Resisting Native-Speakerism in International Learning Exchange Between North Korean Refugee Students and American University Students

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This study showcases an International Learning Exchange (ILE) program between North Korean (NK) refugee students in South Korea and American university students from the US. ILE programs connect two or more linguistic/ cultural groups for intercultural awareness, which provide authentic communicative environments. However, the prevalent use of English and research focus mostly on non-native English-speaking students reflect the ideology of native-speakerism embedded in ILE programs. The purpose of this study was to develop an ILE program that resists native-speakerism and to investigate its influences on native as well as non-native English-speaking students. Adopting a case-study approach, data were collected from video-taping, fieldnotes, student documents, surveys, and interviews. Findings show how the authors designed and implemented a principle-based ILE program. The responses of NK students show their growing motivation and communication ability. The responses of American students show their critical reflections on their native-speaker identities. This study offers insights into designing ILE programs based on multilingualism and translanguaging.

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1. INTRODUCTION

International Learning Exchange (ILE) is a growing phenomenon in the field of English Education. It is seen to provide authentic communicative environments, and it is theoretically grounded on the growing importance of the concept of culture and intercultural competence in English education (Byram, 2014; Yang, 2020). The increase of ILE programs has developed the scholarship at the intersection of foreign language learning, intercultural learning, and technology-enhanced learning (Carloni, Grassi, Virga, & Zuccala, 2018). Studies on these transnational projects supported by technology have reported the involved countries, languages, technologies, activities, theoretical models, problems/solutions, learning outcomes, and perceptions of teachers and students (Shadiev & Sintawati, 2020). Most of the empirical research shows positive pedagogical effects on foreign language learning and intercultural competence, and generally positive responses of the participating students and teachers. The COVID-19 context is highly conducive to the growth of such online educational interactions.

As noted by Shadiev and Sintawati's (2020) meta-analysis of the intercultural learning programs, participants from the US were the most frequently involved and English was the dominant language in most of these studies. Although such programs in higher education (i.e. study abroad) are popular venues for foreign language and intercultural learning, not all programs are successful or effective to meet their objectives. Fong (2020), Tarchi, Surian, and Daiute (2019) warned that inadequate programs could be harmful in the participants' intercultural development when they are implemented without intentional and careful reflections or mentoring.

In this study, we critique the ideology of *native-speakerism* embedded in ILE programs and the academic research on those programs. This study acknowledges that the role of English as the lingua franca (a common language that makes communication possible between speakers of different languages) is important in intercultural contexts. However, the unquestioned dominance of English use is shown to have negative effects on students' linguistic and intercultural developments, reinforcing the English gap among students and the sense of deficiency as non-native speakers (Lee, 2018). The deep-seated ideology of culturalism and linguicism is also reflected in existing research where only the non-native students are targeted as the objects of examination and change.

This paper presents a case study of an ILE program between North Korean (NK, hereafter) refugee students in South Korea and American university students in the US. Research shows that English learning is a major difficulty when NK refugee students settle in South Korea (Jang & Kim, 2021). The Chinese-born children of NK refugees, a growing population in South Korea, who do not speak the Korean language, struggle with both English and Korean languages, while their Chinese language is not adequately supported.

(Yang, 2016). Grounded on the notion of multilingualism and translanguaging, this paper describes the program design where all languages are valued, encouraging students to cross their language boundaries and communicate with their full repertoire of resources, rather than focusing only on English.

The purpose of this paper is to develop an ILE program that confronts native-speakerism and to investigate its influences on both native and non-native English-speaking students. Adopting a case-study approach, this paper describes not only the responses of the NK students, but also the responses of the American students, showing how the alternative approach influenced each group respectively.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Native-speakerism

Native-speakerism refers to the prevalent belief, "'native-speaker' teachers represent a 'Western culture' from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology" (Holliday, 2006, p. 385). Although criticism to the notion has been raised from its absurdness in conceptual construction to the consequences of inequity in scholarship and professions, the native versus non-native binary is still popular in the discourses of ELT (Holliday, 2015).

Two major ideologies are embedded in the native-speakerism: culturalism and linguicism. The idea that native speakers of English are representatives or even experts of Western culture not only essentializes the notion of culture by highlighting superficial aspects of culture (Kubota, 2004), but also leads to "*othering* of students and colleagues from outside the English speaking West" (Holliday, 2006, pp. 385-386) by taking a subtle agenda to neglect or correct non-native speakers' cultural practices. The native-speakerism, in addition, manifests and sometimes reproduces linguistic discrimination, or linguicism, which Skutnabb-Kangas (1988) has defined as "ideologies and structures that are used to legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and nonmaterial) between groups that are defined on the basis of language" (p. 13). Native-speakerism is thus related to a variety of issues including linguistic and cultural identities, teachers' and learners' self-efficacy, and social positioning in schools and workplaces.

Since much research in applied linguistics publicized the problems of native-speakerism, deficit perspectives towards non-native English teachers has been diminishing in academia. Nevertheless, highlighting the unique merits of non-native English teachers as a part of the efforts to break down the native-speakerism may reaffirm the dichotomous view of nativeness versus non-nativeness. Although this binary per se cannot be constructed on

linguistic grounds (Jenkins, 2000) but is constructed discursively (Aneja, 2016), the dichotomy of nativeness and non-nativeness is still prevalent in education and society, making the acquisition of 'native-like' English as an ultimate goal of English education. In the context of education in South Korea, native-speakerism is said to be confirmed particularly through embracing CLT pedagogy focusing on 'native-like pronunciation' and related government-level recruitment of native speakers of English as in the programs such as English Program in South Korea (EPIK) (Choi, 2016). In the educational and social atmosphere of native speaker supremacy, learners of English in South Korea tend to pursue the acquisition of 'native speakers' English,' which is an imaginary entity that can never be embodied in a single form.

Pointing out the spin-offs of native-speakerism in the South Korean context, scholars have made efforts to reexamine the native speakerism from multiple angles (Choi, 2016; Jang, 2021; Pederson, 2019). In particular, with the increasing interests in multilingualism and translanguaging in the field of applied linguistics (Canagarajah & Wurr, 2011; Cenoz & Gorter, 2020; Garcia & Li, 2014; Li, 2018), more attention has been directed to addressing Korean teachers' and teacher educators' beliefs on multilingualism (Kim & Cho, 2020), suggesting the needs for reexamining the native-speakerism critically to reconstruct language teacher identity in this plurilingual and pluricultural era. By highlighting the agency of English language learners (Pavlenko, 2003), Choi (2016) also argued that the participants in the study were not pursuing native-like English; instead, they resisted their imposed label of non-native speakers but rather redefined their position as English-Korean bilinguals.

2.2. International Learning Exchange

Numerous terms are used to label the growing phenomenon of ILE, such as international educational exchange (Lee et al., 2014), international learning exchange supported by technology (Shadiev & Sintawati, 2020), telecollaboration (Carloni et al., 2018), and Collaborative Online Learning across Borders (COLAB) (Arndt, Akpovo, Tesar, Han, Huang, & Halladay, 2021). Lee et al. (2014) has provided an overarching definition: "process of students collaborating with linguistically/ culturally different students, teachers, experts for exchanging knowledge and information, and promoting intercultural understanding, based on internet technology" (p. 20). In other words, ILE involves at least two countries, or linguistically/culturally different groups, aims for intercultural understanding through collaborative work, and uses various online tools for collaboration.

Research on ILE has shown the program organizations, benefits, and problems reported in implementations (Shadiev & Sintawati, 2020; Lee et al., 2014). Shadiev and Sintawati (2020), in their systematic review of 25 studies on ILE programs, show that the majority of

the programs had the US as the partnering country, and used English as the mediating language. Participants came from various educational levels from elementary and secondary school students to college and teacher education students. The programs mostly had a dual purpose of foreign language learning and intercultural learning and the most used theory was Byram's (2014) notion of intercultural competence. Learning activities usually took the sequence of introduction, interaction, and reflection. Various online tools were used, which supported either synchronous interactions such as video conferencing and asynchronous interactions such as e-mail, social media, or discussion board. While many of these programs were done all online, Austin, Rickardb, and Reillya (2017) reviewed programs that took a blended approach which combined online contact and face-to-face contact, and showed the positive effects of blended learning.

There is growing research on ILE programs in the South Korean context (Jeon & Lim, 2013; Jin, 2015; Lee, 2018; Lee et al., 2014; Lee & Park, 2017; Yang, 2020). The partnered countries with the South Korean students ranged from the US and Australia to Taiwan and Iran. Two commonalities were found in these studies. First, the involved language was only English. Secondly, descriptions were given only about South Korean students and teachers and no targeted attention was given to the English-speaking or the partnered students. A highly interesting remark was made by a student in the student survey in Lee et al. (2014), suggesting using languages of both countries rather than only one country. This response critiques the use of English only, which had not been questioned in the previous studies. This is also linked to the reasons that the research focused on the changes of South Korean students only reflecting the desired goal toward the acquisition of English.

An exception was found in Lee (2018), who reported a critical examination of ILE. She first examined the positive effects of the ILE between her middle school class in South Korea and another class in Iran (Lee, 2018). However, she returned to the data to consider the subtle effects of native-speakerism which could have been easily glossed over by the excitements of ILE activities. She first critiqued the high cost of such transnational collaboration, which she was able to afford with her elite background and international network. She also observed that the oral and interactive mode of ILE had an effect of revealing and reinforcing the English gap among the students in a more visible way than the traditional, silent English classrooms. The students with higher English proficiency, who tend to be better English speakers, benefited more from the program than the students with lower English proficiency, who tend to be quiet and not able to interact effectively. Also, the students' sense of self as "deficient" non-natives was reinforced. One of the students who were initially very excited and active in the program became aware of her non-native accent when she watched herself in her group project video. Despite class discussion about non-native accents, the student withdrew herself from class participation. This shows how native-speakerism had negative effects on English learning, particularly for low-level students, even in "communicative"

settings.

The present study, therefore, examines how the Korean students and the American students respond to an ILE program that is designed to resist native-speakerism. In particular, we focus on the ways the ILE program does not reproduce the English gap among the students, where low-level students can also come away with positive linguistic identities. Our research questions are as follows:

1) What are the influences of the ILE program on the NK participants?
2) What are the influences of the ILE program on the American participants?

3. METHODS

3.1. Context and Participants

This study[1] adopts a case-study approach to explain the design, implementation, and student responses of a single ILE program in its complex, real-life context. Case-study is an empirical inquiry that "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" in that it helps gain a holistic and in-depth understanding of a single case while maintaining the complexity of the case (Yin, 2003, p. 13).

The student participants of this study were five NK refugee high school students who had been participating in a long-term project[2] and five American college students. The NK students (2 females and 3 males) were enrolled in an alternative high school for NK refugees located in Seoul, South Korea. The American students (5 females) were enrolled in a public university located in a Southeastern state in the US. Although the two groups were in different school levels due to the NK students' academic gap caused by transnational migration, they were close to a peer group aged from 19 to 22.

The NK participants are all Chinese-born with complex linguistic and cultural identities, which is a growing trend among NK refugee youths. They speak Chinese as their first language and were pressured to learn Korean and English. They began learning Korean as their second language when they arrived in South Korea, their ages of arrival ranging from 12 to 15 (except for Moongyang[3] who arrived at age 7). Their proficiency in Korean varied from intermediate level to quite fluent level depending on the period of their residency in

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[1] This study was approved by SNUE IRB (201805-005).
[2] In 2017, the first author initiated a research project named '*Multilingual Hangout*' for NK refugee youth as a solo project. The project has two phases: a movie-based multilingual program at NK students' school (2017-2018) and a pedagogical translanguaging program in out-of-school context (2018-2020). This article covers a part of the latter.
[3] All names of this paper are pseudonyms.

South Korea. Their levels of English were generally much lower, mostly around beginner level. When this project was initiated in 2017, compensation for participating in the program was given to the NK students who showed low self-confidence in English and lack of motivation to learn. And the students would openly admit that the money was their central motivation, at least in the beginning.

The American students' degree programs and the years varied from Elementary Education to International Affairs and Sophomore to Senior. They participated in this program as a part of their study away course taught by the third author. The American students were more interested in engaging with the NK students and learning from their experiences and perspectives as the conflict and peace building in the Korean peninsula was the target content of the short-term study abroad program. Due to the different interests in mind, American students were less conscious about linguistic and cultural ideologies before they worked with the NK students.

Adopting an on/offline blended format, the main research sites for this program were both online space (i.e., Google Classroom) and a 2-day offline workshop held in Seoul, South Korea. By establishing a transnational network, the authors of this article collaborated to run this NK-US exchange program. From the side of the authors in South Korea, the goal of this exchange program was to provide NK students with a space in which they develop their English skills while rethinking about their abilities and identity as multilinguals through having 'real' interactions with English speaking peers. The authors in South Korea played multiple roles as teachers, facilitators, and curriculum developers, including designing a workbook for this ILE program's summer workshop. For the American students, the goals were to critically reflect on their personal belief system, privilege, and experiences in relation to other cultural members and to demonstrate sophisticated understandings of complex systems where other cultural members are situated especially in the South Korean context.

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

The authors collected data from multiple sources for triangulation. The students' and teachers' Google Classroom postings including texts and videos were collected to examine their online interactions. Approximately 20 hours of offline sessions were observed and video-recorded. The researchers in Korea kept detailed field notes about each session, and their post-session reflection and discussions were recorded in the minutes.

Before and after the Summer Workshop, surveys were conducted to NK and US students. The pre-workshop survey and the post-workshop survey included the same questions regarding the participants' perceptions of languages (5 open-ended questions and 12 multiple choice questions) and different questions regarding their experiences with the Summer Workshop (for pre-workshop survey, 5 open-ended questions about their expectations for

the workshop; for post-workshop survey, 8 open-ended questions about their workshop experiences). Surveys were created in both Korean and English language and the results were transcribed and saved in an Excel format.

During the summer workshop, the classes and activities were all videotaped except for the buddy tour session. Each student's completed workbook, which included texts in multiple languages, drawings, scribbles, or sometimes, doodles, was photographed and saved page by page.

After the Summer Workshop, the first and corresponding authors conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with the NK students individually, and the third author with the American students as a group in order to learn about their responses to the ILE program. The interviews, which lasted approximately 1-2 hours respectively, were conducted in Korean for NK students and in English for American students. All interviews were videotaped and transcribed in its entirety, and Korean was translated into English only when they were selected for publication.

To examine in what ways the ILE program contributed to the deconstruction of native-speakerism and the qualitative transformation of the student participants, the authors analyzed the multilingual and multimodal data by taking multiple steps of coding and analysis. First, guided by the theory of native-speakerism, the authors established two major categories for analysis through discussion; "multilingualism" and "intercultural understanding". Second, the authors reviewed the entire data collected and then conducted an inductive coding individually. The first and second authors coded NK students' data, and the third author did the US students'. Third, the authors compared and discussed the results of their coding and derived themes that appeared salient in each group of participants. For NK students, the overarching theme was "growing motivation and ability for communication" and for US students, "critical reflection on their native speaker identities". And fourth, the authors re-examined data to compile specific examples that illustrate the themes.

3.3. The ILE Program

With the purpose to design an ILE program that deconstructs cultural essentialism and linguistic inequity, which are often driven by the power of English and the ideology of native-speakerism, we first developed three main principles for developing and running the program as follows:

  1) Equal status and opportunities for learning should be provided and supported.
  2) Intercultural learning should be facilitated through communication and interactions.
  3) Sharing and reflection should be the central activities to the program.

We hoped this program to be a place where the native-nonnative binary is critically

reflected and deconstructed, and equal status and opportunities for learning and communication are guaranteed to all participants. Multilingual and multimodal activities were thus implemented so that student participants could utilize the entire repertoire for communication they possessed. In particular, we endeavored to provide NK students with a space where they feel free to speak any language they want to without feeling confined or withdrawn due to their language; on the contrary, we often placed the American students in the situation where they should make efforts to understand and use foreign languages.

   With these principles, the authors in Korea developed the curriculum of this program with four main components as shown in Table 1: Introduction, What I can Teach (WIT), What I Learned (WIL), and Summer Workshop.

TABLE 1

The Curriculum of the Program

Component	Activity	Description	Format/Time
Introduction	Ice-breaking	Posted introductory videos online and exchanged comments	Online & Offline/1 hour
What I can Teach[4] (WIT)	Creating	Created images of WIT and shared in Korean and Chinese	Offline/ 1.5 hours
	Translating	Translated the WIT texts from Korean/ Chinese to English	Offline/ 2 hours
	Refining	Revised and refined the English translations and practiced oral presentation in English	Offline/ 2 hours
	Shooting	Videotaped the WIT presentation in Chinese and English and shared with American students	Offline & Online/1.5 hours
What I Learned (WIL)	Watching	Watched American students' WIT videos created in English	Online & Offline/1 hr.
	Learning	Learned English of the videos through multilingual and multimodal activities	Offline/ 3 hours
Summer Workshop	Planning	Planned the curriculum and activities for summer workshop	Offline/ 1hour
	Workshop	Participated in indoor/outdoor activities focusing on multilingualism, translanguaging, & intercultural awareness	Offline/ 2days
	Reflection	Participated in individual and/or group interviews and self-reflections	

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[4] Here, 'I' refers to the NK students because this curriculum was designed as a part of the big project for NK students.
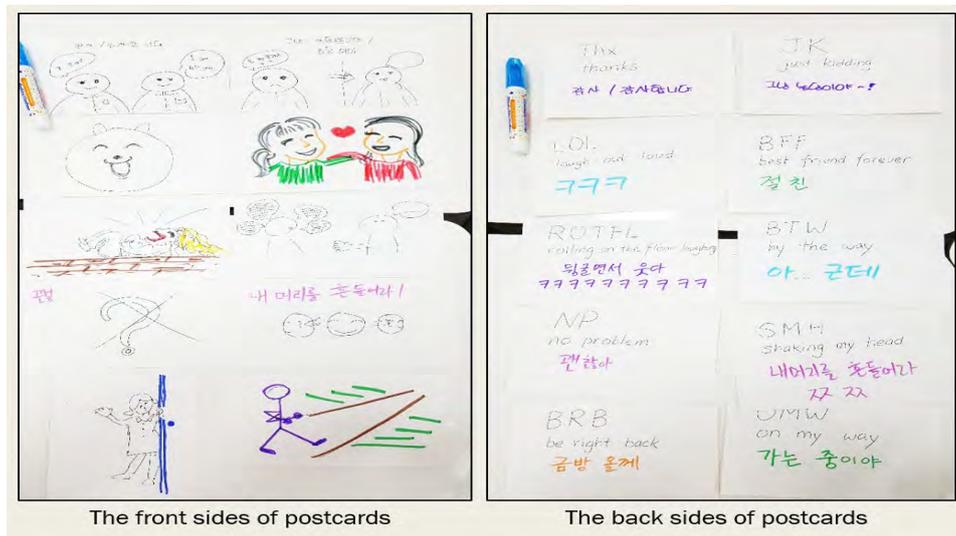
When the program began, both NK and US students were introduced to each other through the Google Classroom. The US students created and posted their introductory video including their name, major/minor, and expectations for the program, using the Flipgrid educational application. The Korean researchers helped the NK students comprehend and comment on the introductory videos made in English in offline classes. For WIT, the NK students created multilingual video clips and shared them with the American students. For WIL, the NK students watched the American students' teaching videos and participated in various activities designed for learning the English phrases and expressions shown in the videos. Finally, NK and American students met in-person for a 2-day Summer Workshop in Seoul, South Korea.

FIGURE 1

NK Students' Artifacts (from WIT)

This program designed a context where students can utilize not only multiple languages of English, Korean, and Chinese, but also various tools such as images, sounds, translator apps, gestures and facial expressions for video clips to enhance their communication with American students. Native speakers of English are typically placed in the position of a teacher or 'natives' in international programs where English is used as a lingua franca. WIT deconstructed this positioning by asking the participants to use multiple languages and tools such as colors and images for communication (Figure 1). Further, the idea that NK students 'can teach something to American students' drove them to interact with American students with more confidence and motivation. Although the tasks of articulating, translating, revising, and videotaping of their WIT in English were quite challenging to the NK students, they showed noticeable interest and engagement in the activity.

FIGURE 2
Examples of the Picture-to-Word Game (from WIL)

The front sides of postcards   The back sides of postcards

Because the NK students reported in the interview that they wanted to improve their English, 'learning English' was also important for them. Although the students might be able to learn English through multilingual activities naturally, WIL was specifically designed to enhance the NK students' English learning. For WIL, American students created and shared their teaching video clips about their selected topics such as useful English expressions, American snacks, and texting abbreviations/acronyms. The NK students commented on the video clips and then, participated in a variety of offline activities (including a picture-to-word game, role playing, and dictation) designed for the NK students to be engaged in their learning without feeling subordinated to native English speakers. For instance, for Jennifer's teaching about 'texting acronyms,' NK students drew pictures for each word on a postcard and wrote the meaning on the back (Figure 2), and then, played games to guess the words by seeing the picture. For Miranda's video about 'basic English expressions useful when traveling,' the NK students created scenarios including the expressions and acted by taking roles such as a tourist and a local resident. We asked NK students to perform the skit in three languages (Chinese, Korean, and English) not only to help them understand English expressions accurately but also, to keep them from feeling weak by their limited proficiency in the English language. The multilingual role-playing performance was video-recorded and shared online with the American students. These trilingual and translanguaging activities of WIT and WIL aimed to help the NK students identify themselves as not 'non-natives of English' but 'multilinguals' in three languages.

FIGURE 3
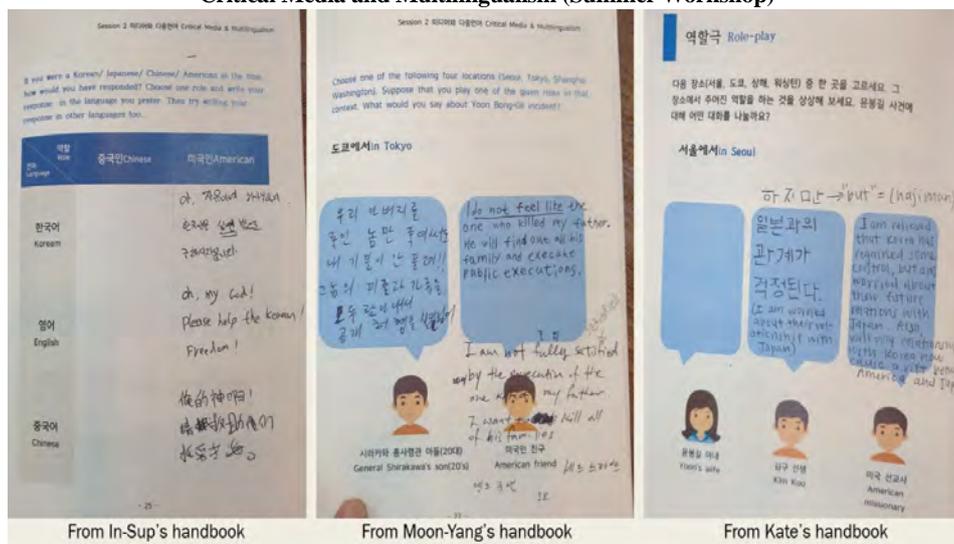
Example Pages of the Workbook (from Summer Workshop)

With curiosity and rapport built through a series of online activities, NK and American students, those with such different backgrounds, became intimate quickly when they actually met in Seoul, South Korea for a 2-day Summer Workshop. The workshop had four sessions focusing on the students' live experiences and critical reflections on multilingualism. To enhance individual interactions between the students, we had one NK and one American student paired as a buddy, asking them to take care of each other throughout the course of the workshop. We also encouraged the students to share individuals' cultural knowledge and practices, instead of presenting static forms of culture such as 'Korean culture' and 'American culture,' so that the students could construct intercultural understandings through prolonged engagement in communication and interactions.

Throughout the course of this workshop, reflection and sharing was strongly emphasized. When the students first met, we gave out a 53-page, small-sized, lightweight workbook to students and asked them to carry it wherever they went during the workshop (Figure 3). The workbook served multiple roles such as a guidebook for the schedule, curriculum of the workshop, and the reading materials for indoor classes, but most of all, we developed it as a journal in which an individual student records one's thoughts, emotions, and activities with guiding questions that were open ended. Including the core question ("what does multilingualism mean to you?"), at the end of each session during the workshop, students were asked to answer questions about their multilingual and multimodal communications

("How am I using my languages (Korean, English, and Chinese) and cultural identity to understand others?", "Specifically, when did successful communications take place? and what were the reasons?", and "When did *UN*successful communications take place? What were the reasons?").

FIGURE 4
Critical Media and Multilingualism (Summer Workshop)

Session 1 and session 3 were outdoor activities and in particular, the 'Buddy Hangout' was entirely upon the students from the stage of planning. The rule we strongly emphasized was that English should not be the only language for communication during the hangout. Instead, we asked students to use any linguistic and paralinguistic tools to communicate with each other. Session 2 and session 4 were classroom activities. For the 'Critical media & Multilingualism' session, the students were asked to discuss how different groups of people (Korean, Japanese, Chinese, and American) might view the same event of Yoon Bong Gil's bombing differently. The students were asked to write down the given characters' comments on their workbooks in multiple languages (Chinese, Korean, and English) (Figure 4). To fill in the blanks of their workbook, the NK-American Buddy pairs came to speak and write in three languages to help each other.

Among many, one difference we made in this offline workshop was perhaps having these American students speak and write in languages other than their mother tongue, which could lead them to understand the challenges that linguistically minoritized students often encounter when they are 'submersed' in mainstream classrooms. Not only was the much less dominance of English witnessed during this workshop, students were asked to help each

other to complete missions during the workshop. NK students, who are bilinguals of Korean and Chinese, had opportunities to help their American buddies.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Response of North Korean students

Throughout the program, we observed the NK participants' growing motivation for English, which dramatically peaked at the face-to-face contact in the Summer Workshop. Table 2 shows participants' overall responses to the workshop.

TABLE 2

Post- workshop Survey Response

Participant	Response
Insup	It was difficult but I felt happy.
Youngmi	It was newness [새로움]. Everything was new and intriguing.
Seongdong	It was helpfulness [도움]. Through this workshop, I really understood the importance of English. And a lot of my stress was relieved through this workshop.
Moonyang	It was a simulation. I didn't know about the importance of English, but I feel the need now. I want to overcome this frustration. These past two days woke me up.

Note. Survey response to: "To me, this workshop was _____."

The participants mentioned the "newness" of the program as compared to their previous English classes or English camps, where they would be required to speak only English, but at the same time, were mostly positioned to listen, stay silent or to passively repeat and memorize, even in the presence of native speakers. Seongdong and Moonyang commonly wrote in the workbook that if they had another chance to participate in this kind of workshop, they would surely come. Youngmi spoke during her individual interview that her motivation clearly changed from the compensation money to the program itself.

Analysis of data shows that a central theme in their response to this program was their growing motivation and ability for communication. First, they could see English as a tool for communication rather than a set of knowledge. Second, their focus on communication led them to use other and new resources for communication. Third, their identities, including new identities constructed by the program, were used in their communication.

4.1.1 English for communication

NK participants' changed views about English through the Summer Workshop was one of the most salient features of their response to the program. They strongly remarked how they actually understood the importance of English as a commonly used language and their strong motivation to learn English so that they can communicate with their American peers. Young-mi spoke below about how she would use the machine translation by herself after meeting the American students.

> **Youngmi**: When we actually met, I suddenly couldn't remember the words I knew and I was so nervous. When I was going home, I was like, ah, I should have said it this way today, ah, I couldn't say it like that back then, well, I'm going to do better tomorrow. After we met, when I went home, I processed the translator, to see if it was correct to say something like; 'we get off at this station'. I would search for it and find out, ah, I should have said it like this.
> *영미: 막상 만나니까 갑자기 아는 단어들도 생각 안 나고 너무 긴장되고, 집으로 돌아갈 때 아 오늘은 이렇게 말할 걸 아 그때는 이렇게 못 말했지 하고 뭐 내일은 잘해야겠다 이러구 내일은 막상 또 똑같아요. 만나고 나면 집에 가서도 번역기를 한번 돌려 봤어요. 이렇게 말하는 게 맞는가 해 가지고 우리 이번 역에 내려요. 하면 그것도 검색하고 아 이렇게 말했어야 됐구나 하고*
>
> (Individual Interview with Youngmi)

These responses support the central finding of ILE research about increased English ability, increased motivation, and increased understanding of English as a communicative tool rather than a set of knowledge to be studied and memorized (Lee, 2018; Lee et al., 2014).

Such changes did not seem to work to reinforce the oppressiveness of native-speakerism but were clearly liberating for the participants. This is because the real oppression lies in the pressure for the students to master a language which they actually cannot master (and not motivated to learn), locked within native speakers and the test papers. When they experience the actual use of English for communication, English seems to become something attainable and something they become highly motivated to attain.

4.1.2 Other/ new resources for communication

In the pre-workshop survey, what the NK participants worried the most about was their limited English proficiency. The language barrier was indeed significant, and the difficulty

of communicating because of their limited English resource was continually expressed in their workbooks. Nevertheless, they also reported successful experiences of communication through the use of other meaning-making resources. These include the online machine translation, teacher's help, Korean language skills of some of the American students and their interests in K-pop, paralinguistic resources such as gestures, and student attitudes such as patience and the willingness to communicate. In their actual interpersonal communication, they experienced that English was not an absolute barrier for communication.

The language gap was the biggest between Moonyang and his buddy, Jennifer. Moonyang's English level was low, and unlike some of the other American students who spoke some Korean, Jennifer did not speak Korean at all. However, in his interview, he explained how he could communicate with Jennifer.

> **Author1**: How did you use language to understand each other during the workshop? So, which one do you think you were using, English, Korean, or Chinese?
> **Moonyang**: Feels like I used a new language. I used them all.
> *연구자1: 워크샵 기간 동안 서로 이해하기 위해서 언어를 어떻게 이용하였나요? 인데, 그니까 영어, 한국어 중국어 세 개 중에 뭐를 어떻게 썼던 것 같애?*
> *문양: 새로운 언어를 썼던 느낌. 다 썼어요*
> (Individual Interview with Moonyang)

With his limited proficiency in all three languages, he said he "used it all," mixing the three languages and other possible meaning-making resources in a new configuration he saw best for the communicative task at hand, what would be called the very practice of translanguaging (Garcia & Li, 2014). His expression of "a new language" aligns with the theory of translanguaging that, from the perspective of multilingual speakers themselves, rather than deploying from separate languages, they are using a unitary linguistic system for communication (Garcia & Li, 2014). When asked in terms of the three separate languages, he expressed the unitary system as "a new language."

If English was the main mode of communication, this would have put low level students at a severe disadvantage. However, because translanguaging was strongly encouraged, and often required in numerous activities, the low-level students had other resources which could compensate for their limited English ability. This worked to restrict the direct reproduction of the power inequality in students' linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds.

4.1.3 Student identity for communication

The Summer Workshop gave the NK students very new roles and positions that they had not experienced in relation to the native speakers. They were encouraged to use all of their three languages while interacting with the American buddies. During the "Critical Media and Multilingualism" session, they watched their buddies trying to write and speak the three languages. Moonyang's American buddy, Jennifer, who did not speak Korean, expressed the difficulty in her response about this activity.

> **Jennifer**: They were a little difficult. I don't have any experience with hangul or Korean prior to this so it was very tricky to write and speak a new language in front of people for the first time. (Jennifer's Workbook)

Moonyang, on the other hand, expressed it as a positive experience because he could teach and help his buddy. Such a translanguaging approach of the program provided a much more equal footing between the two groups, and as shown in the next section, generated American students' critical reflections about native-speakerism.

An important identity constructed for the NK participants was that of a *host.* The American students paid a high cost of actually coming to South Korea, and the NK participants were given the responsibility to take care of their buddies during the workshop. Particularly for the "Buddy Hangout" session, they had to plan and decide where in Seoul to take their buddies, how to travel and what to do during the given couple of hours. All of the participants were the most engaged and excited about planning and carrying out this responsibility. Throughout the workshop, they tried to offer warm hospitality to their buddies, as expressed by the American participants in the next section.

Moonyang took Jennifer to Namsan Tower, which was partly a realization of his "What I can teach" topic about tourist spots in Seoul. One of the questions in the post- workshop survey was the following: "During this workshop, how did you use your cultural identity to understand each other?" Moonyang gave an interesting response to this question.

> **Moonyang:** Just as ants have their own territory, I also acted in my own territory. (In Myeongdong, Namsan is my territory.)
> *문양: 개미가 자기 영역 있는거 처럼, 나도 나의 영역에서 행동하였다.*
> *(명동엔 남산은 나의 영역이다.)*
> (Moonyang's response to post-workshop survey #5)

Bringing someone to his own "territory" worked as a resource to mediate his communication with Jennifer. If he was in a strange place, he would have had very little

resources to use for communication. Canagarajah (2018) referred to *space* as part of meaning-making resources, expanding the notion of translanguaging to include not only human cognition (all the linguistic and non-linguistic resources) but also the non-human *context* of communication. According to the view of seeing competence as "emplacement" (Canagarajah, 2018), Moonyang was competent in his communication to emplace himself in his territory.

We generally did not observe any sense of linguistic deficiency among the participants. In the translanguaging space ideologically protected from native-speakerism, the participants embraced the new identities and power-relations constructed by the program vis-à-vis the native speakers.

4.2. Response of American students

The on- and off-line collaborative learning activities designed to dismantle native speakerism provided opportunities for the American students to reflect upon their linguistic and cultural positions and identities. "[L]anguage competence is socially constructed as different models of language competence are evaluated, a particular set of language competence is idealized, and speakers are positioned accordingly in a specific environment" (Choi, 2016, p.75). Following themes showcase how American students participated and responded to the program designed to explicitly promote multilingualism.

4.2.1. Native speakerism: Power of English, Power of America

From the beginning, the American students were intentionally positioned as co-learners or learning partners (e.g., hangout buddy) rather than as English teachers. For the WIT and WIL online activities, American and NK students selected individual topics to teach, exchanged their teaching materials, and learned from each other's teaching. Although NK students produced teaching materials containing English for the American counterpart, the focus of the teaching contents and the online comments from the American students were not about the NK students' language proficiency. For the face-to-face Summer Workshop, American students were expected to collaborate with the NK students to plan for their own buddy activities, solve the workbook problems, and carry out team missions together. Often, American students had to be dependent upon the NK students and follow the NK students' leads especially when they had to navigate unfamiliar South Korean locations and systems. The structure of the program provided clear orientation and expectation toward multilingualism for the American participants, which led them to believe that all communicative tools and languages are valued in this program. American students' multilingual orientation was also evident in the pre-workshop survey conducted between

the end of online activities and the beginning of the face to face workshop: Two students indicated that their lack of Korean language skills actually worried them the most in order to participate actively (Miranda's written response—"making mistakes speaking Korean"; Kacey's written response—"I don't know any Korean**.**"), which concerns more about their own multilingual repertoire than the NK students' English proficiency.

Although the teaching and learning activities were designed to be mutual between the American and NK students while guided by the multilingual and multicultural principles, American students noticed native speakerism from the interactions with some NK students:

> **Rachel**: Insup, his English was so great, but he would always almost all the time tell me 'oh no my English is really bad' but… we are having full-on conversations.
>
> **Author 3**: Actually, the university that Insup is attending right now, all of the classes in his college are in English.
>
> **Rachel**: And then he got into a really prestigious school in China as well. He speaks really good English, but he kept downplaying himself.
>
> **Author 3**: Yeah. Why?
>
> **Jennifer**: I think because we are native and the [societal] expectation, well, we don't have a high expectation, but talking to a native speaker has to be intimidating.
>
> **Kacey**: I think not only native speakers but just being American, I feel like he might see that America might be the best country. I have to speak really really well. It could have been different if [Insup] was talking to someone with other backgrounds speaking English.
>
> (American Students' Group Interview)

At the group interview, Rachel, who could speak four languages with English as her first language, recalled her own multilingual and transnational experiences and made connections with native speakerism in the US school systems that questioned her ability to learn as a British English speaker. She said:

> **Rachel:** I went to an international school and when I came [to US], I spelt "color" differently. And my teacher was like, that's wrong, and I'm no, it's not, it's correct…. I was just really upset because they put me in the ESL for so long. They put me in ESL for three years, but English was my first language along with what I spoke at home…[But] they kept insisting that I don't know proper English.

Through participating in this program, Rachel became more conscious about the native speakerism and was able to name it within her past experiences. Back then, Rachael's British English was regarded as less standard or less correct in American schools. Recalling the unsolved question about her childhood experience and connecting the incident to native speakerism, she realized that it was the ideology of nativeness, not the language (i.e., English) per se, that framed her linguistic identity as a 'non-native' English speaker. This was her new insight earned from her participation and reflection through the workshop.

Their participation in the multilingual activities pushed the American students to articulate native speakerism prevalent both in South Korea and the US. One of the participants indicated that "to [her] this workshop is *transcendent*" in that it gave her "opportunity and challenge to think outside of [her] comfortable languages and zones and experience different perspectives from different cultures" (Sandy's workbook). The American participants became more agentic and critical in naming the native speakerism and in resisting to conform to such practices (see the group interview excerpt below in 4.2.2.).

4.2.2. Linguicism: Challenges to practice multilingualism

> **Rachel:** I've noticed even when I try to order in Korean they just respond in English.
> **Kacey**: It happens all the time.
> **Sandy:** You'll be like, I want one latte, you'll say in Korean, "하나 주세요".
> They'll be like "One for here? Ice?"
> **Sandy:** I'm like yes and I'll try to continue speaking in Korean sometimes.
> **Rachel:** [Korean people] just immediately switch to English even if you speak in Korean to them.
> (American Students' Group Interview)

At first, the American students interpreted the Korean cashiers' switching from Korean into English as a thoughtful action. However, when similar incidents were repeated, they realized that their opportunities to practice multilingualism became limited. At the same time, such experience led American students to recognize the power and status of English in South Korea. Being aware of linguicism, some of them kept trying to practice Korean language, even when they were constantly "switch[ed] [back] to English " (American students group interview). As the American students became more comfortable in multilingual engagement throughout the program, they also saw themselves more frustrated when they encountered discourses imposed by linguicism. The on- and off-line multilingual program helped the American students see themselves as multilinguals rather than as English speakers and thus became more sensitive to the sociopolitical dynamics where two or more languages and

cultures were involved.

4.2.3. Normalization and appreciation through relationship building and perspective taking

Before they participate in any on- and off-line program, the American students were required to read a series of research articles on NK refugees and an autobiographical book written by a NK author. The common themes highlighted in the course materials were violence, exploitation, trauma, and resilience. Before having authentic relationships with the NK counterpart, the image of NK refugees for the American students was an *object of pity*, which might suggest a reductionistic and colonialistic understanding. Through direct and prolonged interactions with the NK students, the American students had chances to reevaluate their negative impressions on NK refugees and were able to see them first as *people*, who actually *hosted* the American students.

> **Rachel:** They're people. They're not any different. I just felt really bad because they were trying just so hard and I don't know I'm just used to doing everything for myself but they were just so considerate of every single little thing, so I think that was a big difference.
> **Kacey**: Yeah, even every time we were on the metro, [...] a seat opened up and they'll like "Do you want to sit?" and I'm like no no no, it's okay, and they would insist, and I'm like you sit. We're the same.
> **Sandy:** And they always make sure we get on to the train first.
> **Kacey**: And always hold the door open.
> **Rachel:** I just wrote that it was really great to have, how us as well as them both wanted to learn about each other. So we were doing our best instead of just, cause there are some programs where it's just sort of awkward and you don't really, you just sit through it. But I really enjoyed that, like how active and proactive the students were and it felt like we were connecting…
> **Kacey**: Yeah, also in terms of the surface level versus actually connecting,...putting ourselves in each other's shoes or us putting or seeing things from different perspectives. That was super cool, that was one of my favorite things. But the sharing and reflection was actually my favorite thing because it was super special to hear what they took from us.

Being knowledgeable about the NK refugees through published literature was part of the study abroad program learning objectives, however, it was almost impossible for them to exoticize and essentialize the NK refugees and their culture. Their direct interactions with the NK students helped the American students appreciate similarity and common humanity

that might have not been offered just by reading literature. They began to appreciate their NK counterpart's assets (e.g., being considerate, care, kindness, being reflective, speaking multiple languages fluently) rather than remaining in their previous image of deficiency. In fact, Kacey's comment (i.e., "putting ourselves in each other's shoes or us putting or seeing things from different perspectives") implies that she was developing and practicing empathy, which is the most common form of the advanced intercultural sensitivity.

5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study set out to showcase an ILE program between NK refugee students and American university students, and it found that the program had positive impacts on students' development of intercultural awareness and multilingualism, and specifically on motivating NK students' English learning. Differentiated from the limited and unequal communications often observed in English-only international programs, the participants were found to have new and eye-opening experiences of learning and communication during the ILE program.

The study is of significance because it tackles the ideology of native-speakerism embedded in English-mediated international programs by criticizing that to place excessive focus on 'nativeness' in the English language and Western culture can lead to unequal status for learning and communication between natives and non-natives in English. Aiming to develop the ILE program that challenges native-speakerism, the authors established principles for the program focusing on 'equal status and opportunities for learning and communication', 'intercultural learning through communication and interaction', and 'constant sharing and reflection.' Accordingly, the authors developed and implemented a variety of multilingual, multimodal, and translanguaging activities (e.g., WIT, WIL, and Summer Workshop).

Throughout the course of the study, manifestation and deconstruction of native-speakerism were observed in both parties of the students. For instance, using multiple languages and resources for communication, NK students began to overcome their identity as nonnative English speakers and to perceive English as one of the linguistic repertoires that they can use and wish to learn more to enhance communication and develop relationships. Further, as the NK students were asked to play leading roles of 'teachers' and 'hosts' in some activities of the program, English ability became not the only factor that positioned the participants' status in the program. This study has also demonstrated that promoting intercultural awareness, which is the ultimate goal of most international learning exchange programs, is possible through intimate and engaged intercultural communications supported by an equal relationship with each other. On the other hand, the study revealed how native-speakerism was socially ingrained affecting individuals even when they

attempted to reject or challenge it. The American participants, who positioned themselves as 'learning partners' rather than 'English teachers' in the multilingual and multicultural context of this ILE program, experienced that 'being an American speaking English as a native language' per se could "intimidate" the NK students and sometimes, limit their opportunity to be a multilingual.

Despite its exploratory nature, this study offers some insights into designing ILE programs in the future. First, ILE programs based on multilingualism and translanguaging can replace the absurd concepts of 'nativeness' or 'ownership of language' with the value of 'communicativeness.' Second, dynamics and flexibility in power distribution by reversed role-taking and translanguaging can create a more just and equitable context for communication and learning, overcoming the dichotomy of natives and nonnatives in English. And third, when designing ILE programs, culture should not be reduced or essentialized to a set of static traits based on nationality, language, or race, but it should be constructed through interactions. In this study, the ILE program was not the site where American culture and Korean culture met; instead, it was the space where individuals from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds gradually understand each other by breaking down their preconceptions and stereotypes.

Speakers of languages other than English are often labeled as 'nonnatives' or simply 'English language learners' in English-mediated international programs but this positioning is rarely questioned because of the idea that for linguistically minoritized students, such as NK refugees in this study, learning powerful language(s) would guarantee their success in schools and society. English is often considered 'unmarked' and dominant cultural knowledge. However, the authors of this study argue that ILE programs based on such monolingual, discriminatory, and culturally reductionist framework will have the very least chance to enhance participants' multilingual and intercultural understandings in this transnational and translingual era. Further, without critical understanding of and consistent effort to break down the deep-rooted and socially prevalent perception of native-speakerism, only *"tolerance"* towards non-native speakers, which Brown (2006) keenly pointed out as a means for "cover for Western imperialism" (p. 10), would be remained. Assuming that technology-driven international programs will be prospering in the Post COVID-19 era, it is hoped that this study made a case that shows the issues of power involving culture and language must be considered to make successful and meaningful learning happen in ILE programs.

Applicable levels: Secondary, tertiary

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