

History of Foreign Language Education in Korea

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Lee, Kwang-Sook. (2015). History of foreign language education in Korea. *Foreign Language Education Research*, 18, 37-52.

Foreign language education in Korea commenced from the period of the Three Kingdoms. During this period, which lasted until 7th- 8th century AD, the Kingdom's close relationship with China prompted Chinese language education. Similarly, interaction with Japan started the education of Japanese language. Education during this period was reserved for the children of the upper class. From the end of the Three Kingdoms era until the early 19th century, education of four languages including Mongolian and Manchurian, as well as Chinese and Japanese took place. A government agency, Sa Yeok Won, trained translators during this time. Education of English, German, French and Russian languages started from the end of the 19th century, because the newly formed diplomatic relationships with these countries required the knowledge of their languages for communication. That was the beginning of the modern-style public education, which the foreign language education in the 20th century was based on. Currently, foreign language education takes place in high schools and universities. In high schools, the first foreign language is English, while the second foreign languages offered are Japanese, Chinese, German, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, Vietnamese and Classical Chinese characters. Universities offer both compulsory and elective courses on foreign languages. In addition to the languages taught in high schools, African and Southeast Asian languages are available for students to study in university.

Key Words: education, foreign language, translator, communication, compulsory and elective courses

I . Foreign language education before the 19th century

The beginnings of foreign language education in Korea are traced back to the period of the Three Kingdoms. The Three Kingdoms, Goguryeo (BC 37-668), Shilla (BC 57-935) and Baekje (BC 18-660), had a close political and social relationship with China. As Korean language only existed in the spoken form at the time without written language, Chinese characters were used for communication. The use of Chinese characters prompted a close interaction with China in regards to language education. The education of Chinese characters focused on teaching Chinese classics such as *Sa Seo* and took place in schools for children of the ruling class. Many students were sent to China to learn to speak Chinese. In the 8th century, Changan, the capital of Tang Dynasty (618-907), accommodated 8000 students from the Three Kingdoms. Taebong (901-918), a

short-lived country in the 9th century, had an institution named Sa Dae, which oversaw language education. As the Three Kingdoms also had a relationship with Japan, Shilla had an institution called Wae Jeon, which taught Japanese language.

As Goryeo (918-1392) and Chosun (1392-1910) Dynasties established closer relationships with Mongolia and Manchuria due to wars as well as China and Japan, the education of their languages commenced. In Goryeo, a government department named Tong Mun Guan trained since 1276 translators for the languages of these four countries. Students were from Jung In, the middle class of Goryeo. The state examination, Gwageo, also included a test to recruit translators. In Chosun, Sa Yeok Won was established 1393, trained translators and conducted research on Chinese, Japanese, Mongolian and Manchurian languages. Sa Yeok Won not only taught written Chinese with Chinese Classics, but also spoken Chinese using textbooks such as *No Geol Dae* and *Bak Tong Sa*. *No Geol Dae* presents conversation in a variety of topics between merchants from Chosun and China on their way to China.

While reforming the political system in 1894, Chosun also made an attempt to modernize education. Western style schools were established, and everyone was able to receive education. The contents and methodology of education also changed. Moreover, as the country opened its door to the Western nations such as the U.S. and U.K., the modern education of Western languages including English, German, and French began.

II . Foreign language education in late 19th century

1. Changes in foreign policies and foreign language education

As Chosun abolished Daewongun's seclusion policy and opened its door to foreign countries, Western-style modern education was introduced to the nation. A group of people who pursued national civilization, such as Park Young-hyo and Kim Ok-gyun, had started showing interest in modern education since 1876. In 1883, the community leaders in Wonsan established the first modern school, Won-San Hak- Sa in the region. The first private school offered courses not only in classical subjects such as Gyeong Seo (Confusion classics) and Byeong Seo (books on military tactics) but also in modern subjects such as mathematics, physics, machinery, agriculture, sericulture, law, geography and Japanese. Modern education began in earnest as Christian missionaries established Han-Han Hak-Won in 1884 and Bae-Jae Hak- Dang in 1885.

After signing a commercial treaty with the U.S. (1882), Chosun concluded a number of trade treaties with many European countries, such as the U.K. Now that Chosun established diplomatic relations with Western countries, it needed officials who could

speaking western languages. Along with the open-door policy, Chosun government attempted to reform the country's education system. Hence, the reform in 1894 changed not only the political system but also education. It modernized the type and contents of education as well as teaching methods. Western-style schools were established, which enabled the general public, not just the offspring of high officials, to receive education when they reach a certain age. The contents of education also changed from Chinese classics such as *Sa Seo* and *O Gyeong* to practical subjects like modern languages, mathematics. In addition, contrary to the traditional teaching method which emphasized reading, the reform focused on practical experiences. Considering the international relations of Chosun government, Qing Dynasty (1636-1912) recommended P.G. von Möllendorff (1847-1901), who is German, to supervise foreign affairs and the maritime customs. Möllendorff suggested establishing a school that could provide students with necessary skills to work in those areas. Following his suggestion, Dong Mun Hak was founded in Seoul in 1883 to teach English. It was principally organized to teach not only English but also other languages. But the government could not afford it due to financial difficulties. Approximately 40 students attended this school. Established to train interpreters, Dong Mun Hak was the first English school in Korea that provided modern-style education. It was modeled after Tung Won Gwan in Beijing, China, established in 1862 to train diplomats. The graduates of Dong Mun Hak not only learned the language but also contributed to the nation by accepting Western civilization as they were engaged in trade affairs, diplomacy, postal services, telegraphic work and hospitals. Dong Mun Hak ceased operation in 1886, as the official school teaching foreign languages, Yuk-Yeong Gong-Won, opened. This school was divided into the left department and the right department. Young officials currently in service studied in the left department, while classical scholars aged 15 to 20 were in the right department. In total, 35 students attended the school. Every student in the right department lived in a dormitory. The subjects offered were reading and writing, as well as mathematics, science, geography, history, political science and various languages. H. B. Hulbert (1863-1949), D. A. Bunker (1853-1932), and G. W. Gilmore (1858-1933) taught English and used textbooks written in English. Although the operation of the school went smoothly at first, difficulties began to arise as time passed. Students, who were present government officials, often missed school due to their busy schedules. They disliked the strict school rules that emphasized punctuality and prohibited absence without notice. Moreover, there was a friction between the progressive American teachers and conservative school management. As its last remaining teacher, Bunker, resigned in 1894, the school was unable to continue its operation. In 1893, W. F. Hutchison (?-1901), who was teaching English in the Naval Academy in Ganghwa-do was put in charge of Yuk-Yeong Gong-

Won. The name of the school had changed to English School, and Hutchison started classes with 64 students including four from Yuk-Yeong Gong-Won. This school became Hanseong Foreign Language School in 1895 (Lee, 1999, pp. 158-159).

It was the private schools that facilitated the modernization of Korea in a fast and drastic manner. Private schools could be divided into two groups. The first were Korean private schools founded by patriots who worried about the future of the nation. Yang-Jung, Bo-Seong, Hwi-Mun, Hong-Hwa, Jin-Myeong, Suk-Myeong, Osan, Dae-Seong, Jung-Dong and Dong-Deok are such schools. The second group consists of Christian private schools founded by foreign missionaries, such as Ewha Hak-Dang, Bae-Jae Hak-Dang, Gyeong-Sin School, Sung-Sil School, Sung-Ui School, Jeong-Sin Girls' School and Gye-Seong School.

In 1885, an American missionary, H. G. Appenzeller (1858-1902), started teaching English and other Western subjects in Bae-Jae Hak-Dang. In the same year, H. G. Underwood (1859-1916) established Gyeong-Sin School, while M. E. Scranton (1832-1909) founded Ewha Hak-Dang in an attempt to provide education in a Western-style school. The number of private schools in the nation reached 1402 in 1910. Among them, 801 were founded by missionaries. These schools were called the Mission Schools and taught Korean language, history, arithmetic, music and foreign languages. The Mission Schools played a leading role in introducing new culture and education to the nation. They used the English Bible as a textbook to teach English in order to spread Christian doctrines. Moreover, the Mission Schools translated the Bible into Korean, making a great contribution in disseminating Hangeul, Korean alphabet. The Gospels according to Luke and John were translated into and published in Korean in 1882 in Mukden, Manchuria. After the missionaries organized the Bible Committee in 1887, the translation of the Bible began in earnest in 1893. The New Testament translated in Korean was published in 1900, while the translation of the Old Testament was completed in 1910.

2. Modernization of the education system

As a part of the modernization movement, the government abolished the traditional state examination (Gwageo) and status system, and established modern educational institutions where every citizen could receive education. The government set regulations on the establishment of primary schools, middle schools, colleges, universities, technical institutions, foreign language schools and teachers' colleges. However, they managed to establish only Hanseong Teachers' College, foreign language schools, primary schools and middle schools, while failing to found the higher educational facilities such as colleges and universities. Students over eight years old could attend primary schools,

which were divided into the lower grades (Sim Sang) and higher grades (Go Deung). The lower grades took three years to complete, while the higher grades took two to three years. The subjects taught in the lower grades were moral education, reading, writing, penmanship, arithmetic and gymnastics. In addition, primary schools taught one or several of the following subjects such as Korean geography, history, drawing and foreign languages. The subjects offered in the higher grades were moral education, reading, writing, penmanship, arithmetic, Korean geography, Korean history, foreign geography, science, drawing and gymnastics. In some cases, the schools taught foreign languages as well. They could also choose to teach one or several of the following subjects such as foreign geography, foreign history and drawing. The years required for completing a middle school were seven, which consist of four years in the lower grades, and three in the higher grades. Later on, middle schools were called high schools which required four years to complete. The school system at the time was not properly organized. In addition, the officials lacked experiences to follow the curriculum. Even Hanseong Teachers' College only focused on teaching Chinese literature, while neglecting the other subjects.

3. Hanseong Foreign Language School

As the Political Reform in 1894 restructured the political organizations, Sa Yeok Won, the foreign language institute, closed down. However, because Chosun entered into diplomatic and trade relations with the U.S., U.K., Germany, Russia and France, the needs for diplomats or interpreters who know the languages and culture of these countries grew. Such needs led to the establishment of Hanseong Foreign Language School. Japanese School was already established in Seoul in 1891, in Incheon in 1895 and in Pyeong Yang in 1907. English School had already been in operation since 1894, succeeding Yuk-Yeong Gong-Won mentioned above. French School was established in 1895, Russian School in 1896, and German School in 1898. Chinese School started in 1891, but ceased operations in 1894 due to the Chinese-Japanese War (1894-1895). In 1897, the Chinese School reopened.

The curriculum of these schools is generally divided into two parts; subjects related to language acquisition, such as reading, writing, translating and speaking of English and other languages, and subjects such as mathematics, geography, history of Korea, Chinese characters, sports etc. In every school, teachers used the language of the school as a medium of learning, except when they taught Chinese characters and sports.

The level of education offered by these schools was equivalent to that of high school education; however, taking into account that no colleges or universities were available at

the time, they can be considered as higher educational facilities. Foreign teachers¹ and Korean teachers taught classes in these schools.

The numbers of the graduates of these schools until 1910 are as follows. About 260 students graduated from Japanese school in Seoul, 63 from Incheon and 25 from Pyeong Yang. English School and French school graduated 79 and 26 students, respectively, whereas Russian school did not graduate any students. 59 students graduated from Chinese School, and 5 from German School. That the highest number of graduates was from Japanese School followed by English suggests that Japanese was the language with the highest demand, followed by English and Chinese. The rise and fall of the foreign language schools were closely linked to Korean political situation. Chinese School was temporarily closed after the Chinese-Japanese War (1894-1895), while Russian School ceased operations in 1904 due to the Russian-Japanese War (1904-1905). The foreign language schools were run independently at first, but merged into Hanseong Foreign Language School in 1906. In 1911, Hanseong Foreign Language School was abolished due to the Japanese Annexation of Korea, and became a part of Gyeong Seong School (currently, Gyeonggi High School).

4. Other schools

Other schools than the foreign language schools also showed interest in foreign language education. In 1895, the government established a modern style school for teacher training, Hanseong Teachers' College, which taught Japanese. Hanseong Middle School, established in 1898, offered English courses in both lower and higher grades. Hulbert, a teacher from Yuk-Yeong Gong-Won, was the English teacher in the Middle School. In 1909, governmental and public high schools offered English three hours per week as an elective course.

Christian schools, which amount to approximately 800 and were mostly established by American or English missionaries, were actively engaged in teaching and spreading English language. Some classes in these schools were taught in English. Private schools established by patriots also put effort into English education. Hung-Hwa School taught English and Japanese. Jung-Gyo Ui-Suk was a school for training in foreign languages, where it taught English, Japanese and Chinese characters. Han-Yeong Seo-Won in Gaeseong also emphasized English education. Other private schools such as Yang-Jeong,

¹ The names of the foreign teachers are as follows (Lee, 1999, p. 164). T. E. Hallifax, W. de Hutchison and R. Frampton worked in English School. E. Martel worked in French School, N. Birukoff in Russian School, J. Bolljahn in German School, Okakura Yoshisaburo in Japanese School, Hu Wen-Wei in Chinese School.

Bo-Seong, Hwi-Mun, Suk-Myeong and Dong-Deok, and Seo-Wu Teachers' College offered an English course (Moon, 1976, p. 641).

5. Compilation of dictionaries, newspapers and other literary works

The compilation of dictionaries helped missionaries learn Korean, and had indirect effects on the education of foreign languages (Moon, 1976, p. 641). J. Ross, a missionary from Scotland, compiled a dictionary called *Corean Primer* in 1877, and revised it in 1882 to publish a book titled *Korean Speech with Grammar and Vocabulary*. In Yokohama, Japan, a pastor named J. S. Gale published *A Korean English Dictionary* in 1897. Also in Yokohama, Underwood published a Korean-English dictionary titled *An Introduction to the Korean Spoken Language* in 1898. He further compiled the first Korean-English and English-Korean dictionary in 1890, *A Concise Dictionary of the Korean Language in Two Parts, Korean-English & English-Korean*.

In regards to French Language, a Korean-French dictionary, *Dictionnaire Coréen-Français*, was completed in 1880. In 1881, a French book on Korean grammar, *Grammaire Coréen*, was compiled by Société des Missions étrangères de Paris (Song et al. 1999, p. 78; Kim, J., 1971, p. 12). H.G.C. von der Gabelentz, a German, studied the spellings and sounds of Korean language in 1892 (*Zur Beurteilung des Koreanischen Schrift- und Lautwesens*). In 1923, A. Eckardt published a Korean grammar book (*Koreanische Konversationsgrammatik mit Lesestücken und Gesprächen*) in Germany (Kim, J., 1971, p. 13).

The Independent was a newspaper issued in 1896 by the Independence Association, whose members include Seo Jae-Pil. The first and second pages of this newspaper were in Korean, while the third and fourth in English. Nam-Gung Eok was the editor of the English edition, which reported on Korean political situations, customs and culture. YMCA, established in 1903 in Seoul, particularly contributed to English education in Korea. Initially called Hwang-Seong Young Men's Christian Association, it set up a secondary education department and taught foreign languages including English, German, Chinese and Esperanto (Moon, 1976, p. 643).

Literary works written in different languages were also translated into Korean. Gale translated *The Pilgrim Progress* by J. Bunyan, which was published under the title of *Cheon-Ro Yeok-Jeong* in 1895. Pak Eun-Sik translated F. Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* and titled it *William Tell* in Korean. Hong Myeong-Hee translated *Les Misérables* by V. Hugo under the title of *Neo Cham Bul Ssang Ta*. These translated literatures were published in newspapers as novels and also played in theaters (Kim, J. 1972, pp. 373-374).

Ⅲ. Foreign language education during Japanese Occupation (1910-1945)

1. First Period (1911-1921)

Japanese Annexation of Korea introduced changes to the education sector in Korea. During this period, Chosun Education Decree was issued four times, while institutions for general education, teachers' and vocational (farming, commerce and industry) education, professional (law, medicine, engineering, agriculture, and business) education, university education were reorganized.

The Japanese Governor-General of Korea controlled the establishment of schools and contents of education by enacting the first Chosun Education Decree (1911-1921). In the early stage, schools higher than primary and middle schools used textbooks compiled by the Governor-General as well as other books approved by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in Japan. Seodang, a traditional village school of Chosun, was regulated, while elementary schools (equivalent to primary schools) were established. Elementary high schools were built in large cities including Seoul. In 1911, the school system was determined. Under the new school system, there were three to four years of elementary school, four years of elementary high school, three years of girls' elementary high school, teachers' school (one year after elementary high school), vocational school (two to three years after graduating from elementary school) and colleges (three to four years after graduating from elementary high school). Teachers' school trained educators and taught English. In the early stage, tertiary educational facilities such as universities were not present. As the emphasis was on vocational education, elementary high schools taught subjects such as agriculture and commerce. Foreign language schools were abolished, and the number of private schools dwindled. The number of private schools, which reached approximately 3,000 in 1908, decreased to about 690 in 1919.

The contents of education were also revised. Around 1920, a foreign language became a compulsory subject in elementary high schools. They could choose among English, German and French. Girls' elementary high school offered foreign languages as an elective subject. The schools had a choice of English or French.

Colleges were in operation prior to Japanese Annexation of Korea. Bo-Seong College was established in 1905, and the college department of Sung-Sil Middle school started in 1907 in Pyeong-Yang, which became Sung-Sil College later. In 1910, Ewha Hak-Dang established a college department, while Yeon-Hee College was built in 1915. Gyeong-Seong College was established in 1916, and Su-Won Agricultural College in 1918. Developed from Je Jung Won, Severance Medical School (1913) was established

in 1916. American nationals taught English classes in the college department of Ewha Hak-Dang and Yeon-Hee College. As many foreigners attended chapel, the lecture there was conducted in English.

The subjects offered in normal high schools were moral education, Japanese, Korean, Chinese characters, history, geography, mathematics, science, vocational studies, law, economics, penmanship, reading, handicraft, music, gymnastics and English, which was an elective subject offered two hours per week. English teachers were Korean or Japanese nationals. The English course contents were spelling, pronunciation practice, penmanship, interpretation, writing, speaking and grammar.

2. Second Period (1922-1937)

The New Education Degree in 1922 (the second Chosun Education Decree 1922-1937) increased the years in elementary school from four to six. The emphasis was on vocational studies. The years in elementary high schools extended from four to five, while those in girls' elementary high schools from three or four to five. The years in teachers' college extended to six. Koreans also had an opportunity to receive university education. The first university, Gyeong Seong Imperial University, was established in 1924 and assigned approximately one third of the total roll to Koreans.

In accordance to the New Education Decree, foreign languages were compulsory subjects in elementary high schools. Schools had a choice of English, German, French and Chinese and offered the course five to six hours per week. Girls' elementary high school chose between English and French, which were taught five to six hours a week. Most schools selected English, but Gyeong-Dong Middle and High School, formerly known as Wuk-Gu Middle School, chose German.

Private colleges put emphasis on English Education. Ewha Women's College called its liberal arts department as English department, where missionaries taught the subject (Moon, 1976, p. 648). The course contents included reading, English literature, play, English composition, grammar, writing, new literature, speaking and translation. Students in the graduating class put an English play on the stage every year, learned to type in English and publish English newspaper. Yeon-Hee College included English as a subject in the entrance exam in 1930. An English newspaper, Yeon-Hee Times, issued its first number in 1935, and the English speech contest was held among its students.

3. Third Period (1938-1943)

The third Chosun Education Decree (1938-1943) changed the school system into primary school, middle school, high school, college and university. Even in this period, German, French and Chinese were included in colleges and universities as an elective subject. Compared to French, German was exceptionally popular in the fields of science and medicine. A reason behind such popularity was that after the Meiji Restoration (1868-1911), Japan adopted German culture and arts during the enlightenment period. In 1938, students at the department of law in Gyeong-Seong Imperial University were required to study German as the first foreign language. The other departments within the school of arts selected English as the first foreign language. The department of engineering also adopted English as the first foreign language, whereas the department of medicine chose German. In those days, learning German was mandatory to study law or medicine. Because this trend continued on, German was a popular subject for students in the department of law or medicine even after Korea's independence from Japan. The university taught grammar, reading, writing and speaking for the first foreign language, and reading and speaking for the second foreign language. Foreign lecturers in charge of speaking in Gyeong-Seong Imperial University at the time were Breis for English, Hupper for German and Martel for French.

The school of arts in Yeon-Hee College in 1940 offered English, German and French classes. More than nine hours per week were assigned to English classes. Students could choose between German and French as the second foreign language (three hours per week). In the school of commerce, Chinese (two hours per week) as well as English (seven hours per week) were compulsory subjects. German was an elective course, assigned two hours a week for two semesters. In the school of science, English, German and Chinese were compulsory courses, and the number of classes assigned to German classes was higher than English. While two hours per week for four years were assigned to German classes, English classes were held two to three hours per week for three years. Chinese classes were held one to two hours per week for three years. The school of science put emphasis on Japanese education. Other than the language classes, Japanese history and Japanese studies were compulsory subjects. The curriculum of the Severance Medical School in 1940 shows that English, German and Chinese were offered as the foreign language courses. The first year students attended German and English classes two hours a week, while the third and fourth year students took Chinese classes one hour a week. The scope of English classes was broad as students read the original English books and studied phonetics; however, the hours and contents of the other language classes were not as significant as those of the English.

As the Second World War broke out in Europe in 1939, Japan declared war on the

U.S. and U.K. The subjects offered in middle schools in the 1940s were moral education, the national language, Chinese characters, history, geography, foreign language, mathematics, science, vocational studies, reading and gymnastics. One language among Chinese, German, French and English could be chosen as the foreign language. During this time, Japan implemented a policy to obliterate Korean language and oppress the media. As a part of the anti-U.S. and U.K. policy, studying in or travelling to those countries were prohibited, while the importation of Western books were tightly controlled. Foreign missionaries who contributed to English education both directly and indirectly were expelled. Underwood, who managed Yeon-Hee College, left Korea in 1942, and Martel, a French teacher, in 1943. As Japan controlled and monitored Christian schools, in 1941 English education was abolished in Ewha Women's College, and lecturers who studied in Western countries but did not speak Japanese were fired. In the same year, English teachers were faced with an ordeal as American and English staff were fired from Yeon-Hee College. Even in Japan, English was declared as the language of the enemy in 1941. Such decision had a ripple effect on Korea, negatively affecting English education in the country.

4. Fourth Period (1943-1945)

In October 1943, the Education Decree was revised once again. However, education could not continue on as in the normal state, because Japanese students in the School of Arts in all the universities and colleges discontinued studying in December. Moreover, Korean students were also called to the army in January 1944. Japan capitulated in 1945.

IV. Foreign language education after the establishment of the Republic of Korea

1. Middle and high school

Korea was emancipated from Japanese occupation in 1945. In 1948, the country was divided into North and South, which respectively formed their government. The Korean War that broke out in 1950 and ended in 1953 continued the separation between North and South. In South Korea, the Education Act in 1949 established the school system currently in place, which consists of six years of primary school, three years of middle school, three years of high school, and four years of university.

Middle schools started offering foreign language classes in 1948. Theoretically, schools could select one language among English, German, French and Chinese;

however, most schools chose English in practice. English became the first foreign language in 1963. Since 1974, every middle and high school has been regulated to offer English as a mandatory subject, taught four to five hours per week.

English has been taught from the third grade of primary school since 1997. As primary school included English in its curriculum, kindergartens also started teaching the language. Various learning materials for kids that include supplementary materials, audios and videos have been on sale as a result. Although early-childhood foreign language education is gaining popularity globally, it is particularly widespread in Korea, overshadowing other foreign languages. Such trend is intensifying as the usage of internet increases.

In the 1960s, high schools offered German, French and Chinese as a second foreign language. In 1968, second foreign language also became a compulsory subject. In academic high schools, most male students learned German, while female students studied French. Such division was for administrative convenience. Most vocational high schools offered Chinese.

Because of political, social and economic development, the interest in foreign languages rose in the 1970s and 80s. In 1969, Spanish was added as a second foreign language in high schools, followed by Japanese in 1973, Russian in 1995 and Arabic in 2002. In 2012 Vietnamese was added to the high school curriculum. Russian and Spanish are not widely chosen, whereas Japanese is because students find the language structure and culture easier to understand. Most high schools offer only two among all the languages mentioned above, and students choose between the two. Due to economic and administrative reasons, most schools are unable to offer every language their students wish to learn. Since 2001, middle schools have also been offering second foreign language courses. Schools can choose one subject among computer, environment, Chinese characters and foreign language. Most schools select computer.

The following is the number of high school students learning second foreign languages (2012):

TABLE 1

The number of high school students learning second foreign languages (2012)

German	6,524
French	8,136
Spanish	2,760
Chinese	96,143
Japanese	173,373
Russian	257
Arabic	12

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Education (2012)

The Ministry of Education examines the course contents and textbooks of middle and high schools. A team of professors and teachers write foreign language textbooks for high school, which need approval from the Ministry. Whereas textbooks till the 1980s focused on grammar and practices, currently they intend to decrease the share of grammar and present diverse conversational situation by including interesting conversation, songs, pictures and photographs. The teaching methods still center on learning grammar and translating texts, whereas listening and speaking practices do not receive proper attention.

In the 1990s, foreign language high schools such as Daeil, Daewon, Hanyoung and Ewha Foreign Language High Schools were established where students could study foreign languages intensively and have opportunities to practice them with native speakers. Students in foreign language high schools must learn three languages including English, a compulsory subject. The hours assigned to foreign language classes are longer than other academic high schools.

There are several problems with the current second foreign language education in regular academic high schools. First, the number of classes continues to decrease. Students are unwilling to learn second foreign languages and they are only interested in the subjects covered by the university entrance exam. Due to inconsistent education policy, second foreign languages are not recognized as a proper subject in the university entrance exam. Theoretically, the objective of foreign language classes is to enhance communication skills, but it seems unattainable. On average, only two hours a week for two to four semesters are assigned to second foreign language classes. Despite the introduction of audio and visual aids, and language laboratories, the learning methods still emphasize grammar and translation of text. Moreover, students hardly have an opportunity to use the languages they learned in real life. English classes do offer listening practices on the other hand. Even in the university entrance exam, students receive assessments for their English listening skills.

2. University

Foreign language (English, German, French and Chinese) education in university began in 1946 when the department of language was established in the School of Arts and Science in Seoul National University. As Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (HUFS) is established in 1954, English, German, French, Chinese, Russian and Spanish education commenced. The department of Japanese language was not established until 1961 because of political reasons. HUFS also operated the departments of Italian, Arabic,

Portuguese, Thai and Vietnamese. In the 1970s, it started offering Dutch, Indonesian, Turkish, Swedish and Iranian courses. In the 1980s, the university established Hindi, Polish, Romanian, Czech, Hungarian, Yugoslavian and Swahili courses. Other universities also established the department of foreign languages in the 1970s and 80s, but most only offered English, German, French, Chinese, Japanese, Spanish and Russian. As of 2015, the department of linguistics in Seoul National University offer Italian, Manchurian, Turkish, Mongolian, Greek, Latin, Sanskrit and Pali. The following is the number of university students for foreign languages (2014).

TABLE 2

The number of university students for foreign languages (2014)

	English	German	French	Spanish	Japanese	Chinese	Russian
Number of students	7222	1188	1169	510	3006	3844	643

(Source: Statistical Yearbook of Education 2014)

In university, students are able to learn foreign languages as general studies, a major or a minor. The objective and contents of foreign language classes in university are not specified and vary across universities. Students often apply to a department of foreign language as a means of entering into a certain university, without having any clear objectives. Most students choose to do a double major or minor. Classes are mostly centered on lecturers and conducted in Korean. Specialized text in foreign languages and Korean textbooks are used as teaching materials. In general, lectures emphasize interpreting and translating texts. Because a large number of students are unable to communicate in foreign languages even after graduating from university, they often opt to study languages abroad. Popular destinations for language studies are English speaking countries.

Currently, foreign languages other than English are facing difficulty, because the society only requires knowledge on English. The bar exam, entrance exams for Master's and PhD, and employment assessments for the media industry and corporate do not require second foreign language skills. Even foreign companies whose headquarters are in non-English speaking countries require the applicants to present only TOEIC and TOEFL scores. Desires for migration and finding a job in multinational companies have also been fuelling demand for English education.

Even within university, many factors unfavorable to second foreign language education are present. The policy of the Ministry of Education intending to combine departments that have similar course contents has a fatal impact on the department of second foreign languages. If each foreign language does not have its own department,

students will no longer need to take a second foreign language course. Students choose only those courses that will help their future career (such as English, among all the foreign languages). The policy of allowing a double major, and reducing the required credits for a double major (currently 130 credits during eight semesters) also have negative effects on foreign language education.

Foreign language education in university should do more than merely providing contents for learning the language. For instance, the department of German language may offer course contents that can be linked to music, law and philosophy and/or establish an inter-departmental system (e.g. politics, economics and culture of Germany) so that students can better prepare for their future career and broaden their horizons. Therefore, the course contents of the department of languages and literature should be revised and reorganized. Teaching staff should also develop teaching contents and methods corresponding to the revision and reorganization efforts.

V. Conclusion

In any period of Korean history, schools or institutions have played a central role in foreign language education. The Political Gap-o Reform in 1894 reorganized the education system, establishing Hanseong Foreign Language School, which intends to train students as interpreters and translators. Within the Foreign Language School, English school, French school, Russian school, Chinese school, German school and Japanese school were independently run and provided education for corresponding languages. Currently, universities offer courses on various languages. Courses on not only Asian and European languages but also African, Sanskrit, Latin and other classical Western languages are available. In the past, foreign language education was necessary as a medium for political, social and cultural interaction with other countries. Nowadays, learning the language itself has become the aim of foreign language education. In addition, the notion of foreign language has been extended. The opportunity to learn foreign languages is almost unlimited in Korea.

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Received on August 31, 2015
Reviewed on December 11, 2015
Revised version received on December 20, 2015
Accepted on December 24, 2015