

1. GLOBALIZATION AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN KOREA: SOCIALIZATION AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION OF KOREAN YOUTH

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6. Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine a relationship between learning English and the socialization of Korean students with respect to three aspects: first, I examined the role of English as a medium to transmit cultural and ideological elements of the U.S. to Korea. Second, this study examined cultural knowledge delivered to Korean learners via cultural products as learning materials. Finally, I examined the impact of the previous two aspects on Americanization of Korean learners and their identity construction.

The study was conducted in a foreign language institute affiliated with one of the national universities in Korea. Data was collected through different methods. First, ethnographic interviews with students were used as a main method for the data collection throughout the study. Second, participant observation in the classroom was used in order to gather data on teaching methods, instructional materials, learning contents, and

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classroom activities. Third, I participated in an English conversation group organized by the participants.

The findings of this study revealed that the participants viewed language as a tool with which people of the language and culture identify themselves. The spread of English in the society was considered as a threat to their national identity. It was found that the role that English played in various social and cultural divisions in Korea had a profound implication on English as a language of power in the society, which was clearly reflected in the process of “Americanization” of Korean youth for whom English was believed to be the powerful medium for access to economic and educational success. On the other hand, the participants were assured of the significant meaning of their native language to Korean people and the nation in the construction of history, culture, and national identity and therefore, called attention to the needs of educational reform to make education more culturally appropriate and meaningful to Korean students.

The significance of this study is its attribute to developing a critical, alternative perspective on English language education for both educators and students in understanding the relationship between language and culture. Furthermore, the study is a very crucial and urgent task in repositioning the Korean language in relation to English and to develop culturally appropriate language curriculum based on a critical awareness and understanding of culture and language.

This study provides recommendations by discussing the role of education in the socialization of Korean youth, developing English language curricula that promote authentic learning, and the role of learners as agents for change in which English becomes a main tool.