An Analysis of Recent Trends in Methodologies for Teaching Korean as A Foreign Language

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Abstract

The rising global popularity of Korean contemporary culture is fueling a boom in learning the Korean language and leading to more students enrolling in Korean language classes. Consequently, Korean language lessons should be carefully designed to cater to the learner's needs to understand more about K-culture through K-pop, K-dramas, and K-movies, along with linguistic components. However, it seems some language teachers may lack confidence in incorporating K-cultural content into their teaching practice, lesson plans, and instructional material design as a means of learner-centred instruction. This is partially due to the traditionally teacher-centred instructional methods dominant in Korean education, where teachers should be role models and lead the entire lesson, and to the lack of professional training available for teachers. Therefore, this study aims to review recent methodologies implemented in Korean language education to provide an overview that can guide Korean language teachers and educational professionals in making informed decisions and adopting effective practices in Korean as a foreign language education by analysing relevant literature about current methodologies in the Korean language classroom. The integration of various effective teaching methodologies, along with the incorporation of technological advancements and cultural contents, appears to be inevitable and the most promising path forward. This blended approach not only aligns with current educational trends but also addresses the specific needs and preferences of learners in a globalised context.

Keywords: Eaching Korean, Technology Integration, Gamification, Cultural Immersion, Experiential Learning, Blended Learning

Introduction

The significance of Korean as a foreign language has grown remarkably in the contemporary landscape of global language education. This increasing interest in the Korean language can be largely attributed to the international popularity of Korean popular culture, known as K-pop and Korean dramas (Jung et al., 2022; Lee & Kawata, 2021; Nam, 2020; Shin et al., 2006). These cultural exports have not only brought the Korean language and culture to the global stage but have also fostered a growing community of learners

worldwide. Furthermore, the importance of Korean language fluency in a variety of academic and professional sectors has increased due to South Korea's vital geopolitical position and strong economic growth (Paik, 2001). Interest in the language among academics and diplomats has also increased as a result of the Korean Peninsula's strategic importance. (Choi & Lee, 2020; Kim, 2020).

Objective

By evaluating pertinent literature and investigating useful instructional design in the Korean language classroom, this study aims to investigate the language teaching approaches used in teaching Korean as a foreign language. Therefore, the primary objectives of this study are:

1. To Gain an Understanding of Historical and Modern Teaching Methodologies: This involves analyzing how teaching approaches have changed over time and spotting contemporary developments in Korean language instruction.

2. To Assess Effectiveness and Challenges: Determining how well different teaching strategies fulfill the wide range of learner demands. This involves investigating how successfully different approaches use technology to engage students, incorporate cultural components, and integrate these factors.

3. To Provide Recommendations: providing analysis and suggestions to curriculum designers, legislators, and language instructors in order to improve the effectiveness and accessibility of Korean language instruction.

Through this comprehensive exploration, this study seeks to contribute significantly to the discourse on language pedagogy, particularly in the context of Korean as a foreign or second language education. It aims to provide an overview that can guide educators, learners, and stakeholders in making informed decisions and adopting effective practices in the dynamic field of Korean language teaching.

Literature Review

History of Korean Language Education as a Foreign Language

Table 1: The history of Korean language education as a foreign language

Period	Key Developments
Early 20th Century	Origins of Korean language instruction overseas; informal teaching practices for over 150 years.
1959	Establishment of the first formal Korean language program at Yonsei University
Late 1980s	Growth of Korean research and education; systematic teaching methods began to develop (Kim, 1999)
1990s - Early 2000s	Increased global interest in Korean due to the rise of Korean pop culture (Hallyu)
Current Trends	Diverse motivations for learning Korean, including cultural interests

Note: This table highlights the significant milestones in the evolution of Korean language education as a foreign language, reflecting changes in societal needs and cultural influences.

The history of Korean language education as a foreign language has seen substantial change over time, however, its origins may be found in the early 20th century. Although Korean language instruction overseas has been practiced for over 150 years, Korean instruction was first offered in the nation's formal educational institutions in 1959, at Yonsei University. In addition, Korean research and education started in the late 1980s. It is challenging to understand how the systematic use of Korean teaching methods was achieved up until that point (Kim, 1999). As Korea's international profile grew, so did the necessity for foreign diplomats and business professionals, including missionaries, to become fluent in the Korean language (Paik, 2001).

The first formal institution for teaching Korean to foreigners was likely established in South Korea in 1959, at Yonsei University Korean Language Institution which has been offering Korean language courses to foreign students since their establishment. These early programs were primarily aimed at diplomats, missionaries, and business professionals who needed to learn Korean for their work in or with Korea. However, The Yonsei University Korean Language Institution's founding is extremely important. At that point, Koreans formed the first Korean language instruction program as a foreign language, and instruction started because of their objective. The concept of teaching Korean as a foreign language, together with instructional materials and other resources, was formed with the creation of the Korean Language School. This marked the beginning of a fully formalized, systematized approach to teaching Korean (Paik, 2001).

In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, there was a global boom in interest in studying Korean, especially with the rise in popularity of Korean pop culture, also referred to as "Hallyu" or the Korean Wave. This phenomena in culture greatly increased the demand for Korean language instruction globally and altered the direction of Korean language education. In the past, learners of the Korean language were mostly focused on acquiring the language for academic or professional goals to broaden their skill set. These days, cultural interests have drawn them to become enthusiasts (Jung, 2021). This diversity necessitates a teaching approach that is flexible and responsive to individual motivations and learning objectives (Ellis, 2004). One other obstacle in teaching Korean is engaging a wide cohort of students, each with different motivations and learning objectives.

Historical Context

Teaching Korean as a foreign language has a rich historical background that has been woven together by changing educational approaches influenced by technology, social factors, and educational philosophies. This paper charts the evolution of various approaches, emphasizing important turning points and advancements in teaching methodologies.

In the early stages of the 20th century, the grammar-translation approach was mostly used in Korean language instruction. (Yoon, 2009). This method, deeply rooted in traditional academic settings, focused primarily on the grammatical rules and written aspects of the language. It involved the direct translation of texts and extensive rote learning of vocabulary, often at the expense of verbal proficiency and communicative skills. Richards and Rodgers (2001) highlight that this approach emphasized understanding the literary form of the target language rather than facilitating practical communication skills. The resources for learning during this period were relatively scarce (Ko et al., 2022), and the teaching methodologies were, therefore, more inclined towards memorisation and textual analysis (Thamcharonki, 1999).

Transitioning into the mid-20th century, there was a marked shift with the introduction of the Audio-Lingual method. Deriving its principles from structuralist linguistics

and behaviourist psychology, this method revolutionised language teaching by emphasizing spoken language. As described by Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2013), this approach involved repetitive drills and pattern practice aimed at ingraining linguistic structures in learners. This method prioritised spoken language and repetitive drills, aiming to create habitual responses in learners. It was a departure from the earlier focus on written language, instead fostering verbal proficiency through repetitive and immersive practices. However, this method later received criticism, as noted by Brown (2007), for its limited scope in developing comprehensive communicative competence, particularly in neglecting the cultural context of language use.

In the late 20th century, there was a major paradigm shift in favor of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). This method was developed in response to the flaws of the audio-lingual approach, which included a teacher-centered approach (Littlewood, 2018) and a lack of grammar instruction (Lee, Schallert, & Kim, 2015). Prioritizing interaction and the practical application of language, CLT aims to empower students to speak successfully in everyday contexts (Mohammed, & Al-Ahdal, 2020). Savignon (2002) elaborates on how CLT significantly influenced language education, shifting the emphasis from grammatical accuracy to meaningful communication and interaction. This approach aligned Korean language teaching with global educational trends and acknowledged the importance of communicative competence in language learning.

The advent of globalization and the rapid advancement in technology at the turn of the century further reshaped Korean language education. The rise of South Korea as a cultural and economic powerhouse, coupled with the growing global interest in Korean culture, led to an increased demand for Korean language skills. King and Yeon (2017) observe that this period saw an expansion in the availability of learning resources, including diverse multimedia materials and online courses. Furthermore, the integration of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) brought a transformative change to language education, enhancing accessibility and interactivity, as discussed by Chapelle (2003). These technological tools not only made learning more flexible but also introduced innovative methods catering to a global audience.

In more recent years, the focus in language education has shifted towards intercultural communicative competence, recognising the significance of cultural understanding in language learning. Byram (2008) emphasises the importance of this approach, particularly in Korean language education, where understanding cultural nuances is crucial for effective communication. This contemporary approach to language teaching integrates cultural components, such as etiquette, social norms, and cultural references, alongside linguistic training.

The evolution of teaching methodologies for Korean as a foreign language reflects a journey from traditional, teacher-centred methods to more dynamic, learner-centred, and technologically integrated approaches. This progression mirrors broader trends in language education and is intimately linked with the cultural and global status of the Korean language. As the interest in Korean culture and language continues to grow, it is anticipated that these methodologies will evolve further, embracing new pedagogical theories and technologies to enhance language learning experiences.

Review of Current Methodologies

Table 2: The current methodologies in teaching Korean as a foreign language

Methodology	Description
Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).	Emphasizes interaction as the primary means of language learning
Task-Based Learning (TBL)	Involves students completing meaningful tasks using the target language, promoting practical use.
Technology Integration	Incorporates digital tools and resources to enhance learning experiences and accessibility
Cultural Immersion	Engages students in cultural experiences to deepen understanding of language context and usage

Contemporary methodologies in teaching Korean as a foreign language have undergone significant evolution, integrating various innovative strategies to enhance both the effectiveness and the engagement of the learning experience. These methodologies, including Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Learning (TBL), Technology Integration, Blended learning, Flipped learning, Differentiated Instruction, Interactive and Collaborative Learning, Problem-Based Learning, Content and Language Integrated Learning, and Cultural immersion, etc., reflect a diverse and dynamic approach to Korean language education. However, this study only reviews and analyzes four distinctive methodologies frequently adapted in Korean language teaching classes due to the time constraints and the length of the study given.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

For many years, CLT has been a popular method in language instruction, placing a strong emphasis on real-world language use and practical communication (Butler, 2005). In the context of Korean language education, CLT has shifted the focus from grammatical accuracy to effective communication skills. Richards and Rodgers (2001) describe CLT as involving a range of activities that encourage language use in authentic contexts, such as role-playing, group discussions, and problem-solving tasks. A study by Kim and Kim (2016) demonstrated that CLT-based courses significantly improved learners' conversational abilities in Korean, highlighting its effectiveness in enhancing practical speaking and listening skills that require learners to negotiate meaning and interact meaningfully in the Korean language.

This practical approach to language learning makes CLT highly engaging for students, as it allows them to use the language in realistic situations. However, as Richards and Rodgers (2001) also point out, CLT may lack a thorough focus on grammatical structures, which can pose a challenge for beginners who need a solid foundation in the basics of the target language. Since the traditional second or foreign language teaching system has long focused on vocabulary expansion, grammar, and structure, learners may show a propensity and strength

for education that is form-focused (Kurniawan, Miftah, & Qamaria, 2020). Learners can utilize conventional learning strategies to produce meaning in the communicative classroom by introducing form-focused tasks and activities. For instance, prior to engaging in verbal activities, teachers should review the basic and key vocabulary and grammatical expressions to allow learners the opportunity to prepare notes before participating in oral responses. Moreover, relevant homework could strengthen the communicative language objectives of the lesson the learners have taught (Vasilopoulos, 2008).

Task-Based Learning (TBL)

TBL, or task-based language learning, is closely related to CLT and has gained popularity as a communicative approach to teaching second languages. It emphasizes learning through meaningful tasks that bear similarities to everyday activities. Ellis (2003) defines TBL as an approach wherein language acquisition occurs while learners engage in and complete meaningful tasks that require communication in the target language.

According to Jeon and Hahn (2006), Asian learners seem to have fewer opportunities to practice the target language sufficiently outside the classroom. Thus, providing learners with authentic opportunities to use the target language in the classroom is vital to achieving the lesson goal. This does not necessarily mean that teachers will have to recreate authentic dialogues. However, assigning learners the task within a real-life scenario, in turn, provides opportunities to speak realistic language. For example, in Korean language education, TBL might involve viable activities such as planning a trip to Korea, conducting interviews in Korean, applying to a dormitory for international students, or creating cultural portfolios. Lee and VanPatten (2003) observed that TBL not only improves language proficiency but also fosters problem-solving abilities and cultural understanding among learners.

While TBL can be particularly beneficial for intermediate and advanced learners who already have a basic understanding of the language, it can also be challenging for learners with limited language proficiency, as pointed out by Lee and VanPatten (2003), because it demands active and immediate use of the language, which can be daunting for beginners. However, if an achievable level of tasks is assigned to beginner-level learners, with plenty of example model sentences, and key vocabulary as well as expressions given before the activity, the learners could fully engage in the task-based activities using the Korean language. Learners come from diverse backgrounds including heritage learners, professionals seeking to expand their skills, and enthusiasts drawn by cultural interests. This diversity necessitates a teaching approach that is flexible and responsive to individual motivations and learning objectives (Ellis, 2004). Engaging a different level of learners, each with varying motivations and learning goals, therefore, is a further challenge in TBL.

Technology Integration

The advent of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has revolutionized Korean language learning. Warschauer and Healey (1998) conceptualize CALL as the application of computers in language teaching and learning which includes the use of educational apps, online resources, and virtual classrooms in Korean language education. Ahn (2014) and Song & Moon (2010) emphasises the effectiveness of these tools in enhancing engagement and accessibility for learners globally. Additionally, Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), a subset of CALL, as discussed by Stockwell (2007), and Kang and Moon (2011), allows learners to access a wider choice of language materials anytime, anywhere, facilitating continuous, context-based learning. The integration of technology in language learning, through approaches like CALL and MALL,

offers significant flexibility and accessibility to learners. Warschauer and Healey (1998) and Stockwell (2007) highlight how these methods facilitate a more engaging and personalized learning experience, accommodating different learning styles and paces. Moreover, the use of multimedia and interactive resources can make the learning process more enjoyable and effective.

The integration of advanced technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Virtual Reality (VR), is poised to offer more immersive and interactive learning experiences. AI can personalize learning paths, adapting to the unique needs of individual learners and providing immediate, customized feedback (Pikhart, 2020, Warschauer & Healey, 1998). Since "no human teacher is able to process so much information about individual students and the words or grammar each of them needs" (Pikhart, 2020:1417), the utilization of AI in Korean language education will bring benefits to both teachers and learners. VR, on the other hand, has the potential to create immersive environments, simulating real-life situations in Korea, and thereby enhancing contextual learning and cultural immersion (Chapelle, 2003). The online/offline space is acknowledged as a co-existing new answer, and the recently raised meta-base concept is being provided as a new option to meet the emergency education demand for COVID-19. The term "metaverse" refers to a new three-dimensional virtual environment that is a synthesis of the real-world universe (universe) and virtual space transcendence (meta). To provide a new paradigm in language teaching, a metaverse-based educational platform is made to facilitate avatar-based participatory learning and to finish a game-based word learning support model (Yoo, & Chun, 2021). Ryu (2022) reveals the possibility of developing metaverse-based Korean language content. Although the utilization of this metaverse in Korean language education is in its early stages and the need to establish authentic contextual scenarios, learners of the Korean language could have benefited from metaverse based on such programs as "Virtual Worlds" and "Mirror Worlds" (Ryu, 2022: 296). In the "Virtual Worlds", computer-simulated environments, learners can interact with other learners by creating "avatars" which represent the learner themselves. The "Mirror worlds" are digital representations of the real world that aim to mimic the real world so that learners can experience real-life scenarios. For example, if learners are assigned to plan the weekend activities that they are likely to encounter in real life, with other learners, they can transport to various mirror worlds and explore those areas to gather useful information. Then they share the information with the other learners and can solve the problems, thereby increasing collaboration among learners for the online tasks. Giving students these kinds of real-world assignments could help boost their motivation to learn and their interest in the work (Han, 2001).

Gamification and interactive learning tools are expected to become more widespread in Korean language education. These tools make learning more engaging and can significantly enhance the motivation and retention of learners (Lee & Hammer, 2011). Kwon & Woo (2013) also propose a gamification methodology for Korean language education. The fundamental ideas of this methodology are to make learning enjoyable and to maintain the learners' interest in Korean language learning by applying game elements, such as competition, level, time limit, and mission along with challenges to learning functions such as vocabulary, listening, pronunciation, and speaking (p.69). In order to cater to the needs of the fans of the Korean Wave, the gamified learning practices were built based on and utilizing K-culture content which is K-pop, K-dramas, and movies. While learners play this specifically designed educational game, they can learn about Korea and its culture effortlessly and pleasingly. However, one potential drawback of technology-based learning is the reduced opportunity for direct interpersonal interaction and immersion in the cultural context of the language.

This lack of face-to-face communication and cultural immersion can limit learners' ability to understand the nuanced aspects of the Korean language.

Blended Learning

Blended learning, which combines traditional face-to-face classroom instruction with online learning, has been gaining popularity in Korean language education. It attempts to merge the benefits of direct teacher interaction with the advantages of technology-assisted learning outside of the classroom (Lee, 2013., Kim & Lee, 2022). Neumeier (2005) advocates for blended learning as it merges the structured interaction of classroom learning with the flexibility and resource-rich nature of online education. Lee (2013) emphasizes the benefits of the blended learning method because it allows learners to prepare some contents of the lessons in advance of participating in in-class lessons, thus increasing learners' participation in learning (Jones & Lau, 2010) as well as learner autonomy (Sun, 2010).

For Korean language learners, this approach can mean integrating in-class lessons with interactive online modules and practice tools. This approach allows learners to independently familiarize themselves with new language concepts online, while classroom time is dedicated to interactive, communicative activities. Kim & Lee (2022) propose a comprehensive model that can be applied to the implementation of blended learning in Korean language education. The eight functional contents selected for and incorporated in online learning content depend on the functional content level of the necessity of teacher presence and the simplicity of a task such as repetition-based or practice-oriented activities. Grammar and vocabulary learning can be replaced by video lectures and gamifications. Listening and speaking activities can be learned with AI Chatbot. Reading and writing activities can be learned by AI Chatbot and Messenger. Add the four basic linguistic skills, speaking, listening, reading, and writing, are implemented by real-time video conferencing with teachers. The learners can also experience the Korean culture through immersive content in culture activity subjects. Lastly, the learners' Formative Evaluation can also be assessed by gamification. Since online learning enables learners to control their learning and the technology, the use of blended learning for Korean language education can be more learner-centered and self-directed.

Cultural Immersion and Experiential Learning

Language is a part of culture and embodies the meanings and values of culture (Byram, 1989). Understanding the culture of the target language is inevitable in foreign language education and is one of the most important parts of learning a foreign language. Without knowing about the target culture, it is impossible to communicate fully in the target language and there is also a greater chance of miscommunication (Brooks, 2001; Reid, 2010; Sarnovska, 2022; Yoon, 2009). Regarding its significant role in foreign language education along with the rapidly growing demand for Korean language education all over the world, cultural immersion and experiential learning have become essential components of contemporary Korean language education (Jung et al., 2022) and, possibly two of the best instructional methods to immerse learners in the Korean language classroom (Grahn & McAlpine, 2017; Haley, & Austin, 2014). These methods involve direct experience and engagement with various forms of Korean culture, which includes not only traditional artifacts but also pop-culture, such as K-dramas and movies or K-pop, as it allows for a deeper exploration of these areas through the medium of the Korean language (Lee & K, 2021).

Kolb (1984) emphasizes that experiential learning is a process where knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. This approach is particularly effective

in language learning as it situates the language within its cultural framework. For Korean language learners, hands-on activities like participating in traditional craft experiences and workshops, cooking traditional dishes, Korean etiquette training courses, K-pop cover dance and Korean traditional dance clubs, K-pop singing contests, K-drama clubs, cultural festivals, and interaction with native speakers provide valuable insight into the cultural context and usage of the learning.

The use of K-culture as a teaching material in Korean language education is becoming increasingly popular (Jung, 2022) According to Shin, et al. (2006), K-dramas provide learners with opportunities to acquire practical usage of the Korean language as well as non-verbal communication such as face expressions, eye contact, gesture, posture, etc. and to allow the learners to understand cultural values and premises deeply rooted in Koreans' daily life.

Along with K-dramas, K-pop also has significantly gained popularity in Korean language classrooms and proved its effectiveness as a teaching tool (Jin, 2016: Jo, 2023; Jung, 2021; Jung et al., 2022; Lee. 2018; Lee & Kawata, 2006; Yang, 2022). The learners' interests in Korean contemporary culture and K-pop have led to more students enrolling in Korean courses (Jung. 2017; Looney & Lusin, 2019. Cited in Jung et al., 2022:37-38) who want to know about and enjoy Korean cultural content better through K-pop and K-dramas. While the learners of those studies were singing K-pop songs, they learned new words (Kocaman, 2016) as well as grammar (Jung, 2021), and they did not even realize that they were studying (Jung, 2022;). Furthermore, incorporating K-pop into Korean language classes benefits not only the retention of the vocabulary (Orhan, 2016; Park et al., 2021) and grammatical structure learned through songs (Jung, 2021), but also improves the learners' listening skills, usage of correct spelling and collocations (Park, et al., 2021), and increases learners' motivation to learn and engagement in learning (Jo, 2023). However, there are some drawbacks to incorporating K-cultural content in teaching practice that cannot be disregarded. Selecting appropriate K-pop songs is one of the most difficult parts. The songs have to include a repeating linguistic and cultural factor in the lyrics, and the linguistic content in the songs has to be aligned with the given chapter in the textbook. The trending K-pop songs that have already been chosen and designed for the lesson could fade away and so cannot be used in lessons for the long term.

In summary, contemporary methodologies in Korean language education reflect an eclectic blend of approaches. They are characterized by a focus on communicative competence, practical application of language skills, technological innovations, and cultural immersion. These methods are continually adapting to meet the evolving needs of learners, embracing technological advancements to create more effective, engaging, and inclusive learning environments. As the field of language education progresses, these methodologies will likely continue to evolve, shaping the future of Korean language learning.

Conclusion

To sum up, the dynamic and diversified field of Korean language instruction demands a flexible and multimodal approach. It seems that the most viable way forward is to combine different successful teaching methods with technological innovations and cultural components. This blended approach not only aligns with current educational trends but also addresses the specific needs and preferences of learners in a globalized context. Therefore, the integration of these diverse methodologies in teaching Korean as a foreign language caters to a wide range of learning styles and preferences. It combines traditional and modern educational philosophies to create a more holistic and effective learning environment.

Suggestion

Adopting a Blended Methodology: Educators should embrace a blend of teaching methodologies, including CLT and TBL, to ensure a comprehensive learning experience. This combination allows for a balance between the development of practical language skills and the understanding of complex grammatical structures.

Integrating Technology: The use of technological tools like AI and VR should be intensified in Korean language education. These tools offer immersive and interactive experiences that can significantly enhance learner engagement and facilitate a deeper understanding of the language and its cultural context.

Emphasizing Cultural Immersion: Given the integral role of culture in language learning, educators should incorporate cultural immersion into their teaching strategies. This could involve the use of authentic materials, cultural exchange programs, and experiential learning activities, as well as K-cultural content such as K-dramas, K-movies, and K-pop, that provide learners with a rich understanding of Korean culture.

Continual Innovation and Professional Development: Educators should commit to continuous innovation and professional development. Staying abreast of the latest educational technologies, methodologies, and cultural trends is essential for effectively teaching the Korean language.

Resource Development for Advanced Learners: There is a need to develop more comprehensive resources for advanced learners. This includes materials that cover specialised areas of the Korean language and cater to higher levels of proficiency, ensuring that advanced learners have adequate resources for continued development.

Collaborative and Networked Learning Opportunities: Encouraging collaborative and networked learning can enhance language acquisition. This involves creating opportunities for learners to engage with each other and with native speakers, fostering a community of practice that supports language learning.

The area of Korean language instruction can develop further and better serve the requirements of a growing and diverse community of learners by putting these suggestions into practice. To reinforce and enhance the whole educational experience, the objective is to not only teach the Korean language but also to foster a profound awareness and understanding of Korean culture.

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