

Korean language education in China: current status, characteristics and improvement suggestions¹

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Abstract

This paper aims to grasp the current situation of Korean education in colleges and universities in China, and to analyze the main problems and challenges as well as to put forward suggestions for future improvement. This paper first divides the development history of Korean education in China into four periods, and then analyzes the current situation of Korean education in China before pointing out its main characteristics and problems. Based on the above discussions, this paper puts forward some suggestions on the development of Korean education in China from seven aspects: the development direction, the training of teachers, the construction of teaching materials, the cultivation of graduate students, the reinforcement of academic communications, the development of Korean teaching and research, and the diversification of Korean education.

Keywords: Korean language education; China; Korean major; current status; characteristics; improvement suggestions.

1 In this paper, Korean language refers to the language of North Korea and South Korea. Due to the limited space, the research object of this paper refers to the Korean education for Korean majors in Chinese mainland universities excluding Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan. This research was supported by China's National Social Science Foundation 20AYY014.

1. Introduction

China and the Korean Peninsula, which are often called “neighboring countries connected with a narrow strip of water”, enjoy close geographical proximity and are inextricably linked in history and culture. With Chinese characters and Confucianism as the media, there have been very frequent exchanges between China and the Korean.

Korean language education in Chinese universities and colleges began in 1945 and has a history of more than 70 years. Especially since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and South Korea in 1992, remarkable progress has been made in the development of Korean language education. However, there have been few academic achievements in analyzing the current situation and future direction of Korean language education. Studies on this topic were first conducted by Chinese scholars in the late 1990s. Whereafter, Li (2005), Wang (2009), Yin (2015), Jiang (2020) and other Chinese scholars have also commented on the current status and the problems of Korean language education in China. Meanwhile, Yoon (2007), Song (2007), Jo (2004) and other Korean scholars have analyzed China’s Korean language education and discussed its prospects.

Korean language serves as the basis of the communication and cooperation between China and the two Koreas in diplomacy, economy and trade, cultural and humanities exchanges and other fields. Through Korean language education, we can not only cultivate experts with Korean language proficiency who are going to play an important role in the future communications between China and the Korean Peninsula, but can also train the future generations to become the major force in Korean studies. As globalization increasingly becomes the development trend of the world and the rapid development of information technology drives changes in human life, it is necessary to review the history of Korean language education in China over the past 70 years and to have an objective understanding of the current situation and issues we are facing in order to make further improvements to Korean language education. In view of the above, this paper, based on a review on the historical process of Korean language education in Chinese universities, aims to understand the current status and problems of Korean language education in Chinese universities and colleges and to put forward some suggestions for the development of China’s Korean language education in the future.

2. Development process of Korean language education in China

Before focusing on the current status of Korean language education in China, it is important to investigate how it has developed. The development process can be divided into four periods, namely the initial period (1945-1972), the recession period (1972-1992), the transitional period (1992-2002) and the growing period (2002-present) (Wang, 2009).

2.1. Initial period (1945-1972)

Korean language education in China was initiated in 1945 at the Department of Korean Language of the National Oriental Language College, which is the predecessor of the Korean Language and Culture Department of Peking University. In 1946, the National Oriental Language College moved from Chongqing to Nanjing and began to recruit students in February the same year. After the liberation of China in 1949, the Department of Korean Language of National Oriental Language College was incorporated into the Department of Oriental Languages and Cultures at Peking University, and changed its name to the “Teaching and Research Section of Korean Language”. At the beginning of the establishment of the Korean language major, in order to support its development, in 1951 President Kim Il Sung of the DPRK sent Professor Ryu Ryeol and Professor Kim Gwangik, known as famous Korean scholars, to teach at Peking University. Professor Ryu Ryeol also served as the first director of the Teaching and Research Section of Korean language. The faculty was composed of Han Chinese professors, ethnic Korean professors in China, and North Korean scholars, which laid a solid foundation for the development of Korean language education in China.

Following the example of Peking University, the University of International Business and Economics, and the PLA College of Foreign Language each established a department of Korean language in 1952 and 1953 respectively. In 1972, Yanbian University established the department of Korean language as a foreign language, as did the Beijing International Studies University. At that time, the teaching conditions were highly unsatisfactory and, due to the lack of demand for people with Korean language proficiency, there were fewer than 30 teachers and fewer than 100 students. Despite such difficult conditions, these universities made great efforts in Korean language education and played a key role in nurturing diplomats and professionals for diplomatic communications between China and North Korea.

2.2. Recession period (1972-1992)

For approximately 20 years, from the latter period of the Cultural Revolution in 1972 until the establishment of China-ROK diplomatic relations, education of Korean studies, like other educations in China, was in recession. Beijing International Studies University suspended enrollment from 1973 to 1992 for 20 years, and the Korean language department in this university, which was established in 1972, had only 9 graduates by 1993. What's more, the University of International Business and Economics suspended enrollment on two separate occasions for 13 years in total from 1966 to 1984, and the Korean language department of it had only 35 graduates for nearly 30 years (1952-1985).

2.3. Transitional period (1992-2002)

The establishment of China-ROK diplomatic ties in 1992 was deemed as a turning point for the development of Korean language education. Along with the increasing exchanges in a variety

of different fields between the two countries and South Korea's economic growth, Korean language education in China also achieved unprecedented development. During this period, not only the number of students increased significantly but also the importance of Korean language education was widely acknowledged, followed by the establishment of Korean departments in many universities. From 1993 to the end of the 1990s, there were 19 universities where Korean departments were newly set up—including the initial five universities, the total is 24. During this period, interest in Korean continued to increase, and Korean language education presented a rising trend of development. It could be called a Korean language boom in China.

According to statistics conducted in 2002, ten years after the establishment of China-ROK diplomatic relations, the number of students had grown from 500 in 1995 to 2,357 in 2002. Moreover, the number of professors had also risen from 30 in the 1970s to 125 in 1995, and 178 in 2002.

Meanwhile, publication of integrated materials, such as *Standard Korean (1-3)* (1996, Peking University Press), *Korean (1-4)* (2000, The Ethnic Publishing House), helped improve the level of Korean education. However, there were also some negative aspects: preparation for adequate courses, materials and professionals became a problem as such rapid development had not been predicted.

2.4. Growing period (2002-present)

Since 2002, with the rapid development in the past 20 years and the enhancement of its internal capacity, Korea studies education has blossomed significantly. According to the statistics of the platform designated by China's Ministry of Education², as of December 30th, 2017, there are a total of 266 universities offering Korean majors, with 125 of them offering four-year courses and the other 141 offering two-year or three-year courses. At the same time, there are 2,675 universities with English majors and 829 universities with Japanese majors in China. Thus, Korean is the third largest language in China's foreign language education, surpassing Russian (212) and French (189).

In October 2002, the Korean Language Teaching and Research Association of China (hereafter the KLTRAC), a Korean-language-teaching related association, was officially launched. Since then, it has been contributing to unifying the capacity of teachers and researchers of Korean language through a series of activities such as holding international academic conferences, publishing an academic journal, dispatching professors for overseas training and holding Korean Studies academic forums for graduate students. Since 2012, the KLTRAC started to

2 <https://gaokao.chsi.com.cn>

organize and implement the TKM-4 (Test for Korean Majors-Band 4) and TKM-8 (Test for Korean Majors-Band 8) nationwide. During this period, the association has achieved an amazing success, going beyond the past 75 years in many areas such as material development, teacher training and research on Korean pedagogy. Its active involvement in the field contributed to the establishment of academic identity of Korean language pedagogy and methodology. At present, Korean language teaching has been enjoying another renaissance period, holding a leading position among the 99 non-general languages in China in terms of both scale and teaching level.

3. Current status and problems of Korean language education in China

This chapter, based on survey data and existing research results, focuses on the current situation and main characteristics of Korean language education in China, and points out several main problems that might hinder the development of Korean language education. The main features of Korean language education at this stage can be summarized as follows.

First, in general, Korean language education has developed but the regional distribution is unbalanced and the level of education is uneven. After the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and ROK in 1992, with the comprehensive development of economic, cultural and educational exchanges between the two countries, there is an increasing demand for Korean experts in society. The number of Korean majors increased more than 50 times in less than 30 years. A total of 266 universities have set up Korean majors. The current situation of Korean majors is shown below in table 1³.

TABLE 1

The situation of Korean major in China

REGION	PROVINCES, AUTONOMOUS REGIONS AND MUNICIPALITIES	UNIVERSITIES	COLLEGES	TOTAL
Northeast China	Liaoning	4	11	15
	Jilin	16	9	25
	Heilongjiang	10	9	19

3 Data source: <https://gaokao.chsi.com.cn>.

North China	Beijing	7	0	7	26
	Tianjin	4	2	6	
	Hebei	4	4	8	
	Shanxi	0	3	3	
	Inner Mongolia	0	2	2	
East China	Shanghai	6	5	11	128
	Shandong	27	37	64	
	Jiangsu	11	24	35	
	Anhui	2	4	6	
	Zhejiang	4	4	8	
	Jiangxi	1	3	4	
	Fujian	0	0	0	
Central China	Henan	1	3	4	17
	Hubei	3	4	7	
	Hunan	4	2	6	
South China	Guangdong	6	8	14	19
	Guangxi	1	1	2	
	Hainan	1	2	3	
Northwest China	Shaanxi	6	0	6	7
	Gansu	0	0	0	
	Ningxia	0	0	0	
	Qinghai	0	0	0	
	Xinjiang	0	1	1	
Southwest China	Chongqing	2	0	2	10
	Sichuan	2	2	4	
	Guizhou	1	0	1	
	Yunnan	2	1	3	
	Tibet	0	0	0	
Total	125	141	266	266	

As shown above, Korean majors in China are mainly distributed in East, Northeast and North China, where exchanges with South Korea are more active. Among them, 128 universities in East China have set up Korean majors, accounting for about 1/2 of the total number in China. As for the provincial distribution, Shandong Province, Jiangsu Province, Jilin Province, Heilongjiang Province, Liaoning Province, Guangdong Province and Shanghai are on the top seven with 64, 35, 25, 19, 15, 14 and 11 universities offering Korean majors respectively. Among them, the number of Korean majors in Shandong Province accounts for about 1/4 of the total. On the other hand, the development of Korean language education in Western China is totally different. There are 10 provinces in Southwest and Northwest China, but merely 10 and 7 Korean majors respectively, less than 10%. Among them, Qinghai Province, Gansu Province, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region and Tibet Autonomous Region have no university-level Korean majors. In sharp contrast to the vigorous development of Korean education in the eastern coastal areas and northeast areas, Korean education in the western regions is experiencing a period of stagnation. There are great differences between the two areas in the economic, trade and cultural exchanges with South Korea, which leads to different demands for Korean professionals, and the imbalance of conditions and levels of Korean education in different regions. However, as the exchanges between Western China and South Korea are increasing, it is also necessary to improve the development of Korean education in the western region.

Meanwhile, the teaching level of Korean department varies greatly in different universities. Some famous universities with a long history teach on the basis of clear educational ideals and philosophy, so their Korean education is more standardized and of higher quality, while some universities and colleges set up departments to teach Korean purely for the purpose of expanding scale and obtaining economic benefits. The latter cases lack the necessary preparations of educational courses, faculty and teaching materials, making it difficult to carry out high-quality education.

Second, there is lack of diversity in the curriculum of Korean major in colleges and universities where there is a single mode and serious homogenization. According to the level of school rating, Chinese universities are often divided into 985 Project universities, 211 Project universities, universities under the central government, provincial universities, and junior colleges. According to the scope of disciplines, it can be divided into comprehensive universities and colleges, science and engineering universities and colleges, normal universities and colleges, language universities and colleges and so on. Universities of the same level can be divided into different categories according to disciplines, and universities of the same category can be divided into different levels. In addition, due to the different goals, ideas and students' backgrounds, various universities and colleges are highly diversified. In this case, Korean majors in different colleges and universities should also reflect their own characteristics in terms of vision, educational objectives and curriculum. However, the current curriculum of Korean majors proves to be highly homogenous, which can be perceived reflected from the following examples of Korean program descriptions.

This major cultivates high-quality Korean and Korean language professionals who meet the needs of the socialist modernization with Chinese characteristics and the development of the new era in the future. They should have comprehensive development in morality, intelligence, physics and arts, and a solid foundation in Korean language and literature, strong language practice ability, innovative spirit and international vision. After graduation, students can engage in foreign affairs, teaching, scientific research and translation in government agencies, colleges and universities, research institutions, news media and foreign trade enterprises.

—A comprehensive 985 Project University in Jilin Province

This major cultivates comprehensive and wide-ranging Korean senior professionals with solid basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation, extensive scientific and cultural knowledge, high-quality and strong ability, who can engage in translation, research, teaching and management in foreign affairs, economy and trade, culture, press and publication, education, scientific research, tourism and other departments.

—A provincial comprehensive university in Hebei Province

The purpose of this major is to enable students to master the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating Korean through systematic learning, master the language, literature, history, politics, economy, culture, religion, society and other related knowledge of Korea, be able to engage in foreign trade, cultural exchange, press and publication, education, tourism and other work, and cultivate the students with both ability and political integrity and international vision.

—A provincial normal university in Jilin Province

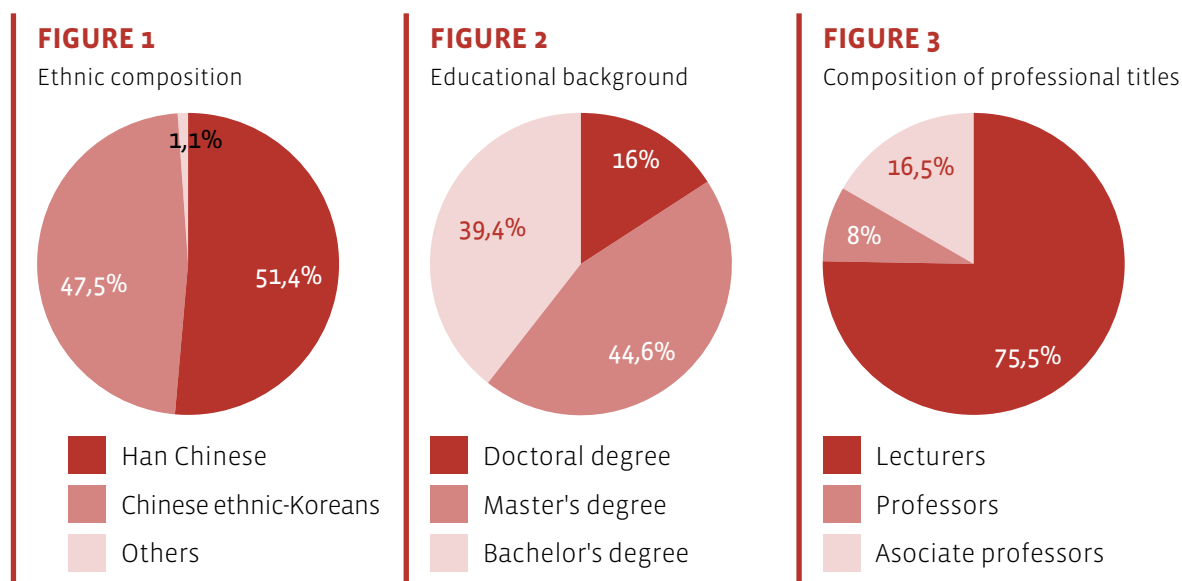
As above, although these universities and colleges vary in different categories and levels, and the score gap in the college entrance examination of these universities is more than 200 points maximally, the statements about the training objectives are highly homogeneous and reflect no significant distinction or characteristics. Among the curriculum designs of Korean major training programs in different universities and colleges, the homogeneity and lack of characteristics are more obvious as they present no diversification of school-running and talent training, and to reflect the characteristics of universities and colleges.

Third, the faculty has increased, and the overall level has been greatly improved, but it hasn't reached a satisfactory level yet and there is still much room for improvement. The quality of faculty is the quality of teaching and can determine the success or failure of education. The number of Korean language teachers has increased from less than 30 in the 1970s to 1,024 in 2009. According to incomplete statistics conducted by the Beijing office of Korea Foundation in 2016 on 105 universities and 54 junior colleges, the number of teachers reached as high as 1,343. Conservatively speaking, the number of Korean language teachers in China could be more than 2,000 today. Compared with other foreign language teachers, teachers of Korea majors in China are mainly composed of Chinese ethnic-Koreans and Han Chinese. According to the survey results in 2009, among the 1,024 Korean teachers in 170 universities, Chinese ethnic-Koreans and Han Chinese accounted for 51.4% and 47.5% respectively. In recent years,

with the retirement of the older generation of ethnic-Korean teachers and the entry of a large number of young Han Chinese teachers who graduated from South Korea or domestic universities, the proportion of Han teachers has gradually risen. Korean is the native language of Chinese ethnic-Korean teachers, therefore they have a unique advantage of providing good language education for students as a native speaker. Most of the Han teachers with Ph.D. degree in Korean linguistics or Korean Studies have received good academic trainings. Most universities and colleges can bring into full play the advantages of ethnic-Korean teachers and Han teachers, so that they can learn from each other and provide high-quality language education for Korean majors.

In recent years, the overall teaching and research level of Korean teachers in China has improved to a certain extent. However, local universities, private universities and some colleges cannot afford to employ those with master's degrees, let alone those with doctoral degrees. According to statistics from the Chinese Korean Language Education Research Association in 2009, among 1,024 professors of Korean departments, only 164 obtained a doctoral degree (16%) while 457 and 403 had a master's degree (44.6%) and a bachelor's degree (39.4%) respectively. Meanwhile, the situation of Korean teachers' professional technical titles is not satisfactory either with only 82 professors and 169 associate professors, and the rest being full-time lecturers.

The ethnic composition, educational background and professional titles of Korean language teachers are shown below in figures 1, 2 and 3.



Fourth, Korean teaching materials have been greatly improved in both quantity and quality, but there are few high-quality teaching materials that can meet the needs of teaching. With the development of Korean language education, many Korean teachers have taken part in

developing China's original materials for Korean teaching. On the other hand, because of the strong market needs for Korean teaching materials, many publishing houses begin to translate and publish Korean teaching materials developed in South Korea. Therefore, there has been a surge of textbook compilation and publication as various Korean teaching materials appeared. As of January 2021, the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press has published 240 Korean textbooks. In addition, Peking University Press and the World Publishing Corporation have also published a large number of Korean textbooks that are developed in China. In view of the current situation of Korean teaching materials, published Korean textbooks have far outnumbered those of other non-general languages.

But there are still some problems in the existing teaching materials. 1) The materials pay more attention to knowledge and skills than to qualities and abilities and lack reference to Chinese culture. 2) The materials show a lack of systematicness, consistency and the connections with each other. 3) The emphasis of each stage in the materials is not prominent, which leads to the neglect of Chinese students' main characteristics. 4) The form of the materials is monotonous, much too serious and uninteresting. 5) The contents of the materials lack scientificness, accuracy and standardization. 6) The materials fail to reflect new theories about foreign languages teaching, reflecting old contents and methods.

Fifth, the graduate education of Korean major has not been effectively developed, not reaching an ideal stage yet in terms of scale and quality, which hinders the sustainable development of the discipline. In recent years, Korean language education has made great progress. However, of all the universities that offer Korean majors, only 35 universities are capable of training master students and only 11 universities are capable of training doctoral students, accounting for a small proportion. As for the academic situation of students majoring in Korean, the proportion of master students and doctoral students is far lower than that of undergraduates and junior college students. The statistical results show that in 2016 the numbers of undergraduates, postgraduates and doctoral students majoring in Korean in Chinese universities were 20,572, 1,063 and 114 respectively, with a ratio of 180:9:1, while that of undergraduates, masters and doctoral students in Chinese universities is 36:4:1. If the number of junior college students is included, the proportion of master's degree and doctor's degree holders would be less than half of this ratios.

In China, most universities have the restriction that only professors and associate professors can supervise master and doctoral students. Therefore, the actual number of teachers who can train master and doctoral students is very limited. Besides the shortage of teachers, there are further problems in the training of master and doctoral students such as limitation of professional directions, single curriculum, insufficiency of teaching materials and reference materials, which lead to inefficiency in improving the quality of postgraduate training. On the other hand, from lack of interest in the field of Korean studies, students with excellent academic skills, knowledge, interests and potential tend to pursue graduate programs abroad

instead of in China. This regrettably leads to a phenomenon that students with the best academic performance go to the United States and Europe, the second tier of students go to Korea, while students in tier three study for master's and doctor's degrees in other majors in domestic universities, and the remaining students stay in China for master's and doctor's degrees in Korean.

Sixth, the research ability and the research level of Korean language education have been strengthened and enhanced to some extent, but when it comes to establishing its identity as an independent academic discipline, there's still no research foundation supporting it. Although Korean language education was firstly conducted in China early in 1945, the research in this field officially began in the late 1990s; it has a history of barely over two decades. The current research on Korean language education has gained remarkable achievements in both quantitative and qualitative terms when compared with 20 years ago. However, after reviewing research status in detail, we could also find out some limitations which can be largely summarized in two aspects. Firstly, there exists a remarkably uneven distribution of different research areas as most studies focus on only several specific areas. For example, previous studies have focused on approaches to linguistics ontology, such as Korean pronunciation education, vocabulary education and grammar education, while involving very few functional approaches such as listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating. And although literary and cultural education undoubtedly plays an indispensable and important role in Korean language education, there has been little research on it. In addition, studies seldom refer to the application of the theory of SLA (second language acquisition) in Korean language education, and it is still difficult to find an approach from a broad perspective. Research on the learning process, such as contrast analysis with Chinese and error analysis studies pointing to the learner's intermediate language, has significant practical needs, and should also be promoted to fully reflect the variables in learning such as learner's physiological, cognitive, emotional states and learning strategies. What's more, there is almost no research on learner needs. Last but not least, it is necessary to point out the current status and problems of research on Korean language education by collecting and organizing existing research, but the so-called 'research on research' is quite insufficient. Secondly, there are not many in-depth studies with objectivity, systematicness, scientificity and creativity. Among the existing research, some papers written by Korean language educators working in China introduce problems in the course of teaching Korean and suggest measures for improvement. Nonetheless, these studies are not only less reliable because there is no detailed research foundation and the methods of research are unscientific but are also difficult to be applied to actual teaching practice.

Seventh, regional cooperation and cooperation with Korea has not yet been vitalized. In response to the rapid increase in demand for professionals with Korean language proficiency, universities devoted themselves to hastily establishing Korean language departments and courses; however, regional and China-Korea cooperation has not been vitalized yet. In other

words, mutual cooperation in compiling textbooks or applying for Chinese or Korean projects was short-lived and was usually at an individual or university level. A sustainable and higher plan of cooperation seems distant from reality. The education within a region and the concentration of research capacities are regarded as the most effective measures to solve many of the abstruse problems. However, there are various difficulties owing to the absence of the channels or networks for exchanging information. In recent years, a slight change has taken place in the tendency to promote intraregional cooperation by organizing academic activities. At the moment, though, more needs to be done.

4. Proposals for the development of Korean language education in China

Korean language education in China, which has lasted for more than 70 years, has entered a stage of stable development. Under the background of the transformation and development of China's higher education, with the formulation and implementation of the "National Standard for Undergraduate Teaching Quality" and the "Teaching Guide for Non-General Language Majors" as well as the construction of "Double First Class" and "New Liberal Arts", and the continuous development of artificial intelligence technology, China's Korean language education is facing new opportunities and challenges. Today's Korean language education is realizing a historic transformation from "extensive development characterized by scale expansion" to "connotative development centered on quality improvement". Based on the previous discussion on the current situation and characteristics of Korean language education in China, this chapter puts forward several proposals for the development of Korean language education in China, echoing the above analysis.

First, it is high time to improve institutionalization and standardization, highlight the characteristics of the discipline and promote the balanced development of Korean language education in various regions. For a long time, the establishment of Korean programs has been led by universities with a certain level of autonomy, instead of being dominated by the Ministry of Education. In order to ensure a planned and sustainable development of Korean language education and solve the problem of regional imbalance, the Ministry of Education should not only guarantee the autonomy of universities and colleges, but also should contact overall planning at the national level, like giving priority to the development in central and western China with appropriate policy preferences. At the same time, the amount and the scale of Korean majors in the eastern coastal areas should be controlled at an appropriate level. This is a reasonable way to effectively bridge the development gap of Korean language education between eastern China and western China, and to avoid the blind development of Korean education in different regions.

In addition, the Ministry of Education should, in accordance with the provisions of the "teaching guide for non-general language majors", conduct a comprehensive teaching evaluation on the Korean majors from aspects of training objectives, curriculum, teaching plans, teach-

ing staff, teaching conditions, quality management system etc., and rectify the majors that fail to meet the requirements of the guide, or even cancel those with poor conditions that cannot meet the teaching requirements.

The institutionalization and standardization of Korean language education should also be reflected in the development of the national Korean proficiency test, the development of national Korean teaching syllabus, the determination of Korean learning vocabulary and the compilation of dictionaries for Chinese learners and other projects. The Korean Language Teaching and Research Association of China started organizing the TKM-4/TKM-8 in 2012, and since then students of Korean major across the country have been actively taking the test and the number of candidates has been increasing steadily.

Different types and levels of colleges and universities are required to formulate distinctive training plans according to their own educational concepts and training goals, and to seek connotative development and characteristic development, so as to make the experts trained by Korean majors more in line with their personal growth and the needs of nation-building.

Second, we should improve the quality of Korean language teachers and reinforce their on-job training. One of the most urgent matters in Korean language education is to improve the quality of the teachers. This is a vital task that can determine the success or failure of Korean language education. To do this, systematic training for teachers must be conducted first. The annual conference organized by the KLTRAC provides a platform for Korean language teachers to communicate with each other, so that they can have an opportunity to share research findings and learn about the dynamics of the academic community. Also, from 2005 to 2015, the Korea Foundation subsidized every year about 30 young university professors to receive training in Korea for two weeks, which has greatly benefited the re-education of the teachers. However, academic conferences and short-term training alone will not be enough to improve the quality of Korean language teachers. In order to evenly improve the quality of thousands of professors in hundreds of universities and colleges, doctoral education aiming for training Korean teachers and long-term programs for teaching training should be carried out.

On the other hand, providing Korean teachers with opportunities to share research results by publishing regular journals is also beneficial to facilitate academic research by Korean teachers, and this task should be accelerated. As it will be difficult for any university to push ahead with this work alone, it is advisable to do this via forming and operating a joint editorial committee together by several universities.

Publishing academic papers is an important channel to improve teachers' academic level. Although the KLTRAC publishes an academic journal in South Korea every year, in most Chinese universities, papers published in South Korea are not recognized when it comes to evaluating academic achievements. Thus, it is urgent to publish Korean-education-related academic journals in China as soon as possible.

Third, it is also important to strengthen the planning and compilation of high-quality and systematic teaching materials of Korean language. The promulgation of the “national standard for undergraduate teaching quality” and the “teaching guide for non-general language majors” has defined the professional orientation and training objectives of Korean majors as one of the non-general language majors. More emphasis need to be placed on the cultivation of interdisciplinary knowledge structure, cross-cultural communication ability, critical thinking ability and autonomous learning ability, so as to promote the development of Korean majors in teaching philosophy, training mode, curriculum, teaching contents and methods. In this context, it is a crucial task and a historical mission for the front-line teachers of Korean majors to promote the reformation of curriculum teaching with the construction of teaching materials, and to develop basic teaching materials that can meet the requirements of the “national standard” and embody the spirit of the “teaching guide”.

As for the development of teaching materials, we should focus on the following issues. 1) Teaching materials should not only enable students to understand Korean culture and its essence, but also focus on carrying forward the excellent culture of China and helping students shape correct views of the world and life as well as correct values. 2) Teaching materials should fully absorb the latest theoretical results of foreign language teaching and textbook compilation and follow the rules of foreign language learning. The contents of the textbooks should meet the requirements and objectives of ability training at all levels and reflect the learning characteristics of different stages. 3) It is necessary to build a complete system for all kinds of teaching materials. Students’ books, exercise books, multimedia courseware and supporting simulation tests should be developed simultaneously. In order to avoid the fragmentation of knowledge, language knowledge learning, development of language skills, learning application of strategies and cultural connotation understanding should be organically combined. 4) In teaching materials, we should increase the amount of knowledge input in the middle and advanced stages, expand the scope of reading and use selected teaching contents to arouse students’ interest in learning, so that students can further understand the historical development, social situation and emotional world of the Korean Peninsula. 5) Teaching materials should be equipped with the authenticity of language materials, the diversity of language styles and the vividness of language expression, which will help students acquire interdisciplinary knowledge and life experience through language learning and will help them cultivate comprehensive application abilities through using foreign languages to deal with and solve problems in real scenes. 6) Teaching materials should combine the learning and application of language knowledge with cultural communication to help students deeply understand not only their own culture, but also the culture of the Korean Peninsula and the world. 7) Teaching materials should not only help students master the basics of Korean language, but also help them understand the specialized knowledge of Korean language and literature, social history, politics and economy, culture and education, as well as the knowledge of Chinese culture, humanities and science. In addition, they should help students shape their character, improve self-cul-

tivation and nurture a humanistic spirit as well as scientific literacy. 8) Teaching materials should be able to arouse students' learning enthusiasm and interest via abundant learning activities that are lively, interactive, novel and challenging. In addition, the visual design also plays an important part with vividness, richness and variety in the layouts, illustrations, colors and other aspects. 9) Teaching materials should adapt to the characteristics of the information age. They should promote the network of existing teaching materials and develop a variety of electronic teaching materials and Korean learning apps to meet the needs of Korean learners.

Fourth, we should promote graduate education and cultivate new forces for Korean studies education and research. For the sustainable development of Korean studies in China, the first priority is to cultivate younger generations. Given the current status of Korean language education, there is an urgent need for launching projects to scout for gifted students who have the potential for academic studies, and to educate graduate and post-graduate students in Korean studies. In order to nurture experts in Korean studies, priority must be given to the development of Korean studies so that students can find an attraction and value in Korean studies. Considering the fact that there is almost no research on how to nurture graduate students at the current stage, we should pay more attention to issues like how to direct students to engage in various majors, how to develop curriculums for graduate schools, how to specifically design tutorial materials for graduate students, and how to improve teaching methodologies in graduate schools. Some specific methodologies for nurturing the younger generation in research are listed below. 1) In universities equipped with academic conditions, more professional directions such as Korean politics, economy, culture, Korean teaching, in addition to Korean linguistics and literature, should be set up for cultivating experts of Korean studies. 2) In the case of schools that fail to offer various subjects in graduate courses due to restrictions on faculty members, a system might be introduced to share educational resources with other universities in the region and to recognize each other's credits. 3) Hold various prestigious lectures and academic special lectures to help students feel the academic atmosphere and to encourage their motivations for academic research. 4) Hold academic forums on Korean studies for graduate students, and provide them with opportunities to exchange and share academic knowledge and information. 5) Set aside a part of educational funds in each school as scholarships to reward graduate students engaged in Korean studies, so as to boost students to conduct research continuously. 6) Graduate students, who are deemed as the reserve force in Korean studies, should be provided with a lot of opportunities to study abroad and engage in joint degrees programs with prestigious universities in Korea and other countries.

Fifth, promote the communications among Korean educators and researchers and strengthen the links between them. In order to achieve a more notable development of Korean studies in China, it is necessary to promote cooperation between educators and researchers, between regions and countries. Barriers between regions, school systems, disciplines and areas should

be breached by building a network of universities and research institutes of Korean studies, which creates connections among all researchers and educators of Korean studies. Moreover, regional cooperation also means sharing information and data. For the accessibility of library resources on Korean studies to trace where the research materials are located in China, we can build an academic database that connects researchers and universities by means of an office being in charge of regional contacts. In order to facilitate the sharing and exchanges of information and academic resources among educators and students of Korean studies, we can create web pages concerning Korean studies-related issues and link pages that will show the research progress of Korean studies in different regions and all over the world.

Sixth, develop the research on Korean language education and establish its academic identity. In the past 20 years, the research on Korean language education has developed at a tremendous rate and gained remarkable achievements in China. According to rough statistics, there have been more than 2,000 Korean language education-related papers published in China by Korean language educators and researchers in China, and the quality of the papers has improved considerably. However, compared to the scale of Korean language education in China, the quantity of research in this field is still insufficient. The research on certain areas is still in the initial stage, such as learning process and learners, testing and postgraduate teaching. What's more, in terms of research method, qualitative research is most predominant while it usually lacks results.

In recent years, the development of Korean language education has changed from simple growth of quantity to the improvement of quality and efficiency. In this context, research on Korean language education, which lays foundation for educational practice, should be committed to the innovation and development of teaching theory, so as to help research on Korean language education achieve the status of discipline which it deserves. In order to achieve this goal, it is advisable to treat researchers with Korean language education as an academic field. In other words, Korean language education can be offered as a specialty in a well-equipped university. The Korean Language and Culture Department of Peking University began recruiting postgraduate students in "Korean education" in 2009, and doctoral students in "Korean linguistics and Korean education" in 2012, which has created a good paradigm for the cultivation of expertise in Korean teaching and research.

Seventh, conform to the trend of the times and carry out diversified Korean language education. Korean language education currently being conducted in China has a variety of education methods in addition to regular education. Given that different learners learn Korean for different purposes, curriculums and textbooks, teaching methods and evaluation standards should be developed with much variety as possible. For this, it is desirable first to consider the attempts of a variety of methods. In other words, Korean language education can be carried out with the adoption of more media such as public internet, SNS, mobile applications etc. The second one comes to creating a curriculum that is in line with the learner's study targets.

In addition to academic education, we can also develop various forms of non-academic education, such as short-term training courses, intensive courses and preparatory courses for studying abroad.

5. Closing remarks

Korean language education in China has developed significantly in quality and quantity over the last 70 years and is still taking a new leap forward today. At the same time, however, many problems have been found in both internal and external aspects of Korean language education.

This study first divided the development history of Korean language education into the initial period, recession period, transitional period and growing period, and then analyzed the current situation and problems of Korean language education. Based on previous discussions, this paper made some suggestions for further development of Korean language education from the perspectives of the balance of regional distribution, the diversification of curriculum designs, the improvement of teachers and teaching materials, the promotion of graduate education and expert-training, the foundation of academic identity in research and the reinforcement of regional and international cooperation.

Although the discussions are not detailed due to the limitation of space and research capacity, hopefully this paper will be of help to understand the past, present and future of the education of Korean studies in China.

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