

A Study on Foreigners' Korean Language Learning Experiences through Design Thinking Analysis

Pei Zhi Lee*, Boyeun Kim**

Dept. of Design Management, International Design school for Advanced Studies, Hongik University*
Prof. of Digital Media Design, International Design school for Advance Studies, Hongik University**

디자인 사고 분석을 통한 외국인의 한국어 언어 학습의 연구

리페이즈*, 김보연**

홍익대학교 국제디자인전문대학원 디자인경영전공*, 홍익대학교 국제디자인전문대학원 교수**

Abstract The international status of the Korean language has been elevated as the demand for studying the language among foreign students has grown sharply over the past few years. Unfortunately, foreign students face difficulties in learning the language, conflicts are also deepening between Korean and foreign students. Using Erin Sander's design research spiral, this paper investigates foreigners' Korean language learning experiences, identify the main cognitive and affective factors influencing their learning process. Research findings collected with the design analysis revealed needs and insights that offer opportunities relevant specifically for the conception, design and development of new products and services related to Korean language learning.

Key Words : Design research, Design spiral, Design opportunities, Design methodology, Language learning, Second language acquisition, Korean language

요 약 국어를 공부하는 외국인 학생들이 몇 년간 급격하게 증가하면서 한국어의 국제적인 지위가 올라가고 있다. 하지만 외국인 학생들의 입장에서는 한국어를 배우는 과정에 많은 어려움을 겪는 점이 드러나고 있다. 또한 이에 더해 한국 학생들과 외국인 학생들간의 이해관계가 어려워지는 점을 지적하는 연구가 나오고 있다. 에린 샌더의 디자인 연구 스파이럴을 통해서 이 논문은 한국에 있는 외국인 학생들의 한국어 교육경험을 조사했다. 또한 이 학생들의 한국어 학습에 대한 인식과 효과적인 요인들을 분석하였다. 결론적으로 본 연구는 디자인 연구를 통해 한국어 학습에 중요한 통찰을 결과로 도출했으며, 외국인 학생들이 한국어를 효과적으로 공부하는데 기여할 디자인 기회를 도출한 의의가 있다.

주제어 : 디자인 연구, 디자인 스파이럴, 디자인 기회, 디자인 방법, 언어 학습, 제2언어 습득, 한국어

Received 14 March 2017, Revised 21 April 2017

Accepted 20 May 2017, Published 28 May 2017

Corresponding Author: Lee Pei Zhi(International Design school for Advanced Studies, Hongik University)

Email: peezac@gmail.com

© The Society of Digital Policy & Management. All rights reserved. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0>), which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of South Korea

The booming Korean wave has prompted foreigners to learn Korean language and culture[1]. Many foreigners are studying Korean language informally through Korean songs and television dramas or formally in academic settings. According to the Ministry of Justice statistics, the number of foreign students studying in Korea reached 105,193 in March 2016. Experts explained that more and more foreigners desire to become Korean language specialists[2]. Unfortunately, the academic system may not be the best fit for foreign students to learn Korean. “The international status of the Korean language has been elevated,” said Professor Kwon In-Han, a Korean language professor from Sungkyunkwan University, “we need to be able to make Korean grammar and vocabulary more logically understandable for foreigners”[3]. If Korean students, who grow up in the Korean culture, receive stress because of the academic system[4], it is not surprising why foreign students could not adapt to the Korean academic system.

1.2 Aims / Objectives

The all-work, no-play culture of South Korean education is outcome-driven, affecting the mental health of students[5]. The intensive education system may have strained the cognitive and affective capacities of foreign learners, who are unfamiliar with this educational culture. The objective of the paper is to investigate foreigners’ Korean language learning experiences by employing Erin Sander’s design research spiral, identify problems and propose design opportunities as solutions. The aim of the research is to increase foreigners’ proficiency in Korean language, so that they can better integrate into the Korean society.

2. Literature review

Second language learning occurs when the to-be-learned language is the dominant language, using it may be necessary in everyday life, and, hence, motivation to learn may be higher[6]. In order to promote higher forms of thinking in education, Benjamin Bloom, an American educational psychologist identified 3 main domains of learning, namely cognitive, affective and psychomotor[7]. The cognitive domain involves the knowledge and intellectual skills a person will develop. The affective domain deals with a person’s emotions and how they are handled. The third domain of Bloom’s taxonomy - the psychomotor domain - involves physical movement, coordination and motor-skill usage. As psychomotor domain is less related to this scope of study, I focused on the cognitive domain and the affective domain.

2.1 Cognitive domain in learning

Educators have recognized the importance of cognitive domain in learning. The original levels of cognitive domain proposed by Bloom in 1956 involved the following: Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis and Evaluation. To meet the needs of the outcome-focused education objectives, Anderson and Karthwohl (2011) revised Bloom’s taxonomy[8].

<Table 1> Revised Taxonomy from Bloom’s Taxonomy

Revised Taxonomy	Sample Verbs	Examples
Remember	Recognize; Recall; Retrieve; Recite; Produce	A child recites the English alphabet.
Understand	Interpret; Classify; Summarize; Infer; Compare; Explain	A child points to an apple and describes it.
Apply	Use; Compute; Solve; Apply; Construct	A child uses basic words to communicate.
Analyze	Differentiate; Create representations mentally	A child differentiates similar words.

2.2 Affective domain in learning

MacIntyre (1995) noted that affective variables also affect second language acquisition. Affective learning is the acquisition of behaviors that reflects feelings, attitudes, appreciations, and values[9]. David Krathwohl divided the affective domain into five domains:

<Table 2> Krathwohl's Taxonomy of the Affective Domain

Krathwohl's Taxonomy	Sample Verbs	Examples
Receiving Phenomena	Feel; Sense; Capture; Attend;	A person listens attentively to a friend.
Responding to Phenomena	Conform; Allow; Cooperate; Enjoy;	A person participates in a conversation.
Valuing	Use; Compute; Solve; Apply;	A person respects another's opinion
Organization	Differentiate; Organize and attribute;	A person prioritizes to manage a healthy work-life balance.
Internalizing Values	Act On; Depict; Exemplify; Internalize	A person internalizes learning as part of his personality

2.3 Integrated affective-cognitive learning

Outcome-driven curriculums tend to neglect the affective aspect of learning and focus more on the cognitive aspect of learning. Existing research and literature support the importance of a learner's affective dimension in facilitating the affective-cognitive process and internalization of cognitive knowledge. The role of affective processing is of particular importance because it may contribute substantially to defining types of engagement and motivational states during engagement[10]. The following section addresses two affective variables related to this:

i) Motivation

Motivation has been identified as the learner's orientation with regard to the goal of learning a second language[11]. Students who are most successful when learning a target language are those who like the people that speak the language, admire the culture and have a desire to become familiar with or even integrate

into the society in which the language is used. Literature review points out that motivation acts as a predictor of performance in second language acquisition. In the socio-education model of language learning by Garner, integralization and attitude towards learning situation are two correlated variables that support individual motivation to learn a foreign language, but motivation is responsible for the results in learning a foreign language[12].

ii) Attitude

Attitude is the most powerful determinant of behavior[13]. It can influence an individual's behavior, modify it accordingly and result in positive or negative reactions. While positive attitude can serve as motivating role to enhance second language acquisition, negative attitude and lack of motivation of learners can become obstacles to language learning.

3. Design research methodology

To gain an understanding of foreigners' Korean language learning experience in South Korea, Erin Sander's Research Learning Spiral is employed to conduct user research. This design spiral is iterative and it contains five steps - objectives, hypotheses, methods, gather and synthesize. It is used to help designers answer questions and obstacles when trying to understand what direction to take when moving a design forward.

3.1 Objectives

It is the objective of this design research to investigate the cognitive and affective experiences of foreign learners during Korean language acquisition and generate key insights for the conception and development of future design opportunities.

3.2 Hypotheses

The intensive education system of South Korea may

strain the cognitive and affective capacities of foreign learners, who are not used to South Korea's educational culture. Based on research findings and literature review, the following hypotheses were developed:

Hypotheses 1: Despite high motivations, foreign learners struggle to acquire Korean language academically in South Korea.

Hypotheses 2: Improving foreigners' language ability in Korean will reduce the cultural differences.

3.3 Methods

Kormos et al. suggest that measurement of attitudes towards learning a foreign language can be done through questionnaires with Likert scales[14]. To understand foreign learners' Korean language learning experiences in South Korea, a survey titled 'Learning Korean as a Second Language' was designed. The survey asked the respondents 8 questions.

3.4 Conduct

i) Survey

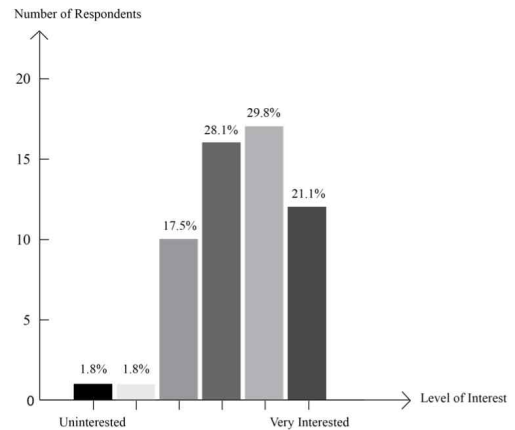
This section contains an analysis of the survey results from all respondents who took the survey over a 6-day period from Thursday, October 06, 2016 to Wednesday, October 12, 2016 inclusive. A total number of 57 responses were collected.

ii) Participants

Question 1 served to find out the background of the respondents. 78.9% of the respondents were aged between 20 and 30 years old. 68.4% of the respondents were female and 31.6% were male. The respondents came from a very diverse background. 31.6% spoke Spanish as their first language, 28.1% respondents spoke English and 19.3% spoke Vietnamese. Other respondents spoke languages including Uzbek, Krygz, Portugese, Finnish, Bulgarian, Lao, French, Amharic, Filipino, Cambodian, Turkish, Urdu, and Mandarin.

iii) Analysis of question 2

Question 2 sought to find out the interest level of Korean learners in the Korean language. 45 out of 57 respondents showed more interest than not in the Korean language. With the maximum value of interest at 6, the median value among all respondents was 5, revealing a very positive learning attitude.



[Fig. 1] Level of Interest in Korean Language

<Table 3> Level of Interest in Korean Language

Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	6.00	5.00	4.46	1.16

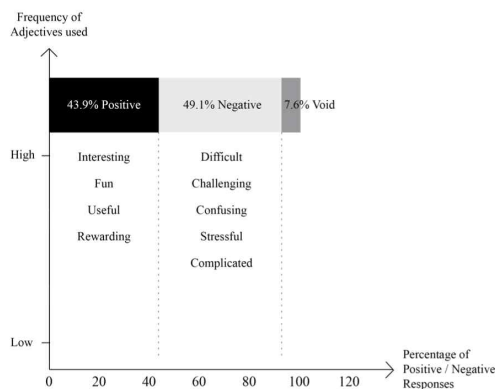
iv) Analysis of Question 3

Question 3 was a self-assessment question. Respondents were asked to rate their own Korean language skills, from beginner to native level. 28 out of 57 respondents rated their Korean skills as above average. Even though there were respondents who had been learning the Korean language for more than 6 years, none claimed that they were of native standard.

v) Analysis of Question 4

Question 4 served to understand the Korean language learning experience of the respondents in the

cognitive and affective aspects. Respondents' were asked to list 3 adjectives to describe their learning experiences. Their responses were divided into 2 main categories—positive and negative. As shown in Fig. 4, there were more negative adjectives than positive adjectives. In a descending frequency of adjectives used, the top 5 negative adjectives used were “difficult”, “challenging”, “confusing”, “stressful” and “complicated”. On the other hand, the top 4 positive adjectives used were “interesting”, “fun”, “useful” and “rewarding”.



[Fig. 2] Consolidated Description of the Korean Language Learning Experience

vi) Analysis of Question 5

Question 5 aimed to find out the type of motivations and demotivations that Korean learners experienced in Korea. 21 respondents stated that their biggest motivation to learn Korean was to live and communicate in Korea and 18 respondents stated “Kpop and Kdrama”. A respondent shared that she wanted “to understand what her Korean idols were talking about without having to wait for translation.” On the flip side, “the intensive learning system” demotivated them the most. It was “intensive” yet “unhelpful”, foreign learners felt frustrated that they were unable to hold conversations in Korean.

vii) Analysis of Question 6

Question 6 aimed to find out how difficult it was for

foreigners to pick up Korean language in Korea. Interestingly, 35 out of 57 respondents said it was relatively difficult because of “complicated grammar”, “academic delivery” and “vocabulary”. Interestingly, 38.6% considered it to be relatively easy because Korean language shared similarities to their 1st languages. For instance, Korean language uses a similar set of vocabulary as Chinese language. The second most frequent explanation was their interests in Kpop and Kdrama, which naturally motivated them.

viii) Analysis of Question 7 & 8

Question 7 and 8 aimed to find out if improving the language ability of Korean learners will narrow the gap between Korean people and foreigners. Question 7 asked respondents if learning Korean changed the way they think. While 47.4% stated a change in perspective. 31.6% expressed uncertainty and 21.1% said no change. Many respondents pointed out that learning Korean increased their sensitivity on their usage of words, culture, interpersonal communications and it changed the way they understood Korean people and society.

Question 8 aimed to find out if learning Korean help learners understand the way Koreans behave better. 73.7% respondents undoubtedly said that it helped them to understand the way Koreans behave better. No respondent denied its usefulness. Some reported that they could understand “why Korean people act the way they act and think the way they think and they saw the importance of formality, politeness and respect.”

3.5 Synthesize

The data gathered provide insights and findings to prove or disprove our hypothesis. Firstly, 78.9% of the respondents expressed interests in the Korean language and 49.1% rated their Korean skills as above average, indicating that their motivations were strong enough to sustain a long-term language acquisition to reach above average level of proficiency. But the “method of

academic delivery” demotivated them. This showed that the academic system in South Korea is unsuitable for foreign learners, proving hypothesis 1 to be correct.

Secondly, respondents shared that learning Korean language allowed them to understand Korean people and Korean culture. While increasing foreigners’ Korean language ability promotes understanding, whether cultural differences can be effectively reduced also requires an understanding from Korean people. Therefore, hypothesis 2 is proved to be partially right.

4. Conclusion

Research findings collected with Erin Sander’s design spiral revealed needs and insights that offer opportunities relevant for the conception, design and development of new products and services related to Korean language learning.

4.1 New design perspective on Korean language learning

Synthesizing the evaluations of all hypotheses provides a new perspective on the design of the current Korean language learning system. While foreign learners of Korean language who are living in South Korea have a relatively high motivation to acquire Korean language, the motivation is driven by environmental forces - a need to communicate with Korean people to facilitate their lifestyle in Korea. However, despite the merged need for Korean language acquisition, results also show that the intensive Korean educational system introduces demotivations and frustrations to foreigners. Based on the design research, factors that eased the Korean language learning experience includes the similarities the Korean language share with the learners’ first language. As foreign learners come from different backgrounds and cultures, the former factor cannot be tackled easily.

The second biggest motivation was their interests in Korean popular culture. Since the academic path is deemed unsuitable for foreigners, a non-academic path may offer a friendlier and more efficient way to learn Korean, without introducing language anxiety.

4.2 Design opportunities for innovation

The latter factor was explored further with a design shadowing research. Two Kpop fans living in South Korea were invited to participate in this research - Dieu Le Thanh from Vietnam and Jay Siros from Thailand. Dieu spent 4 hours watching Korean dramas and listened to songs of her favorite band, Exo, whenever she could. In 1 year, she achieved TOPIK Level 5. Similarly, Jay spent 5 hours watching Korean drama and she could communicate with Korean people fluently after 1 year.

The design shadowing research revealed that foreign learners of Korean language are involved in cultural activities such as ‘noraebang’. They also spent a lot of time on Korean entertainment, watching Korean dramas and listening to Korean songs. These are the natural behaviors of foreign learners of Korean language who desire to experience Korean culture, suggesting new design opportunities for innovation. By tapping on the foreign learners’ interests in Korean entertainment and their natural behavior of spending a huge amount of time watching Korean dramas and listening to Korean songs, designers can create new solutions to facilitate the Korean language growth of foreign learners. If foreigners can learn whole sentences and pair works from Korean dramas, this would certainly enhance their learning curve [15], suggesting new design opportunities for innovation.

REFERENCES

- [1]DOI:<http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation>

- /2016/08/181_211080.html (August 18, 2016)
- [2] DOI:http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20100720000729 (July 20, 2010)
- [3] DOI:http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20100720000729 (July 20, 2010)
- [4] DOI:http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2016/03/116_200321.html (March 14, 2016)
- [5] Hyun-Suk Lee, "Convergent Study of the Effect of University Students' Addiction to Smartphones on Self-Esteem and Self-Efficacy. Stress Level and Mental Health as Mediating Factors", *Journal of the Korea Convergence Society*, Vol. 8. No. 1, pp. 139-148, 2017
- [6] R. L. Oxford, "Language learning styles and strategies: Concepts and relationships." *IRAL*. Vol. 41, No. 4, pp. 271-278. 2003.
- [7] B. S. Bloom, M. D. Engelhart, E. J. Furst, W. H. Hill, D. R. Krathwohl, "Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Handbook I: The Cognitive Domain. New York: David McKay Co Inc. 1956.
- [8] L. W. Anderson, & D. Krathwohl, "A taxonomy for learning, teaching and assessing: A revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives. New York: Longman. 2001.
- [9] A. N. Paimin, R. N. Hadgraft, & J. K. Prpic, "An exploration of the conative domain among Engineering Students." *Proceedings of the Research in Education Symposium 2009, Palm Cove, QLD*. 2009.
- [10] G. D. Sideridis, A. Mouzaki, P. Simos, & A. Protopapas, "Classification of students with reading comprehension difficulties: The roles of motivation, affect and psychopathology." *Learning Disability Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 3, pp.159-180. 2006.
- [11] G. Crookes, & R. W. Schmidt, "Motivation: Reopening the research agenda." *Language Learning*, Vol, 41, No. 4, pp. 469-512. 1991.
- [12] A.M. Masgoret, R.C. Gardner, "Attitudes, motivation and second language learning: A meta-analysis of studies conducted by Gardner and Associates." *Language learning*, Vol. 53, No. 1, pp.123-163. 2003.
- [13] Ji won Lee, Kyung-hee Kang, "Study about the

relationship between self-esteem, depression and stress of students according to school system", *Journal of the Korea Convergence Society*, Vol. 5, No. 4, pp. 69-74, 2014.

- [14] J., Kormos, K. Csizér, "Age-Related Differences in the Motivation of Learning English as a Foreign Language: Attitudes, Selves, and Motivated Learning Behavior." *Language Learning*, Vol. 58, No. 2, pp. 327-355. 2008.
- [15] Ja-Mi Ryu, Seong-Rok Oh, "A Convergence Strategy of Improving Korean Speaking Skills through Memorizing Whole Sentence and Pair Works", *Journal of the Korea Convergence Society*, Vol. 7. No. 2, pp. 77-84, 2016.

리페이즈(Lee, Pei Zhi)



- 2015년 9월 ~ 현재 : 홍익대학교 국제디자인전문대학원 디지털미디어과 학생
- 관심분야 : 브랜딩, 시각 디자인, 디자인 연구
- E-Mail : peezac@gmail.com

김보연(Kim, Bo Yeun)



- 2006년 3월 ~ 현재 : 홍익대학교 국제디자인전문대학원 디지털미디어과 교수
- 관심분야 : 타이포그래피, 디지털미디어디자인, 사물인터넷
- E-Mail : byk2019@gmail.com