

KOREAN TEXTBOOKS FOR FOREIGN RESIDENTS IN KOREA: IMAGINED COMMUNITIES AND LIMITED POSSIBILITIES

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INTRODUCTION

Since the late 1980s, South Korea (henceforth, Korea) has witnessed a remarkable growth in the number of foreign residents within its domain. Whereas there were approximately 381,166 registered foreign residents in Korea as of 1999 (Yun, 2008), this number has steadily increased and remained approximately one million (982, 461 as of 2011)¹ for over a decade, representing a little less than 2% of the entire Korean population. Some studies (Kim, 2009; Lee, 2009; Yun, 2008) attribute this growth to the serious labour shortage in Korea, particularly in 3D (Dirty, Dangerous and Difficult) jobs that Koreans have avoided and as well, to the increasing number of international marriages that have resulted from the difficulties many men in rural areas have faced in finding a Korean marriage partner. According to Kim (2009), “[r]apid urbanization has largely drained the countryside of young women” (p.82) to the cities as they sought out a better standard of living and opportunities for education and jobs, whereas many men in the countryside “stayed behind to carry on family-owned farming” (p.83), which led them to look for picture brides outside of Korea from the 1990s. Considering an increasingly aging population and a declining birthrate in present-day Korea and a serious imbalance in the sex ratio at birth that has been derived from Koreans’ preference for males, Kim (2008) also contends that the number of foreign residents in Korea will continue to increase in the future. The Korean government too forecasts that by the year 2050, foreign residents will comprise approximately 10% of the total Korean population if this trend continues (Yun, 2008).

The purpose of this paper is to analyze Korean language textbooks which are designed for the growing number of foreign groups, foreign brides and foreign workers, to support their more rapid adjustment into Korean society. In particular, this paper examined how the textbooks portray those foreign groups (i.e., imagined learners) and Koreans (i.e., imagined interlocutors), focusing on the identity positions that the textbooks give to them. First, I will begin by reviewing several pieces of literature on identity construction in foreign language textbooks and presenting the conceptual framework that will be grounded in this paper. In the following sections, several findings from the analysis will be provided and thus I will argue that the Korean textbooks examined in this paper restrict the imagined learners to stereotyping and less valued identity options than the imagined Korean interlocutors, and the communities that the textbooks are ‘imagining’ for the learners are not for them in reality, but for the dominant group, Koreans.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the years, a number of scholars in applied linguistics have focused on exposing ideologies underlying many foreign or second language textbooks. For instance, through analyzing visual

¹ A figure is from the statistics that the Korean Ministry of Justice offers.
(<http://www.moj.go.kr/HP/MOJ03/index.do?strOrgGbnCd=100000>)

images in several English textbooks published in Britain, Giaschi (2000) shows that the majority of the images in the textbooks captured men in work-related circumstances, while women were placed considerably in spheres related to fashion and in a lower social status than men: “there were no male receptionists, for example, and no women leading seminars” (p. 39). Similar findings are observed in other studies as well. Matsuno (2002) examined Business English textbooks, ‘The Easy Business English’, that were used for a nationwide radio program in Japan and revealed sexism inherent in the textbooks: all of the male characters in the texts were depicted as having “powerful, high status, highly esteemed occupations” (p.88) whereas “[w]omen are often not described in terms of their occupations but rather in terms of their personal relationship, such as mother, cousin, wife, grandmother, and aunt” (p.88). Drawing on the framework of critical discourse analysis, Thomason & Otsuji (2003) also disclosed dominantly male-oriented features within Business Japanese textbooks (*Kacho*): “females characters are not given significant business roles and are not given much access to conversations, scarcely taking any turns” (p.199). Furthermore, the study importantly problematizes conspicuous native-speaker privileges that appeared in the textbooks. That is, even though the textbooks were for foreign students and a number of foreign businessmen/women are actively working in Japan in reality, non-Japanese, in particular non-Japanese females, are almost invisible in the textbooks. This invisibility of non-Japanese females in the texts, the authors argue, would result in providing them with “minimal access to the Japanese business community” (p.201) and would acculturate the female learners to a male-dominant social reality.

Shardakova and Pavlenko (2004) and Taylor-Mendes (2009) are noteworthy in that their focus is beyond the imbalanced representation of gender in language textbooks. Shardakova and Pavlenko (2004) investigated the range of identities that were given to the imagined learners and imagined interlocutors (Russian) by two Russian textbooks. As a result, the findings show that their portrayals were considerably limited to learners being “heterosexual White middle-class males who go to Russia to experience titillating adventures and perhaps even “educate the natives”” (p. 43) and Russian interlocutors being “White middle-class men, as well as women who constitute romantic interests and supportive characters” (p. 43). Taylor-Mendes (2009) also problematizes stereotypical images of English speakers that were depicted in several English textbooks, namely “White, wealthy, powerful, isolated with members of their own race, and few of problems” (p. 76) and highlights that these images would reinforce racial biases that have been rooted in the world.

Although the examined language textbooks and research focus of these studies above are different, they suggest one convergent point whereby language textbooks are not a neutral repository of grammatical forms and lexical items, but significantly ideological and can be a channel that constructs and reconstructs certain discourses. However, up to the present time, I know of no studies yet that has critically analyzed Korean textbooks, not only for “generic” foreign learners but also for foreign brides and workers. Without critical exploration, productive outcomes will not be obtained. Therefore, this paper aims to deconstruct the ideologies hidden in the Korean textbooks by relating them to dominant ideologies that have been reproduced in Korean society.

IMAGINED COMMUNITIES

The notion of ‘imagined communities’ that was first proposed by Anderson and adopted and developed by several scholars in applied linguistics (e.g., Dagenais et. al., 2008; Norton, 2001; 2011; Kanno, 2003), is a helpful theoretical construct for this paper. Norton (2001; 2011) argues that when learning a new language, the learners have certain images about the target communities in which they want to participate in the future. Whether or not the learners

perceive learning the target language as leading them closer to the imagined communities has an important impact on their investment (Norton, 1995) in the target language.

It is important to note that the concept of the ‘imagined communities’ can be applied to examine institutional visions. Kanno (2003) shows that schools also envision communities for their students – “what kind of adult the students will grow up to be and what communities they will join in the future” (p. 287) – and the visions were considerably reflected in the policies and practices of schools, thereby affecting the students’ identities both in the present and future. Moreover, she emphasizes that because schools are frequently regarded as a regime of having considerable authority beyond the capacity of individual students and parents, they have the power to transmit various social, political and cultural ideologies onto their students and simultaneously, the power to subvert the dominant ideologies within the societies.

In this paper, I consider that authors or editors of language textbooks choose certain topics, settings, vocabulary and visual images over others on the basis of the imagined communities that they construct for imagined learners, and by examining those communities, it is possible to discern ideal and legitimized figures that Korean society expects to foreign brides and foreign workers.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Texts: ‘Korean with Foreign Brides’ & ‘Go-Go Korean for Foreign Workers’

This paper analyzes two different Korean language textbooks that were published by the National Institute of the Korean Language: One is ‘Korean with Foreign Brides’ and the other is ‘Go-Go Korean with Foreign Workers’. The former is comprised of four volumes, of which the first and second volumes were published in 2009 and the third and fourth volumes were produced in 2011. In the case of the latter, only the first volume was published in 2010 and yet, the National Institute of the Korean language has a plan to produce its second in the near future.

As can be inferred from the title, the textbooks of ‘Korean with Foreign Brides’ were designed for foreign women who immigrated to Korea for marriages with Korean males. Each volume is divided largely into two parts, or a language section and a culture section. The language part is comprised of twenty lessons and each lesson contains a dialogue, a new vocabulary section, exercises for the lesson’s grammar patterns, and activities for listening, speaking and writing practices. On the other hand, the culture part consists of five lessons and each lesson provides learners with readings on Korean culture (e.g., Korean food, Korean traditional weddings) or various Korean social systems (e.g., education system, public transportation) and sections for writing and speaking practices that direct learners to talk about their homeland culture by comparing it with Korean culture and writing about it. Interestingly, the third and fourth volumes of the textbooks allot some space to showing the intonation curves of some sentences that are extracted from the dialogues.

‘Go-Go Korean for Foreign Workers’ that was designed for those who crossed over to Korea for work, on the other hand, is comprised of fifteen lessons. Each lesson begins with a dialogue and it is followed by a listening section that introduces a short conversation or paragraph regarding the main topic of the lesson, grammar patterns, new vocabulary, structural pattern exercises and activities for speaking and writing.

In order to clarify the identity repertoires that are offered to imagined learners and imagined Korean interlocutors by these textbooks, I examined all of the images with foreign brides and workers and Koreans, vocabulary types and the content of the dialogues presented in each

lesson. However, it is necessary to note here that as Sharrdakova & Pavlenko (2004) points out, different interpreters will have different interpretations from what I found here even from the same textbooks, and as well, different findings will be observed in different textbooks. Therefore, it should be acknowledged that my interpretations of these two Korean textbooks is limited to my knowledge of Korean culture and society and my experiences as a KFL teacher who was born and grew up in Korea until my mid-20's and who has spent over a decade in Japan and Canada.

Identity Options for Learners: Who are they?

Through the analysis of the textbooks, three different identity options for imagined learners, foreign brides and workers emerged: (1) they are from less-developed countries, (2) they have a limited capacity for professional work and (3) they are culturally and socially incompetent.

(1) Others from less-developed countries

Even though the two textbooks are designed for two different groups of learners, one salient similarity found in the portrayals of the groups between them is that both textbooks envision their potential learners as those who are from less-developed countries. The textbooks of 'Korean for Foreign Brides' revolve around the protagonist named Susan and she is a Filipino woman, who has been married to a Korean male for seven years and has two children. In addition, all of Susan's friends who have Korean husbands are also identified as women from less-developed countries: Hũong is from Vietnam, and Nich'anan and Hongmae, who are attending a Korean class with Susan, are from Thailand and China, respectively. This is true too in the textbook of 'Go-Go Korean for Foreign Workers' because the main male character, Iman, is from Indonesia and his co-worker, Tuan, is from Vietnam.

Such an identification of imagined learners as foreigners from less-developed countries is further attested through lists of country names that the two textbooks offer in the new vocabulary sections. Both textbooks present several country names with exercises for learners to practice speaking their and others' nationalities in Korean, and interestingly those include some country names that are rarely mentioned in other Korean language textbooks: to name a few, Vietnam, Mongolia, Cambodia, Uzbekistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar. <Table 1> below will more clearly show the disparity between the textbooks in question and other Korean textbooks for "generic" (albeit ostensibly) foreign learners in this regard.

<Table 1> Comparison of provided country names in Korean language textbooks

Korean for Foreign Brides	Lesson 2 (Vol. 1)	United States, Canada, Brazil, France, Russia, Korea, Japan, Mongolia, Uzbekistan, China, India, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, The Philippines, Australia
Go-Go Korean for Foreign Workers	Lesson 1 (Vol. 1)	Korea, Indonesia, Vietnam, The Philippines, Bangladesh, Malaysia, China, Mongolia, Myanmar, Japan, Thailand, Uzbekistan
Sokang Korean ²	Lesson 1 (Vol. 1)	Korea, Japan, Canada, United States, Australia, France, China, Russia, Mexico
Pathfinder in Korean ³	Lesson 1 (Vol. 1)	Canada, United States, Mexico, Brazil, China, Korea, Japan, The Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, Russia,

² This textbooks were published in 2008 by the Institute of International Cultural Exchange of Sũgang University.

³ These textbooks were published in 1998 by the Institute of Language Education of Ewha Woman's University and are comprised of five volumes.

		Sweden, German, France, Italy, Hungary, Spain, Britain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia
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(2) Family-centered women and working-class men

While the two texts share a similarity regarding the imagined learners' regions of origin, the texts do differ in the ways in which they portray the learners' occupations, gender and social class. Firstly, as noticed from the title, the textbooks of 'Korean for Foreign Brides' imagine the potential learners as female and by extension, family-centered women who are little engaged socially. In the texts, Susan and her friends – Hũong, Hongmae and Nich'an – are altogether portrayed as full-time homemakers and the topics that they talk about in the dialogues are predominantly related to their families and domestic chores such as their husbands' jobs, children's school events, family events and cooking. As a wife, they arrange their husband's birthday party, worry about his health or make an effort to cut down on living expenses. As a mother, they actively attend their children's school events, take care of them when they are sick or consider buying organic food for the children. In addition, as a daughter-in-law, they visit their parents-in-laws every weekend, prepare their birthday presents or study for a driver's license to take their mother-in-law on a trip. Given the invisibility of family troubles and any signs of financial hardship in their lives throughout the four volumes of the textbooks,⁴ foreign brides therein seem to be fairly happy and satisfied with their roles as a wife, mother and daughter-in-law.

These identity options – a housewife, mother, daughter-in-law and wife – given to foreign brides or potential users of the textbooks are also reinforced by the visual images and the types of vocabulary that are presented therein. In the images that featured domestic activities such as cleaning the house, washing dishes and doing laundry, those duties are performed entirely by women and as well, many of these images depict at least one of the main female characters. Moreover, a few of these images capture Korean husbands relaxing while reading a newspaper or eating fruits. Also, it is noteworthy to point out that the images of places where many dialogues occurred are limited considerably to the homes and marketplaces, and vocabulary relevant to family and household chores (e.g., names of food, kitchenware, tableware, home appliances, kinship terms, etc.) frequently and repeatedly appear not only in the new vocabulary sections but also in the exercises of grammar patterns.

In contrast, 'Go-Go Korean for Foreign Workers' portrays the imagined learners as *men* who are in the working-class. The male protagonist, Iman and his non-Korean male co-worker, Tuan are working at a Korean factory and their position in the workplace is depicted as less powerful and professional, as readily noticeable from their work uniforms and descriptions of their work. Their social status as members of the working class is further verified by the types of vocabulary that repeatedly appear in the text, those relevant to their work such as a hammer, screw, factory, company dormitory and working gloves.

Furthermore, what is also important is that this textbook implies a restriction of foreign workers' social mobility. Lesson 11 of the textbook begins with a dialogue between Tuan and a vocational counselor in which information on work that Tuan is able to do is exchanged (see Dialogue 1). The listening conversation and reading paragraph of the lesson are also about

⁴ Only two dialogues are found in the textbooks where a foreign bride expresses her complaints about her husband, but they are somewhat trivial ones: one is about Hũong's husband who forgot their wedding anniversary and the other is also about Hũong's husband who comes back home late because of work and does not call her at all from his work.

The first dialogue is a conversation between Hũõng and her mother-in-law that appeared in ‘Korean for Foreign Language’. The mother-in-law asked Hũõng to make young radish Kimchi (*Ch’onggak* Kimchi), but she soon realized that Hũõng had never made the Kimchi before and began to instruct her on how to make it. The second dialogue is a conversation between the main character of ‘Go-Go Korean for Foreign Workers’, Iman and his Korean co-worker, Minsu, about the rules of the company dormitory where Iman is living. In this conversation, Iman continues to ask his Korean co-worker about the rules of the dormitory and the Korean co-worker effortlessly provides all of the answers for Iman’s questions. In addition to the two dialogues above, many dialogues in both textbooks constantly position foreign brides and workers as novices in the local communities, thereby asking for information, while positioning Korean interlocutors as expert members of the community who know every answer for all of the questions: Susan calls and asks her Korean friend about what to do for her daughter who burnt her legs, which is responded to by the Korean friend; Hũõng is instructed by her Korean neighbor how to separate garbage; and Iman is advised by his Korean co-worker not to talk on a cell phone in a subway train and to use Korean honorific forms when speaking to the elderly.

In this regard, one may pronounce the legitimacy of this relationship between foreign residents and Koreans in the conversations on the grounds that foreign brides and workers are new to the local culture and institutional systems. However, why should it *always* be the Koreans who provide the information that foreign brides and workers need? Why cannot it be more experienced foreign brides or workers who have lived in Korea for years? Also, why cannot the foreign brides and workers sometimes be greater experts than the Korean interlocutors in particular fields, for example their home countries’ cultural practices, products and perspectives, and provide the Korean interlocutors with this knowledge?⁵ The two textbooks analyzed in this paper, therefore, position the imagined learners – foreign brides and workers – as powerless, dependent and vulnerable in the local communities by ignoring the fact that they are socially and culturally multicompetent (cf. Pavlenko, 2003).

Identity Options for Koreans: Who are We?

Korean interlocutors in the two textbooks are characterized by individuals who have identity positions mirrored to those of the foreign brides and foreign workers that were mentioned above. In other words, as opposed to foreign brides and workers’ representations as powerless, incompetent and dependent, the textbooks describe their Korean interlocutors as individuals who belong to a more socially and culturally powerful, professional and successful status. For instance, in ‘Go-Go Korean for Foreign Workers’, Minsu, who is the main character Iman’s Korean co-worker, is portrayed as an office worker unlike Iman, which is perceivable from their different clothes in the workplace. In the textbook, Korean workers who do manual work like Iman are invisible. Moreover, as stated above, Korean interlocutors are always knowledgeable information providers. Even though two participants in a conversation seem to have a similar social status in terms of occupation, age and social class, it is unchanged that a Korean is the information giver and a foreign resident is an information receiver. For example, this is attested in a conversation between Susan and her Korean friend who is identified as Hyõnu (her son)’s mother and a housewife like Susan.

⁵ Among eighty dialogue settings found in the volumes, the textbooks of ‘Korean for Foreign brides’ devotes merely one dialogue that shows a foreign bride, Susan, who provides her Korean friend with the information about her home country of The Philippines.

DISCUSSION

In this paper, I analyzed two Korean language textbooks that were designed for foreign brides and foreign workers by the National Institute of the Korean Language, focusing on investigating how foreign brides and workers (imagined learners) and Koreans (imagined interlocutors) are represented therein and thus, what ideologies in terms of race, gender and social class are (re)produced. As a result, this paper revealed that the two textbooks produced essentialized views towards foreign brides and workers and as well, implicitly normalize an unequal power relationship between them and Koreans. Within the surveyed textbooks, foreign brides and foreign workers were, without exception, depicted as individuals who come from less-developed countries (e.g., Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia), have socially less professional and successful roles (e.g., housewives and factory workers) and are culturally less competent and independent than their Korean interlocutors who are depicted as possessing more significant and powerful roles in the workplace (e.g., office workers and president of the company) and being more competent and knowledgeable members in the local communities (e.g., experts in Korean culture and the social system).

One may argue that this is because the two textbooks attempted to reflect the reality that the majority of foreign brides and workers are not experienced with Korea. In effect, according to the statistics on nationalities of foreign brides that were provided by the Ministry of Justice Republic of Korea, Vietnamese occupied the largest number as of 2010 and was followed by Chinese, Korean-Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Cambodians, Thai and so on. However, it does not mean that *all* of the foreign brides are from less-developed Asian countries. The statistics show the presence of a considerable number of Japanese brides. Although the figure is relatively low, it is also found that there are foreign brides who are from other developed countries such as the U.S., Canada, Britain, Australia and so forth, who are completely invisible in the textbooks. Furthermore, the survey conducted by the Korean Ministry for Health, Welfare and Family Affairs in 2008 reports that 19.4% of the respondents⁶ were employed at the moment and 15.9% of them occupied professional positions in education, architecture, engineering and so on (Kim Y. K., 2009), which is also unseen in the textbooks. Consequently, it is fair to say that the two textbooks in question do not portray the full diversity of foreign brides' lives and by extension, reinforce the racial hierarchy between 'white' brides and 'non-white' brides within the boundaries of 'foreign brides' through rendering 'non-white' brides who are dominantly in domestic capacities hyper-visible, while rendering 'white' brides who are in similar situations invisible.⁷

In the imagined communities given to the imagined learners by the textbook authors, foreign brides and foreign workers seem to have fairly peaceful and comfortable lives. Susan and other foreign brides smile while talking about their children and family vacations and while grocery shopping and cooking in the majority of the images, except for a few instances such as when

⁶ This survey was conducted with 1,196 foreign brides who were from China, Vietnam, The Philippines, Japan, Thailand, Mongol, and India (Kim Y. K., 2009).

⁷ Kim et al. (2009) investigated representations of foreign women that appeared in Korean TV programs – 'Love in Asia' and 'Talk with Beauty' – and discovered: 'Love in Asia', a program that focused on foreign brides' lives in Korea, dominantly represented foreign brides (a majority of them were from less-developed Asian countries) within the boundaries of their families while 'Talk with Beauty', a program that focused on the lives of foreign females who had studied internationally and had professional jobs in Korea (a majority of them were 'white'), represented them as competent and outspoken by allowing them space to criticize Korean social and cultural systems on the basis of their experiences in Korea. Therefore, the study partially disclosed the racial hierarchy (even within the same gender) that has been rooted in Korea.

they talk about a sad story in Korean television dramas and their husbands being late returning home and smoking too much and when their children were sick. In a similar vein, Iman in 'Go-Go Korean for Foreign Workers' also talks about his workplace, what he did on weekend and his considering changing his job with a smile, except for when he is sick. Therefore, the textbooks virtually ignore the other side of the lives that foreign brides and foreign workers have faced in Korea, which are related to the issues that have been frequently reported through the media: domestic violence by Korean husbands and "unpaid wages and compensation, dismal working conditions, industrial, and even physical violence and sexual harassment by Korean employers" (Lee, 2009: 370).⁸ Consequently, it can be said that the textbooks do not present the linguistic repertoire that the imagined learners would be able to improvise and defend themselves when they faced those problematic situations in reality (cf. Shardakova & Pavlenko, 2004).

It is necessary to ask that "whose social reality' and 'whose interest'" (Thomason & Otsuji, 2003: 200) are hidden in the imagined communities and identities proposed in the textbooks for foreign brides and foreign workers. The Korean government opened its doors to foreign workers due to its need for low-wage workers in 3D jobs since the late 1980s (Lee, 2009). At a local government level, it was encouraged to "import" foreign brides to Korea in order to replace the roles of childbirth, nature and domestic labor that Korean women have "neglected" in recent years and thus, retain local communities (Hong, 2010). According to Hong (2010) that examined discourses that had been produced through Korean newspapers' articles on foreign brides, the Korean newspapers continued to convey the stories about foreign brides who were devoted to their families as a mother, wife and daughter-in-law, labeling them as 'better daughter-in-laws than Koreans'. Hence, it is reasonable to say that the two textbooks examined in this paper contribute to construct and normalize the social reality that only limited access to other parts of society is allowed to them by reproducing identity positions and imagined communities that Korean society expects of them to possess and reside within.

LIMITATION AND FUTURE DIRECTION

My analysis in this paper is clearly limited to the two Korean textbooks, 'Korean for Foreign Brides' and 'Go-Go Korean for Foreign Workers'. Therefore, it would be advisable to investigate more textbooks in the future, including those for "generic" foreign learners by comparing between a range of identities that are positioned to the characters in the textbooks for "generic" foreign learners and those in the textbooks for foreign brides and workers. In addition, it is also needed in the future to examine how these textbooks are used within classrooms by Korean teachers in practice and how the learners perceive identity options offered by the textbooks and how they respond to them.

⁸ 'Go-Go Korean for Foreign Workers' merely offers one simple sentence that alludes the likelihood that foreign workers would be unpaid from their employees as below:

<Lesson 11> Counselor: How can I help you?

Iman: I haven't been paid yet.

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