

ICLT#7: Tyler's Interview Bio

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Tyler's Interview Bio

When responding to a question about how his past experiences were similar or different, Tyler was very articulate in defining the boundaries of his intercultural journey. It was a journey fraught with mixed emotions and realizations of a *self* striving to cope with and adjust to a new reality and set of expectations that were, at times, both “interesting” and “irritating.”

Tyler's first intercultural encounter took place when he worked as a teacher in South Korea. When I posed that question, I assumed that the dynamic of dominant versus non-dominant cultures might emerge. Indeed, some of the mixed feelings Tyler expressed—being “handled,” “shown off,” or treated as a symbol of prestige—can be understood through this very lens.

As an American, Tyler was perceived not only as an individual but also as a representative of a dominant culture that many Koreans seemed fascinated by. He embodied the English language—a language widely admired and sought after—and symbolized a nation perceived as politically and economically powerful.

Tyler's feelings of isolation, I believe, stem from a deep-seated power dynamic. When an American travels abroad, the individualistic nature of American culture often leads them to assume that others perceive them primarily as individuals. However, in many contexts, they are viewed instead as symbols of broader cultural, linguistic, and racial identities. The shift from being seen as “*Who I am*” to “*What I represent and where I come from*” may have contributed to the sense of alienation Tyler experienced while adjusting to life in Korea.

When comparing Tyler's experience in Korea to his later experience in Africa, similar patterns of irritation, misunderstanding, and exclusion appear—but with additional layers of complexity. Beyond the dynamics of English and America as symbols of power, race enters the equation, creating a triad of intersecting identities: *English*, *America*, and *Whiteness*. This triadic identity shapes how Tyler was perceived and positioned in both social and professional contexts, influencing his intercultural experience in profound and multifaceted ways.