Situated Globalization and Racism: An Analysis of Korean High School EFL Textbooks

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Abstract

This study examines the content of South Korean high school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks to investigate the ways in which globalization is reflected in the textbooks. A content analysis reveals that the textbooks promote Westerners and their cultures in positive terms while non-Westerners and their cultures are consistently marginalized. The complex interpretations of the division of the West and non-West are suggested, particularly with respect to power, privilege, and unique manifestations of situated globalization in South Korea. The author calls for critical awareness to promote English as a tool for intercultural understandings.

Key words: textbook analysis, situated globalization, power, social responsibility

<div align="center">Introduction</div>

In an era of globalization, the English language represents the international language. English has become the language of technology and diplomacy, as well as a tool for accessing knowledge. More importantly, English is often equated with the achievement of economic prosperity on both personal and national levels. This belief has led many governments to actively seek national policies to equip their citizens with proficient English language abilities, particularly in relation to globalization (Tsui & Tollefson, 2007). The present study builds on research concerning national policies that have impacted the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). This study seeks to examine Korea's globalization policy and to unveil situated manifestations of globalization engendered and reflected in the content of EFL textbooks in South Korea.

Policies promoting strong EFL education have been implemented by many governments, each within their own unique social and historical contexts. The Malay government reintroduced English as the medium of instruction in its schools by connecting English competency to a strong national economy, even though English represents an exacerbation of the negative residual effects of colonialism in this country (David & Govindasamy, 2007). In Japan, as one of the tools to reignite economic power during the collapse of its corporate and economic systems in the 1990s, the government accentuated the nation's need for the acquisition of English (Hashimoto, 2007). The South Korean government also recognized the role and value of English ability in its efforts to drive the country and its citizens to be more globalized (Lee, 2003; Yim, 2007; Shin 2006). The recent heated debate on the adoption of English as a second official language in Japan and Korea, initiatives which were ultimately rejected, reflects how arduously people in these countries tried to improve their English competency, although little correlation is found between the adoption of English and greater economic advancement (May, 2001).

A Situated Understanding of Globalization in South Korea

To investigate the ways in which situated globalization is reproduced and reflected in Korean EFL textbooks, an understanding of globalization is crucial. Exploring globalization requires a complex lens. Although there are some commonalities in definitions of globalization, such as "interconnectivity…, intensity, simultaneity, and instantaneity of knowledge generation, information transmission, and interaction" (Tsui & Tollefson, 2007, p. 1), the concept of globalization is interwoven into so many fields and contexts that it is nearly impossible to define it absolutely. In addition, globalization manifests itself in different ways in diverse places (Capella, 2000; Luke & Luke, 2000; Pike, 2000). Globalization itself is not always global. Thus, the crucial factor in exploring globalization is a situated understanding, examining unique social and cultural factors that may influence the process of globalization within a society. A situated understanding is doubly critical in exploring the reciprocal impacts between the globalization policy and EFL education because, as Fishman (1996) argues, the status of English varies depending on regions, and the application of general theories to differing societies fails to capture the complexity of the issues associated with the English language.

Thus, a situated understanding of globalization in Korea requires an investigation of unique social and political factors surrounding the globalization process in Korea. In 1987, the Korean government produced and politically promoted propagandistic concepts such as "New Korea" (in 1993), which eventually evolved into "Internationalization" (in 1994), and then

"Globalization" (since 1995) (Kang, 2000), in hopes of giving its economy a national and international economic jump-start. Globalization is considered as critical in order for Korea to become "the central country in the management of the world" (Kang, 2000, p. 186) and "to survive and thrive in this age of increasingly fierce borderless global competition" (Kim, 1996, p. 15). In other words, Koreans understand that globalization and ferocious competition among countries go hand-in-hand and that Korea should gain global leadership and an economic command in order to survive the competition. This Social Darwinian understanding of the globalization, that only the fittest survives (Kang, 2000; Shin, 2003, 2006), has encouraged Koreans to seek ways to be the fittest.

Education and Textbooks in Korea

Traditionally, Koreans consider education as a straightforward vehicle to being the fittest and being successful personally and collectively as a nation. Education is considered a tool for the achievement of power and to become a member of a dominant group. In search of the ways to be the fittest to survive fierce global competition, Koreans continue to put extreme value on education. Koreans' enthusiasm toward education is often expressed as "education fever" or "obsession with education" (Seth, 2002, p. 97). Formal schooling begins in elementary school (6 years) and continues to junior high school (3 years), senior high school (3 years), and college (either 2- or 4- years). Quite unique in the Korean education system is the importance of entrance to highly selective universities. The college entrance exam is often called "examination hell" because of its extremely competitive nature (Ellington, 2006). Although various instructional materials are used at schools to encourage students to become competitive, no other materials are more influential than textbooks (Wang, 2006). In fact, authorities consider the textbook the single most central teaching tool (Oakes & Saunders, 2004). Particularly in Korea, the fact that school textbooks must be authorized by the government augments their power.

Racism in Korea

In addition to the continued recognition of education as a means for gaining more power, Koreans eagerly search for role models who have already achieved what they perceive to be global power. Role models must have attained economic and political power, a symbolic representation of the dominant groups, that can be termed "the West," "the Center" or "Whites" (Grant & Lee, in press). Koreans are eager to position themselves closer to these groups, as opposed to the non-West, the Periphery, or non-Whites. They perceive that a closer positioning to these dominant groups means that Koreans may elevate their economic and political status to the level of the dominant groups and that they are more "globalized."

The importance of power and capital in the understanding of dominant groups strongly suggests that the separation of West/non-West, or Center/Periphery, is not exclusively characterized by geographical location. For example, although the Bahamas are geographically situated in the West, they are rarely considered as West or Center. Similarly, while race is often explained in relation to skin color, at the core, it does not concern skin color alone. Race is a social construct, not a biological concept (Kubota & Lin, 2006). For most Koreans who believe that globalization means global economic leadership, Whites symbolize economic advancement. Understandably, Whites have become a global representation of power and privilege (Kubota & Lin, 2006), and, in Korea, people from economically affluent countries are often equated with

Whites (Shin, 2003). Thus, in an exploration of racism, it is important to investigate the intersection of racism with other social categories such as poverty and material conditions (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Koreans view Whites as an ideal globalized group (Grant & Lee, in press) not only because of their skin color, but also because of their symbolic power and economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1994; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

While Whites are often admired as a globalized group by Koreans, individuals marked by race who are perceived to lack capital earn little respect from Koreans. Negative attitudes, for example, toward Blacks persist among many groups of Koreans, including grade school students (Kim, 2005), television talk shows participants, authors and editors of newspapers (see Moon, 2006; Shin, 2003), and even Korean-Americans living in the US (Chang, 1999; Lee, 1999; Lie & Abelmann, 1999).

Globalization and Ethnic Nationalism

The importance of economic and social capital in understanding globalization is also exhibited as situated ethnic nationalism in Korea. Discourses on globalization in Korea center on national success, strongly implying nationalistic sentiments. Nationalism embedded in discourses concerning globalization is hardly surprising considering that globalization tends to accompany nationalism (Fine, 1999; Kacowicz, 1998), and language policies developed in relation to globalization in many countries actually promote nationalism (Tsui & Tollefson, 2007).

In the implementation of globalization, the Korean government calls "for national unity in order to survive and gain leadership in the international community" (Park, 1996, p. 2). Following this policy, many Koreans emigrating abroad have been viewed and welcomed by the government and Korean nationals as a new economic force. The government proclaimed a special law regarding overseas ethnic Koreans in 2000 (Shin, 2003). Although the overarching goal of this law was to promote globalization and to create a global Korean community, the law manifests itself in a way that uses Koreans who command English, mostly Korean-Americans. These Koreans are considered as assets who can contribute to improving the Korean economy, whereas the law excludes ethnic Koreans in China and Russia, because the Korean government did not want unskilled ethnic Koreans to flux into Korea for jobs. In other words, the government covertly and overtly has encouraged ethnic discrimination through a special law (Shin, 2003) based on ethnic Koreans' association with political, economic, and cultural capital. Shin (2003) argues that this manifestation "demonstrates a careful, strategic, and instrumentalist use of globalization for Korea's collective national interests" (p. 11). Not surprisingly, Korean nationals demonstrate emotional prejudice and discrimination against Koreans living in less-affluent Asian countries, mostly Korean-Chinese (Kang, 1998; Park, 1996).

Method

Research Questions

Under the overarching question of how Korea's globalization policy and situated manifestations of globalization are engendered in the content of Korean high school EFL textbooks, the following more pointed questions are investigated in this study: 1) How are non-Koreans (both Westerners and non-Westerners) and non-Korean cultures (both Western and non-Western) portrayed in the texts? 2) What themes are included in the texts with respect to non-Koreans and non-Korean cultures? 3) How do the texts treat discussions of non-Koreans and their cultures?

The ways non-Koreans are depicted are examined in relation to the situated understanding of globalization.

Content Analysis

I conducted a content analysis of Korean EFL textbooks to answer these questions. I closely scrutinized the textbooks, identifying sentences and paragraphs in which non-Koreans or non-Korean cultures were mentioned. Then I compressed the selected passages into summaries and grouped them into related patterns. Using theme analysis (Spradley, 1980), I grouped related patterns into related descriptive categories to construct descriptive thematic categories (Macgillivray & Jennings, 2008) that represented the portrayals of non-Koreans within the selected textbooks. The developed thematic categories include the following: 1) Highly Valued Quality of the Arts: Western arts are subjectively praised with flowery language; 2) Factual Explanations (and a Lack of Explanations) of the Arts: non-Western arts are explained in a matter-of-fact way or included only tangentially; 3) Western Culture as a Representation of Foreign Cultures: the West is equated with an "international community"; and 4) Popular Culture/Commercialism: Western, particularly US, popular culture and commercial brand names are included.

Textbook Selection

The textbooks I selected are designed for students in the first three years of senior high school in Korea, equivalent to grades 10, 11, and 12 in the United States. Based on their popularity in Korean high schools I chose three "English" textbooks published by Neung-Yul Publishing Company, Ji-Hak-Sa, and Chun-Jae-Kyo-Yuk. For first-year students, 21% of high schools used "English" published by Neung-Yul Publishing Company, 17% by Ji-Hak-Sa, 15% by Chun-Jae-Kyo-Yuk, 11% by Jung-A-Kyo-Yuk, and 36% by various others (the Korea Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation, 2002). Thus, the three textbooks I selected made up 53% of the total number of textbooks used in high schools in the year 2002. A majority of the authors of these textbooks were Korean professors in Korean colleges. My review of EFL textbooks showed that the EFL textbooks shared many structural similarities, each with 12 chapters and approximately 300 pages in length.

Findings and Interpretations

The careful readings and examinations of the three textbooks under scrutiny revealed four major themes that exhibit Koreans' unique perception of foreign cultures in relation to globalization: Highly Valued Quality of the Arts, Factual Explanations (and a Lack of Explanations) of the Arts, Western Culture as a Representation of Foreign Cultures, and Popular Culture/Commercialism.

Theme 1: Highly Valued Quality of the Arts

The textbooks contain a considerably large amount of information on artists from all over the world, including musicians, writers, painters, and sculptors, as well as their creative works. Table 1 includes the names of artists and works of art that are mentioned at least once in the textbooks.

Table 1

Names of Artists and Works of Art

Artists	Western Countries	Non-Western Countries
Musicians	Tchaikovsky (N[1]); Mozart (C), Bach (C), Mendelssohn (C), Chopin (C), Beethoven (C), Vivaldi (C)	Young Asian Musicians (N)
Writers	Mark Twain (J); Arthur Conan Doyle (C), Edgar Allen Poe (C), Agatha Christie (C), Ellery Queen (C), Charles Dickens (C), Wilkie Collins (C), Michael Cox (C), Christy Brown (C), William Shakespeare (C), Victor Hugo (C), Fyodor Dostoevsky (C)	
Painters/ Sculptors	Renoir, (C) Gogh (C), Gaugain (C), Millet (C), Chagal (C),	Toya Shigeo (N), Sereeter (N), Dagvadorj (N), Wnda Gu (N), Shirin Neshat (N)
Dancer	Luigi Facciuto (C)	

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[1] For Table 1, "N" refers to the textbook from Neung-Yul Publishing Company. "C" refers to the textbook from Chun-Jae-Kyo-Yuk Publishing Company, and "J" refers to the textbooks from Ji-Hak-Sa.

Art Works	Western Countries	Non-Western Countries
Literature	Sherlock Holmes (C), Auguste Dupin (C), Hercule Poirot (C), Ellery Queen (C), Crime and Punishment (C), The Brothers of Karamazov (C), Les Miserables (C), The Hunchback of Notre Dam (C), Hamlet (C), Merchant of Venice (C), Romeo & Juliet (C)	
Dances	Classical Jazz (C), Ballet (C), Flamenco (C)	Lakorn (C), Bharata natyam (C)

Table 1 demonstrates that the quantity of examples of Western art in the textbooks outweighs those of non-Western art. More importantly, forms of Western literature and music receive within the textbooks, explicit and relatively subjective admiration. For example, Shakespeare's literature is described as: "full of fascinating lines and language" (Lee, Park, Ryou, Han, & Lee, 2001, p. 275); having great plot, humor, and attractiveness "to audiences of all ages" (p. 275); "the best play I have ever read" (p. 280); "written… in fascinating language" (p. 280); "something that every reader can love" (p. 280); and having "a great reputation" and a great story (p. 280). Other Western writers are also praised. Edgar Allan Poe, Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, and Arthur Conan Doyle are all deemed great writers, each of whom "started a genre of fiction that remains among the most popular today" (Lee, Park, Ryou, Han, & Lee, 2001, p. 50). Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is described as "so much fun" that the readers "can't put it down" (Lee, Park, Ryou, Han, & Lee, 2001, p. 39).

Theme 2: Factual Explanations (and a Lack of Explanations) of the Arts

While the texts praise Western arts, the features of non-Western arts are depicted in an objective way and without the accompanying praise used for their Western counterparts. In the main body of the chapter *Gwangju Biennale* (Lee, Lee, Ku, & Baker, 2001), the authors go into great detail about four prize-winning painters and sculptors from China, Japan, Mongolia, and Iran and their works (See Table 1). For example,

> One of the prize winners was Wenda Gu from China. He made large flags of 188 countries from around the world. Each flag was made from Chinese, Korean, and Japanese human hair…. It took him seven years to make the flags.
> Gu's artwork looked at the conflict between globalism and nationalism. (p. 82)

Value-laden words such as "favorite" (Lee, Park, Ryou, Han, & Lee, 2001, p. 39), "fascinating" (p. 275), or "best" (p. 280) which are used to describe Western arts are not used in the descriptions of non-Western arts.

The only other references to non-Western art forms included in the textbooks, the dances Lakornin, Bharata natyam (Lee, Park, Ryou, Han, & Lee, 2001), are mentioned without the provision of any cultural information. In the chapter *Against All Odds* (Lee, Park, Ryou, Han, & Lee, 2001), the textbook authors introduce American classical jazz dancer Luigi Facciuto and explain his devotion to Jazz. At the end of the chapter, the authors include pictures of various dances (including Bharata natyam and Lakorn). The only information given about these dances is five pictures of people performing them. The pictures of these dances do not contain substantive cultural components and fail to serve to enhance readers' understandings of them. It is a good example of "playing lip-service" to the inclusion of diverse cultures in the textbooks. For these pictures, the authors also fail to provide specific information on Western dances such as ballet and flamenco. However, considering that jazz and other forms of Western art such as literature and music receive a considerable amount of substantial explanation, the lack of information on Western dance for this picture does not serve to diminish the emphasis on Western arts found elsewhere in the texts.

Theme 3: Western Culture as a Representation of Foreign Cultures

The third thematic category, Western Culture as a Representation of Foreign Cultures, is developed based on the observation that in the textbooks the West is synonymous with the "international community." This can be seen, for instance, in the chapter *Taegwondo's Impact on the World* (Lee, Lee, Ku, & Baker, 2001). With the explicitly mentioned theme of promoting an understanding of Korean culture and Taegwondo, the authors provide information about Taegwondo's role in Korean history and the basic philosophy and principles of Taegwondo. In doing so, the authors claim that "Taegwondo is one of the most popular martial arts in the world" (p. 240) by arguing that "if you ask *Westerners* [italics added] what they know about Korea, most will say it is the home of Taegwondo" (p. 240). In addition, Taegwondo is described as a great way to introduce Korean values, language, and culture to Westerners.

> Westerners get a chance to learn a little about Korean culture and philosophy... Any Westerners who learns these tenets [five principles of Taegwondo] also learns about traditional Korean philosophy.… When they practice it [Taegwondo], they also learn about Korea. Most of the words used in Taegwondo are Korean, so Taegwondo students learn Korean numbers and a few phrases. Some students become curious about the language and wish to learn more. Others may even travel to Korea to study Taegwondo. (p. 242)

It should be noted that the authors use the term "Westerners" in place of "foreigners." The authors continue to exclude non-Western people throughout the chapter by continuously using the word "Westerners" for subjects and pronouns referring to non-Koreans. Considering that the title of the chapter is "Taegwondo's Impact on the World," not "Taegwondo's Impact on the Western World," this is the explicit exclusion of non-Westerners as foreigners or of non-Western regions as a part of the foreign world. Exclusion is also evident in the sentence "in this era of globalization, Taegwondo helps to make Korea an active member of the *international* [italics added] community" (p. 243). In doing so, the West is positioned as the "international" community.

Theme 4: Popular Culture/Commercialism

Another thematic category that I identified from the textbooks is Popular Culture and Commercialism. Passages about popular culture are not concentrated in one chapter; rather, they are scattered throughout the textbooks. For example, in the chapter concerning Taegwondo, the textbook authors briefly explain the popularity of Taegwondo in other countries by dropping a popular star's name: "Many Westerners know of this martial art [Taegwondo] from TV shows and movies. For example, Chuck Norris, a famous movie and TV actor, is well known for his Taegwondo skills" (Lee, Lee, Ku, & Baker, 2001, p. 240).

The readers are also introduced to several other popular culture names from Western film, popular music groups, and celebrities, such as *A Space Odyssey* (Kubric, 1968 in Lee, Lee, Ku, & Baker, 2001), *The Sound of Music* (Wise, 1965 in Lee, Park, Ryou, Han, & Lee, 2001), the Beatles (Lee, Park, Ryou, Han, & Lee, 2001), and Nicole Kidman (Lee, Hwang, Kim, Kim, Yang, Kim, & Song, 2001). Professional sports teams and players like the New York Yankees, the LA Dodgers, the Detroit Red Wings, Dallas Cowboys, Nick Carter, and Kobe Bryant are named as well (Lee, Hwang, Kim, Kim, Yang, Kim, & Song, 2001). Corporations such as New York Pizza and Bloomingdales (Lee, Park, Ryou, Han, & Lee, 2001) are also mentioned. Popular culture and stores that may connote fun and a convenient life are only mentioned when the authors describe certain Western countries, in particular, the US. Non-Western countries are excluded from the content under this theme. To recapitulate, the textbooks reveal that Western arts are praised while non-Western arts are given either factual information or tangentially included with little information. Some passages imply that the West represents the world, and the textbooks often include references to popular Western culture and U.S. commercial brand names.

Discussion

The inclusion of passages concerning foreign cultures in Korean EFL textbooks is not unanticipated as the textbook authors explicitly claim in each textbook preface that their textbooks are created to promote globalization and intercultural understanding. In the midst of the continuing discussion of globalization within Korea and the perception that the English language is the quintessential tool for globalization, the textbook authors may feel a cultural pressure to include content that reflects globalization. However, the textbook authors' choice of content that depicts foreign cultures and foreigners perpetuates prejudice against the non-West, hence negating any notion of true intercultural understanding and global awareness. For example, although a number of chapters are devoted to the arts from various countries, Western creative art works are admired as great works of art in a subjective sense, while the features of non-Western works of art are plainly explained in a matter-of-fact way. Also, when the international community is referred to, the non-West is excluded from the global community, as the authors choose the term "Westerners" (Lee, Lee, Ku, & Baker, 2001, p. 242) over "foreigners." In addition, only Western, particularly U.S., popular culture is included as foreign cultures that imply an entertaining lifestyle.

The unbalanced portrayals of the West and non-West in the textbooks exhibit Koreans' unique and idiosyncratic understandings of globalization within the Korean society: belittlement of countries or people with diminutive political, economic, and cultural capital. In other words, messages subtly embedded in the textbook passages with respect to the West and the non-West reflect Koreans' popular and traditional beliefs toward the West and the non-West, because

textbooks represent a society's organized and validated knowledge systems (Apple, 1992, 1996; Auerbach, 1995; Tollefson, 1989). With a Social Darwinian understanding of globalization, perceiving globalization as the achievement of more economic and political power on a global scale, Koreans admire developed countries, mostly the advanced West, and/or people associated with power, such as Korean-Americans, because they represent the power and privilege Koreans seek for themselves as individuals and as a nation. Consequently, the advanced West constitutes Koreans' perception of the "globe." The West is revered as a role model for how to win in a global competition, and the people, culture, and language of the advanced West tend to be considered more valuable. On the other hand, the non-West is perceived as contributing little to Korea's economic and political advancement. The nonexistence of the non-West in the textbooks' content, by the world being equated with the Western world, exemplifies the almost non-recognizable subtle everyday manifestations of prejudice against the non-West in Korea. Thus, what divides the West from the non-West is not based on geography, but on political and economic power that the West is perceived to possess.

The importance placed on power and privilege in a binary of West and non-West rather than on geographical location also implies a binary of race, because, in Korea, people from economically affluent countries are often equated with Whites (Shin, 2003). This equation is persuasive considering that racism interacts significantly with other social factors, such as poverty and socioeconomic status (Bonilla Silva, 2004; Kubota & Lin, 2006), and that racism may take place not only in the White dominant society but also in a society where non-Whites are a majority, like Japan (Kubota & Lin, 2006). The fact that Korean nationals even discriminate against Koreans abroad who lack social, economic, and cultural power, such as Koreans in China, while valuing Koreans abroad who are frequently associated with capital and power, including Korean Americans (Kang, 1998; Park, 1996; Shin, 2003), demonstrates how important the achievement of power and capital is for Koreans. Because of this power and capital that Whites perceived to possess, Koreans tend to believe that Whites are an ideally globalized group who is equipped with political and economic power and speak ideal English (Grant & Lee, in press; Lippi-Green, 1997; Schuck, 2006). Thus, in understanding the textbook passages that subtly send a message that the West is more valuable, the West can be understood as a signifier of Whites, a global representation of power and privilege (Kubota & Lin, 2006). For example, it is possible for the Korean textbook readers to equate Western arts to art works created by Whites. Similarly, in the interpretation of the textbook phrase that equates the international community to the Western world, it is possible for the readers to perceive "world" as countries with a majority of a White population.

To summarize, in relation to the recent popularity of globalization and an eagerness to be globalized, groups that lack capital, for example, non-Westerners and non-Whites, are often belittled by Koreans. The textbook content reported in this study subtly exemplifies belittlement of those with little power. The reality that Koreans abroad who possess little capital do not enjoy as high status in Korea as Koreans abroad in affluent societies also supports the argument that the division of Westerners and non-Westerners is based on capital, not on geographic location.

Conclusion

The textbook content that subtly and blatantly glorifies cultural groups with power and privilege demand immediate action for change because the passages perpetuate negative images of the non-West, running counter to the notion of intercultural understanding and global awareness. Importantly, individual educators can choose to teach their students to read these texts critically, that is to read with an eye to how social problems such as racism may be manifest within a given text. The notion of inclusive global communities coincides with a belief in social responsibility, which is "an individual's commitment to being accountable for and taking action to insure equity for *all* [italics added] human beings" (Hansen-Krening, Mizokawa, & Wu, 2001, p. 213). I suggest that globalization in Korea should be built on these components of social responsibility. In pursuit of the notion of social responsibility, an individual's willingness and efforts are crucial, because an individual is the smallest yet the most critical unit of society. Through individual awareness, the importance of successful others (prejudice embedded in globalization) may be replaced by a respect for all (social responsibility) on a social level, which is the ideal underpinning concept of globalization. The English language could thus be a tool to teach respect for all human beings and true intercultural understanding in the midst of the current globalization wave. English would therefore not be a tool through which prejudice is spread.

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