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Learning Korean Language in Multimodal Setting: A Case Study of an Indonesian Adult Learner's Language Learning

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Abstract

The emergence of new technology, such as the Internet, enables popular cultures to spread rapidly from one country to another. Korean pop culture, for example, has been infiltrating Indonesia approximately from the early 2000's. The advanced information and communication technologies further enable human beings to engage themselves in consuming the media and pop culture on a daily basis through printed media as well as social media. To the extent of language as a part of culture, the present study attempts to investigate Korean language learning process in a multimodal circumstance. This deals with how multiple modes of communication play role in learner's autonomy and motivation to learn Korean language and how language-learning environments support her learning. Using participant's language learning history and semi-structured interview, it is found that the ease of access towards Korean language through several channels such as Korean language guide book, internet sources including YouTube, Korean pop music and drama help enacted learner's autonomy and motivation to learn the language. In addition, the participant is online and offline community contribute to the learning process in terms of putting into practice the language learned in a daily basis.

Keywords: community; Korean language learning; motivation; multimodal

1. Introduction

The emergence of new technology, such as the Internet, enables popular culture to spread rapidly from one country to another. Korean pop culture, for example, has been infiltrating Indonesia approximately from the early 2000's (Jeong, Lee & Lee, 2017). The advanced information and communication technology further enables human beings to engage themselves in consuming the media and pop culture on a daily basis. As far as library research has been conducted, the author only found several studies on Korean pop culture in relation to media usage and consumption (Jeong, Lee & Lee, 2017; Jung, 2011). Unfortunately, no study has been found on Korean language learning by Indonesian learner especially of those from language learning beyond classroom (henceforth LLBC) point of view. In regard to this, the present study attempts to investigate learner's motivation and ecology in learning Korean language. This deals with how motivation plays role in learner's autonomy to learn Korean language and how language-learning environments with their multiple modes of communication support her learning.

2. Literature review

Studies into LLBC have identified autonomy and motivation as crucial factors that drive one's decision to learn (Benson, 2011; Lamb, 2011; McLoughlin&Mynard, 2015; Ushioda, 2011). In regard to the former, Benson defines it as "a capacity to control one's own learning" (2013: 2). This capacity includes learners' ability, desire and freedom that are potential to support their learning process. As long as ability is concerned, learners' aptitude is central. While desire reflects learners' intention, driven by particular reasoning to learn the language, freedom covers the allowance and permission that learners have in controlling their language learning. In addition to capacity, control is of equal importance. By control means learners' "power to make choices and decisions and acting on them" (ibid.: 5). This is realized through the dimensions of learning management, cognitive processes and learning content that vary according to learner's personal relevance.

The latter factor, motivation, will now be discussed. One major contributing factor to learners' motivation to precede their learning is interest. Interest is defined as "a positive

response to stimuli based on existing cognitive structures in such a way that learners' curiosity is aroused and sustained" by Keller (1984, in Ellis, 2008: 686). This relates to learners' intrinsic motivation, and drives their self-regulation, as Ellis explained, is "the ability to monitor one's learning and make changes to the strategies that one employs" (2008: 687). Ellis further argues that motivation is dynamic and open to possible changes during the learning process respectively to learners' evaluation over their learning progress. A number of studies have been conducted in search of the importance of motivation in LLBC (Lamb, 2011; McLoughlin & Mynard, 2015; Ushioda, 2011). They draw on a conclusion that intrinsic motivation is important as it influences the choices of learning strategies employed to support, improve and evaluate knowledge, skills and ability of the learners. In this present study, autonomy and motivation are central, and both of these factors are organized and played together in language learning environments that accommodate learners' language learning.

As noted at the end of the previous paragraph, language learning takes place in particular learning environments under particular contexts. Some researchers make use of metaphorical expression of *ecology* to depict this learning environment. The *ecology* metaphor depicts the setting in which human activities, especially of those related to learning, take place. Palfreyman describes ecology for learning as "a system, involving the interaction of various learners, teachers, materials, and other elements" (2014: 176). This includes both physical and virtual spaces (Baron, 2006). As a system, it consists of one or more sub-learning environments that influence, either in constructive or destructive ways, the development of human as individual in society. It is important to note that the contribution of environment to one's learning development is highly affected by the availability of resources and their affordances, and how learners make use of these resources in the contexts. This creates interdependency between learners and the available resources, and it is varied from one sub-learning environment to others. These contexts of learning shape the what and how learners learn, which is depending as well on learners' individual differences and learning style (Barron, 2006; Benson, 2011; Palfreyman, 2014).

In regards to multimodality, or multisemiotic, it is the simultaneous employment of several meaning-potential systems such as language, picture, music, layout, colour, gesture and so forth to construct meaning (Goodman, 1996; Kress, 2000; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). Those meaning-potential systems are labelled as modes, which according to Kress and van Leeuwen are "semiotic resources which allow the simultaneous realisation of discourses and types of (inter)action" (2001: 21). As the centrality of the notion is on the use of multiple modes attended to as part of meaning-making, it is imperative to note that each mode is supporting one another according to their own affordances, that is what a semiotic resource permits to do which brings "consequences for representation and communication" to best encoding meaning (Kress, 2000: 339).

3. Methodology

This small-scale qualitative study is conducted to identify an Indonesian adult learners motivation to learn Korean language, with participant's short language learning history (henceforth LLH) and semi-structured online interview are used as data. The participant involved in this research is an Indonesian female student, in her 20s, majoring in English studies. The participant was chosen, as she is the only student who learned other language than English autonomously from the population of students of English Department academic year of 2011 in one university in Jember. In analysing the data, the author employs an interpretative approach to investigate the participant's learning history, with specific focus is being paid to these points:
1. learner's motivation in learning Korean language
2. learner's Korean language learning ecology

For the sake of data analysis and result dissemination, the participant's LLH is screen-shotted. No interview's transcript is displayed, but the main points of the recorded interview are summarized to support the interpretation of the participant's LLH under those categories above.

4. Result and discussion
4.1 Motivation in learning Korean language

Figure 1. Participant's LLH - part 1

Language that Makes Me Passionately Happy

First of all, I consider myself as a person who has lots of interests. Learning languages and cultures is one of them. Since I was very young, my parents made me to get used to reading anything that contains alphabets in it. As I grew up, I began to realize that I enjoy activities that involved reading and writing. I learnt English and Arabic as foreign languages, additional subjects during my nine years prior to my primary school and junior high school. From that point I knew I love learning languages, and how new languages flutter my heart as it is something exciting to explore and learn about. When I was in first year high school, my teenager self started to get interested in K-Pop. Before Korean wave happened, I was so into soccer during junior high school – and I also joined the soccer club with bunch of guys and before that, during my primary school, I was into J-Rock band and that was because my eldest brother had so much influence toward me, the little sister. The thing is, once I get into something I tend to absorb as much as I can, and whole-heartedly, passionately do everything related to it. That was my prior reason why did I learn Korean language. It made feel passionate and happy.

As observed from Figure 1, it is evidenced that the participant is highly motivated to learning language. She describes her positive attitude materialized in her positive appraisal towards language learning, as she uses *flutter my heart, love, exciting, interested, whole-heartedly,* and *passionately,* to describe her feeling about language learning. Specifically, she feels passionate and happy about Korean language and about learning the language. This finding shows that learner is feeling about her language learning experience can be observed and implication can be drawn upon (Oxford, 1996). Further, it can be concluded that her independent language learning is mainly affected by her intrinsic motivation, on her own will. From participant's LLH, stages of her interest and language learning progress is observed and discussed under two categories: emergence of interest and creation of learning opportunities to maintain her interest.

Emergence of Interest. As observed in Figure 1, the participant's interest on Korean language emerged from her high school year, as she got interested in Korean pop culture in the form of Korean music and drama, which are mainly available online on the internet. In the interview, she extended her explanation that on the beginning of her language learning, she imagined herself to be a competent Korean language user. The emergence of this "ideal L2 self" by Dörnyei (in Ushioda, 2011: 201) had pushed her language learning ahead. Parental encouragement and access to multimedia resources are instrumental in further helping her imagine herself as future user of Korean language, which at the same time helped her maintaining her interest to learn the language.

Creation of learning opportunities. On Figure 2, the participant made use of Korean pop music and drama as her learning resources. As she explained, she began her learning by copying and murmuring some common spoken words, she heard from Korean drama. From that self-initiated activity, she stated that her interest entered a more serious phase as she asked her parent's support to buy her a Korean language learning guidebook. These efforts showed her value as "committed learner" by DiSessa (in Barron, 2006: 206). To show her further commitment in learning Korean, she challenged herself to go further with her independent language learning as she decided to take Korean language proficiency-test, TOPIK.

Figure 2. Participant's LLH - part 2

At first, I only copied and murmured some common spoken words that I frequently heard from videos, songs and dramas, also saying the short-but-well known expressions with friends who were also into K-Pop. But then, I decided to make a huge and different effort. There is a saying that curiosity kills. Well, that is possibly true. The more I watch Korean video, the more I think that the language is beautiful. So fifteen years old me asked my dad to buy me some kind of guide book to learn Korean. Luckily, I have the coolest parents ever. Dad, especially, thought that I was really capable to learn many things and he was fully armed to support me doing what I like. He bought me a book, the title was *Tiga Langkah Menguasai Bahasa Korea*, with the little box behind the book that tells it helps people who want to take TOPIK (Test of Proficiency in Korean) test. The book was indeed a good book. I started to learn the alphabets of Korean (Hangeul) and how to read, the pronunciation, and also its grammar.

During my high school time, I had Japanese as the additional foreign language beside English and as people might already know that Mandarin, Japanese and Korean share pretty much similar context and root of its language. So while learning Korean, I often get confused with Japanese lesson I had from school. However, it was not a big deal. I got my Korean improved, and straight A for my Japanese subject.

I've been learning Korean by myself. With a little help from the book, and a huge help from videos, songs and dramas I've watched. From book, I learnt written Korean – mostly polite and formal Korean. From songs, videos and dramas, I learnt about spoken Korean – daily language, informal Korean. Because K-Pop and things in between are part of my life – I have accounts where I keep myself updated about K-Pop and my favorite bands, also a community to chat and share about K-Pop related stuffs and also friends from all over the world – learning Korean was fun and my skill improved quickly. During my progress of learning, I think the most difficult part was that I need to do some research about the culture as well, and also the language structure is different from Bahasa Indonesia or English, so it was like a whole new level of learning language, plus, I had no one to learn with – that wasn't a big deal, I'm a big girl lol – so every time I found something hard to understand, most of the time, I tried to seek the solution by myself. Hey, I have many friends – who learn Korean too, who are native Korean, and also online dictionary!

Few years ago, I was thinking "*oh dude, I wanna know what they're talking about without waiting someone to translate it!*" while watching Korean videos. Then, these past two years, I've been challenging myself to know how well my Korean is, and how to apply my understanding about the language to the real context, I decided to translate and make subtitle to some Korean videos (*see attachment*) It was thrilling and pumped my adrenalin to the highest, as it is required me to understand the whole context of the topic, how to interpret the speeches, and also how well I can relate the speeches with Korean culture as the background of the speakers. I think it was indeed a big step I've taken in my progress of learning Korean. Last month, I took another challenge. TOPIK test was a very serious matter. It was – not surprised, but also not disappointed – a difficult test. Especially for someone who has been learning the language by themselves, and just by hearing and little help from a basic guide book. However, I expect a good result from it and I'm proud enough of myself. Not everyone has the bravery to take the test if they were in my shoes.

It is observed that the participant employed different resources to excel on different language skills. For instance, watching Korean drama helped her improving her speaking and listening skill and reading the guidebook helped her with her grammatical foundation. These efforts materialized her language learning strategies, which Oxford (1989) describes as "behaviours or actions which learners use to make language learning more successful, self-directed and enjoyable" (in Ellis, 2008: 703-704). Furthermore, it is evidenced that when she encountered several problems during her learning process, she dealt with the problems by seeking assistance from book and Korean pop music and drama. Those strategies show how as successful language learner, she flexibly employed various strategies accordingly to the situations she experienced (Ellis, 2008).

To put it briefly, the participant, as an adult is simultaneously involved herself in many settings, and in this way, she is creating learning contexts for herself within and across settings, according to her routine as well as the available resources. Further explanation on setting will be discussed in the next part of learning ecology.

4.2 Korean language learning ecology

As far as ecology is concerned, the setting and contexts in which language learning takes place are of importance consideration. From the analysis, it is shown that the combination of self-instruction, through the use of distributed resources such as guide book, and exposure to language input, through the internet resources, and opportunities to produce language output, through her online community, is important in enhancing the participant's language learning development. The learning process takes place independently, not in a conventional classroom in formal educational institution. It is observed that there are at least three environments in which the activities were taking place, namely her home, her online community, and the university environment. The support from home environment is evidenced in her parental support, while the supports from university and online community environment are evidenced in the form of the existence of her learner groups to advancing her language knowledge. When communicating with her Korean online community, she developed her sense of belonging while at the same time improving her language competence, which was used to maintain her learning interest (Barron, 2006). Here, mobile device and internet connection play important role in enabling online communication.

Figure 3. Participant's LLH - part 3

I'm going to continue learning Korean. It has become my second language as English. Korean language has been, and will always be part of my life, my youth and my passion. There is no limit to learn things, especially if they make you happy.

Figure 3 shows the enculturation process taken place during the participant's language learning, or as in Brown, Collins and Duguid's (1989, in Oxford, 1996: 582) term, this shows participant's "cognitive apprenticeship". This notion is closely related to identity formation, in which according to Ushioda, learner's identity may be reconstructed "through [her] interactions with others and through [her] changing experiences and relations with the social world, through entry to world of work, [and] evolving participation in various online communities" (2011: 203).

5. Conclusion

As concluding remarks, it is evidenced from participant's LLH that her Korean language learning happened as she has her own control over her capacity to learn Korean language, that makes her appropriates to be labelled as autonomous learner (Benson, 2013). Multimodality speaking, the learner's Korean language learning cannot be separated from the importance of multimodal resources. The impact of Korean pop such as drama, movie, entertainment and the like, which were distributed through the internet in the form of digital video help learner's meaning making to become multimodal as language is learnt and reshaped by the media. As the participant watches the materials, her curiosity drives her to learn the language independently. This proves that the participant is able to take advantage of the availability of multimodal resources in the form of digital video. Those multimodal resources have helped her develop her Korean language ability and further challenge her to step ahead as she begins to work as translator as well as subtitle-maker of some videos. From her learning process, it is observed that her visual, auditory and verbal literacy skills in Korean language progress as her learning materials provide the opportunity for her to advance the skills. The relationship among those dimensions creates language learning ecology. As observed, her learning environments varied from home, online community, and even university. Support from her family, especially her parents is evidenced in the form of the purchased Korean learning guidebook. In addition, her online community enables her to practice her Korean language online, with the help of mobile devices and internet connection. Further, her university environment is the setting in which she practices her Korean language offline with her university's colleagues during her break time. Above all, her great interest in Korean language

has motivated her, and as she stated at the end of her LLH, will keep her interested to learn Korean language.

This study, however, has several limitations, namely this present study only uses basic parameter to measure how her autonomous language learning has improved from the start, e.g. from know nothing about Korean language to be able to read and write in *hangul* (Korean writing system), and even further towards the participant's decision to take Korean language proficiency test or in another word to become a more competent user of Korean language. No progress assessments are conducted to measure the participant's periodical improvement. Thus, further research is encouraged to be conducted to describe and measure participant's periodical improvement by administering pre- and post-test to account for accurate development and the extent to which motivation contributes to learners' independent language learning. In addition, to measure to what extent the importance of multimodal resources is in language learning process, two group of learners, one with mono-modal resource and another one is placed in multimodal setting, are needed in further research.

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