



THROUGH THE OTHER LOOKING GLASS

Teaching English as a Second Language in South Korea as an Educator of Color



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Introduction

There is a quote from Alice's Adventures in Wonderland that goes, "How funny it'll seem to come out among the people that walk with their heads downwards! The Antipathies, I think—" (Carroll 5). Antipathy is a rather curious word defined by the Oxford Dictionary as a deep-seated feeling of dislike or aversion. Some South Korean citizens display antipathy towards foreigners with darker skin tones.

This paper aims to discuss the experience(s) of educators of color who have taught or are teaching in South Korea inside and outside of the classroom to give an accurate representation to prospective educators of color interested in teaching overseas, specifically, in South Korea. The collected evidence of experiences includes peer-reviewed articles describing the experiences of educators of color, specifically, educators that are not of East Asian or European descent, interviews of educators from the Daegu Gyeongbuk English Village, and personal experiences. This paper will also examine the evolution of English as a Second Language (ESL) regarding policies, history, and requirements of educators. Lastly, this paper aims to create a space for discourse regarding the experience of these educators of color. There is often an emphasis placed on the experiences of European or East Asian-descended educators. These experiences are valuable, however, they are starkly contrasted against the experience of darker skin-toned educators of color.

English Language Programs

What are ESL Programs?

English as a Second Language (ESL) or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs allow international students the chance to learn or improve their English language skills. Depending on the learning facility students can learn academic English needed for international students to enter U.S. colleges or culture courses for those wishing to travel to the U.S. for non-academic purposes. The most common types of ESL programs offered in the United States are Intensive English Programs (IEP) or American Language and Culture Programs (ALCP).

Intensive English Programs

IEPs can be taken for personal or professional reasons that often do not require or offer academic credit. This type of program also allows international students to prepare for admission to a U.S. university and particular programs offer "bridge programs" that will help students enter their university after program completion. IEPs are often designed for any level of English proficiency and require around 20-30 hours per week of intensive language study. IEPs are offered at universities and independent English language institutions (Department of State).

American Language and Culture Programs

Unlike IEPs, ALCPs are usually taken for academic credit to prepare for, or as a requirement for a U.S. degree program. These programs require students to have at minimum an intermediate level of English language proficiency before they can be admitted into the program. ALCPs offer students opportunities to improve specific academic skills and help them adjust to U.S. culture and campus life. The Auburn Global Pre-Enrollment Program is the closest example to this program type (Department of State).

Foreign Language Education in South Korea

The beginning of foreign language education can be traced back to the period of the Three Kingdoms. Since the Korean language only existed in spoken form the use of Chinese characters was widely used for written communication. However, the emergent interest in English education did not come about until the reforming of the political system. After the abolishment of the seclusion policy and the signing of a commercial treaty with the U.S. in 1882, there was a need for officials who could speak Western languages (Lee 37). Two groups of institutions provided English language education to the Korean people: public institutes and missionary schools and three historical periods: Chosun Dynasty, the Japanese Imperialism Period, and the National Curriculum Period (Chang 84).

Chosun Dynasty Period

Public Institutions

The first public institute developed to teach English education was Dong Mun Hak founded in the city of Seoul in 1883. Dong Mun Hak was the first school that provided a modern style of education and produce students that were involved in Western-civilized trade affairs, diplomacy, postal services, telegraphic work, and hospitals (Lee 39). The purpose of the facility was to prepare translators who could expertly translate and interpret Korean into multiple languages using a Direct Method style of teaching with a focus on Written and Spoken English (Chang 84). After Dong Mun Hak ceased operation in 1886, Yuk-Yeong Gong-Won was opened and introduced the conflict of progressive American teachers with the conservative school management (Lee 39). Since the number of students was relatively low, the qualification for English language education remained high, and Yuk-Yeong Gong-Won became the first institution to be recognized as a government-level facility that utilized authentic English. Before closure, the mission of Yuk-Yeong Gong-Won was to cultivate young people who would manage tasks that are necessary for modernized society using a more systemized policy that required instructors to be well-qualified Americans, intensive courses for English language, teaching

materials that were all written in English and kept the Direct Method style of teaching from Dong Mun Hak (Chang 85).

After the Political Reform in 1894, the need for diplomats and/or interpreters led to the establishment of Hanseong Foreign Language School, Japanese School, English School (successor of Yuk-Yeong Gong-Won after closure), French School, Russian School, German School, and the reopening of Chinese School. The curriculum of these schools was divided into two parts: language acquisition and other subjects such as mathematics, geography, history of Korea, etc. The language schools were independent until 1906 when they were merged with the Hanseong Foreign Language School continued operation until being abolished in 1911 due to the Japanese Annexation of Korea and merged to become part of Gyeong Seong School, currently known as Gyeonggi High School (Lee 41-42).

Missionary Schools

Christian or Missionary Schools were established mainly by American or English missionaries and classes were taught in English. Private schools developed by patriots also began emerging and putting a noticeable amount of effort into English education (Lee 42). These schools played a large part in the modernization of the Chosun Dynasty in and outside of the English education field.

The curriculum of these schools consisted mostly of Bible readings that had been translated. The primary purpose of these schools was to propagate Christianity to Korean citizens leading to missionaries taking on the role of English teachers using the Bible as English textbooks, but this led to other complications. Since the teachers were missionaries and not qualified English language teachers, they lacked the pedagogical and experiential knowledge that a public school teacher would have, and the Direct Method was often not engaged as English was not the primary means of instruction (Chang 85).

Japanese Imperialism Period

During this period, English education in secondary and higher schools was considered as being degenerative to Japanese Imperialism (Chang 86) and since there was an emphasis being placed on vocational education foreign language schools were abolished and the number of private schools went from 3,000 in 1908 to around 690 in 1919. Around 1920, foreign language became a compulsory subject in elementary and high schools requiring students to choose a language often among English, German, and French. American nationals taught English in colleges such as Ewha Hak-Dang and Yeon-hee College and since foreigners often attended chapel the lecture was conducted in English as well. In normal high schools, English was an elective subject taught by Korean or Japanese nationals offered two hours per week with content focused on spelling, pronunciation, penmanship, interpretation, writing, speaking, and grammar (Lee 45).

The New Education Decree in 1922 increased the number of years for elementary school from four to six but kept the compulsory foreign language requirement. Schools had a choice between English, French, German, and Chinese and offered five to six hours per week, but most schools chose English. Private colleges emphasized English education. Ewha Women's College made its liberal arts department into the English department in which missionaries taught course content such as reading, English literature, play, English composition, grammar, writing, new literature, speaking, and translation. Graduating students put on an English stage play, learned to type in English, and publish an English newspaper. Yeon-Hee College included English on the entrance exam in 1930, published the first issue of their English newspaper Yeon-Hee Times in 1935, and held an English speech contest among students (45).

In 1941, English education was abolished in Ewha Women's College, and lecturers who studied in Western countries but did not speak Japanese were fired. In the same year, American and English staff were fired from Yeon-Hee College. These may have been caused by the mandate in Japan that declared English the language of the enemy causing a ripple of negative effects on English education in Korea (Lee 47).

National Curriculum Period

After Korea was emancipated from Japan in 1945 and separated in 1948, the Education Act of 1949 established the school system that is currently in place requiring students to spend six years in primary school, three years in middle school, three years in high school, and a minimum four years in university. Middle schools began offering foreign language classes in 1948 though schools could choose between English, German, French, and Chinese. English became the first foreign language in 1963. Beginning in 1974, every middle and high school has made regulations to require English to be taught for four to five hours per week. Since 1997, English has been taught starting in the third grade of primary school and developed a curriculum that is also taught in kindergarten (Lee 48). The first national curriculum was established in 1955 and was delivered through a tentative syllabus and can be separated into 10-year terms (Chang 86).

Education Fever

The preoccupation with the pursuit of education was the result of heavily relying on Confucian attitudes towards the status of people and learning, new egalitarian ideas from the West, and the complex, contradictory ideas of combined new and old ideas. Most Koreans agree that education is a way of achieving status, a self-cultivation method, and the most powerful means of achieving upward social mobility and economic prosperity (Park 50).

Causes of the English Boom

There are three main causes of the English Boom in South Korea: government policy changes, social and economic changes, and the increasing influence of communicative teaching methods in academia (Park 52).

Government Policy Changes

Perhaps the greatest contributor to the English Boom, the Korean government inflicted many policy changes that fueled the flames of the English Boom. In January 1991, the government decided to include listening tests in English in national college examinations. This plus a revision in 1994 to university examinations to include a more communicative approach rather than grammatical English items pushed parents to not only push their children to focus on listening skills and communicative competence (52).

Social and Economic Changes

The English Education industry has been rising exponentially since the government announced, in 1991, the plan to teach English in all elementary school grades by 1995 even surviving the economic crisis of 1997. However, parents with wealth and power began to push for early English education after the Asian Games of 1986 and the Seoul Olympics in 1988 by sending their children to English-speaking countries. Globalization also played a great part in this process as the Asian Games and Seoul Olympics increased South Korea's awareness of globalization and how much English was utilized as the language of globalization making people focus on oral proficiency in English. Some of the more extreme parents would go as far as to have their children undergo a 'linguistic surgery' called a frenectomy to help their child have a more flexible tongue which would enable them to produce English sounds better and make them sound more native-like which was highly sought after (Park 52).

Communicative Teaching Methods

After the government's policy increased the focus on oral competence the communicative teaching approach held a significant amount of power. Despite the increase in adverse effects from underprepared English-only instruction like lack of interest in content, increased stress on teachers, communication problems, and limited understanding an increasing number of institutions promoted English-only instruction policies.

Teachers were and are often hired regardless of their educational background. The government had a goal to try and hire one native-speaking English speaker for each primary and secondary in South Korea requiring at least 10,000 native speakers of English, however, by 2006 there were only 1,950 native speakers of English employed. Since the emergence of English Villages in 2004, a large amount of money has been invested into the process of creating villages with primarily native English-speaking teachers to create these English-immersive towns (53).

Teaching ESL in South Korea

According to the Korea Immigration Service, in 2019, approximately 29,000 foreigners arrived in South Korea with an E-2 visa, or a long-term visa issued for foreign language instructors however, in 2020, only around 10,500 E-2 visa carriers passed through Korea. Foreign instructors are high in demand, especially in hagwon, or private cram schools. The number of native English instructors for elementary, middle, and high schools across the country dropped 30 percent to 7,150 from 10,169 in 2019, according to the Korean Educational Development Institute's statistics. Currently, there is a high demand for native-speaking English educators according to a spokesperson for the National Institute for International Education (NIIED) under the Education Ministry (G.-R. Lee).

Requirements

Most English teachers enter South Korea and work under an E-2 work visa. Requirements for obtaining this visa are fairly lenient only requiring a Bachelor's degree in any field and, in some cases, a Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) certification, or Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA) is required, however, all of these can be obtained in four weeks or less leading to unqualified teachers being issued E-2 work visas from the Korea Immigration Services. However, the wavering number of amply qualified teachers can also be attributed to low teaching salaries. A concerning factor of the lack of qualified teachers could also be attributed to South Korea's ideal of the 'almost' perfect native English-speaking teacher (Jambor 1-2).

The Preferred Teacher

The general view in Korea is that 'non-white' educators are more likely to be unqualified teachers. Historical factors like colonialism, knowledge production, and hegemony have allowed white foreigners to avoid the "migrant worker" label which contributes to them being more respected than workers who are labeled as "migrant workers" or 'non-white foreign workers' and assuming they come from a poor country and therefore cannot teach anything (Jambor 6). This leads to the notion that there are two classes of "migrant workers": the working class and the elite. All white migrants are considered elite and the working class encompasses everyone else. As a result, 'white' English teachers tend to have higher wages which are still about half of those of Korean educators. However, nationalities also play a part in these qualifications. For example, an Indian-Canadian worker will be paid more than an Indian national due to the Indian national's 'lesser worth' even if their qualifications are equal (7).

Though it can be said that there is a preference for 'white' foreign teachers, there is a more prevalent bias toward South and South-East Asian teachers. Korean officials still refer to 'white'

teachers as 'dangerous white' teachers and public figures advocate that the problem with 'foreign teachers' is the dangerous level of drug use and crime that are associated with them. Though these problems are broadcast, the Korean Institute of Criminology stated that the crime rate among foreigners was about 50 percent less than that of crime among Korean citizens and research from Kyunghee University suggested that only 0.013 percent of foreign English teachers were arrested with drugs. Furthermore, Korean citizens are 2.5 times more likely to commit crimes than foreign nationals. Although these facts exist, the Korean Ministry of Justice implemented changes in 2007 that required E-2 visa holders to undergo drug tests, HIV tests, and criminal background checks. However, Korean teachers in public and private schools are not required to undergo HIV or drug testing and only public school teachers are required to submit criminal background checks (8).

Over the years, Koreans developed the general view that the average 'foreign English teacher' is unqualified and this can be contributed to statements like, "Speaking English fluently doesn't necessarily mean they ['foreign English teachers'] can teach well. (They) lack teaching methodology...are not ethically qualified to treat children..." as said by the then supervisor of The Incheon Metropolitan Office of Education, Young-Sun Koo. The alienation faced by all 'foreign English teachers' is the largest factor contributing to the lack of qualified teachers and leads them to seek employment in another country (9).

Navigating in South Korea as an Educator of Color (EOC)

Identity Denial

Shine is an African American woman that taught English at an elementary school while living with a host family. She has an advanced level of Korean language skills and had experience living in South Korea as an international student. Though these experiences existed the isolation and racial discrimination she faced every day changed her view of Korean society. A particular experience she shared involves being called a monster by a child who was hiding behind his father in the elevator of her apartment building. This is a blatant example of the socially constructed idea of unfavourability toward Black people and the discriminative attitudes that seem to be engrained at a young age through media. Often, the system of racial discrimination in South Korea is based on the lightness or darkness of someone's skin tone, however, this colorism also exists in other Korean-cultural contexts. For Shine, her skin color was used to place her lower in social and racial ranking creating difficulties for her and her host family (Lee and Jang 11).

Wilson graduated with a degree in integrative studies, including French and Korean languages, and arrived in Korea with hopes of being immersed in the Korean language in culture by living with his host family. However, while also facing social exclusion based on how he looked, he also felt frustration from people refusing to recognize him as a teaching professional.

Despite being a teacher for more than 8 years in multiple U.S. facilities, his Korean colleagues refused to recognize his experiences as “relevant” (16). Wilson described his experiences as constant, uncomfortable stares that were often accompanied by the misunderstanding of his being from Africa instead of the United States. If he was on a crowded subway, every seat would be filled except the seats next to him. After experiencing fewer of these encounters in Seoul, he realized that there was a degree of stares and social discrimination based on where he was located (12).

Joanne, who was originally from urban Canada, moved to Korea after graduating with a teaching degree in history and cultural studies instead of waiting for a job opening in her home country. Her outwardly Asian appearance caused trouble for her while living in the country due to her inability to speak Korean. Despite her inability to communicate fully, Joanne was the only ‘legitimate’ speaker of Korean amongst the three. Shine and Wilson who had a very high capability of communicating, were seen as ‘illegitimate’ or ‘unauthorized’ speakers of Korean especially while in the presence of other people of Asian ethnicity. When in the presence of other Koreans or Asian ethnic presenting people, they were expected to stand aside while their friends spoke. However, Joanne was expected to speak Korean and often became the forced mediator that Koreans would turn to first when trying to communicate only to find out that she had minimal Korean language skills. Her appearance and the assumption Koreans made based on that also led to her not being recognized as a native English-speaking teacher. Their assumptions also led to Joanne having feelings of uselessness, embarrassment, and failure (14-15).

I Don't Feel Like I'm Beautiful in Korea

Several Black Teachers of English (BTEs) felt that they did not fit the beauty standards of South Korea. All of them were aware of their preference for ‘white’ English teachers and some contributed their difficulty finding a job to the darker tone of their skin despite flawless resumes and applications. There is also a feeling of being ‘ugly’ among Korean people because of the value placed on ‘light skin’. However, unspoken preferences such as race and accents did not go unnoticed (Choe and Seo 1,3).

Educators also experienced discriminatory actions based on their looks. Some unfortunate events that Jasmine, an African American school teacher in South Korea, experienced were students asking why she looked a certain way and sadly a student coming to her desk to rub her arm to see if the color would come off. Furthermore, a friend of hers was called the Korean equivalent of the n-word, as teachers stood by and laughed while it happened perpetuating their misconduct and disrespect of that teacher (4).

We Get Used to Being Black

The daily discrimination and disrespect BTEs face on a day-to-day basis have caused a desensitized experience for those educators. Tamira had the ill-tasted experience of being nicknamed ‘Obama teacher’ by the kids in her school which at first made her uncomfortable.

After a while, the nickname no longer bothered her and she says this to conclude that "if you get caught up in every micro-aggression...you're going to be miserable" (4).

Although these experiences occur daily, the desensitization and the comparative severity of these actions are enough to make some BTEs more willing to accept them as a part of daily life. Darius regards that these micro-aggressive actions and discriminatory methods of treatment are minor compared to that of the U.S. Although still aware of the preference for 'white' teachers, the general view he takes is that favoritism toward 'white' people, in general, is a global phenomenon that cannot be avoided. Another reason for desensitization is regarding these actions as insensitivity and ignorance rather than outward racism (Choe and Seo 6).

Construction of Social Belonging

Shine, the third-grade educator mentioned above, chose to take an active role in fighting against the negative representation of Black people in South Korea going as far as to attend every official event for English Teacher Assistants (ETA) that the Ministry of Education to prove that African Americans could teach abroad. She also did her best to learn Korean with the hopes of having her voice heard and listened to in public spaces (Lee and Jang 16).

Wilson, the integrative studies graduate, used his experience as a professional dancer in the U.S. to participate in several amateur dancing social clubs in which he received great amounts of respect and the members acted playfully with him even though he was the only foreigner that participated in the group. His participation in these groups was his way of assuaging the frustration of not being recognized as an educator and disregarded at his workplace (17).

Joanne, the Asian-Canadian educator, chose to become part of a Taekwondo group that met three times a week and soon became a large part of her social life. She was the first teacher to offer Taekwondo classes in English while keeping a positive outlook on her experiences in part because of her colleagues that would assist her through any obstacles she faced (17).

We are Black Teachers

Despite the grating use of discriminatory language, BTEs are struggling especially with stereotypical imagery of Black people. Darius regards that one of the most heard questions he has gotten is if he has a gun or weapon with students asking because in all movies Black men always have a gun (Choe and Seo 5).

Jasmine comments on the effects of media as one of the most reinforcing those stereotypes especially when there is little to know other interactions, they have with Black people to contradict or correct the prolonged spread of such offensive stereotypes. This prolongation cannot be taken as a fault of the public of Korea and is instead the fault of the mass media (5).

There are several instances in which Black people are equated with Africa in Korean media. Specifically, when learning from a textbook Korean students learned to associate Africa with poorness. Due to these images, Black people are given the attributes of poor though that may not be the case often because Koreans do not separate ethnicity and nationality because they perceive

their country as a racially and culturally homogeneous one. However, BTEs make active efforts to teach their students that their stereotypes and actions matter by explaining why it is wrong to which the general attitude is acceptance and understanding. Many of the BTEs see their jobs not only as educators of English but also facilitators that help students change their perceptions and create new ways of seeing people (Choe and Seo 6).

Daegu Gyeongbuk English Village

The Daegu Gyeongbuk English Village (DGEV) is a partnering facility with Auburn University located in Daegu, South Korea to promote English language learning providing English education to South Korean citizens in an experiential learning environment of Western cultures. Equipped with 101 classrooms across 3 main academic buildings, DGEV offers a full-immersion experience. With 22 different "situation-locations", this "mini-city" allows students to practice English in real-life situations. There are also facilities for intensive instruction for students to learn by subject.

There are three main programs that DGEV consistently runs English as a Second Language (ESL), Teaching English in English (TEE), and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). The ESL Program provides elementary and middle school students with a 3-week, residential experience in which students spend 30 hours a week on a situational and intensive inclusive curriculum. The TEE Program is designed to assist Korean elementary school teachers in improving their English language skills and methods of teaching. The TESOL Program is similar to the TEE Program, however, it offers teachers a chance to improve their teaching methods and skill sets over three weeks (Auburn University).

Experiences of EOC from Daegu Gyeongbuk English Village

The following is a table of four responses to the Google Form Interview sent out to educators of color at the Daegu Gyeongbuk English Village. They were asked to explain or describe scenarios that they think can be attributed to their ethnicity or 'assumed ethnicity'. The experiences of these four EOC interviews will be summarized below.

Name	Highest Level of Education	Years in Korea
Liza D. (1)	Bachelor's Degree; HR	One
Marilyn R. (4)	Bachelor's Degree; Psychology	One
Megan M. (3)	Bachelor's Degree; Management	Five
Dhaima W. (5)	Bachelor's Degree; Advertising	Eleven

Experiences Inside the Classroom

When asked about occurrences inside the classroom the only comment Liza had was, “I have found that students seem more interested in what I have to say because I look so different from their cultural norms.” (D.). After a short time of working at DGEV, Liza has not had any micro-aggressive actions directed toward her from students.

Megan experienced more curiosity from students than discrimination. She says that often the students would ask her about where she was from and were interested in her hair once she wore braid or changed styles (M.). Although Megan has been working at DGEV for five years, there have been only a few occurrences like this. However, Megan does have a lighter skin complexion than the other teachers interviewed which could attribute to the lessened experiences.

Marilyn experienced similar curiosity questions about where she was from, however, students and others assumed she was from somewhere in Asia rather than coming from the U.S. because of her outward appearance. She expressed that some people would even be confused when she corrected them about their assumptions (R.). Though it has been a short time since Marilyn has been working at DGEV, she has received more questions about where she is from than Megan who has been there for five years.

Dhaima who has been there the longest and has the deepest skin tone, expectantly, has experienced the most micro-aggressive, insensitive actions from students. She says that though she experienced many things a student coming into class and saying they were scared because she looked “black and scary” stuck out the most. However, when students would come and touch her hair, at that time she had waist-length locs, without her permission, she did her best to teach them about autonomy and why what they did was unacceptable (W.). Her experience reminds me of Shine and the other BTEs who are trying to change the narrative and teach their students why their actions could be considered rude and how to change.

Experiences Outside the Classroom

Liza experienced one of the, seemingly, most prevalent reactions to foreigners while living in South Korea: staring. She experiences people staring at her often, but she believes the cause of this to be because South Korea is so homogenous there are few to know foreigners “particularly people-of-color since there are so few living here.” (D.) A common occurrence especially in an area like Daegu.

Megan’s experience is less about staring and more about the physical actions of curiosity that occur. She says that elderly women are curious about, compliment, or want to touch her hair when she is out and about (M.). Similar occurrences happened to me when I first studied abroad in 2019. However, these experiences could be merely based on curiosity.

While away from the classroom, Marilyn had to face assumptions based on her appearance. She recalls a particular instance and says, “I visited the doctor at a hospital and they assumed I spoke an Indian language and not English. The receptionist did not even try communicating in

English. After a while the doctor asked to see my passport, then only did she realize that I'm a native English speaker.” (R.) This instance reminds me of the struggles Joanne faced when people would assume she could speak Korean because of her appearance.

Dhaima has experienced more inappropriate actions, so far, than the other educators. During her first year in Korea, she went to a bathhouse with the co-teachers of her class and while everyone was nude, older women would come over and touch her body without her consent. Luckily her co-teachers would tell them to cease their inappropriate behavior. Further, while on the subway, older women would rub her skin to see if the color would rub off creating an, understandably, uncomfortable situation. Dhaima also receives the comment about her locs being called ‘reggae hair’ by people she encounters (W.) Recalling Tamira, I believe people called her hair ‘reggae hair’ due to the popular reggae musician Bob Marley having a similar hairstyle.

Personal Experiences in Daegu

My personal experiences in Daegu match most of the experiences of the other EOCs mentioned above. My second week held the most memorable experiences for me when it comes to experiences with Korean people. Within the first week, there was an unbelievable number of people staring at me while riding the subway and even walking on the street. One fact I have resigned myself to is that no matter what I will always be seen as a foreigner on the street and people will look at me and assume things that may or may not be true based on what I look like. One instance of this is while riding the subway with my classmates during the second week of our program in South Korea. At that time, I was the only person of color (POC) in the group, however, my Korean was also the most fluent in the group. We had been riding on the train for a while and there was a seat next to me which I offered to the older woman that had been standing, but she declined and stood. It was not until a seat opened next to my classmate that the older woman sat down and began to attempt conversation with them. I was shocked and upset by what was occurring in front of me. The classmate then had to ask me what the woman was saying in Korean and what to say back which I responded every time seemingly to the dislike of the older woman. The older woman would look at me as I was responding, but never ask a question directly to me or acknowledge me much more than the look of emotion I cannot explain, but it was not positive.

There were positive experiences as well. Whenever I went into a shop or restaurant, I would try to use Korean and the workers had one of three reactions: they were excited to hear me speaking Korean and spoke with me normally, they were confused and proceeded to ask how I knew Korean halting all other conversation, or they refused to respond to me in Korean and continued to try and speak with me in broken English. Truthfully, the response I received most was a mixture between the first and second. I was visiting a restaurant during lunchtime before the next class began during our second week of the program when I spoke to the waiter in Korean and soon the entire restaurant staff was excited and curious about what I was doing in Korea. There were basic questions like ‘where are you from’ and ‘why I was in Korea’, but the most interesting question I got was why would cause someone like me to want to come to Korea. At first, I thought they were asking why I came as a student, but she made sure to clarify that she

was asking why I, as a darker-skinned person, was in Daegu instead of Seoul where the other 'foreigners' like to stay. I was shocked; however, she went on to explain that she was elated to meet me, but Daegu is a conservative, close-minded city that was not the most welcoming to foreigners. I realized then she was worried about my experience and wanted to make sure I was not having a hard time. It made my day to see her caring about me as she did and it gave me a potential cause of why people acted as they did and Daegu and not in Seoul or another more diverse city.

Conclusions

As an EOC

As an EOC that will be working in Daegu at DGEV, I cannot wholeheartedly say that I am not worried about how I will be treated both inside and outside of the classroom. Like everywhere you go there will be good and bad experiences, nice and not so nice people, and you are going to have to deal with things that make you upset. However, I think if you have enough passion and patience, it is possible to overcome these challenges. In South Korea, your experience depends greatly on where you are and how you choose to handle yourself. If you focus on every little thing that happens, you will be miserable and that stands for anywhere you go. My advice is to use the opportunity and experiences as a means to help people, not only students, grow and hopefully help them be more educated about EOC, our values, our feelings, and how to coexist happily.

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