicated aspects of Korean society and curriculum in order to foster openness, fluidity, and mobility in understandings of curriculum studies and its internationalization (Butler, 2000, 2002).

Cultural Translation as Curricular Discourse

Traditionally, good translation means the extent to which a translator is faithful to the reproduction of the same words in a different language and, consequently, fulfills fidelity to the words. In this chapter, I examine three theorists of Walter Benjamin, Homi Bhabha, and Judith Butler, who have complicated this conventional definition of translation toward cross-cultural, political engagement. In order to provide a theoretical background on translation, I begin this part from the examination of Walter Benjamin’s (1923/2000) seminal work “The Task of the Translator.” I highlight Benjamin’s contribution to translation theory that challenges translators’ fidelity and accuracy. I also examine the notions of cultural translation both from cross-linguistic and cross-cultural perspectives with the use of Homi Bhabha’s (1994) notion of transnational as translational. I then discuss Judith Butler’s (2000, 2002, 2009) theorization of cultural translation to show another perspective on culture, difference, and social transformation. While accepting yet challenging Benjamin’s and Bhabha’s ideas, Butler theorizes a concept of cultural translation by emphasizing political engagement for examining the ways in which one’s life is recognized as valuable and grievable. This examination of cultural translation provides a theoretical framework to review my previous participation in the internationalization of curriculum studies in the second part. I investigate how the notions of cultural translation could engage complicated conversations in curricular discourses.

Walter Benjamin: The impossible task of the translator



While translation used to mean to transfer one specific and accurate meaning to another language, Walter Benjamin posed important questions to challenge the assumptions of conventional approaches to translation. In his seminal work “The Task of the Translator,” Benjamin (1923/2000) asked, “What can fidelity really do for meaning?” (p. 19). Benjamin challenged fidelity of translation by saying that translated individual words can almost never fully reproduce the meaning of the original. He stated:

The imperfection of languages consists in their plurality, the supreme one is lacking: thinking is writing without accessories or even whispering, the immoral word still remains silent; the diversity of idioms on earth prevents everybody from uttering the words which otherwise, as one single stroke, would materialize as truth. (p. 20)

The above excerpt implies that language translation is untranslatable, not because of any inherent difficulty, but because of the plurality of languages and “looseness with which meaning attaches to [words]” (p. 21). According to Benjamin, translation is provisional because the foreignness of language remains out of human reach. Translation is always insoluble as the relationship between content and language is different in the original and in the translation (Benjamin, 1923/2000).

Benjamin’s (1923/2000) theory of translation has informed new perspectives about translation by challenging the conventional theory of translation that emphasizes changing one fixed original text to another. For Benjamin, no universal meaning exists in the original text, and, regardless, it is impossible to translate “the meaning” accurately into another language. Benjamin highlighted the foreignness of language and culture that remains out of human reach. The relationships between content and language are different in the original and translated texts. Given that, translation can never be total, universal, and final; instead, it is an instant, temporal, and provisional attempt (Benjamin, 1923/2000).

Homi Bhabha: Transnational as translational

Benjamin’s emphasis on the difficult and impossible task of translation from one fixed meaning to another has impacted many thinkers in their inquiries into culture, difference, and translation. Homi Bhabha (1994) examines the complexity of translation from linguistic elements to those of culture. He highlights the difficulties of translating one culture into another, similar to the impossible task of linguistic translation from one language to another. He postulated that as one text never can be translated “accurately” to another, neither could culture be translated with a monolithic meaning. Because of the complexity of culture, Bhabha also underscored the untranslatability of certain words or ideas as well as their resistance to being rendered in another language or idiom (Miller, 2010; Wang & Hoyt, 2007). According to Bhabha (1994), the “meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity” because of their “discursive conditions of enunciation” (p. 55). In other words, cultural meanings and symbols of culture are contextual depending on their sociopolitical, economic, and historical locations. Cultural difference, overall, moves beyond the idea of unique and monolithic to complex, temporal, and contextual. Most notably, Bhabha (1994) mentioned the importance of “foreign” elements in terms of challenging the universal meanings of a culture and



considering hybrid meanings of cultures. Citing Walter Benjamin's words in *Illuminations*, Bhabha stated:

I am engaged with the "foreign" element that reveals the interstitial; insists in the textile superfluity of folds and wrinkles; and becomes the "unstable element of linkage," the indeterminate temporality of the in-between, that has to be engaged in creating conditions through which "newness comes into the world." The foreign element "destroys the original's structures of reference and sense communication as well" not simply by negotiating it but by negotiating the disjunction in which successive cultural temporalities are "preserved in the work of history and at the same time cancelled" (pp. 325–326).

Concurring with Bhabha's elaboration on the impossible task of translating one static meaning to another due to the "foreign" element of culture, I posit that different words, rituals, and customs are culturally, historically, and politically inscribed with/in lived historical and social constructions and interpretations of memories. Bhabha's emphasis on discursively and sociopolitically constructed meanings and memories of culture push the boundaries of predefined, fixed, and universalized definitions of East/West, self/other, and colonizer/colonized. Rather, Bhabha invites readers to examine what sociocultural, political, and economic contexts construct meanings, interpretations, and memories of language, culture, and translation.

Furthermore, Bhabha (1994) illustrated the interwoven relationship between transnational and translational while explaining the multiple dimensions of culture. First of all, culture is "transnational" in that postcolonial discourses are founded upon specific histories of cultural displacements and exchanges. Bhabha showed examples of these cultural exchanges from history, including the Atlantic slave trade from the 16th to 19th centuries, the voyages to the American continents and Asia for Europe's civilizing missions, and the traffic of economic flow from the Third World to the First World.

Similarly, Bhabha (1994) explained that culture is translational from not only spatial histories of displacement and exchange but also current global media technologies. To understand culture within these sociopolitical contexts, one must raise new questions about in terms of "*how* culture signifies and *what* is signified by culture" (emphasis added) (Bhabha, 1994, p. 247). For example, inquiries into meanings and diverse cultural experiences of literature, music, ritual, and life/death circulate within specific contextual locations. Since social systems of value are signified by culture, new experiences and interpretations are translated into a "complex form of signification" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 247). As such, transnational dimensions of cultural transformation (e.g., migration, diaspora, dislocation, and relocation) generate the process of cultural translation as complicated modes of signification. The naturalized, unifying, and monolithic discourses of nation, people, and tradition are challenged through translation (Bhabha, 1994). Thus, culture, identities, and experiences are always in the process of interpretations, discursive practices, and constructions.

I underscore the close connection between transnational theories and translational discourses because "translation" consists of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural practices (Castells, 2010; Gough, 2004). Influenced by Bhabha's theory, my inquiries into common understandings of translation purport, in part, to explore the web of translation as not limited to linguistic translation but to cultural aspects with/in curricular discourses.



Through cultural translation, the notions of knowledge, curriculum, and internationalization, for example, move beyond transferring one “final” meaning to challenging the boundaries of universalized meanings.

Judith Butler: Cultural translation as political engagement

Previously, I explained Bhabha’s (1994) emphasis on the discursively constructed aspects of meanings, memories, and culture. The conflicting, challenging, and interstitial “spaces” are sociopolitically constructed via cultural translation. In this section, I examine Judith Butler’s (2000; 2002) theorization of cultural translation with her emphasis on the question of power and political engagement. She defines cultural translation, which fosters openness, fluidity, and mobility by working at the cultural and social limits of universal concepts. Butler’s (2002) notion of cultural translation is inquiry in order “to become more politically responsive” (p. 148) in the midst of not all people are recognized in their daily lives.

In her book *Frames of War*, Butler (2009) posed an important question of whose life is recognized as grievable and livable. Butler analyzed current sociopolitical actions of war situations (e.g., the Iraq War) and asked whose life is “recognized” as valuable and whose death is mourned. Butler (2009), most notably, challenged how norms operate to produce “certain subjects as ‘recognizable’ persons and to make others decidedly more difficult to recognize” (p. 6). This normative violence, which generates frames to dominate and enforce who and what will or will not count as intelligible, calls for a new version of cultural translation. Via cultural translation, we could challenge the social and cultural limits of the universal concepts of human beings. It is a task to dismantle the familiar notion of the human being—which has been normatively generated by heterosexual normalcy, for example—and to create new lexicons in order to perpetuate openness (Butler, 2000, 2002). When we encounter the sociopolitical limits of universalized concepts, Butler has invited us to ask new questions about what might be done to produce new vocabulary to challenge the existing set of norms by which life is recognized. By posing this question, Butler is not merely interested in generating tools to include more people within existing social norms, but also passionate about disrupting universal norms in order to allocate recognition differently and to *all*.

Cultural translation is not only considering multiplicity and impossibilities of translating culture with exact meanings. Rather, Butler focused on the malleability of language and its amenability to recycling in translation. Translation gives us the potential to “engage in the difficult yet necessary labor of constructing, across and within differences, a concept of what it means to be human that can encompass groups with very diverse ideas” (Miller, 2010, p. 15). New discourses about cultural translation originate from ideas that language does not have the exact meanings all the time. Instead, the language has become a scene of conflict, and translation begins at this scene while pushing the boundaries of any universal meaning.

In this sense, cultural translation is to work at the sociocultural limits of universal concepts to create openness, fluidity, and inclusion that previously were excluded from the dominant discourses (Bhabha, 1994; Butler, 2000, 2002, 2004). In other words, cultural translation is a process to radically rearticulate the meanings of universality itself. It is a procedure of an inclusion that was previously excluded from the dominant

discourses. The task of cultural translation is important for possible ethical transformation, and social change could begin with/in this understanding of a set of social norms about what is familiar and what is already known (Butler, 2002). A task of cultural translation enables the future to remain open and unpredictable because “the meaning” intended is no more determinative of a “final” reading. Cultural translation, after all, constitutes a loss and disorientation, and this sense of loss and unfamiliarity presents a chance to come into being anew (Butler, 1997).

Butler theorized cultural translation with the aim of a reconfigured and a more fluid and inclusive form of translation. Butler (2000) highlighted that a translation accepts foreign vocabulary into its lexicon in order to challenge the dominant discourse and its hegemony. For example, when dominant discourses limit the notion of livable and recognizable human beings within heterosexual normalcy, we attempt to generate new vocabulary to dismantle this hegemony. In other words, we can rethink “semantic operations and the forms of life that they indicate” (Butler, 2000, p. 168) via cultural translation and thus create own definitions in flux.

As such, Butler (2002) explicates language’s flexibility that allows users to construct meanings across differences. This difficult but indispensable labor originates from discursively constructed meanings of culture, self/other, and sameness/difference (Miller, 2010). Drawing from Butler (2000, 2002), I conceptualized cultural translation as political engagement to challenge fundamental assumptions of what we already know, what we firmly believe, and why things happen in a specific direction. With setting this understanding of cultural translation as a framework, I review my previous participation in the internationalization of curriculum studies. Situating my participation of curriculum studies within a necessary analysis, I utilize my introduction of what “Korean” curriculum studies is and of how to make Koreans’ voices heard. This explication is a means to rethink some dominant discourses when the internationalization movement aims conversations among nation-states. My self-reflexive thoughts after attending the international conferences provide possible challenges I encounter when static versions of dialogues happen among nation-states. Through the lens of cultural translation, I attempt to rethink my previous understanding of joining conversations.

Participating IAACS as “Korean”

In this section, I explore the possibilities that cultural translation could provide to rethink predetermined aspects of conversations or translations about different notions of culture, history, and curriculum. With a use of self-reflexive autobiographical inquiry, I investigate discursively, sociopolitically, and historically constructed identities, realities, and experiences (Moon, 2012b). Most notably, I juxtapose two different approaches to internationalization of curriculum studies. In the first part, I narrate my experiences to explicate Korea’s curriculum studies that are grounded in its understanding of the United States and its impact on its own development and establishment of curriculum creation and studies in South Korea. The second part of this section deals with my critique and reflexive thoughts about the limits of universal meanings have, as well as the need for new vocabulary to challenge social norms. These existing social norms establish whose life is recognized and whose life is not, within a context of what curriculum studies offers in terms of the examination of “valuable” knowledge. I interrogate the ways in which to



challenge dominant discourses in the inquiries into internationalization of curriculum studies, especially when I focus on South Korea's participation in a global society since 20th century. Overall, I attempt to theorize the internationalization of curriculum studies drawing from my own narratives as a participant of IAACS conference.

Dominant Korean curriculum studies in the internationalization movement

In May 2006, I was looking at a conference program for the Second International Association for the Advancement of Curriculum Studies (IAACS) during my flight from JFK Airport in New York to Tampere Airport in Finland. My eyes were focused on the word *internationalization*. When I looked at this word, I automatically connected it with *Americanization* by interpreting the United States as a cultural, political, and academic colonizer of South Korea due to historical, cultural, economic, and political interconnections between these two countries.

A modest and brief modern Korean history and education. The Korean peninsula, which is located between China and Japan, was politically engaged with the United States after the atomic bombings of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, Japan, in 1945. After Japan unconditionally surrendered to the United States, Korea became officially independent from Japanese imperialism. Yet, Korea was not fully independent due to the trusteeship according to the Potsdam Declaration: The southern territory of Korea was under the U.S. military government and the northern territory was controlled by the Soviet Union. The U.S. Army Military Government was established for three years (1945-1948) in the southern part of Korea, which is the birth of South Korea.

During the U.S. Military government, the modernization of Korean education was highly influenced by the U.S. education. The Korean-American Foundation organized the American Educational Mission to Korea (AEMK) (Brazinsky, 2007; Lee, 2003). This organization was contributed to the development of Korean educational system by consulting the Korean Department of Education. For example, AEMK established a 6-year of elementary school, 3-year of middle school, 3-year of high school, 4-year of college education system (6-3-3-4). It introduced English language classes in secondary schools and adopted Deweyan progressivism, including *learning by doing* curriculum. AEMK also introduced conceptions of democratic education. Paradoxically, the Korean citizens were not familiar with the ideas of democracy in that Korea was a monarchical system before Japanese colonization (Lee, 2003).

The Republic of Korea was founded on July 17, 1948. Unfortunately, the Korean War began only two years after this new democratic government was established and was temporarily stopped by the armistice agreement in 1953. In 1955, AEMK published the *Curriculum Handbook for the School of Korea*. The United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency (UNKRA) and the American-Korean Foundation assisted in publishing this handbook. The Korean government decided what, how much, and when to teach based on this handbook. U.S.-centered notions of curriculum explicitly and implicitly influenced the development of Korea's modern curriculum and education.

The United States' influence on Korean education continued as time passed. Bloom's *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* was translated into Korean in 1966 and



influenced a revision of the national curriculum grounded in three major domains of educational activities: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. Bruner's theories of the structures of the disciplines and the spiral curriculum were highly influential in reorganizing the Third Korean National Curriculum Reform in 1973 (Lee, 2003). Most notably Bruner's model of spiral curriculum dominated—that is, presenting a discipline's structure to students in order to enhance their understandings of how concepts evolve and correspond within a discipline. Korean national math and science curriculum exhibited particular knowledge structures and concepts repeatedly in elementary schools to high schools (Kim, 2005a). Bruner's theory shifted previous experience-based curriculum models, which had lasted almost a decade since 1962, to discipline-based models (Kim, 2009).

Educational discourses circulating in the United States were transferred to Korean educators and researchers: discipline-centered curriculum, self-regulated curriculum, master learning, spiral curriculum, hidden curriculum and critical theory, multiple intelligences and curriculum, and reconceptualization of curriculum studies, to list a handful. The more the United States was actively involved in Korean politics, economy, and culture, the more the United States was involved in Korea's educational policy, theory, and practices (Kim, 2010).

U.S. influences in Korea's curriculum studies. On the plane from New York to Finland in May 2006, I could not hide my skepticism about internationalization. Because of Koreans' collective memories of how the United States has influenced South Korea's education, politics, economics, and culture, I worried that this movement might generate another “neocolonial” agenda in worldwide curriculum studies. I reflected on the ways in which Korea's past curriculum discourses were highly influenced and even “colonized” by U.S. academic discourses. My concern was that U.S. curriculum discourses might dominate discourses on worldwide curriculum studies and, thus, heavily influence Korean scholarship, theorizing, and practice in curriculum studies.

Pinar (2003a, 2006) explicitly stressed that IAACS was a call for complicated conversations, not envisioning a unified version of worldwide curriculum studies, such as one resembling the U.S. curriculum studies field. Similarly, Miller (2006) has noted the danger of a U.S.-centric curriculum and its application to worldwide curricula. However, my educational and professional experiences in Korea have forced me to reflect on the vast historical, political, economic, and educational influence of U.S. curriculum discourses on the Korean field of curriculum studies.

I remember numerous names of U.S. scholars I eagerly studied in college and graduate school in Korea: Dewey, Hirsh, Tyler, Bruner, Bloom, Greene, Pinar, Miller, Anyon, Apple, Gardner, Sternberg, and more. During coursework and seminars, my classmates and I translated these scholars' original texts into Korean. Figuring out the “exact” meanings of texts and translating them into correct Korean were major efforts during class preparation. In light of such “correctly” translated documents, we discussed how to implement the “best” educational practices grounded in their theories without carefully examining different social, cultural, and political contexts. Although some of the curriculum scholars (i.e., Greene, Pinar, Miller) were heavily against



decontextualized educational practices, my concern was how to “adopt” their ideas well into Korea’s educational settings.

Thus, Korean teachers, educators, and policymakers, including me, have assumed that there are universal meanings of *good*, *effective*, and *standardized* curriculum—in most cases, imported from the U.S. curriculum. The “culture of importation” (Kim, 2005b, p. 59)—that is, the uncritical use of U.S. curriculum research as major sources for Korean educational discourses—has been prevalent in Korean curriculum studies. According to Kim (2005b), majoring in curriculum studies means to master the major curriculum studies’ discourses in the United States. This culture of importation has treated U.S. curriculum studies as the most advanced and has situated Korean curriculum studies as part of this discourse—and yet subservient to it. This approach to considering U.S. curriculum as “universalized” curriculum helped spread the “best” national curriculum into Korean K-12 classroom settings. It assumes that U.S. educational discourses are universal, valid, and important. Ironically, so many U.S. reconceptualist scholars (e.g., William Pinar and Janet Miller) have rejected this universalized notion of “best,” or “effective,” curriculum; however, translating materials to implement effective curriculum, teaching-learning resources, and lesson plans remains as one of the major tasks in Korean curriculum studies discourses (Kim, 2005b, 2010).

“Beyond/Against the Discourse of the US/Western Teachers’ Lives”

Late May in Tampere, Finland, was quite impressive; it was a refreshing moment to enjoy daylight later than 11:30 p.m. and have the sun rise earlier than 3:00 a.m. Situated within this new environment, my co-presenter and I were ready to present Korean teachers’ “stories” to an audience from all around the world under the title “Beyond/Against the Discourse of the US/Western Teachers’ Lives: Texts of the Other (Korean Context)” (Kim & Moon, 2006).

Since Korea has such a deeply rooted educationally and culturally colonized history predominantly linked with U.S. academia, we considered that IAACS would provide a great opportunity to “talk back” to the cultural, economic, and political “colonizer” with the indigenous and “authentic” voices of the “colonized,” freshly delivered by “colonized” scholars. We attempted to follow IAACS’s “call for a conversation” (Pinar, 2003a, p. 1) that each nation-state “cultivate[s] its own indigenous and conceptually independent strains of curriculum theorizing, inquiry, and research” (Pinar, 2003b, p. 8).

We introduced some Korean teachers’ life histories in order to “include” a few local narratives into the mainstream discourses of teachers’ life stories. Using a postpositivistic research paradigm, we presented what Western literature has omitted through discourses on Korean teachers’ lives. In addition, as part of introducing a Korean version of the reconceptualization of curriculum studies, we attempted to address issues beyond effective curriculum models for Korean students, Korean teachers’ behavioral developmental stages, or Korean students’ academic achievement. We reported that Western discourses on classroom teachers’ lives have not mentioned important issues or phenomena related to Korean teachers’ lives.

We reconstructed some of the stories of Korean teachers’ struggles in being promoted to school administrators, conflicts between public education and private



education, and a novice teacher's struggles to design progressive curriculum due to a senior teacher's resistance to such an approach. We briefly explained how competitive it is to become a school administrator because eligibility requirements to become vice principal and principal are overwhelming. They require almost ten years of classroom teaching experience, head teacher experience, attending numerous professional development conferences with high achievement scores, and getting almost all As on the principal's assessments. We introduced the story of a teacher who tried to become an administrator his entire teaching career but ended up as a classroom teacher who is actively involved in dancing performances with his elementary students.

We also introduced the notion of *Gyo-shil-bung-geo*³—that is, the failure of public schooling due to the privatization of education by the huge business of tutoring (*Gwaweh*) and *Hakwon*. All private, after-school learning institutions are called *Hakwon*, and they are run by private organizations, including both academic (e.g., math and English) and nonacademic subjects (e.g., music, martial arts, or fine arts). Reducing the expenses for *Hakwon* and *Gwaweh* is always a political issue because parents hope to optimize educational quality while minimizing their individual expenses for their children's education. At the same time, we presented the notion of *Gyo-shil-bung-geo* as a constant issue among politicians, educators, parents, and students. Some students and parents trust *Hakwon* or *Gwaweh* teachers more than public school teachers for their academic achievement. Many students study in *Hakwon* and/or through *Gwaweh* and go to public school to repeat what they have learned in these private institutions (Kim, 2005a; Kim & Moon, 2006).

Visions for our IAACS presentation. Young Chun Kim and I (2006) envisioned that the inquiry on Korean teachers' lives and the findings would be a complementary resource to Western literature in Korean education. During our presentation, we tried to share many stories and make Koreans' voices heard. I believed then that Korean teachers' voices helped establish a network of conversations across borders, cultures, and traditions in the internationalization of curriculum studies. This presentation was our gesture at taking part in this movement from two Korean scholars' "authentic" voices. In addition, grounded in postpositivistic approaches, we attempted to decolonize the consciousness of the colonized, including "centering" decentered Korean educational phenomena as well as demystifying U.S. curriculum theories as universalized (Kim, 2005b).

Questioning Dominant Discourse and Generating New Vocabulary

The Tampere narrative tells of my previous attempt to make Korean voices heard to non-Koreans, more specifically to a Western audience. When we co-presented on Korean teachers' life stories, we believed that the contribution of our presentation was translating Korean curriculum studies into other languages so that local knowledge, which supposedly was established through Korean teachers' authentic voices, could possibly be included within the universal curriculum discourse worldwide (Pinar, 2003b).

When I look back on our presentation as part of Korean curriculum studies to an international audience, I become skeptical of our use of the binary concept of colonizer/colonized to situate Korea's socioeconomic, political, and educational stance. I am now concerned that this approach, which is inviting people to conversations grounded



in this fixed understanding of self/other, could reinforce grand narratives that indicate a universal and monolithic model of Korean curriculum studies using fixed binary oppositions. For example, this approach could be interpreted as us, academically and culturally influenced by the United States, now attempting to talk back to the colonizer. In addition, this approach could be interpreted as our having asserted our authentic, indigenous, and “real” voices. In presenting our argument based on the colonizer/colonized binary, we assumed that we were capable bilingual translators, able to bring our voices to an international audience and, furthermore, to have that voice and its suggestions fully and successfully understood. In consideration of the numerous binaries inherent in our argument, I think we committed a mistake of reductionism by introducing “Korean” curriculum and culture as if a universalized voice exists.

I do note that this “emancipatory” approach to the translation of Korean curriculum studies for an international audience is somewhat valuable. It may generate different perspectives for the exploration of the meaning of *curriculum* among Korean educators by making some colonized or local voices heard (Kim, 2010). However, I ultimately challenge this approach in that it assumes that the notions of self/other, difference, and curriculum are already predetermined and known. It allows for the possibility of generating a universalized version of “Korean” curriculum studies or “U.S.” curriculum studies, when neither of these exists so monolithically. Since the notions of a Korean curriculum are socio-culturally contextualized and discursively constructed, simply addressing the Korean curriculum with the use of the binary of colonizer/colonized is not possible and even problematic. The challenge then becomes how to explain Korean curriculum studies while avoiding translating one universalized version of Korean curriculum studies and culture to U.S. curriculum studies and vice versa. Moreover, how can Korean curriculum studies contribute to its internationalization when some people are included in the mainstream discourse while others are not?

Butler (2000) highlighted that the “translation will have to be one in which the terms in question are not simply redescribed by a dominant discourse” (p. 168). I interpret Butler’s ideas as a means of challenging a dominant discourse when the binary of colonizer/colonized is implemented in understanding Korean society and its interaction with the world. When Korean curriculum studies is universalized with the use of the binaries of colonizer/colonized, how is a dominant discourse reinforced in its understanding of experience, knowledge, and curriculum? Who are recognized (or not recognized) as valuable human beings when Korean curriculum studies apply this dominant discourse repeatedly? What kinds of “foreign” vocabulary can Korean curriculum scholars admit when we see Korea’s ever-changing sociopolitical, economic, and cultural contributions in the global world?

In the following section, I want to reconsider what possibilities there exist for Korea’s participation in the internationalization of curriculum studies. A recent sociopolitical, historical, and economic transformation of South Korea will be an example of using cultural translation to dispute dominant discourse by generating new vocabulary. In particular, I will examine the ways in which Korea’s involvement in the international community have dramatically changed within the past few decades, and thus impacted my understanding of internationalization as well as curriculum studies.



Constant Changes of Korea's Stance in the Global Community

In this section, I briefly elaborate on how Korea's socioeconomic, political, and cultural influences with and on other nation-states have drastically increased during the past decade (*Economist*, 2009; Moon, 2012a). As a result of this increased influence, Korea has created new relationships with other nation-states in the world. I introduce these major aspects in terms of Korea's interactions with the world: tenant farmland abroad (*Economist*, 2009; Evans, 2008; Walt, 2008), exportation of *Hangul* (Choe, 2009), and increasing numbers of immigrants (Kim, Lee, Kim, & Cha, 2010; Moon, 2012a).

Tenant farmland abroad

Tenant farming in other countries is a huge issue in international journals and newspapers. For example, *The Economist* (2009) reports that 20 million hectares, which equals 5 million acres, of farmland are handed over to capital-exporting countries such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and China. They buy or lease millions of acres, grow biofuels on them, and ship them home. Saudi Arabian investors are spending \$100 million to raise wheat, barley, and rice in Ethiopia.

Similar to these countries, Daewoo Logistics—a major Korean corporation—planned for tenant farming of maize, biofuel, and palm oils in Madagascar in November 2008. Daewoo Logistics attempted to negotiate with Madagascar to lease 3.2 million acres of farmland—half the size of Belgium—for about \$12 per acre for 99 years (Walt, 2008). In March 2009, this agreement was cancelled by Madagascar's new leader, Mr. Rajoelina. He proclaimed, "In the constitution, it is stipulated that Madagascar's land is neither for sale nor for rent, so the agreement with Daewoo is cancelled" (Berger, 2009, para. 4).

Whether this negotiation could mutually benefit Madagascar's economy and that of South Korea is controversial. Daewoo Logistics announced that the company would invest about \$6 billion to build the port facilities, roads, power plants, and irrigation systems to support agribusiness in Madagascar, although the yield of the land would be exported. According to Daewoo, this infrastructure would be beneficial in creating jobs for Madagascar's unemployed, in establishing roads, and in applying advanced agricultural techniques (Walt, 2008). A Daewoo spokesman stated, "We will provide jobs for them by farming, which is for Madagascar" (Evans, 2008, para. 2). It is debatable if this proposal would actually be *for* Madagascar when Daewoo uses untouched arable land and creates infrastructure in Madagascar.

The Madagascar government is desperate to have capital for agriculture; giant international companies can benefit some "poor" African countries (Walt, 2008). Efficiently grown crops can be beneficial to Madagascar workers in providing wages. However, I think the benefit to South Korea seems to be more salient than any benefit to Madagascar. A manager at Daewoo, Hong Jon-wan, stated, "We [South Koreans] can either export the harvests to other countries or [ship] them back to Korea in case of a food crisis" (Evans, 2008, para. 4). I also think the people of Madagascar should buy their own food with the money they make (Berger, 2009).

Unlike this failed deal with Madagascar, some of South Korea's companies have made successful deals with other nations. Hyundai Heavy Industries paid \$6.5 million for a majority stake in Khorol Zerno, a company that owns 10,000 hectares of Siberia. South



Korea has signed deals with Sudan for 690,000 hectares to raise wheat (*Economist*, 2009). I cannot forget my shock at hearing about some South Korean companies' economic plans to follow a conventional colonizing model to work with other countries, such as renting the land for 99 years. I am surprised by the fact that South Korea initiated this neocolonial approach. Korea has resisted Japanese colonization and U.S. imperialism throughout modern history and still has memories of being a victim of that imperialism.

The exportation of *Hangul*

Hangul is the native alphabet of the Korean language, which was created in 1443 by King Sejong and his assistants. Before the creation of *Hangul*, only *Hanja* (Sino-Korean), Chinese logographic characters, were used as the official written language (Shon, 1999). *Hangul* is a phonetic alphabet with 24 letters (ㄱ ㄴ ㄷ ㄹ ㅁ ㅂ ㅅ ㅇ ㅈ ㅊ ㅋ ㆁ ㆆ ㆏ ㆑ ㆒ ㆓ ㆔ ㆕ ㆖ ㆗ ㆘ ㆙ ㆚ ㆛), which have the sound values of *g, n, d, r/l, m, b, s, ng, j, ch, k, p, t, h, a, u, o, yo, u, yu, eu,* and *i*, respectively. Almost 450 years after its invention, *Hangul* finally became the official Korean language in 1894.

Recently, an Indonesian tribe that uses the Austronesian Cia-Cia language adopted the Korean alphabet as its writing system. The exportation of *Hangul* to other countries was a similar shock to me: my myth that only “the” Korean ethnic group uses *Hangul* as an official language is being challenged. Korean government established a museum in downtown Seoul in order to celebrate *Hangul*'s simplicity and to being easy to learn. For example, *Hangul* can represent all lexical items—including native, Sino-Korean, loan, and foreign words and morphemes—because it is a phonetic alphabet. When I visited the museum, it was interesting to notice Cia-Cia language that are written in *Hangul* but do not deliver any specific meanings to me. To think of Koreans as possible linguistic colonizers instead of linguistically colonized by English was a huge paradigm shift.

Increasing numbers of immigrants

The numbers of immigrated wives (e.g., from Vietnam, the Philippines), migrated workers (e.g., from Mongolia and Bangladesh), and North Korean defectors have dramatically increased within a decade in South Korea. These new populations made me realize how Korea's political, cultural, and economic power generates such “Korean dreams.” In 2009, the Korean government proclaimed that more than one million foreigners lived in South Korea, constituting almost 2% of the total population. Since 2000, there have been almost 50,000 international marriages. More than 75% of these marriages were between Korean husbands and immigrant wives from China, Japan, Mongolia, Vietnam, and the Philippines, to name a few (Kang, 2008; Nahm & Jang, 2009). As of 2007, North Korean defectors numbered more than 10,000. All of these numbers for immigrants continue to increase (Kim et al., 2010; Moon, 2012a). This new international relationship between Korea and other countries challenges me to rethink the universalized and fixed notions of colonizer/colonized, center/peripheral, West/East, North/South, and First/Third.



Multiplicity of “Korean-ness” and Curriculum Discourses in the International Space

The above two descriptions portray my abbreviated academic journey to engage in the internationalization of curriculum studies. Given Korea’s movable context that challenges the binaries of First World/Third World, the notion of internationalization takes on different meanings in terms of situating Korea as sociopolitically, economically, and intellectually colonized by the Western world. When Korea’s sociopolitical stance is labeled by Western colonization in education, other marginalized groups within Korea and other countries (e.g., Madagascar, immigrants from South Asian countries) are not recognized by this dominant discourse.

In the theorization of postcolonialism, Quayson (2000) has indicated that First World agendas are no longer reproduced in the Third World and vice versa due to discursively constructed relationships. Even these terms of *First* and *Third Worlds* are now called into question. Quayson (2000) posited that we “must pay special attention to the changeability of material and discursive oppression in and across multiple, specific contexts” (p. 7). Similarly, Shange (1983) stated, “There is no necessary or fixed geography to center/periphery relations” (p. 2). She emphasized that the political and sociocultural boundaries are shifting, and the center/periphery binary is provisional and complicated. In other words, “peripheries of the center as well as centers of the periphery” exist concurrently (p. 8). These two postcolonial theorists have highlighted permeable and diffusing concepts of the colonizer/colonized binary. Universal and universalized versions of binaries have their limits in our understanding of self and others.

Butler (2000) mentioned that the politics of translation should be “in the service of adjudicating and composing a movement of competing and overlapping universalisms” (p. 169). I argue that translating Korean curriculum studies and generating conversations among nation-states should move beyond reinforcing universalism about static understandings of a “unified” nation-state and its curriculum. I here focused on problems of introducing Korean curriculum studies with the use of fixed binaries of colonizer/colonized and East/West in order to problematize this static understanding of Korean society and Korean curriculum studies. Butler (2009) stated that cultural translation is imperative in order to “rethink the complex and fragile character of the social bond and to consider what conditions might make violence less possible, lives more equally grievable, and, hence, more livable” (p. viii). I emphasize the necessity of generating a new lexicon via cultural translation in order to consider who is marginalized again when Koreans highlight a social bond generated by its emphasis on the U.S. impact on Korean curriculum studies without considering Korea’s ever-changing interaction with other countries.

Introducing Korea’s curriculum and its translations needs to move beyond simple understanding of Korean-ness, with its persistent use of binaries, in order to challenge universalized meanings of Korean culture, people, and curriculum. When discourses about Korean curriculum studies are summarized by the use of colonizer/colonized binaries, we miss opportunities to address other voices that are not recognized by this collective form of Korean-ness and its curriculum. I introduced three outstanding examples that have shifted Korea’s sociopolitical, historical, and economic stance in the



world. My narrative of Korea's new stance in the world recounts my more recent struggle to explore the complicated meanings of Korean curriculum and discursively constructed meanings of colonizer/colonized. These questions are still connected to the inquiry into which populations have recognized as valuable human beings and which have not in the Korean context. What is the history of this category? Where are we in its history at this time? In other words, Korean curriculum scholars can ask which Korean populations are recognized as valuable human beings within current historical and political discourses that are actively generated.

Miller (2010) posited that “differences from one another cannot be known prior to our interactions” (p. 15). Simply reiterating the binaries of colonizer/colonized, East/West, and self/other without considering the interactions creates another grand narrative. Not considering always shifting and changing interactions among nation-states possibly normalizes violence and excludes certain groups from recognition. Concurring with Miller, I postulate that such binary oppositions are discursively constructed during interactions with “others” as well as during our political engagement with cultural translation.

Toward the Internationalization of Curriculum Studies

I theorize cultural translation as discourse for complicating the meanings of internationalization of curriculum studies. My definition of cultural translation is debunking dominant discourses by creating new vocabulary that cannot possibly be explained with the use of any predetermined concepts of knowledge, self/other, and culture. When dialogues about curriculum among nation-states are universalized with the use of East/West, colonizer/colonized, and self/other, cultural translation provides a lens to interrogate sociopolitical complexity within/among nation-states. Thus, cultural translation in the field of curriculum studies could challenge the multiple binary oppositions inherent in current curriculum discourses. For example, when the predominate discourse on Korean curriculum studies is focused on “what” Korean curriculum is drawn from binaries, cultural translation enables Korean curriculum theorists to rethink monolithic elaboration of Korean-ness with using concepts of East/West, colonizer/colonized, and developed/developing.

The meaning of curriculum studies and internationalization of the field should encompass groups by creating a new lexicon—lexicon which includes groups marginalized by dominant discourses to determine whose life is recognized and whose is not. The notions of Korean and Korean curriculum studies should be diversified by recognizing multiple subgroups. They cannot be totalized by any fixed categories of skin color, gender, or nationality. A presumably effective label of “Korea” is problematic in that it universalizes the meanings of being Korean, without considering sociopolitical, economic interactions. An effort is needed to constantly dismantle any tendency to reduce every cultural instance to a presupposed universality. Furthermore, this effort for generating new lexicon underscores the fact that transnational relationships among nation-states are more complex. As shown in this paper, the simple binary opposition of center/periphery is not possible for examining the complex international relationships between South Korea and other nation-states.



Cultural translation, thus, can possibly minimize the imposition of universalized and ready-made forms of curriculum on other audiences. In this paper, I have provided a constantly shifting sociopolitical position of South Korea in order to challenge monolithic illustration of Korean curriculum studies internationally. When discourses of Korean curriculum studies are introduced mainly by Korea's sociopolitical interactions with the United States by the use of a colonizer/colonized structure, shifting interactions between Korea and other nation-states can never be recognized. Moreover, these fixed binaries may "reproduce exactly the hegemonic structures" toward people within the group, especially those who are not recognized by dominant discourses (Pillow, 2003, p. 192). For example, the predetermined understanding of Korea as the colonized, the other, or the East blocks opportunities to interrogate Korea's sociopolitical and cultural influence on multiple nation-states and vice versa. New vocabulary is needed to introduce Korea or Korean-ness when the complex inter/national relations are constantly in flux. Otherwise, the complex socioeconomic relationships between South Korea and Madagascar, South Asian countries, and multicultural families in Korea are not recognized by the pre-existing definitions of Korean or *the* Korean curriculum studies.

Butler (2009) theorizes cultural translation as political engagement by creating new vocabulary. This project of translation dismantles the dominant discourse and its hegemony to exclude people from proper recognition. I connect Butler's main idea with Miller's theorization of the international movement of curriculum studies. Miller (2010) creates the vocabulary of *worldliness* in order to debunk dichotomous relationships between national and international. By challenging questions about preliminary assumptions of knowing and known inter/nationally, Miller (2005b) initiates the inquiry into how curriculum theorists can work with/in this worldwide movement of curriculum studies. This inquiry in curriculum is to push our fundamental assumptions about knowledge, knowing, and unknowing. Drawing from Miller, I postulate that curriculum scholars re-examine a sense of knowing/unknowing that we cannot predict outcomes prior to our interactions with others. Curriculum theorists should develop new vocabulary in understanding curriculum and its internationalization. This academic and political action is challenging but necessary labor at the sociocultural limits of universalized concepts of knowledge, recognizable human beings, and curriculum studies (Miller, 2010).

Cultural translation, overall, leaves the possibility open for future conversations of whose knowledge, life, or curriculum is recognized as valuable and whose is not, especially when interactions among nation-states become complicated and prevalent in our daily lives. By accepting the possibilities of the unknown as open, yet rejecting any closed readings, dialogues among nation-states will be complicated and enriched in the current internationalization movement of the field.

Notes

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³ According to National Statistical Office, the Republic of Korea (2009), 1 to 12 public school students spend 7.4 hours per week in *Hakwon* and/or *Gwaweh* in 2008. The annual cost per household is \$230 per month. More than 75.1% of the 1 to 12 students in Korea attended *Hakwon* and/or *Gwaweh* (National Statistical Office, The Republic of Korea, 2009). The expense and participation of *Hakwon* education causes inequity in education. A household in which the income is under \$1,000 spends \$50 a month, and 34% of the students attend *Hakwon* and/or *Gwaweh*. These figures contrast with a middle-class household that spends more than \$400 out of \$5,000 a month on average. More than 90.5% of students attend *Hakwon* and/or *Gwaweh*.

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