Research Trends in Korean Language Education for Learners from Multicultural Families

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Research on Korean language education for learners with multicultural backgrounds has been actively conducted since 2006 along with an expansion of research areas, as the demand for Korean language education in our soon-to-be multicultural society began to be discussed in earnest. This paper identifies these recent research trends in Korean language education for multicultural-background learners, including married immigrant women, children from multicultural families, migrant workers, and North Korean defectors. A total of 174 research papers published over the past five years (January 2014–December 2018) were analyzed, including academic journal articles and doctoral dissertations on Korean language education and multicultural studies.

The research areas of those previous studies were then classified into three categories: 'current status and policy', 'language acquisition', and 'language education'. The first category 'current status and policy' consists of studies that analyzed: a) the current status of Korean language education for multicultural-background learners, b) Korean language policies, and c) the history of Korean language education. The second category of 'language acquisition' includes studies of contrastive analysis, error analysis, and interlanguage research, which investigate Korean language learners' systematic language development in their target language. Last, 'language education' comprises studies on pedagogy, learning strategies, classroom materials, and the teaching and learning of grammar and vocabulary that constitute language knowledge.

According to the results of our meta-analysis, research on Korean language education for learners from multicultural families has mainly focused on curricula, teaching syllabi, teaching techniques, and student and teacher factors. It is interesting how new media such as robots and social networks have been used to improve curriculum development and teaching. In contrast, there was a lack of studies that analyzed multicultural-background learners' language use and pedagogical development, based on previous language acquisition studies. We suggest that more studies on language acquisition should be actively conducted as they lay the foundation for the development of learning materials and teaching methods. Furthermore, studies that are currently divided by learner groups and linguistic strata such as morphology, syntax, and discourse, need to be expanded in order to address the correlation between different study results, learners' language use in interaction, and the language use of bilingual learners.

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1. Introduction

Research on Korean language education for learners with multicultural backgrounds has been actively conducted as the increasing demand for Korean language education in our multicultural society began to be discussed in earnest.

This paper groups married immigrant women, children from multicultural families, migrant workers, and North Korean defectors, considering them all "multicultural-background learners", and identifies the recent research trends targeting these groups. The studies reviewed in this paper are also categorized into three types in a meta-analysis: 'current status and policy', 'language acquisition research' and 'language education research'. There are three general topics which have shaped the field of language acquisition research: interlanguage studies, contrast analysis between learners' mother tongue and target language, and analysis of errors occurring in second language learning. The language education research consists of studies on pedagogical issues and strategies for learning grammar, vocabulary, discourse, and pragmatics of the Korean language. It also encompasses studies on curricula, syllabi, textbook analysis, and textbook development.

Based on the results of a meta-analysis, this paper aims to address the research achievements and limitations of previous studies and to suggest possible improvements that can be made in Korean language classrooms and Korean language education policy.

2. Review of previous studies

With the accumulation of research papers on multicultural-background learners, there have been many efforts to evaluate previous literature. Previous studies have usually been categorized by research topic and sorted into the categories of pedagogy, curriculum, and education policy. In some previous studies, e.g., Sim (2014), the term 'multicultural-background learners' has been expanded to embrace international marriage families, migrant workers, and North Korean defectors. However, the focus of most studies has been fixated on married immigrant women or children from multicultural families. Many

previous studies have also discussed the development of new education programs, the use of qualitative research methods, learners with more diversified linguistic backgrounds, and applications of the study results in classrooms (Kang 2015). Among these studies, however, only a few have looked at the process of Korean language acquisition for multicultural-background learners. As a result, there has been a lack of discussion about curriculum development based on the characteristics of learners' interlanguage and actual language use in their daily interactions with Korean native speakers. In response, this paper aims to review the previous studies in detail in order to identify recent research trends in Korean language education for multicultural-background learners and to underscore the need for an increase in both the quantity and quality of studies on multicultural-background learners' Korean language acquisition.

3. Methodology

This paper analyzes a total of 174 studies[3] including academic journal articles and doctoral dissertations[4] published in Korean language education over the past five years, from January 2014 to December 2018.

The research topics discussed in these previous studies were classified into three categories: 'current status and policy', 'language acquisition', and 'language education'. The research on current status and policy focuses on topics such as Korean language education practices for multicultural-background learners, current Korean language education policies, and research trends in Korean language education (see ① in Table 1). The language acquisition research includes studies of contrast analysis, error analysis, and interlanguage research, which investigates Korean language learners' systematic language development in their target language (②). Last, the language education research comprises studies on the teaching and learning of language knowledge (③), pedagogy (④), and classroom materials (⑤).

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[3] The keywords used with the search term 'Korean language' on the Research Information Service System (RISS) provided by the Korea Education and Research Information Service (KERIS) were 'multicultural', 'married immigrant', 'social integration', 'immigrated children', and 'North Korean defectors', in order. On overseas databases, 'multicultural' and 'Korean' were used together to search for relevant studies.

[4] Some previous studies have analyzed either academic journal articles (Won and Kim 2015, etc.) or dissertations (Kim, Y. 2017, etc.). This paper reviews both journal articles and doctoral dissertations published in the past five years including 2018.

Table 1   Categories of research topics

Category		Research Topic
Current status and policy	①	practices, policy, research trends
Language acquisition	②	contrast analysis, error analysis, interlanguage research
Language education	③	teaching and learning of grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, discourse and pragmatics
	④	curricula, syllabi, teaching techniques, student and teacher factors
	⑤	textbook analysis, textbook development, foundation studies[5]

4. Research trends in Korean language education for multicultural-background learners

4.1. Research subjects

An analysis of the research subjects examined in previous research indicates that the major research subject group has been children from multicultural families with just a few studies on North Korean defectors.

Table 2   Research subjects

	Academic journal article		Doctoral dissertation		Total	
Children from multicultural families	89	59%	10	45%	99	57%
Married immigrants	33	22%	6	27%	39	22%
North Korean defectors	6	4%	0	0%	6	3%
Migrant workers	1	1%	1	5%	2	1%
Other[6]	23	15%	5	23%	28	16%
Total	152	100%	22	100%	174	100%

4.2. Research topics

A review of the research topics revealed that most studies focused on curricula, syllabi, teaching techniques, and student and teacher factors (④). Following the topics listed in ④, other studies concentrated on practices, policy, and research trends (①), or textbook analysis, textbook development, and foundation studies (⑤).

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[5] Foundation studies refers to studies that reviewed existing textbooks and vocabulary lists in comparison to those used for other language education (Noh 2018; Kim 2016), or that discussed Korean honorific education (Choi 2018) or content-based Korean culture education (Oh 2017).

[6] The research papers that take a more holistic perspective in studying two or more subject groups are included here. Most of the studies in "Other" category studied children and married immigrants from multicultural families together. Other studies included diverse groups as their research subjects.

Table 3   Research topics

Research Topic		Academic journal article		Doctoral dissertation		Total	
Current status and policy	practices, policy, research trends	32	21%	6	27%	38	22%
Language acquisition	contrast analysis, error analysis, interlanguage research	13	9%	3	14%	16	9%
Language education	teaching and learning of grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, discourse and pragmatics	8	5%	0	0%	8	5%
	curricula, syllabi, teaching techniques and student and teacher factors	71	47%	11	50%	82	47%
	textbook analysis, textbook development and foundation studies	28	18%	2	9%	30	17%
Total		152	100%	22	100%	174	100%

4.3. Research trends for each topic

We subcategorized the research trends in Korean language education for multicultural-background learners as below; (1) Practices, policy and research trends, (2) contrast analysis, error analysis, interlanguage research, (3) teaching and learning of grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, discourse and pragmatics, (4) curricula, syllabi, teaching techniques and student and teacher factors and (5) textbook analysis, textbook development and foundation studies.

4.3.1. Practices, policy and research trends

The information about recent studies on practices, policy, and research trends is shown in Table 4.

Table 4   Research on practices, policy, and research trends

	Academic journal article		Doctoral dissertation		Total	
Practices	17	53%	4	67%	21	55%
Policy	8	25%	2	33%	10	26%
Research trends	7	22%	0	0%	7	18%
Total	32	100%	6	100%	38	100%

Many of these studies that focused on the practices of Korean language education targeting multicultural-background learners proposed suggestions for language institutions

and current Korean language education policy (Lee 2014).[7] In addition, studies have also looked at bilingual language education at home (Ho Thi Long An 2018; Kwon and Lee 2018) as well as school curricula and teaching and learning practices in the classroom (Lee and Kim 2018; Sohn 2017; Mo et al. 2015). The research papers dealing with language policy addressed the strengths and weaknesses of Korean language education policy by comparing it with that of other countries (Won 2014; Oh 2016; Lee et al. 2018). They also conducted a thorough analysis of government projects, such as the Social Integration Program, to discuss recommendations for rectifying current issues (Yoon and Lee 2018; Choi 2018).[8]

Other studies underscored that bilingual language education at home helps children of multicultural families cultivate self-esteem for their parent's cultural background and promote a positive attitude towards their personal relationships with friends and family (Shin 2010; Cho and Kim 2013). A survey showed that 78% of married immigrant women have not yet used their language as a medium for bilingual language education, despite reporting that many of them want to teach their children their first language (Seong and Han 2011). Despite the efforts of the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Gender Equality and Family,[9] not many schools are able to provide bilingual language education. Even if they do provide such programs, the lesson hours are too short, since there are not enough teachers or teaching materials including textbooks for bilingual language education. As a consequence, these under-resourced bilingual education programs have resulted in a lack of public understanding of immigrant cultures (Ho Thi Long An 2018).

In order to address this dilemma, some studies have analyzed previous research to suggest solutions[10] that could improve the quality of Korean language education for multicultural-background learners (Sim 2014; Won and Kim 2015; Kim, Y. 2017).

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[7] The suggestions made from Lee (2014: 258) are as follows; (1) developing a teacher training program to support teachers to build up their professional competence; (2) cultivating professional personnel qualified both in teaching Korean and curriculum education; (3) fostering a future-oriented leadership of school principals; and (4) conducting family literacy education programs to involve parents into school education and improve quality of life.

[8] Yoon and Lee (2018) pointed out the current issues regarding the Social Integration Program as below; (1) Korean language and culture education should continue from beginning to advanced level and the content of education should be specialized according to the learners' education level, (2) some policies in Social Integration Program focused on certain groups should be reexamined, and (3) the education should be specialized based on the learners' length and purpose of stay in Korea.

[9] The Korean government issued the 'Measures for Advancing Education for Multicultural-Background Learners' in 2012 (Lee and Kwon 2018). With the government's determination to reinforce bilingual language education, this captured the public's attention on the issue of the bilingual language education of multicultural families.

[10] The proposals made in the studies are as follows; a variety of research topics should be introduced in the fields of both Korean language education and KSL (Korean as Second Language)/KFL (Korean as Foreign Language) education for multicultural learners and the multiple research methods also should be introduced to improve validity and reliability of Korean language education (Sim, 2014). In order to establish theoretical foundation on multicultural education, future studies need to focus on content-based language teaching for middle and high school students apart from traditional interest on pedagogy and language education policy which includes language skills, grammar, vocabulary and culture (Kim, Y. 2017).

4.3.2. Contrast analysis, error analysis, interlanguage research

The studies shown in Table 5 were categorized as language acquisition research; these studies discussed the interlanguage characteristics found in the language use of multicultural-background learners, compared the different language usage of Korean language learners and native speakers, and addressed errors occurring in the learners' language learning process. The interlanguage of multicultural-background learners has been at the center of language acquisition research, and both research papers on error analysis and contrast analysis were frequently conducted during the period under investigation.

Table 5   Research on contrast analysis, error analysis, interlanguage research

	Academic journal article		Doctoral dissertation		Total	
Contrast analysis	3	23%	0	0%	3	19%
Error analysis	3	23%	0	0%	3	19%
Interlanguage research	7	54%	3	100%	10	63%
Total	13	100%	3	100%	16	100%

The topics of language acquisition research cover the acquisition of grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and discourse and pragmatics, with an emphasis on learners' acquisition process of the target language discourse and pragmatics. These papers mainly looked at the various speech act realizations of married migrant women and observed how their attitude toward using politeness changes when using the Korean language (Bang 2015; Hong 2016; Chung 2017). Other papers compare the different speech act realizations of North Korean defectors and South Korean native speakers (Jeon 2017; Lee et al. 2018; Yang 2018).[11] Choi (2015) specifically examined children's writing at the discourse level regarding grammar acquisition. Hwang (2015) and Ju (2018a) addressed various aspects of the types of errors that occurred in the usage of Korean postpositional particles and endings. Park (2014) and Ju (2018b, 2018c) investigated the interlanguage development of learners. Park (2014), in particular, found a positive correlation between married immigrant women's accurate use of Korean auxiliary predicates and their children's accurate use. When analyzing learners' writing, researchers also studied how the learners apply Korean grammar and vocabulary to be pragmatically appropriate at the discourse level (Kim 2015; Cho 2018). Kim (2018) studied Vietnamese learners' mispronunciation of Korean consonants.

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[11] Jeon (2017) and Yang (2018) investigated the differences between South Korean (SK) and North Korean (NKR) language use and concluded that NKR speakers preferred direct speech acts and expressions to indirect ones. Lee et al. (2018) argued that rejection strategies and certain expressions used only in North Korea could cause potential communication breakdowns between these two different groups.

The most popular subject of research has been students with multicultural backgrounds. Kim, Y. (2017) highlighted the need for more research on learner characteristics and the linguistic competence of multicultural students. She also argued that future research needs to expand its focus to include subjects who are multicultural students and immigrant children in middle school and high school, in order to further the ongoing discussion of elementary school students from multicultural families. Kim, Y. (2017) then argues that all the grammar, discourse structure, learning strategies, and vocabulary need to be addressed and studied for academic Korean language education and academic literacy.

While some studies report that the linguistic performance of children of married immigrant women is positively correlated to their mothers' Korean proficiency (Choi and Hwang 2009), more research on children's language use in interactions with their Korean native-speaker parents should be conducted. This research can be improved by looking at the interactions between Korean spouses and their immigrant partners.

4.3.3. The teaching and learning of grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and discourse and pragmatics

The studies in Table 6 include research papers on multicultural-background learners' knowledge of the Korean language. As shown in Table 6, very few papers have dealt with this topic and thus far none of them has studied learners' understanding of Korean discourse and pragmatics.

Table 6   Research on the teaching and learning of grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and discourse and pragmatics

	Academic journal article		Doctoral dissertation		Total	
Grammar	4	50%	0	0%	4	50%
Pronunciation	1	12%	0	0%	1	12%
Vocabulary	3	38%	0	0%	3	38%
Discourse and pragmatics	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	8	100%	0	0%	8	100%

Table 6 presents the studies that have investigated learners' linguistic knowledge on Korean. They have drawn various conclusions on conducting grammar classes (Park 2016), teaching the predicate structure of the Korean language (Lee and Jo 2014), the endings of a dialect used in Andong city (Kwon 2016), and complementizers of Korean noun phrases (Oh 2017). Three studies dealt with vocabulary education; these studies introduce vocabulary learning strategies for married immigrant women and North Korean defectors (Park 2018; Kang 2017; Shin and Kim 2014). It is noteworthy that the researchers carefully made their suggestions on the basis of their observations of the learners' language use, in order to help the learners overcome specific difficulties during their process of language acquisition. Park (2018) suggested that vocabulary education for multicultural students

should include instruction of words used in school newsletters. Kang (2017) examined several effective teaching methods using images on Google. Shin and Kim (2014) found that North Korean defectors struggle with foreign words in the Korean language and proposed a possible learning strategy employing long-term memory. For pronunciation education, Cho and Cho (2018) described how pronunciation and intonation education has been conducted in the classroom for multicultural-background learners. More research should be conducted, as many married immigrant women experience miscommunications daily, due to inaccurate pronunciation and/or unnatural intonation.

Even though the discussion of multicultural-background learners' acquisition of Korean discourse and pragmatics has actively progressed in the research field of language acquisition, it has barely been applied in classrooms.

4.3.4. Curricula, syllabi, teaching techniques, and student and teacher factors

As previously mentioned, many research papers have mainly focused on teaching techniques for Korean language education targeting multicultural-background learners. Discussion about the development of curricula, syllabi, and learner and teacher factors has also been advanced as shown in Table 7.

Table 7   Research on curricula, syllabi, teaching techniques, and student and teacher factors

	Academic journal article		Doctoral dissertation		Total	
Teaching techniques	22	31%	3	27%	25	30%
Curricula and syllabi	19	27%	2	18%	21	26%
Student factors	15	21%	4	36%	19	23%
Teacher factors	15	21%	2	18%	17	21%
Total	71	100%	11	100%	82	100%

The research papers regarding teaching techniques have actively discussed effective pedagogical approaches for the four types of language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Many of the papers illustrate the profound effects of the use of media, such as digital storytelling (Kim and Kim 2018), flipped learning (Hong 2015), robots (Kim and You 2015), and social network services (Tran Thi Chi 2018), which helped stimulate Korean language learning.

Many other studies aim to address possible improvements that can be undertaken to reform the curricula and syllabi used in Korean language education. They mainly focus on existing curricula and syllabi for second language learners of Korean and analyze how Korean language education for married immigrant women is being practiced in classrooms. In particular, Choi et al. (2018) conducted a needs analysis, which laid a foundation for designing and developing a real-time interactive virtual classroom offering Korean language education for married immigrants. Choi et al. (2018) also expanded their

discussion to applications of online sources in classroom. In contrast, Lee (2014) examined the ongoing practices of Korean language education for multicultural students in elementary, middle, and high schools. Lee then addressed the importance of teacher training sessions and family literacy education that includes both students and parents. The study also underlined the significant role of the school principal in training teachers and managing family literacy education.

The research on student factors investigated the learning motivations of children from multicultural families and married immigrant women, and examined variables affecting the learning process. Last, the research on teacher factors discussed the retraining of teachers and teacher management systems in terms of teachers' awareness of multiculturalism and competence for teaching multicultural-background students. These teacher factors were barely considered in the research field of Korean language education for multicultural-background learners before 2014. Since 2015, as researchers have started to recognize that the degree of teachers' understanding of multiculturalism has profound effects on multicultural-background learners' school lives (Tak et al. 2014), the research has finally begun to shed light on the significance of teachers' competence for working with students from multicultural families. Researchers therefore need to keep abreast of Korean society's efforts to integrate multicultural students through Korean language education by paying persistent attention to how these teacher factors play out in classrooms.

4.3.5. Textbook analysis, textbook development, foundation studies

As shown in Table 8, most of the studies on teaching materials have focused on textbooks. These studies mainly focused on textbook analysis by reviewing the textbooks currently used in Korean classes. However, they showed a lack of discussion about the development of new textbooks or foundation studies for specific groups of learners.

Table 8   Research on textbook analysis, textbook development, foundation study

	Academic journal article		Doctoral dissertation		Total	
Textbook analysis	20	69%	1	50%	21	68%
Textbook development	5	17%	1	50%	6	19%
Foundation studies	4	14%	0	0%	4	13%
Total	29	100%	2	100%	31	100%

The textbook analysis studies have predominantly analyzed two textbooks: 'Standard Korean' and 'Korean for Married Immigrant Women', which targeted the children of multicultural families and married immigrant women, respectively. Kim, J (2017) has pointed out that 'Korean for Married Immigrant Women' has portrayed married immigrant

women as vulnerable, because they are dependent on their Korean husbands, Korean acquaintances, or friends who are fluent in Korean.

The research on textbook development has suggested modifications based on the results of textbook analysis, which demonstrates the demand for new textbooks that deliver specific information about language knowledge and Korean culture.[12] For example, Shim and Cho (2017) discussed new textbook development for immigrant women, suggesting that textbooks need to embrace some of the potential stages of these women's lives after their immigration to Korea, such as giving birth to children, raising them, and enrolling them in school. Along the same lines, Suh (2015) suggested adding cooking recipes to a new textbook in response to the difficulties that married immigrant women may experience in the kitchen. In another approach, Bae (2017) proposes teaching Korean folk songs as an alternative way to promote the social engagement of children from multicultural families, since many folk songs were traditionally developed and used to express public discontent towards society.

The foundation studies have reviewed existing textbooks and vocabulary lists in comparison to other types of language education (Noh 2018; Kim 2016), while also covering the topics of Korean honorific education (Choi 2017) and content-based Korean culture education (Oh 2017).

5. Conclusion

Based on its review of academic journal articles and doctoral dissertation papers on Korean language education for multicultural-background learners published from 2014 to 2018, this paper has categorized the topics of previous studies into three types: current status and policy, language acquisition, and language education. Its meta-analysis shows that research trends have shaped a great number of studies on classroom practices, education policy, teaching techniques, and curricula and syllabi. However, there has been a lack of studies on the Korean language acquisition of multicultural-background learners. With this in mind, this paper has highlighted the fact that much research needs to be done on these learners' actual language use in their daily lives in order to further discussions of Korean language education and increase the relevance and effectiveness of the language education for these learners.

This lack of language acquisition research also hinders the development of classroom materials and discussions of pedagogical approaches. Given that multicultural-background learners must participate in more face-to-face interactions with Korean native speakers than

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[12] Shin (2013) discusses the use of Korean literature in the classroom as a measure to alleviate the difficulties faced by married immigrant women going through pregnancy in a foreign country and to promote their social engagement, deepening their understanding of Korean culture. A variety of classroom activities have also been introduced in Shim and Kim (2012) including writing a book report, participating in hands-on field trips, and creating a family newsletter.

other foreign language learners do, analyses must be expanded to examine learners' pronunciation and knowledge of Korean discourse and pragmatics from a language acquisition perspective in order to help them overcome the difficulties that they must face in their daily lives.

The language education studies have addressed some of the limitations of the textbooks designed by the government and argued that learners' characteristics and geographical backgrounds must be taken into account in textbook development. In response, there has been an effort to reflect multicultural-background learners' social, cultural, and geographical backgrounds in textbook development. In addition, more pedagogical approaches need to be discussed to embrace learners' characteristics and backgrounds in teaching. Some studies have been conducted on the use of various media platforms, such as social network services and robots, in Korean language education. These have gained traction, especially among educators of children from multicultural families at a younger age. Furthermore, the discussion of teachers' awareness of multiculturalism and competence to deal with multicultural students has deepened over the last four years, with the expanded Korean language education research area of creating a safe and positive classroom environment for multicultural background learners.

As mentioned above, however, there has been a scarcity of research on the Korean language acquisition of multicultural-background learners and a lack of analyses of their actual Korean language use in their daily interactions. Therefore, more studies need to pay closer attention to how these learners are acquiring the Korean language, so that the characteristics shown in the learners' interlanguage can be identified and applied in classroom teaching. These efforts will help improve the classroom experience of multicultural-background learners studying the Korean language classrooms with more effective pedagogy.

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