



Introduction to the Special Review on Korean Studies Research and Pedagogy in Southeast Asia

Korean society began to feel the pressing influence of internationalization in the mid-1990s. By the mid-2000s, it has experienced a rapid transformation into a multicultural society. Alongside the domestic changes in Korea, the country began to attract attention overseas as the Korean Wave began to spread in earnest. With these contemporaneous events, a rise in interest in Korean studies at home and abroad has become palpable. Domestically, Korean language education was extended to migrant workers and members of multicultural families for their adaptation to Korean society; while overseas, with the spread of the Korean Wave, there has been an escalation in the study of the Korean language and the number of Korean studies majors in overseas universities.

Traditionally, Korean studies have been offered as a field of overseas area studies in some advanced countries. This kind of Korean studies was promoted using the national policy of the country for the purpose of colonial rule or geopolitical needs. In countries where many overseas Koreans stay, Korean studies was utilized to support the host country's national policy for the integration of ethnic minorities. However, today, overseas Korean studies is rooted in the world's curiosity about Korea's miraculous economic development, its expansion of practical opportunities due to its economy's global expansion, and cultural attraction brought by the spread of Korean pop culture, known as the Korean Wave.

Conceptualization of Korean Studies

There are various opinions on the definition of Korean studies. Generally, it can be divided into two: first is the "national studies" that recognize Korea as an academic object from a subjective point of view by Koreans and second is "Korean studies" that make Korea an academic object from a third party's point of view at home or abroad (Chun 2010, 321).

According to spatial classification, Korean studies could be divided into “domestic Korean studies” whose scholars study in Korea, and “overseas Korean studies” whose scholars are educated in foreign countries (Kwak 2012, 212). Overseas Korean studies are also defined separately by region, subject, and object. Kim (2006, 229) defines overseas Korean studies as “the study of Korea as a research topic by foreigners, and the study of Korea by Koreans from a comparative perspective with the Korean studies done by foreigners.” Meanwhile, Lee (2006) views overseas Korean studies as a study on Korea in a broad sense conducted in foreign countries, and Cho (2002, 176) sees it as “a holistic study to reveal the identity of Korea and Korean culture.” Taken together, overseas Korean studies can be seen as studying Korea as an academic object from an external perspective. Domestic and overseas Korean studies can be perceived as two routes that approach the same object from different directions. Both approaches have strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, it is necessary to try an integrated approach through exchange and communication between these two perspectives.

In the universal classification system of academic disciplines, Korean studies are naturally part of area studies (Chun 2010, 327). Area studies of a certain region or county may develop by increasing practical necessity and academic demands. In other words, it is only when the needs for the knowledge on a specific area increase, that a develop in academic demands and institutional devices are made (Kwak 2012, 212). In this respect, it can be said that overseas Korean studies have developed according to the different purposes and backgrounds that a region or country had in a certain historical period.

History and Scope of Overseas Korean Studies

Overseas Korean studies have been initiated by some scholars to address the pursuit of imperialistic objectives or missionary purposes from the early 19th century in Europe; such as the case in Britain, France, and Russia. Upon such background, we could estimate that the understanding of Korea abroad reached a certain level in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Kwak 2012, 212).

Meanwhile, the beginning of Korean studies education abroad beyond the prior research activities dates to the late 19th century. Surprisingly, overseas Korean studies education began in 1897 when the first Korean studies course

was opened at St. Petersburg University in Russia. Early on, Imperial Russia was interested in Korea that was located at the eastern end of its country from a geopolitical point of view. The Russian government set up a team of experts to investigate and study Korea. Based on the study, they published a vast book called *Hankukji (Korean Encyclopedia)* in 1900, which covered Korea’s politics, economy, society, geography, and history. Under the background of this study, it is known that Korean studies courses were first opened at the University of St. Petersburg (KOFICE¹).

During the Japanese colonial period, overseas Korean studies were conducted in depth by Japanese scholars for the purpose of colonial management and expansion. Japan is known to have accumulated various and extensive data and conducted in-depth research not only on Korea but also on East Asia at the time. The end of World War II in 1945 and the liberation of Korea provided a new environment for overseas Korean studies.

The division of the Korean peninsula after World War II and the advancement of the Cold War attracted interest in Korea in terms of geopolitics because Korea was at the forefront of ideological disputes. Interest in Korean studies was high in the United States, which was the leader of the liberal camp during this period and closely connected to Korea (Jang 2021, 188). It was also a period that the center of overseas area studies moved from Europe to the United States, and the United States greatly revitalized overseas area studies by investing enormous financial support from the government under the grand plan for global management.

The historical trend of Korean studies courses being offered abroad revealed that limited subjects were opened in some limited countries from the 1940s to the 1970s. However, the opening of Korean studies courses began to increase rapidly in the 1980s and showed a nine-fold growth for about 20 years until the 1990s. According to the database of the Korea Foundation (KF), there are 1,395 overseas universities in 107 countries where Korean studies courses are offered, and they are still steadily expanding (KOFICE).

Furthermore, much progress has been made in terms of the quality of Korean studies courses. 101 universities in 39 countries have been awarded master’s and doctorate degrees. This is evidence that many qualitative changes

1. The source is accessible at <http://kofice.or.kr/>.

were made compared to the past when only Korean language classes as a second foreign language were offered.

The degree courses installed in each higher education institution around the world show the sustainability of Korean studies in that it has a system of training education and research personnel of their own. Universities that previously could not find teachers and textbooks to teach Korean studies are now establishing their own curriculum and operating majors according to local characteristics.

Among the reasons for the rapid growth of overseas Korean studies are due to the following: the remarkable growth of the Korean economy, the systematic support of the Korean government, and the spread of the Korean Wave. Beyond the geopolitical interest of the Cold War era, the rapid growth of the Korean economy was enough to draw global attention. This interest led to research in the overall aspects of Korea, contributing greatly to the promotion of overseas Korean studies. The successful hosting of the 1988 Seoul Olympics also served as an opportunity to promote Korea's status to the world. Since then, the practical value of Korean studies has increased due to the full-fledged overseas expansion of Korean companies, which has led to the expansion of Korean language education and Korean studies courses.

Institutional support from the Korean government also played an important role in the rapid development of overseas Korean studies. As international demands for Korean language education and Korean studies expanded, the Korean Ministry of Education recognized Korean language education as an independent area in the academic classification system of Korea in 2002. In addition, since 2004, the Korean Language Academic Yearbook and the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF-K) have classified Korean language education as an independent academic field. After that, many universities in Korea established Korean language education departments, and graduate schools established Korean studies or Korean language education majors (Chun 2010, 328).

In addition, the Korean government has begun to carry out projects related to promote overseas Korean studies. During this period, the NRF-K and the KF began to systematically support research projects in the field of Korean studies (Kwak 2012, 220).

Furthermore, the Graduate School of Korean Studies was opened in 1980 by the Academy of Korean Studies and developed into a central institution for

the advancement and dissemination of Korean studies.

The popular spread of overseas Korean studies can be seen as largely due to the Korean Wave, which has been in full swing since the mid-2000s. The global consumption of Korean cultural contents such as dramas, movies, and popular music led to increased interest about Korean language and Korean studies. Now, people from all over the world are finding and enjoying Korean culture on their own. Young people in each country often study Korean language and major in Korean studies led by their own motivation to enjoy Korean culture, and not for practical purposes such as admission for study in Korea or employment in Korean companies (Lee 2020).

Along with this trend, there are evidence that show the bright future of Korean studies. As of 2019, the number of foreign students attending universities in Korea is 65,000, of which 23,000 are in the master's degree and more than 10,000 are in the doctoral degree. They could be expected to return to their home countries to educate and study Korean studies in various fields, which would serve as a virtuous cycle system for the continuous expansion of Korean studies. In addition, the King Sejong Institute (KSI), which was established with the aim of spreading Korean language and culture to the world, operates 172 institutes in 57 countries as of 2018. Globally, the number of students attending the KSI is 60,000, and the number of subscribers to the KSI's online platform is as high as 167,000. In 2018, the number of applicants for the Korean Language Proficiency Test (TOPIK) reached 155,000 in four tests (56th-59th) (KOFICE).

For the Development of Overseas Korean Studies

Efforts at various levels are required for the continuous development of overseas Korean studies. At first, it is important to lay the strong foundation for promoting Korean studies by expanding Korean language education abroad. It is also necessary to expand the scholarship grant for foreign students who are excellent in Korean language so that they can obtain degrees related to Korean studies in Korea.

As mentioned earlier, the spread of education and research in a specific region or a country is closely related to the expansion of economic opportunities opening for the people in that region or country. Considering these points, it is

strategically important to offer intensive investment in such region or country that have close connection to and active exchanges with Korea.

In the field of overseas Korean studies, Korean language is the most basic and important tool for getting involved in Korean studies. Some universities in China and Southeast Asia offer curricula that focus on teaching Korean language to students to get a job at a Korean company or use it practically after graduation. Some universities teach Korean language only, but about 40.8% of universities teach humanities and social science subjects together. In this regard, the primary goal of expanding the scope of Korean studies abroad should be starting from spreading Korean language education (Kwak 2012, 217; Chun 2010, 328).

For Korean studies to become an attractive area of study for foreigners, they must have sufficient exchange value. Chun (2010, 330-32) states that this exchange value is determined by several factors. First, it is a demographic factor. The number of people at home and abroad who are directly or indirectly related to Korean studies and the number of people overseas who are interested in Korean studies will determine the future fate of overseas Korean studies. The number of people engaged in or interested in Korean studies should exceed a certain level.

Second, it is necessary to form a cultural block that can be developed into a more advanced community culture by spreading, accepting, and converging Korean culture within it. The prospective cultural blocks are likely to be highly correlated with cultural similarities, and East Asia can be a good geographical target to form a cultural block.

Third, it is important to cultivate more internationalized researchers who can communicate with the world audiences on the topics of Korean studies. More specifically, to train Korean studies professionals who can teach and study about Korea with the global language such as English is an important mission to take.

Then, what should the Korean government do for the development of overseas Korean studies at the policy-level? Kwak suggests several of the following. First, it is necessary for foreign governments and their people to recognize Korea as a country of shared interests and as an important partner (2012, 227-29). If Korean studies are recognized as necessary to promote the interests of the host country, Korean studies are likely to develop.

Second, it is necessary to provide foreign universities with the institutional

level of support to be able to appoint at least one full-time faculty member to oversee Korean studies. The full-time faculty members could properly demonstrate their leadership to develop Korean studies in their home universities. Examples known for their pioneering leadership in the field of Korean studies abroad include Professor Lee Ok of Paris Diderot University-Paris 7 in France, Professor Son Ho-min of the University of Hawaii in the U.S., and Professor Robert Buswell of UCLA. It should be noted that through their leadership, Korean studies in the university has developed proactively.

Third, the Korean government's financial support for the overseas Korean studies should be more expanded and systematized. The financial support should be promoted not only to expand the material base but also to strengthen the position of overseas Korean scholars on the campus. This should allow overseas Korean scholars to expand opportunities to demand cooperation from their universities. As response to their efforts to attract external financial support for Korean studies, they could demand for the school's allocation of additional budget.

It is important not only to expand the quantitative scale of overseas Korean studies through institutional support but also to improve its quality as an academic field.

Lee (2020) proposes several ways to deepen and develop overseas Korean studies in the future. First, Korean studies can be annexed as a field of humanities that have a wide range of subjects. It is necessary to present certain standards for establishing a system of Korean studies according to the characteristics and needs of each region abroad. Like Lego blocks, it is necessary to have the flexibility to make Korean studies major courses suitable for each region and to be easily dismantled and reorganized in some cases. Overseas educational institutions centered on Korean language education will gradually move toward a process that includes other Korean studies courses. In preparation for this, various major courses in Korean studies should be developed and applied to seek future development.

Second, it is necessary to create more contents that people around the world can enjoy by adding imagination to Korean history and tradition. Such content can be produced for educational purposes, subject to research, or can be cultural contents for people around the world. Korea, which has a long history, has relatively little production despite having the capacity to produce content. Now, as the manpower pool of Korean cultural producers is expanding around

the world due to the boom in overseas Korean studies, it is expected to produce new Korean studies contents from various perspectives.

Third, it is necessary to expand overseas Korean studies education and research by using e-learning platforms. Despite the rapid increase in demand for Korean studies, access to it is still limited to a specific sector and areas such as urbanized young people living in the large cities. Using information and communication technology, Korean studies should reach out to the underprivileged people and underdeveloped areas.

Finally, overseas Korean studies should contribute to the promotion of the universal value of mankind. Through overseas Korean studies, Koreans can see themselves more accurately through the eyes of others, and the world can enjoy and reproduce various cultures unique to Korea. As such, the development of overseas Korean studies should contribute to the cultural development of the region as well as the continuous development of global culture.

Implication of the Development of Korean Studies in Southeast Asia

Overseas Korean studies have traditionally been divided into Japanese Korean studies, Western Korean studies including the United States, and socialist block's Korean studies including the former Soviet Union and China. Recently, Korean studies in Southeast Asia have attracted attention through the wide spread of the Korean Wave. It is also due to the expansion of economic relations along with cultural similarities that provide optimal conditions for promoting overseas Korean studies. This suggests that the Korean government needs to provide more intensive support at a policy level to promote Korean studies in the region.

Korea has close bilateral or multilateral relationships with countries in Southeast Asia in various dimensions. The importance of Korea-Southeast Asia relations can also be found through statistical figures. For Korea, ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) occupies the second place in trade, the second place in investment, the first place in construction export, the second place in labor exchange, the third place in the scale of the Korean Wave, and the first place in the number of Korean tourists to visit abroad (ASEAN-Korea Center 2020).

Recognizing this importance, the previous government led by Moon

Jae-In declared and promoted the New Southern Policy for the breakthrough development of bilateral relations. This deepening of bilateral relations should spread to the level of academic exchange and move toward deepening the depth of mutual understanding. To this end, efforts to promote Southeast Asian studies in Korea should be made, and the expansion of Korean studies in Southeast Asia should be further accelerated.

Several studies on the status and future tasks of Korean studies in Southeast Asia are being introduced (Ha 2006; Tan 2007; Ly 2007; Jeon and Park 2017). Along with the existing studies, the four papers presented in this special issue will be a good reference for examining the status of Korean studies in Southeast Asia. This special review introduces the four case studies for each country, including the Philippines, Brunei, Singapore, and Malaysia. Among them, the Philippine case discusses the possibility of establishing and developing overseas Korean studies from an institutional perspective. In addition, the two papers cover the cases of Brunei and Singapore by dealing with the issues of Korean language education. Especially the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on overseas Korean language education is examined, and various measures to overcome it are suggested. And the Malaysian scholar's paper introduces Korean culture interestingly from a comparative perspective with the regional countries, Thailand, and Indonesia.

The paper, "Sustaining Korean Studies: Challenges and Prospects in the Philippine Higher Education Institutions" by Aurea C. Javier, Ma. Kristina Carla S. Rico, Sarah Jane D. Lipura, and Oliver John C. Quintana, presents the cases of the two premier universities in the Philippines, University of the Philippines, and Ateneo de Manila University. It examines the recent status of Korean studies in the Philippines and suggests possible directions for future development.

Eum Sangran's paper, "Does an Online Flipped Classroom Support Students' Autonomy, Competence, and Relatedness to Maintenance their Motivation?—Korean as a Foreign Language Learners in Brunei," could be an important and meaningful study at this time of changing educational environment due to the Covid-19 pandemic and advances in technological development. It examines whether the flipped learning method of Korean language education is still effective even in the online classroom environment.

Park Mihi's paper, "Virtual Learning of L3 Korean in Singapore: Learner Attitudes and Perceived Proficiency of Bilinguals," discusses the role of

multilingualism in learning Korean as a third language under the unfamiliar virtual learning environments. This study provides an important implication on Korean language education under the current situation where the online education environment is rapidly expanding.

The paper, "Understanding South Korean and Southeast Asian Social Contextual Differences through Classical Theater" by Hanafi Hussin and Rohayati Paidi, allows us to understand cultural similarities and differences among Korea, Thailand, and Indonesia by comparing symbols in cultural contents. Specifically, this study introduces the concept of soft masculinity and investigates ideological, political, and social contexts applied to the three classical theater dramas in Korea, Thailand, and Indonesia.

This special review will be a good reference for examining the status of Korean studies in Southeast Asia and forecasting future directions. The studies provide some policy implication that support from various dimensions is required so that Korean studies in Southeast Asia, which has much potential, can be properly settled and deepened in the future. Specifically, countries in the early stages of Korean studies should be supported in a way that they can establish Korean language curriculum at the university level. And for countries that have already institutionalized Korean language and Korean studies education, more attention should be paid to supporting the training of Korean studies researchers and experts so that Korean studies can be deepened as an overseas area study.

In addition, although it is divided into individual ASEAN member countries, it is necessary to pay attention to forming mutual exchanges and networks on Korean studies within the framework of ASEAN community and the cooperation mechanism between Korea and ASEAN. In the end, overseas Korean studies experts in Southeast Asia and domestic Korean studies experts in Korea will be able to seek the deepening and development of Korean studies by interacting with each other in more sustainable institutional foundations.

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