

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy in Korean Newspaper Editorials

Ji Young Lee

Dongyang University

Hoewook Chung¹⁾

Ewha Womans University

Abstract

This study investigated how newspaper editorials contribute implicitly to what people know and think about by recontextualizing the discourses of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) policy. Drawing from Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, we examined 311 editorials on ECEC policies of two mainstream Korean newspapers, *Chosun Ilbo* and *Joongang Ilbo*, published from 1991 to 2016. Findings are that the text of discourses changed to reflect shifts in ECEC policy. The textual elements emphasized or de-emphasized information or opinion about events or situations. By controlling the text contents, editorials participated in the (re)formation of discourses, and these discourses were recontextualized to express ideological positions that they support through the interface with social-cultural contexts. The recontextualized discourses can influence the socio-cultural context by building public awareness and bringing political reaction. This study suggests that language, including in newspaper editorials, should be analyzed as a social practice through the lens of discourse.

Keywords : ECEC discourse, ECEC policy, newspaper editorial, critical discourse analysis

Corresponding author, ¹⁾ hwchung@ewha.ac.kr

Introduction

Korean Early Childhood Education and Care(ECEC) policy has shifted from a selective paradigm to a universal paradigm, to incorporate not just disadvantaged children but all children, strengthening national responsibility for ECEC. It is part of a global trend, whereby many governments have taken initiatives that aim to improve equity of access to ECEC (OECD, 2017).

Korean ECEC policies have focused on expanding public ECEC since the enactment of the Child Care Act (CCA) in 1991 and the Early Childhood Education Act (ECEA) in 2004 (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2013). Since the establishment of both the CCA and the ECEA, ECEC policies in Korea were systematically implemented to strengthen public ECEC.

The Saessak Plan, the first childcare plan, and the Saelomaji Plan 2010, the first plan for an aging society and population (PASP), were established to strengthen public ECEC in 2006 (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2006). These policies have converted the main target for support from facilities to consumers. In 2008, the Child Love Plan was established (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2017). It also focused on strengthening public and consumer-centered ECEC systems. In 2010, the Saelomagi Plan 2015, which was the second PASP, was implemented (Government of the Republic of Korea, 2016). In 2011, the Nuri Curriculum for All Children aged 5 (NCAC 5) was enacted to provide financial support for the expense of ECEC for all children aged five years (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2013). Then in 2013, the Nuri Curriculum for All Children aged 3~5 (NCAC 3~5) expanded the age range relating to children's care. Recent ECEC policies have focused on ensuring equity in quality, following the NCAC. The second childcare plan, which focused on enhancing the quality of ECEC services and providing customized support, was implemented (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2017), followed by the third PASP Bridge Plan 2020 (Government of the Republic of Korea, 2016).

Although the government has invested significant public funds in ECEC, public awareness and satisfaction have tended to be low (W. S. Kim, 2015; Lee, 2017). Discourses formed concerning policies influence how the public perceives those policies. Discourse refers to all spoken and written forms of language used as social practice (Wood & Kroger, 2000). In particular, newspapers make linguistic choices and exclusions concerning content during the

publishing process (Gu, 2010) and produce recontextualized discourses. Social issues or events are repositioned to represent the ideology of the press (Fairclough, 2003). The text of the newspaper's policy discourse has higher public accessibility and ripple effects than the text of the original policy discourse. The newspaper discourse continues the ruling forces' ideology and power and is solidified in the socio-cultural context to influence public awareness and policy decisions and practices (H. G. Kim, 2006; J. S. Kim, 2015; Lee, 2015; Lee & Jung, 2017).

Newspaper editorials provide one of the most influential channels through which ideology is insinuated as readers are exposed to recontextualized discourses presented by newspapers. It is necessary to analyze what dominant discourse is produced about ECEC policies, as newspaper editorials are likely to affect the public's understanding and awareness of ECEC policies by intentionally embedding newspapers' ideology.

Discourse analysis is a valuable tool for examining power in the policy process, revealing the linguistic mechanisms that enable policy actors to exercise power (Fowler, 2004). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a particular method of analyzing the relationship between language and society (Fairclough, 2003), which enables the examination of how the content of discourse is structured to support the dominant ideology while visualizing any hidden intentions (Devereux, 2014; Fairclough, 2003). Criticism in CDA means pointing out the practice that we have been accustomed to relying on. It is not a criticism that says something is wrong, but criticism shows that nothing is as obvious as we have believed (Foucault, 2014). Thus, CDA can help readers understand and solve social problems (Jager & Maier, 2009) because it can help readers make rational judgments.

CDA studies of discourses show that the socio-cultural context consolidates discourses within newspapers (Chung, 2009; H. G. Kim, 2006; Kim, 2009; J. S. Kim, 2015; Lee, 2015; Lee & Jung, 2017; Olssen et al., 2004). Discourses help maintain the power of ruling forces and their ideology and influence public awareness and policymaking. Thus, it is necessary to analyze which dominant discourses on ECEC policy are produced because the newspaper's ideology is intentionally embedded within editorials to influence public understanding and perceptions.

Several studies have analyzed discourses on ECEC policies in newspapers (Fenech & Wilkins, 2017; Jang, 2013; Jeun, 2014; Lee & Jung, 2017; Richardson, 2011). According to

the ECEC policy discourse analysis in Korean newspapers, Lee and Jung (2017) said that there is an ideological dilemma in free ECEC policy discourse. Jeun (2014) saw that ECEC policy discourse is a socially constructed discourse, with its meaning and scope formed through discourse contention and struggle in policy formation. Jang (2013) said that although the discourse on ECEC policy is complex, the dichotomous discourse of universalism and selectiveism continues at the base. They studied both the content of discourse and its influence on the public by analyzing the relationship between discourse and society. However, it is difficult to ascertain such a relationship from their results because the studies analyzed discourses from different periods and in different contexts.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze discourses throughout a whole period, from the first year of implementing the ECEC policy. It also examines the relationship between discourse and the socio-cultural contexts relating to the policy discourses in newspaper editorials.

Method

Data

This study's subject is newspaper editorials related to the ECEC policies in the Chosun Ilbo (CI) and Joongang Ilbo (JI) newspapers. CI and JI are the most popular daily newspapers in Korea (Korea ABC Association, 2016). For this study, we retrieved them through the Chosun Ilbo Archive (<http://srchdb1.chosun.com>) and Joins (<http://joongang.joins.com>). Through this process, we reviewed newspaper editorials published from 1991 (the year of enactment of the ECCA) to 2016, the year before we started our study. Using keywords such as “ECEC” and “ECEC policy,” we collected 13,629 articles, and after reviewing the text, we then excluded 5,862 as irrelevant to the theme of our study. We also excluded articles other than editorials. Consequently, 311 editorials were selected that related to ECEC policies.

We found that the texts tended to change based on the establishment and revision of ECEC policies and related laws through preliminary analysis. Therefore, we divided the entire period into four periods according to shifting trends: the first period from the enactment of the ECCA in 1991 to 2003; the second period from the enactment of the ECEA in 2004 to

2007; the third period from the revision of the ECCA in 2008 to 2012; and the fourth period from the implementation of the free ECEC system in 2013 to 2016.

Data Analysis

We applied Fairclough's CDA (1995) to the analysis of the discourse. This approach involves three dimensions of analysis: text, discourse practice, and socio-cultural context.

Textual analysis is concerned with the text's formal features and includes traditional forms of linguistic analysis, such as lexicon, semantics, phonetics, text organization, and writing systems (Fairclough, 1995, 2001). We analyzed expressions such as words, rhetorical devices, quotes, and statistical data in the text dimension. We conducted word analysis to identify the text's content and ideology and rhetorical device analysis to understand the recognition and meaning of policies formed by discourse. Also, we understood quotes and statistical analysis to identify the discourse's focus and the basis for its arguments. The analysis process was as follows: text reading, data extraction (e.g., pork-barrel ECEC policies), surface and ulterior meaning of the data (e.g., comprehensive gift sets → critical expressions indicating government's measures), open coding, categorizing, and case selecting.

Discourse practice analysis is concerned with text and interaction (Fairclough, 2001). It refers to the process of producing and interpreting the text, such as how text is socially generated, distributed, accepted, and how people interact with it (Fairclough, 1995). We focused on discourse production and analyzed the discourses highlighted through interaction among the discourses. The analysis process was as follows: identifying the discourse area, stipulating the discourse (e.g., ECEC finance discussion, free ECEC responsibility discourse), categorizing, analyzing discourse interaction (e.g., jointing, de-jointing, and re-jointing), and case selecting.

Socio-cultural context analysis is concerned with the relationship between interaction and social context (Fairclough, 2001). It examines the organizational and institutional environment within the macro-society where discourse is produced (Fairclough, 2003). We analyzed the characteristic influence of each period of the discourse formation based on the discourse practice analysis within the socio-cultural context dimension. The analysis process was as follows: finding social and cultural context (e.g., election, low birth rate phenomenon),

context regulation stage, recognition of relation discourse between context (e.g., mutual impact: urgency to resolve the low birth rate phenomenon), and case selecting.

Three experts from ECEC verified the process and results of this study to secure each part of the analysis's reliability and validity. We compared our sample selection criteria and selection process with experts'. Besides, we compared the process of analyzing and interpreting text those of experts. This study sought to increase validity through the comparisons. We applied trigonometry, especially in socio-cultural contextual analysis. In addition to the text to be studied, we considered the policy documents, progressive newspapers, and related research to ensure contextual interpretation validity.

Results

Discourses

1991-2003: Need for national support for ECEC

In the first period from 1991 to 2003, discourse on the need for national support for ECEC was highlighted. Discourse on the promotion of women's employment and the lack of ECEC facilities were combined in the text. A quantitative expansion of ECEC facilities was emphasized, while qualitative aspects of ECEC were excluded. Expressions used in this period indicated that discourses supported ECEC policy from an economic perspective:

- (1) The expansion of childcare centers is **urgently needed** (JI, 02 June 1994)
- (2) ...a **restriction** on women's activities...child-rearing (CI, 09 March 2002)
- (3) ECEC is **the share of society** (CI, 31 October 2001)
- (4) According to **the Korea Management Association's** survey...the financial loss of not getting a worker... 7% of GDP... (JI, 24 May 1995)
- (5) The reality is that **the rate of the child attending childcare centers is 12% nationwide**... (JI, 13 March 1994)

Words such as (1) “urgently needed” and (2) “restriction” indicated a need for quantitative

expansion of ECEC facilities as a way to boost the employment of married women. Public responsibility for ECEC was expressed in sentences such as (3). The quote from (4) concerning workforce shortages described the lack of ECEC facilities as a reason for economic damage. This means there is a direct relation between ECEC and the economy. Statistical data, such as (5), was used to provide quantitative evidence of ECEC facilities' shortage.

In this discourse, the view regarding who should carry the responsibility for ECEC expanded from the individual woman to society. The need for public ECEC and support for ECEC expenses were also formed within the discourse. The discourse was produced to support ideas to resolve the lack of a low-wage workforce, which hindered the economy by increasing married women's place in the labor force.

2004-2007: Necessity of ECEC policy

In the second period from 2004 to 2007, discourse on the necessity of ECEC policies was highlighted. Discourse on the low fertility rates (together with cause and effects) in Korea was combined within the text, expressing that the burden of ECEC expenses for parents was the leading cause of the phenomenon. ECEC policies were emphasized as the primary solution. Opinions, both supporting and criticizing the policy, were included in the discourse. Consequently, emphasis on ECEC expenses weakened the discourse on the quantitative expansion of facilities and excluded discourse on the qualitative improvement of ECEC. The expressions in this period showed that discourses advocated the ECEC policy as a solution to low fertility rates from an economic perspective:

- (6) Giving birth and raising children is **a burden and pain** for young couples... Having children is **life damage**... (CI, 10 October 2005)
- (7) ECEC system **to support women's employment** (CI, 05 December 2005)
- (8) A low-birth-countermeasure is a **pretending** measure (JI, 08 June 2006)
- (9) **The president** said, "The most important thing this year to prepare for the future is to create a society not afraid of giving birth to children... the first is the ECEC issue (CI, 16 January 2006)
- (10) **Economists** say a virtuous cycle of production and consumption is only possible with

100 million...The Commission on Aging and Future Societies... announced its policy to support ECEC... **the announcement of ECEC policy is all that.** (JI, 25 August 2004)

(11) **Women's economic participation rate** drops sharply to 55% in their 30s because of the burden of giving birth and child-rearing. (CI, 01 May 2006)

Negative expressions such as (6) were used to represent the difficulties of childbirth and rearing as the leading cause of low fertility rates. Expressions such as (7) described the ECEC policy as a significant way for women to combine work and raising children. Expressions such as (8) indicated that the measures were superficial and ineffective.

Quotes in (9) demonstrated the government's efforts and the importance of ECEC as the primary measure. In (10), economists' quote showed that low fertility was firmly related to the national economy. It also indicated that the discourse focused on an economic viewpoint. Statistical data, such as presented in (11), was linked with the burden of childbirth and ECEC, meaning that the discourse represented only employed women as ECEC consumers from the economic viewpoint.

The discourse on the low fertility rate and the burden of ECEC expenses were combined to justify the policy, which supported the expense as the central government's measure against low fertility. The government used the discourse to inform the public about support and how it was achieved. However, the discourse provided not only information but also a criticism of the measure. It criticized the policy without giving a concrete alternative.

2008-2012: Necessity of free ECEC policy

In the third period from 2008 to 2012, discourse on the necessity of free ECEC policies was highlighted. Discourse on the problem of low fertility rates and the need to strengthen ECEC support were combined in the text. Discourses that justified the policy of expansion of free ECEC and discourses which critiqued its financial implications coexisted. Expressions in this period showed that discourses supported the free ECEC policy from the economic perspective but criticized the policy from the selective welfare perspective.

(12) Free ECEC **alone cannot solve** the low fertility rate (JI, 26 March 2010)

- (13) Free ECEC **at risk** will be totally stopped (JI, 21 April 2012)
- (14) ECEC is **plus welfare** (CI, 01 December 2011)
- (15) **The government** plans to strengthen early childhood education and ECEC support ...
But... it's a **brightly looking apricots** (JI, 20 October 2011)
- (16) **The president** ordered the budget to reflect ECEC expenses in a manner that the state
must take responsibility for young children (CI, 01 December 2011)
- (17) The government has decided to change the basic direction of ECEC policies to the
center of **working parents** (JI, 09 September 2010)
- (18) **The rate of women's participation in the economy** is only 49.2% (CI, 07 July 2011)

The sentence, such as in (12), indicated that only the free policy, which was the primary measure against a low fertility rate, was not enough to solve the problem because diverse approaches can fix it. In 2012, the NCAC 5 began operation nationwide, and the phrase in (13) represented potential financial difficulties and conflicts as a result of the free policy. Positive expressions, such as (14), indicated that the ECEC policy was beneficial to society. In contrast, negative expressions, such as (15) "brightly looking apricots," which is a Korean proverb, indicated that the plans were superficial.

Quotes from the president presented in (16) emphasized the national responsibility for ECEC. Besides, the government's policy, such as (17), demonstrated the shift in the policy's direction. Statistical data, such as referred to in (18), was used to reinforce women's workforce.

In 2012, discourse on the ECEC expense budget was created to criticize the expansion of free ECEC. In the 2012 general election pledge competition, the conservative party announced its pledge for universal welfare by changing its selective welfare view.

On implementing the pledge, the newspapers emphasized the discourse on national economic development and fiscal status, forming a discourse to reassert the view of selective welfare. The debate over free ECEC finance between local and central government provided a chance to reaffirm the view of selective welfare, which the conservative government and newspapers have supported. Discourse on the financial controversy of free ECEC was increased to justify the conservative government and newspapers' ideology. Conversely, discourse on the need for the expansion of the policy decreased.

2013-2016: Controversy over the free ECEC policy

In the last period from 2013 to 2016, discourse on the free ECEC policy controversy was highlighted. The discourse was represented as an economic argument between local and central government. It was considered that the central government should have the economic responsibility for supporting ECEC expenses. The expressions in this period showed that discourses criticized the free ECEC policy from a selective welfare perspective.

- (19) Free ECEC policy... there are many **loopholes**...the budgets are **leaking** here and there... **worthless** money go into this... (JI, 09 January 2013)
- (20) ECEC **chaos**, will the ECEC continue to be tinkered with government support? (CI, 06 May 2013)
- (21) Free ECEC, which has been revealed its limitations, needs to be **fundamentally fixed** (JI, 07 September 2013)
- (22) **Opposition parties and progressive education superintendents** urged the central government to take responsibility for all ECEC budgets, as free ECEC was a presidential pledge (CI, 10 November 2014)
- (23) The free ECEC **budget** has increased **by 35%** ...The burden on local governments will increase (CI, 06 May 2013)

Words such as (19) indicated that the budget for the free ECEC policy was wasted. Negative expressions such as (20) were used to criticize the argument for the budget. The phrase in (21) indicated that the policy had a financial problem and needed to be reformed.

The quotes in (22) indicated a conflict between opinions on financial responsibility like a political argument. Statistical data such as in (23) indicated the increased budget as a heavy burden on local governments. It was used to criticize the conflict of responsibility between central and local governments.

As the free ECEC policy was implemented, discourse on criticism that focused on the financial argument increased. However, discourses on policies related to the women's workforce and low fertility rate resolution decreased. The discourse producer excluded issues that were of greater importance than the financial argument, for example, integrating the system of ECEC, enhancing teacher's professionalism, and expanding public facilities.

Socio-cultural Contexts

1997-2003: Increase women's workforce and awareness of low fertility rates

In the first period, “an increase in women's workforce due to neoliberal globalization” and “public awareness of low fertility” were identified as a socio-cultural context. In Korean society, the expansion of the women's workforce and the resolution of low fertility rates were essential issues for vitalizing the national economy. Newspaper editorials created the discourse related to ECEC policy because it was emphasized as an effective solution to social problems.

The editorials formed discourses to induce social support for women's social work and child-rearing to overcome the economic crisis. At the end of 1997, the IMF reimbursement and structural reforms were carried out (Ministry of Strategy and Finance, 2003). In 1998, the Korean government emphasized ECEC policies to promote economic development by bringing the women's workforce into the primary labor market to escape the IMF bailout and overcome the crisis. Accordingly, the 2001 Long-term Comprehensive Development Plan for Childcare Projects and the 2003 Plan for Activating Childcare Projects aimed to expand childcare facilities for women's social work. They provided the measures for the quantitative expansion of ECEC, but not for its qualitative improvement. In 2003, the government launched strengthened systems to utilize women's labor force. The growth of ECEC facilities was still an essential issue because ECEC infrastructure was necessary for the women's workforce.

Also, this period was a time of change in terms of public awareness of childbirth. The government had implemented family policies on childbirth control until the 1980s to support economic development (H. J. Kim, 2002). The low fertility rate became a problem in the 2000s due to social changes, and measures to raise Korean society's fertility rate were needed. It was necessary to convert public awareness of childbirth control toward childbirth promotion. Under this socio-cultural context, editorials started to create a discourse to change the public perception of childbirth.

The issue of the low fertility rate was problematized within the discourse. The discourse created the idea that women needed public support for both working and parenting. The discourse raised general awareness that the ECEC policy for available assistance was an

urgent matter for solving a low fertility rate facing Korean society.

2004-2007: The government's implementation of measures addressing the low fertility rate

In the second period, the impact of the government's implementation of low fertility rate measures was identified in a particular context. Government policies were established and promoted during this period, and newspaper editorials created discourses on ECEC policies influenced by this institutional context.

The universal ideology of ECEC was strengthened with the revision of ECCA in 2004 (Kim, 2009). Furthermore, the Saelomaji Plan 2010 was implemented in 2006. During the implementation of measures, the government released a press release, and newspaper editorials commented according to the process. The editorials formed a pessimistic discourse on the government's actions. It evaluated them as supplementary, even though the government imposed them as the primary solution. This cynical discourse continued afterward. Therefore, the government's implementation influenced the formation of discourse on ECEC policy during this period.

2008-2012: The universal welfare paradigm

In the third period, the spread of the universal welfare paradigm was identified as a particular context. It was a time when the public desire for welfare increased according to changes in the Korean economy. Government expenditure on welfare also increased continuously to satisfy demand. Newspaper editorials created a discourse on ECEC according to this universal view and an expansion of free ECEC policy under this social context.

In 2008, the government changed the direction of ECEC policy moved to a consumer-centered approach. In 2009, a revised version of the first childcare plan was implemented. Besides, the NCAC 5, a universal ECEC system, was introduced in 2012. In particular, 2010 was when public awareness of the universal welfare paradigm was revealed by supporting the system of free school meals. It meant that the social welfare paradigm shifted from a selective to a universal perspective.

The discourse represented the pledge of universal ECEC as a way of gaining an advantage

in elections; for example, “competition of welfare of the political sphere” (CI 08 January 2011). A critical discourse was established concerning the policy's financial issues with expressions such as “the ruined situation of local governments’ finances because of the competition of free ECEC” (CI 30 March 2012). The spread of the universal paradigm resulted in the expansion of universal ECEC. The discourse accepted the transition to the universal paradigm but criticized the financial instability of the universal ECEC as a crisis.

2013-2016: Populism of ECEC policy

In the last period, the controversy over populism of the ECEC policy was identified as a particular context. The government expanded the support for the NCAC 3~5, implemented the second childcare plan in 2013, mandated the CCTV installation in 2015, and established the third childcare plan in 2017. The discourse on populism was used to criticize policies from the universal perspective, which was dominant. It acted as a significant socio-cultural context influencing the discourse.

There were significant elections, such as the 16th local government election, the 20th national assembly election, and the 19th presidential election during this period. Before and after each election, the controversy over welfare pledges and their implementation was rampant within political circles. Discourses on the commitments concerning ECEC policy were made around the debate.

Political circles advocated welfare pledges that value equality to meet public welfare needs to be advantageous during the elections. Also, they criticized the welfare pledges of the opposing forces as populism. After the elections, the same argument was repeated, that commitments were populist and engaged in political wrangling. This process of populism was cyclical and contradictory within political circles. The editorials created a populist discourse on ECEC policy during this socio-cultural context.

The discourse represented the logic of conservatism; in other words, the vulnerability in economic conditions, uncertainty in finance, and election pledges' implementation would ultimately reduce welfare levels and threaten financial sustainability (Jo & Ryu, 2012). For instance, phrases such as “Korea is suffering from the aftermath of welfare populism...” (JI 06 February 2016) were used.

In particular, abuse cases at childcare centers in 2015 arose as a social issue. These were

used as evidence to criticize the free ECEC policy, as child abuse and teachers' quality were linked within the discourse. One reason for the decline in the quality of teachers was seen as the support for ECEC expenditure. The discourse criticized the free ECEC policy as populism within the same context, insisting that difficulties in improving teachers' quality were because of the support for expenditure on providing free ECEC. Despite having to consider the quality of teachers according to various aspects, the discourse produced a narrow-minded perception of the quality of ECEC.

Discussion

Discussions based on the results are as follows. First, the text of discourses changed to reflect shifts in ECEC policy. Expressions related to politics and the economy were disproportionately more than those related to education and welfare. Furthermore, policies were represented positively or negatively according to political and economic viewpoints. These results were similar to those of Dalton and Wilson (2009), Fenech and Wilkins (2017), Kim (2012), and Kim (2013). Fenech and Wilkins (2017) found that ECEC in discourse was over-expressed in terms of the economy and less-expressed in terms of education and welfare. In Dalton and Wilson's 2009 analysis, topics were disproportionately focused on the market, such as expenses and government subsidies, rather than on the quality of ECEC. Kim (2012) found that conservative newspapers discussed universal welfare only within the political area. According to Kim (2013), newspaper editorials' texts dealt with issues relating more to politics and economics than education and welfare because of their political topics.

The discourse represented a viewpoint that emphasized the market economy and freedom rather than distribution and welfare aimed at equality. Therefore, the public can consider the policy's economic efficiency vital due to a discourse that focused on the economic perspective. It may overlook educational aspects that are difficult to assess as economic efficiencies in ECEC policy. In other words, parents may focus on the elements that can be evaluated from an economic perspective in selecting a childcare center or assessing an ECEC policy. Furthermore, public awareness influenced by biased discourse can bring about practical actions such as forming certain public opinions and voting, which might lead to

inequality and imbalances in ECEC policy.

Second, producers of discourse highlighted the discourses to indicate support for or opposition to society's dominant ideology: the expansion of ECEC support, low fertility rate measures, free ECEC, and the improvement of the free ECEC policy. During early periods, the newspapers supported the government's policy by forming discourses indicating the need for an ECEC policy. The conservative newspapers advocated the progressive government's policy, even though they had different perspectives on ECEC from the government. The conservative viewpoint values individualism and liberalism and asserts welfare at the national or social level should only be selectively provided to those who are essential(W. S. Kim, 2002). On the other hand, the progressive viewpoint values equality and believes that the government should actively intervene in economic and social issues(Lee et al., 2019). The progressive view takes a universal stance on welfare. The conservative newspapers agreed that ECEC policies were necessary to revitalize the economy. However, the newspapers began to form a critical discourse against the policy when the welfare paradigm moved toward a universal paradigm during the third period. In particular, the last period's discourse showed a conservative tendency against the universalist ideology, which was dominant in society at that time. They represented their selective perspective on education and welfare, focusing on the financial instability of the policy.

These discourses reproduced the ideology of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism values free markets and economic growth because it advocates laissez-faire(Fowler, 2004). They revealed neoliberal views, such as applying market economic principles to the evaluation and choice of ECEC facilities. Traditionally, conservative media have adhered to a selective welfare perspective based on neoliberalism. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Chung, 2009; H. G. Kim, 2006; Richardson, 2011). H. G. Kim (2006) reported that conservative newspapers created a neoliberal perspective regarding education discourse. In Chung's (2009) research, conservative newspapers formed an educational discourse under the influence of neoliberal discourse. Richardson (2011) also found that conservative newspapers in democratic countries created a neoliberal discourse mixed with a conservative-liberal welfare model as a dominant discourse.

The findings showed that the newspapers created discourses intentionally but not objectively. The discourses that argued over the need for ECEC policy in the first period

support neoliberal views that prioritize economic development. The recent discourses that criticized the expansion of the free ECEC policy also supported neoliberalism, advocating selective welfare. In this sense, we can assume that the newspapers report recontextualized discourses on ECEC policy to the public to maintain governance and reproduce an ideology that they support. It is understood that newspapers try to keep the social order beneficial to them through recontextualized discourses.

Third, these discourses were mutually related to socio-cultural contexts. The particular context of each period influences discourses. Neoliberal globalization was the main socio-cultural context in the first period. This finding echoed previous studies that found that neoliberalism influenced the discourses on education policies formed in the 1990s and 2000s (H. G. Kim, 2006; J. S. Kim, 2015).

The implementation of low fertility rate policies was the main context of the second period. It was similar to the result of Fenech and Wilkins (2017). They reported that an ECEC policy influences the discourses of the mass media. The increase of the universal welfare paradigm was the main context for the third period. This paradigm shift led to the expansion of the free ECEC policy and formed discourses to accommodate the transition to universal ECEC. The universal welfare paradigm, which was dominant in society, was contrary to conservative newspapers' selective paradigm at that time. Therefore, positive and negative criticisms of the universal policy coexisted within the discourse. Similarly, previous studies pointed out universalism and the discourse's reaction (Kim & Lim, 2009; Kim, 2012; J. S. Kim, 2015; Jang, 2013; Rueling, 2008). According to the studies, the conservative newspapers acknowledged the need to expand welfare but formed a discourse against universal welfare as the reaction.

The populist controversy over the ECEC policy was a particular socio-cultural context of the last period. Populism refers to the political form that seeks to represent the public needs and desires (Seo, 2014). Major media and intellectuals use populism to criticize or attack government policies (D. M. Kim, 2006). Political circles paid attention to pledges on ECEC for the advantage of the election. However, the discourse criticized the ECEC policy and the pledge's fulfillment with a negative view of populism. This finding was similar to Lee's (2015)'s result that discourses contained the influence of populism. The frame of conservative discourse was used to represent the expansion of welfare policy as populism.

Conclusion

Discourses throughout the periods maintained the conservative viewpoint of the newspapers. They showed different attitudes depending on the government of the time. They represented supportive attitudes toward conservative governments and critical attitudes toward progressive governments. In doing so, they intended to foster conservative ideology as the dominant power in society. It is understood that they intended to affect the awareness of readers as discourse consumers.

According to policies and socio-cultural contexts, the discourse producers changed the content and structure of discourses on ECEC policies. They produced recontextualized discourses to maintain the power that they advocate. The recontextualized discourses can influence the socio-cultural context by building public awareness and bringing political reaction. Therefore, we should recognize the recontextualization of ECEC policy discourse in newspaper editorials and consider them in light of the influence of socio-cultural contexts.

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