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【寄稿論文】

Moving Towards an Inclusive Classroom
in Korean as a Foreign Language Education:
A Qualitative, In-depth Interview Study

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Moving Towards an Inclusive Classroom in Korean as a Foreign Language Education: A Qualitative, In-depth Interview Study

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This paper analyses the study of Korean as a foreign language for students in Japan who have special learning needs. Interviews were conducted with three students who suffer from learning difficulties including orthostatic circulation disorder, dyslexia and neural damage. Face-to-face interviews were given to two students with special needs and a student supporter at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific (Beppu, Oita prefecture, Japan) University. The resulting learning barriers can be divided into two areas. The first is the learning difficulties for general classes not limited to Korean language classes. The second addresses the difficulties that arose specifically during Korean language classes. These interviews allow us to gain a better understanding of the students with special needs, as well as the considerations that are necessary from the academic support, in order to provide an inclusive and diverse education for both students with or without special needs.

1. Introduction

25 years have passed since the ‘Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy, and Practice in Special Needs Education and a Framework of Action’ was first adopted in 1994. A variety of educators from all over the world put together their experiences and expertise to pursue the goal of ‘Education for All’. What this resulted in was a gradual shift from the concept of integration to that of inclusive education. This shift addresses the dualistic concept for supporting students that need special consideration, and thus placing emphasis on the importance of Universal Design for Learning around the world.

Promising results can be seen in the field of foreign language education, especially in the field of second language acquisition and multi-cultural education. However, these results are limited to that of English related language education and research on other foreign languages are lacking. It is also vital to recognize the big difference between the study of a language as a native language subject compared to the study of

a language as a foreign language subject.

Thus, this paper will address the concept of inclusive education for Korean as a Foreign Language Education (KFL) in Japan. As mentioned above, this is different to the study of Korean as an official language in Korea. Instead, this paper focuses on classroom based KFL learning for students with special needs through the method of interviewing. The interviews aim to gain further understanding to what it is that these students really need and what is necessary in order to achieve an inclusive KFL class environment. It is important to note that this study took place in Japan and with students who are currently attending a Japanese University. As a result, there are some limitations from the Japanese education system itself. In addition, this study also included the interview with a student supporter. This study will touch upon possible improvements to the Universities' academic support, class curriculum and implementation, and finally the unique characteristics of KFL, while seeking to further our understanding on how to provide a more inclusive learning environment for KFL classes.

2. Methods

2.1 Students with Special Needs

This study originally took place with 3 students with special needs, however as one student took leave of absence, the interview took place with the student supporter who took notes for the student in need of special assistance instead.

Table 1. Interviewee and the learning difficulties

Interviewee	Gender	University Year	Learning Difficulties	Native Language	Korean Language Learning Experience(Hour)
Student A	M	4	Orthostatic circulation disorder	Japanese	250-300H
Student B	M	1	Dyslexia	English	30-40H
Student C	F	1	Nerval damage (Right arm)	Japanese	10-20H

Student A suffers from Orthostatic Circulation Disorder after suffering from a heat stroke in the second year of high-school. In the mornings, Student A has difficulty

getting up due to insufficient blood flow to the head from low blood pressure, followed by severe dizziness and nausea. These symptoms usually subside by the evening, but a lot of times the constant dizziness makes it difficult to concentrate in class. When these symptoms first started, it caused Student A to suffer from depressions and thus take half a year of absence from high school. Although the symptoms have improved by the time Student A entered university, there was an episode when student A went on a short term 5 weeks exchange to Seoul but was unable to return to Japan due to a sudden relapse.

Student B has dyslexia and needs extra time and effort for cognitive processes especially speaking and comprehension. Student B was in the UK from elementary school to high school with a Japanese mother and British father. From University onwards, Student A decided to study in Japan but felt disoriented due to the lack of academic support compared to back in the UK. By using a keyboard on a laptop, Student B is able to convey their own thoughts without trouble which would otherwise be extremely difficult when trying to write by hand in a traditional classroom environment. This learning barrier is present for Student B in all languages including his native language English, as well as his second language Japanese and Korean.

Student C suffered from a traffic accident which resulted in nerval damage in the arms and their inability to take notes. Student C also suffered from minor head injuries which resulted in frequent dizziness and inability to concentrate for long hours. Due to the symptoms worsening, Student C had to take a leave of absence and thus an interview could not take place. Instead, an interview took place with the student supporter who directly helped Student C take notes during Korean language classes. This student supporter is a native Korean speaker and it was their first experience as a note-taker.

2.2 Interview

In 2019, from October until the end of November, the individual interviews with Student A, Student B and Student C's student supporter took place. The interviews ranged from roughly 40 minutes to an hour and were all recorded. Interview questions include:

"What kind of symptoms do you have and since when?"

"What were the difficulties you encountered due to your disability when studying Korean as a foreign language?"

"Do you have any specific methods/strategies that you use to study Korean?"

"What kind of support do you wish you had and would like to receive in the future?"

As a direct interview with Student C could not take place, the pre-class interview between Student C, and an in-depth interview with the student supporter were referred to for this study.

2.3 Data Analysis

This interview uses the technique of hidden issue questioning and symbolic analysis. These techniques were implemented by asking the students to describe their preadolescent years until their current situation at University in chronological order in order to gain a deeper understanding of each individuals' experiences and troubles. Questions include:

"What would happen if you lose the academic support you are currently receiving?"

"What if it was Chinese class rather than Korean class?"

were asked in order understand and analyze what is the priority to the students.

3. Results

3.1 Lack of Professional Assessments

All three students are grateful for the availability of counselling sessions and the provision of a 'request for special consideration' by the University office to the respective teachers. There are however, discontent regarding the process leading to the determination on what kind of special considerations to provide, as well as how these decisions are made by staff who are not professional in the field. On top of that, the assigned university staff is constantly changing which results in a lot of stress for the students. This mediation between the university, staff and student as well as lack of professional help may be leading to an inefficient understanding of the disability the students are facing.

Student A is comparatively satisfied with his life at university. Due to student A's difficulty in getting up in the mornings, he tries to avoid first period classes, although if there is a class they have to take then they will register for it. Student A needs to put in the most effort for Korean language classes and has not skipped any first period classes. However, as student A suffers from dizziness and is unable to concentrate during class, Student A would be grateful

if it was possible to take the first period classes remotely. For student A, once the symptoms start to show as long as he can get somewhere to rest then the symptoms get better. Hence, if there was some sort of resting space available then it would help Student A stay on campus until the evening.

Student B had been receiving generous support during the 12 years he was studying in the UK, which is why they currently feel lost with the lack of support in Japan. For Korean language classes, Student B applied for permission to use the computer for the exams as opposed to writing by hand, but was rejected. Student B has difficulty keeping up with Korean classes due to the speed of the curriculum as well as being unable to take notes fast enough. Student B believes that if resources were provided in a digital form as well as having the lectures recorded, it would be extremely useful in helping him keep up with class. Reading and comprehension are extremely time consuming for Student B, thus his most suitable learning styles are by listening to recordings and repeating afterwards.

Student C's notetaker struggled at first due to being unable to keep up with the speed of the teacher's explanation on the board. Student C's notetaker was able to overcome this by speaking to the teacher and receiving the corresponding resources and material which is then shared with Student C on Google drive along with the notetaker's typed notes. As speaking was not allowed during the lessons, the notetaker was unable to communicate with student C and thus the manner in which the notes were taken were left to the notetaker's own judgment. At times Student C asked help from the notetaker regarding pronunciation, grammar or just for having a conversation partner. However, student C was worried that the other students would find it unfair that they were receiving special consideration.

The issue here is that despite having reasonable special considerations available, there is a lack of a correct assessment of these special needs. Generally speaking, in order to receive special consideration, medical proof is necessary. However, it is important to also have special consideration for symptoms that are not diagnosed but still result in the obstruction to learning. In the case of Student B who did not have the official diagnosis of dyslexia but struggled with learning from reading texts, he found it extremely difficult to keep up with a curriculum heavily based on text comprehension for both the classes and the exams. This could be improved with the introduction of voice overs or more listening resources as opposed to only text. In the case of Student C, the problems were due to the lack of guidance regarding the notetaking process. Thus, if the University staff and people in charge were able to provide more detailed guidance then it would have helped put Student C at ease and allow Student C to integrate in the class better.

3.2 The Need of Radical Change of Curriculum

Student A's symptoms worsen when under pressure which means that Student A struggles with group work and presentations. For Korean language classes, there is basically groupwork everyday as well as pair work for conversation practice. Student A finds that the group work is excessive and wished that there were more activities that could be done alone.

Student B has difficulties with reading and takes time to process the information, thus is unable to answer questions immediately. As a result, Student B struggles to keep up with group and pair work, while Student B finds it much easier to relax and concentrate for activities that can be done alone. Student B also finds that there are too many language classes in a week that lasts 95 minutes each. If the classes were reduced to once or twice a week, then Student B believes that he can put more time into studying without too much pressure. On top of that, classwork is heavily based on writing, thus Student B wished that there was more leeway in letting them type on a computer or at least allow them to take the work home to finish as homework at his own pace.

Student C struggles to concentrate throughout the whole class due to the long period of 95 minutes. Student C believes it would be better if the class periods were shorter and had more breaks. On top of that, Student C wished that the resources used in class could be provided online for revision.

Japanese Universities share a fixed academic structure and thus it is difficult to change issues related class structure and exams. However, issues regarding class content are in the hands of the teachers and they also hold the power over the method of grading as well as introduction of a variety of learning objectives. By doing so, teachers can introduce different learning purposes and allow students to learn according to the method best suited for themselves. Learning methods that cater to each individual student will also allow teachers to evaluate their performance more accurately. All these are important class content related changes that are worth considering.

4. Discussion

4.1 Well-structured Class for Optimized Learning

One of the fundamental principles of 'inclusive education' is to teach in a manner that is easy to understand. 'Easy to understand' refers to the emphasis on the way knowledge is transferred from teacher to student by simplifying jargons and complicated concepts in a way that students can absorb and retain. For example, when using the board, the teacher can divide the board into two sections; one for teaching the class material, the other for

vocabulary that requires special attention. Other examples include the use of images and videos.

4.2 Diverse Methods of Approach to Reach the Learning Objectives

When aiming towards a learning objective in class, it is important to implement diverse methods of approach. The use of a variety of multimedia is vital for teaching in an inclusive learning environment. This is especially relevant for students that have learning disabilities as there currently is not a good balance of Reading, Listening, Speaking, and Writing in class. Especially since most students with learning disabilities struggle with a particular area. After all, language classes are heavily based on Reading, but some students struggle to learn from Reading whereas they do fine if the content was communicated through sound and recordings. Thus, it is vital that teachers take the students' learning style into consideration and aim to provide classes that have a balance of Reading, Listening, Speaking, and Writing.

4.3 Test and Evaluation

As mentioned earlier, the introduction of a variety of learning objectives is important, and thus the method of evaluation then becomes an area of consideration. For example, with the learning objectives such as 'be able to buy things in Korean' and 'be able to shop online in Korean', the class can be divided into groups that do role play, watch videos on a shopping scene and a group that writes a shopping request letter to a Korean friend. In this example, it becomes a problem to try and decide an evaluation system because there are too many variables to evaluate. Despite these difficulties, it does not change the fact that it is important to think about what we can do to improve the curriculum and achieve a classroom environment of inclusive education.

5. Limitations of the Study

This study was only on 3 students taking KFL classes in a Japanese University. Due to the small sample size, the results of this study cannot be used to infer the general population and cannot be used to prove any correlations. It is also important to point out that this study took place in Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University where the KFL curriculum differs significantly with the KFL classes of other Japanese Universities. There are also many other learning disabilities this study was unable to take in account for and the research beforehand needs improvement. Despite these

limitations, this study provides insight into this field that is still lacking in research and can be a useful resource for other academics seeking to research further. As more data is collected on students suffering from the same learning disabilities, it will help path a way towards a better and more inclusive KFL classroom environment.

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