

How Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in an English Textbook is Being Portrayed in South Korea: A Textbook Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This research is a critical content analysis of a frequently used English textbook in South Korean secondary classrooms. Drawing on the construct of intersectionality of culture and language, this Korean English textbook analysis focuses on ways in which linguistic and cultural diversity specifically culture of the United States and Korean culture are portrayed in a Korean high school students' textbook, published by Neungryule, which is one of the major publishers for textbooks in South Korea. This includes what types of multicultural sources are adopted in the English textbook, counting how often members of a particular culture group are mentioned, discussed, presented, or pictured. Further, this study analyzes how visual and written texts in the textbook create a virtual English-learning space and discusses how English speakers and English-speaking societies as well as Korean culture are portrayed and shaped within the context of a linguistically and culturally diverse education. The researcher also investigates how the textbook paves a pathway for Korean tenth graders to visualize North American culture and their own culture. Importantly, the study addresses cultural stereotypes and exclusion of certain ethnic/racial groups within this textbook. The discussion and implications provide

suggestions on how to reconstruct its content in the light of increasing inclusivity and responsiveness within South Korean secondary education.

Keywords: multiculturalism, bilingualism, cultural diversity, textbook analysis, South Korea

INTRODUCTION

In consideration of the growing number of diverse races and ethnicities in South Korea, the need for cultural and linguistic awareness in the school system and educational policy has been increasing for over a decade. However, the view traditionally held by Korean people, who consider themselves a mono-race and mono-ethnicity, prevails in current Korean society as well as in school curriculum (Moon, 2011). Since public interest of the culture and linguistic awareness in education has been growing, many Korean scholars have closely examined immigrant families' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, rather than focusing on how the school system and/or curriculum can change in relationship to the changing demographics of their schools. A primary method for examining linguistic and cultural diversity in education is through a textbook content analysis, yet few Korean scholars have studied how Korean textbooks address representation of linguistic and cultural differences across diverse groups. Although some Korean textbooks have made efforts to include the perspectives of different cultures and values that reflect the current demographic changes in Korean society, such content is limited to the subjects of social studies and the Korean language.

In general, it is possible to find at least some cultural references and social values in current Korean textbooks, including English textbooks which were revised in 2011, when compared with textbooks of the past (Moon, 2011). Specifically, when the authors of this paper

had English education in elementary school, English textbooks aimed solely at increasing students' linguistic awareness and expanding their knowledge of phonics, vocabulary, and grammar. Little attention was given to the sociocultural and sociolinguistic aspects of English learning. In other words, culturally relevant materials were noticeably absent, which ultimately prevented students from gaining awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity (McCarthy, 1990). Korean and American culture differ in many respects; hence, implicit and explicit lessons on such cultural diversity should be included as a part of the English curriculum (McCarthy & Schrag, 1991).

In light of our past experiences, we decided to examine how a current high school English textbook promotes linguistic and culturally diverse learning and how it enhances Korean students' cross-cultural competency. Certainly, when compared to the textbooks used during our elementary school years, the textbook evaluated for this research contained substantial references to American culture. From the critical perspective with critical content approach, we investigated the strengths of this textbook, while identifying ways in which cultural diversity could be explored differently.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Hurtado De Vivas (2010), language and culture are inseparable; thus, learning a new language essentially involves a process of learning a new culture. Many scholars in the field of second language acquisition have argued for the importance of integrating cultural materials into second language instruction. For example, Thomas and Collier (1997) asserted that English language learners (ELLs) need opportunities to experience four different components of language acquisition—linguistic, academic, cognitive, and sociocultural—known as the prism model. Moreover, Krashen (1981) indicated that people do not learn language through direct

instruction; rather, ELLs develop proficiency in their target language by exposing themselves to meaningful cultural activities and practices. In this respect, it is important for English textbooks to include culturally relevant materials, especially when the textbooks are designed for ELLs (Paris, 2012).

As this study focuses on the analysis of Neungyule's English textbook, it is vital for researchers to introduce Korean educational policies. In Korea, the Ministry of Education creates the national school curriculum. The government, however, respects the particular features and conditions of each school, so they accommodate schools' needs and allow flexibility. In fact, the Korean Ministry of Education has undergone major educational policy changes seven times. The current education system is deeply influenced by the seventh curriculum revision, which emphasizes nurturing a citizen "who pioneers a career path within the wide spectrum of culture and who creates new value on the basis of understanding the national culture" (The Ministry of Education, 2018).

Along with this substantive curriculum revision, the Korean Ministry of Education reshaped the focus of teacher education (The Ministry of Education, 2018). For example, in the past, preservice English practitioners received a regimented and fixed form of education that emphasized drills, repetition, and the simple transmission of knowledge as the primary approach to teaching. In contrast, current English teacher education stresses the significant role that critical thinking skills play in students' academic development is reshaping Korean-English language education.

Textbooks at all educational levels must be authorized by Korean government. Many high school textbooks are published by private publishers and/or developed by universities and

research organizations. However, those textbooks are approved or commissioned by Korean Ministry of Education (The Ministry of Education, 2018).

The researchers of this project, will focus on the language and visual representation analysis of an English textbook by Neungyule, that has been widely used in high schools in South Korea. Based upon the two aforementioned academic goals of the seventh revision, we will critically examine how effectively the English textbook reflects cultural diversity and helps Korean high school students develop a unique value based upon their comprehension of national culture.

When it comes to ELLs' learning to English, textbooks are the primary source to be taught. ELLs are making sense of the world and English language through the textbooks. Because of their feeling of security what to be taught to the students in school, practitioners tend to heavily depend on the given textbooks in their teaching practices which may cause to overlook the importance of students' learning language and culture and implicitly infuse particular political view on students (Banks, 2005). Therefore, critical analysis of the textbooks in language learning is essential for teachers to understand, so inappropriate projections about particular languages and cultures are not reinforced (Graves, 2000). This is not only applicable to the context between Korean and Western/White-Anglos, but also to other parts of the world. Particular ways of portraying culture and language through textbooks absolutely influence how the students see the world and language and reflect who they are (Helman, 2007).

Addressing the representation of language, culture and ethnicity in a secondary English language textbook, this content analysis addresses this primary research question:

What linguistic and cultural features and interpretations represented in this tenth grade English textbook in South Korea?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: CRITICAL AND CRITICAL LITERACY THEORY

Scholars emphasize the critical role of schools in reproducing portrayal of certain culture and social classes as inferior. Thus, children develop and gain knowledge that reflects the values of the dominant culture in society (McLaren, 2009). In order to critique the reproduction of certain cultures and images with different statuses, people should be able to challenge the current social structures and ideologies that are shaped by privileged groups (Zion, Carrie, & Jean, 2015). In relation to this, critical theory examines and confronts the perspectives put in place by the dominant culture. Specifically, Bourdieu and Passerson (1977) state that people see the world through social structures that have already been formed by the dominant group in society, and thus, such reproduction of dominant cultures should be challenged by critical perspectives. Patton (2002) also argues that critical theory sheds light on the way in which minority cultures and languages are interpreted by focusing on issues related to marginalized groups. To extend this idea, Bloome and Talwalker (1997) note that critical literacy theory examines the way certain cultural ideologies and values are promoted through written languages. Since textbooks play a crucial role in reflecting and reproducing the values and cultures of the dominant group, analyzing the written languages of the textbooks provides insight into the current dominant group's values and ideologies. By synthesizing two theories, critical theory and critical literacy theory, textbook content analysis deconstructs the knowledge and structures that have been manipulated by the dominant cultures in the study (Ladson-Billings, 2010; Gay, 2000).

METHODOLOGY

This study employed content analysis using a critical literacy lens. A content analysis approach examines how images are represented within textbooks. A content analysis combines both quantitative and qualitative methods based on more recent studies. According to Galda,

Ash, and Cullinan (2000), content analysis examines texts and images of a particular cultural group within the book. Short (1995) states that content analysis tries to understand the particular cultural group or phenomena through social, cultural, and political contexts within the book. As content analysis historically begins with quantitative method, counting the number of particular contents and images is common way to approach in content analysis research. However, qualitative content analysis closely examines small amounts of texts from the readers' point of view. It depends on the analyst's interpretation, and thus, it often creates new narratives based on analyst's critical lens (Krippendorff, 2003).

For the purpose of the present study, pre-use analysis was employed to examine the textbook. It serves to see the content as the possible ways of proposed teaching but not the ways of actual teaching in classrooms because researchers were limited to gain information of how the textbook is actually being used in the class. However, such limitation can be addressed by looking at the relationship between what materials being brought into use and what outcomes are being produced (Littlejohn, 1998). For the purpose of the analysis, McDonough and Shaw's two-level model (2003) was employed in this study. Two levels of analysis in the present study includes level 1 and level 2. In the phase of level 1, researchers evaluated an overall presentation of the textbook including table of contents, organization of units and lessons. Next, for level 2, researchers closely examined detailed information of the selected chapter and analyzed that based on McDonough and Shaw's (2003) two-level model. Specifically, the way of linguistic and cultural representation for particular group of people in the chapter were scrutinized.

In the analysis section, the 8 chapters of this textbook are listed, then special attention is given the chapters most focused on linguistic and cultural representation and the specific findings of these chapters is analyzed in accordance with Zion and colleagues' critical pedagogy.

Taking Krippendorff's qualitative content analysis approach (2003), linguistic representation for particular cultures and ethnic groups and specific word choices for different ethnic groups in the textbook such as adjectives and nouns, are examined.

Critical content analyses of a 10th grade English textbook

The English textbook we chose for this study is *High School English 1* (Lee et al, 2016), published by Neungyule. six Korean authors, created this textbook collaboratively. Numerous publishers produce high school English textbooks, and English teachers in South Korea reserve the right to personally select their textbook by taking into consideration their students' English proficiency and the textbooks' content. In fact, Neungyule is renowned for being one of the most prominent and reliable publishing companies. Many English teachers perceive that the Neungyule textbooks include a variety of meaningful and authentic teaching resources designed to raise students' awareness of English-speaking culture and to effectively assist in their English language development. Since *High School English 1* is currently the English textbook most widely available in Korea, this study seeks to critically evaluate this tenth-grade textbook, focusing on its content and use of language within the field of English language education.

FINDINGS

Using Krippendorff's (2003) analytic tools, we now present the findings of our textbook content analysis. We begin with level 1, covering the overall representation of the textbook specifically focusing on chapter 4 and 7. Next, we examine level 2 characteristics. For example, the way of linguistic and cultural representation for particular group of people in the chapter were scrutinized.

Findings from analysis level 1

In this phase, researchers took a brief external inspection to address explicit information of the textbook, which includes organization of the textbook; authors/publishers' introduction of the book and table of contents with specific lesson topics (McDonough & Shaw, 2003).

In examination of the textbook's content, we noticed the authors' strong desires, which is to help Korean ELLs not only strengthen their English skills, but also expand their worldviews and sensitivity towards other cultures. In the preface of the book, noting the authors' intentions is vital as the researchers examine how effectively the authors achieved their goals throughout this section. There are eight chapters in total in the textbook, and each chapter addresses a certain theme, representing a specific culture (Table 1). Upon close analysis, we concluded that four chapters—Lesson 1, Lesson 4, Lesson 5, and Lesson 6—portray American culture. Three chapters—Lesson 2, Lesson 3, and Lesson 8—center on universal world culture, though they tend to focus predominantly on white European culture.

Only one chapter—Lesson 7—deals with Korean culture. In particular, Lesson 4 and Lesson 7 invited our further investigation and discussion as those two lessons include cultural materials that are closely related to American and Korean cultures. In relation to the contents apart from the lesson topics, each chapter includes activities and exercises of four language domains, including listening, reading, speaking, and writing in order to help ELLs become skillful in that specific language domain. However, most of the activities tend to focus on practicing appropriate use of grammar.

Table 1

Lesson Topics in the Korean English Textbook

Lessons	Theme (Topic of a Reading Passage)	Depicted Culture
Lesson 1	Discover Your Uniqueness (individual's personality & friendships)	American culture
Lesson 2	A Better Life for All (innovative inventions and designs & helping others)	Universal world culture
Lesson 3	The Pleasure of Eating (food culture)	Universal world culture
Lesson 4	Change for the Better (the issue of equality)	American culture
Lesson 5	My School Life (school events)	American culture
Lesson 6	Be Creative (handling emergency situations)	American culture
Lesson 7	Zoom in on Korea (Korean culture)	Korean culture
Lesson 8	Nature's Gifts (beauty of nature)	Universal world culture

Findings from Analysis level 2

In the second level of analysis, researchers conducted an in-depth analysis of the textbook to see how cultural and linguistic diversity of particular group of people is portrayed in identified chapters. As McDonough and Shaw (2003) proposed that effective internal investigation requires at least two units of the textbook, researchers identified 2 chapters, chapter 4 and 7, for closer examination.

The Analysis of Lesson 4: Change for the Better.

The theme of Lesson 4 is "Change for the Better." On the first two pages of Chapter 4, there is a picture of Whites and Black adults, holding hands with each other, while forming a large circle. This image suggests the ideas of peace, harmony, and equality. On top of the picture, the authors pose a discussion question: "How can we make a more equal society?" Then,

the writers of the textbook lead the students to learn about Rosa Parks, Frederick Douglass, Martin Luther King, Jr. and lives of African Americans during the 1960s in the US.

At first glance, Lesson 4 appears to create a valuable educational opportunity for Korean students to effectively learn about the issue of racial conflicts and discrimination, prevalent in the U.S. Nonetheless, under close scrutiny, the researchers discovered that Lesson 4 possesses weaknesses in addressing the existence of diverse ethnic/racial groups. This chapter fails to represent different group of ethnic groups and population while focusing on white and black people stratified only by socio-economic status.

In addition to this, this chapter does not discuss contemporary beliefs and issues, concerning racial discrimination. For the reading passage of the chapter, the textbook's authors introduce a novel, *The Help*. The setting of the novel is prior to the adoption of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The novel tells the stories of African American maids who worked in white households. Distinctively, the reading reveals racial stereotypes that existed during the 1960s and compares the treatment and lifestyles of white women to that of women of color. African American women at that time were perceived as "dangerous," "uneducated," and "unclean," whereas, white women were often seen as "reliable," "sophisticated," and "clean." Moreover, the reading implies the image of racial hierarchy in social and economic status: White women in the reading hold positions of privilege and power as employers, whereas African American women are the hired help with a status comparable to that of a servant. The reading exposes how unfairly maids were treated through voices of three African American women, and the story ends when a maid, Abilene, resigns from her position. The end of the reading states, "Thanks to the courage of these ordinary women, the world learned about the unfair treatment suffered by African-American maids" (Lee

at al, 2016, p.105). Strikingly, African American women are perceived as “ordinary” individuals, and the reading ends, suggesting that the issue of racial discrimination has been resolved.

The entire chapter fails to discuss current racial tensions and difficulties that prevail in American society today. Racism still exists between whites and people of color. More importantly, the lesson does not account for the diversity in America; any reference to other ethnicities/races is noticeably absent. This creates the false notion that the U.S. has only had conflicts between whites and blacks. Lesson 4 is the only chapter that focuses on the theme of racial discrimination and equality, but discussions on other minority groups such as Latinos, Native Americans, and Asians are missing. This textbook contains knowledge and cultural references for the dominant group, while excluding, even rejecting information on other minority groups (Qian, 2007).

The Analysis of Lesson 7: Zoom in on Korea. Lesson 7 is the only chapter that focuses on Korean culture, however, even its discussion is neither thorough nor in depth. The seventh chapter includes a main reading passage, titled “Images of Korea.” Throughout the passage, there are pictures of a palace from the last dynasty, scenes from nature, and an image of smiling children. The passage articulates past generations’ love for nature and their artistic perspectives, highlighting the unique design of traditional Korean porcelains. The textbook also describes how happy children were during the 1970s, a time period when Korea underwent rapid industrialization. This, however, feels intellectually dishonest or at the very least, incomplete. All the children are picture as smiling, when it is well documented that this was a difficult time in Korean history as many children experienced impoverished living conditions.

This specific reading passage does not come across as particularly authentic or relevant for its audience. It seems that Korean high school would find the issues raised in the reading are

overly mundane and repetitive as many students would have studied these same topics in elementary school. Using culturally relevant sources can increase students' motivation and lead to greater academic achievements (Ladson-Billings, 2010; Gay, 2000). However, we are not sure how 'attractive' this reading would be to Korean ELLs.

Therefore, the researchers put themselves in Lee's et al (2016) shoes and contemplated why the authors introduced Korean history in the only section devoted to Korea. We concluded that Lee's et al (2016) primary motivation for including this reading was that it could serve as a guide as to how Korean culture and history should be represented to foreigners. Considering the growing number of visitors to Korea, the textbook authors may have felt a need to demonstrate how Korean culture could be properly introduced to outsiders. Moreover, returning to our discussion on the 7th Korean curriculum revision, the Korean Ministry of Education desired the fostering of citizens who value national culture (The Ministry of Education, 2018). In this context, it is fair for us to argue that the authors of the textbook may have decided to include these positive images and description of Korean history to promote a patriotic education.

Written and Visual Texts Analysis. Visual representation in the textbooks can facilitate students' understanding on the contents and be a great help in contextualizing new concepts. When it comes to diverse cultural and linguistic representation on the particular group of people whom students have never met, the way of portraying and depicting those group of people in the book can shape readers' understanding on the particular culture and ethnic groups (Banks, 2005). For written language analysis, we focused on descriptive parts of speech such as adjectives and nouns, since these elements of languages assert particular characteristics. By looking at adjectives and nouns followed by in each chapter, readers can draw a picture of how particular culture and people in that culture would look like, which sometimes leads to create pre-

assumption or stereotype about the particular culture and people of the culture. Therefore, it may be essential to carefully investigate the use of those words, adjectives and nouns, in the textbook to find out underlying premises on the choices of the words and related images (McLaren, 2009).

Table 2
Analysis of Word Choices in a Korean English Textbook

Ethnicity	Description in Adjectives	Description in Nouns	Visual Representations
Caucasians	Rich, wealthy, educated, sophisticated	Employer, College Education	Wearing jewelry, looking down
Marginalized population (African-Americans)	unclean, dangerous, careful, not well-educated	Diseases, employee, maids/slaves	Looking up
Koreans	Pure (Korean)	None	Smiling children
Other ethnic groups (Asians, Latinos, Africans, people from the Middle East, etc)	None	None	1.An African woman 2.African children, looking for fresh water

The use of language to depict each ethnicity is very obvious and extreme in the textbook that we analyzed. Specifically, more eclectic and positive vocabulary is employed for Caucasians, whereas, less eclectic and more negative words are used to describe marginalized population, African-Americans. Specifically, White western group of people and culture is described as economically more advanced and educated and socially more sophisticated and qualified in many areas. However, marginalized population specifically African-Americans is depicted as economically less advanced, less educated, and poor and socially less sophisticated and qualified in many areas. Regarding the way of describing South Korean culture itself, it seems to distort the actual representation of the culture and people in South Korea. For example, the use of the word “pure” in reference to Koreans implicitly represents Korea as ethnically

homogeneous, which is an assumption about South Korea. Last, there was not much information and visual representation on different cultures and group of people apart from Caucasians and Koreans and their culture. Table 2 demonstrates what specific word choices for each culture and ethnic group were used in the book.

DISCUSSION

There is room for improvement in this Korean English textbook published by Neungyule. After summarizing the findings of the content analysis, two major results of the study emerged. First, non-Korean cultures are represented mostly by North American culture, in particular, white-middle class Caucasian culture. Little to no space is given to minority cultures such as Asian-American or Latinos. Limiting students' exposure to only the dominant culture could hinder their understanding of linguistic and cultural diversity (McCarthy, 1990). Second, there is a hierarchical relationship between white American culture and African-American/minority culture. In other words, the representation of Caucasian American culture as superior to African-American/minority cultures, fails to achieve the aware of linguistic and cultural diversity (Banks, 2005). Although efforts are made in the textbook to denounce white Americans' treatment of African Americans during the 1960's, the overall portrait of African Americans is never redeemed or explored. In addition, students cannot have an opportunity to experience genuine cultural differences across different ethnic groups due to limited resources of diverse cultures (McCarthy & Schrag, 1991). Banks (2005) identified the importance of developing positive racial identities and attitudes and recognized the harm of prejudiced reductionism on linguistic and cultural diversity in public education (p.6). However, this textbook does not properly describe the social status and identity of marginalized groups within contemporary American society. Thus, the textbook implies that specific marginalized groups, African Americans, are

academically less competent and economically and socially less successful. Third, the uniqueness and diversity of Korea's own culture is absent. Although Korea is 'transforming' into a linguistically and culturally diverse nation due to international marriages, an increased number of migrant workers, and the growing presence of North Korean defectors, any specific issues related to such marginalized groups (culture, poverty, and language) are not addressed in the textbook (Wang & Phillion, 2010). The focus of the text is predominantly western leading to the exclusion of marginalized populations and failure to accurately depict the current status of linguistic and cultural diversity in Korea.

IMPLICATIONS

The analysis of this Korean English textbook identified aspects of representation, production, and consumption in the current social and political conditions of Korean society and the possible impacts on students' general perception on linguistic and cultural diversity in their local context and abroad. Further research could take a more holistic view of multiculturalism by including multiple dimensions of linguistic and cultural practices in Korea. Also, additional research is needed to examine how teachers analyze and introduce diverse linguistic and cultural resources to the classroom and how students perceive those materials within the classroom setting. Therefore, it would help evaluate the gap between diverse cultural and linguistic practices in the actual classroom and proposed multiculturalism practices within education policy.

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