

South Korea Places Ban on English Classes for Primary School Students

Posted April 14, 2018

Category : Education/Family

Unlocking Word Meanings

Read the following words/expressions found in today’s article.

- 1. **adverse** / æd'vɜrs / (adj) – bad or negative
Example: Some parents worry about the **adverse** effects of learning a foreign language on children.
- 2. **come into effect** / kʌm 'ɪn tu ɪ'fekt / (idiom) – for a law or a policy to become official
Example: The new policy **came into effect** just last week.
- 3. **in line with** / ɪn laɪn wɪθ / (idiom) – in agreement with something
Example: The ban on English education is **in line with** the government’s plan to celebrate the country’s own language and culture.
- 4. **privileged** / 'prɪv ə lɪdʒd / (adj) – having advantages that other people do not have
Example: Only **privileged** children can afford to go to international schools to study English.
- 5. **miss out (on something)** / mɪs aʊt / (idiom) – to not be able to get or experience something
Example: If you don’t learn English, you might **miss out on some good American shows and books**.

Article

Read the text below.

The South Korean government has imposed a ban on English education for first- and second-graders due to its possible **adverse** effects.

The ban **came into effect** last March as part of a government policy **in line with** a 2016 Constitutional Court ruling, which states that learning English may interfere with the students’ competence in the Korean language.

According to a private English teacher, Korean parents are competitive. For instance, a mother transferred her US-born son from a Korean school to an international school so he could continue learning English.

Parents and critics have raised their concerns that the ban will widen the gap between rich and disadvantaged Korean families. This is because private institutions, which are not covered by the ban, tend to be extremely expensive. As a result, only the **privileged** students have the luxury of learning English as early as possible, while others **miss out on these educational opportunities**.

The education ministry aims to change how parents perceive English by implementing programs and seminars to enlighten parents, in hopes of encouraging them to treat English only as a second language. The ministry also plans to financially aid low-income families to enable them to attend these programs.

On a similar note, Iran also banned English education for primary school students last January. The country’s leaders asserted that learning English in primary school makes young students susceptible to Western influence. Nonetheless, Iran’s head of state clarified that the ban does not oppose learning a foreign language in general.

In Iran, learning English usually starts in middle school because primary education is dedicated to teaching and building a child’s foundation of Iranian culture.

Viewpoint Discussion

Enjoy a discussion with your tutor.

Discussion A

- Do you think the adverse effects of learning English cited in the article are reasonable? Why or why not?

- What is the government’s vision for English education in your country? Discuss.

Discussion B

- In your opinion, when is the best time to be exposed to another language and culture? Explain.

- What language and culture would you want to learn aside from your own? Give details.