

Beyond the English Divide in South Korea

INTRODUCTION

While South Korea traditionally has been considered a country with relatively strong monolingualism, since the 80s, the situation is rapidly changing. Nowadays, English is seen as an important key for success, and the lack of English skills is considered an important handicap in the competitive Korean society (Park, 2009). The importance given to English education has been fostered by the Korean government, which pushed its citizens to be more proficient in English to gain international recognition, more openness, competitiveness, and economic stability in the global economy (e.g., Kim, 2000; Park, 2009). For example, through the 6th National Curricula, English education was implemented obligatorily in 1995 for middle schools and in 1996 for high schools, and all the curricula was changed moving from a pedagogical approach focused on grammatical knowledge and accuracy towards focusing on communicative language use and fluency (e.g., Kwon, 2000; Shin, 2007). In addition, since 1997 (in the 7th National Curricula), mandatory English language education has been implemented beginning in the third grade in elementary school (Jung & Norton 2002; Lee, 2004; Song, 2013).

The emphasis on English education for Korea's development has not only affected primary/secondary education, but it is also reflected in its growing importance in higher education and the job market. Since the late 90s, most universities require students to take an English test as part of their Korean SAT (entrance exam). Moreover, as a graduation requirement, students need to achieve a certain score on standardized English tests such as TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) or TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication), produced and administered by the Educational Testing Service of the U.S., for graduation – and those minimum scores have risen over the years (Park, 2009). Furthermore, English skills have become an important criterion for decisions regarding employment in the white-collar job market, such that even jobs that normally would not require English knowledge still test candidates on their skills during the interview process (Choi, 2002; McTague, 1990; Song, 2011) and even during their career (Choi, 2002). In fact, over 90% of workers in large, private manufacturing and exporting industries are continuously required to take English tests throughout their working career (Choi, 2002).

Thus, having high English proficiency offers significant advantages in entering top universities, landing high-paying jobs, and in future promotions, thereby widening the economic disparity prospects between the rich who can boost their English training and the poor in the country who cannot. Since the introduction of English as an elementary school subject, the private English education market has continued growing, with parents trying to give their children the best chances of having a good future. In recent years, English private after-school academies suppose an estimated \$3.3 billion market (Park & Abelmann, 2004), and the competition for entering English-only kindergartens (*yeongeo yuchiwon*) with native-speaker staff (often twice or three times more expensive than regular kindergartens) is also thriving (Park, 2009).

This is an example of how economic conditions closely intersect with the issue of English in Korea (Park & Abelmann, 2004; Shin, 2016). Those members of the Korean society who have more resources can send their children to costly English-only kindergartens or abroad, which in turn provide the offspring with better chances at securing better jobs (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). This socioeconomic division between the rich and the poor in the society and its relation to the knowledge of English is known as the

“English divide¹”. Nonprofit corporations such as Teach North Korean Refugees (TNKR <http://teachnorthkoreanrefugees.org/>), Helping Others Prosper through English (HOPE http://alwayshope.or.kr/aboutus_eng.php), and Beyond the English Divide Inc (<https://beyondtheenglishdivide.com/>, which forms part of Beyond Inc.) have emerged in an attempt to provide opportunities to foster English acquisition for children from households with limited resources. These nonprofits aim for a level playing field, attempting to ensure equal opportunities by helping children from underprivileged, low-income families (including children from orphanages) find ways to learn and speak English at no extra cost to the parents.

In this book chapter, the importance of knowing English in the Korean society and the role of nonprofit corporations to fight this socioeconomic division will be discussed (with special emphasis on the work done by Beyond the English Divide Inc). First, the chapter provides an overview of the economic situation in South Korea, drawing data from Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, <https://data.oecd.org/>) and Statistics Korea (<http://kostat.go.kr/portal/eng/index.action>). By discussing some economic parameters, such as the real gross domestic product (GDP) or the country’s average expenditure in education, this section provides direct evidence of the English divide concept described earlier. Next, the chapter outlines the work done by the South Korean government (specifically in the city of Seoul) to provide more egalitarian access to after-school education for all the members of the society. This section reviews the information provided by the council for the Education, Women & Children (Seoul Metropolitan Government, 2019), as well as discussing the work done by the above-mentioned nonprofit organizations in the country to provide underprivileged families with free English education for their offspring. The chapter ends by using information gathered through extensive personal interviews with Junhaeng (Broce) Lee, CEO of Beyond the English Divide Inc, as well as other administrators, to outline the role and type of work done by this organization to tackle the issue posed by this so-called English divide, as an example of the work performed by nonprofit organizations to address the root causes of poverty and low-income mobility, rather than simply identifying the effects.

The main purpose of this chapter, then, is to provide a qualitative description of what “English divide” means in the Korean society and to highlight some of the work that is done, mostly by nonprofit organizations such as Beyond the English Divide, Inc., to put an end to this vicious cycle of poverty.

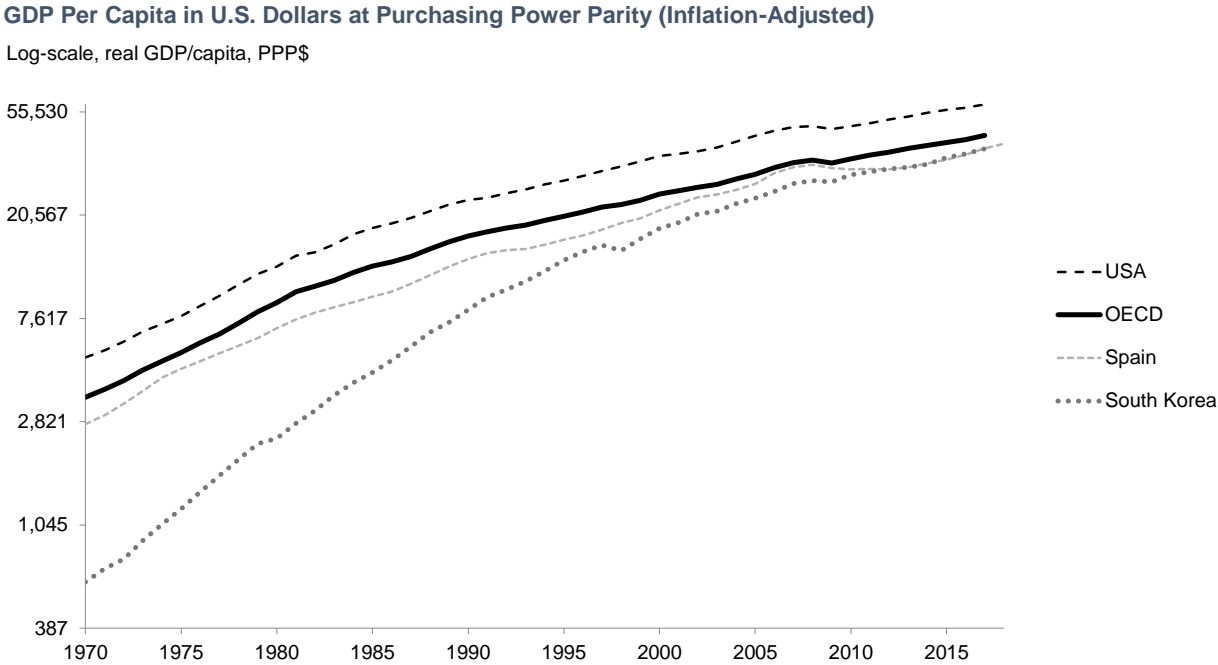
BACKGROUND: SOUTH KOREA IN PERSPECTIVE

Understanding the importance of English in South Korea requires understanding the socioeconomic situation of the country with respect to other countries in similar economic conditions. In this section, the current situation of South Korea is cast in the light of a global perspective, including discussion of some key background aspects. First, the real gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of three countries of the OECD is compared for the international reader to understand the economic position of South Korea within the global market. Second, a more detailed perspective of South Korea’s economy is provided, by discussing the share of households by income size. While the GDP per capita findings provide an average perspective of the country, this data shows the distribution of the income within the society. Third, the chapter continues explaining the socioeconomic situation of South Korea by comparing the disposable income inequality index and the number of generations needed to overcome poverty, two economic measures employed in the literature to understand the difference in a society between the rich and the poor and how hard it would be for the poorer members to overcome their poverty. However, the principal aim of this section is to provide qualitative data to show how the English divide impacts South Korea. For that reason, the section ends with a discussion on the average monthly private education expenditures per student and the share of students by size of private education expenditures’ data, which both indicate how much families spend on their offspring’s private education and how this distribution is bimodal, with some families spending a significant amount of money, while others cannot afford the expenditure.

South Korea has been a member of the OECD since 1996. The OECD is an intergovernmental economic organization based in Paris (France) which was founded in 1961 to stimulate economic progress and world trade among its members (which currently includes 36 mostly advanced countries). Periodically, the OECD publishes different economic statistics, such as the members' index of poverty and inequality. Using these data, together with some of the economic data reported by the Statistics Korea, a central organization for statistics under the Ministry of Strategy and Finance, allows us to understand the economic impact of studying English in South Korea.

Since the 70s, the earliest data point reported for Korea in the OECD database, the Korean standard of living has steadily improved. Figure 1 plots the GDP per capita of Spain, South Korea, the United States (U.S.) and the average value of all the OECD member countries. The GDP of a country represents the expenditure on final goods and services minus imports, all measured in U.S. dollars at current prices. Figure 1 provides the GDP data per capita at purchasing power parity (PPP), which allows us to properly compare differences in living standards between nations. Apart from the OECD average, the U.S. has been included as well, because the U.S. has been the economic benchmark to match post-WWII. Spain is also reported due to the similarities between South Korea and Spain in terms of population (approximately 51.5 and 46.7 million, respectively) and in terms of real GDP per capita (as seen in Figure 1). In this Figure, the y-axis represents the log-scaled real GDP per capita in US dollars, representing the large range of values in equal intervals increased by a factor of the base of the logarithm. The x-axis shows values for each individual year from 1970 to 2018. Thus, Figure 1 visually represents how the economy of the three countries (as well as the average for the OECD countries) has changed over time in approximately 50 years. This Figure allows comparison of the current economic situation of South Korea and to understand the evolution of the country over time.

Figure 1. GDP per capita in U.S. dollars at purchasing Power Parity (Inflation-Adjusted) for South Korea, Spain, the United States and the average of the OECD countries (data downloaded and modified from OECD, 2019a)



NOTE: Data are internationally comparable across countries for each year and compiled according to the 2008 System of National Accounts (SNA).

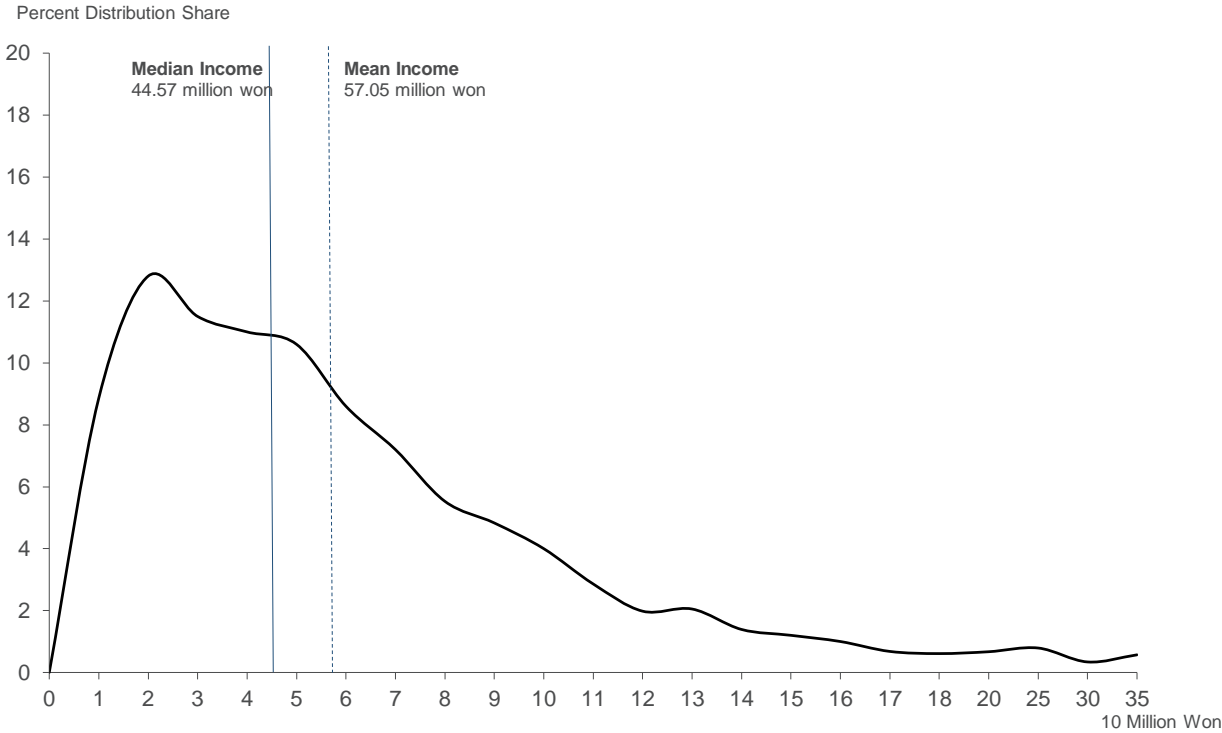
Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2019a)

Figure 1 clearly shows how both South Korea and Spain’s economies have continued growing over the last 50 years yet still remain below the average of the other OECD countries. However, while this steady growth in real GDP per capita can be seen clearly in Figure 1, it is important to recognize that the improvement in living standards is not equally shared among all members of the population. It is also worth noting that Korea’s progress toward equality with the most advanced economies—in particular with respect to the U.S.—was rather fast, but it slowed noticeably after the 1997 Asian financial crisis (Yamazawa, 1998). In turn, Korea’s economic engine of growth largely followed in sync with the recovery of the U.S. after the 2008 global financial recession while other OECD economies (like Spain) went through a lost decade with barely no improvement in real GDP per capita.

Figure 2 represents the share of households by income size, as reported by the Statistics Korea Organization. In this Figure, the y-axis represents the percentage of distribution share for South Korean households, while the x-axis shows the amount of income in Korean won. The Figure also represents the median (midpoint in the distribution) and the mean (average) income in 2017, indicating at which point the distribution is more frequent, that is, which income is more frequently reported among South Korean households. The closer these lines are to the left of the distribution, the lower the income of the average household is in South Korea.

Figure 2. South Korean distribution of yearly salaries as reported in the Survey of Household Finances and Living Conditions (SFLC) in 2017

Household's income Distribution in South Korea (2017)



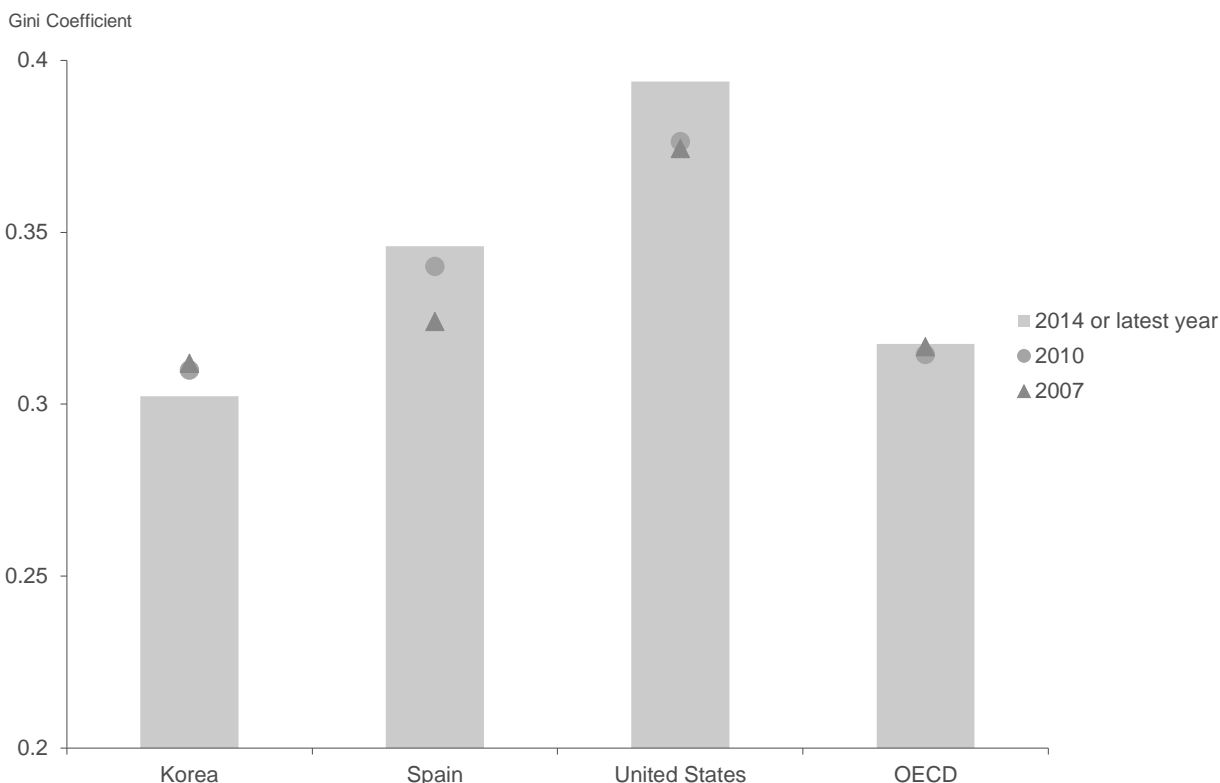
Source: Statistics Korea Organization (2018)

In Figure 2, it can easily be observed that households with an annual income between 10 and 30 million won (roughly 8,600 to 25,900 U.S. dollars) occupies the highest share at 24.5% of the population. This means that about a quarter of the population lives with less than 2,000 U.S. dollars per month, a salary that they need to invest on groceries, transportation, rent and, hopefully, the education (including private education) of the members of the family. Note that all the conversions of won to U.S. dollars have been made following the current exchange rate (March, 2019). Figure 1, thus, shows the improving living standards in South Korea over the last 50 years. However, as shown in Figure 2, not everybody has equal share in the country's prosperity. While the majority of the society lives with less than 2,000 U.S. dollars a month, there is still a large population with a much larger income. That is, there is a clear division between the rich and the poor in the society. This income inequality can also be measured by other means. When comparing the disposable income inequality among the three countries compared in this section (South Korea, Spain, the U.S., as well as for the average of the OECD countries), a conventional measure of income inequality is the Gini coefficient, as represented in Figure 3.

Figure 3, thus, represents the Gini coefficient of disposable income inequality in 2014, 2010 and 2007 for the three countries compared in this section, as well as for the average of the OECD countries. The Gini coefficient is one of the most commonly used measures of inequality, as it compares (in this case) how equal is the distribution of the income among households, that is, whether all households receive the same or comparable income. The values of this coefficient range from 0 in the case of "perfect equality" (each person receives the same income) and 1 in the case of "perfect inequality" (all income goes to the person with the highest income). Thus, this index represents the distance between the actual distribution of income and the equal distribution of the income among the population of each country. The y-axis in Figure 3 represents the Gini coefficient calculated for 2014, 2010, and 2007. Thus, the lower the bars in the graph, the more equal the distribution of the income among households is in each country.

Figure 3. Gini coefficient of disposable income inequality in 2014, 2010 and 2007, considering the total population of each country (OECD, 2019b)

Gini coefficient of disposable income inequality in 2014 (or latest year), 2010 and 2007, total population



Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2019b)

As can be seen in Figure 3, while Korea's inequality is less pronounced than that found in either Spain or the U.S. (and it is the only country in which the trend of this coefficient is improving with time, that is, the bar is lower for 2014 as compared to the previous years), it still supposes a fairly high amount of inequality between the poor and the rich -- the value has yet to reach 0 before an egalitarian distribution has been achieved. Therefore, this difference between the poor and the rich may still have a direct impact on the future of underprivileged children.

However, it needs to be recognized that today's inequality—the differences between the rich and the poor—also has the potential to impact the future prospects of today's underprivileged children. One way to understand how challenging the current environment is for the descendants of these poor families is with a measure of the expected number of generations that would take for them to reach the average income level of the country. In the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2018), *A Broken Social Elevator? How to Promote Social Mobility*, the OECD published the results of a study on the expected number of generations that it would take for the offspring from a family at the bottom 10% income of the countries to reach the mean disposable income of their country. In their report, the OECD explores factors such as income, earnings, health, education, or occupation to make predictions regarding the inequality measures such as the number of generations needed to reach the average income level of each country. As the results of this study indicate, on average, it would take 4.5 generations for a poor child in the OECD region to reach the average income level of the country, while in South Korea, it would take 5 generations. The income inequality and the low income (and social) mobility revealed by Figure 3, as well as these numbers, illustrate the uphill battle of today's underprivileged children in

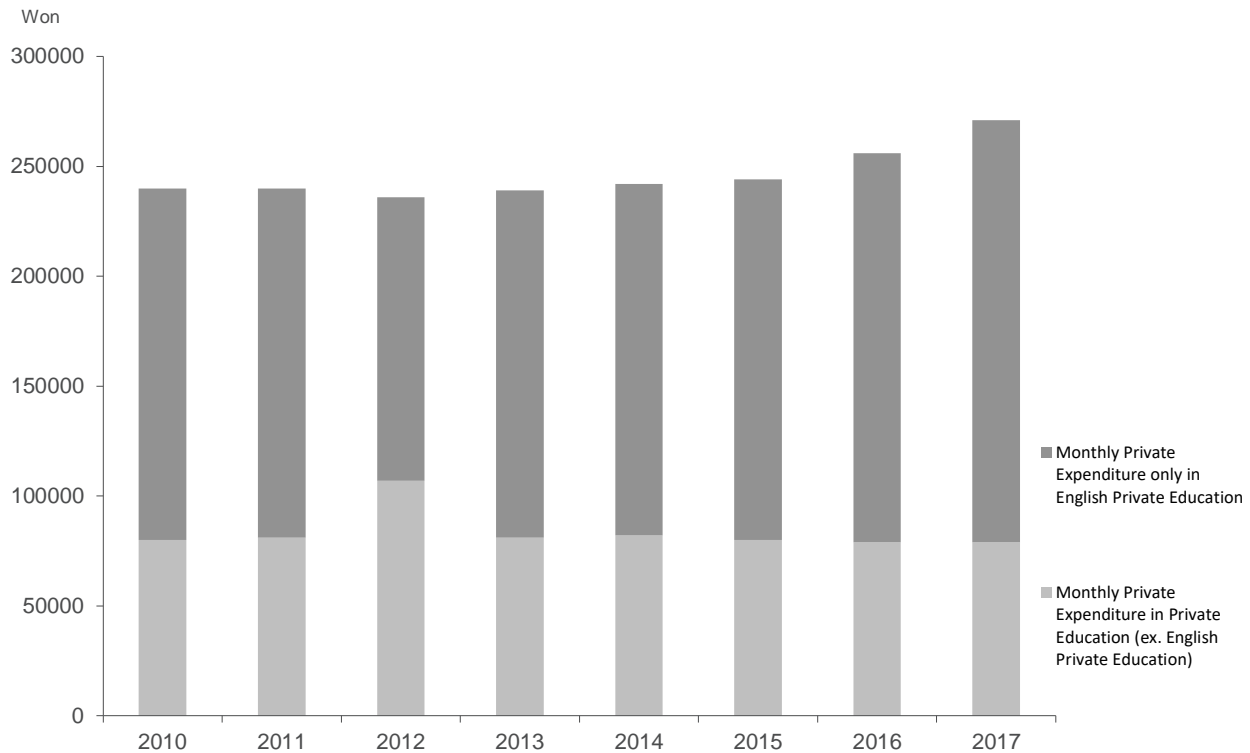
Korea. Hence, the inaccessibility to private education, particularly to English language private education, is destined to limit this generation of children.

As can be observed in the data presented so far, the poorer families in South Korea face the challenge of surviving in a competitive society with very limited resources to invest in the education of their offspring. That is, while being on the poorer side of income distribution, they still need to invest as much as other families to give their children an opportunity in life. Their limitations are more evident when the average private expenditure in private education is studied (only considering after school programs) by households across countries and how sizeable it is in South Korea. As noted in the introduction, South Korea is a country that places significant importance in education and, in recent years, the emphasis has been on developing a pool of skilled workers that make the country more integrated with the rest of the world—internationally recognized, open, competitive, and economically stable. In such an environment, the lack of knowledge of English is seen as a handicap in the competitive Korean society (Park, 2009).

It is not surprising, then, that Korean families are investing as much as they can to increase their children's chances to enter into a prestigious university and find a good job after completing their degree. As can be seen in Figure 4, Korean families have been steadily investing in their children's after school private education, with sizeable amounts devoted to private English language education². The general private education expenditures include different types of courses, such as mathematics, sciences, Korean language, or music. In Figure 4, the y-axis represents the average monthly investment in private education in Korean won, while the x-axis represents the last 7 years. Importantly, this graph provides two types of information, that is, the total expenditure on private education (represented by the total bars) and the amount invested only in English education (represented by the darker grey in the bars). Thus, the lower the bars, the less investment has been spent on that given year on private education (and, correspondingly, on English private education).

Figure 4. Average monthly private education expenditures per student in won as reported in the Survey of Household Finances and Living Conditions (SFHC) in 2018

Monthly Private Expenditure on Education in South Korea

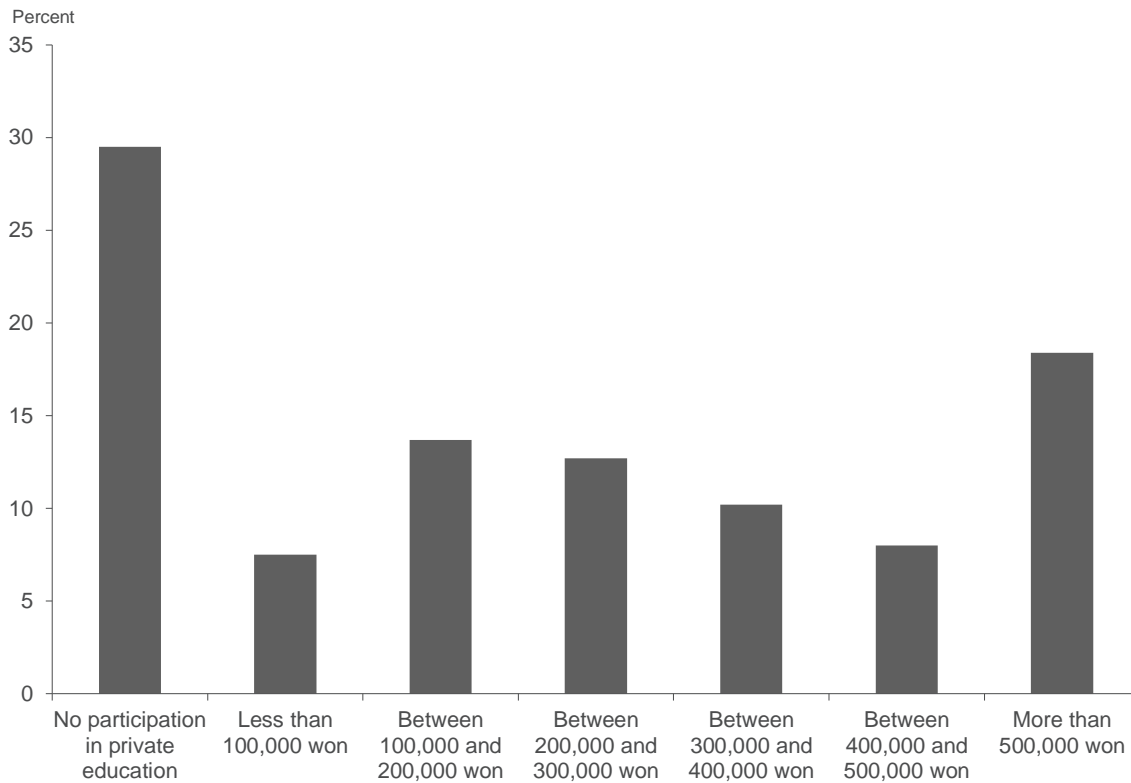


Source: Statistics Korea Organization (2018)

Putting in perspective the information illustrated in Figure 4, it is possible to observe that the average expenditure in 2017 on private education was 271,000 won monthly. For a family with two children, this would equal to 542,000 won each month. If this were one of the families that only receive a monthly salary of approximately 830,000 won, on the lower end of the salary scale, this would mean that they had to invest more than half of their salary only in after-school private education for their two children. As can be seen in the distribution of salaries, Figure 2, households with an annual income between 10 and 30 million won form the majority of the population. This means that these families are receiving a monthly salary ranging from of 830,000 and 2,500,000 won. For these specific families, spending 542,000 won each month on private education for their two children may be a burden that they cannot take, as they would still need to invest money in other, perhaps more urgent, matters, such as health, groceries, and housing. To better understand whether these predictions are true (that is, whether it is true that poorer families may not be able to invest as much on private education as other families), it is important to look at how much households invest in private education, represented in Figure 5. This Figure shows in the y-axis the percentage of the population that spends the different amounts of money in private education represented in the x-axis. All of these data represented the families with children in primary, middle, and high school.

Figure 5. Share of students by size of private education expenditures as reported in the Survey of Household Finances and Living Conditions (SFLC) in 2018

Distribution of Monthly Private Expenditure in Private Education



Source: Statistics Korea Organization (2018)

When observing Figure 5, its bimodal distribution is evident, that is, this Figure clearly shows how the distribution of private expenditures in English education varies considerably in two groups. On the one hand, there is a great share of the population who cannot participate in private education (almost 30% of the children in primary, middle, and high school). On the other hand, there is a substantial fraction of the population who are spending more than 500,000 won (almost twice the mean) on private English language education (18.4%). The data are even more revealing when exploring in detail how much money this top 18.4% of the population is spending on private education. In 2015 alone, South Korean parents spent 3.2 trillion won (2.9 billion U.S. dollars) on private education programs for their preschool children, which means that they spend at least 2,000 U.S. dollars on private kindergartens (Yeo, 2015). Poor families simply cannot afford within their budget to support two school age children with the same expending level afforded by the families that are spending the most.

Thus, Figure 5 is a clear visual representation of the issue addressed by the English Divide in South Korea discussed in the introduction of this chapter. Those members of the Korean society who have more resources can spend more on their children’s private education, which in turn provides them with better opportunities to secure better living situations and jobs in the future (as argued by Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, among others). In this sense, both parents and children are locked in a poverty trap related to education (particularly English) because the poorer students do have less resources to learn English

properly and, thus, less chances to secure admission to a prestigious university and/or to find adequate employment down the road.

While the South Korean government is working towards developing programs to end this inequalitarian situation (which will be outlined in the next section), nonprofit organizations and corporations have emerged to level the playing field by creating opportunities to reverse the educational gap by helping children from underprivileged, low-income families (including children from orphanages) find ways to access after school education alternatives. This includes nonprofit corporations such as Beyond the English Divide, which help these children learn and speak English at no extra cost for their parents.

THE EMERGENCE OF NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS IN SOUTH KOREA

Nonprofit Organizations in South Korea

The South Korean government is aware of the existence of a poverty gap in the country and is working towards implementing measures to put an end to this situation. The city of Seoul is an example of these measures. The Seoul Metropolitan Government has established the Council for the Education, Women & Children (Seoul Metropolitan Government, 2019), with the aim to create a more egalitarian society, focusing on the groups that may be more at risk presently. This council addresses some of the issues these groups face, by providing them with the necessary information and by developing programs to try to put an end to this poverty cycle.

When looking specifically at the types of programs the Council for the Education, Women & Children is developing to help underprivileged children, these projects can be divided into five main categories: (1) projects for improving competence; (2) projects for improving counseling and protection; (3) programs for school dropouts; (4) child welfare; and (5) children's rights. The projects designed for improving competence aim to induce healthy activities, such as creative experience programs and diverse activity infrastructures, for the youth to help them grow into productive citizens (for example, by expanding youth facilities and improving facility operations). Programs designed to improve the counseling system for children and teens aim to resolve the problems that children and teens may face and to create a preventative and protective environment for high-risk teens, such as runaway teenagers (for example, by supporting underprivileged teenagers studying in life long educational centers with late-night snacks and cultural events). The programs for school dropouts and child welfare aim to investigate the reasons some children drop out of school, attempting to find a solution for them, including executing child welfare policies for children who are not properly cared for by their parents. Finally, the Seoul Metropolitan Government is implementing a comprehensive human rights plan and increasing both children and teens' participations in related policies that affect them directly (Seoul Metropolitan Government, 2019).

Not only the government, but also other public and private institutions such as universities, are working towards creating programs to put an end to the division between the poor and the rich in the country (Seoul Metropolitan Government, 2019). Most universities in the country offer volunteering programs that their students can join to gain experience (for example helping in the countryside, with the elderly, or in hospitals; for an example, see the programs offered by Sungkyunkwan University:

<https://www.skku.edu/eng/CampusLife/activities/SocialVolunteer.do>). There are even some universities that do have a requirement for graduation that requires students to complete a certain number of volunteer hours (Seoul Metropolitan Government, 2019). Thus, volunteering work and helping those in need seems to be inherent in the society. While all these measures do have a direct, positive impact on underprivileged children, none of them seems to be directly addressing the English divide problem described in the introductory sections. Until this moment, this gap has been filled with the work of nonprofit organizations such as Teach North Korean Refugees (TNKR), Helping Others Prosper through English (HOPE), and Beyond the English Divide (BtED). Each one of these organizations, however, does have a slightly different approach to work towards ending the English divide in South Korea. On the one

hand, TNKR focuses on teaching English to adult North Korean Refugees, although recently the program has started a program to teach younger refugees also. On the other hand, HOPE and Beyond the English divide (which will be described in more detail in the following section) try to address the problem of unequal access to English language and other educational opportunities for children in Seoul, specifically those from orphanages or from low-income or disadvantaged families.³

While these three organizations make an enormous effort to end the English Divide in South Korea with their limited resources, they face some difficult challenges to overcome at times. In the next section, the work done by Beyond the English Divide is highlighted as an example of how South Korea is working towards ending this injustice and the type of challenges that these nonprofit organizations face in their daily work.

The Beyond the English Divide nonprofit corporation as a solution to a problem

While the economy in South Korea has continued increasing steadily over the last 50 years, as discussed in the Introductory sections, the economic disparity between the rich and the poor in the society continues to be striking. One aspect where this difference is particularly notable relies on the investment in private education, particularly in the case of English private education. While this aspect would not be so critical in certain contexts, it is in the case of South Korea, a country that places great importance on education, such that children with better knowledge of English can access better universities which, in turn, lead them to find better jobs later in life (Choi, 2002; McTague, 1990; Park, 2009; Song, 2011). Thus, not knowing English is considered a handicap in the community, also referred to as English divide. The South Korean government has established certain programs, such as the Council for the Education, Women & Children (Seoul Metropolitan Government, 2019), with the aim to create a more egalitarian society, a work that is followed by the volunteering opportunities fostered by universities. However, the measures proposed so far do not specifically address the English divide discussed in the introductory sections. This is where nonprofit organizations such as Beyond the English Divide, TNKR or HOPE come into play. The next section outlines the work done by Beyond the English Divide, as an example of how members of society attempt to put an end to this English divide. All the information provided regarding the organization and the challenges it faces has been gathered through extensive personal interviews with Junhaeng (Bruce) Lee, Beyond the English Divide Inc's CEO and the other administrators of Beyond the English Divide.

Origins, status and actions taken

Beyond the English Divide is a nonprofit corporation determined to narrow the English Divide in South Korea. It was originally established in September of 2017 by Junhaeng (Bruce) Lee, who witnessed first-hand the effects of the English Divide in the Korean society and wanted to do everything he could to ensure equal opportunities for children from underprivileged, low-income families or orphanages to find ways to learn English at no extra cost for them or their families. The beginnings were challenging, as he had to work to gain the trust of the centers where he wanted to offer the groups' volunteering sessions, recruit volunteers who could teach English to the children, and develop Beyond the English Divide's own teaching curricula, all of it with only his own time and personal resources. However, he managed to achieve his goals, despite all the problems he had to face.

Since its inception, Beyond the English Divide has been steadily growing and consolidating within the community. Today, after being officially incorporated (see below), the group of five board members, including Bruce, meet regularly to make decisions on the progress and vital changes needed to make Beyond continue growing. Moreover, the organization counts on the inestimable help of a group of dedicated administrators. On the one hand, 6 Korean university students (at times, the organization had up

to 8 volunteers) complete management tasks such as fundraising, reaching new centers, and expanding to other regions of Korea. On the other hand, a group of foreigner administrators handles the development of the organization's own teaching curricula to make sure it meets the needs of the students, recruiting, and public relationships through the use of different social platforms. Considering those members who are not physically present at the moment in South Korea but are still involved in the organization and help it grow, Beyond the English Divide is supported by a diverse group of approximately 70 talented volunteers who come from all backgrounds (professionals, students, etc.) and from very different parts of the world.

Since January 2019, Beyond the English Divide has been incorporated, which means that it has been recognized officially by the Korean government as a legal entity and qualifies for certain governmental subsidies, such as the possibility to apply for tax exemption or sue others as a legal entity. As an incorporated organization, it forms part of a larger organization, named Beyond Inc, which includes a second nonprofit organization, 'Beyond Career Mentorship.' Beyond Career Mentorship tries to help university students connect with mentors who can help them find their future careers. Both 'Beyond the English Divide' and 'Beyond Career Mentorship' had been successfully registered as official nonprofit organizations since 2017 and were merged and incorporated into Beyond Inc., in 2019. Beyond Inc. was approved by the Seoul Metropolitan City Mayor and now falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family in South Korea. Without the support received from 강북, 서초, and 강남 Volunteering offices, nothing of what Beyond has done could have been accomplished, as they have helped Beyond the English Divide in all the steps it has given, from helping find underprivileged children to helping the organization register on the 1365 Volunteer Website (see below)).

This volunteer-based organization in Seoul, South Korea, currently works in six volunteer learning centers located throughout Seoul, including educational welfare centers (용산교육복지센터 *Yongsan educational welfare center*), youth centers (such as 강북구 청소년수련관 *Gang-buk District Youth Training Center*), child community centers (such as 병점지역아동센터 *Byeongjeom Child Community Center*, 구로파랑새나눔터공부방 지역아동센터 *Guro Child Community Center*, and 돌산지역아동센터 *Dolsan Child Community Center*) and orphanages (such as 영락보린원 *Yongrak Orphanage*). While originally based in Seoul, the organization is starting to branch out to reach more centers and underprivileged children all over the country. Right now, Beyond the English Divide offers its services in the Seoul metropolitan area, as well as in Suwon, Gyeonggi-do province, where the 병점지역아동센터 (*Byeongjeom Child Community Center*) is located. The management team is working towards establishing a strong community within the Seoul metropolitan area and making contacts within the international communities of other cities in the country (such as Busan, Gwangju, Daegu and Daejeon) to further expand the reach of the organization. So far, Beyond the English Divide has reached and helps around 100 children in all the centers where it volunteers, with some centers hosting up to 30 children at once.

Volunteering sessions are held mostly on Saturdays, due to volunteers' availability, and normally last for about two hours, where the volunteers focus on both completing different activities with the children in English and on creating bonds with them (one of the most important aspects of the program, as will be discussed in the next sections). Although continuously growing, Beyond the English Divide still faces some common problems among nonprofit organizations in the country: The challenges associated with teaching underprivileged children, and the nomadic nature of the expat community in South Korea, as will be discussed next.

Challenges associated with teaching underprivileged children and solutions

One of the most unique aspects of Beyond the English Divide is that it welcomes all volunteers, independently of their country of origin, with the only requirement that they should be at least high-intermediate learners of English (as established after a personal interview with the current CEO of the

organization). Since English was identified as a means to acquire social mobility and cultural capital (Jeon, 2009; J.K. Park, 2009; J.S.Y. Park, 2009), the South Korean government has established very strict requirements for those foreigners intending to secure a job in the country teaching English. The visa needed to teach English in Korea (E-2) is available for those who are ‘citizens of a country where English is the primary language (USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, England, Ireland and South Africa only)’ (Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Korea, 2006).

Some of the other nonprofit organizations working on teaching underprivileged communities (such as HOPE or TNKR) also favor this same rule, and prefer recruiting native speakers as volunteers (this requirement can be found in the description of the type of volunteers they are recruiting). However, this decision limits their pool of potential candidates considerably. On the one hand, being a native speaker of English does not necessarily imply knowing how to convey effectively what one knows. In fact, current research has pointed out the value in someone who is not a native speaker teaching a language, because a learner knows the pitfalls that a native speaker might not see as complicated and has already explored some teaching techniques that may work in the long-term learning process (for a review, see Phillipson, 1992; Viáfara, 2016). On the other hand, this homogeneity in the volunteer corps denies the children the opportunity to know and interact with persons of diverse backgrounds, with whom they can create deep bonds and with whom they can understand their own reality.

The importance of variety is central when teaching underprivileged children. Beyond the English Divide attempts to help all the underprivileged children it can reach. As a result, in each of the centers where the organization teaches, volunteers find several challenges they need to face, such as children with very different levels of proficiency and children who may be facing challenges other than poverty (e.g., learning disabilities, abandonment issues, etc.), some of which are unknown to the volunteers initially. One characteristic of some of the underprivileged children that attend these centers is that they belong to poor, multicultural families, in which one of their progenitors is originally from a country considered to be poorer than South Korea, such as some of the southeast Asian countries. Living in one of the most homogeneous societies in today’s world (Lee, Kim, & Lee, 2015), these children sometimes feel they are “outliers” in their own country. Creating bonds with such a diverse group of people helps them realize that what makes them different is actually something to be thankful for.

In order to face some of the challenges mentioned above, Beyond the English Divide has decided to follow a “non-traditional” approach to teaching these children English, in which “bonding” with the children is valued as much as completing all the activities for the day. Thus, Beyond the English Divide is currently working toward creating its own curriculum, which includes innovative methods of learning such as gamification. The main idea of gamification consists in including typical elements of game playing (e.g. point scoring or competitions with others) to the process of learning (for a detailed review, see Çeker & Özdamlı, 2017). For example, when teaching the present tense, the teacher could have two possible options (of course, many other activities and methodologies could be implemented). On the one hand, it is possible to teach the present tense by explaining the grammar and asking students to complete some fill-in-the-blank activities. On the other hand, the teacher could explain the grammar, divide the group into two smaller groups and give each group a series of cards with subjects, verbs, and objects, and tell the students that the first group to arrange the cards to create meaningful sentences is the winner. This is the reason why Beyond the English Divide has decided to follow an approach in which the students have an active role in their own learning process (for example, through the use of vocabulary cards or games). This approach is a really useful way to make students more engaged and to help them feel more comfortable using the second language (Buckley & Doyle, 2017).

Moreover, another strategy implemented is the use of both worksheets and games, focusing on the vocabulary and grammar of one specific topic (e.g., “Thanksgiving” for November), to help motivate the children without making the lessons particularly challenging. Moreover, the sessions include at least one ice-breaker game. These games help students relax physically, gain motivation, bond together (and with the volunteers), and become willing to participate in the learning process (all these benefits have been

attested through extensive research, for a review see Gordon, Haas, & Michelson, 2017). Even though this is still a work in progress (thanks to the effort made by the Education Team), these handouts, activities, and games are used as a way to interact with and teach the children.

Beyond the English Divide and the nomadic nature of the expat community in South Korea

In the context of trying to provide underprivileged children with the chance to access free English education, which requires the collaboration of unpaid volunteers, a specific challenge that the organization is faced with is the nomadic nature of the expat community in South Korea and its impact on the number of volunteers who can commit for a considerable amount of time. This section discusses its characteristics as well the measures taken to find a flow of long-term volunteers.

As of November of last year, the population of South Korea was 51.42 million persons, of which only 2.9% of the total population is considered to be foreigners with legal status in the country (Statistics Korea Organization, 2017). However, this foreign population seems to be nomadic in nature. As of May, 2013 (latest statistics available), foreigners staying in the country for 1 year to less than 5 years accounted for 56.4 percent of total foreign legal immigration. Most of the other foreigners reported in the census are staying in the country for less than 3 months (Statistics Korea Organization, 2013). While most of the more permanent residents in the country are here with working visas (teaching, business, etc.) or as the spouses of a Korean citizen, most of the short-term visitors are in the country as either general tourists (thus, not particularly interested in volunteering in this specific situation) or study-abroad students. Therefore, recruiting volunteers to teach English to underprivileged children for Beyond the English Divide for the long-run (with the hopes of creating a continuing group of volunteers) is not an easy task, as most of these volunteers are expected to leave in the short-term.

To address this issue, Beyond the English Divide is currently trying to develop new recruiting campaigns, targeting the more long-term resident foreigners in the country. The organization is looking for passionate individuals who want to experience a life-enriching opportunity by dedicating their time to a worthwhile cause, at the same time looking for those individuals who are willing to commit their time in the long-term, and not just for a couple of months. Currently, the organization is recruiting volunteers with the use of advertisements on its webpage, as well as in different social media (such as Facebook and Instagram). Nonetheless, the results are still not satisfactory, as most of the volunteers who signed up after seeing these ads are students who plan to return to their countries after completing their programs.

Among the new measures taken by the organization to help with the recruitment process was to change the status of the organization from “registered” by the National Tax Service Republic of Korea, to “incorporated”. As mentioned earlier, this process implies that now the organization can work as an independent legal entity, and it can provide volunteers and monetary donors with some personal benefits that may be more attractive to them personally (for example, tax exemptions on the money donated to Beyond the English Divide). Beyond the English Divide was incorporated into Beyond Inc, opened its own bank account, and is officially recognized in the state’s records. All these minor details add legitimacy to the organization and its mission, creating solid trust factors for the community and potential donors. While this specific measure may not have a direct impact on the likelihood of recruiting more volunteers, it does provide specific benefits to Beyond the English Divide’s economic donors. As any other nonprofit organization, Beyond the English Divide depends mostly on donations from anonymous people. For a relatively new nonprofit organization such as Beyond the English Divide, fundraising is so much more than raising funds. With the money these organizations receive from fundraising, they can not only prove they are reaching as many people as possible (upgrading their website, creating newsletters or designing a social media strategy), but also that they are providing the children with better, more personalized class materials, presents, food, etc.

Other measures have been undertaken by Beyond the English Divide to try to achieve a more consistent flow of volunteers among the foreigner population who aims to stay in South Korea for the long-term. One of the main measures has been to register the organization in the 1365 Volunteer Website (the approval process is still undergoing at the moment in which this chapter was submitted for publication). The 1365 Volunteer Website is managed by South Korea's Ministry of the Interior and Safety (Ministry of the Interior and Safety, 2019) whose main purpose is to regulate all volunteering work being done in the country. This system is beneficial for both nonprofit organizations and for individual volunteers, both Korean and foreigners. On the one hand, nonprofit organizations can register and advertise their volunteering opportunities, thus reaching a larger population of interested volunteers. On the other hand, once individuals register on the webpage, they can officially keep track of their volunteering hours and receive an official certificate issued by the Ministry stating the work and hours they have invested in volunteering in South Korea. Once volunteers receive this certificate, they can use it to obtain certain benefits from the government. For example, Korean university students can use these "volunteering hours" to either improve their curriculum vitae or to fulfill the volunteering hours requirement that some universities have for graduation. And foreigner citizens can use this certificate to prove the volunteering points needed in the point system to obtain the F2-7 Long-Term Residency visa (Ministry of Labor, 2019).

While the nomadic nature of foreign residents in South Korea is a difficult problem to overcome, nonprofit organizations in the country such as the one discussed in this chapter have found the means to reach those expatriates interested in relocating in the country for the long-term. However, more work is needed to make sure nonprofit corporations such as Beyond the English Divide have a consistent, reliable group of volunteers interested in helping the underprivileged children.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

While in most contexts knowing English is seen as an asset, that is, it is considered worthy of praise and reward, in South Korea knowing English is much more. For example, knowing English in South Korea is directly correlated with having better chances at being accepted into a prestigious university, finding better-paid jobs after graduation and, later in life, getting promotions in the work place (Choi, 2002; McTague, 1990; Park, 2009; Song, 2011).

After reviewing some economic parameters such as the real GDP per capita, the Gini inequality index and the average private expenditure in private education (among others), the existence of this English divide between the rich and the poor in the Korean society, there is no doubt of the existence of this phenomenon. While the rich can afford sending their offspring to expensive English institutes (or even abroad), the poor members of the society find themselves in a cycle of poverty, aggravated by their lack of resources to access after-school private English education. However, it is important to realize that the solution to the problem starts with giving all children, including underprivileged children, the same opportunities to access a decent English education to address the root causes behind poverty and low-income mobility rather than just its effects in the country.

Different measures have been undertaken by the Korean government (such as the creation of the Council for the Education, Women & Children (Seoul Metropolitan Government, 2019)) and universities (by establishing volunteering programs for their students), with the aim to create a more egalitarian society, in which the more at-risk groups are targeted. However, none of the measures implemented so far directly address the issue posed by the so-called English divide. This is the specific problem that the work of nonprofit organizations such as TNKR, HOPE or Beyond the English Divide tries to solve. However, as the volunteers themselves describe the situation, "'Volunteering is, indeed, just a band-aid solution. But it is the solution we have in our own hands.'" (Dunbar, 2019)

In this context, the actions taken by the Beyond the English Divide presented in this book chapter can be used as a starting point for understanding the current situation in South Korea, the role played by the knowledge of English in understanding part of the division of economic inequality within the society, and the challenges associated with running this type of nonprofit corporation. However, this chapter is just a first step towards fully understanding the ramifications of the English divide problem and the validity of the solutions implemented so far. While this chapter presents a purely qualitative study reporting the work done by Junhaeng Lee and the rest of the Beyond the English Divide's administrators, a quantitative study needs to be done to quantify the gains obtained through the work of this (and other) organizations to end with this cycle of poverty.

In any case, the work done by this organization, as described in this chapter, aims to give more attention to this problem and inspire similar initiatives both within and outside of South Korea.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Child Community Center: In South Korea, it is considered to be a place where children can go after school to be fed and receive private, free education (offered by volunteers) without any cost to their families and while their caretakers are still at work.

Incorporation: Status of an organization or organism after following all the legal steps to become a legal entity. After being incorporated, the organization receives benefits from the government (like subsidies or tax exemptions) and can follow all legal procedures as a legal entity.

Educational welfare center: In South Korea, it is considered to be a place where anybody in need can go to receive help (from legal advice, to food or child care service) without any cost to the person in need.

English Divide: A social division created within a society due to the lack of access to English by some of the members of the population. While the richer members can access this education and receive future benefits from it, the poorer cannot access it, and so their prospects of improving their quality of life in the future are reduced.

Expat: Short for expatriate. Group of foreigners in a given country who had to relocate to the new country due to financial, work, or family reasons.

Nonprofit: An organization, group or entity that is dedicated to furthering a particular social cause or advocating for a shared point of view without looking to obtain personal profits.

Underprivileged: Pertaining to a group or social class economically below the average of the country where this person/group lives. They normally do not have access to the same resources as some of their peers, which ends up affecting their prospects of improving their quality of life in the future.

Volunteering: The action of offering one's free time with the aim of helping other and without looking for a financial retribution.

Youth Center: A place where young people (but not limited to young people) can meet and participate in a variety of activities, including sport activities, educative, or religious activities.

ENDNOTES

1. Whenever this term is used in capital letters, it refers to the nonprofit corporation “Beyond the English Divide”. Otherwise, it refers to the socioeconomic problem associated with the lack of access to English private education by a sector of the Korean society.
2. When interpreting this graph take into account that the amounts represented are by student, which would multiply in the case of families with more than one child and that it only represents the average, as private education of older students, in high school for example, is more expensive than that for younger students.
3. While there may be other nonprofit organizations based in South Korea that teach English to underprivileged children, the three mentioned in this chapter are the only ones which are legally registered as nonprofit corporations/organizations at the time in which this chapter was submitted for publication.