

TEACHING KOREAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: INPUTS TO NEW NORMAL PEDAGOGY

Inero Valbuena Ancho

ancho.iv@pnu.edu.ph

College of Graduate Studies and Teacher Education Research
Philippine Normal University, Philippines

ABSTRACT

What lessons can be shared from instructional practices in Korean language teaching? How can other teachers learn from these experiences? Given these reflections, how can one imagine the future of foreign language teaching as guided by reflective practices? The delivery of foreign language classes also needs to be revisited as the sudden shift to teaching and learning modality has created a great impact on instructional materials development, lesson delivery, assessment, and other functions. As a study employing critical reflection as a method, this paper uses the professional learning context of the researcher with teaching Korean as a foreign language in graduate school. Critical reflection is used to further positively contribute to ways and practices of teaching the course. Teaching Korean as a foreign language to graduate students is an experience filled with lessons worthy of examination. These lessons as a product of practice inform prospects with the end goal of refining classroom strategies. The experiences of teachers of Korean as a foreign language could serve as a springboard in critically revisiting practices and methodologies in the classroom.

Keywords: *Covid-19, foreign language, graduate school, Korean language, lessons, teaching*

INTRODUCTION

With globalization as one of the main drivers, cultures and societies are shaped like one big community being manned by interconnected individuals. Cultural boundaries appear to be of a bridge rather than a hindrance towards a greater understanding of people's way of life. The contemporary times have paved the way for people to be exposed to various cultures and complex societies, highlighted by mechanisms to further enhance understanding and tolerance. According to Semenova (2018), globalization has also created an impact on languages and dialects. Boghian (2016) also opined that temporal aspects contribute to the challenge of foreign language learning, thus "it is ever to be further improved."

Technological breakthroughs facilitate communication and cultural exchange. People across nations consume content and goods via computers and wireless mechanisms. A study by Sabre (2017) looked at how French tourists' experiences concerning Japanese pop culture, as influenced by "media-contents-related" imaginaries. Interests in popular culture and societies yield greater attention and more and more people are focusing on the way people 'from other parts of the world' share their contribution to the bigger picture of a connected global society.

Foreign language is one aspect that is gradually gaining emphasis in contemporary times amidst technological advancement and world trade practices. Numerous studies have been conducted, particularly on foreign language comprehension (Birulés-Muntané & Soto-Faraco, 2016) and its effect on “implicit speech processing” (Bosker & Reinisch, 2017), even ICT use of teachers in the context of foreign language (Guillén-Gámez, Lugones, Mayorga-Fernández, & Wang, 2019). While learning a foreign language serves as a usual activity to some, the fact remains that it contributes to a greater understanding of people’s lives. It is without a doubt that learning a new language creates a significant influence on one’s beliefs, values, and personality.

In the Philippines, learning a foreign language has long been given attention, for academic and recreational reasons. The presence of tutorial center and language learning institutions, along with mandated course requirements in schools and universities are evident manifestations of thrusts and provisions of instilling a cultural and social appreciation of Filipinos. With CMO 23 of the Philippine’s Commission on Higher Education (CHED Memorandum Order 23), Filipino students are now required to take foreign language classes as part of their program of study. Korean is one of the languages students may pursue. Along with academic mandate, Filipinos pursue foreign language learning also for leisure purposes. Dewaele, et al. (2018) suggested that teachers of foreign languages need to focus on the enjoyment of the learning of foreign language learning. Previous studies conducted have also recognized technology as an agent in “increasing students’ engagement and involvement in learning a new language” (Şengül, & Türel, 2019).

The dawn of the Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic has created drastic shifts in the pedagogical landscape worldwide. It is imperative to look at the delivery modes in terms of its equitability and accessibility. The challenge remains as face-to-face conduct of classes is prohibited, thus modular and virtual approaches are utilized to ensure continuity of learning. Undoubtedly, the classroom set-up has formed a new niche online as the processes of teaching and learning are now confined to computer screens and the virtual world.

The delivery of foreign language classes also needs to be revisited as the sudden shift to teaching and learning modality has created a great impact on instructional materials development, lesson delivery, assessment, and other functions. More than being considered as theoretical, foreign language classes requires a more sophisticated approach, particularly actual practice and performance tasks. According to Lo Presti (2020), alterations on the approaches to the teaching of languages have led to the adaptation “to the new scenario and digital tools” in the time of Covid-19. The use of the internet or online media has been experienced at education institutions as teachers’ “dependence on technology” in the time of Covid-19 is deemed crucial (Wargadinata, et al., 2020). It would be deemed challenging to prepare chapter discussions and let students read them as part of the independent study scheme usually employed during lecture classes. As concluded by Egbert (2020): engagement in language tasks can continue to support learners' achievement. A foreign language class requires a carefully planned and systematically organized curriculum to effectively and successfully achieve course intended learning outcomes.

This paper intends to present the experiences of teaching Korean as a foreign language in a teacher education institution in Manila, Philippines. Classes involved in this study are Korean 1 (Beginner Korean) and Korean 2 (intermediate Korean) offered to graduate students. Each course weighs 3 credits as students are required to take the beginner and intermediate level courses of their chosen language. According to Fauziati (2017), continued efforts are consistently pressed in search of effective favorable methods of foreign language teaching.

What lessons can be shared from instructional practices employed during the Korean language teaching? How can other foreign language teachers learn from these experiences? Given these reflections, how can one imagine the future of foreign language teaching, particularly in the time of the Covid-19 pandemic, as guided by reflective practices? These inquiries serve as a guide for the researcher in crafting the flow of this study. According to Ancho (2019), a foreign language classroom serves as an opportunity to strengthen “cultural appreciation, while emphasizing one’s own identity.” In the long run, it is hoped that this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge integrating previously published literature and actual practices in the process of foreign language teaching. For instance, Dolean (2016) has identified approaches that enhance foreign language learning.

FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

This paper places its importance in providing avenues for teachers and students towards effective curriculum implementation practices in the context of foreign language classrooms mainly rooted in experience and reflection. As the education arena faces the challenges of a health pandemic, the paper is also significant in offering possible solutions and approaches worthy of examination and consideration. The current situation “requires a move to remote teaching and learning, and rethinking the delivery of instruction for the foreseeable future” (Ross & DiSalvo, 2020). It is vital that students learning styles be grasped so that learning difficulties could be resolved (Wong, 2015). Teachers’ feedbacks are also deemed beneficial for learners informed of foreign language learning goals (Vattøy & Smith, K., 2019).

To be specific, this study looks into the (a) lessons learned in teaching the Korean language after it is offered for a year, and (b) ways forward to note how current practices would inform the improvement of teaching the courses. Andragogical approaches play a crucial role in this study, with adults as learners of the foreign language class. Arguments are weaved with andragogical perspectives to contextualize objectives identified in this paper. As Byram and Wagner (2018) suggested, it is essential to associate language teaching with other fields of study.

This study is anchored on the critical reflection framework presented by Briscoe (2017). It has been argued how critical reflection as a concept yields complex and vague understanding. To be specific, the process of critical reflection has prompted the researcher to recognize and weigh the context and ideations of practice as these provide deep avenues to self-examination and how day-to-day classroom strategies inform teaching. To facilitate the process of critical reflection, it is imperative to challenge existing ideas, beliefs, and practices to arrive at newly-constructed ideas of teaching.

METHODOLOGY

As a study employing critical reflection as a method, this paper uses the professional learning context of the researcher about teaching Korean as a foreign language in graduate school. Critical reflection is used to further positively contribute to ways and practices of teaching the course. According to Ng, Wright, & Kuper (2019), by “challenging and changing assumptions and practices”, one becomes a critically reflective practitioner.

Critical reflection as a method has provided avenues for a deeper and complex understanding of practice experiences with the hope of improving future practices. This paper is an attempt to present the experience through descriptive, analytical, and critical lenses. The researcher specifically used this approach to revisit his teaching practice and eventually learn from these experiences. In this study, essential episodes in the teaching of the Korean language are identified and linked with significant assumptions that contribute to the achievement of course intended learning outcomes. By doing so, the researcher can highlight which strategies work well and are deemed effective, and which need to be replaced or altered. Through critical reflection, the researcher had the opportunity to recognize how each classroom practice is aligned with personal and professional beliefs and how these are seen to be responsive to the needs of the students. These situations are labeled as “critical” since it talks about “unobserved, unacknowledged, or taken for granted” pieces of practices in the teaching profession (Wang & Hoffman, 2016). With this at hand, new concepts and ideas emerge that inform future practices.

The researcher is currently a faculty of the college of graduate studies in a teacher education institution in Manila, Philippines. While being classified to teach under the Education Sciences Cluster, the researcher also handles foreign language classes for students of the Doctor of Philosophy program. Earning 6 units of foreign language studies is a requirement for the degree. Typically, 12 students enroll in each class.

After three years of continuously teaching Korean 1 and Korean 2 courses, the researcher believes that this time frame is appropriate to conduct a critical reflection of various classroom practices which include but are not limited to classroom management, assessment, strategy, among others. The following artifacts and evidence provide directions and essential inputs during the reflective process: attendance record, pop quizzes, writing and spelling activities, speaking practices score sheet, movie reviews, and final task sheets which focused on grammar and writing activities.

For this study, the discussion is mainly divided into two main parts: lessons and ways forward. For the context of this study, lessons refer to what the researcher has proven to be helpful and beneficial to the teaching practice after employing various strategies in the classroom. These lessons came about as a result of attempts to improve teaching strategies. Given these learned lessons, ways forward encompass prospects and future classroom practices. Opportunities related to teaching in the classroom are also identified and highlighted.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the discussion as a result of the researcher's critical reflection process. This section captures the weekly experience and realization of the researcher during the time spent with graduate students learning Korean as a foreign language. The first part of the discussion deals with the lessons learned from the teaching experiences which could be summarized into three crucial aspects: appreciating foreign language teaching experience, practicing and applying values learned, and bridging cultural understanding through foreign language teaching.

Three aspects were identified for the second part of the discussion: designing more innovative activities, exploring other media for teaching, and contextualizing foreign language teaching in graduate school. The discussion found in the section has been a product of the researcher's sense-making, given current practices in the foreign language classroom. Critical reflection as an approach has been instrumental in revisiting professional practices and deepening how these strategies and situations have impacted the achievement of course intended learning outcomes.

Lessons from Korean Language Teaching: Beyond Grammar and Vocabulary

Typical and traditional approaches to foreign language teaching include grammar mastery and vocabulary memorization for the students. The challenge however arises with what comes next whenever this passive instructional method is practiced since students are deprived of applying what they have learned, especially outside the classroom in terms of speaking and listening situations. During a pandemic, it was seen that digital technologies contributed to individualized student-lead learning via an inquiry-based approach (Masterson, 2020). Korean language teaching in graduate school is filled with lessons applicable not only in foreign language context but in general instructional practices as well.

Appreciating foreign language teaching experience

Korean language teaching, just like any other content courses, requires appropriate instructional strategies aimed at the success of the teaching and learning process. Instructional materials, assessment processes, and even performance tasks need to be carefully planned towards effective curriculum implementation at the classroom level. After semesters of teaching Korean as a foreign language, the researcher has identified essential elements of a foreign language classroom as the experience led to an appreciation of practiced routine in class.

A foreign language class is composed of learners who bring with them limited content knowledge about the subject being studied: vocabulary is lacking, the first-time encounter of grammar rules, brand new content. The challenge in the aspect lies in properly managing students' interest in the midst of what's lacking and what needs to be filled in. It is noteworthy to mention how each student would solidify personal interests with gradual exposure to topics identified in the class syllabus. Students would be amazed at how a particular word translates

into the Korean language, specifically those terms that require Korean-English structures such as McDonald's, smartphones, television, banana, and others.

Since the class is offered to Ph.D. students, learners must be quick at analysis and comparative perspectives. Once vocabulary and grammar rules are discussed, it becomes a norm to digest and come up with comparative views in the context of Filipino language and culture. Teaching a foreign language is indeed an effective way to go back to one's roots and do a self-examination of Filipino culture, language, and tradition.

Another thing worthy to mention when it comes to appreciating Korean language teaching is the fact that it provides avenues for self-growth and development for the teacher himself. As different students require particular effective approaches to fully grasp grammar and vocabulary lessons, the teacher is challenged to design improved and tested methodologies as a result of numerous attempts.

Appreciating foreign language teaching experience leads to the exploration of the possibilities of succeeding in the classroom through innovations after lessons from content-based classes are exhausted. It brings together aspirations that at the end of the term, an identified course intended learning outcomes are exhibited, and program goals are achieved.

Practicing and applying values learned

A foreign language classroom with graduate students as learners is unique in the sense that andragogical approaches are given emphasis: independent learning is at the core of the process. The entire semester has been a temporal driving factor for students to boost self-confidence, creativity, and innovation.

Amid never-ending academic requirements in graduate school, having students successfully memorize the entire Korean alphabet and prescribed vocabulary words somehow contribute to boosting their self-confidence. Ph.D. students at their age would verbalize the challenge of trying to figure out each alphabet but the efforts seemed paid off once they successfully read and write a syllable, a word, or a simple sentence.

Students' self-confidence is developed and enhanced despite the difficulties of required activities and performance tasks in the class. It encourages them to be better and be capable of delivering favorable outcomes. The students' courage to speak and write in basic Korean language despite committing expected mistakes has been instrumental in strengthening personal values during academic pursuits.

As mistakes are committed, the classroom becomes a set of constructive collaboration between the learners and the teacher. Shortcomings are identified with the highest level of respect and corrections are offered with the end goal of achieving authentic learning.

Bridging cultural understanding through foreign language teaching

One great impact of foreign language teaching is the realization that it bridges cultures. Understanding other people's way of life begins with capturing the students' interest in elements that matter: people, language, and tradition. Once these elements are introduced, students begin to deepen their curiosity thus leading to a much larger and relevant inquiry.

Students have the opportunity to re-examine themselves as Filipinos by knowing the people of Korea through a discussion about history and society. Understanding among cultures is heightened by knowing and understanding people from other nations and how they have contributed to shaping their identity.

Learning the Korean language served as a springboard for students to know more about Korea as a country, particularly with formal and informal speeches. Grammar rules show how sophisticated the Korean language is, making it a more appealing language to study. Activities like movie watching and song performances contribute to strategies that make a foreign language class an exciting session for the students, particularly during the pandemic. Language is learned while exercising diplomacy and cultural tolerance.

Teaching a foreign language is an opportunity that creates positive constructs of peace, understanding, tolerance, and diplomacy. The teacher is of critical role in facilitating ideas and perspectives that weave differences and opposing views. Cultures are connected and given due importance because of a foreign language teacher who emphasizes the authentic value of coexistence and respect.

Ways Forward in Korean Language Teaching: Innovation, Media and Context

Despite the challenges faced and lessons gained in teaching Korean as a foreign language to graduate students, the experience has also seen the emergence of prospects and inputs to improve classroom practices. These lessons are evident in daily classroom encounters which could eventually serve as a baseline in planning the curriculum in the future.

Designing more innovative and interactive activities

It is indeed worthy to note that the foreign language classroom is a promising setting for innovative strategies and teaching methodologies to materialize. Instituting games, for example, instead of the usual question and answer format during discussion would successfully capture students' attention and help manage their anxiety, particularly during individual performance task accomplishment. Games could be done in pairs or groups, thus promoting teamwork and camaraderie while advocating friendly competition.

Students were asked to write on flashcards particular vocabulary words they learned during the previous meeting to practice writing strokes and memory. These flashcards were then shown to class as students eagerly read what was written. Through this, the learning process,

particularly materials used were manipulated by the students. These aspects positively contribute to the success of learning.

As task sheets were designed and provided for use of the students, developmental work texts supplement classroom instruction. These task sheets appropriately meet the needs of the students after careful analysis of their learning development. Anchored on the weekly topics stipulated on the course syllabus, each task presents activities related to the theoretical discussion in class. Task sheets are accomplished as homework during the students' flexible learning activity period.

Innovation in the classroom is fuelled by creative ideas after student needs and challenges are identified. Teaching Korean as a foreign language is an invitation to plan, create, design, and implement sensible approaches unique from the usual teaching of other academic courses. According to Wang, et al. (2020), the Covid-19 health crises has prompted learning institutions to contribute to efforts that address the pandemic, particularly in terms of "innovation in online education models." Innovative and interactive activities in the classroom make way for student enthusiasm despite the difficulty of the lessons and other hurdles.

Exploring other media for learning

Movie clips, songs, and drama files can be employed in a traditional classroom setting. Careful planning should be executed by foreign language teachers to align the discussion of topics and the choice of media content to be utilized. As opined by Fansury et al, (2020), in a study on teaching English during the pandemic, "digital content media that can be sourced from YouTube, Facebook, and TV broadcast or teaching videos." With the availability of various Korean films with English subtitles, the discussion is enriched with follow-up activities like movie digest discussion and reflective movie inquiry. Students also see how grammar rules and vocabulary words are practiced in real life.

Korean songs also serve as a way of strengthening vocabulary memory and a source of entertainment. Songs primarily intended for kids are composed of easy words and simple sentences. These songs also seem to be appealing to adult learners. Consistently asking students to sing before or after class would make the students familiar, confident, and comfortable in speaking and singing in the Korean language. Exploring available media for teaching does not just effectively ease the facilitation of learning but it also contributes to appeal to learners' interest.

Contextualizing foreign language teaching in graduate school

One critical aspect of teaching the Korean language in the graduate school is the way andragogical practices are observed. Adult learners require particular strategies in terms of classroom methodologies, assessments, and other processes. Typical theoretical discussions are enriched by the students' various inquiries based on their personal experiences and previous knowledge. With this in mind, it is essential to note how every learner could contribute to each

foreign language session.

Identifying the context of the foreign language classroom is crucial because it provides directions as to how lessons can be executed, how learner's performance must be assessed, and how instructional success is measured. Appropriate techniques lead to a healthy and desirable classroom atmosphere, thus foreign language teaching contributes to the holistic scholarship of every learner: targeted course intended learning outcomes are realized, and program goals are attained.

As adult learners enroll in a foreign language class, their interest and eagerness to learn must be recognized. They are aware of their responsibility as a part of the foreign language class and the teacher carries the task of consistently aligning student expectations vis-à-vis lessons and activities in class. In this context, students are ready and motivated to learn and are capable of providing directions for learning for themselves.

The period allotted for theoretical discussion may take longer than expected, especially with topics related to Korean history, people, society, and culture, since learners are expected to problematize topics and inquiries. Each episode is translated as to how it informs practice and actual application. Typically, presenting Korean history would stimulate students' interest to look back and examine the past of the Filipino people. This is a proactive invitation for the teacher to indulge the students in reflection. In the long run, the context of the Korean language classroom is not just a concern of language learning, but it also encompasses culture, society, and history not only of Korea but also of the Philippines.

Education must continue during the pandemic. The challenge remains as schools migrate to appropriate modes of delivery: whether through the online or modular scheme. Whether this is seen as a solution or temporary relief, it is high time to revisit teaching practices and bank on previously learned lessons and experiences to visualize how the new normal will push through, even in the context of foreign language teaching. These lessons and ways forward culled from previous experience serve as inputs to guiding principles in carefully planning how to go about the smallest steps amid the pandemic. Creating, planning, and implementing curricular modifications in a foreign language class should be anchored on the lessons of everyday experiences and the prospect towards academic achievement. The emphasis is on how one can capitalize on experiences and practices as a springboard in improving the current condition, whether amid the pandemic or not.

CONCLUSIONS

In the light of identified research inquiries of this paper and guided by the findings as a result of the researcher's critical reflection, the following conclusions are offered. Teaching Korean as a foreign language to graduate students is an experience filled with lessons worthy of examination which could serve as significant inputs to teaching during the health crisis. These lessons as a product of practice inform prospects with the end goal of refining classroom

strategies and equitable approaches in the light of Covid-19.

The experiences of teachers of Korean as a foreign language could serve as a springboard in critically revisiting practices and methodologies in the classroom. Lessons gained are inputs to refining classroom practices during the Covid-19 pandemic. Appreciating the Korean language teaching experience yields favorable outcomes for both learners and the teacher. It is essential to note that the achievement of learning outcomes commences with a solid appreciation of what teaching a foreign language could bring in terms of academics. The process of learning a foreign language also develops personal values. Self-confidence, innovation, and creativity are three aspects that are highlighted in this context.

As the Korean language teacher digests lessons learned in the classroom, future practices are envisioned in the hope of positive outcomes in the classroom. Innovative and interactive strategies are encouraged as these neutralize challenges brought about by the difficulties of learning a foreign language. Multimedia materials also do not just serve as a form of entertainment but also as an academic approach to be employed. Lastly, contextualizing foreign language classroom calls for maximizing the potentials of students and teachers. Students as problem-centered learners inform how lessons can be executed, how learner's performance must be assessed, and how instructional success is measured.

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Dr. **Inero V. Ancho** is earned his Ph.D. (2015) and MA (2010) in Education from Chonbuk National University (CBNU) in Jeonju, South Korea as an academic scholar. He was a recipient of the Woojung Foundation Scholarship Program in Seoul, South Korea. He is a graduate of the University of the Philippines – Diliman where he received his undergraduate degree (cum laude), BA in Philippine Studies (2007), with specialization in Speech Communication and Filipino. He attended Hannam University in Daejeon, South Korea for a year-long exchange student program where he majored in Korean Studies. He is currently an Assistant Professor 1 at the College of Graduate Studies and Teacher Education Research at the Philippine Normal University (Manila).