Dynamics of Ethnolinguistic Nationalism and Language Education on the Korean Peninsula Following the End of the Colonial Period

Received: 26 April 2024; Revised: 06 March 2025; Published: 01 April 2025

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Abstract:

This study analyzes the meaning of ethnolinguistic nationalism in Korea after colonial liberation (August 15, 1945). It focuses on orthographic standardization and examines the state of Korean language education during 1945-1948. The issue of orthography was deeply connected to the imposition of orthographic standards for the education of Japanese language in colonial Korea, and it was central to the ethnolinguistic nationalism that identified the Korean language with the Korean ethnicity. In the colonies, orthography was the basis for countering linguistic imperialism and preserving unassimilable territories within empires. The Korean Language Society's *Proposal for the Unification of Korean Orthography* (1933) opposed imperialist phonecentrism with morphological orthographic norms. These were inherited as "national" orthographic norms after the liberation of Korea. However, it paradoxically functioned as a mechanism to suppress the various linguistic experiences that existed in the form of "voice." Teachers involved in the teaching of Korean as a national language endeavoured to overcome this situation by shifting the focus of language education from the written to the vocal, or voice-centered. While maintaining a tense relationship with ethnolinguistic nationalism, Korean language education was a place where another form of nationalism was proposed.

Keywords: Korean language education, ethnolinguistic nationalism, linguistic imperialism, postcolonialism

1. Background: The Environment of Korean Language Education in the Postcolonial Era

Ethnolinguistic nationalism can be defined as a set of ideas and attitudes that equate a particular language with a particular national identity, distinguish that language from other languages, and defend ethnic identity through the development of language systems and language use. The issue of ethnolinguistic nationalism was deeply connected to resistance to imperialism in regions with colonial experience and is an important theme for examining the relationship between the perceptions and sensibilities of each language user and the ideology of dominant control enforced by the state system. This study investigates ethnolinguistic nationalism of the period from the time of Korea's liberation (August 15, 1945) to the division of South and North Korea (1948).

Immediately following Korea's liberation from Japanese colonial rule (August 15, 1945), Korean language education began to be provided to Koreans who were unable to read their own language. This initiative was led by the Korean Language Society (hereinafter KLS), a private sector academic organization that was established by the disciples of Ju Sigyeong, a philologist with the aim of

researching, organizing, and standardizing Korean language texts and terms. Before Korea's liberation, Korean language education, which had been offered as an elective subject under the Third Korean Education Ordinance in 1938, was completely abolished under the Fourth Korean Education Ordinance in 1943. The recommencement of Korean language education after liberation entailed a re-examination of Korean language norms and standards. In this context, norms and standards refer to the rules for writing Korean language. After the colonial period, the core arguments were the proper use of Hanja (Chinese characters) and Hangeul orthography.

As will be discussed in more detail in the text, there were no consistent norms around the orthography of written Korean during the colonial period, and various norms conflicted with each other. There were also class, gender, and regional differences in the use of Hangeul and Hanja, as well as high rates of illiteracy. The post-liberation language policy was a process of introducing consistency to the inconsistent orthography and writing norms, and the policies of the KLS, which had close links with the US military government which exerted a strong and lasting influence on education policy during 1945-1948, were adopted. In particular, it was recommended to abolish Chinese characters in favour of only Hangeul, to adopt the *Proposal for a Unified Korean Orthography* (1933, hereinafter the *Unification Proposal*), and to write horizontally. This paper focuses on the standardization of Korean at the commencement of the postcolonial era (1945-1948) and how ethnolinguistic nationalism emerged as a result of this standardization functioned as a mechanism for oppressing non-standard language usage in Korea. In addition, this paper discusses how this oppressive mechanism was criticized in educational settings. It serves as a critique of ethnolinguistic nationalism in postcolonial Korea and adds to the wider scholarship on historical studies of colonial policy and ideology in language education.

Immediately after Korea was liberated from Japanese rule, the primary goal of the determination of linguistic standards in Korea before its division in 1948 and Korean language education based on those standards set by the *Unification Proposal*, was to establish Korea's "national linguistic borders" and "infuse" ability in the Korean language (which was considered roughly synonymous with the soul of the Korean people) into each Korean to truly revitalize the Koreans as a people. In particular, the calls to abolish Hanja and adopt the *Unification Proposal* made by the KLS that began as part of an effort to remove all traces of the colonial administration from Korean language education standards were all made for the purpose of removing the Japanese influence. The efforts to remove the Japanese influence from Korean went beyond the creation of linguistic standards, and were intended to deliberately split the unified perception of the language and rebuild it to fit the intentions of the newly established state. However, following the 1945 liberation, the diverse individual linguistic experiences intermingled with a complex intertwining of Korean, the local language, Japanese, the language of the old empire, and English, the language of the new empire, the USA. The deliberate attempt to make these distinctions provoked several difficulties.

Previous studies of Korean language education in Korea following liberation from colonial rule can be divided into three major groups. The first group includes studies of the philosophical and linguistic perspectives of the KLS and its members (Park, Y. 2009; Jung, J. 2012; Jung, Y. 2012); the second consists of research into teaching materials and textbooks of Korean (Ko, J. 1996; Kang, J. 2005; Kang, J. 2009; Lee, H. 2012; Moon, H. 2015; Choi, Y. 2017); and the third group studies the history of the

formation of attitudes to Korean language in the Korean people (Kim, H. 2003; Choi, K. 2017; Yim, S. 2021).

Overall, the research mentioned above is strongly tilted towards the study of educational materials, i.e., textbooks. Yet it would be difficult to reach an understanding of the difficulties facing the educational settings directly from textbooks since they were designed to compress the diverse reality of actual linguistic experiences into the framework of a formalized standard language. In addition, a serious limitation of earlier research is that, assuming that the policies of the KLS were carried out in educational settings without modification, Korean language education of the time was considered an ideological device intended to facilitate the running of a new postcolonial nation. Treating post-liberation language education as a simple reflection of the US military government's education policies and the activities of the KLS would overlook the dynamics of the educational scene, and make it harder to problematize language nationalism. What is important in post-liberation language issues is not what language policies were implemented, but rather the difficulties that language policies had to face in practical educational contexts, both in continuity and discontinuity with colonial language policies. It is through the specifics of those difficulties that we can critically problematize language nationalism.

Here, the language standardization that was carried out by KLS, which played a leading role following the end of the colonial period, is positioned as just one condition of those that affected Korean language education, with criticism of the limitations of the standardization of the KLS's Korean language in educational settings also taken into account. Derrida's (1967) critique of phonocentrism and postcolonial historiographical and pedagogical works on the antagonism between nationalism and language form key theoretical frameworks for the analysis here. Derrida focused on the written word (écriture) to deconstruct the absolute nature of the spoken word (parole). Derrida took écriture, which means the 'act of writing', 'written characters', and also the 'written language', to overturn the dominant approach to the relationship between the spoken word and the written word, wherein the written word was used as a tool not only for reproducing sound but also for transparently reproducing individuals' internal world. For Derrida, écriture, the written word, is not an ancillary concept, but rather both the origin of parole and a representation that continually delays parole's realization. In other words, in this view, the written word is not a simple tool for the reproduction of the spoken word; instead, the spoken word emerges from the written word. In addition, by continually producing a difference (or discrepancy) from the spoken word, the written word renders a decisive determination for the spoken word impossible (Derrida 1967). Derrida saw that in the way that écriture continually produces a difference from the spoken word, an ongoing threat to the spoken word as a principal entity. What this paper attempts to do is to apply the relationship between the written word (écriture) and the spoken word (parole) raised by Derrida to the linguistic situation in Korea before and after liberation, and to argue that the language used in the field of education can be an antithesis to ethnolinguistic nationalism.

This approach presents new perspectives on the relationship between ethnolinguistic nationalism and Korean language education in this former colony. This essay shows how education in the national language of Korean involves more than postcolonial nationalism or the application of educational policies, but is at times in conflict with them, generating novel educational needs. We begin this analysis with a return to the colonial period to determine how the language standardization of the KLS

came to be closely associated with what has been referred to as resistance-nationalism. It then presents an analysis of how the relationship between language and nationalism, forged under colonization, changed since liberation and the challenges it raises in the field of education.

2. The Spoken Language of the Empire, the Written Language of the Colony

In this section, we explore through key historical documents of language policy how spelling rules changed in Korea under imperialism and colonial nationalism. The educational ordinance of Japan on Korea was promulgated by the Japanese colonial government of Chōsen in August 1911, one year after Korea was annexed, and was formally enforced on November 1, 1911. It had the aim of "fostering the personal development of the Korean people as citizens [as Japanese citizens]" and "promoting the national language [Japanese]" (*Joseon [Korea] Education Decree*, 1911). In addition, standardizing the orthography of Korean was a pressing issue for the Japanese colonial government, which moved forward with the rule of its Korean colony and spread, as rapidly as possible, knowledge of Japanese in the local population. A further document, *Korean Orthography for Use in Ordinary Schools* (hereinafter *Orthography for Use*), was issued in 1912 which sought to fulfil the objectives of the above educational ordinance. It was introduced as follows (1912: 1, translated by the author).

> Hangeul orthography was studied and finalized in accordance with the orders issued by the Japanese colonial government researchers entrusted with this task. / As the existing Hangeul orthography is fragmentary and poses a not inconsiderable inconvenience when used in education, this Hangeul orthography is intended to standardize *Orthography for Use* in ordinary education, and for adoption in the educational materials used in ordinary schools. /This Hangeul orthography shall adopt the policies as indicated at left [below].
>
> (1) The language of Keijō [Gyeongseong/Seoul] shall be taken as the standard language.
>
> (2) The orthography shall follow phonetic principles, and historical spellings that are unlike to contemporary pronunciation shall be avoided.
>
> (3) When writing words comprised of Hanja sounds in Hangeul, existing orthography shall be used.
>
> This orthography shall also include, for reference, pronunciation in the national language [Japanese] indicated using the 50 sounds [kana], including voiced sounds and long sounds.

It is noteworthy that *Orthography for Use* was finalized with educational usage in mind, that it followed the basic principles of phonetic orthography (writing words as they are pronounced), and, finally, considered that the position of Korean, as a language, was to serve as an aid for writing the sounds of the Japanese language. The most important point here is that the education of Korean was assumed to be, as the name of the document implies, teaching Korean people at ordinary schools who would receive education in Japanese. In other words, the Korean language was positioned as a tool for

Japanese language education rather than for its own teaching and learning, and Korean orthography was standardized for that purpose.

The principles of phonetic orthography that were introduced with *Orthography for Use* can help us understand the linguistic issues connected to the hierarchy of empires and colonies. *Orthography for Use* assumed a uniformed relationship, with no exceptions, between the sounds of Japanese and Korean written characters. Thus, it was designed to allow an intuitive spelling of "Korean" that is based only on phonetic information, an arrangement that facilitates its convenience for use as a tool in Japanese language education. However, the uniformed and interchangeable relationship assumed between phonetic sounds and written characters is not based on an equal relationship between the two languages at play. They are not on an equal footing, as the script of Korean was detached from the native language system and repurposed as a tool to impose the education of another language, the colonial language of Japanese. Fundamentally, Korean was phoneticized and mobilized to teach Korean people to write Japanese which was positioned as the national language.

This approach to and implementation of language education was not restricted to the Japanese colonial rule, and it should be viewed as deriving from the imperialist nature inherent in the principles of phonetic orthography. Takahashi (1998) summarizes Derrida's (1967) critique of phonocentrism in relation to imperialism. At the root of Western rationalism is the notion that parole, the spiritual (non-physical) spoken word, whose ultimate expression is the voice of God, expresses the speaker's intention, whereas *écriture*, the written word, is only derivative of the spoken word and is not essential in its nature and only a representative of the voice. The expansion of Western imperialism resulted in the broader transmission of an idealized model for which the voice had a special status and the written word held an affiliate one, and "as long as the assumption held sway that phonetic characters are the general idealized model, phonetic orthography would inevitably serve as a breeding ground for Western ethnocentrism and Eurocentrism" (Takahashi 1998: 77–78). If we keep in mind the essentially imperialist nature of phonetic(ized) orthographical principles, the preparation of Korean standards by the Japanese colonial government and their insistence on regulating written Korean in a manner that is consistent with pronunciation can be seen clearly as imperialist.

Imperial rule is always mediated by the divine voice and, in colonies, where opportunities for public education are restricted, creating a linguistic environment in which the spoken word rather than the written word is central, is of utmost importance for the colonial authorities to more easily reach and control the people, in other words, a linguistic environment where orders from the imperial power can be conveyed in speech. The "Jewelled Voice" of the Japanese emperor was projected as the single source of truth, and deployed as a tool for forming, over a wider area, homogeneity among imperial subjects and citizens, smoothing over the various internal boundaries of the empire created by the written word.

The orthographic standards for Korean issued by the Japanese colonial government were amended twice, first in the publication *Summary of Korean Orthography for use in Ordinary Schools* (1921) and later through the *Korean Orthography* (1930). The two amendments produced a stronger application of phonetic orthographic principles in the Korean orthographic standards. The exception for Sino-Korean words included in the orthography standards of 1912 and 1921—"Sino-Korean words shall be

written, in accordance with historical orthography"—was absent from the *Korean Orthography* of 1930, where the new regulations stating that "Korean orthography shall, as a basic rule, follow the principles of phonetic orthography, irrespective of whether a word is native Korean or Sino-Korean." In this context, native Korean refers to terms and expressions that are difficult to write in Chinese characters based on the spoken language of the Korean language, and Sino-Korean refers to terms and expressions that originated from Chinese characters. Here, it must be considered how the relationship between the orthographic system and phonetic orthography principles that the colonial authorities wished to uphold, whether orthography would move toward or away from those principles, was used to measure the extent of resistance from the Koreans against the Japanese colonial authorities. If it were possible to leave in the linguistic standards some elements of formalism, so that they included elements that did not have to be written in strict accordance with the pronunciation, this could serve to represent a vestige of the ethnic identity of Korean people. Orthographic standards formed in opposition to standards based on phonetic orthographic principles can be found in the KLS's *Unification Proposal* (1933), a proposal that, as mentioned previously, also had a considerable influence on the orthographic standards of the Japanese colonial government. The citations provided below form part of the *Unification Proposal* (1933: 4, translated by the author).

> Clause 1: Although Hangeul orthography shall be written in accordance with the standard language, as a basic rule, it shall be written so as to ensure consistency with linguistic usage.
>
> Clause 2: As a general rule, individual words shall be written separately.
>
> Clause 3: Words of foreign origin shall be written according to the Orthography for Words of Foreign Origin.

Unlike the Japanese colonial government's *Korean Orthography* (1930), the *Unification Proposal*, issued on Hangeul Day (October 29), a day created in 1933 to commemorate the promulgation of Hangeul started by King Sejong during the Joseon Dynasty, added that Hangeul should be "written so as to ensure consistency with linguistic usage," establishing a clear difference from the colonial government's proposal. Here, "linguistic usage" means "semantic origin." Thus, this instruction requires semantically related words to be written with the appropriate orthography, regardless of actual pronunciation. Because this type of formalism in language requires its users to have a deep knowledge of the language's grammar, it is easy for users to feel a "burden of correct usage" (Lee, K. 1981: 319–320). Orthography that is rooted in formalism assumes a long formal education in the language, and, until it ceased functioning following the KLS Incident of 1942 in which 28 members of KLS were arrested for participating in the independence movement, KLS applied considerable effort to editing and producing a Korean dictionary that could serve as a foundation for Korean language education and wider literacy in Hangeul.

It could be that KLS's *Unification Proposal* was precisely a "threat" that Derrida derived from the relationship between parole and écriture in this nature. The KLS's proposal to preserve the semantic origin of words in a fashion that was not directly reducible to their pronunciation entailed the retention of traces of *écriture* in the world of *parole*. This was in contrast to the assumption that underlay authority of the colonial government, namely, that there should be complete consistency between the

spoken and the written word. It represented the maintenance of a vestige of Korean identity in the apparatus of colonial rule, and it is for this reason that the KLS's orthography came to be entwined so deeply with the question of Korean identity under Japanese colonialism.

3. Language Education Discourse and the écriture in Korea after Liberation

In this section, we examine prominent scholarly discourses following the KLS Incident on how the status of the KLS's proposal of orthography had changed after liberation, and the extent to which it was associated with Korean nationalism under colonialism, and what criticisms had been raised about the changes. Following the 1945 liberation, the Korean language's position and status changed. This change pertains both to its replacement of Japanese as the national language, and the emerging perception of the ethnolinguistic relationship between the Korean language and the Korean people (where the Korean language is the language of the Korean people) as absolute and axiomatic. Those who most strongly advocated this ethnonationalist view were, as might be expected, the linguists of KLS. An essay entitled "Our language and our script; we must protect them with our blood", written by Taejin Jung, a key member of KLS, which was published in the Society's journal *Hangeul* in 1948, contains the following text:

> A language and script are the blood, the life, and the soul of a people. When I think about how, over the past 40 years, the cruel and ruthless Japanese bandits have taken every possible terrible step to remove from our land our precious language and script, attempting to remove every trace, I can only grit my teeth and shudder.
>
> Ah, the joy of our August 15th liberation!
>
> From all around we hear the chattering voices of children, gagya-geogyeo! [onomatopoeia]. These voices that are a war cry expressing our joy at the reemergence of our people.
>
> (Jung, 1948a: 256, translated by the author)

In this essay, Taejin Jung equates the Korean language and the Korean script with the blood, life, and soul of the Korean people, asserting that the language and its script provide a tangible sense of the "reemergence of the Korean people." We might expect this sentiment from someone who was thrown into jail following the KLS Incident as a result of working to continue with Korean language education during the wartime regime, and, in a wider perspective, Jung's view formed a typical perspective on a local language in the context of support for decolonization in areas that had been under colonization. However, it should be noted that what was imposed as an integral part of the Korean people's identities is neither Hangeul as a script nor any abstract sense of the language, but rather the particular orthography expressed in orthographic standards. This is clear from another essay by Taejin Jung (1948b) entitled "Various Problems in Our National Language Education", which states the following:

> As there are many people who feel that making a mistake in a single stroke of a single Hanja is a terrible problem, or that it is extremely embarrassing to make even the slightest error in English or German spelling (resulting in efforts to study correct

> spelling all night long) but still think it is acceptable not to understand the Korean script or not to be ashamed of a lack of knowledge of Korean orthography, we cannot avoid the conclusion that this shows a weak awareness of ethnic identity and culture.… some people say that "the current 'Proposal for a Unified Korean Orthography' is too difficult." However, this is no different from saying that it is difficult to live a regular rule–based life.… if ignorant people are using stifling methods to hide their own ignorance and speak to young students in a way that damages their desire to learn and discourages them from pursuing research into our national language [Korean] and national literary heritage, then those people are bandits stealing our culture, traitors against the Korean people who are obviously deserving of both social and moral censure.
>
> (Jung, 1948b: 74–75, translated by the author,)

The orthographic standards referred to here clearly were about the standards set out in KLS's *Unification Proposal*. Failure to learn the orthography is interpreted as an act of treason toward the Korean people here because that orthography was formulated in opposition to the orthographic standards of the colonial authorities, and it was therefore linked to the question of how unique aspects of Korean ethnic identity could be preserved while the Japanese authorities sought to subsume Korean identity into their empire's identity. However, following liberation from colonial rule, as the colonial occupation had ended and the Koreans no longer had an occupying power to resist, the insistence on preserving the orthography of the *Unification Proposal* was simply empty and groundless. In terms of the relative status of *écriture* and *parole*, we consider that Korean *écriture* no longer produced a discrepancy with *parole*. Instead, it now occupied the position of an absolute voice that required no further underpinning. The status of the orthographic standards as an "absolute concept" can be confirmed in more detail in terms of a debate between Yunje Jo, a scholar of Korean literature, and Jeonghak Lee, a linguist.

Yunje Jo published "Current Issues in Korean Language Education" in 1947, which clarified his position on the use of Hanja, horizontal writing, and orthography, matters that were subject to debate in postcolonial Korea. An extended extract from this publication is given below:

> Before liberation, I was shocked to be told by students that our national language [Korean] had no aesthetic beauty.… However is it really true, in the words of those students who judge everything on a Japanese scale, that our national language has no beauty? The linguistic feel of English is similar to that of German, and the linguistic feel of French is similar to both. If it is natural for the linguistic feel of various nations to be similar, or to become similar, then surely it would also be natural for Japanese and the national language [Korean] to have a similar linguistic feel.… Of course, rather than saying this aesthetic beauty is something we must learn to appreciate, I believe that it is something we have already acquired as a result of living our lives through the national language, and therefore we are already, with our bodies, expressing the national language's beauty. However, due to the long-standing invasion by a foreign language, it is also true that the feel of our language has, at least to some degree, been impinged

> upon, and undeniably this has caused considerable confusion. Therefore, to make up for the invasion it has gone through, we must, as quickly as possible, get back a sense of our language's linguistic feel and live our lives using only pure Korean. The first step towards doing so is to enjoy living our lives through Korean. No matter how many words one knows in the national language or how rich one's knowledge of its grammar, problems will remain if living life through Korean presents difficulties and inconveniences.
>
> (Jo, 1947: 54–55, translated by the author)

This text shows Jo's desire to eliminate the hierarchy among different languages that still exists in the minds of the Korean people to enable the relationship between Korean and Japanese to become similar to the relationship between English, German, and French, where each language has similarities to the others while standing on an equal footing and maintaining their own sense of finding a particular language and identity beautiful. It is also worth noting, in the context of a debate that assumed all Korean people either naturally understood Korean or was equipped with the facility to do so, how we can also see, from the statement "due to the long-standing invasion by a foreign language, it is also true that the feel of our language has, at least to some degree, been impinged upon, and undeniably this has caused considerable confusion", mild criticism of the debate understood the relationship between the Korean people and the Korean language in absolute terms. Stepping back from a position that took for granted a relationship between the Korean people and the Korean language and treating this as a separate matter, it is nevertheless possible to position "enjoying living our lives through Korean" as the primary objective of Korean language education. The proposal for a Korean language education that, for the moment, puts to one side any consideration of vocabulary or knowledge of grammar surely incorporated an awareness of young people who only encountered the Korean language and could not feel the aesthetic beauty of the language.

Jo's position is clearly critical of the KLS's orthography-centric Korean language education. Recognizing that the *Unification Proposal* played a significant role during colonization, Jo further states (1947: 121) "making strong moves forward," he added that at present, "with the cloud of those oppressive times having lifted, and the blue sky of independence now becoming visible," it was time to change the approach. Jo presented the rationale for this as follows:

> Everyone finds Hangeul orthography difficult. This is indeed true. I have been using this orthography for more than a decade, and I still frequently get scolded by my Hangeul teacher for my failure to learn it completely. While perhaps I should not say that because it is difficult for me, it must also be difficult for other people, it is true that the number of people in Korea who can correctly use the Hangeul orthography is not so large, despite the huge effort made by the KLS to publicize their orthography in newspapers, magazines, and on the radio following our liberation. Even if the Korean language education and government schools and from junior high schools onwards decided to postpone substantive language education and instead focus only on teaching orthography, leaving students to learn orthography alone, how many of those young

> students would actually learn to completely master reading and writing using that system?
>
> (Jo, 1947: 121-122, translated by the author)

Jo's position immediately attracted direct criticism on the part of Jeonghak Lee, who published a defence of the *Unification Proposal* entitled "Current Issues in Korean Language Education" (Lee, 1947) in the journal of KLS. Lee argues:

> The Korean language orthography supplied by the Ministry of Education for use in the textbooks for various elementary and junior high schools follow the "Proposal for a Unified Korean Orthography" from the KLS, and this was a bold, but extremely natural decision. While it is true, as Professor Jo points out, that academic debate over the theory of orthography has continued for the past 10 or more years, when a calm, academic conscientiousness, an "ethnic conscientiousness" are taken into consideration, it is abundantly clear that the selection of the "Proposal for a Unified Korean Orthography" by the Ministry of Education is quite natural.… While Professor Jo considers the KLS to be a private, non-governmental group, claiming that the selection of the Society's "Unification Proposal" is inappropriate given that "the Ministry of Education is not a body affiliated with this privately established organization" and suchlike, I am forced to say that it makes me angry to see him go this far. The KLS may, in reality, be a private sector organization, if you wish to call it that. However, if we consider what the KLS achieved in the past under a violent government implementing all manner of oppression and martial law, then claiming the society is a private organization is simply too [illegible] and too absurd, an excessively critical view.
>
> (J. Lee, 1947: 105–106, translated by the author)

Based on this view, the orthography stipulated by the *Unification Proposal* should be defended in accordance with ethnic conscientiousness. This is because KLS protected the language in a period of oppressive government. The reason that Lee responded somewhat emotionally, claiming that criticism of the orthography of the *Unification Proposal* was "absurd and excessively critical," appears to be that, the orthography of the *Unification Proposal* was understood not as a subject for academic analysis but rather as an anchor that appealed to each individual's emotions, linked to their memories of colonial rule, forming a mechanism for the construction of a unified sense of identity in the Korean people. The issue of orthography was far more deeply linked with ethnic nationalism than that of other issues such as the abolition of Hanja or writing horizontally, and therefore, criticism of this orthography, irrespective of its appropriateness, should be rapidly attacked and dismissed as treachery against the Korean people. In the following section, we examine how criticisms of the orthography posed in the classroom created a counter-discourse of "ethnicity."

4. Korean Language Education that does not Stress Ethnicity

Immediately after liberation, due to the recognized and increasingly pressing need to provide Korean language education to the Koreans, and with the passion for education among the general public

reaching its zenith, the ethnolinguistic nationalism that had gradually been formed around Korean orthography ran counter to the demands of the situation. An ethnonationalist Korean language education that centred around orthography was inclined more toward delineating linguistic borders that were based on ethnicity, removing the influence of Japanese and encouraging the awareness of a singular ethnic identity, than it was toward taking into account the various linguistic experiences of the members of the general public and fostering the formation of a more inclusive citizenry. This objective was in opposition to the professed intentions of the US military government, which were to accept the use of Japanese, the former imperial language, to advance the goal of rapidly spreading Korean and promoting education and awareness of democracy.

The most vigorous criticism for the exclusive nature of orthography-centric Korean language education rested on those who worked in educational settings. From a certain perspective, it appears obvious that this be the case, as it was in educational settings, after liberation from colonialization, that the boundaries between different languages had not yet been fully established, and diverse linguistic experiences of people from diverse backgrounds continued to exist side by side. In this environment, young people who did not recognize "the need for us to maintain awareness of ourselves as Korean people" (Ryu, 2008:139) tended to look upon descriptions of their language as the "soul of the people" as lacking real significance. Educators who had experience teaching in schools experienced and demonstrated the difficulties of teaching Korean to these young people, citing as a cause of these difficulties the script-centric education that was founded on orthographic instruction. Below, a focus on various texts published by educational journals in the postcolonial period (these were principally official magazines for education-related organizations), indicates how far the limitations of an ethnonationalist Korean language education centering on the Korean script were exposed and criticized in educational settings. The text quoted below is taken from "Issues in Korean Education" published in *Korean Education* in June 1947 by Sungnyeong Lee, a Korean language scholar who advocated Korean language education in relation to foreign language education and comparative linguistics:

> My view on the Korean language education provided to students at the junior high level and above is that students are losing interest, not completely, but to a considerable degree, and if it were not for the entrance exam required to enter higher-level schools, the level of interest would likely fall even further.
>
> I would first like to propose that we move away from orthography and grammar. I hear that, at one point, all schools including universities, junior high schools, and elementary schools were focusing solely on the teaching of orthography. While this was a natural focus after liberation from colonial rule, if today we emphasize teaching students tasteless, dry orthography, they will rapidly lose interest, and therefore I believe that we should not create the impression that studying Korean is all about studying how to write Hangeul.... I have already observed in various ways how, if we continue to stress orthography, students will become more and more disillusioned as they progress with their Korean education. Students are demanding content, not orthographic rules.
>
> (S. Lee, 1947: 48–49, translated by the author)

Here, we should note that the criticism of a Korean language education that is centred on orthography is levelled at the education provided at the "junior high school level and above." Korean language education for young people who were unable to read and write Korean due to a lack of systematic education in that language but who were able to use it for everyday oral communication naturally concentrated on instruction in reading and writing, with a focus on orthography to fill gaps in the students' linguistic abilities. However, Lee, while recognizing the need to teach orthography in the above essay, stressed that "separately from that importance, we need to move away from it," claiming that continuing orthographic education would result in students' "disillusionment" and an overall loss of interest in the Korean language. Lee's prescription for avoiding "disillusionment" was to teach "content." What does this term mean here? We can find hints of the intended meaning in "Core areas requiring emphasis in the delivery of Korean language education," a text published by Taeyeong Yun in *New Education* in 1948. In which Yun contends:

> Concretely speaking. I believe that Korean language education provided up until now is committing two errors.
>
> First, [language educators] are still failing to consider the essential nature of Korean language education, instead focusing solely on providing instruction in orthography, which has been, since liberation from colonial rule, erroneously considered to be the only relevant aspect of Korean language education.… and if we look more deeply into the fundamental spiritual essence of language education, we can see that, as per the Korean language curriculum guidelines, the goal of Korean language education is to have the Korean people acquire knowledge of the Korean language and its texts, to raise awareness of the right path forward and responsibilities of citizens, and to clarify the unique background to our national characteristics and the long road taken by our culture, in order to foster a rich national spirit.… Methods for arriving at this, the true, essential nature of language education, can be divided into two categories:
>
> The first of these targets' language. We must foster and cultivate an awareness among the people of the Korean language, encouraging feelings of familiarity and admiration.… It is true that under the oppressive rule of the Japanese imperial government, the more the Japanese imperialists stopped us from using our language, the more we fostered our familiarity with it, and the more we were determined, as mutually close associates, to use our language, speaking it out of earshot of the Japanese, showing just how much the language meant to us.
>
> (Yun, 1948: 38–39, translated by the author)

Yun's words accentuate the points of discussion that are harnessed to criticize the Korean language education centred on orthography. First, we note the emphasis on the concept of "citizens." Academics and educators had been critical of the focus on orthography in Korean language education as advocated by KLS following the liberation with regard to the ethnolinguistic nationalism that was grounded in that approach, including not only Taeyeong Yun but also Yunje Jo, as referred to above, avoided the concept of an ethnic group and, instead, focused on citizens. This is because they considered that, in contrast to the concept of an ethnic group, something that emerges naturally and cannot be questioned,

the concept of citizens must be built through the provision of education. Further, while the statement concerning the encouraging feelings of familiarity represents typical grounds for the criticism of the orthographic-centric education approach, what is more noteworthy is how the text describes the Korean people: "determined, as mutually close associates, to use our language" under colonial occupation. This is considered a definitive criticism of the view of language that is prevalent following the colonial period, namely, that written language forms an exact expression of ethnic identity. Yun reports that during the colonial period, Koreans protected not the written language but rather the familiar relationship with the language in everyday life; in other words, the status of Korean as a spoken language, as *parole*. Thus, it is this voice that evidences the Korean people's familiarity with the Korean language, so the voice should be the focus of Korean language education. This assertion indicates full support for the concept of an ethnic group who are unable to read the ethnic language (written Korean). Yun's assertion also enables us to understand why the educational magazines of the time published so many essays that are related to pronunciation. One example is this is the text from Yunsu Choi, entitled "Theory of instruction in Korean pronunciation" (Choi, 1949a). Choi criticized the attitude of teachers who claim that the distorted and incorrect pronunciation influenced by Japanese is correct, pointing out that Korea after liberation has regained the letters but not the pronunciation (Choi, 1949a: 3-4).

What Choi points out is more needs to be restored than written language; rather, the pronunciation of Korean itself, the Korean parole, should be promoted. He also published a detailed collection of the pronunciation errors he found in the course of instructing pronunciation in schools "Pronunciation instruction for elementary Korean" (Choi, 1948). This work brings order to the pronunciation differences between speakers that come from different regions of Korea with changes in pronunciation caused by the influence of Japanese on Korean, showing the level of diversity in the Korean that he encountered in educational settings. While the quotation above at first seems to be seeking correct pronunciation, it is actually encouraging us to take note of the diversity of *parole*, something that is not readily apparent from a study of the written word alone. Choi states that "education is, to begin with, individual", which underlies his calls for education that account for individual differences, as set out in his publication "Delivering education that takes a count of individual differences" (Choi, 1949b), which shows an awareness of the diversity of parole.

In other words, in Korean language education during this era, behind the idealized conception of an equivalence between the Korean language and the Korean people was a wide range of varieties of Korean, accompanied by theories of Korean language in education that were in place at the time. Educators who had rich experience in teaching the Korean language recognized the importance of vernacular Korean (Korean as a spoken language). By stressing the importance of citizens and referring to nationalism under a different name, they overcame the restrictions of education that centred on orthography and brought an ethnonationalist approach to Korean language education. The conflict and tension between the importance of written and spoken language under a colonial empire and in one of its colonies were repeated following the end of the colonial period in the form of an internal conflict in Korea between different notions of and names for nationalism, whether this refers to a form of ethnonationalism or nationalism that focused on the concept of the citizen.

5. Conclusion

This essay has examined ethnolinguistic nationalism in Korea following the end of the colonial period, with reference made to orthographic standards. It examined the status of Korean language education in relation to the criticism of ethnolinguistic nationalism. Immediately after liberation, the Korean language education policy led by KLS under the US military administration focused on improving the written language through the 'correct' use of orthography. This was because orthography had been equated with ethnic identity during the colonial period. However, this policy overlooked the diversity of language experience that exists at the level of the spoken language and thus faced criticism in the field of actual education. When teaching standards for the Korean language were not completely systematized yet, and much was left to the discretion of individual teachers, it appears that Korean language education was not merely a device for the promulgation of a pure nationalist or ethnolinguistic ideology, but rather a channel for the suggestion of a different variety of nationalism that maintained a certain tension with those ideologies. Further, it is clear how the criticism of ethnolinguistic nationalism with ethnicity at its heart was made possible through the diversity of Korean as a spoken language, as well as an educational approach that recognized this diversity, which could not be entirely subsumed under the unified standards available for a written language.

Of course, simply by accepting Korean as a spoken language, a *parole*, which led to a tolerance of linguistic diversity, it does not mean that the imperialistic nature of focusing on spoken language was no longer an issue. While this focus cannot be described as imperialist, there was an emphasis on a phonetic approach that prioritized the spoken word in the Republic of Korea (South Korea) soon after its establishment in 1948, which was necessarily linked to authoritarian government policies intended to mobilize (South) Korean citizens. Prominent examples include the proposal of a bill to simplify Hangeul made in 1954 by President Rhee Syngman (which was intended to thoroughly implement the principles of "writing Hangeul as it is written"), the establishment in May 1968 of the Five Year Plan for Hangeul Exclusivity, implemented under the dictatorship of President Chunghee Park (a framework that called for the exclusive use of Hangeul in all documents related to the executive, legislature, and judiciary, as well as in all school textbooks), along with the establishment in October 1968 of the Korean Language Investigative Committee (a body researched readily understandable methods of writing Korean). Further research is needed to investigate the decolonial and ethnolinguistic dynamics between the *parole*, as defined in relation to the aims of the national government, and the *parole* as it is observed in educational settings.

Declarations and Acknowledgment:

The author declares there is no conflict of interest.

This work was supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number JP22K19999, JP23KK0006.

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