ENGLISH, NATIONALISM, AND THE POLITICS OF LANGUAGE USE:

Language Ideologies In Media Criticism Of Yoon Suk Yeol's Speech

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December 2025

Submitted for the degree of Bachelor of Asian Studies (Honours)
Asia-Pacific Studies Specialisation
The College of Asia and the Pacific
The Australian National University

DECLARATION

Unless otherwise acknowledged in the text, this thesis represents the original research of the author.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr Eunseon Kim, for her unwavering support throughout my thesis program, especially during the additional two months it took for me to complete this thesis. I can't imagine how much more difficult this past year would have been without her guidance, enthusiasm and solicitude. Thank you for being a constant comforting presence, for pushing me to dig deeper when I needed to and telling me to stop when I was going too far, and for always expressing your confidence in me, even when I was losing confidence in myself. I don't think there is anyone who could have been a better supervisor for me and my thesis.

Second, I want to extend a massive thank you to our Honours course convenor, Dr Mark Strange, for his tireless efforts supporting our honours cohort and for always being so willing to help me with whatever I needed. While I usually had no idea what kind of help I needed, knowing that your help was there when I figured it out—because I very much needed it—was truly appreciated. Thank you for supporting me and checking in with me through my ADHD diagnosis and adjustment to what it meant for my Honours program, and for always backing my decisions on how to handle everything.

I also received so much love and support from my friends, without which I legitimately think I might not have made it through this year without. To Phoebe, thank you for being the sounding board to my late-night thesis ravings whenever I needed to talk through the mess of ideas that was bouncing around my head and for reading through my entire thesis before I submitted it. To Nina, thank you for always expressing your support and confidence in me and factoring in where I was at with my thesis, workload and stress when making plans together or when we were hanging out (I really did need to be kicked out). Even more so, thank you for making me realise that my struggles were not because I just suck but because something more fundamental needed addressing in my brain—I'm not sure I would have figured that one out without you. Additionally, thank you both for pushing me to let you meal prep for me when I felt like all I had time for was working on my thesis. To Emma, thank you for being my lunch buddy on campus so I didn't feel like such a loner all the time. Our yap sessions were very much needed to keep me sane. To Matthew, thank you for all your guidance and support with this whole process and for answering my many questions. Knowing I had someone who understood everything I was going through and was going to go through with honours was very much appreciated—and needed—when I was feeling very uncertain.

NOTES

This thesis draws upon a number of primary and secondary Korean language sources. I have transliterated Korean language source materials and words according to the McCune–Reischauer romanisation system. However, when referencing notable historical or political figures, such as former President Yoon Suk Yeol, I have used the transliteration of their name that is most used in English language sources. In cases where an English language source has used another romanisation system, such as the Revised Romanisation system, I have left the transliterations from these sources intact.

Unless otherwise specified, all translations from Korean to English are my own. In all instances where I have provided an English definition of a Korean word without providing a source for the definition, I have formed the definition myself based on my own knowledge of the Korean language and through consulting the NAVER English-Korean Dictionary. The NAVER English-Korean Dictionary compiles entries and definitions from established lexicographic sources, such as YBM, Oxford and Urimalsaem, and regularly updates its database to reflect contemporary usage, making it a suitable reference for forming definitions.

Given that this study is grounded on discourse analysis of Korean language sources I have provided the original Korean text for quotations and terms. I have not included this text in my final word count calculation as it serves a purely referential purpose

Word count (including content footnotes): 23,956

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ABSTRACT

Within a speech community, language practices are informed by multiple, sometimes competing, ideological frameworks. In South Korea, language practices are shaped by long-standing linguistic nationalist sentiments surrounding the Korean language, alongside neoliberal orientations that position English as valuable global linguistic capital. Against this backdrop, former President Yoon Suk Yeol (2022–2025) was repeatedly criticised within the media for his apparent penchant for incorporating English-origin words into his Korean-language speech. Situated within these broader ideological tensions regarding language, national identity and pride, and the place of English within Korea, this thesis examines why the media criticised Yoon's linguistic behaviour. Following a language ideological approach, this study analyses discourse within media texts that explicitly criticised Yoon's use of English-origin words into his speech, with particular attention paid to metalinguistic commentary and evaluative framing. Treating such discourse as a site where language use is rendered socially and politically meaningful, these texts are analysed to identify how Yoon's linguistic behaviour was discursively constructed within media's criticism, which language ideologies underpinned these constructions, and how such ideologies shaped the discourse itself. The findings of this study show that the media's criticism was structured predominantly through a linguistic nationalist framework, within which English was conceptualised as symbolically opposed to the Korean language itself and its associated values as the national language. While this framing enabled sustained critique of Yoon's use of English-words at this symbolic level, it simultaneously constrained the focus of the media's criticism to that level, leaving other ideologies of English that contribute to the reproduction of social and class inequalities in South Korea unchallenged. By demonstrating how linguistic nationalism both motivated and limited media criticism of language use in political discourse, this thesis contributes to research on language ideology, language use within political discourse, and the sociolinguistic context of English within South Korea.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout his presidency (2022–2025), former South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol was repeatedly criticised by the media for what they described as his "English love" 영어 사랑, "English obsession," 영어 집착, and "English disease" 영어 병. This criticism was not targeted at comments that Yoon had made about English, but instead at Yoon's linguistic behaviour, specifically his habit of using English words within his Korean speech; the issue was *how* he spoke, not about *what* he said. Whether they were describing his linguistic behaviour itself or commenting on what it meant, the media's criticism was expressed through a mixture of explicit and implicit evaluations about Yoon's use of language.

The interesting thing about the media's criticism of Yoon's use of English words is that such linguistic behaviour reflects a significant aspect of South Korea's (henceforth Korea) sociolinguistic context; despite the English language not being used for everyday communication, English is basically unavoidable. First and foremost, the Korean language borrows a significant number of words from English, with English-origin lexical material making up 5% to 10% of the Korean lexicon, meaning Korean speakers regularly use English-origin lexical content as a part of their language use.[1] Additionally, English is highly visible (and audible) within the Korean linguistic landscape, being featured on business and street signs, fashion and beauty products, and product packaging, and in brand advertising and commercials, and popular media, such as in the lyrics of the Korean songs that are played as background music in cafes and shops. Maybe most crucially, English is unavoidable for Koreans because English proficiency is an entrance requirement for many—especially prestigious—universities and companies, making it an important and, in many cases, necessary means for success within Korean society. This is all to say, English is a fact of life within Korea; so why did the media find Yoon's use of English words so objectionable?

Some Important Context

The media's criticism actually exists within a larger discourse regarding the mixed feelings many Koreans have towards English, both in terms of its place within the Korean language and within Korean society at large. The main reason why English inhabits such a prominent position within Korea is the significant visibility and value it has as a 'global' language and its concomitant associations with global competitiveness, cosmopolitanism and modernity. That

[1] Sofia Rüdiger, "Mixed Feelings: Attitudes towards English loanwords and their use in South Korea," *Open Linguistics* 4, (2018): 186-189, https://doi.org/10.1515/opli-2018-0010.

being said, the place of English is contentious in Korea due to the nation's steadfast linguistic nationalist values. Since the late 19th century, linguistic nationalism has been a hegemonic ideology within Korean nation-building discourse, through which the Korean language has been held up as a fundamental, defining, unifying and liberating feature of the Korean nation and its culture, history, and spirit. As such, the Korean language has immense value within Korean society, with these linguistic nationalist values even being enshrined in law through the Framework Act on the National Language 국어기본법, which is aimed at promoting and preserving the Korean language. The Act even specifies the celebration of Hangŭl Day 한글날, a national holiday for the celebration of the national script, Hangŭl. Thus, while English holds value within Korea as a global language, the Korean language itself has been imbued with intense ideological and political value as a symbol of the Korean nation and national identity. Additionally, as the native language of at least 94% of the national population, Korean is much more valuable than English as a means of communication within Korea.[2] And yet, for the reasons outlined above, English has come to be viewed as a necessity in almost every field of life, though this point of necessity, especially as it relates to education and employment, has stirred criticism related to issues of class inequality in Korea.[3]

However, despite this larger context of both languages' positions and value within Korean society, there was very little—if any—meaningful discussion of English's significant position within Korea in the media criticism. The media did criticise Yoon for creating a barrier to communication, as not all Korean citizens would be able to understand the words he used, something which is particularly problematic coming from the country's leader. However, while this point was a consideration in some of the criticism, it was by no means the main point of critique. Furthermore, there was no clear acknowledgement of the fact that the Korean language does incorporate a significant amount of English or broader discussion of how important English proficiency has become in Korea, even in a critical sense. Instead, the social meaning and implications of Yoon's linguistic behaviour—what it meant about his politics, psychology and identity—made up the bulk of the criticism. That is to say, the majority of the media's criticism was ideological. Which brings us back to my earlier question of why the media found Yoon's linguistic behaviour objectionable. Why did the media criticise Yoon's linguistic behaviour? This is the question that this thesis aims to answer.

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[2] Park Han-na, "More than 1 in 10 Residents Have 'Migrant Background' in 17 Korean Municipalities," *The Korea Herald* (Seoul), December 8, 2025, https://www.koreaherald.com/article/10632068.

[3] Jamie Shinhee Lee, "'Everywhere You Go, You See English!': Elderly Women's Perspectives on Globalization and English," *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies* 13, no. 4 (2016): 342-343, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15427587.2016.1190654.

The Case Study at Hand

There are some levels on which this question can be answered rather simple. Most simply, the media did not approve of Yoon's use of English within his Korean speech. In many of the articles, it is even quite obvious that the media's criticisms are based in a linguistic nationalistic perspective. Moreover, we can say that Yoon's position as the President provided motivation for the media to criticise Yoon's linguistic behaviour specifically due to the institutional influence and increased visibility the position bestowed upon him and his language choices. This factor was also emphasised within some of the media articles in comments that describe the president as "a walking public institution" 대통령은 걸어 다니는 공공기관이라고 할 수 있다, "the head of the country who represents its people and public institutions" 나라의 수장으로서 국민과 공공기관을 대표하는 대통령, someone who others look to as a "role model" 롤 모델, and who's "every move . . . has an influence on so many people" . . . 나라의 최고 지도자인 대통령의 일거수일투족은 너무 많은 사람에 영향을 끼칩니다.[4] These considerations then provide the surface level motivation and reasoning for why the media criticised Yoon.

However, my intention is not to answer this question in a surface level or descriptive sense. Instead, the aim of this thesis is to deconstruct the metalinguistic discourse within the media articles—that is their explicit and implicit criticism of Yoon's language use—and thus the ideological beliefs that underpinned their criticisms. In doing this, I hope to make sense of why the media criticised Yoon's linguistic behaviour as they did, why they emphasised certain elements while disregarding others. With this aim in mind, this study takes a language ideological approach in its analysis which is guided by several secondary research questions that examine the discursive, ideological, and evaluative dimensions of the media criticism:

- How was Yoon's linguistic behaviour discursively constructed? How did the media describe and interpret it?

[4] Yun Kŭn-hyŏk, "'Naesyŏnŏl P'ak'ŭ' rago hamyŏn mŏt ittago? Yoon Suk Yeolŭi yŏngŏ Sadaejuŭi" [Do you think it's cool when you say 'National Park'? Yoon Suk Yeol's English Sadaejuŭi], *O-mai Nyusŭ* [OhmyNews] (Seoul), June 11, 2022, https://www.ohmynews.com/NWS_Web/View/; Kim Ho-gyŏng, "Taet'ongnyŏng ŭi panmal kwa yŏngŏ nambal… 'konggam nŭngnyŏk pujae' ŭi tanmyŏn" [The President's informal speech and English overuse... a cross section of 'lack of empathy'], *Mindŭlle* [Mindle News] (Seoul), January 1, 2023, https://www.mindlenews.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=1071; Kim Yong-t'aek, "Yoon Taet'ongnyŏng ŭi yŏngŏ sarang… wae munje in'ga?" [President Yoon's love for English... why is it a problem?], *Chinsil ŭi Kil* [Power of Truth] (Seoul), January 1, 2023, http://www.poweroftruth.net/column/mainView.php?kcat=2030&uid=1520&table=yt_kim&ckattempt=3; O T'ae-gyu, "Yoon Suk YeolTaet'ongnyŏng ŭi kojil 'yŏngŏ pyŏng'" [President Yoon Suk Yeol's chronic 'English disease'], *Mindŭlle* [Mindle News] (Seoul), May 22, 2024, https://www.mindlenews.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=8386.

- What language ideologies underpinned such constructions? And how are they embedded across different levels of the media criticism?
- How do such ideologies influence the content and focuses of the criticism?

This thesis does not attempt to evaluate the correctness or motivation of the media criticism. Instead, it examines the ideologies that inform such criticisms, representing a case study of how language ideologies are discursively reproduced, negotiated and normalised through metalinguistic discourse, with media discourse being a salient site of these ideological processes. Through an analysis of language ideologies, this thesis investigates how two contentious linguistic positions coexist through ongoing negotiation and considers the broader impacts of these negotiations

This study contributes to research on political discourse and language ideology by examining media criticism of a president's linguistic behaviour, rather than criticism of policy positions or propositional content. Focusing on metalinguistic evaluations of Yoon Suk Yeol's speech, the study explores how linguistic form becomes a site of political meaning-making and contestation. While empirically grounded in the Korean context, the study also speaks to broader questions about the role of language in political legitimacy in globalised settings.

Approach and Organisation

This study uses the theoretical framework of language ideology to conduct a discourse analysis of metalinguistic criticism of former President Yoon's linguistic behaviour, examining how ideological meanings are articulated and evaluated, within a corpus of nine media articles. I adopt a language ideological framework grounded in the work of language ideology scholars Michael Silverstein, Kathryn Woolard, Judith Irvine, Susan Gal, and Paul Kroskrity. With this language ideological approach, I analyse both how Yoon's use of English was framed, evaluated, and made meaningful within the media's explicit and implicit metalinguistic criticism, and the ideological assumptions that underpinned such processes. The theoretical foundations and specific application of language ideological concepts and processes of this approach are discussed in detail in Chapter One. More generally, Woolard's characterisation of language ideology as a "mediating link between social forms and forms of talk" serves as a useful starting-point for conceptualising how I use language ideology within this study.[5] As I mentioned, there seems to be a gap—by omission—between the media's criticism and the reality of English's significant presence within Korean society, and how Yoon's use of English

[5] Kathryn A. Woolard, "Introduction: Language Ideology as a Field of Inquiry," in *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory*, ed. Bambi B. Schieffelin, Kathryn A. Woolard, and Paul V. Kroskrity (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 3, https://doi.org/0.1093/oso/9780195105612.003.0001.

may reflect its situation within this larger sociolinguistic context. Therefore, with the aim of understanding the language ideologies that underpin the media's criticism of Yoon's linguistic behaviour, I use the approach outlined above to make sense of such gaps. In this sense, this thesis uses language ideology as a 'mediating link' that explains why the media interpreted and described Yoon's use of English in the way they did.

The corpus analysed in this study comprises opinion and editorial articles drawn from eight South Korean online media outlets, including from citizen journalism and independent alternative media platforms (OhmyNews, Mindle News, News Free Zone, Power of Truth, Voice of Seoul), established national newspapers (The Hankyoreh), and specialist and regional outlets (EDaily, iDomin).[6] While the outlets differ in scale, audience reach, and institutional legitimacy, they all engage in metalinguistic criticism of Yoon's use of English words in his Korean speech, which was my key criterion for selection. Importantly, the corpus is not designed to treat all sources as equivalent in journalistic authority or credibility, nor does the purpose and scope of this study require evaluation of such elements. Additionally, due to this selection criterion, the corpus is drawn from centre and left-leaning media outlets. This skew was not pre-determined but rather reflects an empirical pattern observed during data collection: right-leaning outlets tended to report quotes from Yoon's speeches without metalinguistic commentary, or in cases where articles included metalinguistic commentary the focus was on Yoon's demonstration of proficiency in speeches delivered in English, which falls outside the scope of this study.[7] Given that Yoon came from a right-wing political party (People Power Party), it is important to acknowledge the possible partisan bias that may have influenced the criticism presented within the corpus. However, as the aim of this thesis is to examine the articles as sites of language-ideological articulation, evaluation of their validity or political motivations is outside the scope of this study. Accordingly, the specific political orientation or journalistic model of each outlet is analytically secondary to the metalinguistic critiques instantiated in the texts themselves.[8]

[6] As the articles are opinion pieces, I reference the authors' names when referring to them in the text.

[7] An example of the typical metalinguistic commentary demonstrated in right-leaning outlets: Kim Tong-ha, "'Chunghakkyo chorŏp haedo ihae hal sujunŭro' Taet'ongnyŏng yŏngŏ yŏnsŏlmun 10 pŏn koch'yŏtta" ['To a level that even a middle school graduate could understand' the President's English speech script was amended 10 times], *Chosŏn Ilbo* [The Chosun Ilbo] (Seoul), April 29, 2023, https://www.chosun.com/politics/diplomacy-defense/2023/04/28/YZESLFEYHRHXHCQJHZ27DJUDYA/.

[8] The corpus is thus constructed analytically rather than representatively; it reflects a specific viewpoint and critical discourse rather than a balanced sampling of political viewpoints.

Table 1: Corpus of Media Articles

Title (translated + original)	Author	Outlet	Date
Do you think it's cool when you say 'National Park'? Yoon Suk Yeol's English Sadaejuŭi '내셔널 파크'라고 하면 멋있다고? 윤석열의 영어 사대주의	Yun Kŭn-hyŏk	*O-mai Nyusŭ* [OhmyNews]	11-06-22
Yoon Suk Yeol's love for English is manifested from his 'inferiority complex compensation' '열등감 보상'에서 발현된 윤석열의 영어사랑	Ku Yŏn-su	*Kyŏngnam Tomin Ilbo* [iDomin]	28-06-22
Yoon Suk Yeol's frequent English use is a terrible complex 윤석열의 잦은 영어 사용은 지독한 콤플렉스	Editorial	*Sŏul ŭi Sori* [Voice of Seoul]	21-12-22
Yoon Suk Yeol and Han Duck-soo's excessive 'obsession with English' which builds 'barriers' to communication 의사소통 '장벽' 쌓는 윤석열·한덕수의 과도한 '영어 집착'	Ko Sŭng-ŭn.	*Nyusŭ P'ŭri Chon* [News Free Zone]	22-12-22
The President's informal speech and English overuse... a cross section of 'lack of empathy' 대통령의 반말과 영어 남발…'공감 능력 부재'의 단면	Kim Ho-gyŏng.	*Mindŭlle* [Mindle News]	01-01-23
President Yoon's love for English... Why is it a problem? 윤 대통령의 영어 사랑… 왜 문제인가?	Kim Yong-t'aek.	*Chinsil ŭi Kil* [Power of Truth]	01-01-23
Yoon Suk Yeol's Konglish 윤석열식 콩글리시	Chang Nam-gu.	*Han'gyŏre* [The Hankyoreh]	31-01-23
President Yoon's Excessive English Expression... 'Do it Aggressively' 윤 대통령, 과도한 영어표현…'어그레시브하게'	Kim Mi-gyŏng	*Ideilli* [EDaily]	11-05-23
President Yoon Suk Yeol's chronic 'English disease' 윤석열 대통령의 고질 '영어 병'	O T'ae-gyu	*Mindŭlle* [Mindle News]	22-05-24

The organisation of the thesis is as follows: Chapter One begins with an in-depth explanation of the language ideological approach that is employed within this study, followed by a literature review of key ideologies of Korean and English in Korea to provide a base for my analysis of the media's criticism. Chapter Two examines how Yoon used language, how the media represented his use of language, and how we can understand both in relation to Korean language use norms. As such, this study situates the media's criticism of Yoon's linguistic behaviour, as well as Yoon's language use itself, within normative Korean language practices surrounding the incorporation of English-origin lexical items into Korean. This analysis exposes the disjuncture between media characterisations of Yoon's language use and actual language practices, thereby highlighting the ideological work performed by these characterisations. Chapter Three analyses how the media interpreted Yoon's linguistic

behaviour and the social meanings the ascribed to such linguistic behaviour through their interpretations. Then, deconstructs how the media connected Yoon's linguistic behaviour to such social meanings. In doing so, this deconstruction reveals the framework of language ideologies that the media's evaluation and criticism of Yoon's linguistic behaviour was based on, which explains the 'gaps' in the media's criticisms. Finally, the Conclusion draws together and discusses the insights and implications of such findings.

CHAPTER ONE:
LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY AND THE KOREAN CONTEXT

This chapter explains the theoretical framework of *language ideology* and provides a literature review of the language ideologies which are necessary for analysing, contextualising and interpreting the findings of this study. As my research questions suggest, language ideology is fundamental to the aims of this thesis and my own understanding of the case study it examines. While the media's criticism of Yoon was centred on how he used language, it was by no means limited to the domain of language and language use. Rather, the media's metalinguistic criticism was incorporated into discourses about identity, psychology, international politics and institutional influence, among others, linking social forms to Yoon's form of talk. Thus, through examining both the concept of language ideology and Korean language ideologies of Korean and English, my aim in this chapter is to lay the conceptual and contextual groundwork for my analysis of the media's criticism.

In the first section of this chapter, I begin by introducing the field of language ideology and how I understand the concept, before explaining the language ideological approach I take within this study. In the two sections that follow, I conduct a review of the ideological frameworks which enable both Korean and English to inhabit positions of social, economic and political value within Korea: nationalism and neoliberalism. Importantly, my aim in these sections is to provide a comprehensive overview of how these ideologies developed, how they function, and how they are maintained.

1.1 A Language Ideological Approach

First introduced by Michael Silverstein in 1979 as "sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use," language ideology has become central to sociolinguistic and anthropological research, spawning a diverse body of scholarship on the connections between language, society and power.[1] Along with Silverstein's definition, various other definitions of language ideologies have been proposed, including Alan Rumsey's "shared bodies of commonsense notions about the nature

[1] Michael Silverstein, "Language Structure and Linguistic Ideology," in *The Elements: A Parasession on Linguistic Units and Levels*, ed. Paul R. Clyne, William F. Hanks, and Carol L. Hofbauer (Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society, 1979), 193.

of language in the world," Shirley Heath's "self-evident ideas and objectives a group holds concerning roles of language in the social experiences of members as they contribute to the expression of the group," and Judith Irvine's "cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests."[2] There are three key aspects of language ideology, expressed to varying degrees across the definitions provided, that I want to highlight here in the way of a definition. First, language ideologies are socially derived, rooted, constrained and dependent systems of belief that interact with both language structure and use, and social forms, concepts, and institutions.[3] Second, because they are ideologically and socially derived, they are "partial, contestable and contested, and interest-laden."[4] Third, language ideologies make themselves appear natural, self-evident, and coherent through essentialising processes that obscure their origins and mechanisms, and any incongruous elements.[5]

Along with these three aspects of language ideology, I also include Kroskrity's "three main planks of the language ideologies approach," *positionality*, *multiplicity*, and *awareness*, in my 'definition.'[6] According to the attribute of *positionality*, "language ideologies represent the perception of language and discourse that is constructed in the interest, or from the perspective, of an economically positioned social or cultural group."[7] This attribute somewhat connects my first and second key aspects of language ideologies by locating their social grounding in specific groups and their partial and interest-laden construction in said groups' use of language as a "site at which to promote, protect, and legitimate" their interests and perspectives.[8] Furthermore, language ideologies may be contestable and contested because of their *multiplicity*, which results from "the plurality of meaningful social divisions . . . within sociocultural groups that can produce divergent perspectives expressed as indices of group

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[2] Alan Rumsey, "Wording, Meaning and Linguistic Ideology," *American Anthropologist* 92, (1990): 346, https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1990.92.2.02a00060; Shirley Brice Heath, "Social History," in *Bilingual Education: Current Perspectives, Volume 1: Social Science* (Arlington: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1977): 53; Judith T. Irvine, "When Talk Isn't Cheap: Language and Political Economy," *American Ethnologist* 16, (1989): 255, https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.1989.16.2.02a00040.

[3] Kathryn A. Woolard, "Introduction: Language Ideology as a Field of Inquiry," in *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory*, ed. Bambi B. Schieffelin, Kathryn A. Woolard, and Paul V. Kroskrity (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 3, https://doi.org/0.1093/oso/9780195105612.003.0001.

[4] Kathryn A. Woolard and Bambi B. Schieffelin, "Language Ideology," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 23, (1994): 58, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.an.23.100194.000415.

[5] Woolard, "Language Ideology as a Field of Inquiry," 10.

[6] Paul V. Kroskrity, "Language Ideologies: Emergence, Elaboration, and Application," in *The Routledge Handbook of Linguistic Anthropology*, ed. Nancy Bonvillain (New York: Routledge, 2015), 98-102, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203492741.

[7] Kroskrity, "Language Ideologies," 98.

[8] Kroskrity, "Language Ideologies," 98.

membership."[9] Kroskrity notes that this attribute makes language ideological approaches especially applicable to studies that examine ideological contact, contention, and transformation, all of which are pertinent to the topic of this thesis. Finally, the attribute of *awareness* refers to the varying degrees to which members of groups are aware of local language ideologies.[10] Depending on the degree of awareness, languages ideologies can be articulated explicitly or implicitly within meta-linguistic discourse or may only be expressed through language use itself. One of the main factors that affect awareness is how identifiable and distinguishable a kind of linguistic or discursive phenomena is to speakers, and in the case of the Korean language, English-origin loanwords are about as identifiable and distinguishable as it gets, author Koh Jongsok even described them as "stand[ing] out like sore thumbs."[11] As I demonstrate throughout this thesis, the media's meta-linguistic comments, and even their own language use at times, often overtly expressed their language ideological positions.

With the above understanding of language ideologies and their characteristics, my approach incorporates several language ideological concepts and frameworks. Silverstein's concept of *metapragmatics*, specifically metapragmatic discourse, being explicit talk about language use as a form of social practice, provides the basis for positioning the media's metalinguistic criticism of Yoon's speech practices as a site of language ideological work, with metalinguistic critique of linguistic form functioning alongside metapragmatic evaluation of language use.[12] Through this metapragmatic evaluation, the media's commentary represents an active mechanism through which specific kinds of language structure and use are recontextualised with ideological loading to signify moral, social and political meanings. Hence, this study does not evaluate the ideological indexicality of Yoon's language use itself but analyses such interpretations as effects of metapragmatic discourse. Moreover, as noted in the above paragraph, multiplicity is central to understanding these interpretations within my approach, with the media's discourse not only being a site of language ideological work, but also a representation of broader discourses of ideological contact, contention, and transformation.

[9] Kroskrity, "Language Ideologies," 99.

[10] Kroskrity, "Language Ideologies," 101.

[11] Kroskrity, "Language Ideologies," 102; Koh Jongsok, "Contamination, Infiltration, Hybridity: A Swipe at Purism in Korean," in *Infected Korean Language, Purity versus Hybridity: From the Sinographic Cosmopolis to Japanese Colonialism to Global English*, trans. Ross King (Amherst: Cambria Press, 2014), 93.

[12] Michael Silverstein, "Shifters, Linguistic Categories, and Cultural Description," in *Meaning in Anthropology*, ed. Keith H. Basso and Henry A. Selby (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976), 48-50; Woolard, "Language Ideology as a Field of Inquiry," 9.

In terms of methodology, I also consider Woolard's characterisation of language ideology as a "mediating link between social forms and forms of talk" in my approach. I separate forms of talk from social forms in my analysis to identify inconsistencies between the media's metapragmatic discourse, which produces the link between certain linguistic and social forms, and norms of actual language use in Korean.[13] Then, using the semiotic processes developed by Judith Irvine and Susan Gal as my main analytical framework (discussed in detail below), I analyse the mediational role of language ideology within said discourse. Altogether, this language ideological approach allows me to analyse how Yoon's language use was connected to social, political, and historical discourses of language, identity, and nation, thereby reproducing certain ideological understanding of such concepts. As such, using language ideology to analyse the media discourse about Yoon's language use will provide insight into not only the language ideological issues at hand, but also the broader social, political, and historical tensions such issues are embedded within.

Irvine and Gal identified three semiotic processes through which ideological linguistic differentiation, and thus social differentiation, occur: *iconization*, *fractal recursivity*, and *erasure*. Using these three processes, speakers construct ideological representations of linguistic differences to rationalise and justify the use of linguistic forms as indices of the social identity and activities of the people or groups who use them, thus providing a basis for social differentiation.[14] *Iconization* refers to the base semiotic process which transforms the sign relationship between linguistic forms and the social images with which they are linked into an iconic one.[15] As such, these linguistic forms appear to be iconic representations of the social groups or activities that said social image apply to, with this apparent qualitative similarity between the two serving to make the connection between them seem inherent and thus necessary. *Fractal recursivity* then is "the projection of an opposition, salient at some level of relationship, onto some other level," such as an intra-group opposition being projected onto an intergroup opposition, creating subordinate or superordinate sites of differentiation.[16] In a similar vein to Kroskrity's multiplicity, Irvine and Gal emphasise that these myriad oppositions "do not define fixed or stable social groups," but provide discursive and cultural resources which people use "to claim and thus attempt to create shifting 'communities,' identities, selves, and roles, at different levels of contrast, within a cultural field." Finally, *erasure* is the process of

[13] Woolard, "Language Ideology as a Field of Inquiry," 3.

[14] Judith T. Irvine and Susan Gal, "Language Ideology and Linguistic Differentiation," in *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Polities, and Identities*, ed. Paul V. Kroskrity (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 2000), 36-37.

[15] Irvine and Gal, "Language Ideology and Linguistic Differentiation," 37-38.

[16] Irvine and Gal, "Language Ideology and Linguistic Differentiation," 38.

"simplifying the sociolinguistic field" through ignoring or explaining away any facts or elements that are inconsistent with the ideological representation which has been constructed.[17] Such elements may persist despite being inconsistent because erasure generally only occurs when an element is seen as legitimately threatening.

In the major analytical chapter of this thesis, Chapter Three, I apply Irvine and Gal's framework of linguistic differentiation, with some modifications, to examine the language ideologies that underpinned the media's criticisms. In my application, I examine the differentiation of conceptual linguistic forms—the Korean language (in an idealised form) and English which is used within the Korean language (a comparatively non-ideal form)—within the media's rhetoric. As such, I have adapted Irvine and Gal's framework to analyse these conceptual linguistic forms as indices of social meaning, rather than indices of social identities. In my approach, I analyse how these processes constructed, reproduced and naturalised the social meanings attributed to Yoon's linguistic behaviour by the media to determine the perceived ideological oppositions that underpinned their criticisms. I expand on the specifics of my application of this framework in Chapter Three.

1.2 (Ethno)nationalist Korean

Linguistic nationalism, put in the most basic terms, is a political ideology of language that positions language, specifically a shared–common–national language, as the fundamental element of a nation. It is arguably the most important language ideology within Korea, with the Korean language being a salient national symbol, encompassing the nation itself, national identity, national spirit, national unity, and national pride. Korean linguistic nationalism (KLN) was baked into the very concept of the Korean nation since well before its political conception in 1948, and is still a central ideology in Korea today, being disseminated through political discourse, education, and—of course—media. Thus, it is with this understanding of KLN that I approach the following examination of KLN ideology with the aim of outlining how the Korean language was constructed as both fundamental to and a symbol of the Korean nation.

Linguistic nationalism has profound ideological roots, with the very concept of a 'national language' being instrumental to the formation of the modern concept of the nation.[18] As such, this section begins with a brief overview of how the concepts of nationalism and the

[17] Irvine and Gal, "Language Ideology and Linguistic Differentiation," 38-39.

[18] John E. Joseph, "'The Grammatical Being Called a Nation': History and the Construction of Political and Linguistic Nationalism," in *Language and History: Integrationist Perspectives*, ed. Nigel Love (Oxford: Taylor & Francis Group, 2006), 149-154, ProQuest Ebook Central.

nation were constructed—and how language was embedded within them—as well as how these concepts have been deconstructed to reveal their ideological foundations, mechanisms and functions, which will serve to contextualise KLN within the wider global discourse of nationalism, national identity and language.

Nationalism and Language

Nationalism centres on the belief that nations, as groups unified by a fundamental shared identity, are the natural and exclusive sources of political authority which should therefore govern themselves and hold sovereignty over their territories in the form of nation-states. The roots of nationalism can be traced back to the rhetoric of the American Revolution (1776) and First French Revolution (1789–98), through which revolutionists challenged the established socio-political contract between those who governed and those who were governed by placing political authority within the will of latter.[19] That is, the emergence of nationalism represented a conceptual reversal in the relationship between 'the people' and the 'state.' This shift was made possible through the concept of the 'nation,' which formed 'the people' into an essentially unified and sovereign community, changing the role of the state from ruling the people according to their own will, to representing the will of the people. However, while nations are presented as organic groups, formed through shared identity, the crucial aspect of the construction of nationalism—why it works—is that this shared identity, and thus the nation that is formed from it, are themselves politically and socially constructed. As discussed by Benedict Anderson, nations are "imagined political communities;" given that most members of a nation will never meet each other, the connection that serves as the basis for their national unity and natural political authority within the framework of nationalism is 'imagined' by its members.[20] Anderson argued this sense of national belonging and shared identity, rather than being fostered through actual communion among members, is shaped by shared narratives and symbols which are embedded within the imagination of the public through media which uses universally accessible vernacular languages, forming a mental image of communion instead.

Linguistic nationalism first emerged in the late-eighteenth century from Johann Gottfried Herder's idea of the 'spirit of the people,' later termed by others as '*Volksgeist*,' which he attributed as the organic source of a nation's unique shared identity and way of thinking, with the *Volksgeist* being naturally shaped by their shared 'national' language.[21] Herder

[19] Joseph, "'The Grammatical Being Called a Nation,'" 150-151.

[20] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 14-21, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[21] Carlton J. H. Hayes, "Contributions of Herder to the Doctrine of Nationalism," *The American Historical Review* 32, no. 4 (1927): 722-724, https://doi.org/10.2307/1837852.

conceptualised language as integral to not just the transmission of the shared national narratives and symbols which tie the members of a nation together, but also to the shaping of such narratives and symbols. According to Woolard, this "identification of a language with a people and a consequent diagnosis of peoplehood by the criterion of language," is a globally hegemonic language ideology that that was exported through colonialism, which is not to say that it is monolithic.[22] Linguistic nationalism manifests in varying degrees of intensity and overtness, and can be embedded within ethnic or civic nationalist discourses, expressed through multilingual or monolingual national language policies, and maintained through connection to other ideological concepts, such as anti-colonialism or democracy. However, regardless of how it manifests in any given nation, the national language will always be positioned as the fundamental source and marker of national identity and nationhood within the framework of linguistic nationalism.

Many scholars have problematised and deconstructed this notion that language and nations are naturally linked, in order to demonstrate that this connection is "not a natural fact but rather a historical, ideological construct."[23] In his book *Language and Symbolic Power*, Pierre Bourdieu applied his influential theory of *symbolic power* to linguistic nationalism to demonstrate how 'national languages' are constructed and imposed by the state through the officialisation, standardisation and propagation of said languages, with these now unitary languages universally representing an appropriately unitary nation.[24] As such, rather than being a naturally unified group, the 'linguistic community' that results from these processes, which purposefully maps onto the 'nation,' is the product of *symbolic domination* by the state, with the perception that national languages are natural or self-evident also being an effect of such domination. Similarly, Eric Hobsbawm has argued that national languages, as well as nations themselves, are invented traditions, which rather than being the culmination and expression of communities and shared identities formed naturally over time, are instead modern inventions that are created to serve certain interests—in this case, national unity, legitimacy and political authority—while being presented as traditional or timeless.[25] Thus, while languages are indeed salient sites of national identity formation and transmission, they too are constructed to serve nationalist interests and agendas. Considering this, Anderson's model has been criticised within language ideological research for taking the notion of a nation—however imagined—having a

[22] Woolard, "Language Ideology as a Field of Inquiry," 17.

[23] Woolard, "Language Ideology as a Field of Inquiry," 16.

[24] Pierre Bourdieu, *Language And Symbolic Power*, ed. John B. Thompson, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 43-65.

[25] Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 56-58, ProQuest Ebook Central.

vernacular or common language for granted without questioning how that language may have become common.[26] When all other notions of national commonality are imagined, the common 'national' language is likely imagined too.

One Language, One Minjok

Korean nationalism follows Johann Gottlieb Fichte's model of ethnolinguistic nationalism. While Fichte's model of nationalism built upon the Herdian concept of *Volksgeist*, it was also motivated by his desire to activate and embolden German national consciousness in response to the annexation of several German territories by the First French Empire (1804–1815).[27] As such, ethnolinguistic nationalism tends to be more politically assertive and exclusionary in nature than Herder's cultural organicist approach. At the time, Fichte presented the German language, as a 'natural' boundary on which the German nation could stake its claim to sovereignty using the following rhetoric:

> "[t]hose who speak the same language are already, before all human art, joined together by mere nature with a multitude of invisible ties; they understand one another and are able to communicate ever more clearly; they belong together and are naturally one, an indivisible whole. . . . The external limits of territories only follow as a consequence of this inner frontier, drawn by man's spiritual nature itself. . . . Thus lay the German nation, sufficiently united by a common language . . .."[28]

In line with Fichte's conceptualisation of ethnonationalism, linguistic nationalism in Korea emerged as part of the broader ethnonationalist discourse that was employed within Korea's nation-building efforts. From the late 19th century, Fichte's model of ethnonationalism was adopted and developed by reformist intellectuals in the Kingdom of Chosŏn (modern day South Korea and North Korea) who sought to distance and defend Chosŏn from the then waning hegemony of the Qing Empire and encroaching Japanese imperialism. Actively invoking ethnonationalism within their rhetoric, these reformists began referring to the people of Chosŏn as an 'ethnonation'—'*minjok*' 민족—and revived the myth of Tan'gun, the founder of the first Korean kingdom and progenitor of the Korean people, to propagate and historicise the ancient and distinct origins of the Korean people as a homogenous ethnic group.[29] Additionally, the colonisation of Chosŏn by the Japanese Empire in 1910 and the Japanese colonial

[26] Joseph, "'The Grammatical Being Called a Nation,'" 162-167.

[27] Joseph, "'The Grammatical Being Called a Nation,'" 152-154.

[28] Gregory Moore, ed., *Fichte: Addresses to the German Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 214-215, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[29] '*Minjok*" was borrowed from the Sino-Japanese neologism '*minzoku*' 民族, which translated the ethnicity-based conception of *Volksgeist*. Gi-Wook Shin, *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea: Genealogy, Politics, and Legacy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 4-6, 8-9.

administration's subsequent implementation of assimilationist policies motivated further development and intensification of Korean ethnonationalism as both employed rhetoric aimed at dismissing the notion of the Korean *minjok* and suppressing Korean identity, culture, religion and language.[30] In response to such rhetoric, Sin Ch'ae-ho, a celebrated Korean independence activist, proposed a new understanding of and approach to writing Korean history, known as Korean nationalist historiography 민족사학, that was intended to inspire nationalist sentiment and anti-colonial resistance by challenging traditional Sino-centric and colonial assimilationist historiographies.[31] Sin centred the historical narrative of the Korean *minjok* to present the Korean people as a distinct and ancient nation, with a shared bloodline, spirit and history, that had existed continuously since its founding by Tan'gun. According to Gi-Wook Shin, proponents of this primordial, ascriptive, homogeneous view of the Korean nation argued that Koreans' "contemporary sense of ethnic unity was the natural extension of historical experiences—the Korean *minjok* existed even if the word did not."[32] Thus, within these early ethnonationalist nation-building efforts, the Korean language was also constructed as a historical, natural and fundamental source of unity and legitimacy for the Korean nation, particularly through the efforts of language reformers.[33]

Within early KLN discourse, these language reformers made script and orthography reform the central focus of their movement. Since the Unified Silla period (668–935), a diglossic relationship existed between Literary Sinitic (*Hanmun* 한문), the high variety written language used in prestige domains, which was only accessible to the elite class, and vernacular Korean, the low variety spoken language.[34] Vernacular Korean did not have an independent script until 1443 when King Sejong created a more accessible native vernacular writing system (now known as *Hangŭl* 한글). Following Hangŭl's invention, a similar diglossic relationship was reproduced between Hanmun and Hangŭl, with Hangŭl only used for non-official or personal writing. Consequently, use of Hangŭl was not widespread and its orthography received little constructive attention. However, through the burgeoning discourse

[30] Daniel Pieper, "The Making of a Foreign National Language: Language Politics and the Impasse between Assimilationists and Language Nationalists in Colonial Korea," *Journal of Korean Studies* 24, no. 1 (2019): 64, https://doi.org/10.1215/21581665-7258055.

[31] Henry H. Em, "Minjok as a Modern and Democratic Construct: Sin Ch'aeho's Historiography," in *Colonial Modernity in Korea*, ed. Gi-Wook Shin and Michael Robinson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999), 339-343, https://doi.org/10.1163/9781684173334_014.

[32] Shin, *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea*, 5.

[33] Ross King, "Nationalism and Language Reform in Korea: The Questione della Lingua in Precolonial Korea," in *Nationalism and the Construction of Korean Identity*, ed. Hyung Il Pai and Timothy R. Tangherlini (Berkley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1998), 47-49.

[34] Ross King, "North and South Korea," in *Language and National Identity in Asia*, ed. Andrew Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 204, https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780199267484.003.0010.

of KLN, language reformers challenged the hegemony of Hanmun, and promoted the propagation and standardisation of Hangŭl as the national script, *Kungmun* 국문.[35] Chu Si-gyŏng, a leading figure in the language reform movement and a seminal scholar of modern Korean linguistics, often invoked Fichtean style rhetoric in his writing, as did other central figures of the movement.

> "Thus, in accordance with the command of Heaven, it is normal for a certain race to live in a certain region and . . . speak a certain language. In this way, a natural social group forms a nation, and the independence of each is determined. . . . Ever since Tan'gun founded our nation, a sacred orthodoxy has been handed down over more than four thousand years-our own, special, indigenous Korean language. The genius sage King Sejong was concerned that our Korean language had no appropriate writing system and invented the twenty-eight letters of the Korean alphabet. ... This is our own, special, indigenous Korean script."[36]

While there was debate about whether Hangŭl should be used independently as a pure Kungmun or in a mixed-script with Hanmun ('*Kukhanmun*' 국한문) using *Hancha* 한자 (the Chinese characters Hanmun was written with), reformers framed moving away from exclusive us of Hanmun as a necessary process for affirming the distinct, independent, modern national identity of the people of Chosŏn.[37] Likewise, efforts to standardise the orthography of Hangŭl, such as developing spelling and word boundary conventions, became efforts to strengthen the nation and safeguard its independence.

During the colonial period (1910-1945), KLN became further embedded as a central feature of Korean nationalism as assimilationist policies actively targeted the Korean language. According to Daniel Pieper, there was a "close equation drawn between the Japanese language, the Japanese spirit, and true imperial citizenry" in Imperial Japan.[38] As such, Japanese administrators understood the power that language could hold as a symbol and foundation of nationhood and viewed linguistic assimilation as crucial to the process of assimilation itself. Consequently, during the colonial period, language reformers doubled down on their efforts to establish a standardised Hangŭl orthography and began framing Korean not only as the essence of the nation, but as a symbol of independence, resistance and liberation. However, as Young-Key Kim-Renaud notes, "[t]he Japanese were very much aware of this linguistic symbolism and considered Korean linguists and language teachers as dangerous agitators and rebels that

[35] King, "North and South Korea," 204-205.

[36] King, "Nationalism and Language Reform in Korea," 47-48.

[37] King, "Nationalism and Language Reform in Korea," 35-37.

[38] Pieper, "The Making of a Foreign National Language," 67.

had to be suppressed."[39] By the end of the colonial period, the Korean language and script were relentlessly suppressed, which eventually culminated in the incarceration and subsequent interrogation and torture of over thirty Korean linguists and language activists in 1942.[40] While this event did essentially bring Korean language reform efforts to a halt until the end of the colonial period in 1945, the ultimate effect of this event was that it turned language reformers into national heroes and martyrs and further entrenched KLN within the Korean national consciousness. Thus, KLN discourse positioned the Korean language as not only a source of national identity but a site of anti-colonial resistance.

In the almost century since Korea's national liberation at the end of World War II, KLN-based movements and government campaigns have continued to have a recurring presence within Korean politics and society, maintaining the ideological dominance of KLN until today. Motivated in large part by the low literacy rates of their population, finalising and promoting the use of a standard form of Hangŭl were some of the first policy objectives that were pursued following liberation in the form of nationwide language education and literacy programs.[41] According to Pieper, "[t]he repressive nature of colonial-era language policies . . . created an outpouring of patriotic sentiment and public discourse, especially surrounding the previously banned Korean language and script . . .."[42] As such, the rhetoric and pedagogy of these programs was heavily influenced by KLN, with "[t]he learning of Korean and Hangŭl . . . [becoming] a hallowed nationalist obligation so that never again [would] the identity of the Korean *minjok* be threatened."[43] In 1976, President Park Chung-hee reinvigorated these purification efforts with the National Language Purification Movement 국어순화운동, which promoted the purification of foreign elements from the Korean language as a means of reinforcing a homogenous Korean ethnonational identity to engender a deeper sense of national unity that would bolster Park's developmentalist policies.[44] At the time, the motivation for the Movement was characterised in The New York Times as follows:

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[39] Young-Key Kim-Renaud, "Korean Language, Power, and National Identity," in *The Two Koreas and Their Global Engagements*, ed. Andrew David Jackson (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 191, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-90761-7_8.

[40] King, "North and South Korea," 208.

[41] King, "North and South Korea," 210-217.

[42] Daniel Pieper, "The Attraction and Repulsion of Empire: Education and the Linguistic Landscape in Post-Liberation South Korea, 1945-1950," in *Manshū oyobi Chōsen kyōikushi: kokusaiteki na apuro-chi* [Education history in Manchuria and Korean: An international approach], ed. Andrew Hall and Jin Tingshi (Fukuoka: Hana Shoin, 2016), 303.

[43] Pieper, "The Attraction and Repulsion of Empire," 305-309.

[44] Seung Woo Yang, "Reconceptualization of English Ideology in Globalizing South Korea," (MA thesis, University of Hawai'i, 2018), 20-25, http://hdl.handle.net/10125/62161.

> "Behind the purification movement, according to both Koreans and Westerners [in Korea], are national pride and the continuing search for national identity. Korea has for centuries been under the domination of China or Japan and to a lesser degree, the incursions of America and the West. The purification drive also appears to be an outgrowth of other controversies that have long plagued the Korean language. In their written language the Koreans have swung back and forth between using Chinese ideographs and the native Hangul syllabary."[45]

As I mentioned in the introduction, the current Framework Act on the National Language, first passed in 2005, is also based in KLN ideology. The Act is a comprehensive, systematic and ideologically consistent framework that centralises the authority, planning and implementation for all language-related government activities. Article 2 (core ideology 기본 이념) of the acts demonstrates its basis in KLN:

> "The State and the people shall deeply recognize that the national language is the nation's foremost cultural heritage and the driving force of culture creation, and exert every effort in developing the national language, thereby contributing to the establishment of [our] national cultural identity and proper preservation of the national language, so that it may be inherited by future generations."[46]

As this policy and the various language movements and campaigns that have preceded it (only a few of which are summarised here) demonstrate, the dominance of KLN within Korean national and linguistic consciousness is an enduring feature of Korea's national history.

Imagined Purity and the Cult of Hangŭl

Korea's ethnicity-centred brand of linguistic nationalism is often considered to be particularly zealous and exclusionary, a characterisation that is exemplified by two major components of KLN, linguistic purism and script nationalism. As defined by George Thomas, "[p]urism is the manifestation of desire on the part of the speech community . . . to preserve a language from, or rid it of, putative foreign elements, or other elements held to be undesirable . . .."[47] KLN purism includes purification of both external and internal elements, such as the removal of foreign lexical items and the subordination of regional varieties through the institutionalisation of a 'standard' variety, though I will focus on the former here. In the case of KLN, we can think of linguistic purification as a process of exclusionary homogenisation, whereby a completely homogenous linguistic form, made up of only the 'purest' elements, that perfectly maps onto a

[45] Richard Halloran, "Seoul, to 'Purify' Language, Acts Against Foreign Words," *The New York Times*, May 21, 1976, archived at https://www.nytimes.com/1976/05/21/archives/seoul-to-purify-language-acts-against-foreign-words.html.

[46] See Appendix, section 1 for original text. Kugŏ Chŏngch'aek Kwa [National Language Policy Division], *Kugŏ Kibon Pŏp* [Framework Act on the National Language], no. 20913 (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, amended March 8, 2024), https://www.law.go.kr/법령/국어기본법.

[47] George Thomas, *Linguistic Purism* (Harlow: Longman, 1991), 12.

homogenous group, i.e., the Korean *minjok—one* language, *one* nation—is cultivated through the exclusion of undesirable elements.

As Koh Jongsok wrote in his influential book *Infected Korean Language, Purity versus Hybridity*, "the struggle against foreign languages . . . has been waged on two fronts," the first of which was the Kungmun versus Kukhanmun debate, with the proponents of Kungmun-only writing wanting to purge Hancha from the national script to make it *purely* Korean.[48] Owing to purist rhetoric which linked Hangŭl-only writing (Kungmun) not only to nationalist values but democratic values too, and the general preferability of having a uniform writing system and orthography, this purification effort has been successful overall, with Hangŭl-only writing being a well-established norm, though some use of Hancha does persist.[49] The second, and overall more problematic, external purification effort is the purification of foreign lexical items from the Korean lexicon, some of the iterations of which I discussed above. There have been attempts to purge Chinese-origin, but due to their significant abiding presence and naturalisation within the Korean lexicon, even being their own lexical category—Sino-Korean—the results of these efforts have been meagre.[50] Comparatively, because Japanese elements represented "a more concentrated discourse directed against a concretized adversary—imperial Japan—and its post-liberation cultural manifestations," efforts to purge these elements have been much more effective.[51] Efforts to purify elements from European languages, the "prime culprit" being English, have fared much better than those targeted at Sino-Korean; as Koh explains, because they are so easily identifiable and distinguishable, ". . . it was easier for them to provoke feelings of nationalist rejection and revulsion ."[52] However, Koh predicted that the extent of English interference was likely to increase, with attempts to block it likely becoming ineffective as "the borders around the Korean language . . . [grew] gradually lower and more porous;" a prediction that certainly rings true now, less than two decades later.[53]

Described as "a cult of the native writing system" by King, Korean script nationalism takes the framework of ethnolinguistic nationalism and applies it to the national script,

[48] Kungmun refers to the 'national script,' but in this context it refers Hangŭl-only writing and Kukhanmum refers to mixed Hangŭl and Hancha writing. Koh, "Contamination, Infiltration, Hybridity," 89-90.

[49] Koh, "Contamination, Infiltration, Hybridity," 89.

[50] Koh, "Contamination, Infiltration, Hybridity," 91-93.

[51] Pieper, "The Attraction and Repulsion of Empire," 316-317.

[52] Koh, "Contamination, Infiltration, Hybridity," 90, 93.

[53] Koh, "Contamination, Infiltration, Hybridity," 93.

Hangŭl.[54] In a way, I have already discussed Korea's script nationalism a few times in this chapter; the Kungmun versus Hanmun versus Kukhanmun debates, the language reformers' anti-colonialist efforts to standardise the Korean–Hangŭl orthography, and the promotion of Hangŭl as a national symbol that would protect the Korean *minjok* during the post-liberation literacy campaign were all founded on script nationalist ideology. For example, according to Pieper, the legislation of Hangŭl as the official and sole national language in 1948 reflected language ideological sentiments which "equated Hangŭl usage with independence from both Chinese toadyism and Japanese imperialism."[55] Yi Ŭng-ho characterised such sentiments as a continuation of colonial era script nationalist discourse, writing, the ". . . campaign for the unification and propagation of Hangŭl was suppressed by imperial Japan because it was actually a campaign for the autonomy and freedom of the Korean nation."[56] As I also discussed earlier, Hangŭl, unlike most scripts, was deliberately invented and designed for the Korean language. For this reason, while Hangŭl may not be ancient or natural, as the Korean *minjok* and language are claimed to be, the fact that it was purpose-built for the Korean language (by a Korean king no less), based on linguistic principles, such as the shape of consonants being correlated to their place and manner of articulation, has fostered a "collective Korean linguistic imagination" which sees the Korean script as "superior to all others."[57] As such, King argues, "Korean 'script nationalism' manifests itself above all in an almost cult-like respect and even worship-like reverence for both the invention of Korean script and for King Sejong," including through ". . . repeated assertions and celebrations of the 'superiority' of [Hangŭl]." Hangŭl Day is an example of this reverence, with its stated purpose being "to introduce the originality and scientific composition of Hangŭl at home and overseas and to enhance nationwide consciousness of love for Hangŭl" 정부는 한글의 독창성과 과학성을 국내외에 널리 알리고 범국민적 한글 사랑 의식을 높이기 위하여 . . ..[58] A final key aspect of Korean script nationalism noted by King and Koh is the common conflation of Hangŭl with the Korean language (*han'gukŏ* 한국어), with people often using 'Hangŭl' even in cases where they are

[54] Ross King, "Korean Linguistic Nationalism is Strong, but Korea is Not Investing Properly in Foreign Learners of Korean," interview by *Melbourne Asia Review* (October 29, 2024), https://doi.org/10.37839/MAR2652-550X20.3.

[55] Pieper, "The Attraction and Repulsion of Empire," 312.

[56] Yi Ŭng-ho, "Kwangbok ihu ŭi Hangŭl Undong" [The Hangŭl Movement since liberation], *Nara Sarang* 26, (1977), 46, quoted in Pieper, "The Attraction and Repulsion of Empire," 314.

[57] King, "North and South Korea," 221.

[58] Kugŏ Chŏngch'aek Kwa, *Kugŏ Kibon Pŏp*, che 20 cho (Hangŭl Nal) [article 20 (Hangŭl Day)].

only referring to the spoken language—a conflation which Koh argues has indirectly, but meaningfully, contributed to KLN being "less benign and tolerant than it could be."[59]

The linking of these ideologies of the Korean language with broader ethnonational narratives of ancestral homogeneity, anti-colonial resistance and liberation, the ever present external threat of foreign powers, and the unique, timeless spirit of the Korean *minjok* has cultivated a brand of nationalism in which language is so deeply embedded, not only within nationalist discourse itself, but within Korean people's understanding of their history, identity and place within the world. Moreover, similarly to the ethnonational narratives of the Korean *minjok*, the presentation of the Korean language as an ancient, intrinsic, unique, unifying force exists within a web of historical, mythical, sensationalist, and faithful discourses which interact to construct, reproduce and naturalise the ideology of KLN. To be sure, Korean linguistic homogeneity can be traced back to at least the beginning of the Koryŏ dynasty (918), with the continuous use of historic Korean languages attested since the late 7th century, though he notes that specific details of the linguistic environments that existed on the peninsula before the Chosŏn dynasty are poorly documented.[60] However, as Koh points out, this homogeneity—then and now—is not absolute, because the Korean language, like any language, is not a unitarily definable thing but an amalgamation of different and yet interconnected historical, social, regional and personal varieties. And yet, within the purist rhetoric of KLN proponents, there is this appeal to some 'pure' form of Korean—as Koh terms it, this "obsession with imagined purity"—that transcends language to reinforce an overarching sense of national homogeneity and purity, with both language and nation needing to be protected from that which could corrupt them.[61] Furthermore, as King discusses, in a similar sense to how Hangŭl is conflated with han'gugŏ, the script nationalist discourse of superiority has spread from its specific application to the 'scientifically superior' composition of Hangŭl, to the superiority of the Korean language, to the superiority of the community.[62] And again, this sense of superiority itself reinforces the exclusionary rhetoric of linguistic purity, and *vice versa*; both of which are placed with the nationalist narrative of endangerment that galvanises the rejection and devaluation of that which is linguistically foreign.

[59] King, "North and South Korea," 221; Koh, "Contamination, Infiltration, Hybridity," 86.

[60] King, "North and South Korea," 202; Koh, "Contamination, Infiltration, Hybridity," 94-95.

[61] Koh, "Contamination, Infiltration, Hybridity." 99, 104.

[62] King, "North and South Korea," 219, 221.

1.3 Linguistic Capital, Class, and English

Despite the image of Korea being a monolingual country that has been constructed and heavily promoted through KLN discourse, English holds a significant position within Korean society, not only as a feature of the Korean language and linguistic landscape, but also as a second language. English is the most common second language among native Korean speakers and has been a required subject for students from the third year of elementary school to the first year of high school since 1997, though it has been a feature of the national curriculum since 1955.[63] This means that most Korean nationals under the age of 40 are not just familiar with English but have formally studied it to some extent. Further, as I mentioned in the introduction, English proficiency has even become a criterion for getting into many universities and companies. Overall, given the position of KLN as a dominant ideology in Korea, the significance and increasing prevalence of English within Korea's linguistic landscape, second language education and the Korean lexicon may seem confounding. However, as I discuss in this section, English also holds significant social value within Korean society due to neoliberal ideologies of language, which have encouraged this national fixation on the language.

Globalisation, Neoliberalism, and 'English Fever'

English was first introduced to Korea during the late 19th century in Chosŏn, with English language education soon following. Following the establishment of diplomatic relations with the United States (US) and United Kingdom in the early 1880s, the government established a language school to train interpreters, which marked the beginning of the emergence of several English language and English-medium schools throughout the end of the century.[64] Moreover, during this time period, a small number of Korean students also began going abroad to study English in US higher education institutions.[65] There was a drop off during the colonial period, but after liberation, English education quickly became a focus of the Korean government once again, now spurred along by the presence of English-speaking United Nations and US troops on the peninsula, with English even becoming compulsory in secondary schooling.[66] As such,

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[63] Rha Hae-sung and Park Si-soo, "60% of Koreans Speaks a Foreign Language at 'Casual Conversation' Level: Poll," *The Korea Times* (Seoul), November 26, 2017, https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/southkorea/society/20171126/60-of-koreans-speaks-a-foreign-language-at-casual-conversation-level-poll; Bok-Myung Chang, "Korea's English Education Policy Innovations to Lead the Nation into the Globalized World," *Journal of Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics* 13, no. 1 (2009): 88, https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ921027.

[64] Jamie Shinhee Lee, "English in Korea," in *The Handbook of Asian Englishes*, ed. Kingsley Bolton, Werner Botha, and Andy Kirkpatrick (Newark: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2020), 587, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[65] Michael J. Seth, *Education Fever: Society, Politics, and The Pursuit of Schooling in South Korea* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 15.

[66] Lee, "English in Korea," 587; Joseph Sung-Yul Park, *The Local Construction of a Global Language: Ideologies of English in South Korea* (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2009), 37, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110214079.

Joseph Park notes that while English was viewed as a tool for upward social mobility even during the late 19th century, its importance was further emphasised and diffused throughout Korean society following liberation because of the significant presence and political involvement of the US military.[67] In particular, English proficiency played an important role in the formation of the new Korean government, with US-educated elites gaining prestigious positions in the government due in large part to their ability to communicate with US officials.[68] As such, English has been a language of importance and power within Korea since before its inception.

The intensification of English's significance within Korean society to where we see it today, can be traced back to the 1980s when Korea began its transformation into a neoliberal, global economy. From the 1980s, the Korean government began transitioning from a state-controlled economic system towards a more market-oriented one, pushing the Korean economy and nation towards greater liberalisation and global integration.[69] As a part of this transition, the government encouraged citizens to learn English and looked for opportunities for the nation to engage with global spaces, such as hosting the 1986 Asian Games and 1988 Olympics.[70] These efforts were taken to another level with the 1995 'Globalisation Declaration' 세계화 선언, which, through its goal of improving the nation's global competitiveness, emphasised education, particularly English education, as necessary for Koreans to become competitive global citizens.[71] However, though the declaration led to increased economic neoliberalisation, the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, further accelerated processes of neoliberalisation as the government rapidly restructured the economy to become more open to global markets, as was required as part of the bailout package they received from the International Monetary Fund.[72] These periods of rapid neoliberalisation and globalisation had a significant effect on Korean society, transforming Korean workers into 'human resources' 인재, ideal neoliberal subjects that can competitively meet global standards.[73] Furthermore, as the Crisis led to mass layoffs

[67] Park, *The Local Construction of a Global Language*, 37.

[68] Pieper, "The Attraction and Repulsion of Empire," 323.

[69] Michael D. Smith and Kim Donghwa, "English and Linguistic Imperialism: A Korean Perspective in the Age of Globalization," *The Journal of Mirae English Language and Literature* 20, no. 2 (2015): 339, ResearchGate.

[70] Lee, "English in Korea," 587.

[71] Hyunjung Shin and Byungmin Lee, "'English Divide' and ELT in Korea: Towards Critical ELT Policy and Practices," in *Second Handbook of English Language Teaching*, ed. Xuesong Gao (Cham: Springer International Publishing AG, 2019), 76-77, ProQuest Ebook Central; Shin, *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea*, 212.

[72] Park, *The Local Construction of a Global Language*, 57.

[73] Shin and Lee, "'English Divide' and ELT in Korea," 77-78.

and record unemployment rates, the Korean public began to view globalisation as an inevitability, the avoidance of which would only lead to more suffering.[74]

Through this increased sense of necessity to become competitive within global markets, especially the neoliberal transformation of workers into 'human resources,' English became an essential skill of the ideal neoliberal subject. As stated by Joseph Park and Adrienne Lo, "[u]nder neoliberalism, language and communication are no longer seen as fundamentally linked with identity, and instead increasingly viewed as a detachable, malleable, and marketable resource or skill."[75] In this sense, languages become forms of linguistic capital, with "language learning [becoming] skill production, or [a] project of entrepreneurial self-development to increase the individual's employability in the job market."[76] In the case of Korea, English is understood as an important form of linguistic capital which supports "individual and national advancement in an era of neoliberalism and English-dominated globalization."[77] As such, while English is not needed for everyday communication in Korean society, "[t]he neoliberal celebration of English as a powerful means of enabling both nations and individuals to successfully compete on the global stage has resulted in an increasing emphasis on English and a growing investment in English language education."[78] That being said, it should also be noted that this association of English with global markets and focus on global competitiveness tends to be rather US-centric. A 2021 study of middle class Korean mothers' ideologies of English education found that they specifically conceptualised the importance of English in terms of its use in the US, as the most globally dominant country, rather than its status as global medium of communication (*lingua franca*); "[t]hey thought that acquiring the language of the US would bring their children power and benefit them in terms of social mobility in a US-centric world."[79] Regardless of the specific associations of English's 'global' value, this association and the neoliberal understanding of English that it exists in, has led to the fervent pursuit of English

[74] Park, *The Local Construction of a Global Language*, 57.

[75] Joseph Sung-Yul Park and Adrienne Lo, "Transnational South Korea as a Site for a Sociolinguistics of Globalization: Markets, Timescales, Neoliberalism," *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 16, no. 2 (2012): 150, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9841.2011.00524.x.

[76] Shin and Lee, "'English Divide' and ELT in Korea," 75.

[77] Chris K. Bacon and So Yoon Kim, "'English is My Only Weapon': Neoliberal Language Ideologies and Youth Metadiscourse in South Korea," *Linguistics and Education* 48, (2018): 10, 75, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2018.09.002.

[78] Lee Jin Choi, "English as an Important but Unfair Resource: University Students' Perception of English and English Language Education in South Korea," *Teaching in Higher Education* 29, no. 1 (2024): 146, https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2021.1965572.p.

[79] Chunhwa Lee, "Hidden ideologies in elite English education in South Korea," *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 42, no. 3 (2021): 226-227, https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2020.1865383.

within Korean society as a perceived necessary form of linguistic capital within an increasingly globalised world.

This intense pursuit of English, or 'English fever,' permeates all levels of Korean society. Coined by Stephen Krashen, the term 'English fever' refers to "the overwhelming desire to (1) acquire English and (2) ensure that one's children acquire English, as a second or foreign language."[80] According to Jin-kyu Park, English fever in Korea is an extension of a larger phenomenon commonly referred to as 'education fever' 교육열.[81] Described by Michael Seth in his book on the phenomenon as the "national obsession with the attainment of education," education fever comes from the diffusion of a traditional Confucian view of education as "a means of self-cultivation and a way of achieving status and power," coupled with "new egalitarian ideas introduced from the West," i.e. the neoliberal conception of education as a meritocratic "site for human capital development."[82] Drawing from this established academic zeal and applying its focus directly onto English, for the above reasons, English fever thus positions English as a necessity for socioeconomic mobility within Korean society irrespective of its global value, which has led to extreme levels of investment in English education. According to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Data and Statistics, English education ranked first in average monthly private education expenditure, with a figure of 264,000 KRW per student (roughly 270 AUD, or 180 USD) in 2024, accounting for 32% of total spending (823,000 KRW).[83] As demonstrated in Chunhwa Lee's 2023 study on English language ideologies and social class, "English competence is regarded as a resource for prestige, privilege, power, and gate-keeping in Korea," with families prioritising investing in their children's English education regardless of socioeconomic status.[84] Further, even in cases where students want to pursue careers with no professional need for English proficiency or global engagement, English is viewed as necessary for following professional aspirations, either because it is a requirement to enter university (as was the case for a participant in Lee's study who wanted to become a Korean history teacher), or because it improves one's chances of getting into a better company.[85] In the case of the latter, the motivation is directly tied to students desire to use

[80] Stephen D. Krashen, *English Fever* (Taipei City: Crane Publishing, 2006), 1.

[81] Jin-kyu Park, "'English Fever' in South Korea: Its History and Symptoms," *English Today* 25, no. 1 (2009): 55, https://doi.org/10.1017/S026607840900008X.

[82] Seth, *Education Fever*, 9.

[83] Ministry of Data and Statistics, *Private Education Expenditures Survey of Elementary, Middle and High School Students in 2024* (Ministry of Data and Statistics, 2025), section 4, https://mods.go.kr/board.es?mid=a20111020000&bid=11758&act=view&list_no=436035&tag=&nPage=1&ref_bid=.

[84] Chunhwa Lee, "Language Ideology and Social Class in Korean Society," *The Journal of Linguistic Science* 104, (2023): 103, http://dx.doi.org/10.21296/jls.2023.03.104.89.2023.

[85] Lee, "Language Ideology and Social Class in Korean Society," 101-102.

English as a means for upward socioeconomic mobility.[86] Hence, English's value within Korea has surpassed its global value to become a form of linguistic capital which is necessary not only because it used in international business and communication, but because of the advantage it provides within the domestic job market and higher education.

The Mirage of Meritocracy and Globalisation

The value placed on English as a necessary skill for achieving success, both domestically and internationally, has drawn significant criticism from academics and the Korean public alike, related to class and educational inequality and the threat English poses to the Korean language. Multiple studies have found that English in Korea today has become a marker of class that reproduces inequality within Korea as access to English education opportunities is determined by the economic resources people have access to.[87] In their critical analysis of Korean English language teaching policies, Hyunjung Shin and Byungmin Lee discussed the term "English Divide," which emerged in the mid-2000s to refer to English's role in "increasing social polarization," based on the disparity in access to so-called "good" English and the importance of English in accessing higher education and well-paying jobs.[88] Shin and Lee note that the Korean public have been aware of English fever's role in class reproduction for the past two decades. However, because Koreans continue to believe in the neoliberal "promise of English," that 'good' English will "guarantee access to good universities and middle-class jobs," and that such English is equally achieved through personal effort, they continue to invest excessively in English education.[89] And yet, when debates on the proposal of English replacing Korean as the nation's official language, based on the same neoliberal ideologies of English, emerged following the Asian financial crisis, on the whole, there was major backlash to the idea, spearheaded by KLN sentiment.[90]

In his book *The Local Construction of a Global Language*, Joseph Sung-Yul Park attempted to explain English's contradictory position within public discourse through analysis of how English is talked about, including within the discourse surrounding the 'Official English debate.' From this analysis, Park identified three ideologies of English—*necessitation*, *self-depreciation*, and *externalisation*—which both detractors and proponents of English's

[86] Lee, "Language Ideology and Social Class in Korean Society," 101.

[87] Chunhwa Lee, "Conflicting Ideologies of English in Korea: Study of Bilingual Adolescents," *Linguistics and Education* 48, (2018): 24, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2018.08.006; Choi, "English as an Important but Unfair Resource," 147; Shin and Lee, "'English Divide' and ELT in Korea," 73-74.

[88] Shin and Lee, "'English Divide' and ELT in Korea," 80.

[89] Shin and Lee, "'English Divide' and ELT in Korea," 82.

[90] Park, *The Local Construction of a Global Language*, 91.

increasing dominance within Korean society engage with, and which ultimately serve to legitimise and maintain said dominance. The ideology of *necessitation* constructs English as a necessity for all Koreans, the basis of which I have just outlined.[91] *Self-depreciation* is the view that Koreans are universally bad at English, meaning they will always be deficient compared to native English speakers, both in terms of linguistic capital and power. Park notes that by positioning *all* Koreans as bad English speakers, despite this being a clearly false generalisation, self-depreciation acts as a form of erasure, explaining away and thereby erasing the causes of those differences, such as economic and education inequality. Consequently, the combination of the ideologies of necessitation and self-depreciation provides the justification for the Korean public's extreme investment in English education. Conversely, the ideology of *externalisation* provides a basis for the critique of English's dominance by employing KLN rhetoric to present English as the language of the Other, and also the legitimisation of the ideology of self-depreciation by emphasising English's foreignness to Koreans. [92] Therefore, while externalisation is used by detractors, it also does not challenge the ideological bases of necessitation and self-depreciation, leaving the dominance of English and its empirical negative social effects unchecked, a process which Park refers to as 'ideology pooling,' where opposing viewpoints are expressed through a shared framework, thus making seemingly contradictory ideologies compatible.[93] and of these three ideologies, the seeming contradictory ideologies of Korean and English may not challenge each other

In his own examination of the Official English debate, Jae Jung Song problematises Park's ideologies of English for leaving the root of Korea's English fever unchecked. Song argues that while Park acknowledges the role of English in the reproduction of social inequality and the role of the ideologies of English in rationalising, or erasing, such inequalities, he presents these inequalities as a consequence of the interaction of the three ideologies when they are the cause, specifically in the case of necessitation and self-depreciation.[94] As such, Song presents English as a "'mechanism of elimination' designed, under cover of meritocracy, to conserve the established social order in South Korea . . . [which] has been 'conveniently' recruited, in the name of globalization, to reproduce and rationalize the 'hierarchy of power relations' . . .."[95] According to Song, Koreans believe that success within their society is based

[91] Park, *The Local Construction of a Global Language*, 74.

[92] Park, *The Local Construction of a Global Language*, 77.

[93] Park, *The Local Construction of a Global Language*, 68.

[94] Jae Jung Song, "English as an Official Language in South Korea: Global English or Social Malady," *Language Problems & Language Planning* 35, no. 1 (2011): 48, https://doi.org/10.1075/lplp.35.1.03son.

[95] Song, "English as an Official Language in South Korea," 36.

on merit, especially educational attainment, which is achieved through personal effort, commitment and ability. However, he argues, this meritocracy "is more apparent than real . . ., since in reality educational attainment depends on how far parents' wallets can go to meet the cost of children's 'good education'"—it is an "ideology of merit."[96] Education then, reproduces this "meretricious system of merit," because if 'good education' is achieved solely based on individual factors, then their success or failure cannot be attributed to structural factors, such as wealth. Furthermore, this ideology of merit is even more meretricious in the case of English because not only is the attainment of 'good English' viewed similarly to that of 'good education,' but 'good English' is treated as a requirement to achieve success or good job performance even when it is irrelevant. Furthermore, because "the hegemony of English is a global, not local phenomenon," the ideology of merit is able to present the cause of English-based inequality as external rather than internal.[97] As such, Song argues that "[t]he (growing) importance of English in South Korea has not been as much engendered by globalization as it has been resorted to as a subterfuge to conceal where in society the responsibility for inequality (in education) lies," that being "the privileged classes and politicians who fail or refuse to recognize South Korea's "obsession with English" as what it really is:" a social malady.[98]

The Negotiation of Fundamental Korean and Essential English

As both Park and Song's examinations of the ideological factors of English's place within Korean society reveal, while English holds a privileged position within Korea, it is also the source of a lot of tension regarding education, class and national identity. But, despite Koreans' awareness of this tension and its co-constituent sociocultural effects, these ideological beliefs and mechanisms naturalise and reproduce themselves, leading Korean people to feel like they have no choice but to participate or otherwise face the socioeconomic consequences of failing to do so—not getting into a prestigious university that will provide them with greater employment opportunities, or being barred from the possibility of entering larger companies—they are forced to be ambivalent. And so, whether the ideology of necessitation is the effect or cause of English's role in class reproduction, in the shared social consciousness of the Korean nation, English is an essential skill. The issue then is how do we square this up with the media's criticism of Yoon, who's linguistic behaviour exists within and seemingly reflects this sociolinguistic context? If Korean is fundamental to being Korean, but English is essential to (socioeconomic) survival within Korean society, is it not necessary for them to coexist?

[96] Song, "English as an Official Language in South Korea," 44-45.

[97] Song, "English as an Official Language in South Korea," 49.

[98] Song, "English as an Official Language in South Korea," 36, 49.

The thing is, Korean and English and the ideological bases of their value within Korean society do coexist, because they must; Korean is the national language, the vehicle of everyday communication and native language of most people in Korea, and English is a form of linguistic capital which people invest in for that reason. We even see how the negotiation of the contradictory positions of Korean and English are made possible through ideology pooling within Park's three ideologies. KLN criticism of English not only helps to reinforce the externalisation of English, which reinforces the ideological frameworks of self-depreciation and necessitation, but the criticism itself leaves the negative socioeconomic effects and/or causes of these ideologies of English unchallenged. Consequently, KLN criticism does not meaningfully engage with these issues because its fundamental impetus comes from a different ideological framework with different principles of what makes a language valuable, and crucially, what makes other languages harmful. Thus, going forward into the rest of this study, the question is not just why the media criticised Yoon's linguistic behaviour, but whether their criticism challenges the ideologies of English that it seems to reproduce.

CHAPTER TWO:
IS IT 'NORMAL' TO SPEAK LIKE THAT?

Upon seeing that Yoon was being criticised by the media for how he was speaking, one might think it must be because he was using language in a remarkable way—the way he was speaking must not be 'normal.' Why else would the focus be on *how* he spoke instead of *what* he was saying? So, was it 'normal'? That is essentially the question this chapter endeavours to answer, with some caveats. Obviously, 'normal' is a word which is loaded with value judgements that often tend to be moralistic, reductionist, and prescriptive in nature, especially within discourse about language. In fact, it is within discourse about language as it appears in regular conversation, educational settings, and public discourse, that metalinguistic evaluations of language structure are often loaded with these kinds of value judgements through metapragmatics, as it is in the case of the media discourse about Yoon's linguistic behaviour. Thus, it is by no means my intention to evaluate whether or not Yoon's linguistic behaviour was 'normal' in some absolute sense, because it does not exist. Instead, the aim of this chapter is to place Yoon's linguistic behaviour within the context of common language practices regarding the use of English within the Korean language. In this sense, I use 'normal' to refer these common language practices in an observational sense, though I acknowledge that what is 'common' is also reductive by virtue of being a generalisation. Moreover, through contextualising Yoon's linguistic behaviour in this way, this chapter attempts to determine where the gaps were between Yoon's use of English and the media's characterisation of how he used English.

To address these aims, this chapter is divided into three sections. First, I provide an overview of how and to what extent English is incorporated within and used as a part of the Korean language to establish an understanding of what is 'normal.' Second, I examine Yoon's linguistic behaviour to determine how he was using English.[1] This section employs a corpus-based approach to identify instances of English use within a selection of Yoon's official speeches during his presidency, which are then analysed qualitatively to determine the extent to which Yoon's use of English is consistent with relevant common language practices. The final section examines how the media characterised Yoon's use of English—through

[1] The use of English-origin words or lexical material within another language is not the same as 'using English.' However, for simplicity in referencing the 'use of English words of lexical material within Korean language use,' as is the focus of this chapter, I use a mixture of 'using English,' 'use of English,' or 'English use' to refer to these cases.

metalinguistic evaluation—and synthesises these characterisations with the findings from the first two sections.

2.1 English as a Part of the Korean Language

There is a significant precedent for the incorporation of English-origin lexical material into the Korean language in various forms and degrees of transmutation. As I discussed in the previous chapter, since the 1980s, English language education has boomed in Korea, causing English to become the most common second language among the Korean population. Moreover, in the time since then, Korean people have increasingly been able to casually engage with English-language media, especially as technological advances have precipitated the creation and rapid proliferation of online media, not to regularly engaging with English within the Korean linguistic landscape too. As such, many Korean people are relatively familiar with English, even if they are not proficient in the language, creating a sociolinguistic context through which the borrowing of English lexical material has flourished in Korea.

English-origin lexical items represent a significant portion of the Korean lexicon, with the largest presence after Native Korean and Sino-Korean words (henceforth jointly referred to as 'Korean').[2] The *Standard Korean Language Dictionary* (henceforth *Standard Dictionary*), published by the National Institute of Korean Language 국립국어원 (NIKL), the central government agency for language planning, including standardisation, purification, and regulation, lists 27,044 headwords which are classified as either 'loanwords' 외래어 or foreign 'mixed-language words' 혼종어 (not including words that mix only Native Korean and Sino-Korean), accounting for 7.4% of all headwords in the *Standard Dictionary* (365,220).[3] Of these, 76% (20,560) contain English-origin lexical material, equating to 5.6% of all headwords. However, as the *Standard Dictionary* only records standardised vocabulary, it does not include many colloquialisms, especially slang terms, or neologism. If we look at the data from the NIKL's online open-source dictionary, Urimalsaem 우리말샘, which was established in 2016 with the purpose of "compiling words used in daily life" on an on-going basis, including colloquialisms and neologisms, the percentage of loanwords and mixed-language words containing English-origin lexical material significantly increases, making up 20.2% (154,885)

[2] As mentioned in the previous chapter, Sino-Korean words are so naturalised within the Korean lexicon—and make up over 50% of it—that for the purposes of this analysis, there is no reason to make a distinction between Native Korean and Sino-Korean.

[3] These statistics do not include Sino-Korean words which, likely for the above reasons; there is a separate statistical category for Sino-Korean headwords. "Sajŏn t'onggye" [Dictionary statistics], P'yojun Kugŏ taesajŏn [Standard Korean language dictionary], accessed June 30, 2025, https://stdict.korean.go.kr/statistic/_dicStat.do.

of all headwords (768,089).[4] Based on the data from both dictionaries, English-based words seemingly represent between 5.6% and 20.2% of headwords in the Korean lexicon.

However, whether English-origin words make up 5.6% or 20.2% of the total lexicon of Korean, these statistics do not reveal much about how common these words are in terms of actual use. That is, what a 'normal' amount of use would be. While there seems to be little research of loanword use frequency in regular speech, there are studies that track loanword use within other kinds of speech and texts. In their diachronic corpus analysis of loanword use, Yoonjung Oh and Hyunjung Son analysed the content of articles related to the semantic field of 'housing' in a selection of women's magazines published between 1970 and 2015. Based on this analysis, they found that loanwords were being used at a token frequency rate of 22.5% by 2015 in the magazines studied.[5] Urimalsaem divides their headwords into 'everyday language' 일상어 and 'technical language' 전문어; 16.1% (11,705) of all loanwords and mixed-language words are classified as everyday language.[6] Given that English-based words account for 90.5% (154,885) of such words (171,098), it is likely that the vast majority are technical terms. Though, technical terms may also be used regularly, just in more specific domains. In a 2020 survey of 5000 people conducted by the NIKL, when asked if they were someone who ordinarily used loanwords and foreign words a lot, 68.6% of respondents said they generally or substantially thought they were.[7] Additionally, 83.3% said they generally or substantially thought they saw or heard loanwords or foreign words being used a lot in their everyday lives[8] These statistics suggest that, at least based on perception, loanwords and foreign words are commonly used by Korean speakers and within the Korean linguistic landscape. Exact numbers that reflect the frequency and amount of English based words (henceforth English loans) are not possible to obtain in this case. However, the above statistics do, to some measure, demonstrate English's significance as a part of the Korean language.

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[4] The words submitted to *Urimalsaem* go through a process of review by lexicographers and words that are yet to be reviewed are listed separately from those which have been approved. "How to use Urimalsaem?," National Institute of Korean Language, February 2, 2017, https://korean.go.kr/front/board/boardMovieView.do?board_id=14&b_movie_type=4&mn_id=56&b_seq=295&pageIndex=1; "Sajŏn t'onggye" [Dictionary statistics], Urimalsaem, accessed June 30, 2025, https://opendict.korean.go.kr/service/dicStat.

[5] Yoonjung Oh and Hyunjung Son, "Lexical Borrowing in Korean: A Diachronic Approach Based on a Corpus Analysis," *Corpus Linguistics and Linguistic Theory* 20, no. 2 (2023): 8-9, https://doi.org/10.1515/cllt-2022-0102.

[6] "Sajŏn t'onggye," Urimalsaem.

[7] National Institute of Korean Language, *2020 nyŏn kungmin ŭi ŏnŏ ŭisik chosa* [2020 survey of public language consciousness], 11-1371028-000845-01 (National Institute of Korean Language, 2020), 93, https://www.korean.go.kr/front/reportData/reportDataView.do?mn_id=207&report_seq=1048.

[8] National Institute of Korean Language, *2020 nyŏn kungmin ŭi ŏnŏ ŭisik chosa*, 87.

Loaning processes of English-based words in the Korean language can be divided into two main categories: 'direct' loans and 'creative' loans. Direct loans have equivalent meanings in both English and Korean, and their forms are only altered in terms of phonology in order to adapt their pronunciations to the Korean phonetic system, which also allows them to be written using Hangŭl.[9] Additionally, this phonological adaption makes it possible to seamlessly apply Korean's predominately agglutinative grammar system to these loans. Creative loans, which may also be referred to as 'Konglish,' also undergo processes of phonological adaptation. However, they differ from direct loans in that they involve other, more creative loaning processes, which result in further structural and/or semantic alterations. Eun-Young Kim separates these "creative adoption" methods into four categories: *semantic shift*, when an English word is used with a different meaning than in English (e.g. referring to lamps as 'stands' [*sŭt'aendŭ* 스탠드]); *creative compounding*, the combining of two English words or parts of words to replace an English compound noun (e.g. 'eye-shopping' [*aisyop'ing* 아이쇼핑] instead of 'window shopping); *mixed-code combination*, combining English and Korean words or parts of words to create new compound words (e.g. '*sogae-t'ing*' 소개팅 means 'blind date' and combines '*sogae*' 소개 [lit. 'introduction'] and '-ting' from 'meeting'); and *clipping*, shortening words or phrases without changing the meaning (e.g. '*ap'at'ŭ*' 아파트 for 'apartment').[10] Both direct and creative loans are commonly used within everyday speech.[11]

2.2 Yoon Suk Yeol's English

In this section, I place Yoon's English within the context of Korean language use norms by analysing instances of English use within a selected corpus of thirteen of Yoon's speeches. While the media criticised Yoon's use of English in a variety of speech genres, including speeches, interviews and individual comments, I chose to only include speeches within my corpus because their structured modes of production and distribution allow the content and form of such speech events to be more intentional and coherent, providing a more consistent basis for analysis. Given that he was the President, Yoon's speeches were likely prepared in advance under significant scrutiny, meaning both the content and form was deliberate. Additionally, because speeches have a monological mode of distribution, they are delivered in an

[9] Sofia Rüdiger, "Mixed Feelings: Attitudes Towards English Loanwords and Their Use in South Korea," *Open Linguistics* 4, (2018): 188, https://doi.org/10.1515/opli-2018-0010.

[10] Eun-Young Julia Kim, "Creative Adoption: Trends in Anglicisms in Korea," *English Today* 28, no. 2 (2012): 15-17, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078412000107.

[11] Kim, "Creative Adoption," 17.

uninterrupted manner, there is less possibility that the intended content or form was significantly altered during their delivery. In comparison, the content and form of comments taken from interviews or press conferences are generally less intentional and coherent, even when preparation is involved, because they occur within dialogical and sometimes spontaneous interactions.

The speeches included in the corpus were selected according to three factors: date, audience, and frequency of English use. Considering that the articles included in this study were published at different points throughout Yoon's presidency (May 2022 to April 2025), I selected speeches that were delivered across the span of his presidency as well (June 2022 to October 2024).[12] In terms of the audience, I chose speeches that were intended for domestic audiences to limit the possibility of Yoon using more English because the speech was delivered within an international communication context; the media's criticism was also mostly directed at Yoon's linguistic behaviour in domestic contexts. Regarding the frequency of English use, I specifically chose speeches where the frequency appeared higher because they contained more and a greater variety of data. From my own observation of a large number of Yoon's speeches (many times more than what my corpus includes), while Yoon's English use was a consistent feature throughout his presidency, the amount of English he used was not, with many speeches featuring little to no English, meaning they would not provide much data relevant to this study. The details of the speeches are provided in the following table; I have assigned each speech a number code for ease of reference.[13]

[12] Note that while April 4th marks the date of Yoon's impeachment, his role as president became essentially defunct soon after his declaration of martial law on December 3rd, 2024.

[13] SP4 was delivered as two separate addresses but for the same occasion, and Yoon's use of English during this occasion, across both addresses, was criticised in many of the articles, so I decided to treat them as a single text.

Table 2: Corpus of Yoon Suk Yeol's Speeches

No.	Speech	Date
SP1	Opening Ceremony of the 2022 Korea High School Graduate Recruitment Expo 2022 대한민국 고졸 인재 채용 엑스포 개막식	02-06-22
SP2	Cultural Future Report 2022 문화 미래 리포트 2022	08-07-22
SP3	The 48th State Council Meeting 제 48 회 국무회의	01-11-22
SP4	Speech and Closing Remarks at the 12th Emergency Economic and Public Livelihood Meeting and the 1st National Economic Advisory Meeting 제 12 차 비상경제민생회의 겸 제 1 차 국민경제자문회의 연설과 마무리 발언	21-12-22
SP5	The 12th State Council Meeting 제 12 회 국무회의	21-03-23
SP6	Global Video Content Leadership Forum 글로벌 영상 콘텐츠 리더십 포럼	27-04-23
SP7	The 19th State Council Meeting 제 19 회 국무회의	09-05-23
SP8	The 20th State Council Meeting 제 20 회 국무회의	16-05-23
SP9	The 29th State Council Meeting 제 29 회 국무회의	18-07-23
SP10	The 45th State Council Meeting 제 45 회 국무회의	30-10-23
SP11	The Yoon Suk-yeol Government's Two-year National Report 윤석열정부 2 년 국민보고	09-05-24
SP12	State Affairs Briefing 국정브리핑	29-08-24
SP13	Words to the People 국민께 드리는 말씀	07-11-24

I went through each speech to find every instance where Yoon used an English-based loan and tabulated each unique loan to form my dataset, which is divided into two tables: 'standardised loans' (Table 3) and 'unstandardised loans' (Table 4).[14] Table 3 includes loans that appear in the *Standard Dictionary* with the same meaning as was signified by Yoon. Table 4 includes loans that do not appear in the *Standard Dictionary* with either the same meaning or form as was used by Yoon, or at all. For example, if Yoon used a mixed-language loan, but only one part of the loan appears in the *Standard Dictionary*, it is categorised as an unstandardised loan. Most unstandardised loans do appear on Urimalsaem, which suggests that other Korean speakers might be familiar with them, though some do not. Dividing the dataset into these two tables was done to simplify the tabulation as these two larger categories are relevant to my analysis. I have excluded any proper nouns and abbreviations of proper nouns from the dataset

[14] Each item was assigned a number. Items from Table 3 are numbered as follows: #1.1, #1.2, etc. Items from Table 4 are numbered as follows: #2.1, #2.2, etc.

as these words are often left untranslated or even adapted given this could confuse their referentiality. Thus, their inclusion could significantly skew the data (except for #2.16 because it is a loan of the English name for the country). Additionally, within the dataset, 'unique loan' encompasses single words and semantic units (e.g. #1.1. and #2.3). Each loan is provided with a Hangŭl and Romanised transcription and the English word that it was loaned from, along with its token frequency.[15]

Table 3: Standardised Loans

No.	Hangŭl Form	Romanised Form	English Form	Token
1.1	수출 드라이브	*such'ul tŭraibŭ*	*export* drive	2
1.2	펀드	*p'ŏndŭ*	fund	1
1.3	리포트	*rip'ot'ŭ*	report	1
1.4	팀	*t'im*	team	2
1.5	디지털	*tijit'ŏl*	digital	15
1.6	인센티브	*insent'ibŭ*	incentive	2
1.7	시스템	*sisŭt'em*	system	11
1.8	엑스포	*eksŭp'o*	expo	7
1.9	데이터	*teit'ŏ*	data	5
1.10	인큐베이터	*ink'yubeit'ŏ*	incubator	1
1.11	미디어	*midiŏ*	media	1
1.12	네트워크	*net'ŭwŏk'ŭ*	network	3
1.13	플랫폼	*p'ŭllaetp'om*	platform	5
1.14	콘텐츠	*k'ont'ench'ŭ*	content	1
1.15	코스트푸시 인플레이션	*k'osŭt'ŭ p'usi inp'ŭlleisyŏn*	cost-push inflation	1
1.16	디플레이션	*tip'ŭlleisyŏn*	deflation	2
1.17	스태그플레이션	*sŭt'aegŭp'ŭlleisyŏn*	stagflation	1
1.18	인프라	*inp'ŭra*	infra[structure]	5
1.19	허브	*hŏbŭ*	hub	2
1.20	메시지	*mesiji*	message	1

[15] I used the Hangŭl transcriptions provided in the official speech transcripts that I consulted to collect my data. Some initialisms were transcribed using the original English form (Latin script); I transcribed these into Hangŭl myself. There are two instances where a Latin script initialism formed a semantic unit with a word written in Han'gŭl (#2.21, #2.32), which I left as is in the Hangŭl transcriptions. The expanded forms or constituent components of initialisms are provided in round brackets. In instances of clipped loans, square brackets are used to indicate clipped portion. In instances of mixed-language loans, the non-English components are marked with italics. Other additional information is provided in round brackets where needed for clarification. Where the Hangŭl form of a loan was transcribed as a single unit (unspaced) but consists of more than one word in the English form, the English form is hyphenated.

1.21	에너지	*enŏji*	energy	1
1.22	리더십	*lidŏsip*	leadership	3
1.23	시너지	*sinŏji*	synergy	1
1.24	클러스터	*k'ŭllŏsŭt'ŏ*	cluster	2
1.25	프로젝트	*p'ŭrojekt'ŭ*	project	3
1.26	업그레이드	*ŏpkŭreidŭ*	upgrade	5
1.27	아웃렛	*autret*	outlet	1
1.28	미사일	*misail*	missile	6
1.29	파트너	*p'at'ŭnŏ*	partner	3
1.30	포럼	*p'orŏm*	forum	1
1.31	서비스	*sŏbisŭ*	service	6
1.32	채널	*ch'aenŏl*	channel	1
1.33	에이아이	*eiai*	AI (artificial intelligence)	8
1.34	달러	*tallŏ*	dollar	10
1.35	로봇	*robot*	robot	1
1.36	카르텔	*k'arŭt'el*	cartel	4
1.37	알고리즘	*algorijŭm*	algorithm	1
1.38	킬로미터	*k'illomit'ŏ*	kilometre	1
1.39	킬로	*k'illo*	kilo[metre]	2
1.40	밀리미터	*millimit'ŏmm*	millimetre	1
1.41	모니터링	*monit'ŏring*	monitoring	1
1.42	시뮬레이션	*simyulleisyŏn*	simulation	1
1.43	패러다임	*p'aerŏdaim*	paradigm	1
1.44	프로그램	*p'ŭrogŭraem*	program	5
1.45	배터리	*paet'ŏri*	battery	2
1.46	하드웨어	*hadŭ weŏ*	hardware	1
1.47	소프트웨어	*sop'ŭt'ŭ weŏ*	software	1
1.48	플랜트	*p'ŭllaent'ŭ*	plant	1
1.49	엔지니어링	*enjiniŏring*	engineering	1
1.50	배럴	*paerŏl*	barrel	2
1.51	인터뷰	*int'ŏbyu*	interview	3
1.52	시시티브이	*sisit'ibŭi*	CCTV (closed-circuit television)	1
1.53	가스	*kasŭ*	gas	1
1.54	가스전	*kasŭ chŏn*	gas-*field*	1
1.55	포인트	*p'oint'ŭ*	point	1

1.56	지디피	*chidip'i*	GDP (gross domestic product)	3
1.57	붐	*pum*	boom	1
1.58	온라인	*ollain*	online	1
1.59	비전	*pijŏn*	vision	1
1.60	센터	*sent'ŏ*	centre	1
1.61	브리핑	*pŭrip'ing*	briefing	1
1.62	그린벨트	*kŭrin pelt'ŭ*	green-belt	1
1.63	싱글	*singgŭl*	single	1
			Total token frequency:	169

Table 4: Unstandardised Loans

No.	Hangŭl Form	Romanised Form	English Form	Token
2.1	레귤레이션	*regyulleisyŏn*	regulation	6
2.2	인게이지먼트	*in'geijimŏnt'ŭ*	engagement	1
2.3	거버먼트 인게이지먼트	*kŏbŏmŏnt'ŭ in'geijimŏnt'ŭ*	government engagement	2
2.4	거버넌스	*kŏbŏnŏnsŭ*	governance	1
2.5	글로벌	*kŭlloböl*	global	22
2.6	글로벌 스탠더드	*kŭlloböl sŭt'aendŏdŭ*	global standard	10
2.7	글로벌 안보	*kŭlloböl anbo*	global *security*	4
2.8	글로벌 이슈	*kŭlloböl isyu*	global issue	1
2.9	글로벌 중추 국가	*kŭlloböl chungch'u kukka*	global *hub country*	2
2.10	글로벌 시장	*kŭlloböl sijang*	global *market*	4
2.11	글로벌 마켓	*kŭlloböl mak'et*	global market	2
2.12	마켓	*mak'et*	market	2
2.13	싱글 마켓	*singgŭl mak'et*	single market	1
2.14	월드 마켓	*wŏltŭ mak'et*	world market	1
2.15	코리안 마켓	*k'orian mak'et*	Korean market	1
2.16	코리아	*k'oria*	Korea	1
2.17	아젠다	*ajenda*	agenda	5
2.18	벤처	*pench'ŏ*	venture	2
2.19	필립스 커브	*p'illipsŭ k'ŏbŭ*	Phillips curve[16]	1
2.20	어그레시브	*ŏgŭreshibŭ*	aggressive	1

[16] This is the name of a specific economic model; I have included it because it does have a translated Korean name (‘*p'illipsŭ koksŏn*’ 필립스 곡선).

2.21	K-콘텐츠	*k'ei k'ont'ench'ŭ*	K-content (Korean content)	4
2.22	리빌딩	*ribilding*	rebuilding	1
2.23	펜데믹	*p'endemik*	pandemic	4
2.24	파트너십	*p'at'ŭnŏsip*	partnership	3
2.25	스마트시티	*sŭmat'ŭ sit'i*	smart-city	1
2.26	화이트리스트	*hwait'ŭ risŭt'ŭ*	whitelist	3
2.27	소프트파워	*sop'ŭt'ŭ p'awŏ*	soft-power	1
2.28	바이오	*paio*	bio	6
2.29	셔틀외교	*syŏt'ŭl oegyo*	shuttle-*diplomacy*	2
2.30	세일즈 외교	*seilchŭ oegyo*	sales *diplomacy*	4
2.31	MZ 세대	*emjet'ŭ sedae*	MZ-*generation* (Millennial + Gen Z)	1
2.32	오일 머니	*oil mŏni*	oil money	1
2.33	크라우드 매니지먼트	*k'ŭraudŭ maenijimŏnt'ŭ*	crowd management	4
2.34	드론	*tŭron*	drone	1
2.35	트라우마	*t'ŭrauma*	trauma	1
2.36	펀더멘털	*p'ŏndŏment'ŏl*	fundamental	1
2.37	킬러	*k'illŏ*	killer (adjective)	1
2.38	킬러 규제	*k'illŏ kyuje*	killer *regulation*	2
2.39	퍼블릭 케어	*p'ŏbŭllik k'eŏ*	public care	2
2.40	메가 클러스터	*mega k'ŭllŏsŭt'ŏ*	mega cluster	2
2.41	스타트업	*sŭt'at'ŭŏp*	start-up	9
2.42	터널	*t'ŏnŏl*	tunnel (metaphorical)	1
2.43	하이타임	*hai t'aim*	high-time (idiom)	1
2.44	아르엔디	*arŭendi*	R&D (research and development)	9
2.45	윈윈 관계	*win win kwan'gye*	win-win *relationship*	1
2.46	에너지안보	*enŏji anbo*	energy-*security*	3
2.47	에너지 인프라	*enŏji inp'ŭra*	energy infrastructure	1
2.48	프리	*p'ŭri*	free	2
2.49	포퓰리즘	*p'op'yullijŭm*	populism	3
2.50	파트너국	*p'at'ŭnŏ kuk*	partner-*country*	5
2.51	대테러	*tae t'erŏ*	*counter*-terror[ism]	1
2.52	사이버	*saibŏ*	cyber	3
2.53	사이버 안보	*saibŏ anbo*	cyber security	1
2.54	사이버상 테러	*saibŏsang t'erŏ*	cyber terror[ism]	1

2.55	아이티	*ait'i*	IT (information technology)	2
2.56	옵서버 그룹	*opsŏbŏ kŭrup*	observer group	1
2.57	신재생에너지	*sinjaesaeng enŏji*	*renewable*-energy	1
2.58	솔루션	*sollusyŏn*	solution	1
2.59	스마트팜	*sŭmat'ŭ p'am*	smart-farm	4
2.60	블록버스터급	*pŭllokpŏsŭt'ŏgŭp*	blockbuster-*level*	1
2.61	포스트 오일 시대	*p'osŭt'ŭ oil sidae*	post oil *era*	1
2.62	그린산업	*kŭrin sanŏp*	green-*industry*	1
2.63	무탄소에너지	*mut'anso enŏji*	*carbon-free*-energy	1
2.64	크레딧	*k'ŭredit*	credit	1
2.65	오디에이	*odiei*	ODA (official development assistance)	4
2.66	에프지아이	*ep'ŭjiai*	FGI (foreign government investor)	2
2.67	컨트롤타워	*k'ŏnt'ŭrol t'awŏ*	control-tower	1
2.68	코로나	*k'orona*	corona (= Covid-19)	5
2.69	패키지	*p'aek'iji*	package	2
2.70	글로컬	*kŭllok'ŏl*	glocal	1
			Total token frequency:	159

Analysis of Yoon's Use of English

The most obvious finding from the dataset is the similar distribution of standardised and unstandardised unique loan use, with 63 standardised loans and 70 unstandardised loans, and a total token frequency of 169 standardised and 159 unstandardised. Thus, we can say that Yoon used standardised loans as much as unstandardised ones. However, standardisation is not an absolute indication of whether a word is commonly used or not. As I mentioned earlier, many of the unstandardised loans appear on Urimalsaem, and many parts of unstandardised words appear in the *Standard Dictionary*. An example of this is 'global' (#2.7), which is a common loan that is only included as part of longer dictionary entries, such as 'globalism' and 'global budget' within the *Standard Dictionary*. There is an equivalent Korean term that speakers can use (and Yoon did also at times), but 'global' is often and commonly used across a variety of domains, including marketing, business and politics. Just within the speeches I analysed, Yoon used 'global' in eleven out of the thirteen speeches to describe various objectives and concepts and was combined with other words in multiple semantic units (#2.6 to #2.11), altogether accounting for 13.7% of the total token frequency rate across both tables. Additionally, Yoon

used 52 of the 133 unique loans three or more times, with many appearing in two or more speeches as 'global' did.

In terms of the types of loans, the majority represented in this dataset would be classified as direct loans, with a small number of creative loans such as #1.18, #1.39, #2.21 and #2.31. The high occurrence rate of direct loans within the data set is likely due to two related factors. One, many of the loans are used primarily in specific technical domains, such as macroeconomics, public policy and international relations (#1.15-1.17, #1.56, #1.62, #2.26, #2.70). As the statistics from Urimalsaem suggest, around 80% of loans in the Korean lexicon are considered 'technical terms' 전문어.[17] Two, for this reason, such loans have precise meanings which are specialised to their domains and/or technical concepts they refer to. Yoon's reliance on these more domain-specific loans may have reflected the specificity of the topics he was discussing; if these speeches were delivered to audiences familiar with those domains, their use would be appropriate. However, the audiences for Yoon's speeches—especially those referenced by the media—were much broader, so his use of these terms could be considered inappropriate based on the context of the speech events, even if they were appropriate in terms of the domains of the topics he was discussing.

In the case of the creative loans, the loaning processes he used were not remarkable. Similarly to the case of the direct, Yoon's creative loans likely would have been fully or partially understood by some and not others given the diversity of his audience. Yoon also used English-based abbreviations in the form of Latin letter initialisms in multiple speeches (#1.33, #1.52, #2.21, #2.31 #2.55). Use of these kinds of English abbreviations is common within Korean government documents and on government websites along with the translated Korean titles.[18] Further, Latin letter English abbreviations, which can either be directly loaned (e.g. #1.56; 'GDP') or be creatively loaned to form neologisms (e.g. 'MT' for 'Membership Training'), are commonly used by Korean speakers and in visual mediums.[19] English abbreviations can also be combined with Korean verbal suffixes, such as 'MZ-*generation*' (#2.31), which is a neologism.[20] Thus, Yoon's use of English-based abbreviations was consistent with Korean language norms, as were the loaning processes he used.

[17] "Sajŏn t'onggye," Urimalsaem.

[18] "Kyŏngje Hyŏmnyŏk Kaebal Kigu OECD" [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development OECD], Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accessed June 19, 2025, https://www.mofa.go.kr/www/wpge/m_3887/contents.do.

[19] Admin+63, "Korean University Student Culture," K-LIFE, accessed June 18, 2025, https://k-life.co/student/8135.

[20] "Emjet'ŭ^sedae" [MZ^generation], Urimalsaem, accessed June 18, 2025, https://opendict.korean.go.kr/dictionary/view?sense_no=1468818&viewType=confirm.

Overall, Yoon's use of English in itself was not abnormal. As demonstrated in the previous section, loaning of English words is a common language practice in Korea and can be done in multiple ways to varying degrees of structural and/or semantic transformation (i.e., direct vs creative loans). However, some of the loans he used were more technical terms, which may have impacted their general understandability, an issue which I address in more depth in the next section. In regard to the issue of standardised versus unstandardised loan use, the standardised–unstandardised distinction is not meaningful in itself. Rather, it speaks to the complexity of trying to evaluate language use according to some standard because there are always exceptions or elements that get missed, as the case of 'global' reveals. As a final note on Yoon's use of English, while my corpus contains only thirteen speeches and thus is not extensive enough for a detailed diachronic analysis, it is expansive enough (in terms of the period of time covered) to make the general observation that this behaviour was present throughout Yoon's presidency. The persistence of this behaviour in the face of the media's ongoing criticism suggests that it was intentional, at least in the sense that he did not attempt to 'correct' it. That being said, as I mentioned earlier, Yoon's use of English within less structured or predictable interactions, such as press conferences, was also criticised, which suggests that it was to some degree a natural linguistic habit rather than being a wholly deliberate act.

2.3 Addressing the Media's Criticism

Across the nine articles, the media criticised Yoon's linguistic behaviour in part through their metalinguistic descriptions of three aspects of his use of English: (1) degree of use, (2) necessity of use and (3) manner of use. The media's descriptions of these aspects can be summarised as follows: (1) Yoon used English excessively; (2) Yoon's use of English was unnecessary and served no purpose; (3) Yoon used English in a confusing or careless manner. Though most of the articles only focused on one or two of these aspects, they each featured in at least five of the articles.

Excessive Use of English

The most common descriptive criticism levied at Yoon's English was that it was excessive, appearing in eight of the articles.[21] This critique was expressed most frequently with the term "*nambal*" 남발, which translates to 'overuse' when referring to language use; one definition provided by NAVER defines it as "[t]he act of making promises or talking unreservedly and

[21] Did not appear in Chang Nam-gu's article.

excessively without much thought."[22] Following this definition, the use of '*nambal*' not only expresses 'excessiveness' but also implies that it is flagrant and indiscriminate, attaching a negative connotation. Similar sentiments were also expressed through the uses of "*kwadohada*" 과도하다 and "*chinach'ida*" 지나치다, which both signify excessiveness in terms of being immoderate, inappropriate, and extreme in degree. In some instances more neutral terms were used, such as "*suduruk'ada*" 수두룩하다 (being numerous or common), "*sumant'a*" 수많다 (being a great many of something), and "*kyesok*" 계속 (continuous or unceasing).

In terms of quantifying the degree of Yoon's English use, I counted the number of loans used in two of his speeches and compared this to the total number of words in each speech. I chose SP4 and SP11 as they were both directly referenced in several of the articles and represent the upper range of Yoon's English use based on my own observation. In the case of these two speeches, English loans accounted for 3% (SP4) and 2% (SP11) of words.[23] English loans could account for somewhere between 5.6% and 20.2% of headwords in the Korean lexicon, the over 20% frequency rate for loanword use found in Oh and Son's corpus study, and the results of the NIKL's 2020 survey, with the majority of participants thinking they at least generally used, saw, and heard a lot of loans and foreign words in their everyday lives. Therefor a 2–3% frequency rate, which may already be negatively skewed based on my selection criteria, does not seem excessive.

However, even with the analysis I am able to provide here, the media's claim of Yoon's English use being excessive is still difficult to evaluate. As I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, you cannot set an objective limit of what constitutes 'normal' versus 'excessive' English use, as even setting such a limit based on observed language use norms would require generalisation. It would be possible to compare Yoon's use of English to that of other presidents to establish if the amount of English he used was greater than that of his peers, but this still

[22] "Nambal" [Nambal], NAVER, accessed June 18, 2025, https://en.dict.naver.com/#/entry/koen/9c836cf9a2034854a33192cfcf83bcbc.

[23] Office of the President of the Republic of Korea, *Yoon Suk YeolTaet'ongnyŏng Yŏnsŏlmunjip 1 kwŏn* [Yoon Suk Yeol Presidential Speech Collection Volume 1] (Seoul: Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, 2023), 492-495, https://www.korea.kr/archive/expDocView.do?docId=40690; Yoon Suk Yeol, *Che 12 ch'a pisang kyŏngje minsaeng hoeŭi kyŏm che 1 ch'a kungmin kyŏngje chamun hoeŭi mamuri parŏn* [Closing remarks at the 12th emergency economic and public livelihood meeting and the 1st national economic advisory meeting], speech (December 21, 2022), transcript published by Taehanmin'guk Chŏngch'aek Pŭrip'ing, https://www.korea.kr/briefing/presidentView.do?newsId=148909692, Yoon Suk Yeol,Yoon Suk Yeolchŏngbu 2nyŏn kungmin pogo [The Yoon Suk Yeol Government's two-year national report], speech (May 9, 2024), transcript published by Office of the President of the Republic of Korea, archived at https://web.archive.org/web/20250315111111/https://www.president.go.kr/president/speeches/yu4yLz4t.

would not prove whether it was excessive or not. Regardless, it is worth noting that none of the articles establish a specific or even general limit to support their claims of excessiveness.

Unnecessary Use of English

The media's criticism of excessiveness often overlapped with the issue of necessity, most commonly expressed through comments about Yoon using unnecessary English excessively. This perspective is clearly expressed by Ko Sŭng-ŭn: "even though [Yoon] could express [something] simply in Hangŭl, he needlessly overuses English words…" 한글로 표현하면 간단하게 표현할 수 있는데도 쓸데없이 영어단어를 남발하며 . . ., using the adverb '*ssŭlteŏpsi*' 쓸데없이 which means 'without use or benefit.'[24] Similar sentiments were expressed in other articles through comments such as "[Yoon] used many English abbreviations for words even though [he] really did not need to" . . . 굳이 영어 약자를 쓰지 않아도 될 단어도 수두룩했습니다 and plainly describing the English Yoon used as "unnecessary" 불필요하다.[25] I argue that the common cooccurrence of these critiques across the articles creates a linked causal relationship between the two. That is, because Yoon's English use was unnecessary, as demonstrated by the suggestion of native Korean alternatives, it was by nature excessive, which made it bad.

Necessity can be subjective, different people can view the same things as necessary or unnecessary depending on the metric they are basing such a judgment on. However, the degree of subjectivity can be reduced by establishing the metric through which necessity is being judged in a particular case. In some of the articles, Korean words were provided as alternatives for the English words Yoon used, such as '*kukche p'yojun*' 국제표준 instead of 'global standard.'[26] The provision of alternative Korean words suggests that the media viewed using

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[24] Ko Sŭng-ŭn, "Ŭisa sot'ong 'changbyŏk' ssannŭn Yoon Sŏk-yŏl–Han Tŏk-su ŭi kwadohan 'yŏngŏ chipch'ak'" [Yoon Suk Yeol and Han Duck-soo's excessive 'obsession with English' which builds 'barriers' to communication], *Nyusŭ P'ŭri Chon* [News Free Zone] (Seoul), December 22, 2022, https://www.newsfreezone.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=432641.

[25] O T'ae-gyu, "Yoon Suk YeolTaet'ongnyŏng ŭi kojil 'yŏngŏ pyŏng'" [President Yoon Suk Yeol's chronic 'English disease'], *Mindŭlle* [Mindle News] (Seoul), May 22, 2024, https://www.mindlenews.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=8386; Ku Yŏn-su, "'Yŏldŭng kam posang' esŏ parhyŏndoen Yoon Suk Yeolŭi yŏngŏ sarang" [Yoon Suk Yeol's love for English is manifested from his 'inferiority complex compensation'], *Kyŏngnam Tomin Ilbo* [iDomin] (Changwon), June 28, 2022, https://www.idomin.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=797780; Kim Ho-gyŏng, "Taet'ongnyŏng ŭi panmal kwa yŏngŏ nambal… 'konggam nŭngnyŏk pujae' ŭi tanmyŏn" [The President's informal speech and English overuse... a cross section of 'lack of empathy'], *Mindŭlle* [Mindle News] (Seoul), January 1, 2023, https://www.mindlenews.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=1071.

[26] O, "Yoon Suk YeolTaet'ongnyŏng ŭi kojil 'yŏngŏ pyŏng;'" Yun Kŭn-hyŏk, "'Naesyŏnŏl P'ak'ŭ' rago hamyŏn mŏt ittago? Yoon Suk Yeolŭi yŏngŏ Sadaejuŭi" [Do you think it's cool when you say 'National Park'? Yoon Suk Yeol's English Sadaejuŭi], *O-mai Nyusŭ* [OhmyNews] (Seoul), June 11, 2022, https://www.ohmynews.com/NWS_Web/View/at_pg.aspx?CNTN_CD=A0002842256.

English loans instead of possible alternative Korean words as unnecessary. This metric is based on two assertions that were explicitly and implicitly expressed across the articles: one, it was possible for Yoon to express the same meanings using Korean words; two, that using the Korean alternatives is necessary because the English loans are less or not understandable.

Regarding the first point, while the media responses demonstrated that Korean alternatives exist for many of the loans used by Yoon, many of the loans he used were technical terms, which have nuanced and specialised meanings, possibly related to a specific domain, which such equivalent Korean terms may not express. For example, in SP11, Yoon used the word 'agenda' (#2.9) multiple times; according to O T'ae-gyu, Yoon could have used '*ŭije*' 의제 instead. However, while both terms are used to designate a plan of items that need to be addressed, either through discussion or action, 'agenda' is also used in a more figurative sense to refer to the overarching goals or priorities that a person or group's actions are guided by, which '*ŭije*' generally is not. Yoon used 'agenda' when discussing '*national* agenda' 국가적 아젠다 and '*policy* agenda' 정책 아젠다; in these instances there is a sense of prioritisation based on some larger vision. As such, Yoon may have used such loans instead of possible Korean alternatives because of their specific or technical meaning. The findings of the NIKL's 2020 survey support this notion with the most common answer to the question of why people used foreign words being that they can convey meaning more accurately (41.2%).[27] Thus, it could be argued Yoon's use of such loan was semantically necessary.

That being said, I argue that the second point of the use of Korean alternatives being necessary for communication, debases this idea of semantic necessity. As said by Ko, "by overusing English words that really do not need to be inserted . . . [Yoon] is building a barrier to communication" 윤석열 대통령은 . . . 굳이 집어넣지 않아도 될 영어단어를 남발하며 의사소통에 장벽을 쌓고 있는 셈이다.[28] While Yoon may have used many of these loans because they express the meaning of what he wanted to say the most accurately, if your audience cannot understand the word in the first place, any clarity they provide is null. There are many Koreans who either never got the opportunity to learn English, particularly those from older generations, or did not learn it well (possibly due to economic factors, or simple uninterest).[29] There are likely many people in Korea who would struggle or be unable to

[27] National Institute of Korean Language, *2020 nyŏn kungmin ŭi ŏnŏ ŭisik chosa*, 95.

[28] Ko, "Ŭisa sot'ong 'changbyŏk' ssannŭn Yoon Sŏk-yŏl–Han Tŏk-su ŭi kwadohan 'yŏngŏ chipch'ak.'"

[29] Jamie Shinhee Lee, "'Everywhere You Go, You See English!': Elderly Women's Perspectives on Globalization and English," *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies* 13, no. 4 (2016): 321, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15427587.2016.1190654.

understand a significant amount of the English Yoon used, especially the domain specific and technical terms. This issue was pointed out by Yun Kŭn-hyŏk in reference to Yoon's use of 'government attorney:' "…people who understand the English meaning of 'government attorney' are extremely limited" . . . '거버먼트 어토니'. . .란 영어 뜻을 이해하는 국민들은 극히 제한되어 있다.[30] For this reason, using Korean equivalents, regardless of whether they express the meaning as accurately as Yoon wanted, would have been more effective in terms of communication because more Korean citizens would understand them well. And, given his position as president, being understood by as many Koreans as possible was arguably necessary.

Confusing Use of English

The media did not just criticise Yoon for using English excessively or unnecessarily, but also how he used English in terms of form and structure. O criticised Yoon for using "many words that clumsily combined English and Korean" 영어와 한글을 어설프게 조합한 단어 . . . 수두룩했습니다, listing 'killer *regulation*' (#2.38), 'global *hub country*' (#2.9) and 'sales *diplomacy*' (#2.30) as examples.[31] Each of these examples are in line with common loaning practices, such as mixed-language loans and mixed-code combinations. As I discussed above, 'global' is commonly used in this way. In the case of 'sales *diplomacy*,' though O suggested Yoon should have used the pure Korean 'economic diplomacy' 경제외교, Yoon's use of the term is not only 'normal' in terms of its mixed-language form, but is arguably appropriate for the contexts Yoon was speaking in. 'Sales *diplomacy*' is a term that was coined in the 1990s, at the time of the Globalisation Declaration, to describe the Korean brand of President-led economic diplomacy, which positioned the President as similar to a salesperson, working to sell Korean exports and investment opportunities abroad.[32] In this sense, characterising such use of loans as 'clumsy' somewhat undermines the fact that they are an established and normalised feature of the Korean language, and that they may even designate Korean-specfic concepts and ideas.

Ku Yŏn-su criticised Yoon for using English words with different or confused meanings, saying Yoon "overused and confused the meaning of English words" 영어 단어 남발하고 의미 혼동.[33] Ku used the term 'doorstepping' as an example of Yoon's confusion of English word

[30] Yun, "'Naesyŏnŏl P'ak'ŭ' rago hamyŏn mŏt ittago? Yoon Suk Yeolŭi yŏngŏ Sadaejuŭi."

[31] O, "Yoon Suk YeolTaet'ongnyŏng ŭi kojil 'yŏngŏ pyŏng.'"

[32] Chŏng Sang-ch'ŏn, "Daet'ongnyŏng ŭi seilchŭ oegyo" [The President's sales diplomacy], *Han'gug Oegyo Hyŏp'oe Chŏnŏl: Oegyo Sogo* [Korean Council on Foreign Relations Journal: Diplomacy Small Notice] 23-08 (2023): 1, https://www.kcfr.or.kr/bbs/board.php?bo_table=613&wr_id=145.

[33] Ku, "'Yŏldŭng kam posang' esŏ parhyŏndoen Yoon Suk Yeolŭi yŏngŏ sarang."

meanings: Yoon used it to describe the informal daily question and answer sessions he held as he went into work. In English, 'doorstepping' describes when reporters "attempt to obtain an interview . . . from a contributor without prior arrangement or agreement, typically by confronting them in a public space . . .."[34] Yoon's use of 'doorstepping' seemingly confuses the original meaning by focusing on the idea that doorstepping usually involves reporters confronting someone as they are entering or leaving a building, disregarding the actual English definition. Hence why Ku said Yoon's use of 'doorstepping' was "completely different from the original meaning" 심지어 '도어스테핑'은 본래 뜻과 전혀 달랐다, possibly implying he used it incorrectly. Thus, the issue with instances such as 'doorstepping' was that they were used differently than they are in English.

However, while Yoon's 'doorstepping' may have been incorrect by English language standards, his use of 'doorstepping' could be characterised as semantic shift. Chang Nam-gu, also challenged such criticisms in his article where he discussed Yoon's use of Konglish loans.[35] Chang described Konglish as "English that is used in a Korean way, either being mispronounced or ungrammatical" 한국식으로 잘못 발음하거나 비문법적으로 사용하는 영어를 속되게 이르는 말, using 'change thinking' as an example. Chang argued that even though "there was controversy over whether [change thinking] was correct according to English grammar, [you] can work out what it means" 영어 문법에 맞냐는 논란이 있지만, 무슨 뜻인지는 알아들을 수 있다. He says, "the problem is [Yoon's] repeated use of English expressions that are difficult to understand" 문제는 이해하기 어려운 영어 표현을 자꾸 쓰는 것이다, such as 'government attorney' or 'regulation. As such, Chang presents Konglish loans—these Koreanised English words—as more understandable than the semantically unaltered jargon Yoon often used, positioning understandability as being more important than correctness.

Similarly, Kim Ho-gyŏng described Yoon's English as childish or unrefined ("*yuch'ihan yŏngŏ*" 유치한 영어) because he "continuously mixed unnecessary English words into his remarks" 계속 불필요한 영어 단어를 뒤섞어 발언하다 . . ..[36] The verb Kim used, *twisŏkta* 뒤섞다, does not just mean to mix one thing with another (that would be '*sŏkta*' 섞다), it denotes being jumbled or muddled up, implying that Yoon's mixing of English into his speech was done in a confusing and indiscriminate manner. Kim pointed out instances where Yoon

[34] "Door-Stepping," BBC, accessed November 12, 2025, https://www.bbc.co.uk/safety/resources/aztopics/door-stepping/.

[35] Chang Nam-gu, "Yoon Suk Yeol sik K'onggŭllisi" [Yoon Suk Yeol's Konglish], *Han'gyŏre* [The Hankyoreh] (Seoul), January 31, 2023, https://www.hani.co.kr/arti/opinion/column/1077689.html.

[36] Kim, "Taet'ongnyŏng ŭi panmal kwa yŏngŏ nambal… 'konggam nŭngnyŏk pujae' ŭi tanmyŏn."

used direct loans, such as 'aggressive,' 'government engagement' and 'crowd management,' which suggests that to him the issue was Yoon's mixing of direct loans into his Korean speech rather than the use of creative loans. In a similar vein, Ko Sŭng-ŭn described Yoon's use of direct loans as "…[the] overuse of English words without any meaning" . . . 아무 의미없는 영어단어를 남발한 셈이다, and, likening Yoon's prime minister's use of English to his own, "[pouring] out a host of English words that were jumbled up with Korean . . . to the point that you could not understand the meaning upon hearing it." . . . 수많은 영어단어를 한글과 마구 뒤섞어 쏟아낸 바 있다. . . . 듣고선 무슨 뜻인지 알아들을 수 없을 수준이다.[37] Thus, characterising Yoon's use of English within his Korean speech as incoherent. As I stated before, while the use of direct loans is 'normal' in Korean, especially in the case of technical terms and jargon, if they are creating a barrier to communication, as Kim and Ko's comments suggest, their use becomes problematic, particularly in the case of public communication.

Unrealistic Standards

Looking at these criticisms altogether, there are discrepancies across the articles, both with each other—why each article represented Yoon's English as problematic in a linguistic sense—and with the reality of the language situation regarding loaning of English in Korean. While all but one of the articles saw Yoon's degree of English use as problematic, after that assertion the focus of their critiques differed, with some focusing more on necessity and some on the manner of their use.[38] I might also argue here that the critique of excessiveness was salient because it was the easiest critique to make, or was even a prerequisite for critiquing Yoon's English, regardless of its validity, given the prevalence of English loaning and loan use, because it is difficult to critique something that is 'normal' without claiming that it exceeded the norm. Additionally, with the various descriptions of Yoon's manner of English use, there was no clear consensus on why its form or structure was problematic; sometimes Yoon was criticised for using 'incorrect' English, at other times he was criticised for jumbling up his speech with unadulterated—in a sense 'correct'—English. Furthermore, the media's descriptions of Yoon's English either disregarded the prevalence of English in Korean or undercut the linguistic creativity of Korean loaning processes by representing his English as not only bad Korean, but bad English as well.

In employing a language ideological approach, this thesis in itself assumes that the media's criticism was ideological, and thus that Yoon's use of language was not remarkable in

[37] Ko, "Ŭisa sot'ong 'changbyŏk' ssannŭn Yoon Sŏk-yŏl–Han Tŏk-su ŭi kwadohan 'yŏngŏ chipch'ak.'"

[38] In articles that addressed all three, the critique of manner more so served to support the critique of necessity, i.e., the manner being bad made such lack of necessity seem worse.

its form alone, but due to the ideological loading of social meaning onto its form. The discrepancies I identified in this chapter—these gaps—point to the core issue that language ideological studies attempt to reveal: that language is not purely linguistic, it is social and thus ideological, and so is discourse about language structure. Even though the discourse focused on in this chapter was metalinguistic, being concerned with how Yoon used English rather than what such use meant, it was still ideological because it was not merely descriptive but prescriptive. Just through their descriptions of Yoon's English, the media discourse implied a standard of 'good' or 'ideal' Korean, which does not include 'excessive,' 'unnecessary,' or 'confusing' English, that is detached from actual language structure and use. As such, it is through this standard that Yoon's English use in and of itself was depicted as problematic, as not 'normal.' Understanding the media's descriptive characterisation of Yoon's English requires not only understanding the standard it was evaluated against, but the ideologies embedded within such standards.

CHAPTER THREE:
WHAT'S THE PROBLEM THEN?

In this chapter, I analyse the media's metapragmatic discourse, how they interpreted Yoon's linguistic behaviour, and the values and narratives that underpinned such discourse, to determine the language ideologies they engaged with and embedded within their criticism. I argue that these ideologies act as a framework that makes not only the media's interpretive criticism but also descriptive criticism coherent—makes them *ideologically* logical—acting as a 'mediating link' between Yoon's language use and the media's description and interpretation of it. Thus, the aim of this chapter is to reveal and deconstruct the ideological logic behind the media's criticisms.

I begin by examining how Yoon was portrayed within the media discourse based on his linguistic behaviour to establish the social meanings they ascribed to his linguistic behaviour. I then deconstruct these interpretations by analysing how the media discursively framed Korean and English and identify the ideologies of Korean and English that are embedded within their rhetoric through connecting their arguments to the language ideological discourses discussed in Chapter One. From this, I reconstruct the ideological framework of the media's criticisms to demonstrate how the media's beliefs about language were transposed into beliefs about Yoon's language use and then into beliefs about Yoon's character in an ideologically logical manner.

3.1 Language, Identity, and Nation

Across the articles, the reporters presented various negative interpretations of Yoon's linguistic behaviour, specifically the implications of Yoon's linguistic behaviour. I have already established how the media wanted Yoon to speak—avoiding English and using Korean instead whenever possible—based on their critical descriptions of Yoon's use of English as excessive, unnecessary, and confusing. However, in this section, I examine how the media framed Yoon's linguistic behaviour in terms of what it said about him, its social effects, and the implications of both to establish *what* the media said was problematic about Yoon's linguistic behaviour before I identify *why* they understood it as problematic and *how* they represented it as such in an ideologically logical way in the next section.

There is a significant throughline in the articles that needs to be considered before examining how the media interpreted Yoon's linguistic behaviour and its implications. Most of

the articles include either an explicit assertion that Yoon's linguistic behaviour was reflective of his identity and psyche or an implicit assumption that it did. For example, O T'ae-gyu said he could "easily tell what kind of person [Yoon] is" . . . 그가 어떤 종류의 사람인지 쉽게 간파할 수 있습니다 just by looking at his "linguistic habits" 언어 습관, particularly what kind of vocabulary he liked to use.[1] Similarly, Kim Ho-gyŏng and Kim Yong-t'aek stated, "[Yoon's] linguistic habits are the outward utterance of his . . . inner character" 이런 윤 대통령의 언어 습관은 . . . 내면의 품성이 겉으로 발화한 것, and "[his] language is [his] character" 말은 곧 그 사람의 인품이다, respectively.[2] These same sentiments are often assumed and expressed implicitly in comments about Yoon's personality, character, and psychology that are predicated upon his habit of using English, which I discuss in this section. This conflation of language with identity or psyche is important because it allowed the media to not only criticise Yoon's linguistic habits but to extend their criticism onto Yoon himself and present his character in a negative light.

Additionally, while the articles mainly focused on criticising Yoon's linguistic behaviour, many also discussed metalinguistic comments about English and Korean that Yoon made. The comment that received the most coverage, was said in relation to plans to open a public park on a former US military base; he said, "it would be nice if we could erect small statues for those who have sacrificed for their country around the park and name it 'National Memorial Park'" 공원 주변에 국가를 위해 희생한 분들을 위한 작은 동상들을 세우고 '[National Memorial Park]'로 이름을 지으면 좋겠다.[3] Yoon continued, "when you say

[1] O T'ae-gyu, "Yoon Suk YeolTaet'ongnyŏng ŭi kojil 'yŏngŏ pyŏng'" [President Yoon Suk Yeol's chronic 'English disease'], *Mindŭlle* [Mindle News] (Seoul), May 22, 2024, https://www.mindlenews.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=8386.

[2] Kim Ho-gyŏng, "Taet'ongnyŏng ŭi panmal kwa yŏngŏ nambal… 'konggam nŭngnyŏk pujae' ŭi tanmyŏn" [The President's informal speech and English overuse... a cross section of 'lack of empathy'], *Mindŭlle* [Mindle News] (Seoul), January 1, 2023, https://www.mindlenews.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=1071; Kim Yong-t'aek, "Yoon Taet'ongnyŏng ŭi yŏngŏ sarang… wae munje in'ga?" [President Yoon's love for English... why is it a problem?], *Chinsil ŭi Kil* [Power of Truth] (Seoul), January 1, 2023, http://www.poweroftruth.net/column/mainView.php?kcat=2030&uid=1520&table=yt_kim&ckattempt=3.

[3] News source for quotation: Yi Yu-mi, "Yoon Taet'ongnyŏng, yŏ chidobu manna 'Yongsan Kongwŏn, Naesyŏnŏl Memoriŏl P'ak'ŭ ro'" [President Yoon meets with party leaders, 'turn Yongsan Park into National Memorial Park'], *Yŏnhap Nyusŭ* [Yonhap News] (Seoul), June 10, 2022, https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20220610079352001. Mentioned in Chang Nam-gu, "Yoon Suk Yeolsik K'onggŭllisi" [Yoon Suk Yeol's Konglish], *Han'gyŏre* [The Hankyoreh] (Seoul), January 31, 2023, https://www.hani.co.kr/arti/opinion/column/1077689.html; Ko Sŭng-ŭn, "Ŭisa sot'ong 'changbyŏk' ssannŭn Yoon Suk YeolHan Tŏk-su ŭi kwadohan 'yŏngŏ chipch'ak'" [Yoon Suk Yeol and Han Duck-soo's excessive 'obsession with English' which builds 'barriers' to communication], *Nyusŭ P'ŭri Chon* [News Free Zone] (Seoul), December 22, 2022, https://www.newsfreezone.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=432641; Ku Yŏn-su, "'Yŏldŭng kam posang' esŏ parhyŏndoen Yoon Suk Yeolŭi yŏngŏ sarang" [Yoon Suk Yeol's love for English is manifested from his 'inferiority complex compensation'], *Kyŏngnam Tomin Ilbo* [iDomin] (Changwon), June 28, 2022, https://www.idomin.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=797780; *Sŏul ŭi Sori* [Voice of Seoul], "Yoon Suk

'National Memorial Park' in English, it sounds cool, but when you call it '*Kuknip Ch'umo Kongwŏn*' it's not cool, so I don't know what to do for our country's name for it" 영어로 내셔널 메모리얼 파크라고 하면 멋있는데 국립추모공원이라고 하면 멋이 없어서 우리나라 이름으로는 무엇으로 해야 할지 모르겠다, saying the Korean translation of 'National Memorial Park,' did not sound cool like it does in English. Another instance that received attention was his comments about his nomination of then Chief Prosecutor Han Dong-hoon for Minister of Justice:

> "with his fluent English ability, [candidate Han] has diverse international work experience, so I've decided he is the right person to foster a judicial system that meets global standards. For facilitating international communication, I consider Chief Prosecutor Han, who [studied law] in the US and is good at English, and also has extensive investigation and trial experience, to be the most suitable [candidate]."[4]

O T'ae-gyu also quoted Yoon as having said, "when I was in school, Korean [class] wasn't interesting. Why bother learning our own language again?" 학교 다닐 때 국어가 재미가 없었다. 우리말을 뭣 하러 또 배우나, presenting it as evidence that Yoon's "neglect of Korean . . . [was] a chronic disease" 윤 대통령의 한글 경시는 . . . 고질입니다.[5] The inclusion of each of these comments presents Yoon as having an overly positive view of English and English proficiency and as not liking or valuing Korean. As such, though the media predominately focused on Yoon's linguistic behaviour, they did use these comments to support their critiques.

He Can't Value Korea If He Doesn't Value Korean

The media's interpretation of how Yoon's linguistic behaviour affected the Korean language was that it devalued and degraded it. In June 2022, a North Korean media outlet mocked Yoon for his 'National Memorial Park' comments, saying, "if you prefer the language of foreign

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Yeolŭi chajŭn yŏngŏ sayong ŭn chidokhan k'ompŭlleksŭ" [Yoon Suk Yeol's frequent English use is a terrible complex], December 21, 2022, https://2022.amn.kr/43088.

[4] See Appendix, section 2.1 for full quotation. Sŏ Yŏng-ji, "Yoon Suk Yeol'yŏngŏ sillyŏk yuch'ang' – Han Tong-hun 'kŏmch'al ŭn nappŭn nom chal chapŭmyŏn twae' [Yoon Suk Yeol 'fluent English proficiency' – Han Dong-hoon 'the prosecution just needs to catch bad guys well'], *Han'gyŏre* [The Hankyoreh](Seoul), April 13, 2022, https://www.hani.co.kr/arti/politics/politics_general/1038840.html. Mentioned in Kim, "Yoon Taet'ongnyŏng ŭi yŏngŏ sarang… wae munje in'ga?"; Ku, "'Yŏldŭng kam posang' esŏ parhyŏndoen Yoon Suk Yeolŭi yŏngŏ sarang"; Yun Kŭn-hyŏk, "'Naesyŏnŏl P'ak'ŭ' rago hamyŏn mŏt ittago? Yun Suk Yeolŭi yŏngŏ Sadaejuŭi" [Do you think it's cool when you say 'National Park'? Yoon Suk Yeol's English Sadaejuŭi], *O-mai Nyusŭ* [OhmyNews] (Seoul), June 11, 2022, https://www.ohmynews.com/NWS_Web/View/at_pg.aspx?CNTN_CD=A0002842256.

[5] While O's quotation suggests that Yoon had a dismissive or negative attitude toward learning Korean, within the full context of the quotation, Yoon seemed to be expressing a belief that Korean language education was uninteresting because it focuses too much on learning technical or esoteric information and should focus on facilitating understanding of and engagement with Korean culture through literature instead. See Appendix, section 2.2 for full quotation. O, "Yoon Suk YeolTaet'ongnyŏng ŭi kojil 'yŏngŏ pyŏng.'"

powers, change your name to 'Joseph Yoon' and your office's nameplate to 'White House 2.0'" 그렇게도 외세의 언어가 더 좋다면 이름을 '조지프 윤'으로 바꾸고 사무실의 간판도 '화이트 하우스 2.0′이라고 달라.[6] Referencing this incident, Kim Yong-t'aek questioned, "when the President is leading the destruction of our precious [*language*], can we criticise the North's media for mocking [him]?" 대통령이 앞장서서 소중한 우리의 한글을 파괴하고 있으니 북의 매체가 조롱하는 것을 욕할 수 있겠는가?[7] Kim Yong-t'aek validated North Korea's mockery of Yoon through his interpretation of Yoon's linguistic behaviour as destroying the Korean language. According to Kim Ho-gyŏng, ". . . the fact that [Yoon] frequently shows off [his English] to his fellow citizens during public appearances [could] only be interpreted as meaning that he has less affection and esteem for his mother tongue" 공개석상에서 자국민들을 상대로 자꾸 과시한다는 건 모국어에 대한 애정과 자존감이 떨어진다는 뜻으로밖에 해석되지 않는다.[8] Kim Ho-gyŏng explicitly told readers they should interpret Yoon's linguistic behaviour as an expression of his disregard for Korean, his "mother tongue." For both authors, Yoon's linguistic behaviour was an affront to the Korean language and the value that it holds as something precious to the Korean people and worthy of affection and esteem.

O T'ae-gyu took this interpretation a step further, equating the supposed disregard for Korean that Yoon expressed through his linguistic behaviour to a disregard for the Korean nation. Discussing a desk plaque with 'the BUCK STOPS here!' written on it that sat in front of Yoon during the delivery of his two-year national report (SP11), O presented displaying the plaque during an address to the Korean people as "neglect of the nation [and] . . . of [*Korean*]" 국민 무시-한글 무시.[9] O reinforced this sentiment at the end of his article with a call to action which portrayed the Korean language as something valuable that should be cultivated, even implying that it needs to be protected from people like Yoon: ". . . we need to confront people, including President Yoon, who belittle and neglect the nation and [*Korean language*] more actively and forcefully. Individuals should take the lead in loving, cultivating and refining

[6] News source for quotation: Kim Myŏng-jin, "Puk maech'e, Yoon Taet'ongnyŏng e "oese ŏnŏ chot'amyŏn 'Chojip'ŭ Yun' ŭro kaemyŏng hara"" [North Korean media told Yoon Suk Yeol, "If you prefer the language of foreign powers, change your name to 'Joseph Yoon'"], *Chosŏn Ilbo* [The Chosun Ilbo](Seoul), June 16, 2022, https://www.chosun.com/politics/north_korea/2022/06/16/IZCQVZAG2RHRZMNKMPLXZEQF5A/.

[7] There were multiple instances where the articles used 'Hangŭl' when referring to either spoken Korean or the Korean language as a whole. As discussed in Chapter One, this is a common practice based in script nationalist ideology. I do not translate these instances directly and use square brackets and italicise my translation to mark them. I elaborate on this issue later. Kim, "Yoon Taet'ongnyŏng ŭi yŏngŏ sarang… wae munje in'ga?."

[8] Kim, "Taet'ongnyŏng ŭi panmal kwa yŏngŏ nambal… 'konggam nŭngnyŏk pujae' ŭi tanmyŏn."

[9] O, "Yoon Suk YeolTaet'ongnyŏng ŭi kojil 'yŏngŏ pyŏng.'"

[*Korean*]" . . . 나라와 한글을 경시·무시하는 윤 대통령을 비롯한 사람들을 상대로 더 적극적으로, 더 강력하게 맞서야겠습니다. 개개인이 한글을 사랑하고 키우고 닦는 일에 앞장서야 하겠습니다. Within this statement, O equated the Korean language with the Korean nation. As such, O's interpretation can be understood as attaching the positive sentiments he expressed towards the language to the nation. This interpretation was also mirrored in the Voice of Seoul editorial piece, which connected Yoon's linguistic behaviour to the claim that "the country was doomed" 나라에 망조가 들었다.[10] Thus, it is through this conflation of language and nation that these articles were able to present Yoon's linguistic behaviour as harmful to the nation as well.

A Toady with an Inferiority Complex

The most common identity-based interpretation of Yoon's linguistic behaviour amongst the articles was that Yoon's Linguistic behaviour, his so-called English love and obsession, was an expression of *Sadaejuŭi* 사대주의.[11] *Sadaejuŭi* is used pejoratively to describe "a subservient, self-disparaging, or self-negating attitude towards one's own country, culture, or society . . . in favor of a more powerful or dominant one," with '*sadae*' 사대 connecting to the historical tributary relationship between Korea and China and '*juŭi*' 주의 meaning 'doctrine.'[12] Discussing Yoon's linguistic behaviour, Ku Yŏn-su described Sadaejuŭi as, ". . . the tendency of a country to depend on a powerful country without agency . . ." 사대주의는 한 국가가 주체성 없이 강한 국가에 의존하는 성향을 일컫는다, and referred to Yoon's English use as "linguistic Sadaejuŭi" 언어 사대주의.[13] Kim Ho-gyŏng proposed that Yoon's "overuse of English words" could be interpreted as "English Sadaejuŭi" or an "English complex" 이 같은 영단어 남용에 대해 '영어 사대주의' 또는 '영어 콤플렉스'로 인한 게 아니냐는 해석이 나온다, describing it as "a linguistic habit created by an old-fashioned consciousness or subconscious that regards Korea as peripheral and idolises the US or the West as the centre of the world" 한국을 변방으로 간주하고 미국 또는 서구를 세계의 중심으로 동경하는

[10] *Sŏul ŭi Sori* [Voice of Seoul], "Yoon Suk Yeolŭi chajŭn yŏngŏ sayong ŭn chidokhan k'ompŭlleksŭ."

[11] Mentioned in six articles: O, "Yoon Suk YeolTaet'ongnyŏng ŭi kojil 'yŏngŏ pyŏng;'" *Sŏul ŭi Sori* [Voice of Seoul], "Yoon Suk Yeolŭi chajŭn yŏngŏ sayong ŭn chidokhan k'ompŭlleksŭ;" Ku, "'Yŏldŭng kam posang' esŏ parhyŏndoen Yoon Suk Yeolŭi yŏngŏ sarang;" Kim, "Taet'ongnyŏng ŭi panmal kwa yŏngŏ nambal… 'konggam nŭngnyŏk pujae' ŭi tanmyŏn;" Ko, "Ŭisa sot'ong 'changbyŏk' ssannŭn Yoon Sŏk-yŏl–Han Tŏk-su ŭi kwadohan 'yŏngŏ chipch'ak.'"

[12] "Sadaejuŭi" [Sadaejuŭi], Wiktionary, modified May 18, 2025, https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/사대주의; "Sadae" [Sadae], Wiktionary, modified September 24, 2024, https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/사대#Korean.

[13] Ku, "'Yŏldŭng kam posang' esŏ parhyŏndoen Yoon Suk Yeolŭi yŏngŏ sarang."

구시대적 의식·무의식이 만들어 낸 언어 습관이라는 것이다.[14] Kim's interpretation is echoed by O T'ae-gyu's comment that "[Yoon's choices] would be difficult to do if he didn't have a heart that valued or revered the US and English more than Korea and Korean*" 한국보다 미국, 한글보다 영어를 중시하고 숭상하는 마음이 없고서는 행하기 어려운 일입니다.[15] O underlined this supposition with the assertion that "[Yoon had] clearly shown that he is a stubborn Sadaejuŭi-ist and English worshipper. He has confirmed where his heart lies by abandoning a 'country-first mentality' and running toward blind pro-US, pro-Japan diplomacy" 그가 변하기 어려운 사대주의자이고 영어 숭배자임을 여실히 보여줬습니다. '자국 중심성'을 내팽개치고 친미·친일 추종 외교로 내달리는 심성의 뿌리가 어디에 있는지를 확인해 줬습니다. In these statements, Yoon's use of English is portrayed not just as a linguistic preference or habit, but as an outward manifestation of his Sadaejuŭi mentality which devalues Korean and Korea—again with the conflation of language and nation—through veneration of English and foreign powers, particularly the US. They also suggest that Yoon exhibited a sense of disregard for Korea's interests or agency, presenting him as blindly, unconditionally following and internalising the interests of foreign powers.

In some articles, Yoon's English use is also framed as a habit that signals an inferiority complex about his language, culture, and country, such as Ku's main argument that Yoon's "English love" was the "manifestation of 'compensation for an inferiority complex" '열등감 보상'에서 발현된 윤석열의 영어사랑.[16] According to Ku, a sense of inferiority is an inherent aspect of Sadaejuŭi which is not expressed by common English translations of the term, such as 'toadyism,' 'flunkeyism,' or 'sycophancy.' Ku framed this lack of a suitable English translation as evidence that "devaluing things from one's own country and worshipping foreign things is an uncommon phenomenon" 여기서 알 수 있는 것은 자국의 것을 평가절하하고 타국의 것을 숭배하는 것이 일반적이지 않은 현상이라는 것이다, implying that Yoon's Sadaejuŭi mentality is abnormal. Following this, Ku proposed 'colonial mentality' as a psychological phenomenon that reflects the "psyche" 정신세계 of someone who believes in and expresses linguistic Sadaejuŭi, such as Yoon, describing it as ". . . an attitude in which people internalise a sense of national or cultural inferiority as a consequence of colonisation" . . . 식민화의 결과 사람들이 민족적 또는 문화적 열등감을 내면화한 태도를 뜻한다. As such, Ku's article not only presents Yoon's linguistic behaviour as evidence of an inferiority complex

[14] Kim, "Taet'ongnyŏng ŭi panmal kwa yŏngŏ nambal… 'konggam nŭngnyŏk pujae' ŭi tanmyŏn."

[15] O, "Yoon Suk YeolTaet'ongnyŏng ŭi kojil 'yŏngŏ pyŏng.'"

[16] Ku, "'Yŏldŭng kam posang' esŏ parhyŏndoen Yoon Suk Yeolŭi yŏngŏ sarang."

about his country and culture but presents this complex as a psychological issue, or as something almost pathological.

This idea that Yoon's 'English love' was the manifestation of an inferiority complex, whether it be about the Korean nation, language, or culture, was itself a concern in some articles. Despite his article being quite moderate, only criticising Yoon's use of technical English loans, Chang Nam-gu did express his discomfort with Yoon's apparent inferiority complex. Reflecting on Yoon's 'National Memorial Park' comment, he concluded his article saying, ". . . I feel uneasy, wondering if he subtly exposed an inferiority complex" . . . 은연중에 열등감을 드러낸 것은 아닌가 싶어 마음이 불편해진다.[17] This same sentiment was a central concern in Ku's article:

> ". . . the weight of an individual's sense of inferiority is on a different level to that of a country's leader. Because the greater the responsibility of your position, the greater your obligation to face your sense of insecurity and channel it in a positive direction," later continuing, "isn't Korea a cultural powerhouse in every sense of the title now? . . . It seems like this news hasn't been delivered to President Yoon yet. So, it feels like our language, our script, our culture, they are still not cool yet."[18]

With these comments, Ku demonstrated why Yoon's inferiority complex was concerning to them; if Yoon, as the leader of the country, acted like Korean is inferior to English, like Korea is inferior to the US or other global powers, Korean people may have internalised Yoon's sense of inferiority as well.

Is That Something to Brag About?

Within these interpretations of Yoon having an inferiority complex and valuing English more than Korean, some of the articles portray Yoon's Linguistic behaviour as an attempt to show off. Discussing Yoon's use of "raw" 날것 English words instead of equivalent Korean words, O T'ae-gyu claimed, "… it seemed as if he was bragging and saying 'I know this kind of English too'" . . . 바꿔 부를 수 있는 것을 마치 '나 이런 영어도 알아'라고 자랑이라도 하는 듯이 보였습니다.[19] Similarly, in his comments about Yoon's Linguistic behaviour being proof of his lack of affection for Korean, Kim Ho-gyŏng interpreted Yoon's use of English as "showing off to his fellow citizens" . . . 공개석상에서 자국민들을 상대로 자꾸 과시한다는 건 . . ..[20]

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[17] Chang, "Yoon Suk Yeolsik K'onggŭllisi."

[18] See Appendix, section 3.1 for original quotation. Ku, "'Yŏldŭng kam posang' esŏ parhyŏndoen Yoon Suk Yeolŭi yŏngŏ sarang."

[19] O, "Yoon Suk YeolTaet'ongnyŏng ŭi kojil 'yŏngŏ pyŏng.'"

[20] See Appendix, section 3.2 for full quotation. Kim, "Taet'ongnyŏng ŭi panmal kwa yŏngŏ nambal… 'konggam nŭngnyŏk pujae' ŭi tanmyŏn."

In the Voice of Seoul's editorial piece, the author asked, "[when] the President uses foreign language that the general public cannot possibly comprehend like this, does he seem more dignified? No, he doesn't, so why does [Yoon] readily use difficult foreign languages often?" 대통령이 이처럼 일반 국민이 도무지 알아먹을 수 없는 외국어를 사용하면 격이 높아질까? 그렇지 않은데도 왜 윤석열은 걸핏하면 어려운 외국어를 자주 사용할까?[21] Though the idea that Yoon's linguistic behaviour could have a positive impact on his image is rejected in the second question, the inclusion of the first question suggests that the author thought it was a notion worth addressing. By interpreting Yoon's use of English as 'showing off' or recognising that Yoon or others might view it positively, they implicitly acknowledge that English has some social value in Korea. That being said, because that implicit acknowledgement is embedded with the articles' negative framing of Yoon's linguistic behaviour or outright rejection of such notions of value, the articles are able to undermine even the implication of English's value, presenting Yoon's linguistic behaviour and Yoon himself as pretentious and self-interested.

Overall, the media not only presented Yoon's linguistic behaviour negatively but, through their interpretations of said behaviour, presented Yoon and the effects of his linguistic behaviour negatively as well. Using his linguistic behaviour as inculpatory evidence, the media portrayed Yoon as a self-interested, Sadaejuŭi follower and English worshipper with an inferiority complex who values English over Korean. Further, they also presented Yoon as causing harm to the Korean language and, by extension, nation through his use of English. Through these interpretations, the media connected Yoon's linguistic behaviour to both negative social meanings and negatively indexed characteristics and values, such as egotism, self-deprecation and sycophancy. And, using his position as the President to underline the significance of his linguistic behaviour, the media criticised Yoon for demonstrating and expressing such characteristics and values through his linguistic behaviour. In this sense, we could just say that the media criticised Yoon's linguistic behaviour because they interpreted it as indexing these negative social meanings. However, this does not explain why the media interpreted Yoon's linguistic behaviour as indexing the specific social meanings they ascribed to it.

[21] *Sŏul ŭi Sori* [Voice of Seoul], "Yoon Suk Yeolŭi chajŭn yŏngŏ sayong ŭn chidokhan k'ompŭlleksŭ."

3.2 The Ideological Logic of it All

The media's metalinguistic discourse about Yoon's linguistic behaviour not only reveals the social meanings they viewed it as indexing, but the ideologies of language that underpinned such interpretations. To uncover these ideologies, I deconstruct the ideological framework of the media's criticisms using Judith Irvine and Susan Gal's processes of linguistic differentiation: *iconization*, *fractal recursivity*, and *erasure*. Moreover, through analysing these processes within the media's rhetoric I also demonstrate how the media's beliefs about language were transposed into beliefs about Yoon's language use and then into beliefs about Yoon's character in an ideologically logical manner. In the case of the media criticism of Yoon's linguistic behaviour, I argue that their ideological representations of Korean and English are constructed in opposition to one another, portraying Korean as an icon of the nation and English as an icon of the threatening Other.

As I explained in Chapter One, I apply these processes slightly differently to Irvine and Gal with the linguistic forms I analyse—the media's idealised form of 'Korean' and 'the use of English within Korean'—being more conceptual than empirical. What I mean by this is, given that English loans are a 'normal' part of the Korean language, the linguistic form of 'Korean' (henceforth written without quotation marks) which the media presented as ideal, is purely conceptual in and of itself, with the concept of 'the use of English within Korean' (henceforth English), particularly that which is apparently 'excessive,' 'unnecessary,' or 'confusing,' existing in opposition to that ideal of Korean within the articles. Furthermore, in my analysis, iconization operates through a transformation of the sign relationship between linguistic forms and the social concepts with which they are ideologically linked, not just the social images. Additionally, instead of using fractal recursivity to demonstrate the reproduction of structural oppositions between linguistic groups, I use it to demonstrate how the above conceptual language-level ideological contrast between Korean and English, as the antithetical Other was projected onto the level of language use and then onto the level of the language user.

Iconizing Korean and English (vis a vis Korean)

The media's conflation of language and nation reflects a Korean linguistic nationalist (KLN) view of the Korean language. As discussed in Chapter One, within KLN discourse, the Korean language and nation are conflated with each other because they are co-constituent; the Korean people's nationhood is validated by its shared, indigenous language, and the Korean language's value is validated by virtue of indexing the Korean-ness of the nation. This also means that protecting the Korean language is viewed as akin to protecting the nation. Looking at the

following quotation from Chu Si-gyŏng, we can see how the protection of the Korean language was positioned as being imperative within early Korean nationalist discourse: "the prosperity and decline of a nation lies in the prosperity and decline of its language, and the very question of the existence of a nation lies in the existence of a language."[22] This kind of rhetoric was also used by Kim Yong-t'aek to link Yoon's linguistic behaviour to the potential loss of the nation, saying "there are countless examples of *minjok* that couldn't protect their language and writing who not only lost their culture but even lost their nation " 말과 글을 지키지 못했던 민족은 그 문화는 물론 나라마저 잃어버린 예가 수없이 많다.[23] Kim even supported this statement using another quotation from Chu: "the relationship between language and *minjok* is inseparable" . . . 주시경 선생은 '말과 민족과의 관계는 떼놓을 수가 없다'고 했다. O T'ae-gyu's conflation of Yoon's apparent neglect of the Korean language with neglect of the nation is also a salient example of how this KLN discourse was used within the media's rhetoric to criticise. Thus, through such KLN discourse, Korean is framed as a representation of Korean nationhood and the essence of the Korean nation—with the fate of each inextricably linked—within the media's discourse.

In terms of how the media framed Korean itself, they also engaged with script nationalism by portraying Korean as superior or special in some way, or worthy of greater recognition than it was being afforded by Yoon. For example, when Ku Yŏn-su used the lack of an equivalent English term for Sadaejuŭi to present Yoon's linguistic behaviour as abnormal, he also rhetorically remarked, "how many nations have their own unique writing system and language?" 고유한 글과 말을 갖고 있는 나라가 어디 흔한가?[24] In mentioning Korea's unique status as one of the very few nations that not only possesses a native language that is unique to their people, but also a script that is uniquely associated with their native language, Ku's rhetoric is directly aligned with script nationalist ideology. As such, Ku framed Yoon's Sadaejuŭi attitude as not just abnormal, but egregiously so, because of Korea's distinctive national language context. Ku even called on Yoon to consider the weight of his actions as the President and "raise the global status of Korean" 대통령이 지니는 무게감 감안, 한국어 세계적 위상드높여야, further invoking the script nationalist framing of the Korean language as a special language that deserves global recognition.

[22] Ross King, "Nationalism and Language Reform in Korea: The Questione della Lingua in Precolonial Korea," in *Nationalism and the Construction of Korean Identity*, ed. Hyung Il Pai and Timothy R. Tangherlini (Berkley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1998), 48.

[23] Kim, "Yoon Taet'ongnyŏng ŭi yŏngŏ sarang… wae munje in'ga?."

[24] Ku, "'Yŏldŭng kam posang' esŏ parhyŏndoen Yoon Suk Yeolŭi yŏngŏ sarang."

This aspect of script nationalist discourse, along with the discourse of linguistic purism, also features in other articles. O T'ae-gyu and Voice of Seoul expressed similar sentiments, lamenting about Yoon's failure to use "the most dignified [*Korean*] sentences" . . . 가장 품위 있는 한글 문장 . . . or "dignified language" . . . 품위 있는 언어 . . ., respectively.[25] Similarly, Kim Mi-gyŏng remarked that foreign languages were being abused and misused in government documents when they should be using "proper Korean" 올바른 국어.[26] The implication here is two-fold. First, the most dignified form of Korean speech is one that uses less English than Yoon did, I would argue they meant he should have used as little English as possible. In this sense, they are employing linguistic purist discourse by asserting that a 'purer' form of Korean is the best form. Second, this assertion that the most dignified use of language is one which is more 'purely Korean,' also connects to the script nationalist discourse of superiority. Though they are not outright saying Korean is superior to English, we can infer a hierarchical relationship between Korean and English based on the implication that using more English makes someone's language use less dignified. Furthermore, in the case of O, the script nationalist discourse which conflates Hangŭl with Korean is overtly demonstrated throughout his article as he almost exclusively referred to Korean as 'Hangŭl' despite his criticism being about Yoon's speech habits, which have nothing to do with Hangŭl as a written script.[27] He even supported his comment about dignified Korean sentences by referencing the celebration of Hangŭl Day and stating, "Hangŭl is the Korean cultural product most worthy of global pride" 한글이 세계에서 가장 자랑할 만한 한국의 문화 창작물이라면서 한글 창제 반포날을 국경일(한글날)로 만들어 기리는 나라에서 말입니다 . . .. Yun Kŭn-hyŏk and Kim Yong-t'aek similarly described Yoon's linguistic behaviour as "Hangŭl misuse" 한글오용 and "destroying our precious Hangŭl" . . . 소중한 우리의 한글을 파괴 . . ..[28] Additionally, this purist 'dignified speech' rhetoric connects back to the language-nation conflation; because the Korean language indexes Korean-ness, diluting or contaminating the Korean language, dilutes or contaminates the Korean-ness of the nation. The co-constituent nature of the language-nation conflation also plays out in the Voice of Seoul article with Yoon's failure to use "dignified

[25] See Appendix, sections 3.3 and 3.4 for full quotations. O, "Yoon Suk YeolTaet'ongnyŏng ŭi kojil 'yŏngŏ pyŏng;'" *Sŏul ŭi Sori* [Voice of Seoul], "Yoon Suk Yeolŭi chajŭn yŏngŏ sayong ŭn chidokhan k'ompŭlleksŭ."

[26] Kim Mi-gyŏng, "Yoon Taet'ongnyŏng, kwadohan yŏngŏ p'yohyŏn… 'ŏgŭreshibŭ hage'" [President Yoon's Excessive English Expression... 'Do it Aggressively'], *Ideilli* [EDaily] (Seoul), May 11, 2023, https://www.edaily.co.kr/
News/Read?newsId=01216886635607936&mediaCodeNo=257.

[27] O, "Yoon Suk YeolTaet'ongnyŏng ŭi kojil 'yŏngŏ pyŏng.'"

[28] Yun, "'Naesyŏnŏl P'ak'ŭ' rago hamyŏn mŏt ittago? Yoon Suk Yeolŭi yŏngŏ Sadaejuŭi;" Kim, "Yoon Taet'ongnyŏng ŭi yŏngŏ sarang… wae munje in'ga?."

language" directly connected to the claim that "the country is doomed" 나라에 망조가 들었다.[29] Overall, the media framed 'purer' Korean as more dignified and positioned this dignified form of Korean as the representative form which is conflated with the nation. In doing this, the media not only reinforced KLN discourse of script nationalism and purism, but also implicitly framed English as an infiltrating or contaminating force which sits in opposition to Korean.

The way the media framed English itself, particularly English 'mixing,' also connects to KLN discourse, specifically anti-colonialism and linguistic purism. O T'ae-gyu demonstrated this kind of rhetoric in his article, writing, "as the political leaders that were educated under Japanese colonial rule left, I wondered if the tendency of mixing Sino-Japanese words into writing had come to an end, but now, mixing of English in writing is spreading like a pandemic following the President's bad example" 일본 식민지 시대에 교육받은 정치 지도자들이 떠나면서 일본식 한자 섞어쓰기 풍조가 끝장나는가 했더니, 이제 대통령의 못된 본을 받아 영어 섞어쓰기가 유행병처럼 번지고 있습니다.[30] In connecting Yoon's use of English to the use of Sino-Japanese words, O's comment is very much a product of KLN discourse, such as the anti-colonial rhetoric that was employed in the post-liberation language purification movement of said Sino-Japanese words.[31] But, O was not the only reporter to draw these kinds of comparisons. While discussing colonial mentality, as a comparable concept to Sadaejuŭi, Ku Yŏn-su used people who assimilated to Japanese customs during the colonial period, including dressing in Japanese clothing and speaking Japanese, as an example and claimed, "[these kinds of people] are still living and breathing in various ways" . . . 그들은 다양한 방법으로 여전히 살아 숨 쉬고 있다, creating an implicit connection between Yoon's Sadaejuŭi-indexing linguistic behaviour and the behaviour of these collaborators.[32] Kim Mi-gyŏng also made a similar comparison to O, stating, "in the past, people struggled to understand official documents because of the excessive use of difficult [Hancha], but these days, English is taking that position" 예전에는 어려운 한자어 남용으로 공문서를 이해하는데 어려움을 겪었다면, 요즘엔 영어가 그 자리를 대신하는 처지다.[33] Though Kim's rhetoric

[29] See Appendix, section 2.2 for full original quotation. *Sŏul ŭi Sori* [Voice of Seoul], "Yoon Suk Yeolŭi chajŭn yŏngŏ sayong ŭn chidokhan k'ompŭlleksŭ."

[30] O, "Yoon Suk YeolTaet'ongnyŏng ŭi kojil 'yŏngŏ pyŏng.'"

[31] Koh, "Contamination, Infiltration, Hybridity," 90-91.

[32] Ku, "'Yŏldŭng kam posang' esŏ parhyŏndoen Yoon Suk Yeolŭi yŏngŏ sarang."

[33] Translation note: while the author used the word '*Hanchaŏ*' 한자어, which refers to Sino-Korean words which can be written using Hancha or Hangŭl, I translated it as just 'Hancha' because the author's critique is that the abuse of *Hanchaŏ* made the documents difficult to understand; if these words were written using Hangŭl,

is more pragmatic, focusing on the issue of accessibility, this comment still subtly invokes the rhetoric of the language purification movement, providing her negative framing of English as the new Hancha with more rhetorical force. Through using this anti-colonial and linguistic purist rhetoric to criticise Yoon's linguistic behaviour, the media implicitly connects English to colonialism.

Ku and Kim's comments also reveal another aspect of how English is framed through the media's rhetoric. Despite the value that English holds in Korea as a form of linguistic capital and as a global lingua franca, the media never explicitly acknowledged this value, and, even when implicitly acknowledging, framed it negatively. As I discussed in the previous section, we see this with the comments that interpreted Yoon's use of English as "bragging" or "showing off," or undercut the implication of this value by emphasising its negative impact on understandability. Ku and Kim's comments express similar tacit but ambivalent acknowledgements of English's value. When discussing the Korean collaborators who exhibited a colonial mentality, Ku said "the higher their social position, the more they internalised [the colonial mindset] to safeguard their economic and social [position]" . . . 사회적 위치가 높을수록 이 개념을 체화하여 자신들의 경제적·사회적 안위를 도모 . . ..[34] He further stated that part of this process involved the Otherising of Korean people "due to a desire to validate one's superiority by highlighting the inferiority of others" 타인의 열등함을 부각해 자신의 우월성을 확인하고 싶은 욕망에 기인한다, and concluded by saying, "think of the *minjok* traitors who ceaselessly Othered the people of Chosŏn" . . . 끊임없이 조선인을 타자화한 민족반역자들을 떠올려보라. Considering Ku's likening of Yoon's linguistic Sadaejuŭi to this depiction of a colonial mentality, by claiming that higher-class people internalised this mentality more to protect their personal interests and characterising them as traitors who Othered their fellow Koreans to make themselves seem superior, Ku connected English to this class-based self-aggrandisation and Othering. Similarly, through framing English as the new Hancha while highlighting the negative impact it has on linguistic accessibility in public communications, Kim also implicitly reinforced the view that English is elitist by connecting it to Hancha, which was inaccessible to anyone that was not an aristocrat during the Chosŏn dynasty. The Voice of Seoul editorial uses similar rhetoric, "people who often hear they lack education or are ignorant, often intentionally use [Classical Chinese] Hancha idioms or English that they just heard somewhere. They mistakenly think that doing so

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they would have been understandable as use of Sino-Korean words in Korean is commonplace. Kim, "Yoon Taet'ongnyŏng, kwadohan yŏngŏ p'yohyŏn… 'ŏgŭreshibŭ hage.'"

[34] Ku, "'Yŏldŭng kam posang' esŏ parhyŏndoen Yoon Suk Yeolŭi yŏngŏ sarang."

gives them prestige. We call this 'a pearl necklace on a pig's neck'" 흔히 학식이 모자라거나 무식하다는 소리를 자주 듣는 사람은 의도적으로 어디서 얻어들은 한자성어나 영어를 자주 사용한다. 그래야 위신이 선다고 착각하는 것이다. 이런 것을 우린 '돼지 목에 진주 목걸이'라고 한다.[35] In this case, English's value is acknowledged more overtly but with the implication that Yoon's way of using English only creates the illusion of prestige, or even, is the result of a faulty attempt to leverage English's social value for his own gain. Overall, these comments demonstrate the media's ambivalence towards English, implicitly framing English as a marker of social status and wealth, and more overtly as a sign of insecurity, ignorance, and even traitorousness.

Furthermore, English is consistently connected to foreign powers and a loss of independence and identity, positioning it as a threat to Korean. Kim Mi-gyŏng concluded her article with a statement from the Sejong Institute of Korean Language and Culture 세종국어문화원 which demonstrates this sentiment: "Language is like a food chain, where the strong dominate the weak. . . . If the misuse and abuse of English, which is already powerful, is left as it is, eventually, our language will come to lose its foothold" 언어는 먹이사슬처럼 강자가 약자를 지배한다. . . . 이미 권력이 된 영어의 오·남용 사례를 그대로 두면 결국 우리말이 설 자리를 잃게 된다.[36] In addition to framing English as a threat to Korean, by suggesting that English will dominate Korean if left to its own devices, this quote depicts languages as independent, agentive entities that can cause harm to one another. Further, it also seems to suggest that rather than English and Korean being able to mix harmoniously as English use increases, English would supplant Korean, that only one can ultimately be maintained. Regarding Yoon's 'the BUCK STOPS here!' desk plaque, O T'ae-gyu said, "my major concern was that he might be mistaken for the governor-general of an American colony instead of the President of Korea" . . . 그를 한국 대통령이 아니라 미국 식민지의 총독쯤으로 여기지 않을까 하는 걱정이 앞섰습니다.[37] This image of Yoon as the governor-general of an American colony, sitting behind his English plaque, not only connects English to the US, but connects it to domination, to subjugation, and to the loss of Korea's independence.

Altogether, while the media used KLN rhetoric to frame Korean as nationalist, precious, special, dignified and pure, they also used it to Otherise English, framing it as foreign, contaminating, colonialist and elitist. The ideological representation of the Korean language

[35] *Sŏul ŭi Sori* [Voice of Seoul], "Yoon Suk Yeolŭi chajŭn yŏngŏ sayong ŭn chidokhan k'ompŭlleksŭ."

[36] Kim, "Yoon Taet'ongnyŏng, kwadohan yŏngŏ p'yohyŏn… 'ŏgŭreshibŭ hage'"

[37] O, "Yoon Suk YeolTaet'ongnyŏng ŭi kojil 'yŏngŏ pyŏng.'"

presented in the articles, portrays it not only as a fundamental feature of the Korean nation, but as an iconic entity which reflects and expresses its essence. Within the ethnonationalist discourse that provided the basis for the construction of the 'Korean nation,' the Korean nation is characterised as natural, ancient, homogeneous, essential and independent. Moreover, the Korean nation is special and thus precious and prideworthy, and should be protected and promoted in a physical, cultural and political sense to reflect that value. From my above analysis, we can see that the media's portrayal of the Korean language aligns with KLN discourse, which presents the Korean language as the outward manifestation of Korean people's common heritage and ethnonational identity, being "handed down over more than four thousand years– our own special, indigenous . . . language," itself natural, ancient and independent.[38] In a similar sense to the people of Korea perceiving themselves as sharing a collective national identity, a key part of this representation of Korean is that it frames the language as collectively belonging to the Korean people. Thus, the media portrayed the Korean language as an iconic representation of the nation, nationalism, national belonging and Korean-ness. The media's iconization of English is slightly different because it essentially serves to stand in opposition to Korean's; because Korean is an icon of the Korean nation, English must be an icon of the Other. And, in the context of KLN discourse, the Other is not just a foreign Other, but a hostile Other. By connecting English and its use within the Korean language to Korea's historical cultural and political submission to China through likening it to Hancha, to Japan's oppressive colonisation through comparing Yoon's linguistic behaviour to the opportunistic, traitorous behaviour of collaborators during the colonial period, and to general servility to foreign powers, particularly the US, the media associated English with domination, subjugation, and loss of agency. Further, these connections and associations frame English as a threat, both to the Korean language, contaminating it, causing it to be misused, making it less dignified and less proper, and making it less Korean, and to Korea's national status and independence. Altogether, with Korean being an icon of nation and nationalism, English is inherently negatively Othered within the KLN framework of the media's criticism. The media's representation of English as this linguistic and national threat, iconizes it to appear antithetical to Korean and thus Korean nationalism. Additionally, because Korean is also iconized as expressing Korean-ness, these two ideologically opposed iconisations of Korean and English, can be understood as 'authentic' or 'correct' Korean and 'inauthentic' or 'incorrect' Korean, respectively.

[38] King, "Nationalism and Language Reform in Korea," 48.

From Language to Language Use to Language User

The media's criticism works by projecting the above conceptual language-level ideological representations of Korean as the nation and English as the antithetical Other, onto the level of language use and then onto the level of the language user. At the level of language use, using Korean, in the purer idealistic form that the media seemed to want Yoon to use, is interpreted as authentic, correct, patriotic and nationalist language use, while using Korean that incorporates English is interpreted as inauthentic, incorrect, unpatriotic and anti-nationalist language use. Additionally, because of the association of English with colonialism and socioeconomic status-based inaccessibility, using English can also be interpreted as Sadaejuŭi-ist or elitist. These projections are then applied recursively onto individual language use to moralise the linguistic behaviour of speakers. Thus, within the media's KLN-based framework, people who use Korean 'correctly' are good, and people who 'incorrectly' mix English into their Korean are bad. However, contrary to how the ideological representation of English is constructed in opposition to the ideological representation of Korean, in practice, i.e., at the level of actual language use, the positive moralisation of using Korean is constructed in opposition to a speaker's 'immoral' use of English within their Korean speech. This is because Korean is the default, and therefore normal, unremarkable and inconspicuous. Thus, while some English-origin words are part of that default form because they have been integrated to the point of necessity, such as 'bus' 버스 or 'coffee' 커피, i.e., words with no NK alternative, it is only through the conspicuous use of 'non-default' English-origin words that the ideological representations of Korean and English language use are mobilised to moralise speakers' linguistic behaviour. That is, use of the default form transforms from morally-neutral to morally-good in light of someone's immoral use of a 'non-default,' 'inauthentic,' 'incorrect' form. Therefore, the media's oppositional ideological representations of Korean and English are projected onto Yoon's use of English concurrently.

Altogether, the media projected their ideological representations of Korean and English onto Yoon's linguistic behaviour to frame it as morally wrong on account of being an incorrect and unpatriotic use of the Korean language. Through the recursion of this projection onto Yoon himself, the media was then able to present Yoon as immoral, as someone who has a Sadaejuŭi mentality and inferiority complex, and who does not care about the Korean language, people or nation, or their interests. Further, by presenting Yoon's English as incomprehensible and tacitly acknowledging his English use as a possible attempt to attract positive attention based on its positive representation as indexing modernity, global-ness, and prestige, the media also presented Yoon as an inconsiderate and even elitist communicator. Based on this moralisation

of Yoon's character, the media's criticism presents the apparent harm caused by Yoon's linguistic behaviour as a direct consequence of Yoon's personal moral failings.

Decontextualised Language Use and Presidentialised Context

In addition to representing Yoon and his linguistic behaviour as immoral and harmful, the media also framed his use of English as abnormal and inexplicable by ignoring or obfuscating certain details that did not align with the ideological framework of their criticism. As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, loaning of English-origin words is a normal and common feature of Korean language practices. By ignoring this bit of context, the media was able to represent it as such without having to qualify their descriptions of his English. Additionally, the subsequent linguistically decontextualised presentation of Yoon's English as excessive, unnecessary, and confusing obscured any possible functional reasons why Yoon might have used English as he did, such as using a word because of its nuanced technical or domain-specific meaning. Moreover, along with ignoring the possible instrumental value of using English loans, the media also never explicitly acknowledged the significant social value that is attached to English within Korean society as a form of global linguistic capital. As I discussed above, even when there is some tacit recognition of English's value, which may have provided some external reason for Yoon's linguistic behaviour, it was always obfuscated in some way, either through framing Yoon's possible use of English for this reason as merely self-interested, or through connecting English to a loss of independence and agency.

Each of these considerations evidence broader structural and systemic factors that could have influenced Yoon's linguistic behaviour and choices. By virtue of not acknowledging these factors within their articles, the media essentially presented Yoon's linguistic behaviour within a vacuum, making it seem more idiosyncratic and internally motivated, such as by Yoon's apparent Sadaejuŭi mentality or inferiority complex. As such, the media discursively positioned Yoon as actively and individually responsible for the negative effects they claimed his linguistic behaviour entailed, such as devaluing and destroying the Korean language and nation, and making other Koreans feel a sense of inferiority about their culture, rather than as someone who was following wider Korean language practices and trends. By disregarding these considerations—these wider structural and systemic sociocultural and linguistic factors which Yoon could not be held personally responsible for—the media reinforced their representation of Yoon's linguistic behaviour as a manifestation of his personal moral flaws, for which he could, even should, have been criticised for.

However, this individualised sense of responsibility for harm caused by Yoon's use of linguistic forms that are in fact not individualised themselves, which provides the basis for

idealised critique, does not exist within a vacuum either. The fact that Yoon was the president is the element of this case that ultimately motivated the media's criticism of his linguistic behaviour. That is, regardless of the specific negative social meaning the media ascribed to Yoon's linguistic behaviour, his position as president necessitated their criticism of his linguistic behaviour because it not only made his linguistic behaviour nationally visible but imbued it individually with a degree of institutional weight and influence which is exclusive to the president. While Yoon is an individual person, as the president he was the nation's leader and representative; as Yun Kŭn-hyŏk remarked, "the president can be said to be a walking public institution" 대통령은 걸어 다니는 공공기관이라고 할 수 있다.[39] As such, if we consider the media's criticism as a form of prescriptivism which judged Yoon's linguistic behaviour against an ideal of 'correct' language use, as I discussed in the previous chapter, Yoon and his linguistic behaviour were an ideal target for the media's KLN-based criticism. Yoon's position as president not only provided the contextual basis for the media's criticism but helped to naturalize its ideological basis by adding greater individual moral necessity to Yoon's use of an 'ideal' form of Korean.

A Metapragmatic Feedback Loop

Overall, the media conceptualised and thus criticised Yoon's use of English almost exclusively, if not entirely, through the lens of KLN. As my analysis shows, the media not only represented Korean as an icon of the nation and Korean nationalism by connecting their rhetoric to KLN values and narratives but represented English and Yoon's use of English as problematic through those same values and narratives, connecting them to the discourses of Sadaejuŭi and anti-colonial narratives. Moreover, being placed in opposition to Korean, English was doubly conceptualised within this framework of KLN ideologies as that which the Korean language and nation must be protected from and that which proves they are in need of protection. In this sense, the media's criticism of Yoon's English use rode on a KLN conceptualisation of English being in opposition to Korean, with said conceptualisation being recursively applied to the point of presenting Yoon in opposition to Korean and the KLN ideological framework that upholds its value based on his language use. Furthermore, the media's tacit but strategic acknowledgement of English's social and economic value as a form of linguistic capital was a key mechanism within this KLN framework, both decontextualising and reframing aspects of Yoon's linguistic behaviour that undermined or muddied their discursive construction of it.

[39] Yun, "'Naesyŏnŏl P'ak'ŭ' rago hamyŏn mŏt ittago? Yoon Suk Yeolŭi yŏngŏ Sadaejuŭi."

However, while such acknowledgements and negative positioning of English's value can be inferred through close analysis of the texts, as I demonstrate in this chapter, they are always expressed through the framework of KLN, leaving issues related to English's position within Korean society that fall outside the framework unaddressed. Notably absent from the media criticism is sustained critical engagement with the role of English in reproducing social and class inequality in Korea. Though the media connected Yoon's English use to colonial narratives of traitorous social elites and English itself to Hancha, as a historically elitist script, these connections exist to support the media's framing of English as a threat to the Korean language, nation, and independence. Even in the references to English being inaccessible in the same way that Hancha previously was, an issue which is directly related to class and wealth, and in any of the other understandability-based criticisms, the critique is not pushed further. Thus, the media criticism left English's role in the reproduction of structural material inequalities unchallenged. Moreover, because the media's KLN framework is applied to Yoon's use of English within his Korean speech, not necessarily English itself, the ideological construction of English as a necessary form of linguistic capital which reproduces these social inequalities is somewhat removed from what the media was attempting to problematize. This finding aligns with Joseph Park's concept of *ideology pooling*; because the media's ideological opposition to English was based on KLN ideologies of English, specifically as it is used as a part of the Korean language, their critique of Yoon's English did not challenge other harmful ideologies of English that Yoon's linguistic behaviour not only reflected but reproduced. In this sense, while the media's criticism appears to be in opposition to the ideologies of English that construct, reproduce and naturalise its significant position within Korean society, these ideologies of English are not problematised within the framework of KLN ideologies. Thus, they were disregarded in the media's criticism.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I set out to investigate why Yoon Suk Yeol was criticised within the media for how he spoke during his presidency, specifically his use of English loans in his Korean speech. Focusing on how Yoon, his use of English, and the effects and implications of such language use were represented within the media's metalinguistic and metapragmatic discourse, I analysed how such linguistic behaviour was discursively constructed, which language ideologies underpinned these constructions, and how those ideologies shaped the content and focusses of the media's criticism. As such, rather than treating the media's criticism as a reaction to Yoon's stylistic choices or the communicative efficacy of such choices, I approached the media discourse itself as an object of analysis, moving beyond surface-level explanations to examine such criticism as a site of language ideological work.

Following this approach, this study found that the media's criticism of Yoon's linguistic behaviour not only expressed linguistic nationalist values but was inherently shaped through the lens of Korean linguistic nationalism (KLN). Within this ideological framework, the media positioned English in opposition to Korean as a symbol of the Korean nation, national identity, and nationalism, thereby Otherising English and discursively constructing Yoon's use of English as not only harmful to the Korean language but as a threat to Korea's cultural and national autonomy, authenticity, and authority. In particular, this discursive framing drew on ethnonationalist, linguistic purist rhetoric and anti-colonial narratives. Moreover, being presented as 'excessive,' 'unnecessary,' and 'confusing,' Yoon's English use was positioned as a deviation from an idealised standard of Korean language use which he was expected to adhere to as the nation's leader. Yoon's linguistic behaviour was further imbued with political and moral significance through the ideological loading of KLN-based social meanings onto different levels of Yoon's language use—the conceptual level of 'Korean' and 'English,' the level of language use, and the level of the language user—which functioned to not only discursively position Yoon's English use as antithetical to KLN values, but to necessitate and legitimise the media's criticism itself.

Furthermore, this KLN framework not only shaped the media's criticism, but actively structured what counted as problematic or noteworthy in Yoon's linguistic behaviour. While English was problematised as a symbolic threat to the Korean language and nation, other significant problematic dimensions of English's position within Korean society were largely absent from the criticism. In particular, the role of English in reproducing structural inequalities

related to wealth and education in South Korea was not included within the media discourse despite being well documented in existing research and the Korean public's awareness. Moreover, this absence was not incidental. Instead, it reflects the ideological parameters of what is and is not considered problematic about the position of English in Korea within the framework of KLN: its use within the Korean language. By foregrounding the KLN-based opposition between English and Korean, the media discourse side-lined critiques that could have challenged English's construction as a necessary form of linguistic capital. That is, the media disregarded materially consequential ideologies of English, and thus the inequalities they reproduce, because they themselves did not contradict the ideological framework through which the media's criticism operated.

Altogether, the findings of this study show that the media's criticism of Yoon's linguistic behaviour, rather than being a purely linguistic evaluation of style or communicative efficacy, functioned as a site through which Yoon's use of English within his Korean speech was connected to deeper ideological tensions surrounding nationalist values and the place of English within Korea. However, this site was limited by the very ideologies that enabled such discourse, with structural inequalities associated with English left largely unchallenged. Thus, the reason the media criticised Yoon's use of English was not because they saw ideologies of English and their social effects as problematic, but because the use of English within the Korean language itself must be understood as problematic within the framework of KLN. As the essence of the nation, as its fundamental feature, the value of Korean within KLN is absolute, and the infiltration of English, as the Other, into Korean is absolutely in opposition to that value and all it represents.

This study contributes to research on political discourse and language ideology. By examining metalinguistic criticism of a political leader's speech, rather than criticism of policy positions or propositional content expressed though such speech, this study demonstrates that linguistic form can become a salient site of political and ideological contestation. Additionally, through analysing how the media evaluated Yoon's linguistic behaviour the findings of this study establish how such criticism can be selective and ideologically patterned, in this case structured predominantly through a linguistic nationalist lens. Further, while empirically grounded in the Korean sociolinguistic and political context, this study has broader relevance for research on the significance of language structure in political discourse. By conceptualising metalinguistic criticism as a site of ideological reproduction, negotiation, and normalisation, it offers an analytic lens applicable to other contexts in which political leaders' language practices are evaluated against ideological expectations.

This thesis represents a case study of a specific response to a specific issue, i.e., explicitly critical media articles about Yoon's use of English within his Korean speech. As such, there are several limitations to the scope and generalisability of this thesis. Additionally, the sociolinguistic context of this case also limits generalisability with Korea being characterised as a monolingual country with particularly strong linguistic nationalism. These limitations nonetheless point to productive directions for future research. Comparative analyses across different administrations or media orientations, as well as studies incorporating audience perspectives, would further illuminate how language use in political discourse is interpreted and contested in South Korea.

Overall, this thesis demonstrates that media criticism of English use in Korean political discourse is not simply about language choice, but about what kinds of critiques are imaginable, legitimate, and speakable within the ideological frameworks they operate through. By showing how ideologies of language serve to both motivate and limit media criticism, this study highlights the need to attend not only to what is said about language, but also to what remains unsaid, and thus what ideologies remain unchallenged. In doing so, it underscores the central role of language ideology in shaping how larger sociopolitical discourses are discursively reproduced as well as contested in contemporary Korea.

APPENDIX

Original Korean Texts Referenced in the Thesis

Note: this appendix reproduces original Korean-language texts corresponding to translations cited or discussed in the main text and notes. Materials are grouped by type.

Section 1: Article 2 of the Framework Act on the National Language

국가와 국민은 국어가 민족 제일의 문화유산이며 문화 창조의 원동력임을 깊이 인식하여 국어 발전에 적극적으로 힘씀으로써 민족문화의 정체성을 확립하고 국어를 잘 보전하여 후손에게 계 승할 수 있도록 하여야 한다.

Section 2: Yoon Suk Yeol quotations cited in external news sources

2.1. Quoted in The Hankyoreh (April 13 2022)

유창한 영어 실력으로 다양한 국제업무 경험도 가지고 있어 글로벌 스탠더드에 맞는 사법제도를 겸비해나가는 데 적임자라고 판단했다. 국제적인 커뮤니케이션을 원활하게 하기 위해 미국 변호사이고 영어도 잘하는, 그리고 수사·재판 경험이 많은 한 검사장이 가장 적합하다고 판단했다.

2.2. Sourced from Han'guk Ilbo video

저도 학교 다닐 때 국어가 재미가 없었다. 아니, 우리말을 뭣 하러 또 배우냐 그러고 시험문제 보면 이게 문학 하시는 분들의 무슨 이게 청록파냐 뭐냐 무슨 자음접변이냐 이런 것이 국어라고 하는 그게 아니죠. 우리의 문화를 배우는 거 아니겠습니까? 그런데 이제 예를 들면 어떤 그런 시라든가 어떤 이런 걸 놓고 우리가 자기의 느낌을 적는다든지 거기에 대해서 뭔가 이런 걸 통해서 한다 그러면 재미없어할 사람이 아마 없지 않겠나 싶고요.[1]

[1] Transcribed from subtitles of video; filled pauses removed by author for clarity. Han'guk Ilbo [Hankook Ilbo], creator, *'Ani uri mal ŭl mwŏt harŏ tto paeunya' Yoon Suk YeolTaet'ongnyŏng kyoyukpu ŏmmu pogo parŏn nollan? #shorts* ['I mean, why bother learning our own language again?' controversy over President Yoon Suk Yeol's remarks on the Ministry of Education operations report? #shorts] (2023), YouTube, online video, 0:52, https://www.youtube.com/shorts/_s9QJDGP0Ew.

Section 3: Quotations from media texts analysed in main discussion

3.1. Ku Yŏn su, "'Yŏldŭng kam posang' esŏ parhyŏndoen Yoon Suk Yeolŭi yŏngŏ sarang."

하지만 개인이 갖는 열등감의 무게와 한 나라의 지도자가 갖는 열등감의 무게는 차원이 다르다. 때문에 책임감이 막중한 자리에 있을수록 자신의 열등감을 직면하고 이를 긍정적인 방향으로 승화해야 할 의무가 있다. 지금 대한민국은 명실상부한 문화강국이 아닌가? 더 이상 빌보드차트에서 1 위를 하는 것이 새롭지 않고, 전 세계인들이 우리 콘텐츠를 즐기는 일이 낯설지 않다. 세계 유수 대학들이 우리의 문화와 언어를 배우기 위한 학과를 개설한다는 소식도 심심찮게 들린다. 하지만 프레지던트 윤에게는 아직 이 소식이 전해지지 않았나보다. 그래서 우리 말은, 우리 글은, 우리 문화는 아직 멋이 없는 것이라고 느끼는 것 같다.

3.2. Kim Ho-gyŏng, "Taet'ongnyŏng ŭi panmal kwa yŏngŏ nambal… 'konggam nŭngnyŏk pujae' ŭi tanmyŏn."

나라의 수장으로서 국민과 공공기관을 대표하는 대통령이 설혹 외국어에 능통하다고 해도 공개석상에서 자국민들을 상대로 자꾸 과시한다는 건 모국어에 대한 애정과 자존감이 떨어진다는 뜻으로밖에 해석되지 않는다.

3.3. O T'ae-gyu, "Yoon Suk YeolTaet'ongnyŏng ŭi kojil 'yŏngŏ pyŏng.'"

그것도 가장 품위 있는 한글 문장을 구사해야 할 대통령 연설문에서 말입니다.

3.4. Voice of Seoul, "Yoon Suk Yeolŭi chajŭn yŏngŏ sayong ŭn chidokhan k'ompŭlleksŭ."

윤석열에게 품위 있는 언어를 기대하는 것은 지나친 욕심이다.

3.5. Voice of Seoul, "Yoon Suk Yeolŭi chajŭn yŏngŏ sayong ŭn chidokhan k'ompŭlleksŭ."

윤석열에게 품위 있는 언어를 기대하는 것은 지나친 욕심이다. 그는 애초에 대통령감이 아니 다. 검사가 그의 최후의 직업이어야 했다. 그러지 못한 것이 작금의 불행을 초래한 것이다. 나라에 망조가 들었다.

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