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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ENGLISH AND KOREAN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION CHALLENGES (ON THE BASE OF DIGITAL TOOLS)

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ABOUT ARTICLE

Abstract: This article discovers the comparative study results, difficulties related to acquiring English and Korean languages` acquisition via using digital tools, focusing on the structural, phonetic, and cultural differences those impact learners' experiences. Besides, it focuses on the efficiency of AI tools for improving language skills such as, grammar, vocabulary, writing, listening and speaking. Additionally, it also studies appropriate nuances, such as Korean's honorific system and English idiomatic expressions, which may lead language learners to misunderstanding.

Introduction

It is no secret that the number of people learning other languages, particularly Korean, is growing year after year among the younger generation. The popularity of Korean music and dramas, films, and cosmetics has fueled a growing interest in learning the language. However, young people who are determined to study Korean may confront a variety of challenges. The most notable issues may include core linguistics, including syntax and separate phonetic systems that differ significantly from English. Not only should students accept this transition in language learning input and cultural knowledge, but so should teachers. Furthermore, teachers are expected to have a certain experience in dealing with the problems of Korean language acquisition. Exploring the challenges and their solutions may improve the language input process, resulting in stable experiences and actions for mastery during the learning process.

Besides, current language opportunities are widened because of digital tools and AI, supporting both teachers and learners with full information, varied formats, and authentic content.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Teaching foreign languages effectively comprises immersive language techniques, structured practice, and cultural context. This study explores various aspects of Korean language acquisition, its phonetics, grammar, conversation style, cultural differences, and IT tools to improve the learning process. It is necessary to distinguish the significant role of Hangul literacy as a foundation for Korean language acquisition. The scholars Cho and Krashen [1] highlight that Hangul's unique, logical alphabetic system accelerates learning by making pronunciation and reading accessible even to beginners. Studies by Sohn (2006) and others argue that students benefit from mastering Hangul early on as it interprets the writing system and enhances confidence [2]

Another scholar, Lee highlights that phonetic system of the language, for instance, some sounds may not be found in learners' L1. According to its specific character, Korean vowels and consonants involve teachers to use audio-visual methods to practice it well and enhance retention. Taking into account the difficulty of Korean language sentence structure, different from English, Park and Lee [8] argue for learning it through contextual approach where non-native learners practice grammar on the base of conversations and authentic context.

According to Kim and Park [4], role-playing activities that allow students to act out everyday conversations greatly enhance their spoken Korean skills. Similarly, Yun (2019) talks about how language exchange programs and speaking with native speakers' aid learners in adjusting to real Korean speech and practicing subtle aspects such as speech levels and intonation. Cook (2009) asserts that communicative language teaching (CLT) techniques promote fluency and self-assurance. The advantages of this type of interactive practice are well known since it promotes the application of language abilities in relevant circumstances, which improves language acquisition overall [13].

What comes to the situation of teaching Korean or English language through cultural content, some of studies hypothesize that integrating language knowledge with cultural enhances learners` input and increases language value. For example, the 1st course students of Urgench State University, of Korean philology are learning the language by practicing various content incorporating Korean culture, music, media and drama. In its turn, it is giving a good result making learner` feel comfortable to learn the language which is complicated in structure and phonetics. Besides, Lee (2020) emphasizes the importance of teaching the complicated formal system, which varies depending on the social structure. Students can learn about

different language forms in context through media exposure, which helps them understand when to use professional, courteous, and casual speech levels [12].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

How to practice Korean and English languages effectively? It is a fact that the growth of IT tools and technology is attacking all the branches of society and the field of language learning is no exception. Using digital technology in teaching and learning languages may impact on enhanced language input, improve learners` attitude towards learning the language, eases the learning process, minimizes learners` anxiety and develops personalized teaching. According to Cho and Lee (2022), digital tools make language learning accessible and sustain student engagement by introducing a variety of content delivery methods. Online flashcards, gamification, and interactive quizzes facilitate assessment through spaced repetition, which is essential for long-term memory retention. Here, we can discuss the key methodologies used in Korean instructions [5]:

1. *Hangul (한글) Proficiency:* Students begin by learning the fundamentals of the Korean alphabet, Hangul. It clearly describes Korean sounds, which facilitates learning and early reading comprehension for novices. To improve comprehension of the structure of Korean words, additional pronunciation drills and sound-blending activities are undertaken.

2. *Teaching vocabulary:* as in teaching English, vocabulary is taught in thematic units, through repetition tasks, flashcards, and digital tools.

3. *Grammar Patterns and Sentence Structure*: Teach basic grammar patterns early on, such as subject-object-verb (SOV) order, particles, and honorifics. Korean grammar uses specific particles to denote subjects, objects, locations, and so on, which can be confusing for beginners, so breaking down each function clearly is essential [5].

4. *Productive speech*: common conversational scenarios (in a restaurant, at doctors, shopping, or asking advice) and *Dialogue* are practiced in a realistic context, getting them be familiar with speech levels and nuances. It covers in itself: clarity, coherence, fluency, vocabulary and grammar. By improving productive speech, learners enhance the ability of articulating words clearly, structuring thoughts logically cohesively, use a wide range of vocabulary (academic/nonacademic), using correct pronunciation and grammatical structures.

5. *Cultural content:* Including materials on Korean culture enables learners to comprehend language content better and enhance motivation. For this, it is appropriate to supply Korean music, dramas, and music. Cultural content supports learners not only master linguistic forms of the languages, but also enables them to distinguish cultural nuances that influence communication. Moreover, by practicing cultural content learners explore how and

why certain expressions, idioms or phrases are used in language. On the other hand, cultural content teaches pragmatics, which refers to language usage in social settings.

6. *Feedback and assessment:* If it is to compare, both languages require language teachers to provide ongoing assessment, giving feedback and emphasizing the parts that need practice and improvement.

Digital tools and technology. A scholar Lee emphasizes online platforms like

Talk to me in Korean (TTMIK) for improving grammar and listening skills, while English language learners use Duolingo or Babbel to improve language abilities through exercises. Furthermore, scientists Lee and Kim [12] claim that *Blended learning* is becoming more popular among Korean language learners, as they engage in active conversation, whereas virtual classrooms focus on language subskills. Using digital technology for evaluation and practice in class is regarded as one of the most effective methods for creating instructional objectives. This concept suggests using a variety of digital tools and techniques, platforms, and apps in the classroom. The table below examines the tools and apps for developing language abilities.

Category of apps and tools	Duolingo (free)	Talk to me in Korean (paid)	Grammarly (freemium)	Memrise freemium)	Roosetta stone (paid)	Kakao Talk (free)	Hello Talk (freemium)	Busuu (freemium)
Supported language	Korean, English	Korean	English	Korean, English	Korean, English	Korean	Korean, English	Korean, English
Vocabulary	☑	☑	✗	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
Speaking	☑	✗	✗	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
Listening	☑	☑	✗	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
Writing	✗	✗	☑	✗	☑	✗	☑	☑
Gamification	☑	✗	✗	☑	✗	✗	✗	☑
Assessment	✗	✗	☑	✗	☑	☑	☑	☑
Audio content	☑	☑	✗	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
Grammar	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	✗	✗	☑

Table 1: the list of language tools and apps for learning Korean and English languages

Furthermore, it is indicated that additional excellent language practice applications, such as Kahoot, Quizlet, Nearpod, and Umaigra, offer real-time classroom feedback. The benefits of these assessment techniques are as follows:

- We may identify learners' needs and areas for development.
- Ongoing monitoring of learners' progress and support for various learning styles.
- Providing timely feedback and making corrections.
- Improving learners' motivation and implementing individualized learning.
- Provide teachers with ready-made language curriculum and reduce their daily workload.

In contrast to English language acquisition, Korean language stresses the importance of *honorifics* and the level of politeness in the target language and culture. Lee advises using situational practices to help learners understand real-world use of Korean language and culture. While English has both formal and informal means of expressing thoughts, it lacks Korean's honorific system. Instead, it helps learners to practice speech using context-based terminology. According to Kim Mayer`s study, it is distinguished that both Korean and English language learners benefit from pedagogical video content with language learning modes, such as Viki learn mode (for Korean language) and Fluent U (for English language). These tools support practicing vocabulary in real-life situations, in written and oral forms. The aforementioned digital technologies help to integrate language abilities, allowing for a more in-depth comprehension of language usage and content [11]

Challenges: It is usual to have difficulties while studying because of the differences between the Korean and English languages. According to Ellis and Levinson [14] studying Korean language may present some challenges to teach and learn. They are the followings:

1. Korean language has a complex honorifics system, changing on the base of social hierarchy age (reflecting the formality)

2. According to Lee and Ramsey, Korean has sounds that don't exist in many other languages, such as the tense consonants (e.g., ㄲ /kk/, ㅆ /ss/), and three-way phoneme distinctions for stops and affricates (plain, aspirated, and tense), which can be hard for learners to distinguish and pronounce [2].

3. Korean lexicon consists of native Korean terms, Sino-Korean words (derived from Chinese), and loanwords, all of which have various usage restrictions. Sino-Korean vocabulary, for example, includes Chinese characters with specific meanings, making it more difficult for learners who are unfamiliar with Chinese characters [3].

4. English language learning can be challenging for phonetics (diverse accents, silent letters), vocabulary (homonyms, slang and idioms), grammar (tenses and word order), writing (formal/informal).

5. English language has got regional accents and phonetic quirks such as silent letters (ec**h**o, dou**g**h, dou**b**t, g**u**itar, w**h**at).

6. Writing skill is complicated as it has got two styles (formal /informal), strict punctuation rules and conventions.

The following *solutions* are suggested by scholars:1). A scholar, Kim [2], stresses the significance of directing learners` conscious approaches to word study. It is emphasized to sort out or classify vocabulary into levels of frequency and context usage to make learning

practicable. This aligns with separating Korean vocabulary into native, Sino-Korean, and loanwords. 2). What belongs to phonetic difficulty, it is suggested to focus on more repeated exposure and ongoing practice to grasp unknown sounds in their L1 [13]. 3. To understand the honorific system or their Politeness Theory of the Korean language, it is necessary to practice role-play and scenario-based learning, authentic materials, videos, and films [16].

The English language phonetic system can also be challenging, and it requires learners to use multimedia resources for diverse accents. A scholar, Ellis, proposes to use speech recognition tools and tasks for improving listening [14]. Rosetta Stone and Duolingo are the best tools for improving listening English, recognizing phonics, and making challenging sounds more accessible to learners. When language learners have difficulty in writing, they need to focus on more cognitive processes, develop guided writing, practice pre-review activities, and use structured writing templates for academic and non-academic writing [15].

The study shows that there is no problem that may not be solved in the language teaching process. On the basis of ideas suggested by scholars, language teachers of both Korean and English may tailor their teaching approaches.

CONCLUSION

Teaching and studying Korean and English have considerable linguistic, structural, and cultural problems. Scholars argue for context-based, immersive, and interactive approaches to these issues, as well as tools that encourage practice and reinforce challenging phonological and grammatical features in teaching both language. By including culturally relevant resources and employing systematic instructional approaches, instructors can better accompany students as they traverse the intricacies of Korean language acquisition. English language learners frequently encounter linguistic, phonological, and syntax issues, which can be addressed during the teaching process by improving comprehensible input and intercultural competency. To overcome these challenges and problems, both teachers and learners have the potential to use digital technology and language applications effectively. Besides, distinguishing formal and informal formats in both languages enables learners to master foreign languages easily and fluently. Except for teachers, language content should be effectively used to input cultural, educational, and practical knowledge.

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