


RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Two different language ideologies and conflicting representations of China in Chinese Mandarin and *Hanja*

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## Abstract

This article demonstrates the ambivalent sentiments of Koreans toward China as represented by the ideological construction of *Hanja* (traditional Chinese characters) and Chinese Mandarin embodied in Korean media. Adopting discourse analysis to examine what is described by different language ideologies, this article investigates language discourses concerning *Hanja* and Mandarin, locating the former mainly within linguistic nationalism and the latter within linguistic instrumentalism. This article puts forth two suggestions. First, investigating linguistic nationalism in relation to the use of *Hanja* not only displays negative and antagonistic attitudes toward China and the use of *Hanja* as an embodiment of humiliating historical experiences but also shows ambiguity, fluidity, and vulnerability of Korean national identity. Second, in contrast to *Hanja*, Koreans' heated enthusiasm to learn Mandarin shows their affection for China as a global market and becomes intertwined with linguistic instrumentalism, embodying an articulation of neoliberalism by reproducing structures of inequality.

**Keywords:** *Hangeul*; *Hanja*; linguistic instrumentalism; linguistic nationalism; linguistic purism; Mandarin

## Introduction

According to Silverstein, language ideology indicates “any sets of beliefs about language articulated by the users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (Silverstein 1979, p. 193). Since his recognition of language beliefs as subjects of study has garnered substantial attention, language ideologies have been positioned as pivotal for comprehending how languages are conceptualized, evaluated, and represented in specific social contexts (Kroskrity 2000, 2004; Piller 2015; Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity 1998). The study of language ideologies provides a robust framework for understanding the profound implications and underlying assumptions of specific linguistic practices and their social embeddedness (Piller 2015; Silverstein 1979). Viewing the inseparable link between language and society through the lens of language ideologies emphasizes the crucial role of investigating a particular language ideology to comprehend how “linguistic forms, including whole languages, can index social groups” (Gal and Irvine 2000, p. 37). In this vein, Heath (1989) further underscores the sociocultural significance of language ideologies, defining them as the “self-evident ideas and objectives a group holds concerning roles of language in the social experiences of members as they contribute to the expression of the group” (53). In other words, while all languages may appear equal in their potential for meaning-making, as Woolard asserts that “ideologies of language are not about language alone” (Woolard 1998, p. 3), language ideologies in essence are seen as social constructs reflecting different meanings, feelings, and values about linguistic features to groups of speakers within a given society (Kroskrity 2004).

It is based on this understanding of language ideologies that this article aims to show ambivalent conflicting perceptions that are enmeshed in “a complex of linguistic practices mediated by language ideologies that connect to political-economic structures” (Kroskrity 2021, p. 181). Refusing to examine only one ideology for language ideological research, this article addresses language ideologies as “part of a larger complex of relevant beliefs and feelings, both indigenous and externally imposed, that may complement, contest, or otherwise dynamically interact with each other to modify language ideologies and linguistic practices” (Kroskrity 2018, p. 134). The sociolinguistic picture presented in this article illustrates that looking into “a single ideology” by no means suffices to explicate the complexities of language ideologies. Language ideologies constructed surrounding Mandarin and classical Chinese characters<sup>1</sup> (henceforth, *Hanja*, 漢字) in South Korea (henceforth, Korea) offer interesting cases. They demonstrate the importance of understanding the complexity of what people think about their linguistic resources and how different ideologies interact with each other rather than function exclusively. This implies that analyzing the interactions between ideologies invested in a specific language resource and its actual practice necessitates adopting a more dynamic perspective. We can also see how ideas and representations of a particular linguistic form are shaped and demonstrate the complicated nature of Koreans’ perceptions of China. Language ideologies come into play and present two contradictory sides of Korea’s relationship with China, which are embodied through two disparate functions of language, the symbolic and communicative functions (Edwards 1985), and become the ground on which multi-layered ideological representations are constructed (Gal and Irvine 1995). The particular context of and a close analysis of the discourses on *Hanja* and Mandarin can, therefore, offer a new site in which to discuss further “the relationship between linguistic ideologies and other, sociopolitical, or cultural ideologies” (Blommaert 2005, p. 171).

It is the undeniable fact that *Hanja* and Mandarin are respectively imported from and originated in China. *Hanja* persisted for the past two millennia as a dominant script and the primary writing system in the Korean peninsula from ancient times (King 1998; Lee and Ramsey 2001; Song 2005, 2012). On the contrary, Chinese Mandarin is the official Chinese language reformed in modern China (Coblin 2000; Dong 2020). However, when language discourses regarding Chinese Mandarin and *Hanja* are constructed in Korea, they come to forge diametrically different language ideologies. The former is directly germane to communicative function of language that involves an emphasis on linguistic instrumentalism (Wee 2003), evaluating language and culture on the basis of its practical and economic value, and ultimately projecting a pragmatic view onto China; Koreans’ enthusiasm for learning Mandarin, namely Mandarin fever, is the epitome (Jeong 2012; Kang 2017). In contrast, the latter is mainly associated with the symbolic function in the form of linguistic nationalism (King 2007; Ko and King 2014; Song 2005) that the use of *Hanja* is sometimes viewed as a vestige of the humiliating experiences under the umbrella of Sino-centric view. The controversy over whether to use the vernacular Korean script (henceforth, *Hangeul*, 한글) or *Hanja* in writing is the archetypal example of this. *Hangeul* proponents mainly reveal the conflicting language ideology by repeatedly asserting that *Hangeul* is superior to any other writing systems (King 2007) and that *Hanja* should be rooted out. To explore how such different and conflicting ideologies are shaped, it is critical to investigate media discourses given that “the representation of any issue for a mass audience has implications for the way it is understood” (Cameron 2007, p. 268). Therefore, by analyzing media discourses with respect to Mandarin and *Hanja*, this article presents different language ideologies as a key to demonstrating Koreans’ dichotomized perception of China.

In examining two different language ideologies, this paper also attempts to explore what implications of language ideologies reflected in the discourses of Mandarin and *Hanja* in Korea connote. First, this paper argues that investigating linguistic nationalism in relation to the use of *Hanja* not only displays negative and antagonistic attitudes toward *Hanja* as a script of an Other but also

<sup>1</sup>Mandarin refers to a language whereas *Hanja* indicates an inscriptional system, i.e., writing system that has been used in the Korean peninsula from ancient times. In this article, *Hanja* therefore means original Chinese characters (the script) in orthography, not a language.

shows ambiguity, fluidity, and vulnerability of Korean national identity. Those opponents clearly express their antipathy toward *Hanja* by emphasizing *Hanja* being “Chinese” characters that destroy the purity of Korean language and, thus, “foreign loanwords,” associating the exclusive use of *Hangeul* with independent cultural identity (King 1998; Ko and King 2014; Song 2012; Taylor and Taylor 2014). They identify *Hangeul* with “the marker” (Edwards 1985, p. 11), or essence, of national identity. It should be, however, noted that the justification for *Hangeul* over *Hanja* is a counterpoint to the argument that identifies *Hanja*, namely cultural heritage written in *Hanja*, with Korean cultural identity, in the long-standing debate on the policy over the use of *Hanja* since the late nineteenth century. For the proponents, *Hanja* is quintessential to Korean culture to the extent that an incomplete understanding of *Hanja* would hinder getting knowledge of cultural values (Song 2012). Therefore, the examples of linguistic nationalism in regard to the use of *Hanja* demonstrate the negative views toward China while showing how the interpretations of national identity can change and be socially and culturally constructed according to the boundary of self and other, and how they play as actors to define national identity. Second, I suggest that Mandarin fever, Koreans heated enthusiasm to learn Mandarin, not only shows their affection for China as a global market but also becomes intertwined with linguistic instrumentalism and embodies an articulation of neoliberalism, thereby engendering problematic effects, such as social inequality of access to the acquisition of linguistic capital in the sociolinguistic picture.

### Prior literature on the use of *Hanja* and Chinese Mandarin in the media

Koreans’ enthusiasm for learning foreign languages emerged with the painful experience from the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and vicious globalization mobilized by neoliberalism in the late 1990s. In particular, forced globalization made Koreans realize that they have to make an endless effort to survive cut-throat competition (Park 2009). As a result, it engendered the perception of a foreign language, i.e., English (and later Mandarin), as one form of economic capital, rather than as a means of communication. For example, linguistic instrumentalism, in tandem with neoliberalism, has significantly promoted the perspective that language serves as a means to gain an economic advantage. Consequently, proficient English language skills are believed to facilitate economic and social advancement (Park 2011). Similarly, as China’s global economic power increases, skills in Mandarin begin to play a major role in securing successful employment, with an emphasis on the economic value of the language. Like English, Mandarin is evaluated on the basis of its economic or “instrumental” value (Kang 2012), which has made more college students and parents pay attention to the growing importance of Mandarin in education and the job market. Such an example of linguistic instrumentalism, which recognizes and evaluates Mandarin in relation to the economic development of China, can be observed in the Singaporean case (Kang 2012; Wee 2003, 2006).

By contrast, the debate on *Hanja* is not a newly emerged issue. It was already a heated topic in the late nineteenth century with the germination of Koreans’ nationalism. At the time, progressive intellectuals and conservative supporters of Chinese writing had debates over whether to write in *Hangeul* or *Hanja* (King 1998). After Korea’s independence from colonial Japan in 1945 until the National Language Basic Law enacted in 2005, the government language policy consistently changed between anti- and pro-*Hanja*, resulting in a relentless tug-of-war between the supporters and opponents (King 2007; Song 2012). The policy seems to bring the issue to an end by legitimizing *Hangeul* as the only national script. However, the use of *Hanja* becomes a controversial issue that constantly resurfaces in contemporary Korea with two diametric arguments as in a century ago.

There are a number of scholarly works discussing the history of *Hanja* and its social meanings. However, most researchers pay more attention to the contour of the *Hanja* history rather than observing linguistic nationalism. For instance, adopting a linguistic approach, Ko and King (2014) pays close attention to the history of the Korean language, introducing *Hanja*-related debates with focus on Korean literature. Similarly, Lee and Ramsey (2011) touch upon discourses over the use of *Hanja* by focusing on the historical development of the Korean writing system. Taylor and Taylor (2014)

also thematize the history of *Hanja* with a brief introduction of the past and present *Hanja* use. Although these studies offer the contour of the history of *Hanja*, they primarily deploy a linguistic approach without paying much attention to ideological discourses.

There are a few studies addressing issues of the use of *Hanja*. King, for example, discusses different perceptions of *Hanja* in pre-colonial Korea by looking at the Korean language situation in relation to nationalism and language reform (King 1998). He also briefly introduces a perceived aversion to the use of *Hanja* in contemporary Korea (King 2007). Likewise, Song (2005) addresses controversial issues regarding the use of *Hanja* in a detailed way, arguing that *Hanja* will not completely disappear in Korean culture. In his discussion about the language purification movement in modern Korea, Park (1989) puts forth a meticulous list of the rationales for language purification.

While these studies provide much insight into a sociolinguistic picture related to *Hanja*, their studies are confined to either linguistic or historical aspects of *Hanja* itself. Considering the long-standing history of *Hanja* in Korean culture, it is surprising that virtually no research has so far been done on Koreans' understanding of China through the use of *Hanja* nor critically analyzed linguistic nationalism represented by *Hanja* in the media. Moreover, two different language ideologies derived from *Hanja* and Mandarin provide glimpses of multi-layered Koreans' perceptions of China; little research has focused on language ideologies invested in them.

Regarding the popularity of Mandarin in Korea, there is only one research report that describes the status of Mandarin in comparison with English to predict if Mandarin could overtake English to become the most predominant foreign language in Korea (Kang 2017). However, it does not investigate language ideology, nor is an in-depth discussion on Mandarin and linguistic instrumentalism provided. Therefore, my study aims to demonstrate Koreans' ambivalent views in flux toward China while showing two different ideologies derived from *Hanja* and Mandarin to help us better understand the sociolinguistic picture in contemporary Korean society.

### Situating *Hanja* and Mandarin within English-dominant Korean society

In Korea, *Hanja*<sup>2</sup> is not the only language resource that manifests linguistic nationalism. A strong resistance toward the pervasiveness of English is another example. English has enjoyed its status as the first foreign language as a result of globalization and government education policy. For example, the government introduced English tests in the college entrance exam in 1991 and conglomerate companies began to highly value competence in English for global competition (Kang 2017; Park 2009; Park and Bae 2009). The acquisition of English skills naturally comes to mean access to higher education and more opportunities in the job market, resulting in a deeply held popular belief that English is a key to success (Cho 2017; Park 2009; Song 2018). However, for Koreans who project their ethnic and national identity onto the Korean language, English is nothing but “a language of an Other” (Park 2009, p. 77). Perceiving that they rarely speak English in their daily interactions, Koreans closely align the use of English with the disruption of Koreans' ethnic identity and the language (Lee 2018; Park 2009).

<sup>2</sup>Although *Hanja* itself was imported from China, some of *Hanja* words were also derived from Sino-Japanese words. There are primarily two cases: borrowing new Sino-Japanese words from Japan when importing Western technology and ideas in the mid-nineteenth century, and replacing Sino-Korean words with Sino-Japanese words by the Japanese colonial government during the Japanese occupation (1910–1945). However, few Sino-Japanese words remain in Korean. There are largely two reasons. First, due to the traumatic colonial experience, the government-initiated purification campaigns aimed at removing Japanese loanwords from the late 1950s until the early 1990s (King 2007; Lee 2017; Song 2005). Second, when coining new words to explain Western concepts, Japanese also borrowed Chinese characters, which later were reborrowed into Korean in a written form. Koreans read these Sino-Japanese words based on Sino-Korean pronunciation. Moreover, given the fact that they are rooted in Chinese characters, Sino-Japanese words were not regarded as Japanese loanwords but as *Hanja* (Sohn 2006; Song 2005). Therefore, when referring to Chinese characters in Korean, they commonly encompass not only Sino-Korean vocabulary coined in Korea but also those borrowings from both China and Sino-Japanese.

Despite linguistic nationalism being a useful lens to explain the place of English and *Hanja* in Korea, not only *Hanja* and English, but also Mandarin, diverge from each other in the specific mechanism upholding their discourses and status. First, different factors rationalize the necessity of *Hanja*, Mandarin, and English. Forces of globalization undergird Mandarin and English as “must languages.” However, *Hanja* is promoted as a Korean cultural heritage and for disambiguation of word meanings. Second, in contrast to English and *Hanja*, it is rare to find ideology-charged debates on Mandarin itself. That is, the discourse on Mandarin<sup>3</sup> is mostly centered around linguistic instrumentalism. The reason for this largely lies in (1) the extent of pervasiveness of the language in Korean society, and (2) whether the increasing influence of the language is considered to disrupt national and ethnic identity. For example, historically, there were a series of attempts to remove *Hanja* and English from Korean culture (Park 2009; Song 2005). However, with Mandarin’s short history in Korean society, it is not yet conceived of as a menacing force to be reckoned with. Moreover, compared to the ineluctability of English in the Korean educational system and of *Hanja* as “naturalized components of the Korean language” (Ko and King 2014, p. 92), the use of Mandarin is relatively circumscribed to companies and colleges (Kang 2017). For these reasons, Mandarin tends to be considered not so much a threat to national identity as an economic resource.

Lastly, each bears different status in the linguistic market. While English and Mandarin compete for hegemony, *Hanja* is almost losing its momentum, albeit not completely, with the discontinuation of its use in writing and printing (Lee and Ramsey 2011; Taylor and Taylor 2014). It also should be noted that although the number of Mandarin learners skyrocketed, precedence is still taken over by English due to Korea’s educational system (Park and Bae 2009). Therefore, there is a clear hierarchy between the three language resources.

### Materials and analytical frameworks

To provide a lean discussion on different narratives of *Hanja* and Mandarin, this paper mainly adopts content analysis to examine the ideological framing of *Hanja* and Mandarin in the media articles, mainly drawing on the online news articles. The date collection period spanned from August 21, 1992, to December 31, 2021. There had been debates<sup>4</sup> on *Hangeul* and *Hanja* at the turn of the

<sup>3</sup>In this article, the language ideology of Mandarin is shown to be similar to that of English only in that both languages are mainly regarded as “social capital.” However, it should be noted that since the data collection for this study was done in March 2022, this study cannot represent the most recent change in the language ideology of Mandarin in Korea. Further case studies on the language ideology of Mandarin are needed to understand the complexities of the language ideology in Korea.

<sup>4</sup>As briefly mentioned above, the debate on *Hangeul* and *Hanja* traces back over a century in Korea, beginning during the “enlightened period” between 1890 and 1910 (King 2007; Lee and Ramsey 2011). When King Sejong first invented the *Hangeul* writing system, the ruling class, who had been using *Hanja* as their writing system, treated *Hangeul* with disdain, while noble women and commoners were embracing a new writing system (Song 2005). The ruling class kept holding onto the use of *Hanja*, which therefore continued to signify one’s social status and erudition until the late nineteenth century (Song 2012). However, with nationalist awakening in response to colonial powers, a group of progressive Korean intellectuals started to emphasize the true significance of the vernacular Korean script (*Hangeul*). For example, language reformers such as Seo Jaepil (서재필) and Chu Sikyung (추시경), advocated for the use of vernacular Korean by publishing the “Independent Newspaper” (*Toklip Sinmun*, 독립신문) from 1896 to 1899. It was exclusively written in *Hangeul*, with editorials calling for language reform. By linking the use of *Hangeul* to national independence, they pushed for the abolition of *Hanja* as a foreign script (King 1998, 2007). Similar arguments are also found in other newspapers, articles, and booklets that are published between 1899 and 1910, such as *The Korea Daily News* (*Daehan Mail Sinbo*, 대한매일신보). By contrast, the conservatives, such as Yeo Gyuhyung (여규형), put out articles in 1908 and defended the use of *Hanja* by contesting that *Hanja* is not only the original Korean script but also deeply rooted in Korean culture. This debate on two different writing systems continued after independence from Japan. However, the controversy surrounding the issue has significantly diminished over time, primarily because *Hanja* has gradually lost its predominance due to the rise of English and, *Hanja* education, which was a compulsory subject in middle and high schools, was changed to an elective subject (Song 2012). It should also be noted that the growing significance of learning Mandarin in the early 2000s has influenced the perceptions of *Hanja*, fostering a more pragmatic approach to *Hanja* education, which will be explained later in this article. The full discussion of the debate on *Hangeul* and *Hanja* in the early twentieth century is beyond the scope of this study. For further information, see King (1998).



twentieth century in the Korean peninsula (King 1998) whereas so-called “Mandarin fever” began to appear in the late twentieth century. Therefore, I chose August 24, 1992, as the starting date because it is when Korea and China established their diplomatic relations. Since then, the flow of trade between two countries gradually began to grow, which resulted in driving the demand for Mandarin (Kang 2017). For this reason, collecting data from 1992 made it possible to provide two conflicting perceptions of China by contextualizing different narratives of *Hanja* and Mandarin. This paper also attempts to consider the most recent trends in the perceptions of *Hanja* and Mandarin. Thus, I chose December 31, 2021, as the end date.<sup>5</sup>

The articles were sourced from press outlets, such as *Chosun pub* (<http://m.pub.chosun.com>), *Chinese Educational Development Institute* (<http://ccroom.net>), *dongA.com* (<https://www.donga.com>), *Economy Talk News* (<https://www.economytalk.kr>), *Geoje News* (<https://www.geojenews.co.kr>), *JoongAng Ilbo* (<https://www.joongang.co.kr>), *Kukmin Ilbo* (<http://news.kmib.co.kr>), *Kyeonggi News* (<https://www.kgnews.co.kr>), *Maeil Business Newspaper* (<https://www.mk.co.kr/news>), *OhmyNews* (<http://www.ohmynews.com>), and *The Voice of Seoul* (<http://www.amn.kr>). From the selected sources not only news reports on *Hanja* and Mandarin, but also a wealth of op-eds was also collected. All Korean media articles were searched and collected through the *Bigkinds* (<https://www.bigkinds.or.kr>) database. For this study, several keywords were selected to focus on different language discourses. When narrowing down keywords, I was aware that since Xi Jinping came into power, Chinese nationalism frequently sparked conflicts between Chinese and Korean netizens to the extent that some high schoolers were reluctant to pick up Mandarin because of negative perceptions of China caused by “cultural origin dispute” (Jeong 2012). Mindful of this countertrend, keywords such as *junggugeo yeolpung* (Mandarin fever, 중국어 열풍), *junggugeo sagyoyuk* (Mandarin private education, 중국어 사교육), *junggugeo yuchiwon* (Mandarin kindergarten, 중국어 유치원), *junggugeo jeongong* (Mandarin major, 중국어 전공) were used to search for articles on Mandarin. In regard to *Hanja*, given that this study aims to investigate language ideologies entrenched in *Hanja*, I opted for narrowing the database search to specific phrases and keywords. The search term, *Hanjagyoyuk* (*Hanja* education, 한자교육), was used, because language and education policy of *Hanja* has caused debates since independence in 1945 from colonial Japan (King 2007; Ko and King 2014; Lee and Ramsey 2001; Taylor and Taylor 2014). *Hanja* education aside, the debates on whether to use *Hanja* or *Hangeul* for the characters, *Gwanghwamun* (광화문), written on the sign of the *Gwanghwamun* gate, which started in the early 2000s, is the most recent ongoing controversial issue that throws the ideologization of the use of *Hanja* into high relief. It shows that *Hanja* is recurrently associated with the past experiences under the heel of the Sino-centric world view. Considering this, media articles were collected by using such phrases as *Gwanghwamun Hanjasayong* (Use of *Hanja* at *Gwanghwamun*, 광화문 한자사용), *Hanjasayongeun junggugui sokgugeul uimihana* (Does using *Hanja* in our daily lives imply that Korea is still subordinate to China? 한자사용은 중국의 속국을 의미하나?).

In addition to this, riding the wave of the popularity of Mandarin, discourses on *Hanja* started to shift in ways. For example, linguistic pragmatism began to be drawn upon to promote *Hanja* education, i.e., evaluating *Hanja* only predicated upon its usefulness and practicality for learning Mandarin. Therefore, to provide a more thorough analysis of the linguistic picture, I also paid attention to media articles thematizing the usefulness of *Hanja* for Mandarin learning. Given this, the following search terms such as *Hanjawa junggugeo hakseup* (*Hanja* and Mandarin education, 한자와 중국어 교육), *Hanjawa junggugeo* (*Hanja* and Mandarin, 한자와 중국어), and *Ganchewa Hanja* (Simplified Chinese characters and *Hanja*, 간체와 한자) were used. As a result, in total, 269 articles relevant to the keywords were identified. I read through and examined all 269 articles. Following the process of singling out pieces that directly concern linguistic nationalism and linguistic instrumentalism, and the critical reading of these articles, two semantic macrostructures common to newspapers

<sup>5</sup>I started collecting data in January 2022 and finished organizing them in March 2022. For this reason, the most updated data used for this study is the article published on October 10, 2021, on the debate over the use of *Hanja* or *Hangeul* for the signboard in *Gwanghwamun* (<https://www.mk.co.kr/news/society/10054948>).

concerning the use of *Hanja* were found: (1) supporting the use of *Hanja* by identifying *Hanja* with national identity, and (2) regarding *Hanja* as a script of an Other that contaminates the national identity and national language. These two different language ideologies demonstrate the contingency of constructing national identity and its essence. In particular, the latter tends to imply a negative perception of China as an unwanted foreign force. When it comes to news articles on Mandarin, one semantic macrostructure was found, that is to consider Mandarin as a commodifiable resource and China as an enormous global market.

The ideological framing of *Hanja* and Mandarin will be examined by adopting discourse analysis. There are a variety of approaches to discourse analysis, and all share the view that meanings of discourse do “not occur in a vacuum” but “are created, supported, and contested...emanate from interactions between social groups and the complex societal structures in which the discourse is embedded” (Hardy 2001, p. 28). This study thus presupposes that those discourses constructed around *Hanja* and Mandarin are understood to demonstrate that meaning is constantly negotiated. Such an approach enables the analysis of how ambivalent perceptions of China are socially constructed and also helps to capture the complex accounts of the Koreans’ sentiments toward China. Particularly, this study regards linguistic nationalism and linguistic instrumentalism as Koreans’ “basic frameworks of social recognition” of China that are “shared by members of social groups,” functioning to organize “the social representations of the group” (Van Dijk 1995, p. 248).

Axiomatically, being associated with an emblem of nation-state, language is a discursive means that constructs national identity (Edwards 2009; Safran 2004). As one element among many others mobilized as distinctive national characters, language plays a role of “delimiting the boundaries” and, therefore, protecting and maintaining one’s own national language are considered to protect national identity (Edwards 2009). The strong connection between language and nationalism can be seen in the discourses constructed around *Hanja*. Two opposing discourses produced by opponents and proponents of the use of *Hanja* put forth language as an identity marker, a symbol of groupness (Edwards 2009). However, they also demonstrate that reinforcing linguistic nationalism gives rise to exclusion of a certain group. An example is the perception of China represented by the opponents of the use of *Hanja*. They consider using *Hanja* to be a literary yoke and national humiliation (Park 1989). Therefore, linguistic nationalism expressed by opponents of the use of *Hanja* represents China as an unwanted force.

In contrast to this, “Mandarin fever” manifested by linguistic instrumentalism shows a different perception of China. Linguistic instrumentalism means to evaluate a language strictly based on the economic value and suggests that the viability of a language is contingent upon its usefulness (Wee 2003). It tends to recognize a language as an economic resource rather than as a marker of national identity (Heller 2010; Pomerantz 2002; Wee 2003, 2006). For example, Wee exemplifies linguistic instrumentalism by looking at language policy in Singapore that emphasizes Mandarin education due to the development of China as a global market (Wee 2003, 2006). Likewise, the education of Mandarin in Korea that stresses the instrumental value of the language in achieving “economic development or social mobility” (Wee 2003, p. 211) recognizes China as an attractive global market. In this regard, linguistic instrumentalism in conjunction with linguistic nationalism is a useful means in understanding how the perception of China shifts according to different linguistic contexts. Since this study discusses two different perceptions of China by investigating language ideologies while attempting to paint a sociolinguistic picture in contemporary Korean society, linguistic nationalism and linguistic instrumentalism will be used as the main frameworks.

## Findings and analysis

### *Hanja, linguistic nationalism, and representation of China*

As noted, language figures prominently in establishing the boundary between “in-group” and “out-group” to consolidate internal cohesion and produce national identities (Anderson 2006). In particular, language seen as a key element in defining national identity played a pivotal role for European

linguistic nationalism in the late eighteenth century (Patten 2006). Linguistic nationalists believed that promoting national language was a political concern, and they emphasized the importance of having standardized national language to establish a unified national identity and political legitimacy. Linguistic nationalism, in this regard, can be referred to as “the ideological mobilization of language as a medium and object of collective self-definition as a nation” (De Bres, Cosme, and Remesch 2020, p. 780). However, the ideological process of constructing the boundary is so complicated that, as Hobsbawm states, “national identification and what it is believed to imply, can change and shift in time, even in the course of quite short periods” (Hobsbawm 1992, p. 11). Discourses on the use of *Hanja* that appear in the media can be seen as examples in which language continues to play its role in revealing contingency of the interpretations of national identity. Intertwined with nationalist ideology, two different views of *Hanja* link different linguistic resources with a legitimate national marker. They invoke language nationalism by emphasizing the symbolic aspect of each linguistic resource to mobilize it as an unique emblem of national identity, demonstrating the power of language ideologies that “become instruments of power as part of larger ideological complexes” (Blommaert 2005, p. 171). Language ideologies influence how we practice the use of linguistic resources. The most typical language issue in contemporary Korea in the context of whether publicly to use *Hanja* or not is an article written in 2014 on the marking of *Gwanghwamun* (光化門) in *Hanja*. It clearly shows the rhetoric of Korean language purification associating *Hangeul* with national identity.

#### Example 1

The pope, Francesco, will visit Korea and beatify on the plaza of *Gwanghwamun* in Seoul on August 16 ... The signboard with *Gwanghwamun* written in *Hanja* will be broadcasted to the whole world and billions of people around the world will be watching it. People could misunderstand that Korea is still a tributary country subordinate to either China or Japan. If *Gwanghwamun* written in *Hanja* is broadcasted, Korea will be considered a savage country where Chinese characters are predominantly in use because they have no language of their own. It is shameful not to hang the signboard with *Gwanghwamun* in *Hangeul* because Korea as a sovereign country has a scientific and sophisticated language ... If the signboard, “門化光” (*Gwanghwamun*), is covered in *Hangeul* ... it will be a good opportunity to let people around the world know that *Hangeul* is our greatest cultural inheritance so Korea will be seen as a civilized country .... (Kim 2014)

According to Park (1989), there are two main rationales justifying language purification, one of which is decontamination. It is the most frequently cited rationale for eradicating foreign elements from the Korean language as they are considered threats to the purity of both the Korean language and the Korean psyche. The other one is national identification which symbolizes Korea as a sovereign nation by associating *Hangeul* with national identity (Park 1989). In the article above, the author vehemently argues that using *Hanja* is disgraceful to Korean people while accentuating that letting the world know the presence of Koreans’ greatest cultural inheritance, *Hangeul*, will lead to enhancement of the nation’s prestige. Directly associating *Hangeul* with the national identity, and furthermore employing it as a boundary distinguishing in-group and out-group, the author views both decontamination and national identification as essential to protect national identity. The sentiment of nationalism is again embodied in the expression “greatest cultural inheritance,” confirming Anderson’s argument that language creates the imagination that fellow members share the same history and values, and thus, it results in a sense of belonging galvanizing unity between insiders (Anderson 2006).

It also should be noted that having *Hangeul* as the emblem of Korean identity is crucially significant to the extent that the native script works to determine perceptions and images of outsiders/out-groups as opposed to the in-group. Drawing on the importance of protecting and achieving nationhood derived from *Hangeul*, the article positions China as a foreign force endangering the national identity and contributes to forging national images in a negative way by reminding the reader of the humiliating experiences with such expressions as “Korea is still a tributary country



subordinate to either China” and “because they have no language of their own.” In effect, *Hangeul* proponents frequently adopt this rhetoric to solidify nationalistic consciousness by projecting national identity onto *Hangeul*.

This same idea is manifest in the earlier debate in 2010 over the use of *Hanja* for the signboard at Gwanghwamun. Song Hyun, the director of the Korean Cultural Center, bemoaned hanging the signboard written as 光化門 as “little short of showing to people around the world the traces of humiliating history that Korea had to experience by paying tributes to China” (Park 2010). Again, referencing the humiliating experience and naturalizing linkage between the language and nationhood, Song regards the use of *Hanja* as a script of an Other while justifying removing it and promoting the salience of instituting *Hangeul* for Korea’s sovereignty. Moreover, it suggests that lurking behind the concern, there is the image of China as an unwanted foreign influence through associating *Hanja* in and of itself with China and, therefore, the use of *Hanja* with a threat to the national identity.

The definition of linguistic purism developed by Thomas offers a framework for understanding further the issues relating to language discourses regarding *Hanja*. In the words of Thomas (1991), purism is “the manifestation of a desire on the part of a speech community to preserve a language from, or rid it of, putative foreign elements or other elements held to be undesirable” (Thomas 1991, p. 12). According to him, linguistic purism is based on four perceptions of language, of which two are applicable here. One is that a language “can be divided into acceptable and unacceptable elements” and the other one is that the elements of a language “can be labeled ‘pure’ or ‘impure’ respectively” (Thomas 1991, p. 35). For the abolitionists, *Hanja* is obviously an “unacceptable” element contaminating the purity of *Hangeul* that represents Korean “national identity and essence.” Such linguistic purism can be seen in the government language policy. Particularly, it is worth noting “The Article 14 of the Framework Act on the National Language” established in 2005 to enact only-*Hangeul* policy for government documents, the basic idea of which is to “recognize that the Korean language is the most valuable cultural heritage of the nation” (Sports and Tourism, Ministry of Culture 2022). In general, regulating the use of *Hanja* can be regarded as a conscious constitutional attempt to bring about specific desired achievement to carry out purification of Korean. Article 14 stipulates that “When drawing up public documents of official institutions, only the following cases are allowed to use either *Hanja* or foreign languages in parentheses. 1. When necessary to clarify the meaning of a word, 2. When using either difficult and unfamiliar jargon or neologism” (Sports and Tourism, Ministry of Culture 2022).

According to Article 14 as decreed, there are three primary types of writing systems in Korea: Chinese characters (*Hanja*), foreign languages (foreign loanwords), and native Korean script (*Hangeul*). However, it divides language resources into acceptable (*Hangeul*) and unacceptable (foreign languages and *Hanja*) by specifying the cases in which *Hanja* and foreign languages can and cannot be used in government official documents. Considering the division of different types of language and the implication of the policy that recognizes only *Hangeul* as an official script, it clearly yet implicitly conveys a language ideology, that is linguistic purism, in line with the idea that *Hangeul* is considered pure, desirable, acceptable, homogeneous, and, therefore, a unique national character, or “the most valuable cultural heritage.” In contrast, any foreign loanwords and *Hanja* are seen as impure, undesirable, and unacceptable because they contaminate and threaten native pure culture and national identity. The stipulation does not explicitly express antagonization toward or show any explicit attempt to uproot Chinese characters. Nevertheless, Article 14 recognizing *Hangeul* as an official script is often invoked by appealing to the nationalist sentiment in validating purists’ ideology and, undoubtedly, finds expression in the form of linguistic nationalism. For example, the article below deplores the indiscriminate usage of *Hanja*, and The Article 14 serves to justify the main idea of it. The relevant excerpt is as follows.

#### Example 2

If foreigners saw elementary and middle schools whose names are made up of *Hanja* (Chinese characters), they would misunderstand them as Chinese schools. I am concerned about the indiscriminate use of Chinese characters that make foreigners mistakenly conceive of Korea as a

tributary country of China...The indiscriminate use of *Hanja* disturbs our language use, which could result in the loss of our subjectivity. The Framework Act on the National Language stipulates public documents of public institutions must be written in the Korean language. (Yoon 2018)

The article defines *Hanja* as an undesirable foreign element necessary to be stripped because it contaminates the purity of *Hangeul*. The author shows the purist orientation toward *Hangeul* by linking “the indiscriminate use of *Hanja*” with “losing our subjectivity.” The exclusive use of *Hangeul* connotes Korea’s identity, thereby not practicing it is to infect “our identity” with disruption of “our language.” Though linguistic nationalism is not thrown into sharp relief in the National Language Law, the article above demonstrates the underlying language ideology of *Hanja* that implicitly connects the use of *Hanja* with foreign contamination and alludes to how it serves to distinguish between “authentic native language” and “impure languages” not qualified as such.

Mary Douglas in her book, *Purity and Danger* (2003), analyzes how “pure and impure” within the social interaction are constructed, elaborating on the constructedness of the quality of purity. Her analysis of “matter out of place” validates the fact that linguistic purism is a relational phenomenon. That pure and impure are contingent upon their placement can be reflected by different perceptions of what defines national essence and identity; discourses constructed regarding the use of *Hanja* are cases in point. As noted above, for purists, *Hangeul* is the only script that represents and distinguishes national identity from others. By contrast, there is another language ideology demonstrating the constructedness of “matter at its right place,” i.e., the national essence. It associates, along with *Hangeul*, *Hanja* as a quintessential element in Korean culture with the nation’s cultural identity. With the justification of *Hanja* over *Hangeul* and emphasis on its history, proponents of *Hanja* identify *Hanja* with the national identity predicated on the fact that “written language – the language of the bureaucracy and of high culture – was formal written Chinese” (King 2007, p. 202) since its importation during the Unified Shilla period. After such time, the elimination of *Hanja* represents nothing less than to lose access to a repository of the rich cultural heritage. An example of this can be seen in articles on the same subject, the use of *Hanja*, in which part of them states:

#### Example 3

We should protect ethnic identity by using *Hangeul* mixed with *Hanja*. Koreans began to adopt *Hanja* in the first century. *Hyangga* (향가)...which records the origin of homogeneous Korean ethnic unity, are all written in *Hanja*... When they were written was the juncture at which homogeneous Korean ethnic spirit had begun to emerge since they show ethnic spirit and justify the legitimacy of the ethnic Korean nation-state. For this reason, not using *Hanja* amounts to forgetting the origin of ethnic spirit. If you cut loose from the ethnic origin, the consequence will be the loss of your ethnic identity. (Kim 2010)

#### Example 4

First, I am concerned that it (eradicating *Hanja*) could lead to disrespecting the heritage descended from our ancestors ... the Korean peninsula began to accommodate *Hanja* since BC 194 and for this reason, *Hanja* has been the only tool for a very long time that reifies our spiritual culture more than anything else. (Son 2020)

In the above articles, the fact is emphasized that *Hanja* is shown to play a significant role in embodying Korean history and culture to the extent that they are seen as rooted in *Hanja*. Adhering to the use of *Hanja* is rendered legitimate because it is defined as a core national value in that *Hanja* reifies “spiritual culture” and justifies “legitimacy of the ethnic Korean nation-state.” Consequently, not knowing *Hanja* could lead to “disrespecting the heritage descended from our ancestors.” Indeed, *Hanja* had been used for thousands of years, due in part to its deep connection to Confucianism, as the sole medium of writing for much of Korean history (Park 1989; Song 2012; Taylor and Taylor 2014).

Given this historical context, its advocates' complaints of the attempt to diminish the use of *Hanja* are seemingly not implausible. Of interest in their argument, however, is that the proponents for the use of *Hanja* above do capitalize on language nationalism applicable to the language purists.

King (2007), referring to Gardt's elaboration on language nationalism, points out that a unique feature of language nationalism is to attribute to one's own language "antiquity, genealogical purity, structural homogeneity" and to identify the "language character, nature, or essence with a unique national or ethnic character" (King 2007, p. 219). Also, language nationalism formulates the assertion that a foreign language and culture can endanger the integrity of a language and national identity (King 2007). As we have seen, purists claim to restrict the use of *Hanja*, because they see *Hanja* as a foreign and undesirable writing system contaminating and endangering "the integrity and identity" of the nation, whereas *Hangeul* has "a unique national character." In the same vein, the proponents of *Hanja* in the article suggest that it is *Hanja* that serves as the salient marker of symbolizing national identity, to the point where limiting or abolishing the use of *Hanja* could bring about "the endangerment of the integrity and identity." *Hanja* is considered not so much a foreign element held to be undesirable as the quintessence of national identity. It is through the identification of *Hanja* with the essence of national character that language nationalism comes into play. From this viewpoint, *Hanja* is the manifestation of "antiquity" and "genealogical purity" to which national essence is embedded on account of its preservation of the unbroken tradition. The examples from the articles above therefore explicitly show how two conflicting ideologies on *Hanja* co-exist in Korean culture and come into force in different ways to define the national identity.

Another implication from *Hanja* discourses is that linguistic nationalism and pragmatism<sup>6</sup> work non-exclusively in that they can be projected upon the same language resource. They are inherent in discourses of the use of *Hanja* and mobilized for contrasting language practices. For instance, opponents of *Hanja* put forth practical factors for adapting *Hangeul* instead of *Hanja*, e.g., *Hangeul*'s efficiency for learning makes it possible to remove illiteracy and to enable convenient communication (Song 2005). Similarly, those arguing for the use of *Hanja* undergird their argument by suggesting that *Hanja* is one effective way for visual communication and the disambiguation of homonyms (Song 2005). Indeed, *Hanja* comes to be handy when distinguishing Korean homonyms (Taylor and Taylor 2014). In this regard, it is possible for a linguistic resource to be indexed as national and ethnic identity and still to be accompanied by pragmatism, i.e., a convenient communicative function. Through language nationalism constructed in reference to *Hanja* and *Hangeul* we, therefore, can get glimpses of how the interpretations of national identity can change and be socially and culturally constructed according to the boundary of self and others. Furthermore, we can see how these interpretations play as actors to define national identity by being intertwined with linguistic nationalism and pragmatism.

### Linguistic instrumentalism in Mandarin and its consequences

While debates regarding *Hanja* are identified with a heavily loaded sense of linguistic nationalism and hatred of sorts toward China is aroused by associating it with an unwanted foreign force, the representation of Mandarin is solely predicated on economic value, along with the significance of Chinese economy. Interestingly, the economic value of Mandarin often affects the perceptions of *Hanja* and fosters a pragmatic approach to it.<sup>7</sup> Edwards (1985) suggests that linguistic practicality, social mobility, and economic advancement are so important that if learning a specific language is conducive to the economic circumstance and proved to have greater economic value, people begin to learn the language,

<sup>6</sup>I am intentionally using pragmatism instead of instrumentalism. Linguistic instrumentalism, according to Wee (2003), is mainly predicated upon "the economic value" of a language, which helps one achieve social mobility. However, in the *Hanja* case, convenient communication is emphasized rather than the economic value of *Hanja*. Therefore, pragmatism is more suitable for this case.

<sup>7</sup>This is not arguing that familiarity with *Hanja* is "linguistically useful" in learning Mandarin. Rather, this paper argues that the pragmatic view of Mandarin is projected onto *Hanja*, constructing an ideological discourse of "Having knowledge of *Hanja* can help learners overcome constraints in learning Mandarin."

and language loyalty will persist. In particular, Edwards's observation can be verified by the increased survivability of the language, i.e., *Hanja*, when the practical value of it is recognized thanks to Mandarin. Moreover, although one may venture that *Hanja* seems to be on its way out due to the decrease of its use (Taylor and Taylor 2014), there is also a likelihood to boost the use of *Hanja* by associating it with the promotion of Mandarin, as China is widely recognized as an enormous global market (Song 2005). For instance, in the following article, *Hanja* education is supported in relation to learning Mandarin.

#### Example 5

The recent craze for early study in Mandarin also promotes *Hanja* education ... Many *Hanja* characters that have been assimilated into the Korean language are also commonly being used in contemporary Chinese (Mandarin) and Japanese. 50% of *Hanja* characters that make up the Korean language can be found in Chinese. (Park 2007)

The article stresses the practical value of learning *Hanja*, pointing out that one can exploit the advantages of understanding Korean language made up of *Hanja* in learning Mandarin, because *Hanja* has been preserved since the medieval period closely in parallel to Japanese and Chinese. It also accentuates the current trend of "early study in Mandarin" promoting *Hanja* education. Of interest in this article is the rationalization of learning *Hanja*. In contrast to the discourse constructed by *Hanja* opponents, humiliating historical experiences implied in the use of *Hanja* are obliterated by the practical value of it. China is also no longer represented as an unwanted foreign force but as a market, a source from which one can reap economic benefits. This view is more clearly reified when the practical or economic value of Mandarin is recognized.

#### Example 6

What is a simplified Chinese characters test? It aims to overcome the fundamental limitations the current *Hanja* tests have in preparation for the ever-growing demand in Mandarin ... Learn Chinese characters Chinese people use in their daily lives.... (Chinese Educational Development Institute, n.d.)

#### Example 7

Most Chinese people use simplified Chinese characters. However, *Hanja* we (Koreans) use is the traditional one. According to Chinese people, it is a "dead language."...Even if one passes a *Hanja* test, it is impossible to understand even a menu at the restaurant or a road sign in simplified Chinese characters...Because of the resurgence of China's economy, Mandarin as a second language is becoming popular...Even Westerners prefer learning simplified Chinese characters to traditional ones.... (Kim 2006)

Articles above approach *Hanja* solely in light of pragmatism by which the pursuit of *Hanja* is valorized and justified. They even argue for learning and changing the existing tests for simplified Chinese characters because *Hanja* in use in Korea is a "dead language" that is illegible to Chinese people and hence not worth learning. Foregrounding the resurgence of China's economy and the importance of Mandarin accordingly, *Hanja* is relegated to a mere economic commodity that expedites the process of mastering Mandarin and making one's way into the Chinese market. In this regard, values of conflict-ridden *Hanja* are commodified as an economic instrument and hatred toward China abruptly evolves into interests about the Chinese market, as mediated through pragmatism embedded in the Koreans view of China.

From this perspective, it can be said that linguistic instrumentalism that in some way repositions and re-evaluates *Hanja* in a thoroughly different paradigm is firmly entrenched in the Mandarin discourse. Linguistic instrumentalism assessing a language according to its economic value is "a view of language that justifies its existence in a community in terms of its usefulness in achieving specific

utilitarian goals, such as access to economic development or social mobility” (Wee 2003, p. 211). Such discourse can easily be demonstrated by an obsessive desire for Mandarin. For example, the increased importance of learning Mandarin is emphasized often by associating the Chinese market with economic prosperity.

#### Example 8

“The second domestic market, the bridgehead to enter the North Korean market, the market of opportunity.” This is the first phrase in the confidential document “The Strategy to Make Inroads into the Chinese Market.” It describes the Chinese market with a population of 1.2 billion people using the successful example of Coca-Cola, “if 1.2 billion people drink a bottle once a year, it will be 1.2 billion bottles...” The Chinese market comes to the image of “China equals the land of opportunity.” And the craze for learning Chinese begins.... (Park 2009)

This article succinctly explains Koreans’ obsession over learning Mandarin, the importance of mastering Mandarin, and of investment of Korean companies into the Chinese market, it invokes a famous phrase denoting Koreans’ illusion for the Chinese market that is “if 1.2 billion Chinese people drink a bottle of coke, it will be 1.2 billion bottles.” Mandarin, unlike *Hanja* being viewed as a cultural and ethnic identity marker, is seen to have a practical economic value with the clear manifestation of linguistic instrumentalism. Being competent in Mandarin provides an economic advantage in the context of China’s economic development and its possible future hegemony. Hence, it is regarded as a skill and a resource that should be acquired by individuals for profit-making, thereby facilitating the appropriation of a language as an economic commodity and a means to access the center of global power (Heller 2010).

This strong economic value is also reflected in the growing importance of Mandarin in education and the job market. As a language with significant potential upon which one’s success is contingent, Mandarin is promoted as a crucial key for university students to survive in the flexible job market, resulting in Korean parents making investments in early Chinese Mandarin education. For instance, such phenomena can be testified by exploring the craze and practical reasons for learning Mandarin.

#### Example 9

This third-year college student (22 years old) started learning Mandarin last year because many senior job-seekers are required to have HSK (Chinese Proficiency Test) scores to get decent jobs. A college professor’s advice that “in the future... it is ineluctable to collaborate with China” also motivates him to pick Chinese up. The student said that “we seem to live in a society in which not only English, but also Chinese are prerequisites to get a decent job.”... There are also kindergartens offering Chinese classes. They teach Chinese in the morning and English in the afternoon, so-called “half and half” kindergarten...it seems that the era of “Chinese divide” in which Chinese skills determine one’s income and social status has come. (Baek 2015)

The impetus underlying the promotion of the language is attributed to the pragmatic value of Mandarin, such as “get decent jobs,” “prerequisite to get a decent job,” and “ineluctable to collaborate with China.” Moreover, the fact that the promotion of Mandarin in kindergartens and universities neither results in English in a decline nor replacement of English reflects linguistic instrumentalism because Mandarin, “whose economic value is being championed, is acquired in addition to English, never in place of it” (Wee 2003, p. 222). Another example in line with the pragmatic view of language is to conceptualize Mandarin as a decontextualized medium. It is considered one important measure of pure potential (Park 2016); failure in the job market can be attributed to not recognizing the significance of Mandarin, as both Mandarin and English become a “must” for survival. This “Mandarin fever” is also bound up with what Urciuoli (2008) refers to as “soft skills.” Workers should arm themselves to be more flexible in adapting to shifting conditions in the job market, transitioning from good English skills to being competent in both Mandarin and English, thanks to globalization and the increased significance of the Chinese market. However, it is unlikely that the language as a seemingly



transparent medium to maximize pure potential conveys the meanings of the sign without any connotations of social action (Thorne and Lantolf 2006). For example, as seen in the article above, the acquisition of good competence in Mandarin is considered to play a significant role in determining “one’s income and social status” for which parents begin to make investments for their children at a very young age. The Mandarin frenzy, accordingly, is merged with class anxiety and “education fever,” which indicates “national obsession with education” (Seth 2002, p. 252), resulting in another social inequality. With English being in a downturn in comparison to Mandarin (Kang 2017), a good command of English as a symbolic value of a class marker becomes less prominent (Song 2018), and yet, fluency in both languages, rather, newly emerged as an index that points to the speaker’s privileged social status that simultaneously connotes the constraints of the linguistic market. The following article points out exorbitant prices to attend “half and half” kindergarten and attributes the reason to the anxiety of parents that motivates them to make serious investments in early education of English and Mandarin.

#### Example 10

English kindergartens, which play a significant role in the early childhood education, started to competitively offer Mandarin classes because of which expenses for early childhood education are skyrocketing...The average tuition of these private language kindergartens is 1,500 to 1,700 dollars a month, which is more than 19,000 dollars a year...twice as expensive as the tuition fee of medical schools in Seoul...This phenomenon stems from vague fears of parents for the future of their kids. (Park 2015)

Notice that the primary rationale for the desire to learn Mandarin is that having sufficient competence in the language, along with English, is supposedly considered to help secure valued capital and competence in social advancement. Having good skills in both English and Mandarin is believed to be a crucial determinant in attaining greater opportunities for a promising economic future. It implies that the dominant ideology in English is similarly projected onto Mandarin in the Korean linguistic market. Political and economic prominence of China gradually attributed “great capital value to Mandarin” (Park and Bae 2009, p. 368). With increasing trade volumes between the two countries, corporations prefer hiring Mandarin speakers, putting an emphasis on Chinese skills (Kang 2017). Accordingly, Korean parents have started to invest in early Mandarin education based upon the practical and instrumental value of the language. One example is Singapore being an ideal target country for Koreans’ early study abroad for the education of English and Mandarin (Kang 2012; Park and Bae 2009). For this reason, it seems axiomatic that early education of two different languages newly emerges to index social inequality that is otherwise resulted by English education, thereby deepening class struggle in Korean society. Such an accentuation of Mandarin based on China as an enormous global market provides glimpses of how linguistic instrumentalism affects Koreans to recognize and evaluate a language. The cases discussed above make it clear that the ascent of China leads to a considerable demand for Mandarin education onto which only practical value of the language is reflected.

#### Conclusion

This paper discussed ambivalent views in flux of Koreans toward China that can be seen through language ideologies embodied in discourses with respect to the use of *Hanja* and Mandarin; the former is heavily associated with linguistic nationalism representing China as an unwanted force while the latter is inescapably trapped in the vise-like grip of instrumentalism by which China per se is frequently considered a market rife with opportunities. The discussion of the ways in which two conflicting narratives regarding the use of *Hanja* are employed to undergird linguistic nationalism reveals how language ideologies can be constantly reformulated depending upon different linguistic contexts, resulting in fluidity and vulnerability in defining and interpreting national identity. To illustrate such ambivalent conflicting perceptions, this paper analyzed news articles. The analysis shows that two disparate

narratives are attributed to the indexing of the nation's essence and thus cultural identity (ethno-nationalism), and that the process is contingent and arbitrary. Supporters of *Hanja* identify *Hanja* with national identity on the grounds that *Hanja* is so fundamental in Korean history as it is nearly impossible to discuss Korean culture with the exclusion of Chinese characters (Ko and King 2014). In contrast, for those arguing for linguistic purism, *Hanja* is nothing but a vestige of colonialism that contaminates the national identity and national language. These two language ideologies centered around *Hanja* unambiguously demonstrate how different sociocultural factors are employed to define and construct national identity and its essence, which ironically validates the vulnerability of such national characterism and reflects its contingencies and arbitrariness.

In contrast, when constructing linguistic discourse of Mandarin, a specific ideology regarding language as *shibboleth* performing authentic national identity fades away, and the perspective of language as one of the commodifiable resources comes to the surface to the extent that even learning *Hanja* is touted to be beneficial to Mandarin learners. Good competence in Mandarin is considered to help one secure valued capital and thus facilitate future success. It shows that the Mandarin craze is imbued with linguistic instrumentalism with an emphasis on its economic value. For example, neoliberal ideology is heavily invested in Mandarin education, for the language is seen and commodified as a means to be acquired by individuals for profit-making and social mobility. A growing number of Chinese learners from kindergarten kids to college students also reflects this educational and social trend (Kang 2017). In addition to this, with the middle-class status being indexed by English education at an early age that now begins to shift toward the education of both languages, good competence in Mandarin becomes one of the indicators implying the structure of class rather than a transparent medium. "Education fever" in Korea is also an impetus promoting Mandarin education. Therefore, delving into two different language ideologies concerning instrumentalism and nationalism reflected by Koreans' perceptions of Mandarin and *Hanja* in the media offers a way of understanding the sociolinguistic picture in contemporary Korean society and, furthermore, their conflicting views of China embodied by each linguistic practice.

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