

National Branding through Education: South Korean Image in Romania through the Language Textbooks for Foreigners

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Abstract : The paper treats about the Korean public diplomacy and national branding strategies, and how the Korean language textbooks were used in order to construct the Korean national image. The field research of the paper stands at the intersection between Linguistics and Political Science, while the problem of the research is the role of language and culture in national branding process. The research goal is to contribute to the literature situated at the intersection between International Relations and Applied Linguistics, while the objective is to conceptualize the idea of national branding by emphasizing a dimension which is not much discussed, and that would be the education as an instrument of the national branding and public diplomacy strategies. In order to examine the importance of language upon the national branding strategies, the paper will answer one main question, How is the Korean language used in the construction of national branding?, and two secondary questions, How are explored in literature the relations between language and national branding construction? and What kind of image of South Korea the language textbooks for foreigners transmit? In order to answer the research questions, the paper starts from one main hypothesis, that the language is an essential component of the culture, which is used in the construction of the national branding influenced by traditional elements (like Confucianism) but also by modern elements (like Western influence), and from two secondary hypothesis, the first one is that in the International Relations literature there are little explored the connections between language and national branding, while the second hypothesis is that the South Korean image is constructed through the promotion of a traditional society, but also a modern one. In terms of methodology, the paper will analyze the textbooks used in Romania at the universities which provide Korean Language classes during the three years program B.A., following the dialogs, the descriptive texts and the additional text about the Korean culture. The analysis will focus on the rank status difference, the individual in relation to the collectivity, the respect for the harmony, and the image of the foreigner. The results of the research show that the South Korean image projected in the textbooks convey the Confucian values and it does not emphasize the changes suffered by the society due to the modernity and globalization. The Westernized aspect of the Korean society is conveyed more in an informative way about the Korean international companies, Korean internal development (like the transport or other services), but it does not show the cultural changed the society underwent. Even if the paper is using the textbooks which are used in Romania as a teaching material, it could be used and applied at least to other European countries, since the textbooks are the ones issued by the South Korean language schools, which other European countries are using also.

Keywords : confucianism, modernism, national branding, public diplomacy, traditionalism

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