

Globalization as Context of Intercultural Education in Japan

Hitoshi Mabuchi

グローバリゼーション—異文化間教育のコンテキストとして—

馬 渕 仁

Abstract

Intercultural education is a vital issue in the field of education in many countries. It should also be regarded as one of the significant responses to the enormous social changes called globalization. In this paper, I will examine three aspects of globalization as an important context of intercultural education particularly in Japan. The economic, political and cultural aspects of globalization are also discussed in relation to cultural imperialism, the notion of nation states and the notion of progress and universality. This paper provides a theoretical framework to investigate intercultural education not only in the Japanese context but also elsewhere in the world.

Key words : globalization in economic, political and cultural spheres; cultural imperialism; nation states, notions of progress and universality

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抄 録

異文化間教育は、多くの国において教育の重要な分野となっており、かつ、グローバル化への重要な応答のひとつとして見なされている。本稿は、そうした異文化間教育のコンテキストとしてのグローバリゼーションを、経済、政治、文化の3つの領域から考察する。さらに、文化帝国主義、国民国家、普遍性や進歩の概念というグローバリゼーションと密に関係を持つ諸点を、特に日本における異文化間教育という文脈を考慮して分析する。本稿は、日本、そして世界各地での異文化間教育へのひとつの理論的枠組を提供するものである。

キーワード : 経済、政治、文化領域でのグローバリゼーション、文化帝国主義、国民国家、普遍性・進歩の概念

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1. Introduction

Globalization commonly refers to a process whereby time and space are being compressed (Harvey 1989: 240) due to technology, transnational production and consumption and vast movement of people across borders. Giddens (1990: 64) defines globalization as a stretching process whereby modes of connection between different social contexts or regions become networked across the earth's surface. Waters (1995: 1) suggests that postmodernism was the concept of the 1980s and that globalization may be the concept of the 1990s. In this paper, I will concentrate on economic, political and cultural aspects of globalization as three major spheres of globalization, each of which affects intercultural education.

Although much has been written about globalization, the arguments about it can be categorized into two groups, one of which is skeptical about the extension of globalization and the other which argues that globalization is all-pervasive. Those in the first group tend to assert that globalization occurs in particular fields and can be applied only in limited ways. When the term globalization started to be widely used, Burton (1972) and Bull (1977) claimed that it was a radical concept because it denied the saliency of the nation state as a prime organizing principle for social life. Gilpin (1987) saw globalization primarily as the advance of capitalism. Wallerstein (1990) regarded globalization as a process of geosystematic integration exclusively in relation to the economy. A common feature among their work was the view that globalization was occurring mainly in the economic sphere but not in other spheres. Waters (1995: 33) criticized such theorists for restricting the significance of globalization to the economic sphere and pointed out their unwillingness to recognize the extent to which states were surrendering sovereignty to international and supranational organizations.

More recently, writers have stressed that globalization is an omnipresent notion present throughout various fields. Robertson (1992), for example, argued that globalization represents a consciousness of the world as a whole. He observed that the world is increasingly united, although he did not claim that it is becoming more integrated. Giddens (1990), on the other hand, pointed out the increase in ethnic conflicts and regarded these to be a part of the process of globalization. For Giddens, local nationalism should not be seen as counter-globalization but as intimately tied up with the process of globalization itself. Beck (1992), who placed risk at the center of his analysis of contemporary social change, pointed out that the distribution of risk follows the pattern of the 'boomerang curve'. In other words, local happenings in one location have increasingly come to affect events in others and are then affected by events occurring there. Societies cannot and do not any longer function in isolation. One of the common threads in the work of such theorists is their prediction of an overall decline in the sovereignty of the state. This argument is particularly relevant to the

exploration of education and political globalization, which will be discussed subsequently.

While there is now general acceptance that globalization is a multi-faceted process, it is still useful to analyze globalization in relation to the economic, political, and cultural spheres (Waters 1995, Appadurai 1996, Lechner and Boli 2000). By discussing how globalization is thought to be occurring in each of these spheres, the relevance of multiculturalism and the importance of multicultural education will become more apparent (Burbules and Torres 2000, Stromquist and Monkman 2000). I will explore such ideas in the following sections.

2. Globalization in the economic sphere and cultural imperialism

"The image of globalization to me is the Internet", "Globalization allows us to be able to travel throughout the world much more easily than before". These are some typical responses from interviews I conducted in Australia and Malaysia (1995, 1997). Globalization is often identified in relation to the dramatic advances in transportation and information technology. Dicken (1992) stated that this technological change was a primary force behind globalization and discussed its influence on how we communicate and how we think about and produce products. Appadurai (1996) also indicated how technologies have accelerated globalization, particularly in the economic sphere.

Globalization has increased as world production shifts from the production of tangible material goods to the creation of nebulous but more mobile non-material goods (Waters 1995: 75). The globalized financial market provides a ready example of the new globalized economy. The movement of people as tourists, temporary or permanent residents (for example, international students, businessmen, and professional elites) reflects this aspect of globalization.

Much emphasis has been placed on the economic sphere within the discussion of globalization. Giddens (1990) and Wallerstein (1995), for example, have examined capitalism historically and in doing so emphasize the role of the nation state in relation to globalization. However, others, including Robertson (1992) have pointed out that the economics of globalization should not be over-emphasized as the main engine of change.

Consumption has also been considered in relation to the economics of globalization. Waters (1995: 92) pointed out that stratification patterns are now linked more to possibilities for consumption rather than to the ability for production. Featherstone (1995) and Appadurai (1996) emphasize the importance of consumption in the context of globalization.

Now the question is how these recent changes caused by globalization in the economic sphere affect education. These require human resources with certain skills such as foreign language and intercultural competence. For example, as countries are increasingly integrated into the global economy, learning English has become vital throughout the world.

Competencies for globalization have been expressed by Knight (1999) as follows: (1) intercultural competence, (2) adapting business English and business etiquette to the needs of international clients, (3) using national and global perspectives, (4) basic skills in additional languages, and (5) coping and resiliency skills. Knight's emphasis is on language and intercultural competence. In this regard, it is interesting to note that annual Japanese policies developed by the Ministry of Education emphasize two areas of education: Human resource development for living in an information-oriented society and foreign language [English] education.

The message is clear: nations are under pressure to create citizens who can cope with the circumstances caused by economic globalization. Enterprises require that their employees have such competencies. When Harvey (1990: 177) claimed that the 'just-in-time market' was a major feature of Post-Fordist production, he stressed the necessity of having highly skilled workers with a well-developed sense of the consumer's point of view. Therefore, while globalization has occurred with the emergence of multinational corporations (MNC) and transnational corporations (TNC), each of these types of enterprises needs to have a professionalized approach to developing their human resources in the broadest sense.

Cultural attributes (English language skills, style of life, adoption of US or European rather than local 'attitudes and values') appear to be just as important as more formal job skills in the promotion of women as well as men in TNCs in developing countries (Sklair, 1991: 112).

Intercultural competence and language skills (usually meaning English) proficiency are promoted and developed everywhere in the world in order to prepare people for globalization in the economic sphere.

This connects to questions concerning cultural imperialism, particularly as it relates to the use of English as the international or universal language and the widespread norms which accompany English. Cultural imperialism is a phenomenon whereby a certain culture spreads its values and customs even at the expense of sacrificing other cultures. The phrase 'English [language] imperialism' has been considered in this light. Pennycook (1994) has argued that English has emerged as the international language through a process whereby deference is given to its allegedly natural, neutral, and beneficial features. He argued, however, that these suppositions cannot legitimate English as the international language because English is not natural, not neutral and not beneficial for many people in the world. In other words, the discourse above is legitimated only when those who have already acquired English are in a superior position and attempt to persuade others to accept the language use and the norms which accompany English in order to maintain their dominant position.

Looking at the Japanese context, Kosakai (1996) has argued that cultures have the po-

tential to intervene in the home culture when they are not close to the home culture and when they have become idealized. This is particularly true if the outside culture being adapted does not appear to harm the home culture. Chow (1993: 10) has described this kind of attitude toward the other culture as the Maoist attitude and explained how cultural imperialism as ideological domination succeeds best in capturing the minds of the masses without physical coercion.

Recently, the Japanese-made word 'global standard' has been widely used in Japan's economic circles. The term is used when giving normative sanction to an approach used in America or elsewhere in the West, the assumption being that it is somehow more rational. 'Global standards' are thus in fact Japanese perceptions of a practice assumed to exist in the West.

Views concerning cultural imperialism must be analyzed in the context of economic globalization. This is particularly important when considering the discussion of education policy and the outcome it is being designed to produce. There is, then, a connection between education and the global economy by means of notions about what is economically rational and socially feasible. Bearing this in mind, it is useful to consider globalization in the political sphere and how it evolves as economies become more global.

3. Globalization in the political sphere and nation states

While accepting that the world has become more globalized in terms of economic activity, theorists such as Waters (1995) assert that the primary locus of sovereignty and decision-making continues to reside in the nation state. In this section, however, the idea that even the state is under the strong influence of globalization will be explored. McGrew (1992) claims that the emergence of nation-states is itself a product of globalization. Two issues arising from globalization affect the contemporary nation state.

Firstly, certain issues, which had previously been considered as the province of the state, can no longer remain the concern of one state. One example is human rights. Since the mid-1990s, the sanctions against South Africa, the diplomatic isolation of China following the Tiananmen Square incident and involvement in Bosnia have clearly demonstrated that the notion of human rights has become an important legitimizing criterion that can allow intervention by one or more states in the internal affairs of others. Violations of human rights now meet with widespread global condemnation and often result in multilateral political action to protect these rights.

This change is even clearer on the issue of the environment. The amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere was a major issue discussed at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP) in Kyoto (1997). The process used to negotiate an agreement between all participating countries at

these conferences showed that the environment was a common and pressing political problem for each nation. Other issues include problems of food shortage, excess population on a planetary scale and problems which cannot easily be solved by a single nation.

Another issue is the decline in the ability of many states to control the growth of organizations and the mobility of people beyond national borders. In addition to TNCs, which were discussed above, international organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation framework (APEC) have all influenced a wide range of nations in that they have eroded the sovereignty of their member states. Furthermore, the rapid increase in the number of so-called Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), as the name itself clearly shows, is another example of emerging political globalization. Most of these organizations exist beyond nation states and are not controlled by national governments.

These issues lead us to ask about the viability of the nation-state. Lyotard (1979) has argued that the significance of the nation-state is declining. A similar thought is also expressed by Sklair (1991: 46) who suggests it is time to shift attention from state-centrist ideas to the analysis of the global system.

It is important now to consider what these matters concerning the nation state mean for education, particularly for multicultural or international education. As states have traditionally played a large role in determining education policy, any decline in the role of the state needs to be considered. As discussed above, education policies introduced by some nation states indicate that they still aspire to play a major role in multiculturalism in their societies. In this context, it is worth noting arguments that counter the notion of the declining nation state.

Giddens (1990) has argued that the sovereign autonomy of the nation-state has been underestimated, and has stated "while corporations are the dominant agents within the world economy, nation-states are the principal actors within the global political order" (71). Wallerstein (1995: 54) has argued that the redistributive powers of the state have increased the conflict resulting from the on-going operation of the capitalist market, and has stated that nation-states are the main players driving political globalization. He notes three adjustments made by the nation-state: the path of political participation through elections, the expansion of social legislation and the social wage or welfare. Education, particularly multicultural education, could be added to this list.

However, it is still undeniable that the notion of the nation state itself is under scrutiny. Robertson (1992: 62) has proposed that the notion of a homogeneous national society is breaking down in the contemporary phase of globalization. Appadurai (1996: 161–168), using Anderson's idea of the *imagined community*, has claimed that organizational forms are

more diverse, more fluid, more *ad hoc*, and more provisional in the imagined world and the concept of the nation state has remained in opposition to the concept of these new organizations. One of the implications of such changes is the distinction between the notion of the state and the nation. What is argued is that the conventional view, in which the states serve as main actors in educating their people, must be re-examined in the process of globalization. The focus of the argument has now shifted from the role of the nation state in the political domain to the notion of nationality and national identity.

Hall (1996) strongly advocates the position that the nation must be seen not only as a political entity, but also as something that produces meaning—a system of cultural representation. He argues that national identities were once centered, coherent and whole, but are now being dislocated by the process of globalization. Notions of nationality and national identity have now become central to political arguments, and within this transition, the focus has gradually shifted from the political to the cultural sphere. I will examine the third sphere of globalization, cultural globalization.

4. Globalization in the cultural sphere and the notions of progress and universality

Discussion of globalization in the economic and political realms involves recognition that globalization is also tied up with people's values and preferences. In this section, I will discuss globalization in the cultural sphere, with particular attention being given to the notions of progress and universality. I will firstly explore and critique the notions of progress and universality in this section and then I would like to see how these arguments are meaningful in the field of education.

While postmodernism has been used to refer to a variety of perspectives on socio-political history, two central emphases seem to characterize postmodernist perspectives. One is the insistence that any body of knowledge can be understood only in reference to the power relations which give birth to it. The second is a skepticism that questions concepts such as 'universal validity' and 'progress'.

Lyotard (1979) has discussed postmodernism and the concepts of legitimacy and universality in the context of globalization. According to him, legitimacy derives from a concept of emancipation of human beings---an idea linked to the notion of progress. These ideas, however, are commonly only considered from a Western perspective. He argued that legitimacy for any discourse has been based on its ability to emancipate according to some universal criterion. He commented, however, that universality is not universalistic. In this manner, Lyotard questioned conventional notions which underpinned much of modernization theory and modernity.

Similarly, according to Harvey (1990), postmodernism rejects all universal or totalizing

discourse. He questioned the belief in linear progress and also the doctrines of equality, liberty and enlightenment. Harvey has suggested that the idea that the entire world would gradually become more homogeneous has come from a linear perspective.

One of the main concerns for Wallerstein (1995 and 1996) has been the notion of universalism. He argued that the belief in universalism had been the ideological keystone upholding historical capitalism. He believed that most truths are particularistic rather than universalistic, and claimed that 'Westernization' has been arrogantly labeled 'modernization'. He argued that the search for truth was treated by the modernist theorists as the fountainhead of progress and well being. For Wallerstein, principles of universalism might be found through science, human rights, and meritocracy, which he described as the trio of universalism. Although Wallerstein himself did not use the word postmodernism, he came to believe that modernism was no longer possible since the three principles related to universalism could not be taken for granted in the naive ways typical of modernism.

Various arguments have been made around the two notions of progress and universality. All claim that a new era is being entered although there is some debate about what this era should be called. For instance, Giddens refuses to use the term postmodern because he regards the present as an outcome and therefore a continuation of modernity. Whether we emphasize the continuity with the past or not, notions of progress and universality are likely to continue to occupy a central position in current discussions, for example, in intercultural education. They are particularly important notions in discourses on education in Japan since they dominate educational discussions, as will be seen below.

5. Education and the notions of progress and universality

A modernist perspective has been central to the ideologies shaping educational policy in many nation states. Todaro (1997: 92–93) explained that a formal education system encouraged modern attitudes which assumed that more education would automatically result in more and better development. This perspective can be seen in their view which cuts across the naive optimism of universalism expressed by many Japanese educationalists, such as Uozumi (2000) who is one of the leading scholars in intercultural education in Japan. Postmodernism presents an enormous challenge to that view. And if education itself attempted to respond to this challenge, tensions would emerge, particularly around the notions of universality and progress.

Educational institutions have traditionally committed themselves to the advancement of 'universal knowledge', and the belief that such knowledge existed lent credence to the efforts of those who sought to promote modernization (Knight and de Wit 1995: 53–54). Whether in the age of globalization, society really needs humans with such universal knowledge is doubtful. As mentioned above in section 2.2.1, it may actually be the case that states

and enterprises have a greater need for specific skills. Many corporations are not seeking standardized global men or women (Knight and de Wit 1995: 58).

Along with universalism, another dominant ideology in education is the concept of progress, especially linear progress. Although doubt about the validity of these perspectives has appeared in the writings of economists and political observers for some time, such skepticism has rarely been expressed in the field of education. Throughout the developed and developing world, discussion of education has progressed on the assumption that more education would result in the further development of a nation and its society. However, this view of progress has recently come to be questioned even in the field of education. The overall conclusion of the 1993 Paris conference of OECD was that high participation in educational programs was in no way a guarantee that nations would achieve a high level of development (Hughter 1995).

In Japan, optimistic and normative ideals related to universalism and progress seem to underpin a naive commitment to global citizenship and to a belief that the 'coexistence' of different cultures will inevitably result from human progress. Again, some questions have emerged, including why responding to globalization has been taken to mean pursuing universalism, and how this kind of ideology has formed particularly in the context of intercultural education in Japan. Kurimoto (1996), for example, has argued that internationalization in Japan has meant the wholesale adoption of the Western European model as the modern and hence as the inevitable model.

In his study of the internationalization of higher education in Indonesia, Cannon (1996) found that universal is not in fact universal; rather it is American or European in origin. In a similar context, "*global standard*" has become a catchphrase in Japan. It has recently appeared frequently in the media, among businessmen and in educational circles in Japan. The words are often used as a slogan to legitimate American thinking or American behavior as universally accepted norms. It is then a small jump to suggest that the Japanese urgently need to adopt such thinking and behaviors to participate in the global age.

6. Summary

In this paper, globalization serves as the stage for multiculturalism and multicultural education and has been discussed from various perspectives. Technological changes, consumerism and the increased mobility of people and the appearance of multinational organizations which cross national and cultural boundaries have been accompanied by a new regime of cultural imperialism, while the relevance of the nation state for understanding contemporary societies has been debated. Globalization in the cultural sphere was analyzed around the notions of universality and progress. The dominance of these notions in education was demonstrated and criticized for its Westernism. The issues raised in this pa-

per contribute to the shaping of the vital context of intercultural education in Japan, which in itself must be regarded as a significant response toward this enormous social change called globalization.

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