

# Chapter 1

## Are We Living in a Globalized World?

### Reflections on Language Use and Global Inequality

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#### **ABSTRACT**

*The author first points to some prejudiced or inappropriate language use in an era of globalization, for example, distinctions between language and dialect, Global South and Global North, developed countries and developing countries, majority and minority, intercultural education, and multicultural education. Then the author extends the discussion to the inequality in different fields, such as the educational and economic fields. Finally, the author calls for elimination of the biased language use and unequal practice in an era of globalization. This chapter concludes that a real globalization will not be attained without an equal globe and suggests unbiased language use and equal practices in language use in various domains.*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Are we living in a globalized world? Yes and No. The answer is Yes! In a sense that various forms of mobility, either physical or virtual, can be seen around the globe. Physically, people from one country can easily move to another country or state. On campuses, students from different cultures sit in the same classroom and learn together. In a company, people from different cultures may work together for

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the same company. It is also not uncommon that you see merchandise produced in a far-away country displayed in a store near you or a globally well-known store is just several steps away from you. Virtually, you find that establishing friendship with people from different cultures or other countries is just a finger-tip away. You can even take distance courses and get a foreign degree without having to leave your own country. Thanks to modern technologies and transportation, all these seemingly impossible occurrences before have become norms of our daily life. Under this circumstance, “the boundaries between home and away, local and global, here and there are increasingly blurred” (Caruana, 2010, p. 52). Information, people, merchandise and ideas can flow rapidly around the globe.

However, is this the picture faithfully describing the globe? The answer is No! We cannot pretend that we do not see the other side of the globe. We cannot assume that each member of the global community is equally living happily and safely and the globe is peaceful and harmonious. In addition to what the author describes above, the other side of the globe is also apparent and cannot be overlooked. For example, inequality, discrimination, poverty, conflict, war, oppression, illiteracy, drug trafficking, and epidemics prevail in some corners of the world. To solve these global issues is really a big task and it takes the entire global community to work together to eventually reach the goal of globalization.

To address so many global issues is beyond the scope of this chapter. In this chapter, the author focuses only on the language used and hence inequality existing in the seemingly globalized world. In some literature relevant to globalization, there are indeed existing different degrees and different types of discriminations and prejudices. These linguistic expressions are commonly used in literature and people take them for granted without consciously noticing the pitfalls underlying these expressions. In some cases, there might be gaps between the writer and the reader. While the writer may not intentionally write this way, the reader can receive a great impact on how the writer writes. That is, writers may lack in audience awareness and sometimes they use languages or expressions offensive to people from different cultures. In the following sections to come, the author discusses some commonly used linguistic expressions and their inappropriateness in a so-called globalized world.

## **Background**

One of the most important issues that people encounter moving towards globalization is language used in various political, economic, and educational contexts. The inappropriate use of language is actually one of the factors that bar the road towards globalization. The author will point to just some examples showing how language can be inappropriately used in different contexts. The author’s intention is to draw

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