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## New Measures to Improve Korean Culture Education for Chinese Students in South Korea: Focusing on racial differences<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

To derive a more effective educational method, racial differences among Chinese students in learning Korean culture was investigated using a survey method. The Han and Joseon racial groups in China were examined. Before the survey, the Han race students (Chinese students except Joseon race students, in this case) preferred a language and culture teaching method (LCTM), whereas the Joseon race students favored an audiovisual teaching method (AVTM). However, after experiencing four different teaching methods – comparative-cultural teaching method (CCTM), AVTM, LCTM, and rote memorization teaching method—for two weeks, the Han race students preferred the AVTM more, whereas the Joseon race students preferred the CCTM. Thus, students from the same country require different education methods.

**Keywords:** *Chinese students, culture knowledge, culture teaching methods, Korean culture*

### Introduction

The number of foreign students studying at universities in Korea increases every year<sup>2</sup> (123,462 in April 2017) and the students are mostly Chinese. Since the establishment of Korea-China diplomatic relations, the number of Chinese students, which was initially low, has increased gradually; 56% as of April 2017 (The Ministry of Justice, 2017). China, being a multi-racial country, comprises 56 races, and therefore the students belong to various racial groups. This study, however, focuses on Han and Joseon race students.

People of the Joseon race moved to China from the Korean peninsula between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Han & Gwon, 1994). They have formed autonomous districts in three provinces (Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilungkiang) in northeast China (Lee, 1994). Therefore, the customs and language of the Joseon race is the same as those of Koreans. They even use textbooks written in the Korean language. They are Chinese, but they share great similarity with Koreans. However, regardless of the similarities, the Joseon race students are treated like Chinese students in Korea when organizing educational curricula (Moon, 2013). Moreover, people of the Han race have superficial knowledge about Korean language and culture. The Joseon race students learn Korean language and culture at home and from school; therefore, they differ greatly from the Han race students. Nevertheless, how should the students from these two races be taught? Should the same teaching methods be used with them because they are Chinese? Or, should they be taught differently by identifying differences in their awareness of Korean culture?

This study adopts the latter perspective. Despite being Chinese, students from the two races have apparent differences in their prior knowledge and beliefs regarding Korean culture. The Han race students tend to show high interest in Korean culture, influenced by Korean dramas and K-pop, whereas the Joseon race students tend to exhibit a strong desire to find their identity as the Han race and their roots in Korean culture. In addition, they have different motivations for studying in Korea. The Han race students tend to have a high desire to learn Korea's advanced education, for which they receive economic support from their parents; the Joseon race students, however, do not face difficulties in expressing themselves in the Korean language and seek job opportunities (Moon, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> In 2012, the number of Chinese students was 84,711, which gradually increased to 86,410, 96,357, and 115,927 in 2014, 2015, and 2016, respectively (Monthly statistics published in April 2017 by the Korea Immigration Service).

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Despite such differences, the same cultural education is offered to both the Han and Joseon race university students in Korea. Consequently, students experience conflicts with their prior knowledge and lose interest in learning, which hampers their learning of Korean culture.

Korean culture refers to all collective phenomena that a single race has generated and developed from the past to the present time. Thus, Korean culture encompasses various fields and serves as a foundation for several academic fields (Moon, 2013). It can be considered as the most basic element in understanding and communicating with Koreans. If several elements of Korean culture are considered essential Liberal Arts knowledge, Korean culture education is extremely essential for Chinese students in Korea and can be considered a suitable educational field.

However, Korean culture education has been focusing on the Korean language education because it is considered a prerequisite for foreign learners to learn Korean culture. However, when cultural education is provided along with language education, the effect of language education can be doubled. If we consider language education as a foundation for acquiring a foreign culture, Korean culture education becomes extremely important (Moon, Nam & Kim, 2014).

Therefore, in this study, Chinese students were classified into two groups (Han and Joseon race) to investigate their level of awareness of Korean culture and derive the most effective educational measures based on the results. Both qualitative and quantitative investigations were conducted; four education methods were used to produce data for analyses.

## **Research Methodology**

This study, which lasted for a month (March 10–31, 2017), used both quantitative and qualitative methods. First, a survey using the qualitative method was administered to 200 Chinese university students studying in Korea (100 students each from the Han and Joseon race). To investigate students' preference by their school years, 100 students were selected from freshman and sophomore years and junior and senior years. Moreover, to identify an effective educational method, pre- and post-lecture changes were investigated.

For adequacy, the students' race was checked beforehand; the students' parents' race was also investigated because racial differences between students and parents can influence the result of this study. The students' educational background before university education was also investigated. Students who graduated from Han and Joseon race schools were selected for this study.

196 students were analyzed, of whom four, with dishonest or erroneous responses, were excluded from the analysis. The quantitative investigation had nine items to investigate the students' understanding of Korea-China diplomatic relations and overall Korean culture, and the qualitative investigation had eight items to investigate the students' levels of awareness of Korean culture. Four educational methods—a comparative-cultural teaching method (CCTM), an audiovisual teaching method (AVTM), a language and culture teaching method (LCTM), and a rote memorization teaching method (RMTM)—were derived from the investigations, and they were used to teach the students for 2 weeks. Thereafter, a survey was conducted based on the students' preferred educational method. After giving lectures using the four education methods, an in-depth observation of the students' responses was conducted to identify changes.

The survey investigated whether a different educational method should be used depending on the students' prior knowledge and awareness of Korean culture, even if they are from the same country. This study is based on the assumption that differences in the Han and Joseon race result in differences in the acceptance of Korean culture, eventually determining students' preference for an educational method. The study emphasizes that foreign students from the same country may have differences in the degree of their exposure to foreign culture, their prior knowledge, and cultural familiarity; therefore, different educational methods should be used accordingly.

## **Analysis: Level of students' awareness of Korean culture**

Due to the geographical proximity between Korea and China, the two countries exhibit cultural similarities because they share similar religion, philosophy, and customs (Nam, Kim & Kim, 2016). Does it imply that Chinese students do not need to learn Korean culture? Moreover, despite being Chinese students, if they show different racial tendencies, should they be taught differently? Before taking a different educational measure for different racial students from the same country, this study investigated the students' basic awareness of Korean culture.

According to Table 1, there is a major discrepancy between the Han and Joseon race students in their prior knowledge about Korean language and culture. The Korean language proficiency was low (62%) for the Han race students and high (92%) for the Joseon race students. The difference is attributable to the influence of their parents and language used at schools (elementary, middle, and high schools).

**Table 1.** Level of general knowledge about Korean culture among Chinese students (Han/Joseon race) ( $n = 196$ )

| Question   | Race   | 1<br>Very<br>Much | 2<br>Some-<br>what | 3<br>Not<br>Much | 4<br>Little |
|--|--------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------|-------------|
| 1. China influenced Korean culture greatly.  | Han    | 54%               | 36%                | 10%              | -           |
|  | Joseon | 48%               | 44%                | 8%               | -           |
| 2. There are differences between Korean and Chinese cultures.  | Han    | 7%                | 17%                | 48%              | 28%         |
|  | Joseon | 8%                | 26%                | 44%              | 22%         |
| 3. I have a high awareness of Korean culture.  | Han    | 8%                | 11%                | 62%              | 19%         |
|  | Joseon | 62%               | 27%                | 11%              | -           |
| 4. I have good Korean language proficiency.  | Han    | 8%                | 30%                | 45%              | 17%         |
|  | Joseon | 75%               | 17%                | 8%               | -           |
| 5. There is a difference between Korean and Chinese culture education.   | Han    | 18%               | 43%                | 19%              | 20%         |
|  | Joseon | 21%               | 20%                | 36%              | 23%         |
| 6. There is a difference between what you learned about Korean culture in China and what you learned in Korea. | Han    | 22%               | 45%                | 20%              | 13%         |
|  | Joseon | 20%               | 23%                | 36%              | 21%         |
| 7. I am interested in learning about Korean culture.   | Han    | 5%                | 15%                | 53%              | 27%         |
|  | Joseon | 17%               | 48%                | 23%              | 12%         |
| 8. I like Korean culture.  | Han    | 14%               | 28%                | 46%              | 12%         |
|  | Joseon | 44%               | 24%                | 22%              | 10%         |
| 9. I want to learn about Korean culture.   | Han    | 18%               | 24%                | 46%              | 12%         |
|  | Joseon | 24%               | 32%                | 34%              | 10%         |

Consequently, the Chinese students had different levels of awareness of Korean culture depending on their race. The Han race students seemed to perceive Korean culture from a China-centered perspective (Kim & Jeong, 2004; Yu, 2005), whereas the Joseon race students emphasized racial similarity between them and Koreans. The students from both races believed that Chinese culture was superior and had a China-centered cultural view, but they had a different attitude toward Korean culture depending on their prior learning level. Regarding the influence of China on Korean culture, the students from both races responded that China affected Korean culture (Han-90%, Joseon-92%) and believed in the similarity between Korean and Chinese culture (Han-86%, Joseon-66%). However, according to their level of awareness of Korean culture, 81% of the Han race students responded that they did not know Korean culture very well, whereas 89% of the Joseon race

students responded that they knew Korean culture very well, indicating a great discrepancy between the two races.

Nevertheless, where does this discrepancy stem from? To check the origin, the cultural education situation was investigated, revealing that the Han race students identified a difference between the learning content of Korean culture in China and Korea (67%) and between Korean and Chinese education (61%). However, the Joseon race students identified no difference in both textbooks (57%) and education (59%). Thus, the discrepancy between the two races is attributable to differences in the content of textbooks and in educational methods; namely, Korean students and Joseon race students study from cultural textbooks that emphasize the superiority of their own race (Kim, 2005). Such discrepancies affect students' learning attitude toward Korean culture, and therefore the Han race students had low curiosity about Korean culture compared to the Joseon race students.

To investigate the students' level of awareness of Korean culture in depth, 80 Chinese students (40 each from Han and Joseon races) were selected and a qualitative investigation was conducted; the students' responses to the following eight questions were analyzed.

**Table 2.** Interview on overall Korean culture ( $n = 80$ )

| Question   | Han Race       |                  | Joseon Race    |                  |
|--|----------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|
|  | Correct Answer | Incorrect Answer | Correct Answer | Incorrect Answer |
| 1. The traditional wedding ceremony of Koreans.                      | 15%            | 85%              | 86%            | 14%              |
| 2. The meaning of Korean traditional wedding ceremony.               | 10%            | 90%              | 55%            | 45%              |
| 3. The most preferred funeral ceremony of Koreans.                   | 64%            | 36%              | 73%            | 17%              |
| 4. Why do Koreans cry aloud when a person dies?                      | 13%            | 77%              | 33%            | 67%              |
| 5. How many times do Koreans bow at an ancestral ritual?             | 9%             | 81%              | 35%            | 65%              |
| 6. How many times do Koreans bow to their parents on New Year's day? | 48%            | 32%              | 75%            | 25%              |
| 7. What is the traditional religion of Koreans?                      | 17%            | 83%              | 30%            | 70%              |
| 8. What is the meaning of the Korean national flag?                  | 19%            | 81%              | 43%            | 57%              |

According to Table 2, the students' awareness of Korean culture differed according to race. According to the rate of correct responses, the level of awareness of the Han race students was 25%, whereas that of the Joseon race students was 50%.

For questions 1–5 on the rites of passage, the Joseon race students had a higher rate of correct responses (60%), compared to that of the Han race students (20%), highlighting a great discrepancy between the two groups.

Such a tendency, apparently, reflects the Joseon race students' prior learning of Korean culture (Hwang, 2002). For the questions on the meaning of Korean wedding customs and attire, the Han race students provided all incorrect responses, whereas the Joseon race students provided all correct responses; responses to the questions on the attitude of Koreans toward death and ancestral worship had the same results. This also reflects the students' learning at home and school (Choi, 2005). Such incorrect responses might have been given because the Han race students viewed Korean wedding according to their own wedding customs. In China, after marriage, the bride goes to the bridegrooms' house, and therefore the Han race students could not understand an ancient Korean custom where the groom goes to the bride's house (Moon, 2005). Thus, the Joseon race students were aware of this Korean custom because of their prior learning, whereas the Han race students understood Korean culture from their China-centered viewpoint.

Nevertheless, not all the Han and Joseon race students had different results. To questions regarding Korean traditional religion and the number of bows offered at ancestral rituals, all the respondents responded incorrectly. Despite belonging to the same cultural area, both the Han and Joseon race students responded incorrectly to questions regarding customs that are no longer practiced or those of which they did not have prior knowledge. However, regarding the custom of New Year's greeting that is currently practiced, both race students responded correctly. For the question about the meaning of the Korean national flag, both Han (81%) and Joseon (57%) race students responded incorrectly.

According to the qualitative investigation, the Han race students tended to view Korean culture from the perspective of Chinese culture, and the Joseon Race students also did not know the specifics of Korean culture very well. In other words, the Han race students' China-centered cultural viewpoint and the Joseon race students' preconception that they know Korean culture very well hampered their understanding of Korean culture (Moon, 2012).

Based on the level of the two races' awareness of Korean culture, this study attempted to explore a more effective educational method. Table 3 presents the results of an education method that is considered most effective in the process that Chinese students accept Korean culture.

In the case of the Han race students, because of their low level of Korean language proficiency, they believed that the LCTM was the most effective (35%), whereas the Joseon race students (42%) preferred the AVTM, which provided

**Table 3.** Which educational method do you believe is the most effective for you? ( $n = 196$ )

| Category                                    | Han Race | Joseon Race |
|---|----------|-------------|
| Comparative-cultural teaching method (CCTM) | 29%      | 40%         |
| Audiovisual teaching method (AVTM)          | 31%      | 42%         |
| Language and culture teaching method (LCTM) | 35%      | 10%         |
| Rote memorization teaching method (RMTM)    | 5%       | 8%          |

a visual effect. In other words, the Han race students believed that learning both Korean culture and language was more effective. However, the Joseon race students with high Korean language proficiency believed that a more animated educational method was effective. Table 4 presents the results of a survey on preferred educational methods by university year.

**Table 4.** Which educational method do you prefer the most? ( $n = 196$ )

| Category | Han Race                              |                                       | Joseon Race                           |                                       |
|----------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
|          | 1 <sup>st</sup> -2 <sup>nd</sup> year | 3 <sup>rd</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup> year | 1 <sup>st</sup> -2 <sup>nd</sup> year | 3 <sup>rd</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup> year |
| CCTM     | 30%                                   | 31%                                   | 41%                                   | 48%                                   |
| AVTM     | 28%                                   | 33%                                   | 43%                                   | 33%                                   |
| LCTM     | 34%                                   | 26%                                   | 12%                                   | 14%                                   |
| RMTM     | 8%                                    | 10%                                   | 4%                                    | 5%                                    |

Among the Han race students, the initial year students (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> year) preferred the LCTM (34%) the most, whereas the higher year students (3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> year) preferred the AVTM (33%) the most. In the case of the Joseon race students, the initial year students (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> year) preferred the AVTM, whereas the higher year students (3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> year) preferred the CCTM, which helped them identify the differences between the two cultures. In other words, the students who did not have good Korean language proficiency tended to learn Korean culture to master the Korean language, whereas those who had good Korean language proficiency preferred an educational method that showed interesting videos while teaching differences in cultures.

According to the results of such surveys, cultural education cannot be separated from language education for foreigners. In the case of higher level of language education, video materials are more effective in terms of a comparative approach.

**Results: The most effective educational measure**

To identify the most effective educational method and the process of change induced by the most preferred educational method, four kinds of educational methods were implemented for 2 weeks between April 17 and 28, 2017. The participating students were divided into Han and Joseon races and further into initial year students and higher year students; 44 students were assigned to each of the four groups. The four teaching methods were implemented and four topics were used for each educational method; moreover, 2-hour lectures were given.

For example, for the CCTM, 2-hour lectures were given on the topics of the wedding system, funeral customs (burial and cremation), ancestral rites (presided by son or daughter), and ancestral worship, highlighting the similarities and differences between the two countries. For the AVTM, four topics – the meanings of wedding attire and numbers, differences in preferred colors, Byeong-in yangyo (French campaign against Korea), and the Opium War (Invasion by the British Army) were selected and videos on each topic were presented; the effects of the educational method were evaluated.

For the LCTM, the topics of folk tales, adage, songs, and dramas were used. Folk tales used the two countries’ foundation mythology, adage used the content of man and woman discrimination, songs used the content of K-pop and Chinese songs and dramas used words used in lyrics to explain the difference and similarity between the two cultures.

Finally, for the RMTM, the change of dynasties, diversity of religion and philosophy, and changes of political systems were introduced. For 2 weeks, four teaching methods were used for 32 hours to introduce Korean culture. After the implementation, the students selected the most effective education methods.

**Table 5.** Which educational method do you believe is the most effective for you? (n = 196)

| Category | Han Race |     | Joseon Race |     |
|----------|----------|-----|-------------|-----|
|          | B        | A   | B           | A   |
| CCTM     | 29%      | 33% | 40%         | 49% |
| AVTM     | 31%      | 36% | 42%         | 39% |
| LCTM     | 35%      | 27% | 10%         | 9%  |
| RMTM     | 5%       | 4%  | 8%          | 3%  |

Note: Before survey = B; After survey = A

The results reveal that the educational methods previously preferred by the Han and Joseon race students changed after the implementation; before, the Han race students preferred the LCTM (35%), but after the implementation, they believed the AVTM was more effective (36%). The Joseon race students’ preference also changed from the AVTM (42%) to the CCTM (49%). Such changes were also identified by school year. The initial year students changed their preference after implementation, whereas the higher year students did not.

**Table 6.** Which educational method do you prefer the most? (n = 196)

| Category | Han Race                              |     |                                       |     | Joseon Race                           |     |                                       |     |
|----------|---------------------------------------|-----|---------------------------------------|-----|---------------------------------------|-----|---------------------------------------|-----|
|          | 1 <sup>st</sup> -2 <sup>nd</sup> year |     | 3 <sup>rd</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup> year |     | 1 <sup>st</sup> -2 <sup>nd</sup> year |     | 3 <sup>rd</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup> year |     |
|          | B                                     | A   | B                                     | A   | B                                     | A   | B                                     | A   |
| CCTM     | 19%                                   | 30% | 32%                                   | 30% | 33%                                   | 42% | 35%                                   | 46% |
| AVTM     | 34%                                   | 42% | 43%                                   | 45% | 38%                                   | 34% | 33%                                   | 32% |
| LCTM     | 37%                                   | 23% | 17%                                   | 22% | 25%                                   | 20% | 27%                                   | 19% |
| RMTM     | 10%                                   | 5%  | 8%                                    | 3%  | 4%                                    | 4%  | 4%                                    | 3%  |

Note: Before survey = B; After survey = A

The initial year (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> year) Han race students preferred the LCTM before implementation, but favored the AVTM (42%) after implementation. However, their higher year (3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> year) counterparts preferred the AVTM both before and after implementation. In addition, the initial year (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> year) Joseon race students preferred the AVTM (38%) before implementation, but favored the CCTM after implementation. However, their higher year (3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> year) counterparts preferred the CCTM both before and after implementation.

Thus, the results revealed that the Han race students focused on learning the Korean language in their initial years of university and preferred an education method that induces interest as they progressed to higher years. By contrast, the Joseon race students preferred the AVTM during their early years, but preferred the CCTM, which facilitates in-depth study of Korean culture in later years.

Among the Chinese students, the Han race students admitted that they experienced difficulties in accepting Korean culture due to conflicts with their prior knowledge that they had acquired (the result of qualitative investigation). In other words, China-centered cultural education and Sinocentrism hampered their understanding of the culture of the surrounding countries (Oh, 2001; Park, 2003). Therefore, the Han race students wanted to learn the Korean language initially, but later they became interested in Korean culture after the implementation of their

preferred education method, the AVTM. However, the Joseon race students said that they did not feel the need to learn Korean culture more because they learned Korean culture at home and from the Joseon race in school. Therefore, they were interested in Korean culture before implementation but became curious after the implementation of their preferred education method, the CCTM, to satisfy their curiosity.

**Table 7.** Why do you (Han race) prefer video education? or Why do you (Joseon race) prefer the CCTM ( $n = 196$ )

| Category                     | Han Race | Joseon Race |
|------------------------------|----------|-------------|
| To learn about differences   | 24%      | 40%         |
| To increase my interest      | 36%      | 35%         |
| To reduce cultural conflicts | 33%      | 21%         |
| To expand my thinking        | 7%       | 4%          |

According to Table 7, the Han Race students (36%) preferred the AVTM because it was interesting, whereas the Joseon race students (40%) preferred the CCTM because it highlighted cultural differences. Consequently, the Han race students could overcome a China-centered cultural view after the implementation, whereas the Joseon race students could feel more curious about Korean culture.

## Conclusion

This study began with the premise that different education methods should be used depending on the race of foreign students from the same country. Therefore, 200 Chinese students (100 from the Han race and 100 from the Joseon race) were selected, and their level of awareness of Korean culture was investigated. After implementing four educational methods for 2 weeks, the most preferred educational method of each group was identified. The groups were further divided into initial (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> year) and higher (3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>) years; changes in the students' preference for educational method were compared before and after implementation.

Consequently, the foreign students from the same country (China) showed preference for different educational methods depending on the race (Han/Joseon race) and academic years; namely, the Han race students preferred the LCTM due to their low level of Korean language proficiency, whereas the Joseon race students preferred the AVTM, which increased their interest in Korean culture. The Han

race students changed their preference to the AVTM as they progressed to higher years; the Joseon race students also changed to the CCTM, indicating that their preference for educational methods changed as their understanding of Korean culture deepened.

Thus, different educational method should be used depending on students' level of foreign language proficiency, prior learning, and degree of cultural similarity, although students are from the same country because the most important element in cultural education is students' level of cultural understanding and not their nationality. Therefore, the Han race students experienced difficulties in acquiring Korean culture due to their level of Korean language proficiency and conflicts with prior learning; the Joseon race students, however, had a low level of understanding of Korean culture but did not feel a strong need to learn Korean culture. In particular, students from neighboring countries experienced conflicts with their prior learning; therefore, a comparative educational method might be more appropriate for such students.

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