

The Role of (De)motivational Factors in the  
Context of Learning English in South Korea

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## **Declaration**

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained herein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof and that I have not previously, in its entirety or in part, submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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## Abstract

In November 2013, the Switzerland-based global English education company, EF Education First, reported that, in terms of English ability in non-native countries, South Korea was ranked moderately proficient at 24th out of 60 countries, doing only slightly better than Japan (Education First, 2013). One of the findings was also that, despite the large amount of money spent on English education, Japan and Korea have declined slightly on the rankings (Education First, 2013). The objectives of this study was to determine the motivation of Korean university students in the English language classroom. This study made use of three different methods of data collection: firstly, semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with 13 English teachers (native as well as non-native speakers of English) at higher education settings in South Korea, yielding qualitative data on these teachers' perception of (de-)motivational factors influencing their students' ability to learn English. Secondly, a questionnaire was given to 241 South Korean students in order to determine their perceptions of, and attitudes toward learning English as a foreign language. This second method yielded quantitative data on students' perspectives on and motivation for learning English. Thirdly, English grades were obtained for a subsample of the students ( $N=45$ ) who completed the questionnaire, and correlated with their responses on the questionnaire. This third method yielded quantitative data on the actual performance of a sample of South Korean students on a series of English assessment instruments, and how it correlates with students' self-reported motivation for learning English. The results showed that a composite score reflecting students' self-reported motivation correlated with student grades, and also highlighted some discrepancy between students' self-reported motivation to study English and perceptions of the interview participants.

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## Abbreviations

CSAT	Collegiate Scolastic Aptitude Test
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
EPIK	English Program in Korea
GEPIK	Gyeonggi English Program in Korea
SMOE	Seoul Metropolitan of Education
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TOEIC	Test of English for International Communication
HREC	Human Research Ethics Committee
GPA	Grade Point Average

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background: English Proficiency Levels in South Korea

In November 2013, the Switzerland-based global English education company, Education First, reported that South Korea, herein Korea, ranked moderately proficient in English at 24<sup>th</sup> out of 60 non-English native countries, doing only slightly better than Japan (Ramirez, 2013). Despite the large amount of money spent on English education, Japan and Korea declined slightly on the rankings from previous years (Ramirez, 2013). The unsatisfactory results were a great concern of the Korean government (Park, 2009) who has provided fully supported English-language education for young Korean learners in order to become an international hub for finance in Asia and draw more foreign investment into the country (Thornton, 2009). The average number of compulsory hours a typical Korean student spends learning English in school is around 20,000 in a span of eleven years, According to the Swiss institute, the problem is too much focus on memorization and grammar (Ramirez, 2013). A report by the institute states, “An over-emphasis on rote learning, relatively low levels of exposure to foreigners in everyday life, and teacher-student norms which impede conversation practice all contribute to the problem.” (Ramirez, 2013: 35) The report by English First that ranks the English Proficiency Index adds that the “English level among Korean adults is below the average of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development member states.” (Ramirez, 2013: 30) A study by Gavran (2013) found that “The grammar translation method, in which passages of language are translated from one language to another, rote learning, in which new vocabulary and full sentences are memorised without being comprehended, and the target of achieving high scores in the college entrance exams, are the main and expected outcomes of the teaching methods that focus on linguistic competence” (Gavran, 2013: 88). These technical skills can be used to pass tests but are not helpful for verbal communication . Other studies on English proficiency in Korea (Chen, Warden & Chang, 2005; Thornton, 2009; McFarlene, 2009; Kim, 2009; Yoon, 2004; Flatterly, 2007) have shown that a majority of Korean students, underperform on written and spoken English assessments as a result of low motivation. A study by Kim (1996) found that the low motivation of Korean students, specifically university students, was the result of the compulsory nature of the classes.

Motivation is a large contributing element to learner achievement in language acquisition; however, certain factors can be more influential depending on the learning environment (Dörnyei, 1998). A study by Lee and Oh (2011) found that extrinsic motivation, or doing an activity in order to obtain a reward or outcome, had more significance than intrinsic motivation, or doing an activity for the sake of enjoyment or satisfaction, on students taking mandatory English classes in the first year of university. Another study by Chen, Warden and Chang (2005), found that students from Asian countries were more instrumentally motivated from the societal pressures to learn English. According to the study, it is possible that the most influential factors on students in the learning environment could be dependent on the culture where the target language, or L2, is learned. According to Kim (2009), the type of motivation that influences language acquisition depends on the context. For example, integrative motivation, or learning a language for social integration, is a stronger factor when learning English as a second language (ESL) and instrumental motivation, or wanting to learn a language for a concrete goal such as obtaining a job, is a stronger factor when learning English as a foreign Language (EFL). The term *ESL* refers to learning English in an environment where English is the native language (e.g. the United States) whereas *EFL* refers to learning English in an environment where English is not the native language, or L1, (e.g. South Korea). Another study by Dörnyei (2005) emphasized social-cultural influences on motivation of the *ought-to* self, defined as “the attributes that one believes one ought to possess (i.e. various duties, obligations, or responsibilities) in order to avoid possible negative outcomes” (Dörnyei, 2009: 29).

This study will explore Korean students' motivation to learn English and focus specifically on the role of demotivation in second language acquisition. A majority of research on motivation to learn English in Korean classrooms is conducted and written in Korean (Thornton, 2009). The research conducted in English does not always produce relevant information. Thornton (2009), for instance, compared the language learning beliefs of the students and their teachers and found the results to be inconclusive. McFarlene (2009) also found a variation in the answers given by the English teachers and the Korean students on their motivation to learn English. In the past decade, very few studies have used the beliefs of the native English teachers, which could play an important role in understanding and determining if demotivational factors affect students in the English language classroom.

Dörnyei and Ushioda argue that demotivation “concerns various negative influences that cancel out existing motivation” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2013: 138). Other researchers have regarded demotivation in two ways: as a different entity to motivation (Kikuchi & Sakai, 2009) or a decrease in motivation (as cited in Kim, 2005). Demotivation(al factors) may include external factors, lack of motivation or a decrease in motivation. This study combines findings from quantitative questionnaires obtained from students learning English at the university level and qualitative interviews with both L1 Korean and L1 English teachers, in order to better understand the students and their motives for learning English.

## **1.2. Research Question and Research Aims**

The **general** research question for this study is as follows:

What is the contribution of (de)motivational factors in the underperformance of Korean students in English education?

In order to answer this research question, the study explored the following **specific** research questions:

1. What are the perceptions of English teachers regarding the (de)motivational factors that affect Korean university students’ success in the English language classroom?
2. What are the attitudes of university students toward learning English?
3. Is there a correlation between motivation and English proficiency in Korean university students?

In order to answer the specific research questions, the study addressed the following **research aims**:

- i. Identify the perceptions of English teachers regarding the (de)motivational factors that affect Korean university students’ success in the English language classroom.
- ii. Identify the attitudes of Korean university students toward learning English.
- iii. Determine whether there is a correlation between motivation and English proficiency in Korean university students.

### **1.3. Research Design**

In order to gain more insight on the (de-)motivational factors that play a role in Korean students' ability to learn English, a mixed methods exploratory research design was followed. Exploratory research designs look at topics qualitatively based on how instruments are designed (Kim & Kim, 2013). The data collected is used to assess the results to add a deeper understanding to the body of research (Kim & Kim, 2013). By collecting data from different sources and using different methods, it is possible to examine the research questions from different perspectives, which also improves the validity of the research (Thornton, 2009). This study made use of three different methods of data collection: firstly, semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with 13 English teachers (L1 and non L1 English speakers) at higher education settings in Korea, yielding qualitative data on these teachers' perception of (de-)motivational factors influencing their students' ability to learn English. Secondly, a questionnaire was given to 241 Korean students in order to determine their perceptions of, and attitudes toward learning English as a foreign language. This second method yielded quantitative data on students' perspectives on and motivation for learning English. Thirdly, English grades were obtained from a subsample of the students ( $N=45$ ) who completed the questionnaire, and correlated with their responses on the questionnaire. This third method yielded quantitative data on the actual performance of a sample of Korean students on a series of English assessment instruments, and how it correlates with students' self-reported motivation for learning English.

### **1.4. Data Analysis**

Qualitative data collects a large amount of raw descriptive data that does not provide explanations (Pope, Ziebland & Mays, 2000). To analyse the qualitative data from the interviews, the researcher worked within the framework of Grounded Theory. Grounded theory is a methodology used to analyse this data in order to redefine the research questions and look for new avenues of inquiry that have developed along the way (Pope, Ziebland & Mays, 2000). Grounded Theory is used to describe a social situation by identifying the main processes, or the principle(s) that guides the underlying occurrences of the situation. Stern (1980), states that, "the investigator looks for processes which are going on in the social scene," and "because the observer looks at interactions before static conditions, the

possibility of gaining a fresh but lasting impression is enhanced." (Stern, 1980: 20) In other words, it explores data to generate categories and explanations from the content (Byrne, 2001). According to (Pope, Ziebland & Mays, 2000), "it has the advantage of allowing the researcher to go back and refine questions, develop hypotheses, and pursue emerging avenues of inquiry in further depth." (Pope, Ziebland & Mays, 2000: 114). The data were collected by obtaining the perspectives of various participants involved in the social interaction (Byrne, 2001), i.e. the perceptions of English teachers in South Korea on (de-)motivational factors influencing student language acquisition. Data were collected until no new information was derived from the participants. The process is termed saturation, which indicates the end of data collection (Byrne, 2001). The interviews were semi-structured and guided by a pre-determined set of questions (see Appendix C). Semi-structured interviews gather information about people's attitudes, viewpoints and beliefs in an interactive nature (Thornton, 2009). The advantages of interviewing are that it helps the researcher better understand the quantitative data through more detailed descriptions, explanations (Guba & Lincoln, 1985) and provide a more complete understanding of the data, which compensates for the limitations of the questionnaire (Thornton, 2009).

First, however, it is necessary to explain the broader cultural and ideological context of Confucianism, its role in Korea and its possible role in the English language classrooms. The following chapter will also give an overview of the historical and social background of Korea, and consider possible ways in which this might have influenced the introduction of English language teaching into the Korean education system.

## CHAPTER 2

### HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF SOUTH KOREA

#### **2.1. Confucianism in Korea**

In the late 1300's, during the Chosun Dynasty, the Korean peninsula began to reorganize from a society shaped by Buddhist influences (Cumings, 2005) into what we still know today as "Korean Culture" by embracing the ideologues of Neo-Confucianism (Cumings, 2005). Confucius (551-479 B.C.) was a professed teacher born in China where he taught the practical ethics of daily life (Kim, 2009). In his teachings, he emphasized the importance of education, moral development and self-cultivation in order to attain group harmony (Lee, 2001). When the military leader Yi Song-Gye appointed himself King, he adapted Confucianism to be the official ideology of Korea, which he later reformed into Neo-Confucianism (McFarlene, 2009). Scholars have argued that Korea's adaptation of Chu Hsi's doctrine of Neo-Confucianism (herein Confucianism) paid more fealty than the Chinese forefathers and some would argue, shaped the country's tenacious identity. This has helped the country survive and thrive through centuries of invasions and poverty (Breen, 2004) as well as help it become the economic powerhouse it is today.

Confucian ideals were fashioned within Korean society, deeply impacting the habits, thoughts, behaviors and education of the people as well as the politics and economics of the state (Tweed and Lehman, 2002, Kim, 2009, Lee, 2001). The five relationships that keep social order within the population are between ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, oldest son and younger brothers, elders and juniors with the latter obeying the former with unquestioned loyalty. These relationships create dependency within the family unit, also known as 'filial piety,' obedience to authority and social collectivism. Children are expected to respect the authority of their parents and obey their wishes. Their parents, in turn, enforce this obedience and expect their children to accept and carry out the demands made of them. Outside of the family unit, Confucianism stresses self-sacrifice for the greater whole, leaving limited room for creativity or individualism. Whereas western cultures value diversity, Koreans see unity as ideal for a society to survive: "one mind, one person, one family, one system, one race, one path, and their educational system reinforces this" (Breen, 2004:68)

with an iron fist.

## 2.2. The Role of Education in Confucianism

Confucianism regards education as the most meaningful and fulfilling goal in life and one that values “exemplar, effortful, respectful, and pragmatic acquisition of knowledge as well as behavioral reform” (Tweed and Lehman, 2002:89). Confucius’s central goals of education valued hard work above ability and direct behavioral reform, which would lead to a virtuous life (Tweed and Lehman, 2002). Confucius, himself, claimed that he did not create ideas. He said, “I transmit, but I don’t innovate; I am truthful in what I say and devoted to antiquity” (Tweed and Lehman, 2002: 92). The privileged members of society studied the core ideologies of Confucianism to become cultivated. Those that studied the ideologies believed they had the ability to lead the people to morally better themselves through the morals and values of the doctrine (Lee, 2001). Once a person passed the rigorous examinations of the core ideologies, they were secured jobs as public officials, which were the highest positions a person could attain without royal blood.

During the Chosun dynasty, education was only available to the *yangbon*, or the elite in society, who made up about 15 percent of the population. The *yangbon* were supposed to study and cultivate themselves by following the Confucian doctrine and foster the principles within the society. One of the main aspects of proper Confucian life, which still exists today, was upholding the strict rituals. Living relatives must honor their ancestors. Children must perform these rituals for their elders, especially their parents, while they are alive and must worship them even after their death. The *yangbon* could only marry other members within the class in order to preserve the pure bloodline and class distinction. They also had a hierarchy within their elite society, which caused the eventual collapse of the exclusive group (Lee, 2001). The majority of Korean people, at the time, had the status of a slave or lived in very poor conditions and still practiced Buddhism and Shamanism for lack of education. In Seoul, in 1492, some sources have suggested that up to 75 percent of the population was considered a slave who was either owned by the state or owed service to the state (Cumings, 2005). Born in that position kept them poor and uneducated. “Korea was not a caste society, but rather one with certain castes,” (Cumings, 2005: 54) which kept the bloodlines within the class, keeping the poor to remain poor, and education, specifically reading and writing, a luxury

only the rich could attain. When the fourth king of the Choson dynasty, King Sejong, took power in 1419, he created the Korean alphabet, Hangul, which was completed in 1443 and simple enough for the common people of his kingdom to learn and gain the first means of education. The *yangbon* class still preferred to write and study Classic Chinese, however, the hierarchy of Korean society was structured using Hangul as the main language and is still used today when addressing seniors, within companies and the state where Koreans must use elaborate honorifics, verb endings and conjugations (Cumings, 2005). Once the underclass became more literate, Neo-Confucianism spread throughout Korea and remained strong even through the Japanese invasion.

### **2.3. An Overview of Korean History**

In 1910, Japan officially annexed Korea and with the takeover, single-handedly tried to wipe out the existence of Korea's past, present and future. Japan's policies to erase Korean culture included acquiring Japanese names, using Japanese language, forbidding the use of Korean and schools teaching the Japanese ethical system and the worship of Shintoism (Shin, 2006). These were Korea's darkest years and a part of history many Koreans try to wipe from their memory. After the Korean War, the demilitarized zone, or DMZ, split the country into the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or North Korea, and the Republic of Korea, or South Korea. The split country gained its independence back from Japan in 1945, however, in South Korea, the emotional pain of the centuries of invasions and Japanese rule still had a strong presence on the peninsula. This collective experience, they call *han*, according to Koreans, cannot be translated into another language, but can be loosely described as a silent resentment or as Breen describes, “[A] collective effort to face, deal with and work through all sorts of social suffering” (Breen, 2004:38). The resilience of the Korean people and their strong sense of nationalism enabled them to rise up from a poverty stricken country into the 15<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world in just two generations. With hard work and self-sacrifice during those fifty years, people were able to give their children a better life laden with opportunities not afforded to them. Korea holds the record for the fastest modernization in world history and has developed a strong desire to be seen by the rest of the world as the Asian hub by embracing globalization. As the country becomes more globalized through foreign ideas, multiculturalism and the gradual loosening of Confucian principles and values, new social values are emerging with new generations (Lee, 2001). These new influences have made

Koreans aware that learning English, being a dominant lingua franca, is a necessary requirement to open their country to the global community and has since been implemented into the Korean education system.

## **2.4. Education in Korea**

### **2.4.1. Teacher/Student Relationships**

The Korean educational system is still strongly based on the Confucian hierarchical relationships that demand rigid organization based on age, rank and gender (Lee, 2001), and this extends to the Korean English language classes (Clark & Park, 2013). The hierarchy demands respect for elders, especially teachers, and the classroom orientation is teacher-centered. The students accept, without question, the knowledge that the teacher passes on to them. The students are not expected to give their opinion or ask questions and unlike in student-centered classrooms, they sit quietly and passively absorb the information (Kim, 2009). At the same time, the teacher-student relationship is very paternal where the teacher is strict but at the same time lenient, as they would be toward their own children (Lee, 2001).

### **2.4.2. Student/Student Relationships**

There are hierarchical rules even among the students in the classroom, and the old adage, “It is better to be thought a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt” is observed to avoid the possibility of losing face in front of peers or elders (as quoted in McFarlene, 2012: 27). Students will often choose not to answer a question, even if they know the answer, because expressing their knowledge might be perceived as showing off and cause their classmates to lose face for not knowing or answering the question themselves (McFarlene, 2012). Over time however, this has begun to change in classrooms that have adapted a student-centered approach and has resulted in students feeling more comfortable speaking up in the classroom.

#### 2.4.3. Competition and Standardized Tests

Korea's literacy rate is almost one hundred percent because of the importance placed on education (Breen, 2004). The pressure to succeed begins early in life and competition in the small country is fierce. There is a heavy reliance on standardized tests to measure educational competence, and these tests, in turn, require students to study by rote learning and memorization (Kim, 2009). According to Park (2012), "teaching is governed by the result-oriented and score-centered educational system" (2012: 162). Long hours of studying, hard work, endurance, and diligence are expected of students in order to get a high test score and is a main priority until a place is secured at a university. In 2012, parents spent the equivalent of one point five percent of the country's total GDP to prepare their children for the university entrance exam (Editorial Board, 2013). To create a better future for their family and future bloodlines, Korean parents subject their children to "education fever" (*kyoyukyeol*) or "the national obsession with the attainment of education" (Seth, 2002: 9). Korean mothers are usually in charge of their children and of their education. They are also the decision makers regarding which supplementary classes their children will be enrolled in after their regular classes. These supplementary classes are referred to as "cram schools" or as *hagwons*. The *hagwons* are highly unregulated and range from small businesses that are run in homes or rented office spaces to multi-million dollar businesses that can be seen on every street in both big cities and rural areas. Students who remain in Korea typically attend *hagwons* throughout their primary and secondary education. They are seen as a "necessary evil" that students must endure to keep up with and be able to compete with their peers in the classroom. More affluent families send their children to English speaking kindergartens, find them private English tutors or send them abroad to study in an English speaking country.

#### 2.4.4. Study Abroad

Korean parents send their children abroad to study and help them gain the advantage of emersion in an English speaking country. The term used for these families is called *goose family* where the mother and child go abroad, so the child can attend an English-speaking school, while the father stays behind to work and support them (Clark & Park, 2013). Around 200,000 families sent their children to study in New Zealand, Australia, Canada or the United States in 2008 (Clark & Park, 2013) and the numbers grow every year. Those who cannot

afford this expense still send their children to extracurricular classes or *hagwons* they can afford.

#### 2.4.5. Money Spent on Education

According to a study by Pearson, an education firm, Korea is ranked as having one of the best secondary education systems in the world (Clark & Park, 2013). Part of this likely stemmed from the amount of money parents invest in sending their children to *hagwons* after their regular school classes (Clark & Park, 2013). Families will spend, especially in Seoul, around 16 percent of their monthly income on private education for their children (Hiatt, 2011). Some downfalls of placing a high value on education in a relatively small but highly competitive country are parents end up spending large amounts of money, mothers sacrifice their own careers and family life is strained under the constant pressure to succeed by getting into one of the top universities in the country.

#### 2.4.6. Education and its Relation to Economic Status

At the same time, getting into a good university almost guarantees that these students will get good jobs, high salaries, good marriage matches and continued success thereafter. In many cases, parents will spend their life savings on their children's education and have little to no money set aside for retirement and instead rely on their children to take care of them in their old age. Most families can only financially support one child. This will eventually lead to a future where the retired population will outnumber those who are able to work and support them.

Every year, over 70 percent of students that graduate from high school enter university (Editorial Board, 2013), however, only 10,000 of the 550,000 high school graduates get into one of the top three universities (Clark & Park, 2013). The hierarchy among educational institutions on the peninsula has a strong influence on students' later job prospects and as a result, all possible efforts are made to ensure they get high test scores on the examination (Timblick, 2008). In extreme cases, which happen but are not necessarily common, especially when examination day is approaching, mothers will complete their child's homework in subjects that will not be on the exam, to ensure the most time is spent on subjects that will be on the exam while still maintaining high marks in their regular classes. One of the latest niche

markets to open in Korea are agencies offering services to complete homework in school subjects such as art, for a small fee (Hazzan, 2014).

#### 2.4.7. University Entrance Exam

Before Korean students enter university, it is mandatory that they take the university entrance exam (the Collegiate Scholastic Aptitude Test, or CSAT). The students prepare for this exam for almost half of their school lives, especially during high school, where their studies focus mainly around this exam. They also have study periods late into the evenings to help them prepare. The CSAT is administered every November to high school seniors. On this day, every year, the whole nation adjusts their schedule for the students to arrive at the test site in a timely manner. To cut down on traffic, the public transportation time tables are changed, office workers are allowed to arrive late to work and the stock market opens one hour later than usual. During the listening section of the test, aircrafts are grounded all over the country. For parents who wish to pray for their children, extra services are held on that day as well (Lee, 2011).

#### 2.4.8. English and the University Entrance Exam

A portion of the CSAT focuses on English reading comprehension, listening skills and grammar (Park, 2012). The students must memorize grammatical rules and hundreds, if not thousands of vocabulary words during years of preparation for this one eight-hour test. The CSAT score determines which of the universities the students can be admitted to even though there have been efforts made to promote admissions based on more than just these test scores (Clark & Park, 2013).

#### 2.4.9. Top Universities in Korea

The top three universities in Korea are Seoul National University, Korea University and Yonsei University. They are referred to as “SKY” and they often open many doors for those few who gain entrance into them (Clark & Park, 2013). Korea’s highest ranking university in the country is Seoul National University. Among the best ranking universities in the world, it is in between 100-150<sup>th</sup> (Clark & Park, 2013). In the Times Higher Education’s Ranking, Pohang University of Science and Technology sits at 50<sup>th</sup>, Seoul National University at 59<sup>th</sup>

and Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology at 68<sup>th</sup> (Clark & Park, 2013). According to Seth (2002), “[T]his preoccupation with the pursuit of formal schooling was the product of the diffusion of traditional Confucian attitudes toward learning and status, new egalitarian ideas introduced from the West, and the complex, often contradictory ways in which new and old ideas and formulations interacted” (2002: 6). Most Koreans would agree that education is “a way of achieving status and power as well as ‘a means of self-cultivation,’ and has been valued since the birth of Confucianism (Seth, 2002: 9). Confucian culture marks status as an important part of society as well as an importance for keeping (*ch’emyon*) “face” (Martin, 2003). In Korea, the ability to speak English projects a person as being part of high society or more intelligent, better qualified for jobs and more likely to be successful in life.

## **2.5. The Introduction of English into the Korean Education System**

Korea eventually opened its doors to outsiders in the nineteenth century (Cumings, 2005). In 1886, American missionaries began to open schools and give English lessons to the *yangban*. At the time, Koreans attended these schools in order to move upward in the rigid society, hoping that by learning English, they would appear clever and more scholarly (Cumings, 2005). When Japan ruled over the country, Korean became a forbidden language. Korean intellectuals used English, which was a mandatory subject at school, as a way to resist the Japanese and associate with the Americans who they looked at more favorably (Flattery, 2007). The craze to learn English, however, did not reach full swing until after the Korean War, when South Korea was on its way to becoming an economic success. In 1997, the South Korean government made English a compulsory subject from the third year of elementary school to the first year of university as stipulated by the first National Curriculum (McFarlene, 2012). Students are usually required to attend a one to two hour class once a week to learn the language throughout the eleven years of schooling. During secondary school, English classes in Korea were mostly grammar oriented in the first through fifth national curricula (DeLancey, 2014; Bae & Han, 1994). The Korean government realized how ineffective the grammatical syllabus was and the Ministry of Education tried to restructure how English was taught in the classrooms by replacing the original method of grammar translation and audio-lingual method with Communicative Language Teaching, or CLT, to develop communicative competence. The sixth curriculum was based more on CLT,

and fluency became a priority in the Korean English language classroom. “Communicative language teaching can be understood as a set of principles about the goals of language teaching, how learners learn a language, the kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning, and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom.” (Richards, 2005: 2) The focus on fluency, however, was criticized for lack of grammatical accuracy and again the curriculum was changed.

The developers of the seventh (and current) curriculum incorporated both communication development and grammatical structures. Teachers were not trained on how to implement the communicative approach in their classrooms nor did all teachers find it appropriate to arrange their classrooms from teacher-centered into student-centered (Flattery, 2007). The focus of CLT made non L1 English teachers uncomfortable, unless specially trained, especially those that felt their main purpose was to help their students pass standardized tests and correct errors (Richards and Rogers, 2001). According to Yoon, the seventh curriculum did not provide “how the sentences represent the communicative functions, how those functions should be taught, or how the functions are accomplished interactively.” (Yoon, 2004: 14) Moreover, there was no “strong basis to reach the goal of developing communicative competence.” (Yoon, 2004: 14) Many Korean teachers felt that the CLT method was developed in the West and had westernized ideologies on how to teach a language. If it was to work in other countries, such as Korea, local context needed to be considered, especially in an EFL, classroom setting (Flattery 2007). The Ministry of Education also understood that language and culture were inseparable but neglected to emphasize its importance in the newest curriculum. Korean teachers were not typically familiar with socio-cultural considerations (Choi & Lee, 2008) and cultural awareness was not taught in Korean classrooms, which could have been one reason for the teachers’ inability to fully understand the communicative methodologies of the curriculum (Flattery, 2007). This would also affect the students, who would have no understanding of the L2 culture nor have any interaction with L1 English speakers. To remedy the situation, the government established programs such as EPIK, or English Program In Korea, GEPIK, or Gyeonggi English Program In Korea and SMOE, or Seoul Metropolitan Of Education to offer English classes in the public schools starting in elementary school, for free or at an affordable cost. These classes were designed to expose Korean children to foreigners, different cultures and allow them to have a chance to learn English from a native speaker. The programs that were set up, unfortunately, were not

very successful and the government decided to slowly cancel them, starting with middle schools and high schools and eventually, cancel the elementary school English programs as well. Often, the teachers that were recruited for these programs had little to no experience teaching. They were chosen solely because English was their first language, under the belief that native speakers were the best teachers of their mother tongue. The teachers in the government programs typically teach in a classroom with up to fifty students that they see once a week for forty minutes. Most teachers find it difficult to remember the names of students and often it is impossible to get every student to participate or have group activities. Unfortunately, these factors could have a negative impact on students' motivation, overall performance and success in language acquisition. Outside of the classroom, most students have little to no contact with the L2 culture and rarely use English in their everyday lives. Lack of use could lead to demotivation and inability to understand why it is important for them to learn.

## **2.6. Practicality of Learning English in Korea**

One of the biggest concerns with learning English in South Korea is the practicality of learning it and how useful it will be during the course of the average adult's life. To push for fluency in English around the country, the former Korean president Roh Moo-Hyun attempted to make English the second official language of the country, but he was met with criticism from the general population. One of the main reasons for the objection was the fear that English would dissolve the traditions and culture that dates back to the Chosun Dynasty. English is not used for official government or public purposes nor is it used in everyday life of the average Korean person (Flattery, 2007). In a 2008 questionnaire administered by the New York Times, 42 percent of the population said they had never in their life spoken to a foreigner (Hazzan, 2014). In this respect, South Korea differs notably from other multilingual countries, for instance, India, where a 1961 census identified 1,652 languages throughout the country (Mallikarjun, 2002). In South Korea, however, there is only one official language and the average person can go through an entire lifetime without having to use English. In India, in contrast, having no English skills may make a person unemployable, unable to communicate with other people and significantly reduce their participation in future employment or social opportunities. In South Korea, the most populated city in the country is Seoul, with over ten million people. The next largest city has a population of less than four

million people. According to immigration and government data, the current foreign population in the country is three percent or about 1.5 million people. Over 40 percent of that population consists of migrant workers from China (50 percent), Vietnam (11 percent), the Philippines (five percent), and Indonesia (four percent). The next largest group (ten percent) of foreign residents consists of spouses from China (45 percent), Vietnam (25 percent), and Japan (seven percent). The third largest group of foreign residents in Korea consists of the student population. The majority of the foreign population does not speak English nor is English their first language. For the average Korean who is studying English at their university, 95 percent of the students who took the survey said they would use English after they finish studying, however, when asked if they used the language outside of the classroom, 73 percent who completed the questionnaire said they rarely if ever had the chance to use it. Unless students plan to study or move abroad, or land a job at a company where English will be used, many if not most university students may never use the language and forget it over time. According to McFarlene (2012), Korea's university students see their English education on the basis of test scores and ranking for employment purposes. As a communication tool, it will serve little use to the majority of Koreans (McFarlene, 2012).<sup>1</sup> This raises many questions regarding the role of motivation in Korean students' attempts to learn language. The next section will explore second language acquisition, or SLA, the role of motivation in the language classroom and different types of motivation identified from the literature on SLA.

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<sup>1</sup>Koreans who get hired at companies to speak English do not always possess a satisfactory level to do their job well. On many occasions through out my ten years in Korea, there have been many occasions where Korean co-teachers, co-workers at companies and teachers at universities have been hired to fill positions where speaking

# CHAPTER 3

## LITERATURE REVIEW:

### THE ROLE OF MOTIVATION IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

#### **3.1 Current Theories on Second Language Acquisition**

Researchers, in the context of SLA theories, have tried to find “a more or less abstract set of claims about the units which are significant within the phenomenon under study, the relationships which exist between them, and the processes which bring about change.” (Mitchell & Myles, 2004:7) Formal linguistic approaches to SLA attempt to document and understand formal linguistic development by attempting to identify the linguistic system(s) responsible for performance and construction of phonology, morphology, lexis, syntax, semantics, discourse and pragmatics (Myles, 2010). Cognitive linguistic approaches attempt to understand how learners develop the ability to access and use their formal linguistic systems and what roles both age and individual differences, such as intelligence, aptitude, motivation, learner beliefs and learning styles have on L2 development (Myles, 2010). Social and interactional linguistic approaches attempt to understand how language input facilitates development of the L2 and what factors speed up that development (Myles, 2010). Sociocultural approaches and sociolinguists focus on the social context of language learning and see language and as a cultural product and social activity and focus on language use which they believe is the driver of language development (Myles, 2010). One of the contributing factors of sociolinguistic and sociocultural approaches has been to both question the results of and contribute to a better understanding of formal and cognitive findings in the field of SLA by enabling researchers to better understand how social contexts shape the development of language systems and environment in which learning takes place (Myles, 2010). The most established factors documented that contribute to learning processes in SLA include developmental stages of acquisition, a rule-governed linguistic system responsible for L2 production that does not always follow the same rules of the L1 or L2, the likelihood of

L1 properties to transfer to the L2 and a developmental rate variation between learners (Myles, 2010).<sup>2</sup>

For the purposes of this study the researcher will be exploring how the different theories have been conceptualized in the role of motivation in SLA. There are several studies that have examined reasons for learners' success and failure in SLA. These studies have examined the correlation between language acquisition and the roles of age, social factors, learning environment and attitude towards the language. According to a study by Ellis (1991), the earlier a person learns an L2, the more likely they are to develop native-like fluency. Once a child reaches puberty, they are less likely to acquire a native-like accent and after the age of about fifteen the likelihood of becoming a native-like speaker declines greatly (Ellis, 1991). A study by Johnson and Newport (1989), found that there was a significant correlation between age of SLA and decline in performance on every syntactic and morphological rule (Johnson and Newport, 1989). The results also showed that non-age related factors such as attitude and motivation had little significance in comparison to age and SLA decline (Johnson and Newport, 1989).

Motivation behind learning an L2 is partially formed by the learner's attitude toward the language, which Gardner (1985) has defined as "the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language." (Gardner 1985: 10) His socio-educational model claims that inter group attitudes, cultural identification, familial influences and the social environment as a whole, where the L2 is learned, all influence the SLA process (Gardner, 1985). In his (2006) study, Gardner found that "conditions where the language is being studied for practical or utilitarian purposes," or learners with instrumental motivation, tend to score better on measures of SLA (Gardner, 2006: 249). Another study by Ushioda (2001) found that motivation is a dynamic process and that some factors contributing to SLA motivation include: academic interest, language-related enjoyment, desired levels of L2 competence, personal goals, positive learning history, personal satisfaction and positive feelings about countries or people where the L2 is spoken (Dewaele, 2013). Gardner's (2010) socio-educational model also claimed that motivation is made up of dynamic elements that include affective, cognitive, and

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<sup>2</sup> For a more comprehensible overview, see Myles (2010) and Ellis (2008)

behavioral elements. The model also claimed that there is a clear distinction between the motivation to learn an L2 and the motivation to use the L2 academically in the classroom setting (Gardner, 2010). Baker (2007) also states that there is a vast difference between conversational language and the language required for the classroom or academic purposes. The latter can take longer than eight years to master and require many contributing factors of motivation, such as academic interest, language-related enjoyment, desired levels of L2 competence, or high personal goals, to master.

### **3.2. Motivation in the Language Classroom**

Kanfer and Ackerman (1989) refer to motivation as "the direction of attentional effort, the proportion of total attentional effort directed to the task (intensity), and the extent to which attentional effort toward the task is maintained over time (persistence)" (as cited in Tremblay and Gardener, 1995: 507). Motivation, put simply, can be defined as the desire to reach or complete a goal. This definition, however, does not encompass the totality of what it means. Dörnyei and Skehan state that:

[M]otivation concerns the direction and magnitude of human behavior, or, more specifically (i) the choice of a particular action, (ii) the persistence with it, and (iii) the effort expended on it. In broad terms, motivation is responsible for *why* people decide to do something, *how long* they are willing to sustain the activity, and *how hard* they are going to pursue it (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003: 614).

As pertaining to the language classroom, Peacock (1997: 145) defines motivation as:

[...] interest and enthusiasm for the materials used in the class; persistence with the learning task, as indicated levels of attention or action for an extended duration; and levels of concentration and enjoyment.

It is important to understand motivation in the language classroom because there are so many variables that can affect each learner differently. Dörnyei (1998) states that, "Motivation is indeed a multifaceted rather than a uniform factor and no available theory has yet managed it in its total complexity." (Dörnyei, 1998: 131). In previous studies, researchers have found

that cognitive and affective variables (Dörnyei, 1990; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995) influence the need for achievement (Dörnyei, 1990), self-efficacy or self-confidence (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995) in EFL motivation (as cited in Kang, 2000). Another theory states that a possible predictor of motivation is in the way people attributed success and failure in the EFL context (Schunk, 1991). Past failure, according to Dörnyei (1990), can affect motivation and is common when learning a language.

Researchers have distinguished between many different types of motivation. For this study, six different types of motivation were researched: integrative, intrinsic, extrinsic, instrumental, classroom, and demotivation. In the next section, each type will be examined in the context of how they might influence or hinder learning English as a foreign language in Korea.

### **3.3. Types of Motivation**

#### **3.3.1. Integrative Motivation**

Integrative motivation is associated with the desire to interact, associate and be accepted in the community of the target language, to have an interest in the language and/or have a positive attitude towards the language and language community (Schmitt, 2013). A study by Shaaban and Ghaith (2000) found that integrative motivation had an effect on the success of learning a language (as cited in Duvernay, 2009). However, a study by Schmitt (1996) found that foreign language learners in Egypt had little integrative motivation due to having no interaction with the target language community outside the classroom (as cited in Duvernay, 2009). Therefore, integrative motivation may have a greater influence on students learning in an ESL environment but not strongly influence those learning in an EFL environment. However, Yashima's (2002) study found that Japanese learners had an "interest in foreign or international affairs, willingness to go overseas to stay or work, readiness to interact with intercultural partners, and...openness or a non-ethnocentric attitude toward different cultures,"(Yashima, 2002:57) and redefined integrative motivation as "international posture" as a better adaption to English as the global lingua franca (Dewaele, 2013).

### 3.3.2. Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation is the desire to learn a language for the sake of learning it as an object of study (Johnson & Johnson, 2002), or the desire to do an activity without want for a reward (Deci & Ryan, 1985). For example, a study conducted by Lambert (1955), concluded that an intrinsically motivated American student was able to reach a high level of competency in French (as cited in Duvernay, 2009). Another study by Gan, Humphreys and Hamp-Lyons (2004), found that students were more successful at learning a second language, if they had intrinsic motivational factors such as “interest, learning progress, enhanced self-confidence and self-efficacy.” (Gan, Humphreys & Hamp-Lyons, 2004: 240)

### 3.3.3. Extrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic motivation, according to Deci and Ryan (2000: 60), “is a construct that pertains whenever an activity is done in order to attain some separable outcome,” such as positive feedback, rewards or scores. In a study by Gan, Humphreys and Hamp-Lyons (2004), students who were extrinsically motivated, performed worse in EFL settings than students who were intrinsically motivated. The poorer-performing students also tended to blame outside factors as the reasons for their learning problems (as cited in Duvernay, 2009).

### 3.3.4. Instrumental Motivation

Instrumental motivation is associated with the practical gains from doing a certain activity, for example, passing an exam, getting a higher salary, getting a better job or to be more successful (Schmitt, 2013). In terms of language learning, using the target language as a tool to improve the learner’s life in some way (Duvernay, 2009). Lambert’s (1955) case study of an American graduate student studying French concluded that the student was highly motivated to learn French for her career and achieved high competency as a result (cited in Duvernay, 2009). Wen (1997) also found that Chinese learners in China were instrumentally motivated to learn English because of its importance as an international language (as cited in Duvernay, 2009). A study by Chen, Warden and Chang (2005) found that the demands placed on learning English in Asian countries differ from other cultures and affect the types of motivation that influence learners. In her study, Chinese learners were very instrumentally motivated which she found to be dependent on Chinese culture (as cited in Duvernay, 2009). Gavran (2013) found that Korean learners were also instrumentally motivated as a result of

having to take a university entrance exam and the prospects of getting more prestigious, high paying jobs.

### 3.3.5. Classroom Motivation

Gardner states that classroom motivation refers to the “motivation in the classroom, or in any specific situation” where “the focus is on the individuals’ perception of the task at hand, and is largely state oriented” (Gardner, 2007:11). Some factors that influence classroom motivation are the teacher, atmosphere, materials, facilities and the characteristics of the individual student (Gardner, 2007). Gardner’s research on motivation has indicated that what is most important is the degree to which the individual perceives the classroom situation as motivating.

### 3.3.6. Demotivation

In addition to the different types of motivation described above, some researchers have highlighted the significance of *demotivation* in second language learning. Demotivation is the effect on learners who were once motivated but have lost interest over time, according to Dörnyei (2001). For example, in Korea, English is taught as a school subject but it is rarely used outside of class which may cause students to lose interest or purpose for studying (Kim, 2013). Past studies have focused on external factors such as teacher competence and teaching styles, difficulty of content, lack of intrinsic motivation, inadequate facilities, and tests (Kikuchi & Sakai, 2009). Another study by Kim (2011) and Jung (2011) focused on changes in students’ motivation. They found that Korean students who were asked to rate their motivation to learn English from elementary school to university showed an incremental decrease starting from the second year of middle school up until the first year of university. In other words, learners became progressively more demotivated to learn English as they transitioned from middle school to university (as cited in Kim & Kim, 2013). During the first year of university, however, motivation increased and continued to increase thereafter (Kim & Kim, 2013). Students from grades three to six were increasingly dissatisfied with English language classes both in public and private institutions, resulting in a decrease in motivation (Kim & Kim, 2013). Another study by Kim (2012) found that demotivation was not a loss of motivation but rather, existed independently. In his (2012) study of Korean English learners

from grades 3 to 12, he found that motivation and demotivation depended on different factors of language learning and affected each student to a different degree (Kim & Kim, 2013). In other words, a student can be motivated in some areas of language learning, such as their *ought-to* self, or the kind of person they believe other people want them to be, and demotivated in others, such as taking compulsory language classes (Kim & Kim, 2013).

### **3.4. Influence of Motivation on English language Learning Success in the Korean Context**

One of the key components of learning a language is motivation. The purpose of this study was to obtain information from Korean students studying English at the university level, as well as their classroom teachers, to better understand the underlying factors that influence students' success in learning the language. In Korean university classrooms, a few possible causes for low motivation include the education system, cultural views of the English language, prior classroom experience, inability to choose classes, grouping students according to class rank rather than proficiency and the lack of English speaking role models (Niederhauser, 2012).

A limited number of studies have examined the influence of motivation and demotivation on English learning success in Korean, however, a majority of the studies that were carried out were done in an EFL setting (Kim & Kim, 2013). Research on the beliefs of native teachers about teaching and EFL settings is limited in Korea. Most research conducted in Korea has involved only L1 Korean teachers teaching English, uses only the questionnaire method and is written in Korean (Thornton, 2009). Research of this kind is important because “teachers’ belief systems are founded on the goals, values, and beliefs teachers hold in relation to the content and process of teaching, and their understanding of the systems in which they work and their roles within it.” (Richards and Lockhart, 1994: 30) Research methods have used questionnaires to determine if demotivation is a contributing factor in the English language classroom (Kim & Kim, 2013). The studies include defining factors that have the most negative affect on learners, differences in demotivating factors between different groups of learners, negative changes in motivation, and the relation between demotivation and proficiency (Kim & Kim, 2013). The current study therefore aims to add to the available body of knowledge by examining the motivation of Korean students learning English and

comparing the findings with the perceptions and beliefs of L1 and non L1 teachers in order to find what factors negatively affect students' success in learning English.

## CHAPTER 4

### METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1. Background of Research

The present study explored the relationship between (de-)motivational factors and learning English in Korea, by making use of a mixed methods methodology which generated both qualitative and quantitative data. South Korea was chosen as the area of research partly for convenience and partly for the recent interest in why Korea does so poorly on worldwide rankings of English proficiency, even though the time and money spent on learning the language is significantly higher than other countries.

The researcher administered a questionnaire at six universities in Seoul, South Korea, and the surrounding areas to identify students' self-reported motivation for studying English. A sample of midterm exams, final exams and final grades were collected from a subsample of the participating students to make comparisons with the responses obtained on the questionnaire. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with faculty members at 13 universities or language institutes in and around Seoul. The interviews were conducted in order to get the teachers' perspective on their students' motivation toward learning English. The rationale for selecting this methodology, as well as the research question and aims, are explained in more depth in Chapter 1. In this chapter, information is provided on the participants who took part in the study (section 5.2), the research participants (5.3), the semi-structured individual interviews(5.4), research procedures (5.5) data collection instruments, (5.6) data analysis and (5.7) reliability and validity of the research instruments.

#### 4.2. Research Participants

Two groups of participants took part in the study. Each group will now be discussed in more detail below:

#### 4.2.1. Participants: Students Studying English at a Korean University in Korea

The participants who were selected to complete the language acquisition motivation questionnaire were chosen by means of convenience sampling, which uses people who are easy to reach. In this case, participants were chosen in the area where the researcher resided.

##### 4.2.1.1. Inclusion Criteria

- (a) The participants in the questionnaire were all students studying English in a classroom taught by a native English speaker, at a Korean university in South Korea.
- (b) Participants had to be eighteen (18) years or older.

##### 4.2.1.2 Exclusion Criteria

- (a) No students from the language institutes were included as participants in the present study. Students studying at language institutes could not be recruited as participants for this study, as there is a strict policy which forbids teachers or other people to conduct research at these institutions.

A total of 241 students took part in the present study ( $N = 241$ ; 95 male, 133 female, 15 unspecified). Each university was given the same amount of questionnaires (50) to divide among their classes, however, the questionnaires of students who decided not to take part were not returned. The participants were recruited from six different universities in and around the major metropolitan and capital, Seoul. All of the participants stated their age as eighteen years or older. However, it should be noted that Koreans follow the lunar calendar and children are one year old when they are born. On January first everyone turns one year older. Therefore, there could be as much as a two year age gap between lunar and solar calendar ages. The age range of the participants was between 18 to 51 years old, with a median age of 20 years.

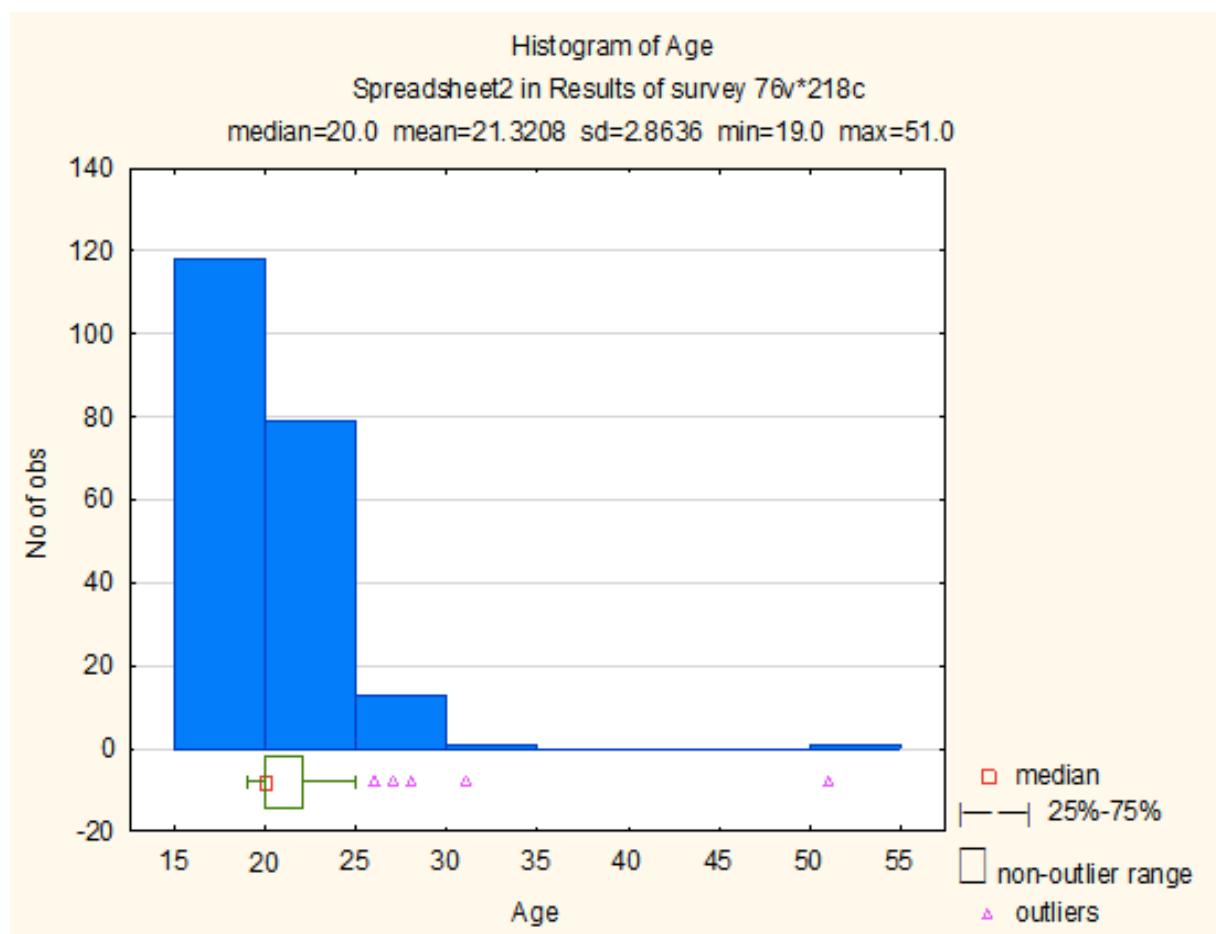
Refer to Table 4.1 for a summary of the relevant information on socio-economic status and language proficiency. This was obtained from student participants included in the study. Figure 4.1 illustrates the age distribution for student participants. Please note that the ages of

the typical male students are older due to the compulsory military service they must complete once they reach eighteen years of age, and which most males complete before graduating from university. They serve for approximately twenty-one to thirty-six months depending on the type of duty they choose. The students who completed the questionnaire were either in the compulsory first year English conversation class or a second, third or fourth year elective class.

**Table 4.1. Description of Socioeconomic and Language Proficiency of Participants:  
University Students**

SOCIOECONOMIC					
a. Family income  *46 incomplete responses	Very low	Low	Medium	High	Very High
	3 (1.3%)	34 (14.9%)	163 (71.5%)	27 (11.8%)	1 (0.4%)
b. Family members that work	Mother	Father	Sister(s)	Brother(s)	You
	135 (55.5%)	204 (53.7%)	12 (3.2%)	12 (3.2%)	17 (4.5%)
c. Family members enrolled in university  *24 incomplete responses	1 Person	2 People	3 People	4 People	5 People
	135 (55.5%)	66 (27.1%)	13 (5.3%)	4 (1.6%)	1 (0.4%)
d. Family members who have learned English	Mother	Father	Sister(s)	Brother(s)	You
	112 (46%)	122 (50%)	94 (38.6%)	110 (45.2%)	180 (74%)
LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY OF PARTICIPANTS					
	Low	Intermediate	Advanced	Native-like	
Reading  *22 incomplete responses	28 (12.7%)	131 (59.3%)	57 (28.8%)	5 (2.3%)	

Writing	86 (38.9%)	110 (49.8%)	24 (10.9%)	1 (0.5%)
Speaking	92 (41.8%)	98 (44.5%)	28 (12.7%)	2 (0.9%)
Listening	41 (18.6%)	121 (55%)	54 (24.5%)	4 (1.8%)



**Figure 4.1. Age Distribution for Sample of Student Participants**

#### 4.2.2. Participants: Teachers who Teach English at a Korean University and/or Language Institute

The participants for the interviews were recruited through a combination of convenience and snowball sampling. A convenience sample is a group of subjects who are easy to find and

recruit whereas a snowball sample is made up when subjects in a study refer suitable acquaintances as new subjects. The researcher approached English teachers at Korean universities with whom the researcher was familiar and these individuals recommended additional potential participants. A total of thirteen (N=13) teachers were interviewed. Six of the participants were L1 speakers of English speakers who were teaching English at Korean universities or language institutes. Three of the participants conducted questionnaires at their universities. The age range of the participants was between 30 to 64 years old and the average age was 36. The teachers were born in Canada, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, Ireland and South Africa and all grew up in English-speaking countries. Two of the L1 English teachers speak Afrikaans fluently, and four of the native English teachers speak beginner to intermediate Korean. Two of the teachers speak Korean fluently and studied either in their home country or in Korea. Five of the teachers work at universities in Seoul, South Korea and one teacher works at language institute run by a university in Seoul, South Korea. The remaining seven teachers interviewed were L1 speakers of Korean who work at universities teaching either English language classes or preparation classes for the TOEIC, or Test of English for International Communication. All of the teachers were born in South Korea and grew up in South Korea. All of the L1 Korean teachers can speak Korean but their English writing and speaking proficiency levels vary. Three Korean teachers studied English in Korea only and four teachers studied in Canada and/or the United States for varying periods of time.

#### **4.3. Semi-Structured Individual Interviews**

The participants were contacted based on the researcher's knowledge of their workplace or through referrals from other participants. Informed consent from the participants who took part in the interviews was gained verbally and the purpose for the interviews was explained before the questions were asked. The participants were assured their answers and identity would remain confidential, and that they could withdraw from the study at any time, or refuse to answer any question. Six of the teachers were interviewed at coffee shops in a designated area. The participants were allowed to see the questions before the interview began. All questions were asked in the exact order and when the participant was finished answering one question the next question was asked. All face to face interviews were recorded by a digital recording device, with the consent of the participants, and transcribed orthographically after the interview. Seven interviews were completed through email correspondence due to time

constraints. The fact that interviews could not all be done face to face is considered a potential limitation to the study. This might have affected participants' responses, as generally people are more willing to give additional information when interviewed in person, than they would be writing it down. The recordings, emails and orthographic transcriptions were saved in a password-protected file. Only the researcher and supervisor had access to these transcriptions, to protect the confidentiality of information.

#### **4.4. Research Procedures**

Ethical approval for the study was obtained through the Stellenbosch Human Research Ethics Committee (Reference number: SU-HSD-000680) and permission to conduct research was obtained from the universities where the questionnaires were administered.

##### **4.4.1. Language Motivation Questionnaire**

The questionnaire participants were recruited after receiving permission from the faculty at each respective university, who then administered the questionnaires. Before the questionnaires were administered to the students, their teachers gave a verbal explanation of the purpose and this information - as well as the reason for the study - was also provided in written form on the first page of the consent form. It was highlighted that taking part in the study was voluntary and that students were allowed to withdraw their participation at any point during the study. They received verbal directions on how to complete the questionnaire. The directions were also written on the front page of the questionnaire in Korean and the teacher stayed in the classroom to answer any questions from the students. A consent form, which stated that the information they provided would be kept confidential and they were encouraged to answer each question honestly, was then distributed to the students. The students who signed the consent form were then given a questionnaire to fill out and the consent forms were collected. The students who chose to participate then filled in the background information followed by the questionnaire. The participants were given time to complete the questionnaire during their regular class either in written form or by filling out an online questionnaire. Once the written questionnaires were completed, they were collected anonymously in a folder and sealed inside. The questionnaires were then given back to the researcher who manually entered the information into the online form. For the questionnaires

that were filled out online, the information was already available in the format created by the researcher.

#### 4.4.2. Obtaining Language Test Scores

The questionnaire participants' English grades from their midterms, final exams and final grades were obtained from one university where the questionnaires were completed. The language tests of each university are unique and created by the teachers who are employed there. They also follow individual grading curves based on the particular standards of the university. Written permission from the university was obtained to access this information and the grades were compiled and matched to the students from that university who completed the questionnaires. Only these participants were asked to provide their student number on the questionnaire in order to match it with the grades provided by their teacher. The researcher was not able to access any other information about the participants and the teacher was not given access to the information on the questionnaires. For confidentiality purposes only the researcher and supervisor had access to this information. The grades were then analyzed and compared to the results on the questionnaires that pertained to motivation. Also refer to Section 5.5.2 for more information on the assessment tool used to evaluate English language abilities at one of the participating universities.

### 4.5. Data Collection Instruments

#### 4.5.1. Language Acquisition Questionnaire on Motivation

A novel questionnaire was developed for this particular study by the researcher, and incorporated individual questions and sections from existing questionnaires used in previous studies. Please refer to Appendix A for the questionnaire used in this study and to Table 5.2 below for an outline of the sources for each question included in the questionnaire. The questions selected for inclusion in the questionnaire pertained to the different types of motivation to study English in the classroom (discussed in Chapter 4), including attitude towards English and L1 English speakers. The questionnaire was translated by an L1 Korean speaker and part-time translator who has experience teaching English in a classroom and who has also studied abroad in the United States. A second L1 Korean speaker was then asked to review the translation and double check that the questions related to the originals as closely

as possible. Any disagreements were discussed and resolved between the second translator and the researcher. The questionnaire was given to the students in Korean, which was most but not all of the participants' L1. The English translation of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix A and the Korean translation in Appendix B. The questionnaire gathered information about the students' language, personal, economic, family and English language background and twenty questionnaire questions on the concepts of interest in this study, using a four point Lykert scale. The four point scale was used in order to discourage the participants from 'fence-sitting' when answering the questions. This was decided based on the nature of the hierarchy society in Korea where students look to authority figures to make the 'correct' decision rather than deciding on their own (Thornton, 2009). For each statement, the participants had to indicate which of the four options best described their opinion about the statement by checking one of the following: strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. The questions in the questionnaire pertained to motivation in the English classroom, attitude towards English and L1 English speakers.

**Table 4.2. Sources for Questions Included in Study Questionnaire**

Item	Adapted from
1	LoCastro (2001), Kirova (2012), McFarlane (2012)
2	LoCastro (2001), Kirova (2012), McFarlane (2012)
3	Song (2003), Tyson (2003)
4	McFarlane (2012)
5	Tweed and Lehman (2002), Martin (2003), Song (2003), Tyson (2003)
6	Tweed and Lehman (2002), McFarlane (2012)
7	Kirova (2012), Lee (2003), Jackson (2003)
8	Tweed and Lehman (2002), Jackson (2003), McFarlane (2012)
9	Song (2003)
10	Jackson (2003)
11	Tremblay and Gardner (1995)
12	Sakai (2009), McFarlane (2012)
13	Jackson (2003)
14	Tremblay and Gardner (1995)
15	Sakai (2009), Robinson (2003)

16	Martin (2003), Lee (2003), Jackson (2003)
17	Robinson (2003), McFarlane (2012)
18	McFarlane (2012)
19	Robinson (2003), McFarlane (2012)
20	McFarlane (2012)

#### 4.5.2. Assessment Tools used by the Respective University to Assess Language Ability

A measure of student performance was obtained from a subsample of students who completed the questionnaire, at one of the participating universities. These students' language ability is assessed three times a year. The students are assessed using a written and verbal examination to determine their understanding of theory and communication abilities. The first assessment is a midterm given in the middle of a semester. This assessment tests the students' knowledge of the class materials up to that date. The second assessment is a final exam given at the end of the semester and also tests the students' knowledge of the class materials from the semester. A final grade is given based on the total performance throughout the semester and also takes into account students' class attendance.

#### 4.5.3. Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

An interview schedule (see Appendix C) was developed to guide the semi-structured interviews with the teachers. The participants were informed of the time and place where the interview would take place. The aim of the interviews was to get more information about the teachers in the English language classrooms, the classroom setting, the teachers' opinions about the students' motivation to learn English, their opinion about the importance of learning the language and the reasons they believe their students learn English. The teachers were asked questions about their personal history, language background, their opinion about the education system in Korea both in general and pertaining specifically to teaching English, and questions relating to Korea. It was explained that they could look at the questions prior to the discussion and were asked to stay focused on the relevant questions. They were also asked to give their opinion about their students' reasons for learning English and motivation to learn the language. Some of the interview questions from McFarlene (2012) were reviewed

and adapted for this study by the researcher based on the themes identified in the literature review.

## 4.6. Data Analysis

### 4.6.1. Quantitative Data: Language Learning Motivation Questionnaire and Student Grades

The quantitative questionnaire data was processed by entering it into an online questionnaire first (either by the students themselves, or manually by the researcher) and then exported onto an Excel spreadsheet. Once the information was numerically configured on the spreadsheet, the data was then analyzed statistically in consultation with a statistician. Firstly, descriptive statistics were used to describe the students' responses in terms of percentages, as it relates to the twenty Lykert style questions on motivation for learning English. Secondly, a "Total Motivation Score" was calculated by assigning a numerical value to the Lykert responses on the questionnaire. For instance, for the statement "I think that my English class is interesting," the response option four "strongly agree" was assigned *four* marks since it arguably indicated a high level of motivation on the student's part. Response option one "strongly disagree," in contrast, was assigned *one* mark since it indicated a low level of (classroom) motivation. Questionnaire questions that were negatively phrased were adjusted during the analysis so that a higher "score" (the number of the Lykert response) always reflected a higher level of motivation; this applied to questions 3, 5, 9, 14, 15, 16 and 20. Thirdly, a Cronbach's alpha was calculated to determine the degree of inter-item correlation between all the questions in the questionnaire. This was done to determine the internal consistency of the questionnaire, an indication of the instrument's reliability. Fourthly, responses on the questionnaire questions were further grouped according to the five different types of motivational factors each question related to, namely:

- (a) sociolinguistic variables affecting attitude towards learning English: items 1, 4, 19
- (b) instrumental motivation: items 2, 3, 20
- (c) intrinsic motivation: items 5, 7, 9, 11, 14
- (d) classroom motivation: items 6, 8, 10, 13, 15, 16
- (e) integrative motivation: items 12, 17, 18.

A Cronbach's alpha was then calculated to determine more specifically the inter-item correlation within each of the groupings in (a) to (e) above. This was done to determine whether the respective questions in each grouping reliably measured the same construct(s), providing another indication of the questionnaire's reliability. Fifthly, an exploratory factor analysis was done to identify underlying factors or constructs which could account for the results, by identifying which items on the questionnaire scored together most reliably. Lastly, the Total Motivation Score outlined in section 5.6.1 was compared to the language grades on three respective assessments. A Spearman correlation coefficient was calculated using the subsample of grades of participants who completed the language acquisition questionnaire on motivation.

#### 4.6.2. Qualitative Data: Semi-Structured Individual Interviews

Qualitative research can be used along with a quantitative survey in order to get an additional perspective and provide significant meaning behind the research question. Each interview was orthographically transcribed by the researcher as a Word document and rechecked against the audio recording by an independent person, in order to ensure the accuracy of the transcribed information. The data was then grouped into common themes using a modified content analysis approach, i.e. examined in detail and organized into patterns that relate to the outlined research questions. The Atlas.ti (1.0.16) software programme was used to group together the common themes in the data. By working within the framework of Grounded Theory, recurring themes were identified from the data, and used to group together ideas across the transcripts. Final interpretations of the data were broken into key factors and analyzed together with the findings from the questionnaire and previous research to provide greater depth and understanding of the results. The themes were broken down into five main categories: orientation, language learning environment, external motivation, internal motivation and self confidence/self efficacy (See Table 6.2) and are discussed in Chapter 6 based on the main ideas and most significant responses from the participants.

### 4.7. Reliability and Validity

The reliability of a collection of data depends on the degree of consistency in the results. The validity of the data collection depends on whether the results enable it to measure what it was

set out to measure (Best & Kahn, 1998). According to Holland and Shortall (1997:24-25):

The fact remains that all questionnaires and most interviews - to a greater or lesser extent - follow the researcher's agenda and not the agendas of the research subjects. And this raises difficult questions regarding the use of these research instruments [...] researchers must be aware of this kind of problem [...] if they are to avoid, as far as possible, giving the impression of bias or pre-judgement or of 'cooking' their data.

The phenomenon described above is also known as researcher bias. In order to control researcher bias in the quantitative section of the study, the questionnaire used to determine students' motivation for studying English was based on various existing data collection instruments reported on in the literature (see Table 4.2).

There are different measures in place to control researcher bias in qualitative research, since the researcher can never be completely objective in that context and instead subjectivity viewed as a strength of the research method. Those measures in this study would be:

- (1) developing an interview schedule based on themes identified in the literature.
- (2) having another person with experience in qualitative research review all the transcripts against the audio recording for accuracy and resolving disagreements through discussion.
- (3) having the person in (2) also review the themes identified by the researcher from the data, and resolving disagreements through discussion.

The students were asked to answer as honestly and accurately as possible, however, respondent bias might still have occurred. In other words, the questionnaire participants may have been unwilling to provide honest answers, preferring instead to provide socially accepted answers to avoid embarrassment, or to please the teacher or researcher doing the study. According to Todd (1995) questionnaire respondents may be culturally influenced and answer based on *ideal self* concepts that are culturally conditioned (as cited in Duvernay, 2009). Before the questionnaire was handed out, the teachers explained to the participants that they should provide answers that were most correct for their situation and they had to fill out the questionnaire by themselves. They were only allowed to ask the teacher practical questions pertaining to the questionnaire, e.g. how to fill it out or resolve any confusion on a

question. The researcher had no contact with the students themselves and instructed those handing out the questionnaire to do so in a manner that ensured confidentiality. All of the students were able to answer the questionnaire questions without problems and there were no questions according to the teachers.

#### 4.7.1. Reliability of Individual Questionnaire Items

The questionnaire used in this study as a tool to measure motivation can be considered as reliable if it was able to measure that which it set out to measure. A Cronbach's alpha was calculated to determine the inter-item correlation; in other words, whether all statements on the questionnaire measured the same broad construct of motivation. The results showed an acceptable level of inter-item correlation overall ( $\alpha = .73$ ), indicating that the questionnaire can generally be considered a reliable instrument for measuring motivation. However, items 4 (I feel a lot of pressure to do well in my English class) and 19 (Korea is a multicultural country) did not correlate positively with the other items, suggesting that these statements were not reliably measuring the target construct. It is recommended that these two items be reformulated or replaced with questions that are more clearly related to the construct of motivation, when using the questionnaire in future studies. Note that the effect of these two items was not large enough to affect the overall positive correlation between the total motivation score and the respective assessment scores.

#### 4.7.2. Reliability of Subgroupings of Questionnaire Items

In order to further explore the reliability of the questionnaire, the researcher wanted to establish to what degree item groupings on the questionnaire related to the different subtypes of motivation. Please refer to Section 5.5.1 for an indication of which statements related to the different categories of motivation. A Cronbach's alpha was calculated to determine the inter-item correlation between individual items within each of the five groupings. A low level of inter-item correlation was found for the category "sociolinguistic variables affecting attitude towards learning English" (3 items;  $\alpha = .15$ ) and the category of "instrumental motivation" (3 items;  $\alpha = 0.16$ ). This suggests that these two categories are problematic in

the sense that the three individual items in each category show limited correlation. Higher levels of inter-item correlation were found for the categories “intrinsic motivation” (5 items;  $\alpha = .50$ ), “classroom motivation” (6 items;  $\alpha = .64$ ) and “integrative motivation” (3 items;  $\alpha = .45$ ). The findings therefore indicate that the six items in “classroom motivation” reliably measure the same construct, with “intrinsic motivation” and “integrative motivation” having acceptable but slightly lower levels of inter-item correlation.

From these results it is clear that although all questionnaire items seem to “tap into” the target construct of motivation, the subgroupings representing the different types of motivation needs to be revisited in future studies, and each item revisited to determine whether these statements were clearly enough formulated. Once these categories have been established, further research could explore how each of these subtypes of motivation contribute to students’ performance in English assessments. As a whole, however, and for the purposes of this study, the questionnaire can be considered a reasonably reliable measure of total motivation.

## CHAPTER 5

### DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

This study made use of a mixed methods approach to explore Korean university students' motivation to learn English and possible factors which influence demotivation. This chapter will present qualitative as well as quantitative findings obtained from two groups of participants, namely (a) teachers who teach English at South Korean universities or language institutes (non L1 as well as L1 English speakers) and (b) Korean university students enrolled in English language courses. Data will be presented in the order in which it relates to the research questions. The qualitative data from the semi-structured teacher interviews relating to their perspectives of the motivational and demotivational factors involved in their students learning English, will be presented and discussed.

#### **5.1. Teachers' Perceptions of Motivational and (De)motivational Factors**

I will now attempt to answer the first specific research question, namely:

***RQ 1: What are the perceptions of English teachers regarding the (de)motivational factors that affect Korean university students' success in the English language classroom?***

This will be done by discussing the main themes and subthemes that were identified during the analysis of the qualitative data from the interviews (see Table 5.1). Direct quotations from the transcripts will be provided at the start of each subsection to illustrate themes in the participants' own words.

**Table 5.1. Main Themes and Subthemes Identified from the Teachers' Interviews**

MAIN THEMES	SUMMARY
1. Orientation a) Personal choice b) Previous experience of learning English c) Attitude	Students' past experience in the English language classroom and with native and non-native language teachers and reasons for studying the language.

<p>2. Language learning environment: power, information and social rules</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Korean educational system and curriculum: Teaching to the test</li> <li>b) Cultural differences</li> <li>c) Teacher characteristics</li> <li>d) Demotivation</li> </ul>	<p>The students' learning environment include the classroom, the current educational system and curriculum, cultural differences, the teacher and the society they live in.</p>
<p>3. External motivation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Compliance with society's standards of success</li> <li>b) Future employment</li> <li>c) Social status</li> <li>d) Multicultural future</li> </ul>	<p>The students' parents and teachers, grades, future jobs and success, exams and pressure from society to learn the language.</p>
<p>4. Internal motivation</p>	<p>The desire to learn the language purely out of interest, or because they like English.</p>
<p>5. Self confidence and self efficacy</p>	<p>Willingness to participate and ask questions, fearing of making a mistake and age differences when they are expected to follow the Confucian hierarchy.</p>

### 5.1.1. Orientation

"The biggest problem is that it's [English: CZ<sup>3</sup>] part of their GPA [grade point average: CZ]. This is something that is not a part of their major but to go back to the engineering students who are some of the worst students we've got. Not as bad as the music students but they are pretty bad. They are great at mathematics. They could get a job at Google based on their mathematical skills but their GPA is going to be pulled down because they do not have an affinity for language learning and that doesn't make sense at all. It should not be part of the

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<sup>3</sup> CZ refers to the researcher Courtney Zach

GPA.”	(Interview 6)
“The psychological baggage often is justified if they [students: CZ] were forced to go into, says, hagwons disguised as babysitting, of course they would feel rejected, jettisoned and may be ignored. If the teachers in these previous institutions, not to sound arrogant, if they didn’t really care, or they didn’t do a good job, or they didn’t understand their clients, the students, then of course there are subjects which maybe are painfully boring like English and mathematics, you know, for a lot of them it’s difficult and then of course because of the pressure, the pressure cooker atmosphere of the education system then they’ve got the exam at the end of their high school. Then of course there’s the pressure to perform once they are in university.”	(Interview 4)
“Maybe the second [reason for learning English: CZ] would be a little bit of a pride issue. Not wanting to seem ignorant in front of others, because English is the international language.”	(Interview 2)
“The problem starts when it gets to middle school and the pressure starts mounting because every Korean parent is aware of the ranking system in universities. They put a lot of pressure on their children to perform. It’s a big problem for the children but if you don’t get A pluses then your parents are angry and if your parents are angry because of one subject then that is when you start hating that subject.”	(Interview 6)

#### 5.1.1.1. Personal Choice

The main reason the interview participants thought Korean students took English classes in university were 1) it is a compulsory subject in the first and second year at university, 2) it is a vehicle to land a good job or become more economically successful, 3) it will provide them the opportunity to get a promotion, or 4) it is expected of them due to the Confucian beliefs of unquestioningly following the authority of their parents or the national progress towards globalization. Interestingly, a majority of the teachers interviewed, supported this policy but not all participants agreed that English should be a compulsory subject. Some participants felt that students should be given a choice as to which language they studied and the class should not affect their overall GPA, or grade point average. It should be noted that students are not

given the choice to study English until after their compulsory classes are completed. Afterward, those who wish to continue or who need it for their major take extra classes. Teachers who instruct upper level English classes mentioned that the numbers decrease significantly, indicating a lack of motivation or interest in further English study for most students.

#### 5.1.1.2. Previous Experience of Learning English

Past experience in the classroom, including exposure to L1 English speakers and L1 Korean teachers and learning environment, can affect a learner's overall success in the language classroom. The nature of the examinations and compulsory classes may negatively affect Korean students. They may become increasingly less motivated to study English and increasingly less satisfied with the language learning experience. For example, the interview participants stated that in the compulsory English classes, students were less motivated than in English classes they were able to choose themselves. Also, in classes that were intended to help students prepare for proficiency tests, it was stated that the students were more interested in passing the test than speaking English fluently.

#### 5.1.1.3. Attitude

The students' attitude toward the learning environment, their interest in other cultures and English speakers, feelings of helplessness caused by low proficiency in mixed level classes and lack of choice to take the language class, affect their success in the language classroom. Students who have a negative attitude towards the L2 language or culture will also negatively impact language acquisition (Ellis, 1991). Students who are interested in the L2 they are learning or who have a positive attitude towards the L2 culture are more likely to be successful in language acquisition (Ellis, 1991). The participants were asked how they thought their students felt about learning English. The responses varied depending on the environment the teachers worked, for example, whether or not students went to a top university or if the class was compulsory. If the students were able to choose the class themselves or if it was a subject for their major, the students' attitude and participation increased but the number of students in the classrooms decreased. According to the participants, the compulsory nature of the English classes negatively affected the students taking their classes. One participant who handed out yearly questionnaires on motivation

found that very few students had an interest in learning English. According to the participant, the students learned English because of “Korean character” and “personality” which comes from the high value and seriousness Koreans place on education. Therefore, they may not like learning English and simply take the classes because it is necessary; however, they do not always have realistic expectations of language acquisition. Students will often ask their instructor to raise their grade if the grade given to them was not what they had expected. The students are usually met with disappointment when dealing with foreign staff because there is a cultural distance between the grading system in Korea and the grading systems in the home countries of the L1 English teachers. In Korea, personal circumstances will sometimes persuade teachers to raise the grades of particular students whereas in western education systems the grades are usually final. This may negatively affect how Korean students perceive L1 English speakers and the L1 culture (Ellis, 1991).

The questionnaire participants were asked if they felt their country was multicultural. This question was asked in order to understand how they perceive their own country and the foreigners residing in Korea (refer to Chapter 3). The participants that were interviewed were also asked whether or not, in their opinion, their students perceived Korea as multicultural. Most of the participants believed that their students did not think Korea is a multicultural country, yet more than half of the students participating in the questionnaire thought that Korea was a multicultural country. The results of the questionnaire will be discussed in more detail in Section (6.2.). Korean students are subject to global influences, especially if they studied or traveled abroad. They are also affected by advertising and consumerism. They watch foreign movies and television and wear global fashions and trends.

### 5.1.2. Language Learning Environment: Power, Information and Social Rules

“Over here, everyone teaches to the test and that is also the result of how teachers are evaluated because if the teacher doesn’t get good results the parents are upset.”  
 (Interview 6)

“Confusion, uncertainty, and that sort of mental stretching is part of the learning process and eventually they get it and they blossom. They thrive in my classes so I think the big

difference is rules but deeper than the rules, it's all about focus of control and empowerment and the dynamic, the relationship between the educator whether it's the government or a teacher and the students and things like cognition. How much can they think, how much can they learn, opposed to how much is controlled and how it is processed or restricted to them.”

(Interview 4)

“I just think a lot of people who have designed syllabi or courses or worked on the whole educational system in Korea don't understand the educational process.”

(Interview 4)

“Sometimes they think communication is important. Sometimes they say writing is important. But these days we use integrated methodology to teach English.”

(Interview 7)

#### 5.1.2.1. Korean Educational System and Curriculum: Teaching to the Test

According to the interview participants, there are major differences between the western educational system and the Korean educational system, and these are created by power, information and social rules. The current learning environment in Korea still follows the traditional Confucian beliefs of hierarchy, for example, deference to those who are older, hold a higher rank or power and the classrooms are teacher-centered. The students are viewed as empty vessels to be filled up with knowledge by the expert: the teacher. In the sixteenth century, Lao-tzu said, “He who knows does not speak, he who speaks does not know.” (Nisbett, 2004: 211) For example, if a teacher asks a question, the students are apprehensive to answer questions, even if they know the answer. Asian students sometimes feel, even when studying abroad, that they do not benefit from speaking up nor does verbalization indicate their understanding of the material (Nisbett, 2004).

The Korean educational system does not teach initiative or independence and focuses almost entirely on academic subjects. Rote learning is often used in English classrooms to prepare students for tests; there is an emphasis on grammar and reading, and there is what some teachers described as an obsession with grades, ranking and test scores. Some of the teachers who were interviewed stated that Korean students are not taught how to debate or express their opinion, trained to be independent or creative, taught critical thinking skills, nor taught effective communication skills. As for teachers, they have the responsibility of imparting

knowledge and measuring that knowledge in terms of test scores in preparation for the university entrance exam.

The Korean educational system strictly decides what students can learn and how they are expected to think, by basing learning strategies on formulaic rules which influences the way students think throughout schooling and into adulthood. This results in the students wanting to be accurate when using English and fearful of making mistakes. Most of the teachers interviewed for this study were disappointed with both the Korean educational system and nature of the English classes. This is partially due to the educational policies frequently changing since the emergence of English education. There is an emphasis on grammar and reading in secondary schools and both the students and teachers must satisfy the English requirements in order for the students to be eligible for university entrance. At the fundamental level there is very little emphasis on practical use, little understanding of the language and lack of critical thinking in the English education curriculum.

#### 5.1.2.2. Cultural Differences

According to Ellis (1991) the greater the cultural difference between the L1 and L2, the more difficult it is to learn the L2 (Ellis, 1991). The first time that most students experience student-centered classrooms are with L1 English teachers. Past classroom experience is for the most part, teacher-centered. The unspoken rule of absorbing the knowledge that the teacher shares can be problematic for teachers if students prefer not to share their lack of understanding. This acknowledgement is necessary in the learning process to correct mistakes in language and progress towards fluency. More than half of the interview participants believe that: the amount of money put into the English educational system does not improve results on worldwide proficiency tests, there is not enough emphasis on speaking, many universities and *hagwons* see the students as customers rather than students, the current system is always changing and does not focus on all four communication skills (i.e. reading, writing, listening, speaking), the class sizes are too big and the cultural and educational gaps between L1 English teachers and students often causes misunderstandings.

#### 5.1.2.3. Teacher Characteristics

The qualifications of the L1 English teachers interviewed ranged from having some

qualifications and little experience to being highly qualified and/or having many years of experience in the English language classroom. The interview participants expressed that a majority of L1 English teachers in Korea are under qualified and inexperienced which negatively impacts the students who are learning from them. The L1 English teachers that are hired are not always qualified as teachers, trained as EFL teachers nor have prior teaching experience before entering Korea (McFarlene, 2012), although this only applies to non-accredited schools, *hagwons* and institutes up to the high school level. L1 Korean teachers also only need a bachelor's degree to work in *hagwons* but in government run schools they need to be qualified, whereas the L1 English teachers are hired without qualifications. Qualified L1 Korean teachers also continue training throughout their careers and on average teach fewer hours per week than the average American teacher, for instance. The government is slowly attempting to hire more professional teachers, however, there are a limited number of people living in Korea who qualify. Therefore, even though rules are implemented, they are not strictly followed.

Maley (1992) observed the division between L1 English teachers and non L1 English teachers was rapidly becoming a major issue:

In most non-English countries there is an uneasy division between local non-native speaker teachers, often with long training, experience, and expertise, who often work in the state system, and native-speaker expatriate teachers, often with minimal qualifications and experience and only a temporary loyalty to their country of sojourn, and who usually work in the private sector. This division is complicated by the fact that many non-native speaker teachers, though excellent practitioners, are often locked into a non-innovatory bureaucratic system, while native-speakers, though often less well trained, are freer to experiment and change. The division is further exacerbated by preconceived notions of the innate value of native-speaker teachers and the correspondingly higher salaries they are often able to command.

(Maley, 1992:97-98)

Unqualified teachers are often unaware of the needs of the students from lack of training and often do not stay at their place of employment for more than one of two years nor do they

attempt to learn Korean. Only two of the six L1 English teachers interviewed held a Masters degree at the start of their employment at their respective universities (two more obtained them later) whereas all seven of the L1 Korean teachers held a Masters degree or higher.

#### 5.1.2.4. Class Composition

Class sizes at Korean universities vary from two to 60 students per class. The compulsory classes generally have more students while the specialized classes have fewer students, unless the class specializes in test preparation. *Hagwon* class sizes also range from two to 25 students. Larger class sizes may make it more difficult for teachers to remember the names each student, persuade all students to participate and reduces the types of activities teachers are able to do in the classroom. A large class size is also better suited for teacher-centered or lecture style classes rather than student-centered.

The social hierarchy can affect participation in the classrooms if there is an age gap among the students. One interview participant mentioned that in universities and *hagwons*, age gap affected participation, especially with classes held at companies. To solve the problem, there would be a ‘no age’ policy during the class. Another participant stated that an age gap definitely affected participation with the younger students but that older students generally were not affected.

#### 5.1.2.5. Demotivation

Factors that prevent learners from being motivated or that demotivate them can affect their language acquisition. They include low grades, unmotivated teachers, ineffective learning environments, mixed level classrooms, fear of speaking, outside pressure and helplessness in choosing the class. In universities, grading curves only allow teachers to give out a certain number of As, Bs, Cs and so forth. One interview participant mentioned that the implemented grading curve and midterm grades reduced motivation in their students. At one participant’s university, the bell curve forced the teachers to give D’s because the overall average GPA was too high and the ranking at the university was lowered because of it. The participant stated that the curve negatively affected their students’ motivation after each midterm depending on the grades they received.

Students also come to class with different needs and different backgrounds of learning experience. The interview participants pointed out that it is difficult to meet the needs of every student which causes low-ability students to think they will not be able to acquire good grades, no matter how much effort they put into learning and that their low grades are already set from the beginning. The students, therefore, have to fight to receive high marks, even if they are doing well in the class. If there is a level disparity, the students may feel that they will never do well in class if they have a low level of proficiency. At the same time, students with a higher level of proficiency may feel that the class is too easy, and not try hard. Three participants that were interviewed said that level disparity hurt motivation in their classrooms and the students lost interest in the class once this was established. In the first and second year of university English classes, there are mixed-level students in one classroom with only one teacher. This makes it difficult for both the students and for the teachers who have to manage and accommodate a class of students from different learning backgrounds and experience.

The fear of making a mistake in front of peers may also affect students' motivation, if they are used to teacher-centered classrooms and their teachers force them to participate in class. The new environment would be daunting for students who just entered university, and even more so if they have a low level of proficiency in English. Many teachers notice their students are fearful of how their peers perceive them, they focus on accuracy over fluency, are fearful of making a mistake and fearful of speaking in general. According to the interview participants, students do not always think the class is important if it is not essential for their major, when they are forced to take the course because they are required to and not because they are interested in learning English or it has no real relevance to their daily lives, especially if they are already overworked from the courses in their majors. Some participants also mentioned that TOEIC preparation can also hurt student motivation because the materials and textbooks are not interesting, especially if students are only interested in their scores or if they have no motivation to learn English in general.

### 5.1.3. External Motivation

"I think TOEIC is an infliction in this country because it doesn't really teach genuine English but a lot of them think well I've got to get a good TOEIC score and therefore I've also got to

get a good English language score in whichever measure whether it's a quiz or exam. So I think their goals are very quantitative and in some ways quite superficial because as you know often when it comes to an exam, say grammar or vocabulary, they will cram the day before the exam and they are sort of these empty vessels to be filled but they promptly forget it."

(Interview 4)

"Parents are obsessed with test scores mainly because they consider that the ultimate goal of English education is to enable students to obtain an acceptable grade on the university entrance exam."

(Interview 10)

"By the time you come to university in Korea, things are different from western countries, you've already been graded. Your university tells everyone in the world who you are. So if you are in a second tier university, that's who you are. You are second tier, you are not going to marry into a first tier and so on. All of that is based on the original scoring system here in high school. Which is why parents are so freaked out about it"

(Interview 6)

#### 5.1.3.1. Compliance with Society's Standards of Success

External social factors that affect a learner's motivation include the students' parents, grades, future jobs and success, exams and pressure from society to learn the language. Eastern educators hold the belief that anyone can learn a subject under the right circumstances and with enough effort (Nisbett, 2004). Parents pressure their children to work hard towards learning English by putting in the effort to learn the material and passing tests. The Education Ministry, teachers, and parents are concerned about external factors such as scores, grades and number rankings and other quantitative measures. Many students are concerned with these factors as well and have other very specific goals when they are learning English. They need to get a certain mark to get the specific major they want, to keep a scholarship or to get one in the future. One participant mentioned that in the past, only English majors and students wanting to go abroad enrolled in English classes but now everyone needs it as a qualification.

#### 5.1.3.2. Future Employment

Most of the interview participants thought that English would help students get a better job and also stated that if participation was part of their final grade, most students would do their best to contribute to the class. The students are also required to pass standardized English tests either in or after university to be considered for employment at large and medium sized companies and to succeed in those companies but overall, it is not always used or needed once they are hired. On a global scale, however, learning English helps the country participate in the world economy and it gives Koreans access to the rest of the world because very few people outside of Korea speak Korean.

#### 5.1.3.3. Social Status

On the questionnaire, more than half of the participants agreed that having proficiency in English would make them appear more sophisticated and intelligent. Older Koreans are not shy to approach strangers in order to practice speaking English. They will say hello to foreigners they see on the street and attempt to make conversations especially in the presence of their peers. One interview participant mentioned that it is fashionable these days to date and marry foreigners, however, it is not always accepted or encouraged within the families.

#### 5.1.3.4. Multicultural Future

Outside of the English language classrooms, numerically speaking, there are very few L1 English speakers living in the country. There are many migrants living in Korea now, however, English is not the first language of the majority. Many come from Southeast Asia and China as brides of farmers, as workers who are mainly hired by factories or as exchange students. There are also government sponsored television broadcasts on multiculturalism, which concentrate mainly on the question of migrant wives in rural Korea. One interview participant stated that their students felt they see a lot more foreign faces, and to them, that equates to multiculturalism. The students who have studied abroad rarely see Korea as a multicultural country, however, it depends on the experience of the individual. None of the L1 English speaking participants thought that Korea was a multicultural country; however, they all believed that in a few generations it could change. Their reasons for this include the perception that immigrants are not yet accepted as part of the society. Also, they felt that

although Korea might have superficial elements of multiculturalism, it is not multicultural in the same sense that other countries understand multiculturalism. Four Korean interview participants said that Korea was not a multicultural country yet but that it will be eventually. One in particular, who is married to a foreigner, stated that Koreans still view themselves as one nation and one family. Less than half of the Korean interview participants said that they believed Korea is a multicultural country. However, they added that most Korean people still feel that foreigners are only visitors and mixed children often get ostracized by their “pure blooded” peers.

#### 5.1.4. Internal Motivation

“But I think they are motivated to speak anyway because they are competent enough and generally interested enough that they have something they want to say.”

(Interview 1)

The desire to learn English does not reflect the motivation most students possess to learn the language nor do they possess the satisfaction of learning of the sake of learning (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). Internally motivated students have an interest in learning purely from liking a particular subject. Most of the interview participants said that only a small percentage of their students are motivated by internal factors and those that did have a desire to learn English sometimes had unrealistic means of achieving their goals of becoming fluent. Students attending the top universities had the highest motivation and, according to the participants, particularly those majoring in English or those who were able to choose their classes. According to the interview participants, students who lived abroad were more willing to interact and ask questions, and were the least afraid to give their opinions. Participants mentioned that once students were more familiar with a student-centered environment they became more motivated to give their opinion and participate in class. Some participants mentioned that their students were motivated to learn English because they want to learn to speak more fluently, develop their language skills, were interested in learning English to achieve their goals or to stimulate their interests. However, the activities that generated the most interest in the classes were generally conversations, free-talking and games or other activities that did not involve much effort but, according to the participants, students would sincerely try to answer questions when asked.

### 5.1.5. Self Confidence and Self Efficacy

“I have some classes where if I ask a question every single student will have their hand up. I have a student. She’ll just start making noises because she wants to speak so badly. So, yeah, they are almost fighting to talk because I give points, participation points for speaking.”

(Interview 1)

Factors that can lead to success or failure in language proficiency include how much confidence students have in their own ability and the power to attain the desired goal. If the student believes that their goals of learning the language can be reached they may be more persistent in attaining their goals as well as devote more effort towards reaching them (Tremblay & Gardener, 1995). If a student is confident about participating or asks questions in class, they are more likely to reach their language learning goals. If however, they are hindered by shyness, lack of confidence in ability, or feel unable to participate due to societal rules, they are less likely to reach their goals. One participant commented that a lot of the students were fearful of making mistakes at first which has to do with what is known in Korean as *nunchi* and *chemyeon*. *Nunchi* is the ability to understand other people’s moods, similar to emotional intelligence, however, it is also important to understand the social status in regards to the person with whom they are interacting. *Chemyeon* is to save face or maintain respectability in social situations. It is important for Koreans to keep a positive self image in front of others and they often care what other people or countries think of them. In this regard, Koreans often avoid giving their opinions or accept blame for their actions. These factors can cause problems in the language classroom where students are afraid to speak up in class. This is not always the case, however, as the teachers conveyed that the students tried to participate, especially if it was part of their final grade. The classes with the most participation also had no age gap, because it was either part of their grade or they became more accustomed to the class. One interview participant stated that if a student took the role of leader it motivated the rest of the class to be more active. In that particular classroom, there was an age gap, because the class was an adult *hagwon*, and the class leader was usually an older student who did not follow the social conventions.

## 5.2. The Attitudes of Korean University Students Toward Learning English

I will now attempt to answer the second specific research question, namely:

**RQ 2:** *What are the attitudes of Korean university students toward learning English?*

In order to address the question, quantitative findings from the questionnaire will be presented and discussed according to the five categories of motivation, as outlined in Section 4.6.1. Table 5.2 below presents these broad categories and their corresponding items in the questionnaire.

**Table 5.2. Themes of Items on the Questionnaire**

Theme	Number of item(s) in questionnaire relating to the particular theme
Classroom motivation	6, 8, 10, 13, 15, 16
Sociolinguistic variables affecting attitude towards learning English	1, 4, 19
Integrative motivation	12, 17, 18
Instrumental motivation	2, 3, 20
Intrinsic motivation	5, 7, 9, 11, 14

### 5.2.1. Classroom Motivation

The questions on classroom motivation relate to students' opinions of their teachers, participation and whether or not they have a positive view of the classroom setting where they study English. Based on the students' answers, the majority had a positive view of their classroom environment and a positive view of their teachers.

**Table 5.3. Responses to Questions Regarding Classroom Motivation**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I think my English teacher is well educated.	59 (26.8%)	150 (68.2%)	10 (4.5%)	1 (0.5%)
I ask questions during my English class.	15 (6.9%)	84 (38.7%)	100 (46.1%)	18 (8.3%)
I think my current class is a good place to learn English.	27 (12.2%)	164 (74.2%)	27 (12.2%)	3 (1.4%)
I think that my English class is interesting.	36 (16.4%)	151 (68.6%)	31 (14.1%)	2 (0.9%)
The teacher and materials are too difficult to understand.	9 (4.1%)	41 (18.6%)	144 (65.2%)	27 (12.2%)
I don't want to speak English if I will make a mistake in front of my peers.	15 (6.8%)	84 (38%)	96 (43.3%)	26 (11.8%)

In cultures influenced by Confucian principles, teachers are held in high regard in society. The majority of participants (95%) agreed or strongly agreed that their teacher was well educated (see Table 5.3 above). The high number of positive responses on this item seems to reflect this sentiment, even though in practice not all teachers in South Korea are necessarily well educated. Most teachers in universities must now have a master's degree, although this has only been implemented in the last few years. Some university teachers, including an interview participant, never received their bachelor's degree. Other participants had degrees in fields other than languages or teaching<sup>4</sup>

A slightly higher percentage of students said that they were unwilling to answer questions in their classes (54%). When Korean students take their first class taught by a native foreign teacher, many have trouble adapting to the environment and following non-Confucian discipline (Martin, 2003). The teachers who were interviewed expressed difficulty encouraging their students to participate even though slightly more than half of the students reported that they were willing to speak in class..

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<sup>4</sup> Ten years ago, when I first came to Korea, I was able to get my first job with a bachelor's degree and had no previous teaching experience. My teacher training consisted of watching videos of other teachers in their classrooms a day before my classes started.

The majority of the participants (86%) believed that their current class was a good place to learn English and 85% thought that their class was interesting. However, half of the interview participants believed most of their students did not find the class interesting, although the other half believed that the majority of their students were interested in learning English. These participants were also the teachers who, overall, had a more positive opinion of teaching in the Korean classrooms.

Only 25% of students agreed or strongly agreed that the teacher and materials were too difficult to understand. Comparing the two languages, perhaps no two are more dissimilar than the Korean and English languages (Robinson, 2003), as expressed in the following two quotations: “Korean and English are so different in structure as well as in their sound system that not only should word order be converted, subjects turned into objects, nouns into verbs, but also in most cases the wording itself must be changed” (Park, 1979:13). “Differences between the syntax of English and Korean include: word order, prepositions, articles, use of subject deletion and agreement in responses to Yes/No questions” (Richards, 2003:214). There are other major differences in phonology and socio-cultural vocabulary usage and expressions of politeness (Richards, 2003). However, this difference between the two languages seems to have been problematic for a minority of the participants in this study.

Less than half of the participants (44%) stated that they did not want to speak English in front of their peers if there was a chance they would make a mistake which is slightly lower to the percentage of participants (54%) who also said they were not willing at ask questions during their English class. The reasons for these findings could be from the students’ past experience of teacher-centered classrooms, shyness in a new environment, lack of interaction with foreigners or few chances to speak English outside the classroom.

### 5.2.2. Sociolinguistic Variables Affecting Attitude Towards Learning English

These questions relate to the students’ willingness to learn English, how they perceive people who speak English and whether or not they believe they live in a multicultural environment.

**Table 5.4. Responses to Questions Regarding Sociolinguistic Variables Affecting Attitude Towards Learning English**

Statement in questionnaire	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
A Korean person who speaks English is sophisticated and intelligent.	45 (20.4%)	131 (59.3%)	41 (18.6%)	4 (1.8%)
I feel a lot of pressure to do well in my English class.	23 (10.5%)	119 (54.1%)	66 (30%)	12 (5.5%)
Korea is a multicultural country.	26 (11.8%)	141 (64.1%)	45 (20.5%)	8 (3.6%)

The attitude a learner has about a language, the way that they perceive foreigners and their ability to utilize the language, can all affect how well or poorly the L2 is learned. The questionnaire participants believe that speaking English projects them as being more sophisticated or intelligent, as evidenced by the fact that 80% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed with this statement (see Table 5.4 above).

Over half of the participants in the study (65%), said they felt pressure to do well in their English classes. Most of the L1 Korean interview participants expressed that student motivation correlated with the pressure to pass standardized tests.

A majority of participants stated that they rarely use English in their daily lives, however, 76% agreed or strongly agreed that Korea is a multicultural country (see Table 5.4 above).

### 5.2.3. Integrative Motivation

These questions relate to the students' willingness and/or ability to integrate into the English environment. The responses that the students gave showed a positive attitude toward English speakers and the English language, however a major factor against their ability to integrate was the surrounding environment.

**Table 5.5. Responses to Questions Regarding Integrative Motivation**

Statement in questionnaire	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I don't have many chances to practice English outside the classroom.	47 (21.4%)	114 (51.8%)	51 (23.2%)	8 (3.6%)
I do not want to learn about English speakers or other cultures where English is spoken.	2 (0.9%)	20 (9.1%)	122 (55.5%)	76 (34.5%)
I will not use English after I finish university or my hagwon.	2 (0.9%)	8 (3.6%)	108 (48.9%)	103 (46.6%)

The participants (74%) agreed or strongly agreed that they do not have many chances to practice English outside of the language classroom because there is a lack of foreigners with whom to interact. However, the majority of the participants seem to have a positive attitude towards English speakers and their cultures. As shown in Table 5.5 above, 90% of the students disagreed or strongly disagreed that they did not want to learn about other cultures.

More than 90% of the students who completed the questionnaire also believe that they will use English after they finish university. Flatterly (2007) states that English serves a variety of functions in Korean society, especially for international trade, and has been given special emphasis because it is an international language. English is used for specific purposes, such as business and trade but very few Koreans interact with native speakers on a daily basis.

#### 5.2.4. Instrumental Motivation

These questions relate to outside factors that affect students' motives for learning English. Most students agreed that English plays a vital role in having a successful future, however many students stated that the external factors had to do with their own goals rather than parental and cultural pressures.

**Table 5.6. Responses to Questions Regarding Instrumental Motivation**

Statement in questionnaire	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
In order to get a high paying job or promotion, a Korean person must speak English.	118 (53.4%)	96 (43.4%)	6 (2.7%)	1 (0.5%)
Getting a high grade on the English tests is more important than speaking English fluently.	5 (2.3%)	40 (18.1%)	153 (69.2%)	23 (10.4%)
I am learning English because my parents want me to study.	1 (0.5%)	13 (5.8%)	116 (52.4%)	91 (41.1%)

The results of this study highlight students' perceptions of the importance of English for their future careers, as the majority of the students (96%) said that they needed English in order to get a good job or promotion. Also, from the point of view of the teachers, most believed that their students were studying English for later job prospects. The findings on questions relating to instrumental motivation are shown in Table 5.6.

The grades that the students receive in their university English classes affect their overall GPA and whether or not they receive or keep scholarships. Only 20% of the students agreed or strongly agreed that receiving a high grade was more important than speaking English fluently. This contrasted with the views of the interview participants, who believed that the students were more concerned with high grades.

The Confucian values in Korea are ingrained in many aspects of daily life and ways of thinking. In school, young Koreans are taught that there is only one way to succeed in life. However, 94% of the participants in this study said that they are not learning English to please their parents.

### 5.2.5. Intrinsic Motivation

These questions relate to factors that intrinsically motivate the students to learn English. From the responses, most students agreed that motivation is an important factor, appeared motivated to learn and enjoyed speaking English.

**Table 5.7. Responses to Questions Regarding Intrinsic Motivation**

Statement in questionnaire	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Memorization is the best way to learn a second language.	16 (7.2%)	76 (34.4%)	107 (48.4%)	22 (10%)
I enjoy speaking English, even if I cannot speak perfectly.	26 (11.8%)	93 (42.3%)	85 (38.6%)	16 (7.3%)
Motivation is the most important factor to learn a second language.	80 (36.4%)	135 (61.4%)	4 (1.8%)	1 (0.5%)
I don't have enough time to study English in order to become fluent.	6 (2.7%)	48 (21.7%)	146 (66.1%)	21 (9.5%)
I am not very motivated to speak English fluently.	3 (1.4%)	14 (6.4%)	131 (59.5%)	72 (32.7%)

Korean students are aware that memorization is not the best way to learn a language. Table 5.7 above shows that 58% of the participants disagree or strongly disagree that memorization is the best way to learn a language.

Just over half of the participants (54%) said they enjoy speaking English even if they could not speak perfectly. This correlated to the answers given in Table 5.7 above, where 44% of students stated that they did not want to speak English in front of their peers if there was a chance they would make a mistake. The students' responses on the questionnaire indicated that they were aware motivation is an important factor when learning a language and 97% strongly agreed or agreed that they needed to be motivated in order to learn English. Most students (75%) in this study believed they had enough time in their schedules to study English, which suggests that this was not a factor that prevented them from learning. The participants (92%) believed they were motivated to learn, in contrast to the interview

participants who believed that less than half of their students were motivated to learn English.

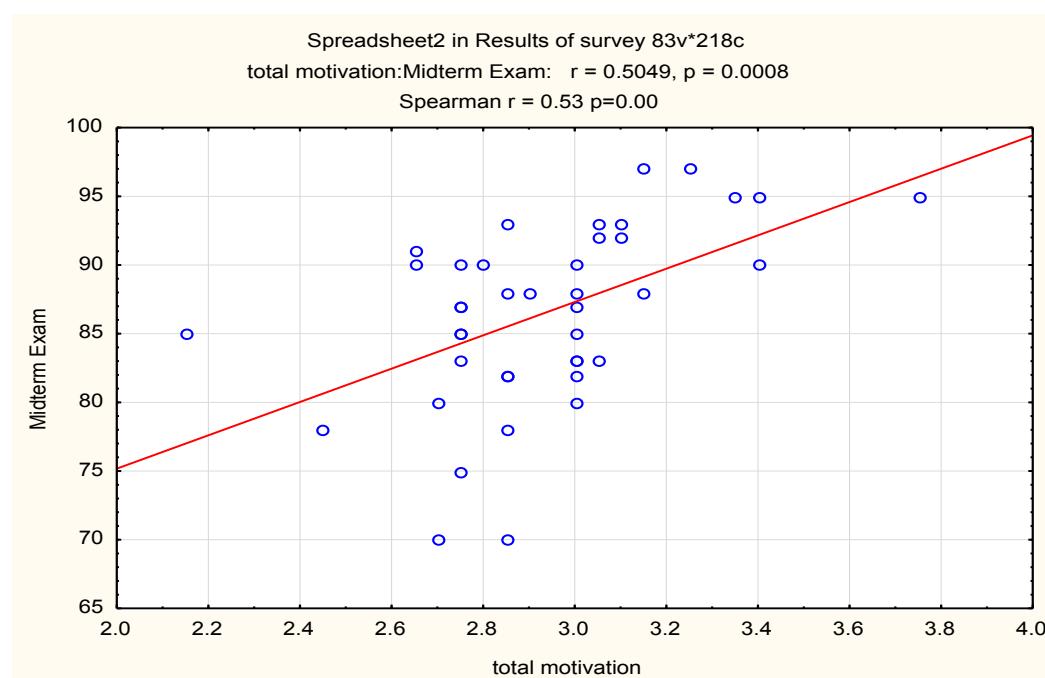
### 5.3. Relationship Between Motivation and English Proficiency in Korean Students

I will now present findings relating to the third specific research question, namely:

*RQ 3: Is there is a correlation between motivation and English proficiency in Korean university students?*

In order to address the question, total motivation scores were compared with the midterms, final exams and final grades of a subsample of student participants to determine whether there was a correlation between students' self-reported motivation and their actual English proficiency. As discussed in Chapter 4, these grades represent the performance on English tests of a subsample of students who completed the questionnaire, and measured at three points during the academic semester. The total motivation score, in turn, is a composite measure that represents students' overall motivation for learning English.

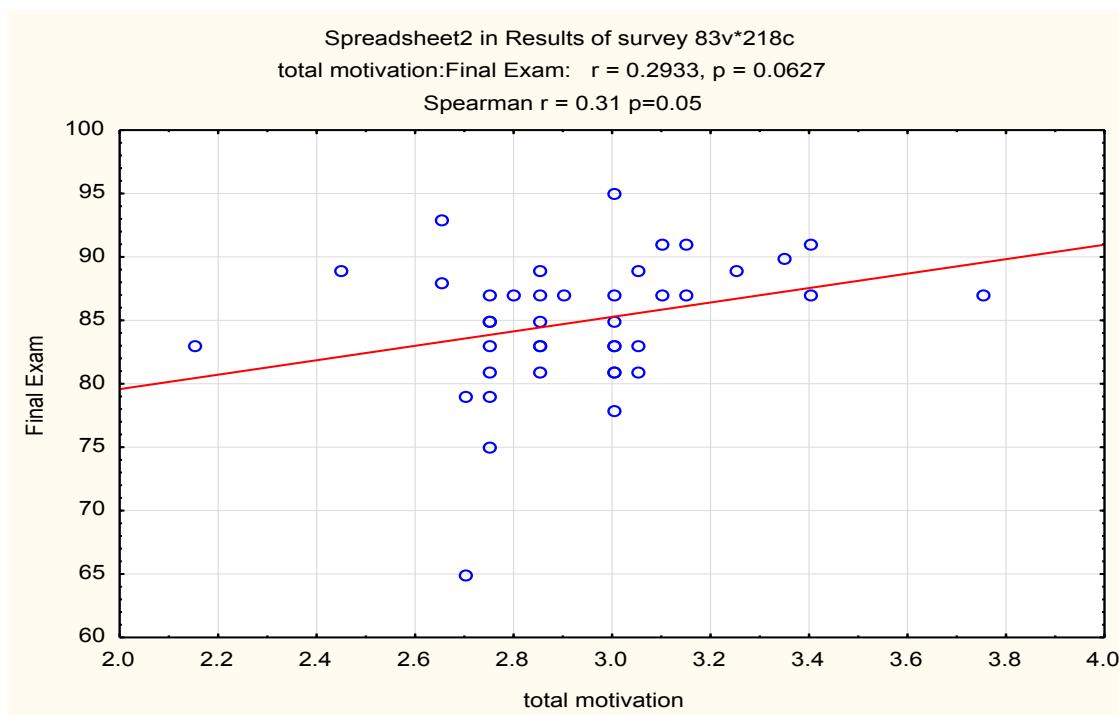
#### 5.3.1 Total Motivation vs. Performance on the Midterm Exam



**Figure 5.1. Correlation Between Total Motivation Scores and Midterm Exam Results**

There is a modest positive correlation between the total motivation score and performance on the midterm exam ( $r = 0.53$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). In other words, the students who stated on the questionnaire that they were more motivated to learn English did significantly better on their midterm exams, whereas those who showed less motivation on the questionnaire performed more poorly on the exam. This is illustrated in Figure 5.1 above. This finding seems to indicate that motivation can have a measurable influence on actual English performance relatively early on in the semester. Since a correlation between the two factors does not necessarily indicate causation, another possible explanation for the findings could also be that students who had more of an affinity for language learning (and therefore fared well in the assessments) were also more motivated as a result of their performance.

### 5.3.2 Total Motivation vs. Performance on the Final Exam

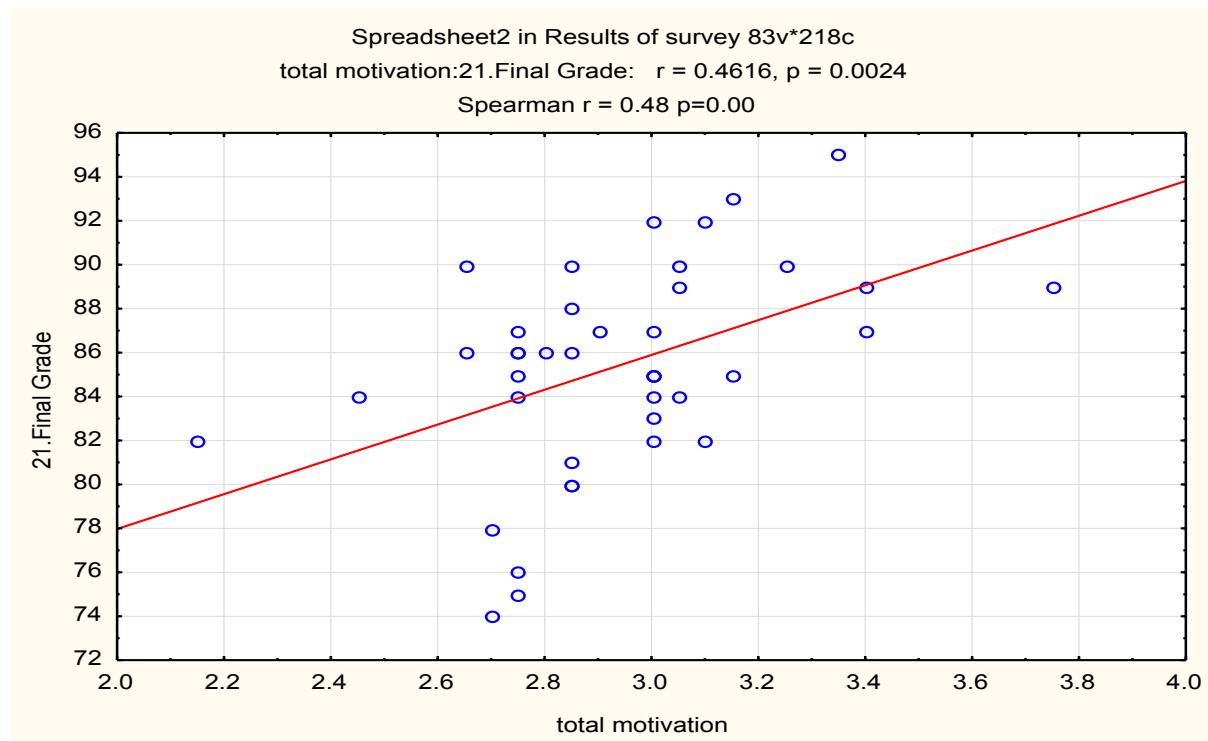


**Figure 5.2. Correlation Between Total Motivation Scores and Final Exam Results**

In Figure 5.2 above, there is a weak positive correlation between total motivation and

performance on the final exam ( $r_s = 0.31$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). In other words, more motivated participants were somewhat more likely to perform well on the final English exam. However, there is a smaller gap between the final grades of those participants who were more motivated than for those participants who were less motivated. This relatively weak correlation might indicate that initial motivation to study English had less effect on students' performance at the end of the semester than on the midterm exam.

### 5.3.3. Total Motivation vs. Final Grade



**Figure 5.3. Correlation Between Total Motivation Scores and Final Grades**

The results, as shown in Figure 5.3, indicate that there is a moderate positive correlation between the total motivation score and final grade ( $r_s = 0.48$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). As with the correlations reported for the midterm and final exam, this finding similarly indicates that students' English scores tend to increase if they report having higher motivation (and vice versa). Note that the final grades also reflect students' class attendance during the semester, which might partly explain why the correlation here is slightly stronger than for the final scores.



## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the motivational and demotivational factors in the EFL classroom in Korea through the use of a novel questionnaire, teacher interviews and the correlation between tests scores and motivation. A novel feature of this study is that it features both quantitative questionnaire data from Korean students and qualitative interview data from L1 English and L1 Korean speaking teachers. For this purpose, the study set out to compare to compare self-reported motivation from the questionnaire participants and the orientation of motivation from the interview participants based on the observed behavior in the classrooms. The study aimed to fill the gap in current research in Korea by utilizing the observations of both L1 English and L1 Korean teachers in an EFL environment. The findings suggest that there was a significant positive correlation between students' self-reported motivation and their performance on midterms, final exams and final grades. Motivation, according to Gardner's (2010) theory, includes effort, want or will (cognition) and task-enjoyment (affect). Students who had the highest motivation attended the top universities, were English majors or chose to take the English classes. Questionnaire participants who stated they were highly motivated, performed better on all three scores that were analyzed. The qualitative findings from the interviews and the questionnaire results also suggest that instrumental and extrinsic factors clearly play a significant role in Korean students' motivation to learn English. Gardner's (2006) also found that instrumental motivation was a strong indicator and correlated with higher test scores in SLA (Gardner, 2006). As stated before, this corresponds with Wen (1997) and Chen, Warden and Chang (2005), who found that Chinese learners were more instrumentally motivated to learn English because of its international status as a lingua franca and the importance of the education Chinese culture (as cited in Duverney, 2009). English has a similar significance in Korea and most interview participants believed that a majority of Korean students were instrumentally motivated to learning English. Yashima's (2002) study also found that Japanese learners had an interest and willingness to learn English as the global lingua franca no longer belongs to specific groups of L1 English speakers (Dewaele, 2013). A learner's motivation, as Ushioda (2001) states is linked to various dimensions and is most likely a combination of motivational factors. External rewards, such as grades and praise can increase intrinsic motivation,

depending on how they affect self-efficacy, according to Pintrich and Schunk (1996). Baker (2007) found that bilingual speakers use the L2 to be regarded as more prestigious or to gain acceptance in certain environments. The interview participants stated that the most significant external factors that contributed to Korean students' motivation included high test scores or grades, jobs, promotions, appearance of sophistication and intelligence, and deference to societal standards. On the other hand, Gardner (2007) argues that effort does not equate to motivation. In other words, the effort expended is not actual motivation if learning the language is to please a parent or teacher. Most of the participants (94%) in this study said that they were not learning English to please their parents. It is possible that the answers given by the participants, again might be what they believe is the "correct" answer rather than their honest opinion. Or, alternatively, that the studies and reports up to date have been biased towards a more negative version of reality. We can only really find out the "truth" by using other methods of data collection such as in-depth individual or focus group interviews with students. In her 2013 study, Gavran noted that "[S]tudents' academic life is influenced by family compulsions and the actions of peers" which is instrumental in nature from external pressure (Gavran, 2013: 70). Most of the teachers participating in the present study said that only a small percentage of their students were intrinsically motivated and that these students often had unrealistic means of achieving their goals. The majority of questionnaire participants had a positive view of their classroom environment, especially regarding their teachers. Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) state that the learning environment, including teachers, materials, etc., has an effect on language acquisition and whether or not learners have a positive or negative experience. The results also indicate that a sizeable proportion of students taking part in the questionnaire were willing to ask questions in class. Korean classroom settings are teacher-centered where students rely on their teachers for guidance, authority and knowledge (Martin, 2003). In this kind of setting, the students listen and take notes but are not necessarily expected to ask questions or actively participate nor are they taught how to be self-reliant learners. However, it is possible that the students chose what they considered to be the most socially-acceptable response, even though they were told that their responses would be confidential. Baker (1992) found that "attitude may be as important an outcome as achievement if further development or interest in a subject is sought." (Baker, 1992: 12) It was stated by many of the L1 English interview participants that students' professed positive attitudes towards learning English and their language-related behaviors often do not match. Many claim "interest" in the language and, when pushed to explain, the

learners tend to state that “it is necessary” to study English for their future careers or for study abroad. Another possibility for the difference in opinions that the interview participants and questionnaire participants could be from *response bias*, or choosing answers that they believed the researcher and research institute want to hear, or, as stated above, the societal opinion of what they believe they are supposed to think about learning English. It’s also possible that students who were more motivated to learn English, were generally more willing to take part in academic activities such as this research study. In other words, those students who were not motivated to learn English were also less motivated to set aside time in their day to take part in a research study on English. In terms of using English outside the language classroom, the majority of students’ responses suggest that they were aware of the presence of other cultural influences on the country, even though the country is still relatively homogeneous with regard to its cultural identity. In reality, non-Koreans are expected to conform to Korean culture and there continues to be discrimination towards non-Koreans (Kim, 2010) in the workplace, with legal issues and amongst other issues. Because the society is rooted in national identity and homogeneity, Koreans may find multiculturalism to be a threat (Kim, 2010, Yoon, Song & Bae, 2008). There is still prejudice against foreigners and Korea is still closed to foreigners even though it is slowly trying to embrace *damunhwa* (multicultural) or a multicultural and multiethnic society (Makino, 2013). “Koreans cast all foreigners as strangers (*nam*) whose “strangeness” or “otherness” does not allow for smooth social interaction, which creates an exclusive and “closed” society to which foreigners find it difficult to adapt” (Kim, 2010:124). However, limited conclusions can be drawn on the basis of the data from the questionnaires about whether students view multiculturalism as a threat or an opportunity, or something in-between. The participants were also aware that there are few chances for them to interact with foreigners and practice English outside of the language classroom. “The term ‘multicultural’ in the societal sense indicates the coexistence of people from many different backgrounds and ethnicities” (Kramsch, 1998: 82). Korea was the last Asian country to open its doors to the West and has since continued to try and maintain its cultural continuity (Kim, 2010). There are currently 1,501,761 foreigners residing in Korea according to the Ministry of Justice and the Immigration Department. The foreign population makes up only three percent of the population or about one foreigner to every one hundred Koreans. English is used for specific purposes, such as business and trade but very few Koreans interact with native speakers on a daily basis. In terms of bilingualism, Baker (2007) states that “the social environment where the two languages function is crucial to

understanding bilingual usage and the role relationships where they are used.” (Baker, 2007; 5) Moreover, understanding culture is an important part of learning a foreign language. Often, this aspect is left out of language teaching if the teacher has no knowledge of the culture where the language is spoken. According to Ushida (2005), L2 learners who have positive attitudes toward the L2 culture and L2 speakers will learn the language more effectively than those with negative attitudes or no knowledge whatsoever. It is important for the students to be interested in the cultures where the language is spoken or about the people who speak it. Although the language does not belong only to the native speakers, it is still an important aspect to learn in order to deal with social aspects of the target language such as the customs, values and manners (Kim, 2002).

#### 6.1 Unique Contribution of this Study to the Existing Body of Knowledge

In the last decade, the majority of studies on motivation in EFL in Korea were conducted and written in Korean (Thornton, 2009). This limits the accessibility of results to the audience. There have been even fewer studies that have examined the resources and beliefs of the L1 English teachers in Korea. They play an important role in motivating students in their classroom and helping them understand the culture and people of the target language. As mentioned earlier, this study uses a mixed methods approach and looks at the research question from the perspectives of teachers and students, making it unique to the body of work currently available.

#### 6.2 Limitations

One limitation of the present study was that the questionnaire was not translated back into English from Korean to ensure that the two versions corresponded as closely as possible in content. Another limitation of the study was that a pilot study was not first conducted to determine the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. This would have made it possible to adapt, change or remove some of the more problematic questionnaire items before proceeding to actual data collection. With regard to the interviews, not all were conducted face to face due to practical reasons, which could have prevented the interviewees from giving more information than they would have if done in person. Since the questions were asked in English rather than in their native language, there is the possibility that there was

miscommunication regarding what was being asked. Finally, the knowledge or *pedagogic competence* of the teachers (Peacock, 2009), limits the study because not all of the teachers interviewed had an education background in SLA and therefore made it difficult to differentiate knowledge and belief (Thornton, 2009).

### 6.3 Recommendations for Further Research

Recommendations for further studies to address existent gaps in research include more comprehensive studies of compulsory English that begin in middle and high school and end in the first year of university, to find out if demotivation is continuous or fluctuates throughout schooling. More qualitative studies from the teachers' perspectives, both L1 English and Korean, would be helpful to determine what factors hinder students' ability to learn. Also, more in-depth research on the topic from the students' perspectives is necessary to gain a greater understanding of their needs in the English language classroom. Adaptations and continued development is needed for the novel questionnaire used in this study, in order to gain in depth information on the participants and/or information that has not yet been obtained. As mentioned earlier, items 4 (I feel a lot of pressure to do well in my English class) and 19 (Korea is a multicultural country) did not reliably measure the target construct. Therefore, questions that are more clearly related to the construct of motivation should be used in future studies that use questionnaires to obtain information.

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## Appendix A:

### Questionnaire (English)

1. A Korean person who speaks English is sophisticated and intelligent.

I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
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2. In order to get a high paying job or promotion, a Korean person must speak English.

I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
------------------	---------	------------	---------------------

3. Getting a high grade on the English tests is more important than speaking English fluently.

I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
------------------	---------	------------	---------------------

4. I feel a lot of pressure to do well in my English class.

I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
------------------	---------	------------	---------------------

5. Memorization is the best way to learn a second language.

I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
------------------	---------	------------	---------------------

6. I think that my English teacher is well educated.

I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
------------------	---------	------------	---------------------

7. I enjoy speaking English, even if I cannot speak perfectly.

I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
------------------	---------	------------	---------------------

8. I ask questions during my English class.

I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
------------------	---------	------------	---------------------

9. I don't have enough time to study English in order to become fluent.

I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
------------------	---------	------------	---------------------

10. I think my current class is a good place to learn English.

I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
------------------	---------	------------	---------------------

11. Motivation is the most important factor to learn a second language.

I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
------------------	---------	------------	---------------------

12. I don't have many chances to practice English outside the classroom.

I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
------------------	---------	------------	---------------------

13. I think that my English class is interesting.

I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
------------------	---------	------------	---------------------

14. I am not very motivated to speak English fluently.

I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
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15. The teacher and materials are too difficult to understand

I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
------------------	---------	------------	---------------------

16. I don't want to speak English if I will make a mistake in front of my peers.

I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
------------------	---------	------------	---------------------

17. I do not want to learn about English speakers or other cultures where English is spoken.

I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
------------------	---------	------------	---------------------

18. I will not use English after I finish university or my hagwon.

I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
------------------	---------	------------	---------------------

19. Korea is a multicultural country.

I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
------------------	---------	------------	---------------------

20. I am learning English because my parents want me to study.

I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
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## Appendix B:

### Questionnaire (Korean)

1. 영어를 사용하는 한국인은 세련되고 영리해 보인다.  
 매우 그렇다.      그렇다.      그렇지 않다.      매우 그렇지 않다.
  
2. 보수가 높은 직업이나 직장내에서 진급되기 위해서는 영어를 꼭 해야 한다.  
 매우 그렇다.      그렇다.      그렇지 않다.      매우 그렇지 않다.
  
3. 영어시험에서 높은 점수를 얻는 것이 영어를 유창하게 하는 것 보다 더 중요하다.  
 매우 그렇다.      그렇다.      그렇지 않다.      매우 그렇지 않다.
  
4. 영어수업에 잘 해야 하는 것이 나에게 큰 부담이다.  
 매우 그렇다.      그렇다.      그렇지 않다.      매우 그렇지 않다.
  
5. 암기는 제 2 외국어를 배우기 위한 최고의 방법이다.  
 매우 그렇다.      그렇다.      그렇지 않다.      매우 그렇지 않다.
  
6. 내 영어교사는 교육을 잘 받은 사람이라 생각한다.  
 매우 그렇다.      그렇다.      그렇지 않다.      매우 그렇지 않다.
  
7. 완벽하게 말 할 수는 없지만 나는 영어로 말 하는 것을 즐긴다.  
 매우 그렇다.      그렇다.      그렇지 않다.      매우 그렇지 않다.
  
8. 나는 영어 수업시간에 질문을 한다.  
 매우 그렇다.      그렇다.      그렇지 않다.      매우 그렇지 않다.
  
9. 나는 영어를 유창하게 하기 위한 영어공부를 할 시간이 없다.  
 매우 그렇다.      그렇다.      그렇지 않다.      매우 그렇지 않다.
  
10. 현재 내가 듣고 있는 영어수업이 영어를 배우기에 좋은 곳 인 것 같다.  
 매우 그렇다.      그렇다.      그렇지 않다.      매우 그렇지 않다.
  
11. 스스로 동기부여를 하는것이 제 2 외국어를 배우기에 가장 중요한 요소이다.  
 매우 그렇다.      그렇다.      그렇지 않다.      매우 그렇지 않다.
  
12. 교실 밖에서 영어를 연습할 기회가 많이 없다.  
 매우 그렇다.      그렇다.      그렇지 않다.      매우 그렇지 않다.

13. 내 영어 수업이 흥미롭다고 생각한다.  
매우 그렇다.      그렇다.      그렇지 않다.      매우 그렇지 않다.
14. 영어를 유창하게 하는 것에 별로 흥미가 없다.  
매우 그렇다.      그렇다.      그렇지 않다.      매우 그렇지 않다.
15. 영어교사와 영어 자료들이 이해하기 너무 어렵다.  
매우 그렇다.      그렇다.      그렇지 않다.      매우 그렇지 않다.
16. 만약 친구들 앞에서 실수 할 것이라면 영어로 말하고 싶지 않다.  
매우 그렇다.      그렇다.      그렇지 않다.      매우 그렇지 않다.
17. 나는 영어가 사용되는 곳의 문화나 사람들에 대해 알고 싶지 않다.  
매우 그렇다.      그렇다.      그렇지 않다.      매우 그렇지 않다.
18. 나는 대학교 졸업 후에 영어를 사용하지 않을 것이다.  
매우 그렇다.      그렇다.      그렇지 않다.      매우 그렇지 않다.
19. 한국은 다문화 나라이다.  
매우 그렇다.      그렇다.      그렇지 않다.      매우 그렇지 않다.
20. 내가 영어를 공부하는 이유는 부모님이 원해서이다.  
매우 그렇다.      그렇다.      그렇지 않다.      매우 그렇지 않다.

## **Appendix C:**

### **Interview Schedule (English)**

Q: Where were you born?

Q: Where did you grow up?

Q: Which languages can you speak?

Q: What do you think is the biggest difference between the Western education system and the education system in Korea?

Q: How important do you think it is for Korean students to learn English?

Q: Do you think there is a good system in place for the way English is taught in Korean classrooms?

Q: In your classroom, do you believe that the majority of your students have an interest in learning English?

Q: In your classroom, what is the biggest factor that prevents your students from being motivated to learn English?

Q: What would you say is the main goal students have when they are studying English?

Q: Do your students try to participate in class and seem willing to answer questions?

Q: If there was an age gap in your class, did it affect participation?

Q: In your English classes, how many students do you think take learning English very seriously?

Q: Do you think English should be a compulsory subject in Korean universities?

Q: How many students are in your classes?

Q: Do you think that Korea is a multicultural society?

Q: Do you think that your students perceive it as a multicultural society?