

시(詩)를 통한 한국어교육

(Poetry as a way to teach Korean language)

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The main inspiration for this paper has come

1) from my love of poetry in general, and, in particular, from

2) Wilga M. Rivers Principles Of Interactive Language Teaching. I am very grateful for her insightful suggestions and proposals, which have often proven to be significant suggestions for a more effective teaching of Korean language over the past years in Venice. In the course of this paper I will often start from quotations taken from Rivers' contribution, to evidenciate how such statements have been interpreted and adopted for the teaching of Korean language in Venice. The stress on the importance of poetry as a means of teaching/learning a Target language does not intend to eliminate all other teaching/learning methods and materials, but rather as an excellent

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integration or (in the case of Venice) provision of “concentrated original language material.”

3) I will proceed with few introductory remarks on the Korean teaching activities at Venice University and on the highlights (and limitations!) of the Korean language courses held. (European-Italian approach: grammatical structures/communicative competence/ cultural contents) (SHOW TRANSPARENCY OF THE COURSES TIMETABLE FOR ONE SEMESTER: Korean vs. Chinese/Japanese)

“the use of authentic materials is one of the most effective ways to teach a target language”

(Guohe Zheng, Waka Poetry as Language Teaching Materials, Ball State University)(From <http://tell.fl.purdue.edu/CATJ16/zheng.html>)

SOME ADVANTAGES OF USING POETRY AS “ORIGINAL LANGUAGE MATERIALS”

- 1) In spite of their belonging to the category of “original language materials” (usually intended for native speakers and therefore full of language structures far beyond the possibilities and the knowledge of foreign students’, learners of the Target Language, poetry presents characteristics of brevity, a strong advantage when facing a text in a new (Other) language.
- 2) Of course for poetry I intend brief poems, not narrative poetry, or poetry with more complex syntactical constructions. Also, I intend poems

selected among the contemporary production, not among the classical one.

- 3) Poetry is first of all sound: reading poetry loudly helps the students acquiring more confidence with the sounds of the Target Language
- 4) Poetry consists of rhythm and, often, of rhymes. Rhythm renders it easy to memorize and so internalize the syntactical structure. Rhymes provide lexical enrichment and also meaningful training in the enrichment of individual lexical knowledge.
- 5) Poetry is a powerful means of cultural communication: Korean poetry provides important information on cultural aspects of the language-learning process. Also, for the students of Venice, given the particular characteristics of the teaching of Korean, limited to the status of a non-major language, poetry provides the teacher the possibility to introduce elements of history and history of literature to the class, and by so doing, it allows a better comprehension of the current Korean situation, other than making parallels with the adjacent contemporary literature and history of China and Japan.
- 6) Poetry is often used for developing creative writing skills also among native speakers: if it is true that a language is learnt creatively, nothing more than poetry can foster such ability, also among foreign learners.
- 7) Poetry can stimulate students' participation in class, through the organization of poetry "declamation" sessions (active production)
- 8) Poetry can be used as a listening practice. CD's of poetry are more and more available nowadays on the market: by using them in class, before and after having explained the syntactic structures, is helps the

students to further develop their listening abilities.

- 9) In the specific case of Korean poetry, it can help the student familiarize with contracted forms of language production and with the intimate or plain verbal endings, usually not contemplated in grammar books, usually geared towards the formal and polite verbal endings.
- 10) Based on the Venetian experience, although requiring a basic knowledge of the Target Language, poetry is highly recommended as a “concentrated” means of vehiculating elements of Korean language and culture to language learning audiences.
- 11) In its simplest forms it can be introduced also at the earliest levels of language acquisition, especially when quoting parts of poems, and not each poem in its entirety.

GENERAL PRINCIPLE

“Teachers need the stimulation of new thinking and new techniques to keep a fresh and lively approach to their teaching(...) the teacher’s work is to foster an environment in which effective language learning may develop. In so doing the teacher experiences what Seneca observed, namely, that “while we teach we learn.” The teacher is a learner and the learner is a teacher. In the words of an old proverb the person “who is too old to learn is too old to teach” The relationship between teaching and learning is well represented by De Saussure’s metaphor of the piece of paper: if you cut into one side, you cut into the other.”¹⁾

Principle 1 : The student is the language learner

“In teaching a language, we are helping individual learners, in the best ways we know, to consolidate their control of it, so that they become increasingly fluent in using it for expression of personal meaning. Our ways of proceeding are often intuitive, since our ignorance in this area is great. We can provide opportunities for observing the language in use and for using the language creatively, but only the learners themselves can assimilate the language and make it their own. This they do in very individualistic ways.”

Corollary 1.1 : Motivation springs from within; it can be sparked, but not imposed from without

Motivation, strong or weak, is always there. It is the task of the teacher to discover the springs of motivation in individual students and channel it in the direction of further language acquisition through course content, activities in and out of the classroom, and learner-generated or at least learner-maintained projects.

Learning a language through poetry is made easier: each student can find a preferred poem and work on it, individually or in group. The approach to the new sounds of Korean language, and to its difficulties, can be mediated

1) *This quotation and the following others in italic are taken from : Rivers(ed.)(1987), at http://agoralang.com/wilga_rivers.html*

through the rhythmical repetitions, which eventually become part of an “automatic repetition” which greatly facilitates the absorption of the new phonetic and linguistic structures.

Principle 2 : Language learning and teaching are shaped by student needs and objectives in particular circumstances

A needs analysis must come first, before decisions are made on orientation and content of courses, and this will affect the way the language will be presented and the types of materials that will be incorporated. Such a needs analysis must be repeated in each new circumstance, and also as cohorts of students change in what may seem to be a stable context.

In all language teaching decisions, the question **Who?** (Who are my students?) precedes **What?** (What kind of course or learning materials do they need?), and these two determine **How?** (What approach and which techniques are most appropriate in this situation?)

Corollary 2.1 : *Language teaching and course design will be very diverse*

The days of a monolithic approach to language courses, imposed on all learners, is well past (or should be). As students change and their perceived needs and objectives change, so will the content and techniques of language courses. Sometimes language programs are set up as a series of discrete units on grammar, sound production, development of reading skills,

or written composition, thus tearing apart the seamless garment of language. Study of sound production is integrally related to syntax, which can be of no use without semantics and pragmatics. Cultural expectations affect syntactic and lexical choice, as well as sound and kinesic elements. These things are best learned and practiced together in use. (...) Classes can now be twinned easily across language groups and geographical areas to work on joint projects via computer and modem. Sounds can be practiced through drama, the reading and writing of poetry, or production of radio or video programs for community access broadcasts. (...) Language is a vehicle that should not be driven around empty.

One of the elements which can allow us not to use language as a vehicle “driven around empty” is poetry: with its frequent use of contracted forms (so common in the spoken language), it can provide a marvellous means of finding grammar, sound production, development of reading skills, or written composition in the poetic text itself. Study of sound production is integrally related to syntax, which can be of no use without semantics and pragmatics. Cultural expectations affect syntactic and lexical choice, as well as sound and kinesic elements. These things are best learned and practiced together in use. A poetic text usually offers a means of integrating all such aspects necessary to the development of Korean language programs. To this the third principle can be easily linked:

Principle 3 : Language learning and teaching are based on normal uses of language, with communication of meanings (in oral or written

form) basic to all strategies and techniques

To learn a language naturally, one needs much practice in using the language for the normal purposes language serves in everyday life. This is in contradistinction to the artificial types of drills and practice exercises to which many learners are still subjected. Manipulation of structural patterns in some presumed logical order in a sequence that is semantically incoherent does not prepare the learner for normal uses of language. Language practice should already be as close to real communication as practicable. (...) In 1904 Jespersen, the Danish linguist, observed that language textbooks often give the impression that Frenchmen (substitute Americans, Germans, Russians, Hispanics) "must be strictly systematical beings, who one day speak merely in futures, another day in [past tenses], and who say the most disconnected things only for the sake of being able to use all the persons in the tense which for the time being happens to be the subject for conversation, while they carefully postpone the use of the subjunctive until next year(O. Jespersen, 1961: 17-18)." Little seems to have changed in a hundred years.

Principle 4 : Classroom relations reflect mutual liking and respect, allowing for both teacher personality and student personality in a non-threatening atmosphere of cooperative learning

Teaching and learning languages are distinctly different from other subject disciplines. Speaking and writing what one really thinks and feels

means revealing one's inner self: one's feelings, prejudices, values, and aspirations. In a new language, learners can do this only in a roughly approximate, unnuanced way, that is, in a simplified form of the language, perhaps incorrectly formulated, so that they can easily give a false impression of who they are, or who they would like people to think they are. This experience can be very inhibiting and ego-threatening, if not traumatic. Students frequently seek to avoid it.

The reading of poetic texts has often proven to be a way out of such barriers: by reading a memorized and internalized text, students have often shown that they were out of the inhibiting and ego-threatening phase. Moreover the involvement caused by the contents of the poetic text helped create an atmosphere of empathy, cooperation, complicity, usually very conducive to the building of a participatory intention between students and teacher. In addition, it also helped keeping the attention rate more constantly on the high level.

Principle 5 : Basic touse of language are language knowledge and language control

All languages are organized at several levels (phonological, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic), and these various subsystems interact within the mental representation. Grammatical structure and vocabulary, which are interrelated in their functioning, provide the tools for expressing semantic and pragmatic meaning. As Halliday expresses it: "Reality consists of

'goings-on': of doing, happening, feeling, being. These goings-on are sorted out in the semantic system of the language, and expressed through the grammar of the clause(M.A.K. Halliday, 1985: 101)." Once we have internalized the fundamentals of this organization for our new language (linguists are working continually at systematizing the details and even native speakers are still learning its potential), we are liberated to express a multiplicity of meanings. (...) Students acquire this precision of expression through performing rules, not through memorizing or discussing them.

The performative qualities of poetry cannot be stressed enough.

Performing rules, then, provides the natural bridge to using these rules in creating personal messages, which we shall call control of language. Language control necessarily implies the ability to understand messages and their full implications in the context, social and cultural, interpreting tone of voice, stress, intonation, and kinesics, as well as actual words and structures. In expression, it implies more than syntactic accuracy; it requires also syntactic appropriateness in contexts of use and in culturally determined relationships. Once some degree of language control has been attained, language is used "as a medium which will engage the thought, perception, and imagination of the learner(A. A. Leotiev, 1981: 65)."

Principle 6 : Development of language control proceeds through creativity, which is nurtured by interactive, participatory activities.

(...) That use of language is creative, not imitative, has been emphasized by language teaching theorists, linguists, and psycholinguists for years, yet many language teachers continue to teach as though imitation, repetition, and reconstruction or transformation of other people's meanings in exercises were the be-all and end-all of language learning. In 1966, Chomsky forcefully drew to the attention of language teachers the fact that "ordinary linguistic behavior characteristically involves innovation, formation of new sentences and new patterns(N. Chomsky / R.G. Mead Jr.(edt.), 1966: 44)." This he succinctly described as "the creative aspect of normal language use(N. Chomsky, 1966: 11)", and this creativity applies as much to listening and reading as to speaking and writing, as psychologists have long pointed out. (...) In language use, "true creativity means free action within the framework of a system of rules," as Chomsky has phrased it(N. Chomsky / C. P. Otero(edt.), 1988).

Poetry is probably the best means demonstrating s creative language use by adopting "free action within the framework of a system of rules".

Principle 7 : Every possible medium and modality is used to aid learning

Principle 8 : Language Learning is penetrating another culture; students learn to operate harmoniously within it or in contact with it

Language and the cultural values, reactions, and expectations of speakers of that language are subtly melded. Gattegno brings this out when he says

that “only when one is really imbued with the literature or soaked in the environment of the people using the language can one express oneself in speech or writing as a native would. It is the spirit of a language that has to get hold of one’s mind(Gattegno, 1972: 20).”

Principle 9 : The real world extends beyond the classroom walls; language learning takes place in and out of the classroom

Participation to poetry readings, such as the one that took place last week in Venice, and saw the participation of the Korean poets Ko Un and Chong Hyon Jong, are strongly recommended, because they offer the students an excellent, although quite costly and rare, opportunity to become exposed to real Korean spoken language, read by poets themselves and not by persons trained in language education, who might provide a way of reading too clean and correct to be close to reality.

Students’ participation to last week’s event has been constant and very high: about 80 of the 100 students enrolled in the courses have attended for the entire day, and the following day presence has been as high as the previous day. In addition, students attentive participation and numerous questions asked at the end of the event have shown that their “thirst” for “Things Korean” is very high. Teaching Korean language simply limiting it to the use of the textbook is too artificial, not very auspicious and certainly not enough for providing the learning audience with a thorough preparation in Korean Language and Culture.

Investment of more funds and resources are needed, and a cooperation with the persons in charge of the individual local universities is highly auspicated. Textbooks prepared for an English speaking audience are not necessarily applicable for audience of different linguistic backgrounds. I herewith take the opportunity to announce in front of this prestigious audience that a textbook with quotations taken from contemporary Korean poetry texts is an ongoing project at Venice University and that I am currently in search of funds for its completion and publication.*

[주제어] 외국어로서의 한국어교육, 시, 실제 언어자료

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* 본 논문은 2004. 10. 31. 투고되었으며, 11. 12. 심사가 시작되어 11. 25. 심사가 종료되었음.

■ Abstract

Poetry as a Way to Teach Korean Language

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This paper is purposed for examining some advantages of using poetry as original language materials, then suggesting some general principles regarding on it. Firstly, poetry consists of rythmes, so it renders it easy to memorize and so internalize the syntactical structures. Secondly, poetry is a powerful means of cultural communications. Thirdly, poetry can be used for developing creative writing skills. Fourthly, poetry can stimulate students' participation in class, and it can be used for a concentrated means of vehiculating elements of Korean language and culture to language audience and so on. Then this paper suggests some general principles regarding on teaching Korean Language through poetry as follows:

1. The student is the language learner
2. Language learning and teaching are shaped by student needs and objectives in particular circumstances.
3. Language learning and teaching are based on normal uses of language, with communication of meanings basic to all strategies and techniques.
4. Classroom relations reflect mutual liking and respect, allowing for both teacher personality and students personality in non-threatening atmosphere of cooperative learning.

5. Basic touse of language are language knowledge and language control.
6. Development of language control proceeds through creativity, which is nurtured by interactive, participatory activities.
7. Every possible medium and modality is used to aid learning.
8. Language learning is penetrating another culture, students learn to operate harmoniously within it or in contact with it.
9. The real world extends beyond the classroom walls; language learning takes place in and out of the classroom.

[Key words] Korean Language Education as a foreign language, Poetry, Original Language materials