Original Article

Exploring directions for intercultural citizenship education in Korean language education for social well-being

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore directions for achieving therapeutic and social well-being effects through intercultural citizenship education in language classrooms. To accomplish this, we first clarified the concepts of education as healing, social well-being, and intercultural citizenship education. Subsequently, through the analysis of reflective journals on the writing and peer review processes written by university students, we discovered manifestations of key concepts of intercultural citizenship, such as empathy, recognition, connection, discovery of new knowledge, and attitude change. Based on these insights, we proposed the perspective that addressing the concept of intercultural citizenship in Korean language education can be beneficial for language education as a form of healing and for social well-being. Furthermore, we suggested that future language education should evolve from instruction focused on the interpretation of symbols and functional proficiency to practices that empower learners as members of global society, allowing them to assign value to their lives and build healthy relationships with others.

Keywords Korean language education, Intercultural citizenship, Social well-being, Healing through language learning

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the course of human history, language education has been undertaken for various purposes. The most significant shift has been observed in the primary objectives of language education and learning, transitioning from acquiring advanced culture to engaging in communication with speakers of different languages. In recent times, there has been questioning about whether it is appropriate to clearly define the field of linguistics in the context of the modern postmodern world. Additionally, as we enter the era of the 4th industrial revolution, arguments persistently arise, suggesting that beyond the translation of symbols, the interaction of meaning and cultural dimensions is crucial[1].

The intensification of international exchanges and the globalization of perspectives related to language teaching and learning are noticeable changes, driven by the increasing global interdependence. Within this context, the goals of individual language learners are expanding from economic pursuits, aiming to gain advantages in the international market, to personal aspirations such as the establishment of social and multiple identities in the third society. Furthermore, the scope extends to social and political aspects related to the sociocultural practices of global citizenship[2].

This paper explores the evolving landscape of language education within this dynamic atmosphere. This trend has been an early research focus in Europe, where language education for integration and respect for diversity has been a major challenge. Evidence of this can be found in the language education policies of the Council of Europe, which actively pursues multilingualism, linguistic diversity, mutual understanding, democratic citizenship, and social cohesion.

Within this global trend, Byram (2008)[3] maintains a foundational perspective that language (foreign language) education should contribute to social equality and social integration. He proposes the concept of intercultural citizenship, defining the intercultural citizen as an individual living freely and democratically as a healthy member in a diverse society. It can be inferred that there

is a connection between intercultural citizenship education in language (foreign language) education and the concepts of health[4] and social well-being. Exploring this connection holds significance for identifying future directions.

This paper delves into these dynamics, examining the intersection of language education, intercultural citizenship, health, and social well-being within the global context.

EDUCATION AS HEALING AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING

The World Health Organization (WHO) Constitution defines health not merely as the absence of disease or infirmity but as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being. Building upon this concept, this study directs attention to the notion of 'healing' as a means to promote the health of social members. According to the Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, 'healing' is defined as 'the process of becoming or making somebody/something healthy again; the process of getting better after an emotional shock,' and in Korean, it is translated as '치유(治癒).' According to the Standard Korean Dictionary, '치유(治癒)' carries the meaning of 'curing and making someone recover from an illness.' This term encompasses not only physical but also psychological and mental recovery.

Recently, the meaning of healing has been expanding from a therapeutic approach focused on addressing deficiencies to a preventive approach based on strengths[5]. In a narrow sense, therapeutic healing aims at correcting and adapting to problems, with the goal of treatment[6]. In a broader sense, preventive healing aims at development, education, and the prevention of issues. The utility of language education in the dimensions of healing and social well-being arises precisely from the expansion of such concepts.

Language (foreign language) education as a form of healing should be contemplated beyond the specificity of a foreign language to consider the universality of language as a tool for learner development and broadening perspectives through education. While the incorporation of the concept of healing in Korean language education is rare, recent studies such as those by Im Gun-su & Cho Hyunyong (2023)[7] and Song Bong-woon (2023)[8] indicate a growing interest in this area. The former presented research findings suggesting that Korean language learning alleviates various psychological issues experienced by middle-aged Japanese learners, while the

latter presented results indicating that psychological symptoms of anger experienced during resistance to the military regime among students at a local foreign language university in Myanmar are being healed through Korean language learning. These studies underscore the significance of exploring teaching strategies focused on healing in the context of learning Korean as a foreign language, acknowledging the impact on psychological well-being. The need for future discussions on instructional strategies with a healing focus is emphasized in light of these findings.

It is natural to prioritize the mastery of language functions in foreign language education, as without functional proficiency, progressing to smooth interaction becomes challenging. However, teaching a foreign language is not merely about adding another tool that can be used. If the instrumental perspective is overly emphasized, it becomes clear that explaining the differences between advancing machine translation technology and educational activities will become challenging. Humans use language to interact with others, shape society, and cultivate their inner selves, leading fulfilling lives. Therefore, in language (foreign language) education, a perspective that employs the broader concept of healing as a lens is necessary to reflect on learners' lives and the broader society they are part of.

At this juncture, an important consideration is the concept of social well-being. Durkheim early on expressed interest in the health status of society, identifying characteristics such as social integration, cohesion, a sense of belonging, mutual dependence, shared consciousness, and communal identity as indicative of a healthy society. Keyes defined social well-being as an 'evaluation of one's surrounding environment and roles within society.' He further elucidated its components as 'social integration, social contribution, social realization, social cohesion, and social acceptance.'[9]

Helliwell also emphasized the significance of trust, relationships with diverse individuals, and a sense of belonging in the social context[10]. Synthesizing various authors' perspectives, crucial concepts within social well-being include community members' cohesion, a sense of belonging, mutual dependence, connection, and support from others. In the following section, we will explore how these concepts can be interconnected with intercultural citizenship education.

INTERCULTURAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

In an era of globalization spanning political, economic, social, and cultural domains, individuals find

themselves endowed with international affiliations and are called upon to embody values and attitudes as global citizens. In international discussions, including those led by UNESCO, global citizenship education is defined as "education that cultivates the necessary knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes for learners to contribute to creating a more inclusive, just, and peaceful world."[11] Accordingly, UNESCO's framework for global citizenship education emphasizes the integration of cognitive, socio-justice, and behavioral dimensions, stressing that it should take place in all settings, encompassing formal and informal education.

Global citizenship is included in the global education goals unanimously agreed upon by the world, known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with the underlying core value of "Leave no one behind." The fourth goal, 'QUALITY EDUCATION,' outlines the aspiration to ensure that by 2030, all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, encompassing education for sustainable development, sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and culture's contribution to sustainable development.

In today's diverse society, individuals are constantly faced with the challenge of overcoming cultural differences. While global citizenship is a comprehensive concept set against the backdrop of the world, intercultural citizenship is a more specific concept that goes beyond merely accepting different cultures. It involves strengthening communities through an appreciation of both differences and similarities, acknowledging that these elements contribute to community cohesion. This does not solely involve celebrating unfamiliar cultures but also respecting traditional and local aspects while valuing the relationships between them. Intercultural citizenship encompasses understanding various aspects that define a community, including but not limited to nationality, ethnic origin, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, and religious beliefs[12].

ANALYZE KEYWORDS IN SELF-REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

Applying the concept of intercultural citizenship in educational activities is not limited to assuming differences in race and nationality. Cultural diversity and conflicts exist in any group, making it possible to apply intercultural citizenship regardless of racial or national differences. Therefore, in this study, to examine the direction of intercultural citizenship education in language classrooms for social well-being, we initially extracted keywords from reflective journals of 25 university students who participated in reflective writing and peer review activities in a university general education course. The writing topics included 'unforgettable places,' 'words that changed me,' 'spaces on campus just for me,' and 'unforgettable foods.' The results are summarized in Table 1. This initial exploration aims to pave the way for a more in-depth investigation into the application of intercultural citizenship education in language classrooms for the betterment of social well-being.

Table. 1. A self-reflective journal after writing in a college liberal arts class

Keyword	Related Keywords	Examples
EMPATHY	Comforted Confidence Good impression Inclusion Interesting Intimate Joy Objective self-awareness Relief Similar experiences The mood has softened …	-Even though we all came from different backgrounds, empathy gave us an inner sense of closeness and identification. -I feel like I'm sharing experiences and emotions, which allows me to talk more freely and deeply. -I was able to recognize myself more objectively by learning who others thought I was instead of who I thought I was. -It was comforting to know that I wasn't the only one experiencing this. -The process of empathy has helped me to learn and embrace diversity.

RECOGNITION	Advance Be humble Be inspired Confidence Discovering the dual self Effort Imitate People like me Recognize what is not enough for me Respect Self-esteem The eyes of your peers …	-Getting encouragement from others gave me confidence in my writing and allowed me to be specific with my thoughts. -I've gained self-acceptance and am motivated to move forward. -I don't usually recognize or praise others, but I did in this activity. -Recognizing other people's strengths allows you to emulate them. -Recognizing your strengths gives you the drive to improve. -Through empathy, I found comfort in my own feelings. -Through the process of accepting others, I was able to recognize what I was lacking at the same time. -We were able to relate to each other's experiences through our writing. -Writing allowed me to acknowledge and reflect on who I am as a person.
CONNECTION	A sense of belonging A sense of community Discover emotions you didn't know you had before Empathy Social issues Stability Understanding …	-After realizing we had the same experience, I wanted to get to know him better. -I don't often share my story with others, but it allowed me to be honest with myself. -I felt like I was connecting with people I had no connection to. -I felt that I was living in the same society. -I thought it would be a good idea to have a conversation with someone I've never met before, so that we could connect faster and more intimately. -In the end, I feel like my writing is an experience and a thought that is connected to society and created by society. -It brought back a good memory that I thought I'd forgotten. -It reminded me of my apathy towards society. -Stabilize your state of mind. -The disconnected were connected by a common form of life. -We have come to recognize that although we have different majors, we are all members of the same school and we all play a role.

Summarizing the content of students' reflective journals, the key themes can be distilled into the keywords 'empathy,' 'acknowledgment,' and 'connection.' At this juncture, it is crucial to recall the concepts of social well-being and intercultural citizenship. As mentioned earlier, the core concepts of social well-being include community members' cohesion, a sense of belonging, mutual dependence, connection, and support from others. Similarly, the core concept of intercultural citizenship involves understanding various aspects that constitute a community, such as nationality, ethnic origin, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, and religious beliefs.

The effects of 'empathy,' 'acknowledgment,' and 'connection' observed in students' reflective journals indicate that the process of writing and engaging in conversations with peers did not only lead students to learn language skills and writing techniques. It also guided them to learn intercultural citizenship for the betterment of social well-being. In addition to the mentioned keywords, the reflective journals also documented new insights gained through conversations with peers, as well as changes in personal values and attitudes. The results are summarized in Table 2. These findings highlight the broader educational impact beyond linguistic and writing skills, emphasizing the cultivation of intercultural citizenship for social well-being.

Table. 2. A self-reflective journal after writing in a college liberal arts class

What I found out	Characteristics of Other Majors Different emotions in the same situation Distortion of history Diverse experiences Emotions of men in their 20s Exam Life Growing up Information about local communities Life and culture in other parts of the world Pain experienced by others People's persistence and passion Study Abroad
What has changed	I learned to listen to others. I didn't show my inner self, but through this activity, I became more open. It made me think about what I want to accomplish in life, not just what I want to do for a living. When I see people practicing what I think about, I want to be like them.

While students were attentive to accurate grammar, precise expressions, spelling, paragraph structure, and effective punctuation during the process of writing, they did not overlook the exploration of themselves and others. Consequently, responses such as aspiring to resemble others or contemplating values one wishes to achieve in life, as outlined in Table 2, likely emerged. Therefore, these response outcomes further indicate that language classes have a positive impact on individual reflection, healing, and social well-being. These findings underscore that language classes not only focus on linguistic proficiency but also contribute positively to personal reflection, healing, and social well-being by encouraging students to contemplate their values and aspirations while refining their writing skills.

CONCLUSION

The intensification of global polarization, coupled with the exacerbation of discrimination, hatred, and anxiety, is a pervasive trend worldwide. This phenomenon extends to classroom settings, making it challenging to actively address such issues in the educational context. In today's rapidly evolving landscape of language classrooms, where technological advancements pose a threat to human language proficiency, the challenge extends beyond the mastery of linguistic functions. It now involves instilling a sense of empathy, acknowledgment, and connection with others (and the world) as active members of contemporary society.

To achieve this, language education activities must progress beyond a focus on functional proficiency, fostering a sense of value in learners' lives and encouraging the establishment of healthy relationships with others. It is through such practices that language

education can take a step forward. The hope is that the contents of students' reflective journals, crafted after writing and peer review activities, will provide answers by embodying the desired sense of connection, acknowledgment, and empathy.

In conclusion, addressing the challenges of today's language classrooms involves moving beyond a strictly functional mastery-centered education, fostering a sense of connection and empathy with others as integral members of society. The anticipation is that the contents of students' reflective journals, shaped through writing and peer review activities, will serve as a testament to this aspiration.

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