

Practical issues affecting the promotion of Korean from Kindergarten to Year 12

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Introduction:

I am privileged to have witnessed and participated in the development of the Kindergarten to Y12 Korean language program in NSW schools since 1994. During this period I have encountered a number of misconceptions and attitudes which I believe worthy of consideration. Principally my paper will comment on daily issues confronting trainers and teachers and accordingly I will provide a brief summary of the development of the Korean program in NSW schools.

1993-1996:

In 1993, under the direction of Howard Jacobs and Younghwa Kim the *Korean Using Technology Project* commenced at Training and Development Directorate, NSW Department of Education and Training. At the same time a Korean Pilot Project commenced in the Wollongong region in 3 primary schools using regular classroom methods. Meanwhile the Directorate was given the task of introducing the study of Korean to NSW Government schools. This was a professional development program for secondary non-background teachers and primary school teachers. It ultimately produced curriculum development material for lower secondary and primary students.

When the project commenced, two high schools became the first schools in NSW to offer Korean to non-Korean background learners. In mid 1994, four additional schools joined the project and upon completion of the pilot project, 100 students from schools located throughout NSW had completed 100 hours of Korean. Apple Macintosh and IBM compatible computers were used as the link-up method. The software was able to be used by all the participants in the lessons. Information entered on the Hub site teacher's computer screen was able to be simultaneously viewed on all the other computer screens. By June 1994, 200 hours of material for non-background Korean learners in upper primary and lower secondary including audio-cassettes and curriculum support videos had been developed.

Besides the *Korean Using Technology Project* at Training and Development Directorate, the Curriculum Support Directorate at the NSW Department of Education and Training also commenced a Korean background students course for Y7-12 at the Saturday School of Community Languages. It now caters for approximately 500 students.

1995-1996:

The project was expanded from 6 to 36 schools including 17 primary schools. An Australian native-speaker support teacher from the school was appointed at each site. These teachers received intensive professional development in the delivery of Korean using innovative technology. Lessons with Y3-12 classes were provided throughout participating NSW schools. By the end of 1996 when the project concluded, approximately 80 non-background teachers in 40 schools had participated. Five hub teachers (Korean native-speaker teachers) carried out lessons with K-12 classes. Three text writers produced the course material for upper primary, lower secondary and secondary senior beginners classes.

Various training programs had also been carried out for teachers of Korean such as:

- Annual Intensive Language Training workshop
- After school hour link-up lessons
- In-country study programs
- Tandem Korean Teacher Exchange between NSW Department and the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education
- Departmentally funded university correspondence courses
- School visits
- In-service courses

By the end of 1996, teachers who had received training were to attain proficiency in Korean at an appropriate level for their teaching requirement. Funding for the project was to terminate at the end of 1996. The training period however proved insufficient particularly for Y9 -10 teachers who were intending to teach Y11-12.

In 1997 and 1998, despite lack of funding, the project continued on with only 2 project officers and a desktop publisher to complete the HSC course text books. The books were trialed by a project officer with Y11-12 students who were studying the HSC course via computer modem link-up. From 1997, for schools unable to form a viable class the Open High School offered Y9-12 classes. In 1999 staffing for the program at Training Development Directorate was reduced to a 2 day per week casual position which discontinued after 6 months.

During 1999, for the first time, the Curriculum Support Directorate offered a Korean Language Consultant position. This position dictated that 40 % of the consultant's time was to be spent toward the production of a Continuers course book for distance education mode to be used at the Open High School. The position was unchanged throughout 2000 but ultimately changed to a fulltime consultant position in 2001.

Term 2 in 2000 saw the introduction of the NSW Department of Education Korean Community Language Program at Campsie public school. Since then 3 more public schools have taken up the program.

NSW Department of Education and Training Community Language Programs

In 1981, Community Language Programs K-6 were established in NSW government schools. Currently, over 50 000 students and 29 languages are involved in the program. Due to its multicultural and multilingual nature, Australia needs people who possess an understanding of and an appreciation for the diversity of its various community languages and cultures. There is a need to enhance the self-esteem of students with a background in the target language through the recognition of their

language and culture in the normal school day. (NSW Department of Education and Training, Community Languages Program K-6:pp1 & 3)

The purpose of this paper is to bring to the attention of all parties with an interest in Korean language programs, the urgent need to address the decline in teacher numbers and the effect the decline is having on the future of Korean language programs in our schools.

With the exception of the learned papers from Sung-chul Shin, Ho-min Sohn and those papers being presented at this conference, there has been very little study or analysis carried out for Korean programs in NSW. There may well be studies relevant to the Australian need available from overseas. However it is my personal view, that without urgent attention being given to problems that exist for primary and secondary Korean programs, the tertiary program's future will be severely affected.

I wish to divide what I have to say into two categories. Background speakers and non-background speakers. Firstly, in relation to background speakers:

1.Common generalisations:

1.1 Korean background parental attitudes

It is commonly held that Korean parents will be firm advocates of the study of Korean by their children. I have found this to be an erroneous generalisation. Many Korean parents believe the study effort of their children is best directed to career development and subjects other than Korean. In many cases it is adopting parents who are the most determined to give their adopted Korean background children a sense of identity, and thus enrol their children in classes that provide Korean language and cultural subjects.

Student numbers

In 2001 approximately 500 background speaker students are enrolled at 4 Saturday School of Community Languages (SSCL) centres and 240 students at 4 primary schools are enrolled in the Community Language Program K-6 for government schools.

According to the statistics, 4795 Korean background students were enrolled in government schools in 2000. 2663 in primary school and 2132 in high school. Korean background enrolment numbers are increasing year by year (Tab 1). I do not have the current figure for Korean background students enrolled at private schools. The number of students learning Korean at government schools is minimal compared to the total number of Korean background student (BS) enrolments.

Tab 1: Enrolment of Korean BS in NSW Government schools

| Year | Total number | Primary school | High school | % |
|-------------|--------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| 2000 | 4795 | 2663 (2.5%) | 2132 (2.8%) | 2.6% |
| 1999 | 4643 | 2450 (2.4%) | 2193 (2.9%) | 2.6% |
| 1998 | 4291 | 2174 (2.3%) | 2117 (2.9%) | 2.5% |
| 1996 | 3383 | 1659 (1.9%) | 1724 (2.6%) | 2.2% |
| 1995 | 3188 | 1539 (1.8%) | 1658 (2.6%) | 2.2% |
| 1994 | 2996 | 1423 (1.8%) | 1573 (2.6%) | 2.1% |

According to the available information, there are approximately 27 ethnic Korean language schools mostly run by church communities teaching approx 2400 students in NSW.

Considering the number of Korean students enrolled in government schools (4795) and private schools (?), only a small percentage of Korean background students are formally studying Korean. (500 + 240 + 2400)

Tab 2: Community Languages Programs K-6 Allocation by Language 2001

| Language | Allocations 2001 | Language | Allocations 2001 |
|------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Chinese | 60.4 | Macedonian | 7.4 |
| Arabic | 50.4 | Turkish | 6.2 |
| Vietnamese | 34.8 | Khmer | 3.4 |
| Italian | 29.4 | Korean | 2.0 |
| Greek | 20.4 | Samoan | 1.4 |

The extract below is from the paper presented at the first Korean Studies Association of Australasia in 1999 by Dr Ho-min Sohn, University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Nurture of all heritage students as bilinguals

“This has not been an issue in Australasia where immigration history is short. In the next decade on, however, this will become a most important Korean ethnic issue since Korean is the basis through which overseas Koreans maintain their national heritage, identity and pride. All necessary means and support must be mobilised for Korean language maintenance of all heritage students. This movement must be forcefully conducted in concerted efforts by the Korean community, Korean language educators, and relevant Korean government agencies.”

“...It is imperative to devise ways to motivate all heritage students at all levels to learn Korean. The most essential condition is that we provide them with excellent education -interesting, fulfilling, relevant, and utilitarian. We also need community support.” (Sohn 1999:17) Clearly a more supportive attitude to the school language program by Korean parents is necessary to maintain the Korean cultural heritage and language in the broad Australian community. All heritage students should be encouraged to study Korean continuously from primary through to secondary HSC level.

1.2 Cohesion and unity within the state-sponsored programs:

It is clear with the benefit of hindsight that the Korean language programs could have been significantly improved had there existed at the time a greater recognition of the need for cohesion and liaison between the NSW Department of Education and Training, the various universities and the Korean community. In my personal opinion, the Departmental oversight of the potentially invaluable long-term contribution of the universities to primary and secondary programs was an unfortunate miscalculation. However misunderstanding within the Korean community and negativity to the Departmental project from within the universities proved equally detrimental. Fortunately recent efforts by all concerned has seen a

vast improvement. To provide a long term strategic plan we must capitalise on the present supportive and cohesive environment.

2. Teacher training issues and challenges

2.1 Teachers' commitment to the program

Given the need to maximise the value of every teacher training dollar within the budget, a review of selection processes for the Korean teachers training program is warranted. Clearly, directing funds to teachers who may be unable through pending retirement or location to put into effect the training they have received, will not provide the optimum result. Some schools with a need to secure funds, training and technology, did commit to the program meeting their short-term contractual obligations. However, they did not necessarily show a commitment to the maintenance of the program in the longer term. Situations where primary school teachers had little opportunities to teach Korean to students other than in their own class.

2.2 The long-term benefits of teacher training incentives:

The incentives have brought to light some outstanding teachers committed to the Korean program. However it has been the experience of workshop coordinators and the facilitators of Korean professional development training that the training efforts are often applied to participating teachers who have no intention of specifically dedicating their training to continuously teaching Korean. Future training must be more selectively directed to ensure teachers awarded vocational study and career enhancement opportunities will be those who have a measurable commitment to long term involvement in the Korean program.

Sung-chul Shin identified in his paper four groups of teachers: A, B, C and D. I strongly endorse his groupings and assessments and would add the following comments.

Group A: "Overseas trained Korean native-speaker teachers who have had in-service training in Australia and/or whose qualifications have been approved to teach Korean in Australian schools. These teachers may need continuous English language training, along with on-going in-service training on the Australian education environment and practices, particularly for recently arrived Korean teachers." (Shin 2000) Additional encouragement is needed to bring these teachers into the system. There is a pool of 24 Korean background teachers currently employed in the Saturday School of Community Languages. Within this group there are 8 NSW qualified teachers. These teachers could clearly be better utilised as fulltime/permanent teachers. However the Community Languages Program K-6 employing these teachers only commenced in 2000 introducing Korean at 4 public schools.

Group B: "Australian English native-speaker teachers who used to teach other languages or subjects and who have had in-service training in Korean in Australia and/or in Korea. These teachers are largely involved in teaching beginner-level Korean. Group B teachers would benefit from on-going extensive training in Korean, along with seasonal cultural training in Australia or Korea." (Shin 2000) 80 teachers from this group have participated in Korean workshops, 40 of whom are active in program.

Group C: “Young Korean native-speaker teachers who have been educated and trained in Australia and are fluent in both Korean and English. These teachers will also need on-going training in Korean linguistics and area studies.” (Shin 2000) This group is one, which presents the most pressing need. Numbers are minimal, yet surprisingly they often have difficulty finding suitable employment as Korean teachers. As a result they often seek other career opportunities. Encouragement through incentives such as scholarships for university students who want to be Korean teachers is a partial answer, but most importantly the introduction of more schools willing to take up the Korean program will provide the best incentive.

Group D: “Young Australian English native-speaker teachers who have had intensive and Korean extensive language training in Australia and/or in Korea. Group D teachers are primarily involved with non-background Australian students. For group D teachers, it will be desirable to provide on-going language and cultural training lifting proficiency to a higher level, and to update their understanding of Korea, as it undergoes rapid change.” (Shin 2000) Group D teacher numbers are also very low and in particular the number of teachers from this group who are willing to work outside of the Sydney area. However, it is a fact that there are very few opportunities for employment as a Korean teacher, therefore they choose to teach other languages or subjects. All three teachers from within this group have taken up employment elsewhere and are now lost to NSW as Korean teachers. Qualified teachers who are seeking employment as a Korean teacher should not simply wait for a position to arise. My suggestion is that they introduce themselves to school Principals and negotiate to be given a chance to demonstrate the skills they possess and encourage the Principal to introduce the Korean program. We are losing trained teachers, and it is a vicious circle. The teachers who have qualifications cannot find jobs therefore the universities cannot attract the students wishing to be Korean language teachers. Departmental records show that available qualified Korean teacher numbers are very low and the Department therefore cannot expand Korean programs.

2.3 Workshop venues-suitability of location:

Dr Sohn mentioned in his paper. “Teachers must have access to continued professional development opportunities. Well-organised conferences and continuing teacher workshops are required for teachers to meet the wide variety of student needs. Korean language teaching staff must be exposed to current language pedagogy training appropriate for performance-based training.” (Sohn 1999:21) NSW schools teaching Korean are scattered all over the state. Therefore to hold a workshop in a central venue means the expenses for travel and accommodation are quite substantial. Tele-conferencing facilities may prove useful.

2.4 Impediment to appointment of Korean background teachers to remote areas.

For a variety of reasons group A and C teachers are not willing to work outside of Sydney despite incentives such as rapid career advancement opportunities being offered by the Department. This impediment needs indepth analysis.

2.5 Under-utilisation of skills by trained teachers

In some primary schools, due to budget constraints trained teachers are only teaching in their own classes. Much depends on the individual Principal’s support. In some

high schools, the Korean language is a less important subject for the school curriculum so the school executive decides not to offer the program. In other cases, not enough students are selecting Korean, therefore the schools are unable to form a class. Additionally, trained teachers are promoted to executive positions or retire or are transferred to non-participating schools. Thus teacher numbers fall through natural attrition. There are also instances where teachers have expressed a lack of confidence in their ability. This indicates to me that there are insufficient workshops or in-service visits to provide teachers with the required level of teaching comfort. If the Korean program is to continue in NSW there is an urgent need for new, trained young teachers, willing to take up appointment particularly in regional and remote communities.

2.6 Impediment to recruitment of Korean-trained teachers

Only 7 Korean background speaker teachers are employed in NSW public schools. 5 at primary, 1 at the Open High School and 1 at high school. Overseas-trained Korean teachers face difficulty upgrading their qualifications to gain NSW government approval. This comes about mainly from a lack of confidence in their English skills and perceived inability to complete the university course required. Support programs and focused preparatory trial exams may be one way of restoring the confidence of these potential recruits.

2.7 Practicum: lack of Korean-teaching schools in Sydney

There is a lack of practicum opportunities for university students who are training to be Korean teachers. Finding a participating school in the Sydney area is often difficult. There is an urgent need to attract more high schools or give incentives to existing high schools to take on practicum students in Sydney.

3. Other languages' strategies:

Extensive national government and non-government support is provided for the languages listed below, making them an attractive subject for potential language teachers. Korean language teachers have benefited of late from receipt of support materials in the form of videos, books and awards etc. However support still lags significantly behind that provided to other languages. The following languages offer examples of the type of support required for the Korean program to succeed. Japanese, French, German, Chinese, Indonesian, Italian, Greek.

4. Other issues:

4.1 General decline of language study in schools

This problem is affecting all language groups, not only Korean.

The Korean community is well placed to promote the value of the study of the Korean language.

4.2 School budget priorities

Using the Wollongong region as an example, specific funding was directed to teaching Korean in this region. The recipient schools have come to rely upon such additional funding and have stated that without such funding the project will cease. Other schools have prioritised Korean and funded from within their own budget.

5. Some solutions

5.1 Expansion of community language programs at public schools and high schools

Where there are more than approximately forty background students, Korean parents may, if they so desire, make a request to the Principal for a community language program at their school. The Principal will then consider implementing the program together with the staff and as a consequence, background speaker teacher's employment opportunities may increase. Community language teachers are appointed to permanent positions in the same manner as other mainstream teachers. They must hold a current NSW government teacher's approval in addition to a community language teacher's approval which is gained after successfully completing the community language teacher's test. The Korean community's awareness of the program is patchy and a targeted promotion is warranted.

5.2 Stimulating interest in Korean programs

- Development of interesting and stimulating resources. ie, high quality videos and movies, cultural and sporting items, innovative on-line programs appropriate for primary and high school language learners
- Provision of e-mail connections
- Appropriate professional development opportunities
- Scholarship opportunities for students and teachers. There are none for high school students.

5.3 Improving language continuity

The NSW Department of Education and Training provides funding support for non-background students in Y10-12 to undertake intensive language study overseas. The program is called Student Language Study in Overseas Countries (SLSOC) and aims to increase students' language proficiency and motivate students to undertake further language study. Since 1996, 48 students of Korean have participated in the program and undertaken intensive study in Seoul.

For background speaker students, considerable changes have been made to the HSC. "The new HSC syllabus's key competencies are communicating ideas and information, collecting, analysing and organising information, ...working with others and in teams...". (Korean Background Speakers Stage 6 Syllabus :P13). Second generation Korean background students are already familiar with this method of learning and will now not feel disadvantaged. Chinese script is omitted from the study and the speaking exam is assessed through an internal exam only. Therefore students can, if necessary, get help from their parents when preparing for their assessment tasks. Parts of the listening and reading exam questions are provided in both English and Korean, enabling students to answer either in English or Korean, thereby fully catering for 1st or 2nd generation Koreans. Most importantly the method of marking the HSC has moved to a standards-referenced approach, ie. no longer does the students' achievements place them relative to other students in the group.

Korean background speaker primary students should be encouraged to participate in the programs at church based community schools and/or government community language programs. In this manner the necessary continuity of students could be achieved.

5.4 Government and non government funding to enhance teacher employment and the provision of scholarships

5.5 Utilisation of Korean community organisational resources in schools to stimulate interest

5.6 Improved selection of teachers for teacher training

References

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Cheal Ted, 2001, Wollongong High School, KOLSA Teachers Forum

Pereira Fiona, 2001, St Andrews Public School, KOLSA Teachers Forum

Kim Younghwa, 1997, NSW Department of Education and Training, Korean Intensive Language Workshop folder

Community Languages Program K-6 2000, NSW Department of Education and Training

Board of Studies 2000, Assessment Support Document

McRoberts Sook Hee, 2001, NSW Department of Education and Training, KOLSA Teachers Forum

Empirical experience gained from

Feb 1994-June 1995 Korean Language Support Officer, Wollongong Cluster DEET-funded Pilot Korean Language Project

Jan 1995-Dec 1996 Hub Teacher for the 'Korean Using Technology'. Presented remote delivery of language programs using a range of computer platforms at Training and Development Directorate, NSW Department of Education and Training

Mar 1996-Mar 1997 Korean teacher for Korean background students, Saturday School of Community Languages

Feb 1997-Jan 1999 Project Officer/Korean, Korean Project, Training and Development Directorate

Responsibilities:

Providing professional development support to schools teaching Korean. Assisting district and school-based staff in the provision of advice, support in the implementation of the study of Korean

- Planning, organising, and conducting training and development programs for teachers of Korean using a range of delivery modes
- Delivering lessons to the schools where HSC 2 Unit Extended and 2 Unit Z Korean is taught in 1997-1999
- Management of the Tandem Teacher Exchange program with Seoul and Intensive In-country course for the teachers in Seoul

Jan 1999 – Present Korean Language Consultant, Curriculum Support Directorate, NSW Department of Education and Training (DET)

Responsibilities:

- Supporting Schools in the effective teaching of Korean K-12.
- Developing and disseminating materials to implementation of Korean language programs K-12
- Developing and presenting workshops on Korean teaching issues
- Liaising with teachers and the Board of Studies to support changes to the new HSC
- Providing advice for curriculum development in Korean