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Examining A Lens of Korean Language Teachers

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Abstract

We share how Korean language teachers view classroom management in US schools and how they enact classroom management skills in their lesson planning. This paper highlights that teacher participants were, in fact, able to shift to a student-centered approach while identifying the intersections of language and culture as a means of effective classroom management. Furthermore, some of the challenges faced by Korean language teachers and educational implications are discussed.

Introduction

The US federal government has referred to Korean as one of the critical need languages, crucial for economic growth and national security (National Security Education Program, 2019). Critical need language teachers are in great demand in the US; the federal government has provided funding for foreign language teachers to meet this demand and acclimate the culture of US schools (Koning, 2009; StarTalk, 2020). This paper addresses how one foreign language teacher training program funded by the federal government provides Korean language teachers with multiple opportunities to explore and examine classroom management strategies and student engagement skills. Many Korean-born teachers hope to become foreign/world language teachers in US schools (Shin & Wong, 2017). Not surprisingly, understanding the many intricate layers of the culture of US schooling requires a deep and comprehensive exploration (Shin & Koh, 2007). Developing classroom management strategies is an important factor for many foreign language teachers to understand students and classrooms in the US (Debreli & Ishanova, 2019; Macías, 2018; Shin & Koh, 2007).

Classroom Management for Foreign/World Language Classrooms

Many researchers refer to classroom management as the actions that teachers take to create an environment that supports and facilitates successive instruction (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Marzano et al., 2005). There is a large amount of research on classroom management as it pertains to general educators (Ellis, 2018; Gest et al., 2014). However, there is a noticeable void when specifically focusing on its impact in foreign/world language classrooms (Debreli & Ishanova, 2019; Macías, 2018). The review of literature reveals a few studies (Burnett, 2011; Evans, 2012; Macías & Sanchez, 2015) that were designed to identify and highlight classroom management in foreign/world language classrooms.

Further, within a very limited scope, a few studies were primarily focused on evidence related to beginning teachers (Balli, 2009; Lewis, 2002; Quintero & Ramirez, 2011) or have addressed target language (TL) use on classroom management in foreign/world language classrooms (Debreli & Ishanova, 2019; Pan, 2010). Moreover, these studies did not explain the integration of level of language and culture for effective classroom management.

Our training program is a carefully designed three-week sequence of synchronous and asynchronous online learning modules and face-to-face workshops (two weeks in June and one week in July 2018). The primary goal of the program was to help Korean teacher participants understand student-centered, classroom management, and the intersection of language and culture in the US classrooms. Our overarching two-part question was: How do Korean teachers participating in professional development that focused on classroom management view the intersection of language, culture, and classroom management? How do they enact it in their lesson plans?

Methodology

Data were gathered during the StarTalk teacher training program using online surveys, daily reflections, online discussion, and classroom management plan projects. The current paper illustrates part of the large study of this mixed method design.

The Participants

Through a local and state-wide recruitment, 16 teacher participants voluntarily participated in this teacher training program and the research process, but only 14 teachers completed surveys. Teacher participants varied in age (20s to 50s) and years of teaching experience (zero to 23 years), but most of the teachers are novice teachers. For example, nine teachers did not have previous foreign language teaching experiences. Three teachers were teaching at local heritage schools, and two teachers work at local middle and high school extracurricular Korean classes, respectively. Fifteen teachers were native speakers born, raised, and educated in South Korea while one non-native Korean participant who learned Korean as her foreign language joined this program.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected over the course of three weeks from the tasks and surveys completed by the participants, interviews, and observation as shown in Figure 1. One of the authors was always present in the research setting as a workshop facilitator, a semi-participant observer, or research coordinator for 6 weeks in total, including preparation (Patton, 2015). In order to establish

credibility with respondents and to avoid biasing their responses and observations, we included the teachers' online reflections, pre-and post-program surveys, and focus group interviews (Merriam, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As part of the program, the teacher participants prepared lesson plans for two hour-long micro-teaching demonstrations for elementary school students in a local summer Korean camp.

Figure 1.

The Program Sequence of Data Collection [Figure ONE <https://bit.ly/37qDhGb>]

The pre-institute survey was distributed a week before the program started, and the post-institute survey was distributed on the last day of week 3. In Week 3, teacher participants focused on consolidating learning from Weeks 1 and 2, in which they reviewed their learning and experience to continue refining approaches to classroom management using the World-Readiness for Learning Languages (ACTFL, 2008). In order to approach the research question of how participating teachers view and enact the intersection of language, culture, and classroom management, this paper focuses on data analysis from week 3. We first analyzed themes in teachers' online discussion to discern emergent categories and then on analyzed and grouped classroom management plans for how participants enacted their views. Because coding and categorizing the ideas of someone else's thought process is not always clear or easy to quantify, and to provide for interpretive validity, the ideas are presented in tables within each section. In addition to illustrating categories more clearly, this allows readers to examine grey areas and draw their own conclusions.

Findings

Pre-institute survey data indicate that teachers recognize the importance of classroom management, but teachers felt they were not sufficiently prepared for foreign classroom management. However, throughout the teacher training program, teachers examined multiple ways of classroom management and adjusted their classroom management skills which fit into the US classrooms. By analyzing online discussion data and classroom management plans in terms of integrating levels of language and culture, we noticed there was a distinct trend between two teacher groups which focus on their potential targeting students, primary or secondary schools.

Views of Classroom Management

Analysis of data from teachers' discussion related to language, culture, and classroom management and the final classroom management plan projects submitted by teachers revealed interesting differences. Teacher participants critically examined transitioning to teaching in learner-centered classrooms, utilizing various learning activities and strategies with their millennial learners. They creatively approached classroom management, all of which incorporated language and culture and management of the class through active student engagement. Korean teachers' discussion on classroom management through engagement revealed three main areas of activity such as culture-related videos or pictures followed by activities or discussion, hands on activities to experience culture (making cultural artifacts, touching and experiencing materials to discuss), and kinesthetic activities or total physical response (TPR) (see Table 1).

Table 1.

Approaches to Classroom Management through Engaging Activities Presented in Online Discussion [Table ONE <https://bit.ly/3of0mCz>]

While most elementary teachers suggested all three engaging activities, only one secondary teacher proposed using a hands-on activity for engagement, and none suggested kinesthetic/TPR or culture-related videos and pictures. Table 2 shows the examples of classroom management approaches through language and culture such as showing respect through greetings or attention. Some teachers suggested student discussions on language and cultural topics for classroom management plans.

Table 2.

Classroom Management through Language and Culture Presented in Online Discussion [Table TWO <https://bit.ly/36p7Qwv>]

Classroom Management Plans: Enactment of Classroom Management

Integrating culture into formal classroom management, however, was less universal. While all teacher participants incorporated culture to some degree, the plans varied in the degree of this integration. Thematically, while an imprecise method of grouping, the plans can be considered to reflect three levels of integration:

Level 1: Traditional teacher-directed classroom management methods.

Level 2: Student-centered classroom management with language and culture as an additional element.

Level 3: Classroom management through full engagement with language and culture.

Level 1. Relying on the traditional approaches that most likely prevailed in their own educational experiences, teachers using a Level 1 approach focused on management through discipline in their classroom. With clear rules, consequences, and parent involvement for reinforcement, these classroom management plans reflect rules set and emphasize student compliance and consequences, and are enforced by the teacher.

Level 2. Teachers utilizing what we refer to as a Level 2 approach to classroom management have incorporated student-centered approaches to the classroom and focused on setting up a classroom that will streamline management. While some of the Level 2 plans reflect elements from Level 1 (involving parents or administrators for infractions, for example), others reflect incorporation of culture. By and large, the plans involve students in the governance of the classroom, but do not use culture as the framework for doing so. Language and culture are addressed (for example, language for grouping students or posting classroom culture) but the framework for management relies on logistics and rules developed in collaboration with students. It is very important to note that this level reflects a significant shift away from a traditional teacher-directed paradigm, and includes many student-centered elements, including student autonomy. Logistics and procedures, however, are forefronted.

Level 3. At this level, teachers have developed their classroom management plans through the lens of language and culture, predominantly through ensuring active student engagement. With no explicit mention of rules or consequences, teachers developing these plans take a full on

engagement-based approach to organizing and managing their classroom. Predominant approaches include cultural activities and discussion, student presentations, and authentic materials and videos.

Based on the three level of classroom management plans, we compared two groups of teachers according to their targeted student groups. Interestingly, more secondary (43%) than elementary teachers' plans (7%) fell into Level 3, and the majority (86%) of the secondary teachers' plans fell into Level 2 or Level 3 as seen in Table 3. Among elementary teachers, the majority of practices mentioned in plans were clearly within the parameters of Level 2 (57%), but Level 1 was a very close second (36%). Only one elementary teacher had a clear Level 3 approach embedded within a mixed plan.

Table 3.

Summary of Approaches to Classroom Management in Classroom Management Plans [Table THREE <https://bit.ly/39wdJKm>]

Another interesting phenomenon is that the plans for enactment of classroom management were somewhat more traditional, and thus at odds with, views of classroom management rooted in language and culture, as presented in the online discussions. It may be that many teachers view classroom management as separate and apart from conducting engaging instruction rooted in language and culture. What is very encouraging is that the vast majority of both groups take a student-centered approach to their classroom management, demonstrated by Level 2 and Level 3 practices.

Conclusions

We designed this study to examine how Korean language teachers perceived and enacted classroom management, utilizing the intersections of language and culture in Korean foreign/world language classes. Even though the range of teachers' perception and enactment of classroom management varies, the participants showed a gradual shift to a student-centered approach as demonstrated in their classroom management plans.

Initially, Korean teacher participants believed that the classroom management was important in class, but did not know how to do it in detail. In teacher-oriented classes, teachers mainly pay attention to the management of student misbehavior and establishment of classroom discipline (Debreli & Ishanova, 2019; Evertson, & Weinstein, 2006) but, through our workshops, teacher participants learned how to develop the lesson plans for ensuring student engagement without explicit mention of rules to organizing and managing their classroom.

Grouping the classroom management into delineated categories showed that some teachers transitioned readily, basing their planning for classroom management on student engagement with language and culture. Others progressed to student-centered approaches to rules and logistics, with an appropriate emphasis on student autonomy. Nevertheless, some participants were not able to translate their views and move beyond a teacher-directed classroom approach to rules.

Implications

The results of the study indicated a paradigm shift for these teachers was difficult, and it will necessitate a concerted effort over time, requiring on-going support. Our work with 16 Korean teachers demonstrates that teacher participants can develop classroom management plans based on a mixture of language and culture.

As literature on teacher change through professional development clearly demonstrates, a paradigm shift is difficult and occurs over time and with extensive support (Guskey, 2010; Jacobs & Farrell, 2001; Mewald & Mürwald- Scheifinger, 2019). Given that teacher participants predominantly addressed rule-based disciplines in the pre-institute survey, it is remarkable that many participants were, in fact, able to shift to student-centered approaches and students' active engagement as their classroom management framework rooted in active integration of language and culture. From this perspective, the results of this study are encouraging.

Classroom management in foreign language classrooms does not simply mean reinforcing rules and procedures or maintaining effective teacher and student relationships (Marzano et al., 2005). Rather, dynamic integrations of language and culture can be conducive to effective classroom management, ensuring active student engagement. We expect that more studies on classroom management in foreign language education are investigated through the lens of language and culture.

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