

LEARNING ABOUT OTHERS THROUGH ENGLISH IN THE AGE OF  
GLOBALIZATION: ATTITUDES, VISIBILITY, AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Incho Lee  
University of Washington  
Box 357240, HSC E-312  
Seattle, WA 98195  
ilee@u.washington.edu

ABSTRACT

This research focuses on how the English language has contributed to understanding of multiculturalism and the notion of social responsibility in Korea since the launch of national policy globalization in the late 1990s. Three research questions are raised to explore this issue: (a) How do English prospective English teachers perceive the role of English language? (b) What are their attitudes toward others? (c) What are the societal perceptions that can buttress their understanding of others? (d) In what ways do they connect the notion of social responsibility to the English language?

Three Korean graduate students in the MATESOL (Master of Arts in Teaching English to the Speakers of Other Languages) program in the U. S. were interviewed. The interview was semi-structured and lasted for about two hours. To further examine societal understanding of others, public discourse from newspaper articles and the content of high school English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks, published in Korea, were analyzed. Mainly discourse and thematic analysis (Gee, 1999; Luke, 1995) and content analysis (Stemler, 2001) methods were incorporated for analysis. The main results include: (a) English is the main tool to understand "others," which is the quintessence of globalization. (b) "Others" are perceived to be English-speaking westerners, mainly people in the U. S. or Canada. (c) Social responsibility is expected to be learned from economically advanced western countries. (d) Like textbooks, public discourses also show praise of westerners and belittling of non-westerners. [A proposal to present other important findings is accepted for the UNESCO Conference on Intercultural Education in Jyvaskyla, Finland, in June, 2003.]

The implications will be discussed from the perspective of multiculturalism, visibility (Hansen-Krening and Mizokawa, 2003) of non-westerners, and social responsibility concomitantly with learning English. This research will appeal not only to educators and

teachers but also to sociologists, political scientists, historians, and anthropologists because implications will be examined in the context of Korean history, and political and societal situations.