

# Syllabus of Heritage Korean Language

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## Purpose

The purpose of this project is to create a mini-series of lessons to teach introductory Korean to heritage speakers.

## Audience

The target audience of these lessons is a heritage Korean speaking college student who has had no previous education in the Korean language. This miniseries is being designed for students who have spoken Korean in their house, with their family, thus implying an aptitude in conversational Korean. The ideal class will consist of students with a homogenous aptitude of Korean, thus allowing for students to be equally engaged and stimulated by all class activities.

The ideal class size would be 12 students. This will allow for group activities of 3 or 4 students, but will allow the class to be small enough so that each student can get individualized attention from the instructor.

## Project Goals

The goal is to have each student come away from the class with a better understanding of the Korean language and a better way of appropriately utilizing it. Though I do not expect that after these courses, any student will be able to be a fluent reader and writer, a goal is that their competency does increase and that they will be able to utilize the basic sentence structures of Korean in their reading and writing. It is very important to note that improvement in a student's skills is the focus of the miniseries and in no way does this miniseries plan on teaching students everything they need to know to be 100% proficient in the language.

For my lesson, it is important for the students to come away with a basic understanding of Korean grammar and language. Very literal situated learning<sup>1</sup> will be a very efficient way for me to convey knowledge and I will do that through an activity that requires the students to perform a skit. This will situate the work that they are doing while they are learning it.

In addition to that, since the students are tied to their success in the course by their heritage, this will allow them to engage more in their learning. Students can learn very well when they connect concepts that they learn with situations that exist in their life by allowing students the opportunity to see how they can immediately apply what they are learning (Strike & Posner, 1985). For this reason, teaching students grammar and language techniques that are commonly used by Korean students will help them retain the knowledge more effectively.

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<sup>1</sup> Situated Learning describes the type of learning that occurs when knowledge is taught within the context in which it will be used

Because the lessons revolve around class discussion and participation, it is essential that diversity does not hinder the experience of any student. Instructors of this class should be very cognizant of the aptitude of each student coming into the course and adjust the student break out groups accordingly. In addition, each student should be called upon an equal amount of time to ensure that everyone is learning.

## **Theoretical Research**

Heritage language maintenance is very important. Not only is it a tie to one's culture beyond 'American', it can also be the only way that a person can communicate with their relatives. However, there is a great threat to the preservation of heritage language in the decedents of immigrants because as the generations become further removed from their ancestors who immigrated to this country, the percentage of children who maintain their heritage language drastically decreases (Alba, Logan, Lutz, & Stults, 2002). Considering that language is a crucial part of one's culture, this loss of one's heritage language implies a loss of one's ability to fully embrace one's culture. Thus, Korean Heritage language learners have a different set of needs when it comes to their Korean education than second language learners.

Since Korean is not taught in most public educational systems and assimilationist ideologies often persuade Korean parents to pursue a monolingual education for their child, many heritage language children do not get any Korean education opportunities before college (Jeon, 2008). Even in the house, where heritage language can be promoted through its usage, some Korean families choose not to utilize Korean out of a misguided fear that pluralistic approach to language will impede the development of both languages. For many heritage speakers, this means that the need to assimilate and learn English to succeed in an American educational system has led to their inability to master the language of their ancestors. In other households, where a more pluralistic language ideology is dominant, parents recognize the value and the benefits of being bilingual. These parents often send their children to church based Korean school programs; however, these programs are only a few hours a week and have teachers who have limited training. Compared to the devotion to their English education that Korean students have, it is very difficult to maintain and learn this secondary language. In either of these language ideologies, it is very common that Korean heritage language speakers do not learn and maintain their language to a fluent level.

There are several ways that Korean Americans become Korean heritage language learners, but I will argue that many become heritage learners because of their model minority status. As part of this status, Korean American students' attempts to assimilate into the "American" community are often limited by the perpetual foreigner stereotype. Despite the fact that Korean Americans may have been born in the United States and only speak English, the universal experience of Asian Americans where remarks like "Oh, you speak good English; where are you from...Not in America, what country are you from" are common, result in Korean Americans' perpetual foreigner status and the isolation that Korean Americans feel. This leads them to increase their personal interests in Korean culture and language and leads them to explore opportunities to learn Korean later on in life, like in college.

Since Korean heritage learners do not have any formal education in the language, their motivation and their home experience compels them to seek out further education in Korean, when they get to a college level. This does not mean that their college level acquisition of Korean language is easier, because although they do have a level of competency in the language, they are also hindered by the years that they have been utilizing the language without having any proper guidance. One example of this is grammar, an area in which many heritage language learners struggle.

Another example of a troublesome task for heritage speakers is Korean's language formality system. Korean has a very intricate system of formality, with multiple elevation levels in which sentence structure and verb conjugation is varied depending on the relationship of the people participating in the conversation. For heritage speakers, who have never been formally taught the subtle differences in the honorifics, it is very easy to make incorrect choices (Lee & Shin, 2008). This is exasperated by the fact that spoken Korean is less strict than written Korean.

A final subject difficult for heritage speakers is word order. Korean has a good deal of word order freedom because "each constituent in a sentence are marked by postpositional case markers/particles" which allow Koreans to understand how each word should be used in each sentence (Lee & Shin, 2008). This proves to be a difficult task for heritage learners, who are exposed to a significantly smaller degree of their heritage language at home than a monolingual person (O'Grady, Lee, & Lee, 2011). Heritage language learners are not typically taught the subtle postpositional cases and are exposed to a smaller variety of sentence structures, making them more likely to make grammatical mistakes in this area.

## Practical Research

From my experience attending a traditional introductory Korean as a second language course in college, I have realized that the course was structured equally around learning elementary words, implementing basic grammar and utilizing the alphabet to read and write the words and grammar points.

There are many institutions around the country that have acknowledged the differences in which Korean heritage learners learn Korean and their second language learner counterparts. For that reason, these institutions have created heritage learner courses that I have been reading over. At the University of California, San Diego, their introductory Korean course for heritage speakers covers short stories, dating and marriages, Korean television shows, periodicals, and poetry (Kim, 2010). This clearly exemplifies the modern take on heritage learning that I hope to embrace. In these programs, popular culture is leveraged to both entice student interest and to promote practical applications of the lessons.

## Key Focus Areas

Especially when I approach my audience, the research is clear that I will need to address a few simple facts:

- 1) A lot of material meant for introductory courses target a younger audience and are less engaging to the college heritage speaker,

- 2) Heritage speakers already speak a limited amount of Korean; however they often have bad habits that require some attention. These habits could include retained improper pronunciation of words or
- 3) Heritage speakers want to learn the language because they consider it to be a part of their identity; they are highly motivated<sup>2</sup>
- 4) Providing assessment is very important to these students. As explained in my theoretical research, one of the reasons why community run Korean schools are unsuccessful is because students have no metric to gauge their success nor do they have any rewards for being successful. For that reason, providing grades and explanations on how to achieve these grades will help students to be motivated to retain their lessons.

## Lessons

This miniseries will contain three lessons that will go through a variety of different topics

### Lesson One - Introductions

1. Introductions (instructor and student)
2. Reviewing the alphabet
3. Resyllabification
4. Words
5. Elevation
6. Practical Use

### Lesson Two – At School

1. Review
2. Introduction
3. Verb conjugation
4. School/College terms
5. Translation practice
6. Listening practice

### Lesson Three – In the Media

1. Review
2. Postpositional Cases
3. Song examples
4. Literature

## Assignments

In each of the lessons, there are short homework assignments that are assigned. Although they are not part of the grade in any of the lessons, a separate category in the students overall grade will reflect their homework. All the assignments are written passages and will be graded for accuracy. Points will be deducted for:

2 pt – Improper use of grammatical structure learned that day

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<sup>2</sup> It is also very possible that students will want to take this course to get an easy A, however, we will be not be addressing those students at this time. I may revisit this idea before the end of the semester.

1 pt – Incorrect spelling of a word learned that day

1/2 pt – Incorrect translation of a word

5 pt – Missing any element requested

These homework assignments will be graded on a 25 point scale.

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